

Critical Intelligence:
Analysis by Contrasting Narratives

Identifying and analyzing the most relevant truths

Typography & Design: Multimedia NLDA with special thanks to Marcel

Printed by: Repro FBD

ISBN: 978-94-6103-071-9

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Critical Intelligence: Analysis by Contrasting Narratives

Identifying and analyzing the most relevant truths

Kritische Inlichtingen: Analyse door Contrasteren van Narratieven
Identificatie en analyse van de meest relevante waarheden

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. H.R.B.M. Kummeling, ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen op woensdag 28 november 2018 des middags te 2.30 uur

door

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geboren op 29 april 1981
te Tilburg

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List of abbreviations

ACN	Analysis by contrasting narratives
ARC	Advice and Reform Committee
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CIS	Critical intelligence studies
EIJ	Egyptian Islamic Jihad
NAF	Narrative analysis framework
NT	Narrative tracing
SATs	Structured analytic techniques
WIF	World Islamic Front
WTC	World Trade Center
ZCA	Zionist-Crusader Alliance

Introduction

Introduction

The greater aim of this research project is to contribute to critical theoretical debate in intelligence studies by developing and demonstrating a new methodology for analyzing complex intelligence problems. The *analysis by contrasting narratives* (ACN) methodology identifies narratives associated with entities involved in a complex intelligence problem.¹ This includes the strategic narrative associated with an intelligence consumer that situates an intelligence organization. ACN should be accomplished cooperatively by intelligence analysts and with working-level policymakers. The ACN approach methodically increases the diversity of perspectives on events and circumstances, and highlights the significance of narratives in grasping and shaping intelligence problems. In essence, rather than *telling truth* to power, this thesis argues that intelligence should strive to *consider the most relevant truths* to serve power. Therefore, this thesis not only contributes to the academic study of intelligence, but is also relevant for the study *for* intelligence, i.e. the practice of intelligence analysis. Adopting the critical theoretical stance advanced in this thesis has profound implications: it leads to a fundamentally different view of intelligence than the way it is traditionally perceived in the Western world.

Intelligence, and particularly espionage, has often been deemed ‘the second oldest profession in the world’.² Central to its practice has always been the operational and analytic tradecraft aggregated and asserted by professionals. The necessary intuitive and associative thinking emphasized the value of experience. It was only after the Second World War that Western intelligence became more fully institutionalized in agencies that served as comprehensive ‘libraries for national security’.³ Parallel to the bureaucratization of intelligence, technical developments such as the invention of radar or programmable crypto decoding machines had a significant impact on the field. The mathematicians and other academics who were hired to work with (signals) intelligence contributed to an academic professionalization of intelligence.⁴ Parallel to various social sciences, the scientific ideal of the natural sciences was pursued in intelligence: for example, by incorporating a numerical standard for intelligence assessments.⁵ The ultimate aim was to find the objective ground

- 1 Analysis ‘by’ Contrasting Narratives is used to emphasize the centrality of comparing and contrasting the development of the various narratives that have been identified. However, the term ‘Analysis of Contrasting Narratives’ could also be used as both adequately refer to the ACN methodology of identifying and analyzing relevant narratives.
- 2 Phillip Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession, Spies and Spying in the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1986).
- 3 Richard K. Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence, Knowledge and Power in American National Security* (New York, Columbia University Press 2007), 5.
- 4 For example Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press 1949), Roger Hillsman, ‘Intelligence and Policy-Making in Foreign Affairs’, *World Politics*, 5 (1952) 1: 1-45, Washington Platt, *Strategic Intelligence Production, Basic Principles* (New York, F.A. Praeger 1957), also described in Stephen Marrin, *Improving Intelligence Analysis* (London: Routledge 2011), 25-28, and Wilhelm Agrell, Gregory Treverton, *National Intelligence and Science, Beyond the Great Divide in Analysis and Policy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2015) 85-87.
- 5 Sherman Kent, ‘Words of Estimative Probability’, *Studies in Intelligence, Fall 1964*, 49-65.

truth. To this day, this positivist empiricist paradigm of discovering truth has remained dominant in the practice and study of intelligence.⁶ However, intelligence is different from positivist science.

First, there exists a tension between the scientific positivist ideal as it is traditionally adopted, and the purpose of intelligence to be of use for a specific consumer. In contrast to research at universities, intelligence is processed information that is required to be relevant, timely, and actionable. Rather than a search for the comprehensive ground truth, intelligence mostly concerns the production of practical wisdom. A prime intelligence example is the successful US civil war mapmaker Jedidiah Hotchkiss, who was able to speedily provide rough sketches with the most relevant information that enabled fast decision-making, instead of drawing detailed comprehensive maps.⁷ Within the dominant positivist paradigm, intelligence is thus concerned with delivering objective packages of knowledge to consumers who use the secret and often difficult to obtain intelligence to their advantage. Problems arise when information becomes ‘distorted’ in anticipation of intelligence consumer preferences, or when consumers ignore ‘accurate’ knowledge based on their preferences.⁸ This is generally referred to as forms of politicization of intelligence, a phenomenon that requires a constant effort to ‘minimize’ its effects.⁹

Second, the bureaucratization of Western intelligence resulted in another development: the demand for audit trails. A major effort has been made in intelligence education to externalize thinking. Since the 1990s, structured analytic techniques and methods to stimulate self-reflexive critical thinking have been documented in a number of US ‘doctrines’ or reference works.¹⁰ Intelligence professionals have become trained in logical rational and empirical reasoning to rid themselves of psychological pitfalls such as biases and presumptions.¹¹ Despite the stance of an array of ‘structured analytic techniques’ in intelligence today as the gold standard in education, from an academic perspective they

6 Peter Gill, Mark Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, second edition (Cambridge, Polity 2012) 33-34, Mark Lowenthal, *Intelligence, From Secrets to Policy*, fifth edition (London, Sage 2012) 158, Jennifer Sims, ‘The Theory and Philosophy of Intelligence’, in Robert Dover, Michael S. Goodman, Claudia Hillebrand (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Intelligence Studies* (New York, Routledge 2014) 42-49

7 Sims, ‘Theory and Philosophy of Intelligence’, 43, Shawn B. Stith, ‘Foundation for victory, operations and intelligence harmoniously combine in Jackson’s Shenandoah Valley campaign (1862)’ *Naval Postgraduate School Thesis*, June 1993.

8 See for example Stephen Marrin, ‘Revisiting Intelligence and Policy, Problems with Politicization and Receptivity’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 28 (2013) 1: 1-4, an introduction to a special edition on politicization.

9 Stephen Marrin, ‘Rethinking Analytic Politicization’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 28(2013) 1, 32-54

10 United States Central Intelligence Agency, *A Compendium of Analytic Tradecraft Notes*, volume I, February 1997, http://www.oss.net/dynamaster/file_archive/040319/cb27cc09c84d056b66616b4da5c02a4d/O5S2000-01-23.pdf (last retrieved February 12, 2018), United States Central Intelligence Agency, *A Tradecraft Primer, Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis*, March 2009, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/Tradecraft%20Primer-aprog.pdf> (last retrieved July 4, 2017), University of Foreign and Military Studies, *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook 7.0*, January 2015 http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/ufmcs/The_Applied_Critical_Thinking_Handbook_v7.0.pdf (last retrieved February 16, 2018), Richards J. Heuer, Randolph H. Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques For Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, DC, CQ Press 2011), Marrin, *Improving Intelligence Analysis*, 28-33, Agrell, Treverton, *National Intelligence and Science*, 86-87.

11 Richards J. Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Pittsburgh, PA, Government Printing Office 1999).

reflect a proto-scientific practice characterized by various deficiencies and limitations.¹² In part, this is the result of intelligence managers requesting simplified versions of social science methods with ‘some invented shortcuts’ to ease their use as analytic techniques by professionals to produce intelligence.¹³ However, it is also related to the distinct nature of intelligence. Even more than with regular social science, complex intelligence problems are atypical, making reproducing and revalidating research difficult. Deliberate deception and propaganda activities by adversaries form another complicating factor. In the traditional intelligence paradigm, these actions are perceived as attempts to ‘poison’ the truth.¹⁴ By raising structured analytic techniques to standard in intelligence, the simplified scientific methods risk camouflaging under a veil of objectivity what is partially a subjective practice.¹⁵

Third, whereas during the Cold War the Soviet threat was the dominant frame to situate Western intelligence problems, especially over the last three decades the intelligence environment has changed significantly. Security is increasingly defined in broader terms that surpass the military domain to include environmental, economic, social, and other problems. Intelligence problems are increasingly linked to wider and other themes, issues, and topics. On the international stage, more non-state actors pursue their own agenda, and gathering intelligence is decreasingly reserved for states. Uncertainty and the complexity of the intelligence process have increased. More than during the Cold War, the frames adopted to make sense of intelligence problems and create perspectives for action shift over time. For example, domestic radicalization of youth can be perceived as a terrorism problem that requires law enforcement and security organizations to act, but under a different political government it might equate to a problem of societal inequality that is best approached by organizing an inclusive dialogue. Such shifting perspectives among intelligence consumers cannot be without consequences for the production of intelligence. The shifting, broadening, and deepening of intelligence problems has profound consequences for the way intelligence organizations and their processes are to be structured. There is more need for adaptive sensemaking, flexible organizational structures, and liaising with non-traditional intelligence partners.

In the last decades in academia, scholars have increasingly engaged in debate over these matters. Intelligence has been described as the missing dimension in the study of international politics.¹⁶ In part, the secrecy surrounding intelligence has limited the development of intelligence studies as an academic subfield of international relations. In

12 Welton Chang, Elissabeth Berdini, David R. Mandel and Philip E. Tetlock, ‘Restructuring structured analytic techniques in intelligence’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 33 (2018) 3: 337-356.

13 Marrin, *Improving Intelligence Analysis*, 31.

14 Chad W. Fitzgerald, Aaron F. Brantly, ‘Subverting Reality, The Role of Propaganda in 21st Century Intelligence’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 30 (2017) 2: 215-240.

15 Chang, e.a., ‘Restructuring structured analytic techniques’

16 For example Christopher Andrew, David Dilks, *The Missing Dimension, Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century*, (Campaign, University of Illinois Press 1984), James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy, Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* (Cambridge, MA, Blackwell 1992) 21, Bob G.J. de Graaff, *De ontbrekende dimensie, intelligence binnen de studie van internationale betrekkingen*, oration, March 2, 2012, (Utrecht, Utrecht University 2012).

the 20th century, intelligence studies consisted of historians documenting the activities of intelligence organizations that were revealed in declassified archived documents, official government reports, or (un)sanctioned memoirs of former employees.¹⁷ Increasingly, academics have started to study intelligence processes. This has also been spurred by the need for academic intelligence education. Predominantly, intelligence scholars providing such education in the West and particularly in the United States have been able to draw on their own experience as intelligence practitioners.¹⁸ The downside of this development is that intelligence theorizing has remained largely descriptive instead of normative. Furthermore, in general, intelligence scholars have refrained from linking to other debates in related fields, such as security, war, and terrorism studies.¹⁹

A number of intelligence failures and scandals have led to reforms of Western intelligence agencies and organization of their oversight. Some scholars have called for a 'radical revolution' or 'paradigm' shift in intelligence.²⁰ However, such calls often concern shifts in the organizational sphere, such as liaising beyond the secret intelligence community in trusted networks, improving analytic training, adopting more flexible planning processes, creating new coordination bodies, or increasing oversight. Most intelligence scholars refrain from explicitly articulating the theoretical roots of their revolutionary new thinking in philosophical terms.

The intelligence practice and intelligence studies are firmly rooted in the positivist empiricist paradigm. In part, this has probably remained the case due to the specific conditions of intelligence. Secrecy limits open debates in academia, and the practice-centric orientation of many intelligence scholars leads away from theorizing. Another condition is that intelligence essentially serves the needs of its consumers. The bureaucratization of this hierarchical relationship has functioned as a constraint for the ability of intelligence organizations to speak truth to power. Analyzing and assessing the impact of the consumer's policies and actions on an intelligence problem is generally off-limits for intelligence agencies. This thesis moves beyond the dominant positivist paradigm and advances a critical theoretical approach that is grounded in distinct philosophical reasoning. The implications for intelligence of this critical theorizing are profound at various levels: the debate over paradigms in intelligence studies, the structuring of intelligence processes in organizations, and the analysis of intelligence problems.

17 Stuart Farson, 'Schools of Thought, National Perceptions of Intelligence', *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Spring 1989, 52-104.

18 Reflected for example in the conferences and literature generated by the International Association For Intelligence Education or the US Association of Former Intelligence Officers.

19 Loch K. Johnson, Loch K. Johnson, 'The development of intelligence studies', in Robert Dover, Michael S. Goodman, Claudia Hillebrand (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Intelligence Studies* (New York, Routledge 2014), 3-22.

20 William J. Lahneman, 'The Need for a New Intelligence Paradigm', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 23 (2010) 2: 201- 225, William J. Lahneman, *Keeping U.S. Intelligence Effective: The Need for a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs* (Lanham, Scarecrow Press 2011), William J. Lahneman 'Is a revolution in intelligence affairs occurring?', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 20 (2007) 1: 1-17. David T. Moore, *Sensemaking, A Structure for an Intelligence Revolution* (Washington, DC, National Defense Intelligence College 2011), Gregory F. Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence for an Age of Information* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001)

A critical approach to intelligence

This thesis promotes a specific way of using the term ‘critical’ that is distinct from the other day-to-day use of the term that relates to maintaining methodological rigor and reducing cognitive bias in intelligence analysis. In philosophical terms, critical approaches to intelligence adopt interpretivism at either the ontological or epistemological level and contest total objectivist empiricism or positivism. More a scientific ethos than a coherent theoretical effort, being critical is a self-reflexive attitude that problematizes the essence and workings of ‘intelligence’ within a socio-political context. An integral part of a critical approach is reflecting on the role of intelligence professionals and consumers in the framing of intelligence problems and their underlying concept of truth. The concept of truth is thus not disbanded but made more relative. Defining not only the substance but also the contours of an intelligence problem, as well as the effects of our own actions on the problem, becomes part of an integrated form of intelligence-policy analysis. Thus, the perception of the intelligence consumer needs to be integrated with the analysis of other (hostile) entities. This is something highly unusual for most traditional intelligence organizations, but even more unheard is for intelligence professionals to participate in reflecting on the effects of the consumer’s actions on the intelligence problem. Lastly, a critical approach also implies that in selecting information and attributing meaning to social phenomena, intelligence analysis (and scientific research) itself provides basic and analytic ‘models’ or a ‘creation of reality’ that remains open to critique.

Is there no ground truth, then? Chapter 1 describes the critical realist theoretical underpinnings of this thesis more comprehensively. In essence, the philosophical supposition is that there is a ‘real world’ out there, but interpretations of ‘real’ material and social conditions also provide a foundation for entities to act. There are deeper intransitive natural and social structures, but also more transitive social practices and events. It is crucial to analyze how structure and agency, and how the natural and social worlds influence each other. How do various types of facilitating conditions (material and ideational contexts) and drivers (actions and intentions) together affect social phenomena and enable potential powers to become activated? What social conditions enable or constrain the occurrence of statements and actions, what triggers them, and what are their effects? Instead of singular ‘causal mechanisms’ of a cause and its effect, a holistic view of the workings of ‘causal complexes’ or ‘networks of causality’ is central to the critical approach advanced in this thesis.

To investigate the workings of such complexes, scientists must combine experience in research with imagination. Knowledge is ultimately generated by experience, but not limited to it. Abductive exploration of possible relationships and connections between social phenomena provides potential ways to increase knowledge – like a spider jumping into the unknown, not only based on that what it has experienced but also with a vision in mind: the

aim of spinning a web.²¹ In that effort, completely value-free social science (or intelligence) does not exist, but researchers and analysts can investigate and define workings, effects, and limits of interpretation while recognizing that research itself also carries a form of meaning-making.

What can be built on this philosophical foundation? The initial idea at the start of this research project was that interpretivism pointed to the importance of analyzing counter-perspectives – in other words, when identifying an enemy, investigating that enemy's perspective. Thus, the initial research proposal referred to 'strategic red teaming'. This was inspired by the intelligence analysis method of Red Teaming in which analysts try to assess situations from an adversary perspective, attempting to act like the opponent. However, the number of actors associated with contemporary complex intelligence issues problematizes this binary concept. Even though analyzing the social dynamics between two adversaries, 'red' is ultimately a characterization attributed from a 'blue' perspective. It would be more neutral and accurate to think in terms of a variety of colors that describe multiple actors and shift shape and color as one's position, perspective, and policy preferences change. In theory, a multitude of perspectives must be considered that relate to and reflect on each other. Therefore, in addition to incorporating and analyzing the intelligence consumer's perspective, as another unconventional step for intelligence organizations (and many researchers in academia) in this research *three* perspectives were considered in parallel to make sense of and explain developments for a complex intelligence problem.²²

The next question that presented itself was how to identify and understand these different perspectives. What could provide the scientific mode of entry? An essential part of social reality lies in language use and communication that manifests in discourses, or narratives. There are other aspects of social reality, but the assumptions expressed in communication, either by articulation or the intentional lack thereof, are a central gateway to understand the perceptions that form the basis for people to act. Thus, the question becomes how to identify different narratives (as perspectives) that can eventually be compared and contrasted by focusing on a series of events such as terrorist attacks. Because of the interconnectedness of texts (intertextuality) and the organic nature of overlapping discourse (interdiscursivity), defining the contours of a discourse is an analytic decision that requires explication by the researcher. Narratives are therefore only *basic analytic narratives* established through a process of redescription.²³ They themselves carry a form of meaning-making which remains open to critique. As outlined in chapters 1 and 2, in this research British language professor Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse model provided the theoretical basis to distinguish

21 Bob G.J. de Graaff, *De wetenschapper en de spin. Over de (on)mogelijkheid van toekomstverkenningen ten aanzien van radicalisering en terrorisme*, oration January 22, 2008, (Leiden, Leiden University 2008).

22 Some studies on discourses or securitization have studied two distinct narratives in parallel, such as Montessori, *A discursive analysis of a struggle for hegemony in Mexico, The Zapatista movement versus President Salinas de Gotari* (Saarbrücken, Verlag 2009) or Holger Stritzel, Sean C. Chang, 'Securitization and counter-securitization in Afghanistan', *Security Dialogue*, 46 (2015) 6: 548-567. But far more common is to focus research on a single narrative.

23 The terms *basic* and *analytic* are derived from Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice, Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (New York, Routledge 2006), 75.

between fundamentally different social domains.²⁴ However, the study refrained from also adopting his strict, detailed, and hence limitative functional linguistic method for textual analysis, instead seeking to analyze key parts of key texts, selected from a more extensive aggregation of texts. Fairclough's theoretical approach to critical discourse analysis made it possible to identify narratives from the dense web of interconnected and overlapping texts, and to situate them in wider social practices and structures.

Combining texts into distinct narratives also required a thematic focus. What to look for in narratives? The concept of sociological securitization as outlined by Belgian international relations professor Thierry Balzacq provided an adequate lens.²⁵ Central to securitization is identifying an existential threat by others against a self before various types of audiences within specific contexts. As stated, this study mapped securitization dynamics in parallel narratives and investigated multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts across social domains, which is an uncommon approach to securitization.²⁶ Also untraditional is that the research did not focus on 'successful' threat articulation *per se*, but examined the moves or *efforts* made in this regard. First of all, the debate is still ongoing in security studies regarding what exactly constitutes 'success' and how to determine whether this has been the case in specific instances.²⁷ In deviating from this quest, the 'looser' approach to centralize securitization efforts provided an adequate starting point to study various types of interacting causes and effects of 'securitization dynamics'. As described in chapter 6, it also opened possibilities to bring more types of audiences into view.

The approach developed in this study highlights the necessity for scholars and intelligence analysts to identify, follow, and understand multiple perspectives through narratives. This focus does not imply an exclusionary stance towards other analytical approaches that, for example, parallel methodologies from the natural sciences. They are in fact complementary, which is also illustrated in the fact that texts were selected based on their relation to a series of security related events, such as attacks and military strikes. Security is not *per se* an objective truth but a reality manifesting *partly* in and through the use of language and non-discursive actions.

Objective and research questions

The greater aim of this thesis is to contribute to critical debate in intelligence studies by outlining a critical methodology and method. In this thesis, sociological securitization and critical discourse analysis are combined into a discursive methodology termed analysis

24 Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge, Polity Press 1992) 73.

25 Thierry Balzacq, (ed.) *Securitization Theory, How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (Oxon, Routledge 2011).

26 One of the exceptions is Stritzel, Chang, 'Securitization and counter-securitization in Afghanistan'.

27 Stéphane J. Baele, Catarina P. Thomson, 'An Experimental Agenda for Securitization Theory', *International Studies Review*, 19 (2017) 650-651, Thierry Balzacq, Sarah Léonard, Jan Ruzicka, "'Securitization' revisited, theory and cases', *International Relations*, 30 (2016) 4: 518.

by contrasting narratives (ACN). ACN seeks to compare and contrast threat articulations between different narratives, identify various types of causes for these articulations, and focus on their effects across social domains. One of the more practical considerations to develop and demonstrate ACN was to find an appropriate topic or theme as object of study which was relevant to intelligence and with sufficient data publicly available. Furthermore, in defining the object of study, a dialectical relation had to be considered: the chosen method would highlight and define the narratives (or case studies), while the narratives would point to theoretical and methodological aspects that required additional studying, such as what narratives to select best.

The complex intelligence problem of *Al Qaeda* served as object of study. It was assumed that the term *Al Qaeda* was a sign representing an organization, a network, and an ideology, in various forms and in various periods in time, to various entities (individual people, groups, networks, organizations, institutions). Two questions were central to this research:

1. How can the theories of securitization and critical discourse analysis inform a critical methodology for analyzing and contrasting narratives, as well as a derived method that improves the practice of intelligence analysis?
2. How can this method be applied to analyze causal complexes that affected the development of the intelligence problem of '*Al Qaeda*' between 1994 and early 2001?

The concept of causal complexes or 'networks of causality' is essential for the research to explain effects on social phenomena, which corresponds to Aristotle's notion of four interacting types of causes: material, formal, efficient, and final.²⁸ As will be explained in the first chapter, the material and formal (or ideational) context constitute facilitating conditions, while the efficient and final (or teleological) causes are the drivers of change. Such an approach aligns with the critical realist underpinnings of the research and guides the abductive reasoning with which the workings of statements and actions in distinct social domains is analyzed. This also allows the analysis of the multi-consequentiality of statements and actions across social domains. Besides considering the integrative nature of the causal complex and its effects on social phenomena, the thesis also examines the dialectical relations between these types of causes and the way they influence each other over time. Chapter 2 more fully explains how drawing on critical discourse analysis emphasized this reciprocal dynamic between facilitating conditions and drivers, or structure and agency.

Answering the research questions first required an exploration of intelligence as a practice, concept, and the academic field of intelligence studies. This situated the critical

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 28 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 18, 22-23, 47, Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations, Critical Realism and the (Re) Construction of World Politics* (London, Routledge 2002) 78-9, Heikki Patomäki, Colin Wright, 'After Post-Positivism? The Promises of Critical Realism', *International Studies Quarterly* 44 (2002) 2, 213-37, Milja Kurki, *Causation in International Relations, Reclaiming Causal Analysis*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, Kindle edition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2008) location 1935. Gilberto Carvalho Oliveira, 'The causal power of securitization, an inquiry into the explanatory status of securitisation theory illustrated by the case of Somali piracy', *Review of International Studies* (published online, 29 November 2017) 21.

approach of this thesis and clarified its relevance. Second, a discussion of securitization theory and the theory of critical discourse analysis provided the framework to identify various narratives and focus analysis of their content. The variables that set apart securitization efforts in various narratives enabled the comparison of the narratives to result in a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues. In theory, the number of relevant narratives could be thought of as extensive. They could be identified at different levels and associated with various actors. Furthermore, it was also valuable for a wider understanding of intelligence problems to study narratives that were critical to the securitization efforts of others. Due to research constraints, three basic analytic narratives concerning *Al Qaeda* were identified to serve as case studies.

The timeframe defined for the research spanned from 1994 to early 2001. This was distinct from other discourse studies on either terrorism and the United States or *Al Qaeda* in that the adopted timeframe ended before the attacks on September 11, 2001.²⁹ Much ‘post-2001’ research has been done on *Al Qaeda*. In contrast, the present study focused on the emergence of *Al Qaeda* and related events in the various narratives, which was more of a terra incognita. A consequence of analyzing multiple narratives was that a compromise had to be made. Compared to other discourse analyses with a more one-sided focus on either the US or *Al Qaeda*, the selection of data per narrative for this research was more limited. For instance, Adam Hodges gathered data from a higher number of US media outlets (between 2001 and 2008) and Donald Holbrook extended his quantitative analysis of *Al Qaeda* discourse from 1991 to 2013.

Compared to other research on *Al Qaeda*, the value of this study lies in its comparative nature of three different narratives and the analytical focus on a particular phase in its development: as the organization came into existence in the 1990s. First, the *Al Qaeda narrative* grasps and situates Bin Laden’s statements in a Salafi-jihadi and wider Muslim context. Then, the *US institutional narrative* focuses on how President Clinton addressed the statements and terrorist acts related to Osama bin Laden. Third, the *critical terrorism narrative* delineates an alternative perspective on the securitization efforts identified in the first two narratives, and as such indicates how there were many possible alternative narratives on *Al Qaeda* and the US.

The data for analysis of the narratives was derived from a diverse array of sources, in this study referred to as ‘texts’. The term ‘text’ refers to written or spoken language but also symbols, signs, and images. The majority of the texts selected for this study consists of transcriptions and other written texts of both an institutional and personal, and both a formal and informal nature. This includes US presidential statements and media transcripts, Bin Laden statements, and some Bin Laden television interviews. Texts were selected based on a set of search queries of key words relating to President Clinton, the US government, Osama bin Laden, *Al Qaeda*, and significant events such as the US Embassy bombings in

²⁹ For example Adam Hodges, *The “War on Terror” Narrative, Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Sociopolitical Reality* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2011), Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism, Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* (Manchester, Manchester University Press 2005), Donald Holbrook, *The Al-Qaeda Doctrine, The Framing and Evolution of the Leadership’s Public Discourse* (New York, Bloomsbury 2014).

Kenya and Tanzania, foiled plots at the turn of the millennium, and arrests of terrorist suspects by US law enforcement agencies. Relevant data was identified using the theoretical framework of securitization. The interviews and news media reporting were studied in print. In addition to the transcripts, parts of video recorded interviews that were accessible were also incorporated in the analysis. Scholarly work on the US and *Al Qaeda* was included in the analysis of texts and provided additional context. Also included for context were memoirs (e.g. from US President Bill Clinton and National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism Richard Clarke), and other writings by professionals such as former CIA analyst Michael Scheuer and former FBI agent Ali Soufan. Due to their experience, these professionals were better informed on US counterterrorism and *Al Qaeda* activities than many in academia.

The large volume and the diversity of the source material had consequences for the analysis of data gathered from these sources. For example, in large presidential speeches that elaborated on a number of different topics besides terrorism, Bin Laden, or *Al Qaeda*, only the relevant parts were studied. Key terms and phrases were identified by their relation to the core elements (entities and events) that guided the search queries. Out of the body of texts selected for each narrative, only a selected number of sources were considered a 'key text' and analyzed in more detail at the textual level. In the *Al Qaeda narrative*, multiple English translations of the original Arabic texts were used whenever possible, hence the use of textual analysis was more limited. Overall, the research generated a theoretically sound, methodically rigorous, and analytically practical discursive approach to widen the understanding of complex intelligence problems.

Summary of the chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the field of intelligence studies and situates the approach proposed in this study. The use of the term 'critical' is clarified; such approaches to intelligence adopt interpretivism at either the ontological or epistemological level and contest total objectivist empiricism. The chapter explores and reviews how contributions to the intelligence studies literature (sometimes implicitly and partially) have acknowledged relevant aspects of critical approaches. This is followed by a discussion of critical realism, causality, and the function of language for intelligence. This thesis adopts an integrative approach in which drivers and facilitating conditions interact and are combined into causal complexes. It is the combination of the material world, the wider ideational context, forms of action, and the motivation or intent behind these actions that shapes the social reality of complex intelligence problems. Critical discourse analysis and securitization are introduced as the theoretical components that enable identification and analysis of distinct narratives. The resulting ACN methodology and related method are distinguished from established structured analytic techniques in intelligence, such as team A/B analysis and devil's advocacy. Central to ACN is that it is more

important to understand various meanings of events than it is necessary to increase the collection of data.

The second chapter outlines the adopted theory of critical discourse analysis in more detail, integrates securitization theory, outlines the ACN methodology, and introduces the narrative analysis framework (NAF) that guides the case studies. It also introduces *Al Qaeda* as the object of research for the case studies. Critical discourse analysis examines articulations of difference and the underlying power relations that drive naturalization processes of meanings to ideology or common sense. Securitization efforts articulate a threatening other; it is a discursive practice that also relates to non-discursive events and circumstances, and is situated in or influenced by wider social practices and social structures. As a result, the central elements of the NAF are 1) the meanings that emerge from the texts in terms of securitization, 2) the analysis of functional language such as grammar and lexicon, 3) the settings or situational contexts of text production and consumption, and 4) the wider background, *zeitgeist*, or external context in which texts and narratives are positioned. As an extension of the NAF method, narrative tracing (NT) entails focusing on the multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts and other statements and actions across narratives.

Distinct social practices ensure that the basic analytic narratives on *Al Qaeda* are clearly dissimilar: the international politics of nations, violent Islamic Salafi-jihadism, and news correspondent reporting in the globalized information society. The first narrative, the *US institutional terrorism narrative*, centralizes the role of US President Bill Clinton and the reproduction and recontextualization of his statements in news media. Second, the core of the *Al Qaeda narrative* comprises the statements of Osama bin Laden and attacks on the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and on the USS Cole in 2001. Finally, the *critical terrorism narrative* reflects the reporting of British Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk, and in addition the reporting of others such as American CNN producer Peter Bergen. All are part of a select group of Western journalists who were able to interview Bin Laden in Sudan and Afghanistan. The first two narratives represent macro narratives in and through which the central entities have an impact on the object of research. The third is a micro narrative that primarily serves as a 'commentator' on the statements and actions of the macro narratives.

The third chapter describes the *Al Qaeda narrative* as advertised by Osama bin Laden and his followers. For intelligence professionals, Bin Laden and his network represent the most traditional analytical focus. The group transformed (institutionalized) into a networked organization as the narrative developed. Bin Laden sought to incite a global Muslim community and rally a vanguard of Muslim youth. He used the *Al Qaeda narrative* to establish and develop self-identification and institutionalization among his followers, expressing and shaping his leadership as much as activating and inciting new (young) followers. More than in the case of the United States, silence would have diminished Bin Laden's position in the Arab and Muslim world, specifically among Salafists. In terms of securitization, the *Al Qaeda* narrative showed the transformation of early complex and incomplete efforts into more focused exertions that centralized targeting US servicemen and civilians around the world.

The articulation through statements and attacks comprised a fundamental variation and hence partial transformation of the Salafi-jihadi social order, as it went against the dominant ideological current. A 1996 speech and memorandum and the 1998 declaration of the World Islamic Front were key texts. Furthermore, a 1998 Bin Laden interview with *Al Jazeera* and a propaganda video on the attack on the USS Cole in 2000 provided an important impulse in the development of the narrative. However, the US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998 that followed the Embassy attacks in Africa, and the bombing campaign over Iraq a few months later certainly also led Bin Laden's message to resonate among wider Arab and Muslim audiences. The US economic sanctions, criminal investigation, and indictment underlined the very status Bin Laden was frantically trying to articulate. The actions lifted Bin Laden's social identity and his critique on US foreign policy further to the forefront in mainstream Arab news media.

Chapter 4 reflects the *US institutional terrorism narrative* on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, a perspective traditionally not considered by intelligence analysts. It has a distinctly different character than the previous narrative. The position, role, and power of the US president has been highly institutionalized through historic practices concerning a wide range of issues. However, the narrative also served to maintain existing power relations in the US social domain. It reflected as much a dynamic of self-identification as the definition of and dealings with an external threat. In responding to threats and attacks, American core values and the essentiality of the government's institutional role were confirmed. Selected texts for the narrative also often relate to multiple domestic and international policy issues beyond terrorism. Following the Embassy attacks in Kenya and Tanzania, Clinton recognized this specific terrorist threat before his formal political institutional audience. American citizens had the status of a moral audience. Threat articulation created the legal political and moral space for Clinton to order cruise missile strikes on training camps in Afghanistan and a factory in Sudan that he related to Bin Laden and his followers. Before the 53rd United Nations General Assembly, Clinton altered the scale and scope on terrorism with an effort to securitize a new kind of terrorism. An important diminishing factor at the time in recontextualizing the threat articulations was Clinton's personal involvement with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Clinton also securitized the Taliban for hosting Bin Laden, but the customized policy of economic sanctions against Afghanistan had a minimal effect and was possibly even counterproductive. At the turn of the millennium, news media reported extensively on all that could go wrong, including terrorist attacks. Clinton seized the opportunity for positive securitization and to underline self-determination. He did not deny the threat, but emphasized that things were under control. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, US national and institutional identity, norms, and values became increasingly prominent in the terrorism narrative. According to Clinton, it was peace, prosperity, freedom, and human rights that drove US foreign policy and that the US military represented. He stated that hateful terrorists opposed this. As such, US identity became more articulated because of terrorism. Bin Laden's motivations or historic and religious references as expressed in his declarations in the mid-

1990s were distant and less of a concern for Americans than the threat of international terrorism to US vital interests. After the attack on the USS Cole, Clinton was in his last days of office and there was no clear securitization effort.

The fifth chapter identifies and analyzes a *critical terrorism narrative*. It is of a different nature than the previous two macro narratives as it manifested more at a micro level, with little influence on *Al Qaeda* or the US. The function of this case study was to extract additional perspectives on the securitization efforts identified in the two macro narratives, with a focus on framing, processes of (self) identification, power relations, and social roles. For traditional intelligence analysts, it is highly uncommon to analyze such a third narrative separately and in parallel. This basic analytic narrative was rooted in the reporting of British Middle East correspondent for *The Independent* Robert Fisk and some others, such as American CNN reporter Peter Bergen. The critical reflections on US and *Al Qaeda* securitization efforts in this narrative highlighted discrepancies, paradoxes, and illogicalities. Internal dissent among Bin Laden followers, and shifts in his definition of the referent subject were discussed. The narrative further highlighted the accuracy of framing Bin Laden as the most wanted public enemy by the US as well as its effect on Bin Laden's position among divided Salafists. Attention was drawn to the limitations and possibilities of the heuristic symbolic value of the US Embassy attacks in Africa and USS Cole bombing for the *Al Qaeda* and US narratives. A number of US actions, mostly in response to the perceived threat, had a counterproductive effect by both intensifying the *Al Qaeda* narrative and increasing susceptibility to the narrative among *Al Qaeda* audiences and potential audiences. The critique regarding the effectiveness of US actions brings the term 'securitization blowback' to mind.

The last chapter serves three purposes. First, it summarizes the ACN methodology and reviews problems and limitations of the research. ACN rests on the abductive distinction between narratives that are situated in different wider social orders. The narratives consist of texts and their interpretation. These texts are selected based on their connection to entities central to the object of research. The definition of these social orders and the selection of related texts make it possible to analyze how securitization efforts develop in macro narratives. The contextual approach to securitization used in this research centralized the efforts or moves over the role of the audience; thus, audience assent and defining 'successful instances' of securitization were not a primary focus. The meanings of actions and statements were considered in combination with material, ideational and teleological aspects, or the causal complex. Analysis of the micro narrative focused more on content than resonance among audiences and processes of self-identification within its distinct social domain. The research's critical theoretical approach to intelligence is reflected in the awareness that all narratives are basic interpretations. Another reflection of the critical theory underpinning the ACN methodology is that the analysis included the narrative of the intelligence consumer. In the intelligence practice, this would be a cooperative and integrative effort at the working level, involving intelligence analysts and policy officers, each bringing their own experience, knowledge, and skills. This way, the effects of statements and actions by the

intelligence consumer (or 'self') could be studied beyond one's own social domain. Overall, the developed NAF was practical and adequate. A concern was the availability of literature and translated texts to enable analysis of the narratives. Fortunately, in the last decades these have become available in adequate numbers for this research. In contrast, especially with *ex durante* research and intelligence analysis, this is an issue of concern that might necessitate involving trusted outside experts in narrative analysis.

Second, the last chapter concludes the research on the case studies by contrasting and connecting developments of the *Al Qaeda* narrative with that of the 'intelligence consumer', the *US institutional terrorism narrative*, while taking into account the critical micro perspective of the *critical terrorism narrative*. The dynamic between the analytical beginnings and endings for the macro narratives is explained by mapping key statements and actions that constituted securitization efforts, and the events and circumstances that affected those efforts. A special focus lies on identifying the multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts within and across social domains. This focus links the development of the two macro narratives, not as a reflection of dominant or singular causal relations in terms of impact per se, but to identify significant drivers and facilitating conditions because of their interdiscursive nature. There was reactivity (or interaction) with regard to securitization efforts in the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives.

The research revealed how Bin Laden shifted the focus of his securitization efforts over the years. His views diverted from other Salafi-jihadi approaches and offered a distinct variation within the social order. This process also caused doubt and dissent among followers and sympathizers. However, the US effort to deal with the *Al Qaeda* threat as comprehensively as possible had some counterproductive effects and strengthened *Al Qaeda's* narrative, broader understanding or sympathy for it, and its process of institutionalization. In contrast to the US narrative, which served to (re)confirm American identity and institutionalized social roles, the *Al Qaeda* narrative had a more formative function of establishing roles and identity. Clinton toned down the public threat articulation of Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* as the US narrative developed. Particularly after the USS Cole bombing, Clinton emphasized to Americans how the US and the world were in a state of peace and prosperity, and not at war. This did not impact the development of the *Al Qaeda* narrative. Bin Laden continued to use *Al Qaeda's* informational capability to communicate on the articulated threat posed by the US. For both the US and *Al Qaeda*, primarily represented by President Clinton and Osama bin Laden, their narratives were important sources and reflections of power, either in *confirming* or in *establishing* social roles. Efforts to articulate an extraordinary threat simultaneously expressed a process of self-identification. The meaning attributed to the statements and actions of others enabled or made acceptable the customized policies before formal or moral audiences.

The nature, status, and role of audiences is a central topic of debate among securitization theorists, due to differences in opinion and practical concerns regarding operationalizing the term. In contrast to the relatively institutionalized US social order, where responses of a

formal and moral audience could be identified, the *Al Qaeda* audiences were more ambiguous. There was more of a spectrum of various audiences. Differentiation was possible between loyal followers, jihadis using Bin Laden's facilities, Salafists willing to discuss the idea of a far enemy, and those with a more general understanding of or sympathy for the narrative in the wider Muslim and Arab world. In focusing more explicitly on *Al Qaeda* audiences, this study highlights the multi-consequentiality of discursive and non-discursive actions within the same social domain. This stretches the notion of what securitization entails. For some Palestinian Muslims who felt anger about American foreign policies in the Middle East, the *Al Qaeda* narrative generally provided something to relate to when voicing more general feelings of frustration during demonstrations. In and through the narrative, *Al Qaeda's* identity was established, and the organization became institutionalized. However, by reaching and influencing a wide range of audiences, the narrative worked to establish and maintain a broader 'ecosystem'. Bin Laden's fame and popularity among groups of Muslims and Arabs spread and reached new potential donors. The *Al Qaeda* narrative was debated among Salafists in religious schools, and Jihadis were recruited by *Al Qaeda* in training camps. The broader ecosystem, nourished by the narrative, enabled *Al Qaeda* to grow as an organization consisting of formal followers.

Third, this thesis contributes to an emerging critical debate in intelligence studies. The thesis challenges the dominant positivist empiricist paradigm in intelligence studies as being fundamentally partial. It also critically reviews the nature and organization of intelligence processes, and demonstrates how a critical approach can be of value to the practice of intelligence analysis. Whereas the first chapter delineates the differences between ACN and established structured analytic techniques (SATs), the last chapter describes how ACN could contribute to such techniques. Over the years, SATs have received criticism as scientific demonstrations of efficacy are lacking. There is also a tendency to automate analytical processes, such as with analysis of competing hypothesis (ACH), which runs the risk of insufficiently considering what constitutes the (subjective) evidence, or input, for these methods. This research demonstrates how ACN is scientific and logically sound, without delivering 'objective' proof of accuracy in a strict manner. The critical realist abductive approach, reflected in the notion of causal complexes, acknowledges and relativizes both empiricism and interpretivism. In its transparent process, ACN could bring theoretical depth to the study *for* intelligence. The derived ACN method substantiates the interpretation of various meanings of events and circumstances which can serve as input for other SATs.

When further developing and incorporating ACN in the intelligence practice, organizational challenges could arise. Implementation might be met with skepticism towards new methods or divergent analytical efforts. The value of narratives as reflecting and shaping the actions of actors could be underestimated, or the integrative and cooperative analytical effort could be viewed as undesirable. Nevertheless, the goal of better serving intelligence consumers is worth pursuing. In contrast to this *ex post* research of *Al Qaeda*, for *ex durante* research and intelligence analysis, translations and background literature are

far less available. The ACN methodology requires interpretation of distinct narratives that is both critically distant and knowledgeably situated. In essence, it is a call for cooperation and jointness among intelligence analysts, working-level policymakers, and relevant trusted outside experts to study the content and workings of narratives. Narratives are the semiotic modes of entry into complex intelligence problems. In a more abstract sense, this thesis demonstrates the validity and value of a critical approach to the study *of and for* intelligence, and hence achieves the greater aim of the research project.

Finally, the last chapter discusses the value of articulating a critical strand or 'school of thought' in intelligence studies. This presumes cooperation among academics engaged in the study *of and/or for* intelligence. A critical research agenda could shed new light on themes already defined in the intelligence literature, and contribute to further growth of intelligence studies as an international relations subfield. A comprehensive publication outlining such a critical agenda might not be too far away.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Intelligence: theory and practice

Introduction

This first chapter serves as an introduction to situate the research in intelligence studies. Its main aim is to introduce various approaches to intelligence and position the critical theory that is relevant for this study. The first three sections define the intelligence field and explore current and past efforts to improve, reform, or revolutionize intelligence. This includes a survey of the key elements of intelligence, such as its definition, tasks, processes, and intelligence problems. A number of intelligence failures have highlighted the increasing complexity of the intelligence process and the intelligence environment. This has led some scholars to call for and propose directions for a ‘radical revolution’ or Kuhnian paradigm shift of the field.¹ Yet, most of these authors have refrained from explicitly articulating their theoretical roots in philosophical terms while advocating ‘fundamentally’ new thinking.

The section ‘Philosophy, theory and critical approaches to intelligence’ promotes a description of ‘critical’ that relates to a philosophical level. Critical approaches to intelligence adopt interpretivism at either the ontological² or epistemological³ level, and from this position derive implications for the limits and possibilities of methodologies for research and analysis. More of a similar ethos than a cohesive theoretical enterprise, these approaches recognize the benefits of questioning the objectivity of certain knowledge that is often taken for granted by positivists. Most notably, intelligence is situated in a political and social context. Intelligence scholars and analysts need to self-reflexively take this context into account. This is not something entirely new to intelligence: many contributions to the existing intelligence studies literature implicitly or partially acknowledge relevant aspects of critical approaches, such as the significance of interpretation and perception in intelligence analysis, or the politicization of intelligence. However, being explicit in terms of philosophy clarifies debate. As such, critical approaches can be more informative when analyzing the motivations, actions, and perspectives of intelligence subjects.

Section 5 provides an overview of some critical approaches to intelligence that have emerged in the intelligence literature in the last three decades. Insightful as they are, they each differ from this research in their focus and theoretical background. Most focus on the study *of* intelligence. However, as this study shows, critical approaches can also contribute to the study *for* intelligence and inform the development of new intelligence practices. Ontological and epistemological assumptions on the nature of social reality and how we can acquire knowledge of it serve as an engine to analyze complex intelligence problems.

1 For example see Lahneman, ‘The Need for a New Intelligence Paradigm’, Lahneman, *Keeping U.S. Intelligence Effective*, Lahneman ‘Is a revolution in intelligence affairs occurring?’, Moore, *Sensemaking*, Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence*.

2 Ontology relates to the nature of the world that surrounds us.

3 Epistemology relates to the way and the extent to which we can acquire valid knowledge of the world.

In sections 6 and 7, this chapter argues for the added value of a critical discursive approach for intelligence analysis that is grounded in critical realism. Critical realism is a theoretical approach that is not unknown to intelligence: British intelligence scholars Peter Gill and Mark Phythian have also advocated the value of this orientation to study intelligence as phenomenon.⁴ This research specifically adopts a critical realist view of causality, and uses critical discourse analysis and securitization theory to shape the discursive approach for intelligence analysis termed ACN.

Characterizing intelligence and its environment

What is intelligence? Over the years, many have sought to define intelligence.⁵ In a broader sense, most characterizations encompass elements of Sherman Kent's 1949 definition of strategic intelligence in terms of process, product, and a form of organization.⁶ Kent was a senior scholar at Yale and an intelligence analysis pioneer at the CIA. Following Kent, intelligence scholar and senior US official Mark Lowenthal defines intelligence in his standard text *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy* as follows:

Intelligence is the process by which specific types of information important to national security are requested, collected, analyzed, and provided to policy makers; the products of that process; the safeguarding of these processes and this information by counterintelligence activities; and carrying out of operations as requested by lawful authorities.⁷

This definition is widely accepted in US intelligence, but as discussed later, the articulation of *national security* as the focus for intelligence unnecessarily limits the concept for the present study. Of value is the broad approach by including the intelligence cycle as a process, its output in terms of information and activity, and defensive and offensive protective measures taken to ensure the overall integrity of intelligence. These elements point towards a broader context.

The 'intelligence cycle', a series of activities (*planning, collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination*) that aim to produce intelligence products based on intelligence requirements, is the traditional way to describe the intelligence process. Following this concept, an intelligence

4 Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 33-52, Peter Gill, 'Theories of intelligence, Where are we, where should we go and how might we proceed?', in Peter Gill, Stephen Marrin, Mark Phythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory, Key questions and debates* (New York, Routledge 2009) 208-226.

5 See for example Loch K. Johnson (ed.) *Handbook of Intelligence Studies* (New York, Routledge 2009) 1-14, Lowenthal, *Intelligence*, 1-10, Adam N. Shulsky, Gary J. Schmitt, *Silent Warfare, Understanding the World of Intelligence*, third edition, (New York, Brassey's 2001) 1-10, Michael Warner 'Wanted, A Definition of 'Intelligence'', *Studies in Intelligence*, 46 (2002) 3 15-22, Thomas F. Troy, 'The 'Correct' Definition of Intelligence', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 5(1991) 4, 433-454, Winn L. Taplin, 'Six General Principles of Intelligence', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 3 (1989) 4: 475-491.

6 Kent, *Strategic Intelligence*.

7 Lowenthal, *Intelligence*, 9.

consumer defines his intelligence needs on a series of topics such as intentions, capabilities, and activities of entities, or trends of thematic phenomena. Intelligence organizations gather related information with various means, for example through human sources (human intelligence), with technical means (signals intelligence or imagery intelligence), or using public sources (open source intelligence). The gathered data is evaluated for reliability of the source and the information, and processed into reports. These types of intelligence are analyzed by all source intelligence analysts who produce intelligence products. Finally, the assessment or estimate of an entity, situation, or phenomenon is disseminated to the intelligence consumer. The intelligence cycle is often portrayed as a serial process, starting with intelligence consumer requirements, in which one step follows another until a finished intelligence product meets the requirements.

In the last two decades, the conceptual value of this model for explaining intelligence has increasingly been criticized. Lowenthal notes that this series of activities is in fact ‘multi-layered’ as analyzed findings might necessitate further collection or requesting feedback on requirements.⁸ Similarly, intelligence scholar and senior US government official Gregory Treverton proposes a more complex ‘real’ intelligence cycle in which the consumer not only receives a product, but also interacts and influences tasking and collection, the selection of raw intelligence, and processing analysis.⁹ Furthermore, the late Arthur Hulnick, another US intelligence veteran and international relations scholar, has argued that the intelligence cycle does not work in tandem, as collection and analysis occurs in parallel, and policymakers do not give collection guidance and seek intelligence that supports policy, rather than informs it.¹⁰

American psychologist Judith Meister Johnston and cultural anthropologist Rob Johnston are among those who deem the traditional model an insufficient representation of the intelligence process. For them the process does not work the same way for all objectives or requirements and the model fails to reflect the process’s iterative character.¹¹ They propose a systems model approach including external factors that influence intelligence analysis, such as the product evaluation process, political and cultural values of the organization, the amount of available data, and the level of demand on the analyst.¹² Distinguished US intelligence scholar and political scientist Loch Johnson acknowledges that the intelligence cycle actually resembles more of a ‘complex matrix of back and forth interactions’ between

8 Ibid, 67-69.

9 Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence*.

10 Arthur S. Hulnick, ‘What’s Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 21 (2006) 6: 959-979, Arthur S. Hulnick, ‘The Intelligence Producer-Policy Consumer Linkage’, *Studies in Intelligence* (1985), Deborah Brammer, Arthur S. Hulnick, ‘Intelligence and Policy—the On-Going Debate’, *Studies in Intelligence* (1980).

11 Judith M. Johnston, Rob Johnston, ‘Testing the Intelligence Cycle Through Systems Modeling and Simulation’, Rob Johnston (ed.) *Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community, An Ethnographic Study* (Washington, DC, CIA Centre for the Study of Intelligence 2001) 45-59. See for example also Beatrice A. de Graaf, ‘De intelligence cycle als functie van de nationale veiligheid’, in Beatrice A. de Graaf, Erwin R. Muller, Joop A. van Reijn (eds.), *Inlichtingen en veiligheidsdiensten* (Alphen aan den Rijn, Kluwer 2010) 349-375.

12 Ibid.

producers and consumers of intelligence, but argues that the cycle remains analytically useful as a concept because it draws attention to the process of intelligence.¹³ He deems this ‘the heart and soul of intelligence’.¹⁴ Thus, even though the concept of the intelligence cycle has received criticism, the elements of requesting, collecting, analyzing, and providing highlighted in Lowenthal’s definition are important and adequate.

Another debate focuses on whether the element of ‘conducting operations’ is part of the essence of intelligence or has a more secondary prominence. For example, while Johnson characterizes covert action and counterintelligence as two other ‘key intelligence missions’ he also contrasts them with collection and analysis as merely ‘subsidiary intelligence activities’.¹⁵ On the other hand, US intelligence scholars Roy Gordon, Abraham Shulsky, and Gary Schmitt recognize *collection*, *analysis*, *counterintelligence*, and *covert action* as four equal elements of intelligence.¹⁶ Their characterization of intelligence is also state-centric and highlights the need for secrecy and the possibility of active deception. Counterintelligence is an essential and integral part of intelligence, as the struggle for a competitive advantage implies the need to safeguard gathered intelligence from adversaries. Covert action is conceptually different from the other elements as it aims to secretly manipulate events or entities and is less concerned with gathering and protecting information.¹⁷ It can concern a wide range of activities, from propaganda or information operations to the assassination of key figures.

Less state-centric is Peter Gill and Mark Phythian’s definition of intelligence, as they recognize that it serves to maintain a *relative advantage to competitors*. Their definition characterizes intelligence in terms of a process that includes products and (covert) activities, and implies the need for defensive and offensive counterintelligence activities as well. Similar to Lowenthal and Treverton, they critique the simplicity and serial character of the intelligence cycle, but Gill and Phythian’s definition places less emphasis on defensive uses of intelligence and stresses its aim, rather than its form. Central is *maintaining power* by forewarning, not specific types of information or national security. This leaves an opening for various kinds of political use of intelligence. With a minor adjustment to their definition, intelligence is defined in this thesis as ‘the [...] activities – targeting, collection, analysis, dissemination and action – intended to enhance security and/or maintain power relative to competitors by the forewarning of threats and opportunities.’¹⁸

Left out of this definition are the words ‘mainly secret’, which unnecessarily limit the applicability of the intelligence concept. Without them, this definition provides a better fit

13 Loch K. Johnson, ‘Sketches for a theory of strategic intelligence’, in Gill, Marrin, Phythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory*, 34. See also De Graaf, ‘De intelligence cycle als functie van de nationale veiligheid’, 358.

14 *Ibid.*, 33.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Roy Godson, *Dirty Tricks or Trump Cards: U.S. Covert Action and Counterintelligence*, (New York, Routledge 2017), Shulsky, Schmitt, *Silent Warfare*, 8.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 19.

with the changing dynamics of the intelligence environment. Over the last three decades, uncertainty and the complexity of the intelligence process and its environment have increased for three reasons. First, security is increasingly defined in broader terms, like controlling epidemics, securing access to raw materials, or sustainability of vital digital infrastructure. The exercise of military power is progressively being tied to economic, social, or technological issues, and states are increasingly exercising softer forms of economic, cultural, and diplomatic power.¹⁹ This causes shifts in the balance of power at a global and regional level. Furthermore, as a consequence, intelligence has developed into a more offensive function that responds and contributes to foreign policy, as well as national and global security.²⁰

Second, the division between foreign and domestic threats fades as the intelligence environment is increasingly characterized by this focus on non-state actors.²¹ On the international stage, more non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, and transnational social networks are able to pursue their own agenda.²² They are decreasingly represented by nation states and act at various continuously altering inter-, intra-, or transnational levels. Even though nation states are widely seen as dominant on the international stage, it is also where entities such as inter- or transnational religious (terrorist) groups, social (cyber) networks like 'Anonymous' or 'WikiLeaks', private security companies, and international corporations manifest and challenge the traditional social order that potential threats occur.²³ The nationality of Edward Snowden or Julian Assange is less indicative of their most prominent identity than the classified information they claim to possess. *Al Qaeda* has been defined as a group, network, and ideology; in all forms, it challenged various nation states. Osama bin Laden was killed, yet terrorist threats under the banner of *Al Qaeda* still occur. Parallel to *Al Qaeda*, in June 2014, radical Islamists or Salafists (some also formerly affiliated with *Al Qaeda*) proclaimed an Islamic state in parts of Iraq and Syria. In the broader region and at a global level, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (*ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fī 'l-'Irāq wa-sh-Shām*, or *Daesh*) represented the development of a distinct type of radical Islamist social movement and ideology. For national intelligence organizations, this diversity makes identifying and assessing events, entities, and phenomena more complex. In intelligence studies, US intelligence historian Michael Warner has recognized this trend. He argues that it is more accurate to state intelligence is concerned with sovereignty and

19 Walter R. Mead, *Power, Terror, Peace and War, America's Grand Strategy in a World at Risk*, reprint edition, (New York, Vintage 2005).

20 Stephen Marrin, 'Intelligence Analysis Theory, Explaining and Predicting Analytic Responsibilities', *Intelligence and National Security*, 22(2007) 6: 834-838.

21 Michael Warner, 'Intelligence as risk shifting', in Gill, Marrin, Pythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory*, 18-20, Gill, Pythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 26-27.

22 Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, The Power of Identity*, Second Edition (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing 2004), Jennifer E. Sims, 'Understanding Friends and Enemies', in Jennifer E. Sims, Burton L. Gerber, (eds.) *Transforming US Intelligence* (Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press 2005), 14-31.

23 Lowenthal, *Intelligence*, 262-306.

'sovereignties', rather than summing up a limitative list of states and other institutions.²⁴ Sovereignties are 'distinguishable and divided over their competitive willingness to use violence to control people, resources and territory'.²⁵

Third, gathering intelligence is decreasingly reserved for states.²⁶ To advance on their goals, non-state actors follow their own intelligence process to maintain a competitive advantage. For a long time, multinational oil concerns have institutionalized forms of intelligence gathering, but smaller companies are now increasingly empowered by networks of information to achieve the same. Economic interests are threatened by corporate espionage, and critical personnel or infrastructure can become a target of terrorist or criminal attacks. The economic, political, cultural, and social environment is permanently evaluated to support strategic decision-making. The thrust that commercial interests give to innovation of intelligence processes, products, and activities easily equals that of national security. Ongoing revolutionary development of information technology and communication systems, and processes of globalization enable non-state actors to acquire vast amounts of information.²⁷ Data travels at the speed of light in global networks, enabling the combination of small bits of publicly available information that together perhaps equal costly secret intelligence. For example, people with a passion for military aircraft or ships that log all their observations on web fora make detailed (classified) information on military transport publicly available. Furthermore, non-state actors increasingly also have access to high quality (commercial) intelligence provided by private intelligence companies.²⁸

The legitimacy of intelligence products and assessments is ultimately defined by intelligence consumers' acceptance. Information becomes intelligence in a relational context that involves the distribution of power: what knowledge, of what, from whom, enables whom? As public and private intelligence organizations (or contractors) cooperate, this only adds to the credibility of commercial intelligence. While at the same time a trend of more openness on intelligence and public hearings on national intelligence failures increases the risk of undermining national intelligence organizations' apparent position of authority. A clear example of this is the hearings of the United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on pre-war intelligence on Iraq, and Colin Powell's speech before the United Nations Security Council in February 2003, in which he shared the faulty assessment that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.²⁹ On a positive note, public hearings also have the

24 Warner, Intelligence as risk shifting, 19-20, Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 26-27.

25 Ibid.

26 Peter W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors* (New York, Cornell University Press 2003), Gregory F. Treverton, Intelligence and the "Market State", *Studies in Intelligence*, 44(2001) 2, 29-34.

27 Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society, An Answer to War* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing 2003), Manuel Castells, Gustavo Cardoso (eds.) *The Network Society, From Knowledge to Policy* (Washington, DC, Johns Hopkins Center for Transatlantic Relations 2005).

28 Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 61.

29 United States Senate, 'Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessment on Iraq', July 9, 2004, https://fas.org/irp/congress/2004_rpt/ssci_iraq.pdf (last retrieved May 30, 2015), CNN, 'Former aide: Powell WMD speech 'lowest point in my life'', Interview with Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson for CNN', August 23, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/08/19/powell.un/> (last retrieved January 3, 2018).

potential to serve as a forum that increases legitimacy and adds to the authority of national intelligence services.

Uncertainty and complexity increase the chance of intelligence failing. The body of literature on what causes intelligence failures is vast and continues to grow. Various intelligence scholars have each emphasized different aspects of the intelligence cycle as the most central element of concern. For instance, former US Defense intelligence analyst Cynthia Grabo's work on strategic warning highlights how analytic failures underlie intelligence failures. This includes inadequate examination or a lack of evidence, excessive preoccupation with current intelligence, predominance of preconceptions over facts due to past experiences, searching for other explanations out of a reluctance to believe, and the reluctance to alarm.³⁰ When repeated warning efforts fail to materialize, both intelligence producers and consumers can suffer from mental weariness.³¹ Due to the increasing availability of data, the risk of information overload as cause for failure is increasing. Analysts might disregard important pieces of information, especially under time pressure, as the haystack grows more than the number of needles in it. Mirror-imaging, or assuming that different actors act similarly to one's own, is perhaps among the most infamous analytical errors made by intelligence professionals.³²

American international politics scholar Robert Jervis argues that the main factor in intelligence failures is a failure to apply social science methods in analysis and critically reflect on general presumptions that fill intelligence gaps.³³ He acknowledges that considering alternative possibilities does not necessarily lead to different assessments but rather to a reduced degree of certainty, which consumers might not appreciate. According to Eric Dahl, a scholar of National Security Affairs at the US Naval Postgraduate School, collection is key, and we also need to study successes, not only failures, of intelligence in warning of surprise attacks.³⁴ He finds that brilliant analysis itself is not enough for consumers to be receptive. It is often the collection of highly specific (tactical) information that makes and enables consumers to take action.³⁵

American political scientist Richard Betts' study of intelligence failures concludes that it is most often the decision-maker who fails to conceive intelligence.³⁶ Intelligence failures only sometimes originate from mistakes made by the analysts who produce finished

30 Cynthia M. Grabo, *Anticipating Surprise, Analysis for Strategic Warning*, edited by Jan Goldman (Washington, DC, US Government Printing Office 2002), Christina Shelton, 'The Roots of Analytic Failures in the U.S. Intelligence Community', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 24(2011) 4, 637–655.

31 Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*.

32 Shulsky, Schmitt, *Silent Warfare*, 41–73.

33 Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press 2010).

34 Eric J. Dahl, *Intelligence and Surprise Attack Failure and Success from Pearl Harbor to 9/11 and Beyond* (Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press 2013). On this point see also Ariel Levite, *Intelligence and Strategic Surprises* (New York, Columbia University Press 1987), Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails*, Robert Jervis, 'Response to James Lebovic's Review of Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War', *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(2010) 4, 1169–1170.

35 Eric Dahl, *Intelligence and Surprise Attack*.

36 Richard K. Betts, 'Analysis, War and Decision, Why Intelligence Failures are Inevitable', *World Politics*, 31(1978) 1, 61–89.

intelligence, and the problem rarely lies with gathering data in a timely manner. It is mostly the preconceived policy principles that narrow the consumers' perspective, while a heavy workload prevents them from thoroughly reflecting on implementations of intelligence for policy. This relates to a wider discussion on politicization in intelligence, and distinguishing intelligence failures from policy failures, which lies beyond the scope of the present study.³⁷

Differences in focus notwithstanding, most scholars take some sort of middle road by acknowledging that intelligence failures are not necessarily mono-causal and can be a consequence of structural as much as procedural factors.³⁸ Many of the imperfections of intelligence are the result of unescapable compromises between the structure and process.³⁹ In reality, it is difficult to perceive the intelligence process as a sequential cycle, as phases affect each other. Nevertheless, the primacy of the intelligence consumer, even though in practice directions might remain vague or static, remains an unquestioned hierarchical relationship. In general, preventing intelligence failures is deemed a matter of preventing cognitive biases from distorting accurate collection and analysis or politicization of objective empiricist intelligence.

Intelligence (r)evolution: rethinking structure, process and problems

Often, intelligence failures give reason to structurally change intelligence processes. Most notably, the failure to prevent the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the inaccurate assessment of the presence and status of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction in 2003 fueled the urge for reform of intelligence structures and processes in the US. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (the 9/11 commission) recommended that the existing Terrorist Threat Integration Center be replaced by a National Counterterrorist Center for operational planning and joint intelligence, and the Director of Central Intelligence by a Director of National Intelligence responsible for overseeing national intelligence centers and programs.⁴⁰ Interagency sharing had to improve drastically as the president was to lead a government-wide effort to 'bring the major national security institutions into the information revolution'.⁴¹ A problem with such reforms is that they are a consequence of a past experience. Too much of a focus on the intelligence failures of the past bears the potential of taking counterproductive measures for the future.

37 See for example Gregory F. Treverton, 'Intelligence Analysis, between "politicization" and irrelevance', in Roger Z. George, James B. Bruce (eds.) *Analyzing Intelligence: Origins, Obstacles and Innovations* (Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press 2008) or Stephen Marrin, 'Rethinking Analytic Politicization'.

38 Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 143-169.

39 Stephen Marrin, 'Preventing Intelligence Failures by Learning from the Past', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 17(2004) 4: 655-672.

40 9/11 Commission, 'Report of The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States' (9/11 Commission Report) <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf> (last retrieved 6 March 2015), 367-429.

41 *Ibid*, 418.

But it is not only intelligence failures that spark reform. The changing intelligence environment, new perspectives on the position of intelligence organizations, and the manifestation of more complex threats all influence the academic debate on reform. Arthur Hulnick proposed the need for a separate analytic agency, separating collection and analysis.⁴² British intelligence scholar and former senior civil servant Sir David Omand and others have introduced 'social media intelligence' (SOCMINT) as a new 'member of the intelligence family' that is necessary to fully grasp and exploit the stark increase of social media use.⁴³ American political scientist Amy Zegart pleads for better congressional oversight.⁴⁴ Jennifer Sims, a US national security scholar and former intelligence government coordinator, advocates the need for a deep understanding of domestic politics to rid 'nonintelligence' factors such as management.⁴⁵ She states that the US intelligence community should behave more as a transnational network itself by increasing cooperation with other states and non-state actors. Overall, most scholars calling for a reform underline that identifying the many positive features of intelligence must be part of any responsible reform.⁴⁶

Other scholars have called for a radical revolution in intelligence, a Kuhnian paradigm shift.⁴⁷ American international security and intelligence scholar William Lahneman concludes that in the US, the intelligence process, its supporting organizational structure, and the required skills for future analysts should all change.⁴⁸ This revolution would not equal an overnight metamorphosis, but a dynamic change management process stimulating 'many pockets of innovation'.⁴⁹ As such, some aspects of intelligence would hardly change while others would drastically transform, altering the nature of intelligence as a whole.⁵⁰

Among frequently named fundamental changes that necessitate an intelligence revolution are the information revolution and a revolution in military affairs. The information revolution might force intelligence organizations to reconsider the core concept of secrecy, as it becomes more difficult to keep intelligence secret.⁵¹ Furthermore, changing perspectives on security have led to a revolution in military affairs, which has shifted the

42 Arthur S. Hulnick, 'Intelligence Reform 2008: Where to from Here?', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 21(2008) 4: 621-634.

43 Sir David Omand, Jamie Bartlett & Carl Miller, 'Introducing Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT)', *Intelligence and National Security*, 27 (2012) 6: 801-823, Jamie Bartlett, Carl Miller, *The State of the Art, A Literature Review of Social Media Intelligence Capabilities for Counter-Terrorism* (London, Demos 2013).

44 Amy B. Zegart, *Eyes on Spies, Congress and the United States Intelligence Community*, (Stanford, CA, Hoover Institution Press 2011).

45 Sims, 'Understanding Friends and Enemies'.

46 Sims, Gerber, *Transforming US Intelligence*, vii.

47 Lahneman, 'The Need for a New Intelligence Paradigm', Lahneman, *Keeping U.S. Intelligence Effective*, Lahneman 'Is a revolution in intelligence affairs occurring?'. Moore, *Sensemaking*, Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence*.

48 Lahneman, *Keeping U.S. Intelligence Effective*, 83-104.

49 Deborah Barger, *Towards a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs* (Santa Monica, RAND 2005) v, 136.

50 Lahneman 'Is a revolution in intelligence affairs occurring?'.

51 Hamilton Bean, *No More Secrets: Open Source Information and the Reshaping of U.S. Intelligence* (Santa Barbara, Praeger 2011), Bruce Berkowitz, 'Failing to keep up with the Information Revolution', *Studies in Intelligence*, 47(2003) 1, 67-74, Bruce Berkowitz, Allan Goodman, *Best Truth: Intelligence in the Information Age* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press 2000).

ability of bureaucratic hierarchical military structures to operate as adaptive networks.⁵² Similarly, intelligence should be able to organize interdisciplinary analysis in collaborative networks.

Richard Betts is concerned about the tension between this urge to ‘do something’ and the uncertainty about ‘what to do’.⁵³ Efforts to reform intelligence by reorganizing can be a proper response, as long as expectations of intelligence performance are modest. Betts sees physical limitations of cognitive processes, contrasting organizational values of secrecy versus sharing and centralization versus pluralism, and conflicting intelligence needs as ‘inherent enemies’ to progress.⁵⁴ As structural reforms respond to the latest mistake, it is important to keep in mind that the optimal solution to organizing intelligence remains a compromise and cognitive factors should not be overlooked.⁵⁵ Betts concludes

The greatest underlying causes of mistakes in performance, however, lie not in the structure and process of the intelligence system. They are inherent in the issues and targets with which intelligence has to cope – the crafty opponents who strategize against it, and the alien and opaque cultures which are not second nature to American minds.⁵⁶

William Lahneman proposes the forming of trusted networks among states, corporations, and non-governmental organizations to bridge the divide between secrets and open source information because this is necessary to deal with some of the ‘extremely complex puzzles’ or ‘adaptive interpretations’ with which the intelligence community is confronted.⁵⁷ He distinguishes these new intelligence problems, or complex puzzles, from traditional state-centric intelligence puzzles as their complexity necessitates cooperation in trusted networks to access new pieces of information. The starting point is that ‘virtually all pieces of the complex puzzle are available’ yet the value of these pieces might change quickly, and small pieces are mostly decisive.⁵⁸

Gregory Treverton and Joseph Nye Jr.’s characterization of intelligence problems goes further and distinguishes complex and ill-defined mysteries from traditional puzzles.⁵⁹ In contrast to Lahneman’s extremely complex puzzles, there might not even be a solution to mysteries, and necessary ‘puzzle pieces’ might not even exist. It is very well possible that no

52 William Nolte, ‘Keeping Pace with the Revolution in Military Affairs’, *Studies in Intelligence*, 48 (2004) 1: 1-10, Lahneman, *Keeping U.S. Intelligence Effective*, 60-68.

53 Richard K. Betts, ‘The New Politics of Intelligence, Will Reforms Work This Time?’, *Foreign Affairs*, 83(2004) 3: 2-8.

54 Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*, 124-158.

55 See also Richard A. Posner, *Preventing Surprise Attack. Intelligence Reform in the Wake of 9/11* (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield 2005); R.A. Posner, *Uncertain Shield. The U.S. Intelligence System in the Throes of Reform* (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield 2006).

56 *Ibid*, 158.

57 Lahneman, ‘The Need for a New Intelligence Paradigm’, 222-223, Lahneman, *Keeping U.S. Intelligence Effective*, 118-135.

58 *Ibid*, 222.

59 Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence*, 1-19, Joseph S. Nye Jr., ‘Peering into the Future’, *Foreign Affairs*, 77 (1994) 4: 82-93, Gregory Treverton, ‘Estimating beyond the Cold War’, *Defense Intelligence Journal*, 3(1994) 2: 5-20.

one knows the answer, as it might not have happened yet.⁶⁰ In principle, the question cannot be answered with certainty. An important point made by Treverton is that mysteries are not only unknown to us, but their answer is related to our own policy actions. In the military domain, puzzles will probably continue to form a significant part of intelligence problems. This is different for policy-related intelligence problems. For framing strategic mysteries, it is crucial that intelligence analysts cooperate in networks or franchises with government departments, non-governmental organizations, private businesses, and academic think tanks. Treverton's conclusion is similar to Lahneman's, as intelligence is not about secrets but about information, and not about written products but about people or subject matter experts.⁶¹

Together with Wilhelm Agrell, a Swedish historian and security scholar, Treverton defines a category of intelligence problems that are 'mysteries-plus' called 'complexities' or 'wicked problems'.⁶² Although the answer to a mystery is contingent, the key variables can be known. For ill-defined, ambiguous complexities, 'many actors respond to changing circumstances, not repeating any established pattern'.⁶³ American intelligence scholar David Moore characterizes two types of intelligence problems: tame problems (or puzzles) and wicked problems (or mysteries/complexities).⁶⁴ It is more important to focus on the distinction between solvable puzzles and complex problems than to distinguish between mysteries and mysteries-plus, so the following explores Moore's distinction further.

A puzzle is an intelligence problem with a fixed outcome that becomes clear as the intelligence analyst collects more and more pieces of information. For example, the Chinese Air Force has a number of operational fighter planes stationed in a region. The puzzle for intelligence analysts is to find out what this number is. It is clearly defined, solutions are limited, and it is obvious when the right solution is found. Furthermore, the right solution points the way to solve similar puzzles, for example assessing the number of operational fighter planes of another country. Through application of the iconic 'mathematical' model for threat perception by American political scientist J. David Singer's (threat perception = estimated capabilities x estimated intentions, combined with observed activities) 'objective' assessments can be made.⁶⁵ Operational fighter planes become a threat when Chinese leaders intend to deploy them, for example to enforce a claim on islands in the South China Sea.

It is more difficult to uphold the claim of objectivity as problems become more complex, like in the case of irregular armed groups such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Who is victim, fighter, terrorist, activist, or criminal? Is there a shift over

60 Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence*, 11.

61 Ibid, 18.

62 Agrell, Treverton, *National Intelligence and Science*, 33, The term complexities comes from Dave Snowden, 'Complex Acts of Knowing, Paradox and Descriptive Self-Awareness', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 6 (2002) 2: 100-111.

63 Agrell, Treverton, *National Intelligence and Science*, 32-33.

64 Moore, *Sensemaking*, 17-19.

65 J. David Singer, 'Threat-perception and the armament-tension dilemma', *The Journal of Conflict*, 2 (1958) 1: 94.

time in which groups conduct different activities under the same group name? Most activities of the FARC are geographically limited. As mentioned, it becomes even more complicated when groups and individuals across the globe use the same name as they refer to an ideology, a loose franchise of like-minded people, or an international organization under the name of *Al Qaeda* or *Islamic State*.

Mysteries or wicked problems have no clear outcome and are ill-defined as all are unique, contradictory, and continuously developing.⁶⁶ Implementing solutions might change the problem in unforeseen ways as mysteries are embodied in other complex problems.⁶⁷ There are no objective solutions to wicked problems: the only 'solution' is to change the frame or narrative to perceive the problem differently. Thus, the intelligence requirements, policy options, and past, present, and future actions of the intelligence consumer influence the way problems are defined. Key to understanding the characterization of intelligence problems is that often an issue can be framed as *both* puzzle and mystery. What makes a particular characterization of an intelligence problem useful depends primarily on the requirements of the intelligence consumer and the means and possibilities he or she has to respond. The resources an intelligence producer has at hand can limit and constrain collection and interpretation of a problem as either puzzle or mystery, but the abilities of intelligence are a much less fundamental factor than the consumer's perspective, as the latter determines the requirement for intelligence producers to construct a problem as the one or the other.

For example, the threat of piracy around the Horn of Africa can be defined as a puzzle to some states and shipping companies. Protecting merchant vessels with armed security teams on board or with naval escorts is the foreseen policy solution. The puzzle intelligence organizations have to solve is to assess when and where pirates attack vessels, so the solution (protective security) can be adequately applied. To this end, technical assets such as unmanned aerial vehicles or submarines providing imagery and signals intelligence might be used to collect intelligence on piracy hotspots, boats, and transiting routes. The type of solution (a threat assessment, security measures, and strikes on hot spots or pirate vessels) can be applied with similar piracy problems. This will not end piracy, however, as captured pirates will be replaced by others. By focusing too much on a single solution to the piracy problem as puzzle, new developing threats can remain hidden from sight, such as terrorist groups seeking a safe haven in the war-torn lands from which pirates can operate.

Seen from the perspective of the United Nations, the poor socioeconomic situation and fragile security environment in Somalia embody important causes of piracy. To further the goal of the United Nations Development Program, the various transnational social networks involved in piracy, warring factions, and tribal issues need to be taken into account to address root causes of piracy such as poverty and violence. In this respect, intelligence organizations are confronted with a true mystery or complexity, requiring different intelligence collection

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66 Moore, *Sensemaking*, 18-29.

67 Ibid.

assets such as human intelligence, and different assessment models. From different angles, problems have different meanings and require or allow different ‘solutions’.

David Moore states intelligence sensemaking provides a new paradigm for the intelligence process that is needed to deal with these kinds of mysteries.⁶⁸ In general, his observations align with the fundamental critical philosophical reasoning in this thesis. Following Warren Fishbein and Gregory Treverton, the traditional intelligence cycle is discarded for a ‘mindful’ sensemaking process of continuous and collective introspection.⁶⁹ Sensemaking is described as an ongoing organizational process, rather than a set of tools, that embodies flexible planning (or flexicution) as requirements and goals change with the discovery of new information and changing conceptions of available information.⁷⁰ In advance, information related to mysteries cannot become evidence for events that have not yet occurred. The description of sensemaking adopted by Moore is expressive: ‘a developing set of ideas with explanatory possibilities, rather than a body of knowledge’.⁷¹

Intelligence sensemaking also implies gathering more information will not necessarily lead to a better understanding of the problem. Analysts are sometimes unaware of what they are looking for until they find something, so finding new perspectives to build a holistic approach is key. Furthermore, expertise is relative, as no situation occurs twice. This implies that sometimes a fresh look from a non-expert is most valuable. Professionals should not act as factory workers, working to achieve pre-set quotas of predefined and statistically quantifiable intelligence products that pass through a bureaucratic system. Instead, analysts need to be embedded with policymakers to enable dialogue about sense.

Identifying and framing intelligence problems is related to consumer-producer relations. Intelligence problems cannot be discussed separately from intelligence as a process. Knowledge of mysteries and the policy options of intelligence consumers change over time, requiring a continuous dialogue between producers and consumers and implying closeness through increasing frequency, depth, versatility, and types of communication.⁷² Central in this relationship is a mutual understanding of the extent to which both are susceptible to forms of politicization (or manipulation) and receptivity of (or bias to) intelligence.⁷³ In the intelligence studies literature, proponents of a continuous interactive dynamic between consumer-producer relations have been deemed ‘activists’ (Kendall school), as opposed to ‘traditionalists’ (Kent school) who have advocated the need for strict professional separation

68 Moore, *Sensemaking*.

69 Ibid, 38-44, Warren Fishbein, Gregory Treverton, ‘Making Sense of Transnational Threats’, *The Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis Occasional Papers*, 3 (2004) 1.

70 Gary Klein ‘Flexicution as a Paradigm for Replanning’, part 1, *IEEE Intelligent Systems*, 22 (2007) 5: 79-88.

71 Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, Sage 1995) xi, Moore, *Sensemaking*.

72 Marrin, ‘Revisiting Intelligence and Policy’.

73 As discussed in *Intelligence and National Security* 28 (2013) 1. See for example Glenn Hastedt, ‘The Politics of Intelligence and the Politicization of Intelligence, The American Experience’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 28 (2013) 1: 5-31, Marrin, ‘Rethinking Analytic Politicization’, Eric Dahl, ‘Why Won’t They Listen? Comparing Receptivity Toward Intelligence at Pearl Harbor and Midway’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 28 (2013) 1: 68-90, Nathan Woodard, ‘Tasting the Forbidden Fruit, Unlocking the Potential of Positive Politicization’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 28 (2013) 1: 91-108.

between the two.⁷⁴ The latter deem separation necessary because consumers are thought of as basing their actions on values and ideas, whereas intelligence producers provide objective facts.

Moore raises important questions, and for the competitive and stove-piped US intelligence community that draws a red line between policy and intelligence, sensemaking carries the sound of a revolutionary approach. In the more cooperative environment of the United Kingdom, intelligence is more integrated in the policymaking process. That is, collected intelligence is disseminated to consumers at an earlier stage and not processed into wider 'finished' analytic products per se. The UK intelligence community has a Joint Doctrine Publication on 'understanding', which equates to a large extent to intelligence sensemaking.⁷⁵ Like sensemaking, understanding holds that it is the contextual perception and interpretation of situations that provides the necessary insight and foresight to intelligence consumers on ambiguous problems.⁷⁶

In summary, intelligence problems can be characterized as puzzles or complex intelligence problems (mysteries, complexities, or wicked problems). This partially depends on consumer requirements and policy options. Although puzzles can be solved, they are related to wider complex intelligence problems. Mysteries cannot be solved as they depend on the continuous development of many factors that are not all known. However, by analyzing how critical factors have interacted in the past, some understanding might develop on their future interaction. Ill-defined ambiguous complexities concern many (smaller) actors that respond to changing circumstances. There is no common understanding of the nature of the problem or topic. Intelligence analysts must strive to ask relevant questions that are informed by the continuously developing understanding of intelligence problems. Ultimately, then, understanding others is related to the framing of problems, which is in turn related to understanding the self. For all the relevant insights offered by Moore's sensemaking, the driver behind his thinking is an idea of crisis of the reigning 'puzzle paradigm' in intelligence. Involving metatheory more explicitly can clarify the relations between self and other and improve the debate on intelligence.

74 Willmoore Kendall, "The Function of Intelligence Analysis", review of *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, by Sherman Kent', *World Politics*, 1 (1949) 4: 542 - 552. The 'Kendall school' in intelligence has also been characterized as 'Gates model', after former CIA senior official and later US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates. For example in Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*, 76-77, Jack Davis, 'The Kent-Kendall Debate of 1949', *Studies in Intelligence*, 35 (1991) 2 : 37-50, Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press 1949)

75 United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, 'Joint Doctrine Publication 04 Understanding', second edition, 2016, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/33701/JDPo4Webfinal.pdf (last retrieved November 20, 2016).

76 Ibid.

Philosophy, theory, and critical approaches to intelligence

As the previous sections have shown, the approaches and direction of the various efforts to theorize and improve intelligence vary greatly.⁷⁷ Some have tried to offer a definition of intelligence or new models of the intelligence process, while others have studied what the focus of intelligence should be as its environment changes. Another discussion on intelligence theorizing has evolved around the type of methodology that best fits the practice of intelligence.⁷⁸ Philosophical theorizing is only covered in a small part of the intelligence literature.⁷⁹ Yet, its questions are of fundamental importance. Should intelligence be driven by empiricism and stick to the facts, or does its estimating nature imply that methodologies follow from normative theorizing? Is intelligence about explaining, understanding, or both?

Intelligence is one of the primary locations of international relations practice.⁸⁰ How has the academic subfield of intelligence studies related to philosophical theoretical debate in international relations? Positivist and interpretivist positions that were shaped by deeper philosophical debates have informed theories of international relations and political science. Over the last century, international relations theorizing has been dominated by a rational positivist debate between (neo)realism (self-gain maximizing power politics) and (neo)liberalism (establishing peace and collective security as long-term goal).⁸¹ Since the 1980s, this debate has been challenged by (critical) interpretivist approaches such as social constructivism and postmodernism.⁸² More recently, critical realism has surfaced as a way around the entrenchment of positivist empiricists and poststructuralist interpretivists. Some efforts have been made to confer theoretical debates in international relations and political science on positivism and interpretivism, realism and constructivism, and modernism and

77 See for example Gill, Marrin, Pythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory*, Gregory Treverton, Seth G. Jones, Steven Boraz, Phillip Lipsky, *Toward a Theory of Intelligence*, Workshop Report (Santa Monica, CA, RAND 2006).

78 Gill, Marrin, Pythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory*.

79 Johnson, 'The development of intelligence studies', 10.

80 Michael Fry, Miles Hochstein, 'Epistemic communities, Intelligence Studies in International Relations', *Intelligence and National Security*, 8(1993) 3: 14-28, Christopher Andrew, 'Intelligence, International Relations and 'Under-theorization'', *Intelligence and National Security*, 19(2004) 2: 170-184, Bob G.J. de Graaff, *De ontbrekende dimensie*, Loch K. Johnson, Allison M. Shelton, 'Thoughts on the State of Intelligence Studies, A Survey Report', *Intelligence and National Security*, 28(2013) 1: 116.

81 Hans J. Morgenthau, Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics Among Nations, The Struggle for Power and Peace*, sixth edition (New York, Knopf 1985), Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley 1979), Robert O. Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York, Columbia University Press 1986), Joseph S. Nye Jr., 'Neorealism and Neoliberalism', *World Politics*, XL (1988) 2, Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, [1795], edited by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merill 1957), John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, [1689], 3rd Student Edition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1988), Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies, The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press 1995).

82 Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making, Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (New York, University of South Carolina Press 1989), Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it, the social construction of power politics', *International Organization*, 46(1992) 2, Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York, Cambridge University Press 1999), James Der Derian, Michael J. Shapiro, (eds.) *International/Intertextual Relations, Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (New York, Lexington Books 1989), Claire T. Sjolander, Wayne S. Cox, (eds.) *Beyond Positivism, Critical Reflections on International Relations* (Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner 1994).

postmodernism in terms of intelligence.⁸³ However, the dominant paradigm in intelligence studies remains objectivist/positivist, and most intelligence literature has an Anglo-American focus.⁸⁴

To further the acceptance of intelligence studies as a legitimate field in academia and increase its relevance to the practice of intelligence, developing critical debate in the field is a crucial effort.⁸⁵ In this regard, it is fruitful to reflect on the development of critical security studies and study how debates and approaches are relevant for intelligence studies. While recognizing the pluriformity of critical approaches to security, an adequate general idea of the term 'critical' is provided in the following. More of an ethos than a coherent theoretical enterprise, critical approaches question the objectivity of knowledge that positivists take for granted and seek to explore the political, social, and historical situatedness of social reality.⁸⁶

Being critical means adhering to a rigorous form of skeptical questioning, rather than being suspicious or distrustful in the vernacular sense of those terms. But, it is also to recognize oneself as being partially framed by those regimes of truth, concepts, theories and ways of thinking that enable the critique. To be critical is thus also to be reflexive, developing abilities to locate the self in a broader heterogeneous context through abstraction and thinking.⁸⁷

For intelligence studies, a critical approach problematizes what is central to 'intelligence', what it is, and how it works within a socio-political context. Developments in the political context of the intelligence producer and consumer become part of the question or 'problem', rather than unquestioned assumptions, when researching or analyzing problems.⁸⁸ This notion of 'critical' is distinct from other day-to-day use in intelligence. Often, the latter form of 'thinking about thinking' or 'key assumptions check' relates to reflections on methodological rigor and logical reasoning standards when practicing intelligence analysis.⁸⁹

83 Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy*, Hamilton Bean, 'Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies', *Intelligence and National Security*, 28 (2013) 4: 495-519, Ralph G.V. Lillbacka, 'Realism, Constructivism, and Intelligence Analysis', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 26 (2013) 2: 304-331, Mary Manjikian, 'Positivism, Post-Positivism, and Intelligence Analysis', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 26 (2013) 3: 563-582, Lahneman, *Keeping U.S. Intelligence Effective*, Gill, Pythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 33-52, Gill, Marrin, Pythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory*, 54-72, Andrew Rathmell, 'Towards Postmodern Intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security*, 17(2002) 3: 87-104.

84 Fry, Hochstein, 'Epistemic communities', 17, Gill, Pythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 34, Gill, Marrin, Pythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory*, Lowenthal, *Intelligence*, xii.

85 Johnson, Shelton, 'Thoughts on the State of Intelligence Studies', 116, Stephen Marrin, 'Improving Intelligence Studies as an Academic Practice', *Intelligence and National Security*, 31(2016) 2: 266-279.

86 This view is adopted from critical security studies, as in C.A.S.E. Collective, 'Critical Approaches to Security, A Networked Manifesto', *Security Dialogue*, 37 (2006) 4, 443-487.

87 Ibid, 476.

88 Keith Krause, Michael Williams, (eds.) *Critical Security Studies, Concepts And Strategies* (London, UCL Press 1997) xi.

89 For example Loch K. Johnson, (ed.) *Intelligence, Critical Concepts in Military, Strategic and Security Studies* (New York, Routledge 2010), David Moore, *Critical Thinking and Intelligence Analysis*, occasional paper number 14 (Washington, DC, NDIC 2007), 8.

In philosophical terms, critical approaches to intelligence adopt interpretivism at either the ontological or epistemological level and separate from total objectivist positivism. To illustrate the difference, for example, poststructuralists assume our interpretations are the basis of reality and interpretation is hence a matter of ontology. In contrast, critical realists acknowledge interpretation at the epistemological level, but assume there is a 'real' world out there, and researchers are able to define the workings, effects, and limits of interpretation. As discussed later in this chapter, this thesis conforms to the latter theoretical approach.

It must be acknowledged that the way ontological and epistemological positions are characterized and relate to each other is contested and many variations exist. Essentially, researchers must 'adopt a position they identify with and continue to use it consistently, while acknowledging that it is disputed'.⁹⁰ As British politics and international relations scholars Paul Furlong and David Marsh state, these theories form 'a skin, not a sweater'.⁹¹ This is easier said than done, since it is probably more accurate to state that researchers need to 'create' their own position by relating to others' theoretical work, rather than adopting one as if they were to choose a clear-cut position from a menu. Adopting such a position is fundamental to inform the use of methodologies.

What map should be drawn for reference, then? In general, two opposing ontological positions characterize theoretical debates. On the one hand, objectivism, philosophical realism, or foundationalism suggests that a 'real world' exists independent of our knowledge of it.⁹² It is possible to discover the properties of the discrete objects in this real world. Its opposing position, relativism, philosophical constructivism, or anti-foundationalism, holds that the world is socially constructed.⁹³ Realities are local and specific and, as they are actively constructed, they cannot be objectively discovered. The main aim of the latter approach is to deconstruct universal theories and criticize the idea that humans are objective rational actors.

The way epistemological positions are characterized and relate to ontological positions is contested, and many variations exist. According to Furlong and Marsh, the two epistemological positions in the social sciences most commonly identified are empiricist (or scientific) and interpretivist (or hermeneutic).⁹⁴ Empiricists argue that the social sciences are analogous to the natural sciences. By identifying law-like *causes* of social behavior through hypothesis testing, the real world can be *explained* and behavior predicted in international relations. This position is reflected in the zero-sum games and prisoner's dilemmas that guided arms policies during the Cold War.

90 Colin Hay, 'Does Ontology trump Epistemology? Notes on the Directional Dependence of Ontology and Epistemology in Political Analysis', *Politics*, 27(2007) 2: 115-119, as in Paul Furlong and David Marsh, 'A Skin Not a Sweater, Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science', in David Marsh, Gerry Stoker (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, third edition (New York, Palgrave 2010), 186.

91 Furlong, Marsh, 'A Skin Not a Sweater'.

92 *Ibid.*, 185.

93 *Ibid.*

94 *Ibid.*

The focus of the interpretivist approach lies in *understanding* the various *meanings* attributed to social behavior. Reality is what narratives make of it. As those meanings are local and specific, no general causal relationship can be found. Entities attribute different meanings to social structures and events, hence any response is specific to each case and actor. Actors can only strive to increase (intersubjective) understanding of the way other actors give different meaning to the world that surrounds them. It is impossible to achieve objectivity in science because any observer can only interpret the interpretations of others. This is referred to as the double hermeneutic.⁹⁵

Positivism is grounded in an objectivist ontology and empiricist epistemology. However, the range of interpretivist approaches that reject total objectivism is highly diverse. Moreover, the ‘middle ground’ between objectivism and relativism, and empiricist and interpretivist approaches, resembles more of a continuum that includes various positions. The distinction of ‘critical’ promoted in this thesis is distinct from traditional approaches to intelligence on the basis that the latter align with objectivist empiricism, while ‘critical’ relates to all approaches that recognize some form of interpretivism at either the ontological or epistemological level, which enables to infer methodological consequences. Critical realism, the approach in which this thesis is grounded, recognizes the value of interpretivism and holds a middle ground between total objectivism and relativism. It holds that understanding and explaining are not antithetical. This will be outlined further on in the chapter.

Critical approaches in the intelligence literature

There is ample debate in intelligence studies on the nature of intelligence problems, the failures and successes of intelligence, and the need to restructure, reform, or revolutionize organizations, processes and paradigms. Although these contributions have provided relevant insights in both the study *of* and *for* intelligence, it is important for clarifying debates in academia to articulate one’s philosophical assumptions. When reviewing the intelligence studies literature with the definition of critical in mind (as presented in this thesis), it becomes apparent that the small subset of publications concerned with philosophical theorizing (less than 8 percent) contains an even smaller subset of articles relating to critical approaches.⁹⁶ In intelligence studies, positivism is dominant and often mostly implicitly present in research. This thesis aims to contribute to critical debate in intelligence studies in a constructive manner. Instead of seeking to contrast and emphasize what divides critical approaches, it is fruitful to consider what connects them and view how they contribute to the manifestation of a debate in intelligence studies informed by critical theory.

Relative outsiders have sometimes discussed critical theoretical approaches to intelligence in a less productive way, resulting in either superficial discussions or a focus on

⁹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (Cambridge, Polity Press 1987).

⁹⁶ Johnson, ‘The development of intelligence studies’, 10.

classifying and critiquing others, rather than bringing out their own ideas.⁹⁷ For example, Finnish quantitative methodologist Ralf Lillbacka deems constructivism to be a ‘fashionable position’ that is inconsistent, provides no workable points of view, and is ‘antithetical to intelligence analysis’ as it does not provide truthful knowledge that can be validated.⁹⁸ He bases his argumentation on the dominance of the objectivist paradigm in some of the literature. In an effort to reduce the chances of intelligence failures occurring, to improve strategic warning to consumers, and to transform intelligence, it seems odd to advocate using the same thinking that is dominant when failures occur.⁹⁹ A different conclusion of Lillbacka’s article might be that the absence of relevant constructivist literature requires an additional effort. This is similar to focusing intelligence collection efforts on information gaps instead of adding information to the heap of known-knowns.

On the other hand, there is a danger of overstraining one’s voice.¹⁰⁰ At first sight, international relations scholar Mary Manjikian’s discussion of positivist and post-positivist approaches to intelligence analysis clearly distinguishes between traditional and critical thinking. She draws a parallel to the medical profession and notes that intelligence organizations could benefit from reflexivity, organizing independent second opinions on analysis, and remaining open to several narratives or interpretations of problems. She argues that medical doctors do not collect and assemble puzzle pieces of objective quantitative and qualitative data. Their diagnosis of patients is not value-free and ethically neutral, but a narrative assembled and interpreted according to a person’s culture and environment. The doctor does not discover a problem, but imposes his authoritative diagnosis on the patient. Different specialists draw different conclusions based on the same ‘evidence’, as politicization is an integral part of the examination, interview, and diagnosis. The way questions are phrased influences the answer.

In themselves, these are valuable observations that fit a critical approach. However, the vehicle she uses to deliver her argument undermines its strength. Manjikian reflects on the parallel drawn between medicine and intelligence by former CIA analyst and intelligence scholar Stephen Marrin and physician and US medical intelligence historian Jonathan Clemente.¹⁰¹ She highlights how their observations on similarities center on the objective, hierarchical, depoliticized, and error-free nature of both fields.¹⁰² Furthermore, Manjikian

97 Clear examples are Lillbacka, ‘Realism, Constructivism, and Intelligence Analysis’, Manjikian, ‘Positivism, Post-Positivism, and Intelligence Analysis’.

98 Lillbacka, ‘Realism, Constructivism, and Intelligence Analysis’.

99 “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”, quote widely attributed to Albert Einstein, as in *The New York Times*, ‘Atomic Education Urged by Einstein’, May 25, 1946, 13.

100 Manjikian, ‘Positivism, Post-Positivism, and Intelligence Analysis’.

101 Ibid, Stephen Marrin, Jonathan D. Clemente, ‘Improving Intelligence Analysis by Looking to the Medical Profession’, *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 18 (2005) 4: 707-729, Stephen Marrin, Jonathan D. Clemente, ‘Modeling an Intelligence Analysis Profession on Medicine’, *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 19 (2006) 4: 642-665.

102 Manjikian, ‘Positivism, Post-Positivism, and Intelligence Analysis’, 564.

mentions how Gregory Treverton advocates the importance of Bayesian inference and ‘presents the analyst as merely a processor of information, like a computer’.¹⁰³

Marrin and Treverton are characterized as positivists, but several of the elements Manjikian presents as part of her ‘alternate view’ of intelligence analysis, such as bias and politicization, are also mentioned by the scholars she contrasts herself with. For example, Marrin and Clemente specifically address how ‘biases, stereotypes, mirror-imaging, simplistic thinking, confusion between cause and effect, bureaucratic politics, groupthink, and many other human factors’ influence both medicine and intelligence analysis.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, they state that in intelligence, great levels of uncertainty exist, causal relationships are difficult to identify, human behavior is driven by complicated combinations of reasons, and it is impossible to test most hypotheses in intelligence.¹⁰⁵ All these factors negatively influence levels of certainty.

To place this in a broader context, Manjikian’s article was published in 2013. Marrin and Treverton wrote many other works before her article and the articles she chose to cite, and have continued to publish relevant work since. Noteworthy are Treverton’s publications on intelligence sensemaking and his distinction between puzzles, mysteries, and complexities. Marrin has also contributed works on subjective analysis and the politicization of intelligence.¹⁰⁶ The point is that one needs to take care not to define or reject the philosophical position of others too forcefully when they have not explicitly articulated it themselves. Otherwise, one risks creating a sham discussion that consequently shifts the focus of the debate away from how intelligence can benefit from critical approaches.

Apart from the critique on argumentation strategy and form, a comparison of the articles by Lillbacka and Manjikian also highlights the nature of the ‘fronts’ both authors choose to defend. Although they fire in opposing directions, there is overlap between their ‘defensive’ positions. Perhaps to some extent they defend the same ground? Scientific realism acknowledges the role of theory as a necessary and imperfect representation of a real world that is out there. Conversely, in the post-positivist assumption that knowledge production is situated in a socio-cultural context and subject to bias implicitly lies the idea or striving for objectivity. On the opposite ends, just as scientific realism does not parallel objectivist empiricism, so does post-positivism not equate to total relativism.

103 Ibid.

104 Marrin, Clemente, ‘Improving Intelligence Analysis by Looking to the Medical Profession’, 714.

105 Ibid, 716-719.

106 Fishbein, Treverton, ‘Making Sense of Transnational Threats’, Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence* Agrell, Treverton, *National Intelligence and Science*, Marrin, ‘Revisiting Intelligence and Policy’, Marrin, ‘Rethinking Analytic Politicization’.

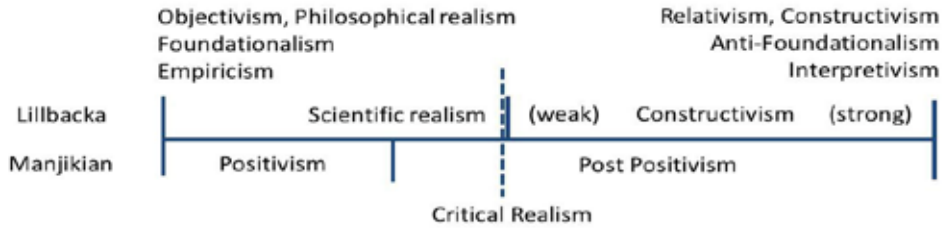


Fig 1.1 Combined schematic overview of theoretical distinctions made by Lillbacka and Manjikian.

In a broader sense, the middle ground between extreme notions of objectivist empiricism and relativist interpretivism is a continuum or patchwork of theories that are rooted in various scientific traditions. Critical realism can be situated right at a ‘boundary’ drawn by others. This merely provides another argument against having too much of an outward-looking focus on the ‘faults’ and theoretical ‘otherness’ of others. It is more productive to consider what critical contributions themselves tend to offer to the study of intelligence and how this *connects* to other theorizing. That is what brings intelligence studies further.

Since the early 1990s, publications in intelligence studies have contributed some valuable critical insights. Where is this thesis positioned, and how do these understandings relate to this research? Following developments in international relations theorizing in the 1980s, leading theorist James Der Derian posited the poststructuralist idea of ‘antidiplomacy’ to conceptualize how traditional state and diplomatic practices had become challenged.¹⁰⁷ After the Cold War, new global dangers and opportunities challenged ‘foundational unities’ (such as the sovereign state and grand theory) and ‘synthetic oppositions’ (such as self and other, inside and outside) that had built the ‘bipolar empire of estrangement’.¹⁰⁸ According to Der Derian, traditional (hyper)rationalist methods of analysis have inadequately grasped the discursive power associated with surveillance, terror, and speed in international relations and the formation of statehood, whereas new information and communication technologies accelerated the power of these ‘technostrategic’ forces. Time (the chronopolitical) is more important than space (the geopolitical), and representations of reality through models in mediated discourses increasingly inform international politics. As Der Derian notes, ‘theoretical reflection of reality loses out to techno-scientific reification’.¹⁰⁹

As a missing dimension of international relations theorizing, Der Derian terms intelligence ‘the continuation of war by clandestine interference of one power into the

¹⁰⁷ Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy*, James Der Derian, ‘Antidiplomacy: Intelligence Theory and Surveillance Practice’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 8 (1993) 3: 29–51, James Der Derian, ‘Anti-Diplomacy, Intelligence Theory and Surveillance Practice’, in Wark, W. (ed.) *Espionage: Past, Present and Future* (New York, Frank Cass 1994) 29–51.

¹⁰⁸ James Der Derian, ‘Preface’, in Der Derian, Shapiro, (eds.) *International-Intertextual Relations*, ix–x, 10 as in Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy*, viii, 13.

¹⁰⁹ Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy*, 4.

affairs of another power'.¹¹⁰ In reference to French philosopher Michel Foucault, he deems surveillance the most pervasive power of intelligence.¹¹¹ New technologies and improving capabilities to gather intelligence, such as with satellites, enable surveillance on a global scale. However, because of secrecy and compartmentalization of knowledge, the lack of corrective feedback on intelligence through surveillance has been neglected. Partial and imperfect information leads to paranoia through distrust, hypervigilance and projection of our own beliefs and hostile impulses. This correct reasoning from incorrect premises justifies more surveillance, which only highlights the ambiguity of intelligence mysteries and complexities. According to Der Derian, it is 'ambiguous discourse, not objective truth, that is the fluctuating currency of intelligence', and intelligence theory must address the imbalance between reason and rhetoric.¹¹² The value for intelligence lies in identifying and analyzing 'what was said or seen by whom when', while recognizing the status and capability of the reader (or the intelligence consumers).¹¹³ Der Derian's observations on international relations and intelligence were a valuable contribution to the study of intelligence and terrorism, putting discursive approaches and intertextual analysis on the research agenda.

An attempt to open up debate in intelligence studies to developments in international relations was also made by American international relations scholar Michael Fry and social scientist Miles Hochstein.¹¹⁴ Questioning the role of intelligence in sensemaking and consequentially in partially shaping intelligence problems, they held that post-positivist theories of knowledge could be beneficial. Such approaches 'conceive intelligence not as the "eye" which perceives the objective international reality of power politics, but in fact one of the primary locations of international relations practice as it reproduces and creates international political reality'.¹¹⁵ British public policy practitioner and scholar Andrew Rathmell responded to this statement a decade later by attempting to operationalize postmodernism for intelligence.¹¹⁶ He identified five core postmodern themes: the end of grand narratives, the end of the search for absolute truths, absent centers and uncertain identities, fluid boundaries, and the emergence of the knowledge economy.¹¹⁷ These themes affect the contemporary intelligence environment as intelligence targets, roles and missions have become fragmented since the end of the Cold War, intelligence problems are increasingly defined as mysteries not puzzles, identity of (commercial) intelligence personnel is challenged, boundaries of classified knowledge networks are shifting and the end is near for 'intelligence factories'.¹¹⁸ Rathmell stated that especially (military) intelligence

110 *Ibid.*, 21.

111 *Ibid.*, 30.

112 *Ibid.*, 26.

113 *Ibid.*

114 Fry, Hochstein, 'Epistemic communities'.

115 *Ibid.*, 25.

116 Rathmell, 'Towards Postmodern Intelligence'.

117 *Ibid.*, 95-96.

118 *Ibid.*, 97-98.

organizations were still hierarchical bastions of modernist meta-narratives of state power and national security that fed on Westphalian nodes such as embassies and border posts.¹¹⁹ Similar to Der Derian, he recognizes the fragmentation of social roles and universal truth.

This idea has been advanced further by Myriam Dunn Cavelty and Victor Mauer, both working at the Zurich based Center for Security Studies.¹²⁰ In contrast to this thesis, they posit that observation is an ontological event; however, this does not immediately dismiss their ideas. They build on reflexive security and complexity science's concept that complex situations can be 'unpredictable by nature, not just by virtue of limitations of the observer'.¹²¹ Uncertainty is not some transitional phase in between paradigms, but a fundamental reality. Increasingly, they state, security can be less defined in terms of threats that are actively created by others, and more by indirect, unintended, uncertain self-defined risks. In moving from the threat-based approach to a vulnerability-based approach, there is a danger of overemphasizing 'worst-case' scenarios to fulfill unrealistic expectations of strategic warning while denying the fallibility of intelligence. Therefore, these risks of future occurrences have to be understood within their specific social contexts.

As Andrew Rathmell (2002: 97) has pointed out, intelligence's 'grand narrative' ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Now, the intelligence community has to understand multiple, overlapping and often contradictory narratives, a world that appears chaotic and developments that display the properties of non-linear, dynamic systems.¹²²

Intelligence itself has thus become a complex adaptive sensemaking system. Cavelty and Mauer argue that a political discourse of uncertainty is required that legitimizes failure as a possibility for intelligence. Such acceptance of reality would offer a way out of the impasse between the requirement of actionable intelligence and the inherent uncertainty of situations. From their critical perspective, it becomes apparent how intelligence has a different role than finding and reporting the truth. The significance of narratives in reflecting and shaping reality is one of their more prominent themes.

Also in line with Der Derian's observations, American communication and intelligence scholar Hamilton Bean emphasizes the centrality of language in constituting, sustaining, and transforming social phenomena. His rhetorical and critical/cultural approach relates to the linguistic turn in the social sciences.¹²³

119 Ibid.

120 Myriam D. Cavelty, Victor Mauer, 'Postmodern intelligence, Strategic Warning in an Age of Reflexive Intelligence', *Security Dialogue*, 40(2009) 2: 123-144.

121 Ibid, 136, Cynthia F. Kurtz, Dave J. Snowden, 'The New Dynamics of Strategy, Sense-Making in a Complex and Complicated World', *IBM Systems Journal*, 42(2003) 3: 462-483, Dave Snowden, 'Complex Acts of Knowing'.

122 Cavelty, Mauer, 'Postmodern intelligence', 134.

123 Bean, 'Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies', Hamilton Bean, 'Organizational Culture and US Intelligence Affairs', *Intelligence and National Security*, 24 (2009) 4: 479-498.

[D]iscourse is the conceptual bridge linking knowledge and power. [...] [Rhetorical and critical/cultural studies] does not deny the existence of facts or material reality; however, it does assert that language cannot simply represent an objective world. Language cannot simply represent an objective world because, as cultural scholar Chris Barker explains: 'Though material objects and social practices "exist" outside of language, they are given meaning or "brought into view" by language and are thus discursively formed.'¹²⁴

Until now, referring to Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (language games) and British language philosopher John L. Austin (speech act theory) in the journal *Intelligence and National Security* has been a rare and remarkable occurrence. The term *rhetorical and critical/cultural studies*, which Bean introduced to intelligence studies, connects the study of rhetoric, critical theory, and cultural studies. He demonstrates the value of these approaches to the study of intelligence with some examples. Rhetorical critics have studied politicization or even fabrication of intelligence in support of policy by examining national security documents and speeches. Illustrative are accounts of the various ways in which US intelligence was communicated to policymakers in the run-up to the Iraq War in 2003.¹²⁵ The study of rhetoric can inform strategies of public inquiry to increase democratic practices in intelligence, for example by assessing the actual strength of analysis in supporting a public intelligence assessment that is presented, determining the level of consensus across the intelligence community on the assessment, and uncovering the level of uncertainty regarding intelligence assessments.¹²⁶

Critical theory studies relationships between power, knowledge, and discourse, whereas cultural studies focuses on cultural practices, identities, relationships, communities, and their relation to power. According to Bean, a critical/cultural perspective can reveal how several accounts of events differ as the context changes. Studying biographies and memoirs of intelligence professionals, for example, can highlight differences between organizational cultures or popular culture images of intelligence.¹²⁷ As stated, Bean's thoughts relate to the study of intelligence. This research interest is also reflected in another study in which Bean examines the way open source intelligence (OSINT) is understood, valued, legitimized, and institutionalized in and through discourse by the US intelligence community.¹²⁸ His discussion of institutional theory, organizational discourse, and rhetoric in that study mainly seeks to clarify the dynamics of bureaucratic turf wars on how open source is thought of, rather than how it has been put to use. In his theoretical orientation on discourse,

124 Bean, 'Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies', 499-500, Chris Barker, *Making Sense of Cultural Studies, Central Problems and Critical Debates* (London, Sage 2002), 224.

125 Gordon R. Mitchell, 'Team B Intelligence Coups', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 92 (2006) 2, 144-173, in Bean, 'Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies', Stephen J. Hartnett, Laura A. Stengrim, *Globalization and Empire, The U.S. Invasion of Iraq, Free Markets, and the Twilight of Democracy* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press 2005), in Bean, *No More Secrets*, 47.

126 Bean, 'Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies', 513.

127 Ibid, 514. Amy B. Zegart, 'Spytainment, The Real Influence of Fake Spies', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 23 (2010) 4: 599-622.

128 Bean, *No More Secrets*.

Hamilton Bean draws on the three-dimensional model developed by Norman Fairclough, distinguishing between social practices, discursive practices, and texts.¹²⁹ In contrast to this thesis's argumentation, Bean is reserved about the potential for critical approaches to improve the practice of intelligence.¹³⁰ However, just as this thesis, Bean makes an effort to contribute to the emerging discussion on the potential of a critical intelligence studies (CIS) subfield.¹³¹ In chapter 6 this topic will be addressed further.

Another significant contribution to the literature with a similar focus on intelligence and also grounded in rhetorical theory has come from Nathan Woodard, a rhetoric scholar and former US intelligence analyst.¹³² His approach has some more practical implications for intelligence as a practice. He investigates intelligence in the policymaking process and decouples objectivity and neutrality. He presents intelligence as a form of communication, and the use of language makes it inherently rhetorical. Utterance, reception, and reproduction of speech can reveal dispositions among actors. This inherent aspect of communication can be used for both good and bad in intelligence. According to Woodard, rhetorical theory is useful for studying intelligence as it is a theory of persuasion.¹³³ He advocates distinguishing objective fairness and clarity from policy neutrality. Clarity in intelligence entails the effort to remove ambiguity in both evidence and language. Paraphrasing *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, a seminal work by CIA veteran and intelligence scholar Richards Heuer, he notes that objective fairness addresses the goal of making basic assumptions and reasoning explicit so others can challenge them.¹³⁴

Striving for neutrality would render intelligence meaningless and thus less useful for consumers. Woodard separates assessment neutrality and policy neutrality. Obviously, intelligence assessments are not neutral to evidence, but a way of reducing ambiguity and ambivalence. Yet, in addition, analysts should also state preferred policy positions as a means of making biases explicit, non-traditional as this approach may be to mainstream intelligence. This only enhances the decision advantage for policymakers. Woodard states that evidence-based policy prescriptive analysis could describe not only 'what an intelligence problem is' and 'what it means', but also 'what could be done about it'.¹³⁵ This would require a transition from a knowledge production model, to a model of two-way interactive communication between producers and consumers of intelligence. As pointed out in this chapter, the discussion on alternative or better models for intelligence is not new: Woodard refers to the work of Richard Betts and Stephen Marrin, in which politicization is

129 Ibid, 19, this model is also part of the theoretical-methodological framework for this research see chapter 2, figure 2.1.

130 A point raised by Hamilton Bean to the author.

131 Hamilton Bean, 'Intelligence theory from the margins, questions ignored and debates not had', *Intelligence and National Security* 33 (2018) 4: 535, 538, note 86. (527-540)

132 Woodard, 'Tasting the Forbidden Fruit', Another rhetorical approach to intelligence is provided by Nate Kreuter, 'The US Intelligence Community's Mathematical Ideology of Technical Communication', *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 24 (2015) 3: 217-234, as in Bean, 'Intelligence theory from the margins', 532-533.

133 He refers to Aristotle's idea of *Rhetoric*, Woodard, 'Tasting the Forbidden Fruit', 94.

134 Ibid, 98.

135 Derived by Nathan Woodard from Ernest May, as in Marrin, 'Intelligence Analysis Theory'.

recognized as unavoidable, and traces thought on policy prescriptive intelligence back to political scientist and World War II intelligence veteran Willmoore Kendall.¹³⁶ He notes that Heuer, Betts, Marrin, and Kendall converge with the rhetorical perspective on the persuasive nature of intelligence.

The work of Swedish intelligence scholar Gunilla Eriksson is rooted in new institutionalism, particularly critical policy research, and critical discourse analysis. She studies the characteristics of knowledge in intelligence analysis.¹³⁷ Similar to other critical approaches, her work recognizes how ‘knowledge relevant to policy is embedded in a social context and is affected by and produces discourses’.¹³⁸ In her research, she primarily focuses on knowledge creation *within* Swedish Military Intelligence, rather than interorganizational dynamics and phenomena such as politicization between producers and consumers. She uses Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional discourse model to situate intelligence production, albeit in a different way and for a different purpose than in this thesis.¹³⁹ The model is adjusted by distinguishing between social and textual discursive practices to direct the research focus at the norm-conforming ‘collective of thought’ regarding organizational processes and routines in the service, and the accepted and inherited frames of interpretation or ‘style of thought’ with respect to intelligence assessments. Eriksson concludes how there was indeed a strong interpretative framework in the Swedish military intelligence service that influenced and guided knowledge production. For example, intelligence was implicitly influenced by a state-centric political realist worldview. More recently, Eriksson has also projected the idea that ‘knowledge affecting policy and regulation is constructed and negotiated within and between various kinds of actors’ on the intelligence-policy relation.¹⁴⁰ She recognized the value of critical policy analysis and policy network analysis to inform the debate between traditionalist and activist approaches to the consumer-producer relationship.

So far, the critical approaches have reflected several common principles and themes, such as contesting total objectivism, recognizing the socio-political situatedness of intelligence, accepting uncertainty as a fundamental condition in intelligence, and the significance of discourses or narratives in reflecting and shaping reality. The critical ethos is primarily directed at intelligence organizations (the study of intelligence). However, there is no fundamental objection to deriving insights from interpretative approaches to study entities that are subjects of intelligence. Moreover, this is where important potential lies for critical theory and methodology to improve intelligence as a practice, especially when rooted in metatheoretical middle ground. Several of the aforementioned approaches can be situated

¹³⁶ Stephen Marrin, ‘Intelligence Analysis and Decisionmaking, Methodological Challenges’ in Gill, Marrin, Pythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory*, 131-150, Richard Betts, ‘Politicization of Intelligence, Costs and Benefits’, in Richard Betts, Thomas Mahnken (eds.) *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in Honor of Michael I. Handel* (London, Frank Cass 2003) 57-76, Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*, Willmoore Kendall, “‘The Function of Intelligence Analysis’”, Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*, 76-77.

¹³⁷ Gunilla Eriksson, *Swedish Military Intelligence, Producing Knowledge* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 2016).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁹ See chapter 2, figure 2.1.

¹⁴⁰ Gunilla Eriksson, ‘A theoretical reframing of the intelligence-policy relation’, *Intelligence and National Security* 33 (2018) 4: 555, Carol Bacchi, *Analysing Policy, What’s the Problem Represented to Be?* (French Forest, Pearson 2009).

in the outer range of the theoretical spectrum, defining interpretivism in poststructuralist terms. The work of Danish intelligence scholar William Mitchell can be situated more in the middle, as he does not view empiricism and interpretivism as antithetical.¹⁴¹ A more precise discussion of the similarities and differences between (his) weak constructivism and the critical realism underlying this thesis lies beyond the scope of this research, but provides an interesting future conversation.

Mitchell also focuses on the study *for* intelligence, seeking pragmatically and practically to improve the use of military intelligence doctrine by drawing on insights from social constructivism. He advocates that theories and concepts of warfighting, command and control, and sensemaking of the battlespace can all improve by reflecting on metatheory. Central is the view that ‘the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction dependent on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world’.¹⁴² According to Mitchell, constructivism complements rather than competes with positivism as it ‘does not constitute a universal methodological stance’.¹⁴³ His argument concerns shifting focus when using broad concepts and systems of systems approaches such as PMESII/ASCOPE¹⁴⁴ to understand an environment. He argues that more emphasis should be placed on the ‘cognitive domain’ instead of traditionally viewing strategic interaction primarily from the ‘physical domain’. For complex intelligence problems, such as insurgencies in Afghanistan or Iraq, predominantly the social facts shaped by identities, norms, values, cultures, and ideas (the cognitive domain) are relevant for decision-makers to grasp to understand patterns of behavior.

According to Mitchell, military intelligence analysis is about increasing intersubjectivity, bridging the cognitive and physical (e.g. fighting capabilities, logistics) domains, and reaching some common understanding of the world between the analysts who are analyzing (the ‘social context’ in constructivist terms) and social facts grounded in cognitive factors.¹⁴⁵ Defining the outline of intelligence problems, engaging in social network or geospatial intelligence analysis, or planning for effects-based approaches to operations – it all relates to the cognitive domain. Together with US intelligence scholar and practitioner Robert Clark, Mitchell has developed the concept of target-centric network modeling (TCNM) to standardize and communicate understanding of these cognitive factors.¹⁴⁶ In some cases,

141 William L. Mitchell, ‘Agile Sense-Making in the Battlespace’, *The International C2 Journal*, 4(2010)1: 1-33. William Mitchell, ‘Instrumental Friend or Foe? Constructivist Activism in Security Means Analysis’, *Politica*, 2004.

142 Mitchell, ‘Agile Sense-Making in the Battlespace’, 4, Emmanuel Adler, ‘Seizing the Middle Ground, Constructivism in World Politics’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 3(1997) 3: 322, Emanuel Adler, ‘Constructivism and International Relations’ in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, Beth A. Simmons (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations* (London, Sage 2002), 104-109.

143 Mitchell, ‘Agile Sense-Making in the Battlespace’, 5.

144 Acronyms (i.e. Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure and information factors and Area, Structure, Capabilities, Organizations, People, Events) used in Western military doctrine to facilitate analysis and operational planning in a battlespace.

145 William L. Mitchell, ‘He who manages intersubjectivity wins’, IAFIE 2016 conference paper.

146 Robert M. Clark, *Intelligence Analysis, A Target-Centric Approach*, fifth edition (Washington, DC, CQ Press 2017), William L. Mitchell, Robert M. Clark, *Target-Centric Network Modeling, Case Studies in Analyzing Complex Intelligence Issues* (Washington,

it might be necessary for TCNM to include ‘allied or neutral networks’ in the analysis to be able to consider all PMESII dimensions.¹⁴⁷ This all serves to increase ‘the speed at which warfighting organizations are able to transform knowledge into actions for desired effects’ (or battlespace agility).¹⁴⁸ The practical focus of Mitchell’s approach is most visible in his remark that in any intelligence analysis or operational plan, one can relate the choices made to metatheoretical assumptions.¹⁴⁹ Critical assumptions are reflected in the underlying problem definition and the extent to which it is considered that an intelligence consumer might ask the ‘wrong’ questions, but also in the idea that allied networks are of influence in an intelligence problem.¹⁵⁰ Compared to Mitchell’s work, the ACN methodology outlined in this thesis is more explicit or radical about integrating the consumer’s strategic narrative in the analysis at the working level.

Irrespective of their different directions and foci, in general all these critical interpretivist approaches have attempted to review and enrich intelligence studies. In their search for critical knowledge claims, the efforts of Der Derian, Bean, Woodard, and Eriksson towards a discursive or ‘linguistic turn’ are praiseworthy. Studying language use and discourse relates to the core of the intelligence practice. Furthermore, Rathmell’s, Cavelty’s, and Mauer’s attempts to operationalize postmodern intelligence offer insights for intelligence from critical perspectives that relate to language and narratives. Intelligence is not an ‘objective eye’ but is socio-politically situated; it reproduces and even partly creates international political reality. Mitchell’s more practical focus to infer from constructivism insights to improve military and intelligence doctrine is laudable too. His approach to social constructivism (as complementing positivism) also positions him on theoretical middle ground.

Apart from drawing on different theory, this research is distinct from the critical approaches discussed in this section in its effort to derive from critical theories and concepts a methodology and method of use for the practice of intelligence analysis that integrally analyzes narratives from intelligence consumers, adversaries, and other relevant entities. The following section outlines in more detail the theoretical foundation of this thesis and explains the merit of the holistic integrative approach.

Critical realism, causality, and the role of language in security and intelligence

Critical realism, a contemporary and critical form of realism rooted in the work of British philosopher Roy Bhaskar, serves as a theoretical ‘middleground’ that transcends the causation-

DC, CQ Press 2016).

¹⁴⁷ Mitchell, Clark, *Target-Centric Network Modeling*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ Mitchell, Clark, *Target-Centric Network Modeling*, William L. Mitchell, ‘Target Network Modelling & Battlespace Agility’, ISMS paper, November 13-14, 2013, 4.

¹⁴⁹ William L. Mitchell, ‘Riding the Nexus, Cases from Danish Defence, IAFIE paper, July 22, 2015.

¹⁵⁰ Mitchell, Clark, *Target-Centric Network Modeling*, 4.

constitutive or explaining-understanding divide, and the structure versus agency debate.¹⁵¹ For decades, these distinctions have entrenched positivist empiricists and poststructuralist reflectivists, particularly in international relations. For positivists, causal relations have been limited to efficient ('pushing and pulling') regularity relations of observables.¹⁵² Research has involved pattern seeking as an additive approach to 'stack' isolated singular causes (causal mechanisms) in 'closed systems'. This has placed logical determinism (or discovering laws) as the central aspect of the scientific endeavor. In this respect, the works of British philosopher David Hume on causation have been highly influential in shaping the core principles of positivist empiricist positions on causality.¹⁵³ Poststructuralist reflectivist approaches that critique Humeanism have focused on understanding how ideational aspects (ideas, norms, conventions, and discourses) are constitutive of the social world. However, in the rejection of Humean causality and avoidance of the terminology, these approaches are also unnecessarily 'reductionist' as they exclude materialistic and deterministic analysis.

Critical realism acknowledges a form of interpretivism and thus moves explicitly away from the objectivist/empiricist paradigm. In contrast to poststructuralism, however, critical realism views observation and interpretation as a matter of epistemology, not ontology. In other words, there is a 'real' world out there. Reality is regarded as differentiated.

[C]ritical realists distinguish the real from the actual and the empirical. The 'real' refers to objects, their structures or natures and their causal powers and liabilities. The 'actual' refers to what happens when these powers and liabilities are activated and produce change. The 'empirical' is the subset of the real and the actual that is experienced by actors. Although changes at the level of the actual (e.g. political debates) may change the nature of objects (e.g. political institutions), the latter are not reducible to the former, any more than a car can be reduced to its movements. Moreover, while empirical experience can influence behaviour and hence what happens, much of the social and physical worlds can exist regardless of whether researchers, and in some cases other actors, are observing or experiencing them.¹⁵⁴

Critical realists do not conceive of the world in terms of either-or. Instead of viewing structure and agency as antithetical, critical realists hold that they conflate in a dialectical relationship. This dialectical relationship, or the free action of entities in the limiting context of deeper structures such as institutions, best explains both the natural/physical and various social realities that exist and influence each other. Reality is an 'open system' in which causal powers interact, enforce, or counter each other. Whether causal powers in the domain

151 Roy A. Bhaskar, e.a. *The formation of critical realism, a personal perspective* (London, Routledge 2008), Jonathan Joseph, *The Social in the Global* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2012), Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*, Bob Jessop, *State Power* (Cambridge, Polity 2007), Colin Wright, *Agents, Structures and International Relations, Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2006), Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 49, and Gill, 'Theories of intelligence', 212.

152 As described in Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*, location 169.

153 Don Garrett, *Hume*, The Routledge Philosophers, 1st Edition (London, Routledge 2015).

154 Norman Fairclough, Bob Jessop, Andrew Sayer, 'Critical Realism and Semiosis', in Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition (London, Routledge 2010) 204.

of 'real' become active at the 'actual' level and can be observed as a fact in the 'empirical' domain depends not only on the social conditions that enable the activation of causal forces, but also on whether other powers work against it.¹⁵⁵ Causal powers can be active, dormant, or countered.

For example, certain physical and social conditions in a dictatorship (political institution, 'real') can become challenged by economic and cultural globalization (structural social process, 'real') stimulated by the development of new technologies and international trade (social practices, 'actual'). The population of that dictatorial society thereby potentially gains the ability to critique and resist (political debate, 'actual') those in power and organize physical or virtual demonstrations (experience, 'empirical') beyond government control. These demonstrations represent and can result in an effect on political debate and the development of new technologies, and eventually even influence the deeper social structures. Yet, no new political institution is formed in and through these demonstrations; the dictatorship is still present as a 'real' social condition and has its (limiting, controlling) effect, although it is possible for the 'real' to eventually change. For researchers, it is possible to study how and why it does so.

Rather than avoiding the term 'causality', it is possible from a critical realist philosophical position (ontological philosophical realism and epistemological interpretivism) to rethink and reconceptualize causality beyond the traditional positivist empiricist Humean account of observable constant conjunctions.¹⁵⁶ Empiricism is not the only way of gaining knowledge. Unobservable processes of social construction can be understood by interpreting motives, reasons and meanings, ideas, rules, norms, and discourses, and the way these are influenced by the social context. Causes interact with and reflect other causes. Instead of additive analysis of singular causal mechanisms, the complexity of the social world requires an integrative approach. It is necessary to consider the 'network of causality' or 'causal complex', rather than singling out an individual causal mechanism.¹⁵⁷ Causes cannot be considered mechanisms, although causal processes or interactions of causes could perhaps arguably be considered in such a way. Critical realists do not necessarily reject the term 'mechanism', but in this thesis it is best avoided to reduce confusion with Humean associations.

The question is how to trace and analyze social conditions and powers to explain social processes in a causally adequate manner. Following German international relations professor Alexander Wendt and others, Aberystwyth University International Politics scholar Milja Kurki has made a fruitful effort to explore the use of Aristotle's four-fold conceptualization

155 Berth Danermark, Mats Ekstrom, Liselotte Jakobsen, Jan Ch. Karlsson, *Explaining Society, Critical realism in the social sciences* (New York, Routledge 2002), 199.

156 Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*.

157 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 18, 22-23, 47. Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 78-9. Patomäki, Wright, 'After Post-Positivism?', Milja Kurki, *Causation in International Relations, Reclaiming Causal Analysis*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, Kindle edition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2008) location 1935. Oliveira, 'The causal power of securitization', 21.

of causes from a critical realist perspective.¹⁵⁸ Without attempting to address all of Aristotle's theorizing, Kurki demonstrates that the typology of material, formal, efficient, and final cause is instrumental to specifying the concept of 'causal complex' and identifying how multiple types of causes interact.

First, *material cause* relates to the nature and properties of matter that enable and constrain possibilities of social action (in what way and for what matter can be used). Material cause is more than substance, as it also encompasses artefacts. At a secondary level, matter can hence be thought of as formed objects with a passive potentiality that shapes basic conditions of social reality.¹⁵⁹ Without (materials to make) weaponry and bombs, there is no capability to act with violence. For Aristotle, all is related to a material base. It has ontological primacy. But the causal power of matter is also intertwined with the physical and conceptual arrangement or social structure in which it is used. Weapons possessed by a friendly entity hold different meaning, or potential, than those owned by an adversary. *Formal causes* relate to the relatively stable ideational context that generates functional shapes of appearance. Ideas, conventions, norms, and discourses affect the ways in which meanings are defined, articulated, circulated, and conceived. Material causes can influence formal causes, as property can increase social status in some contexts. Conversely, a national security discourse can result in the (defensive) organization of infrastructure. Both types of causes can be thought of as constitutive conditions or structures that enable and constrain possibilities for action or agency. They form 'related wholes within which intentional actors act and thereby reproduce or transform the facilitating social conditions (material and formal) of their own activity'.¹⁶⁰

Efficient causes are what is generally conceived as causality. It is the entity or actor that activates movement, interaction, and change. It brings about actions that reflect, recreate, and transform matter and form. This does not relate only to physical action: while discourses can be viewed as constitutive in terms of formal causes, discursive action also has efficient causative effects. By making (provocative) statements in certain settings, specific articulated meanings can become actualized and influence social reality. *Final causes* are teleological. What are the motivations, visions, intentions, or reasons for action? The purpose of action is related to efficient causes, but distinct. Of course, the intended effect of actions can differ from what they actually cause. In case of discourses, the underlying motivation or purpose recipients read into statements may differ widely from what a producer of texts has intended.

These four categories or types represent both constitutive structures (material and formal causes) and causative agency (efficient and final causes), or facilitating conditions and drivers. The various types of causes interactively generate, counter, enable, or constrain effects in the social world. Actions are related to a purpose, but also situated in an ideational

158 Alexander Wendt, Why a World State is Inevitable, *European Journal of International Relations*, 9 (2003) 4, 491–542, Ruth Groff, *Critical Realism, Post-positivism and the Possibility of Knowledge* (London, Routledge, 2004), Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*, Oliveira, 'The causal power of securitization', 1–22.

159 Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*, location 2604.

160 *Ibid*, location 2693.

and material context. Any scientific methodology that relates to critical realism must be able to account for and reflect upon the activation of potential powers (or ‘potentialities’) against the backdrop of the distinction between deeper intransitive social structures and more transitive social practices and events. They have to acknowledge causal pluralism and approach a *complex of causes* holistically to study social phenomena.

Ontologically, the real world ‘out there’ consists of objects with ‘real properties and causal powers by virtue of their composition’.¹⁶¹ Scientists can make plausible causative statements as they study the nature and role of a plurality of causal powers that create social reality.

Causes, for philosophical realists, are not equated with regularities but can be seen to refer to real ontological features of the world. Scientific causal explanation, then, is not equated with analysis of observable regularities, but is seen to arise from the construction of conceptual models that try to grasp the nature of objects through making existential claims about their constituting structures and causal powers, thereby enabling explanations of various ‘actual’ or empirical processes and tendencies. Regularities are of interest to science because they allow us to test theories regarding causal powers in artificial closed system environments. Yet, observed regularities do not constitute causality: causality exists in the underlying causal powers and causal explanation in accounting for these underlying causal powers.¹⁶²

Because not all can be observed, observable regularities are neither necessary nor adequate to explain causal relations. This has implications for the way knowledge is gained. As Peter Gill and Mark Phythian describe, the creative process of abduction or redescription offers a way to find new connections by adopting and testing hypotheses about socially produced realities. Abductive research entails the process of accepting causality between certain social structures, processes, and events, and in addition reflecting upon this relation as the research progresses. By assuming the social conditioning of a society by dictatorship and globalization, political debate through demonstrations and other utterances generates meaning about the essence and workings of this conditioning. However, although the theoretical framework to study these situated demonstrations and utterances in context provides insights that are valid knowledge, it does not encompass *all* there is to know about the causal forces at play.

Neither deduction nor induction alone is adequate in social science: we do not ‘discover’ new events but we do discover new connections and relations that are not directly observable and by which we can analyse already known occurrences in a novel way. [...] By applying alternative theories and models in order to discern connections that were not evident, intelligence scho-

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161 Ibid, location 2316.

162 Ibid, location 2322-2326.

lars [...] [are not] merely describing reality as if through a clear pane of glass: they are seeking to make sense and thus actively 'create' the worlds of intelligence, government and IR.¹⁶³

Ultimately, our knowledge is imperfect as it is 'theory-laden'.¹⁶⁴ Hence, another implication of the critical realist philosophical position is the importance of a reflexive scientific attitude. Scientists are required to continuously consider the extent to which research designs have been constrained or influenced because of social and political conditions. The same is applicable for the practice of intelligence. The role of intelligence analysts and intelligence consumers (the 'observers') in society must be made explicit when analyzing intelligence problems. Intelligence analysis is not 'value-free', but socio-politically situated.¹⁶⁵ Reflection on how situated intelligence shapes problems in particular ways thus turns into an integral part of intelligence analysis. This reflexive attitude also enables deeper analysis of intelligence problems. Problematizing the situatedness of intelligence analysis itself opens up possibilities of a deeper understanding of what contexts, settings, and perceptions of security drive the actions and shape the motivations of intelligence subjects.

A sense of the added value of a critical realist scientific approach to the predominantly positivist practice of intelligence analysis is gained by examining the 'intention, capability, activity' (ICA) framework.¹⁶⁶ The multiplicative 'mathematical' threat assessment model is highly appreciated in intelligence analysis, for example for analyzing terrorist threats. When comparing the Aristotelian typology of causes to this framework (intention – final cause, capability – material cause, activity – efficient cause), the formal cause is evidently backgrounded as a distinct analytical category. One could argue that the category 'intention' indirectly refers to motivation and worldview, and hence includes the cultural or ideational context; but the point is that formal causes are fundamental facilitating conditions that color the meaning of actions. In addition to the question 'are there terrorists out there that target us?', the question 'why?' deserves more attention. What actors and audiences are involved, at what level, and how are they socio-politically situated?

Critical discourse analysis

As a fundamental part of the causal complex, the study of discourse structures and language use within socio-political ideational contexts encompasses a relevant approach to intelligence and security. The use of language is a primary semiotic mode of entry to study objects of research and the social dynamics of causal complexes. Not all is discourse, however. Non-semiotic (or 'extra-discursive') elements also make up social reality, such as the material

163 Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 40.

164 Paul Furlong, David Marsh, 'A Skin Not a Sweater', 205.

165 Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 39.

166 Singer, 'Threat-perception and the armament-tension dilemma', 94.

world, people, social relations and action. Critical realism underlines the significance of both semiotic and non-semiotic elements.¹⁶⁷ This is also a theoretical stand explicitly reflected in critical discourse analysis (CDA) as opposed to other forms of discourse theory.¹⁶⁸ CDA as introduced by British linguistics professor Norman Fairclough is a dialectical-relational discursive approach that particularly allows for the identification of various narratives in distinct social domains.¹⁶⁹ It connects different levels of analysis: texts, discursive practices of text production and consumption, and wider social practices that are situated in social structures.¹⁷⁰ Discourses reflect physical things, actions, and the wider material world in a particular way. There is a complex influence of social structures on events (and, over time, vice versa), which is shaped by all four types of causes. The challenge in discourse analysis is to recognize all of them and be open to working in an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary way, while preventing the tendency among social scientists to overdetermine non-textual aspects.¹⁷¹ This is not antithetical to Aristotle's views on the primacy of materiality. Rather, in indicating the significance of both material and discursive aspects of causal complexes, they balance each other, and unfold or stretch the theoretical framework to its full form.

There are two other leading forms of CDA; the intentions, approaches, and critical attitudes behind them are in fact very similar, but there are some differences.¹⁷² Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach is preferred in this study over critical discourse studies (CDS) and the discourse historical approach (DHA). With CDS, Dutch language professor Teun van Dijk analytically emphasizes cognition and mental models of discourse, pointing at an individual level towards brain research, and sociologically towards cultural memory.¹⁷³ The attempt with CDS is to enrich discourse studies with insights from cognitive science, a course not directly pursued in this thesis. The DHA, developed by Austrian language professor Ruth Wodak, is a popular CDA approach for its text-oriented methodology.¹⁷⁴ It combines text research and sociolinguistics to focus on the historical development of discourses. A central theme is to identify and investigate the nature of discursive strategies in texts. As described in the next paragraph, this thesis takes the theoretical concept of securitization as a conceptual lens for data analysis. This renders the 'strategy objective' of DHA less relevant.

167 Fairclough, Jessop, Sayer, 'Critical Realism and Semiosis', 219.

168 See for example Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London, Verso 1985), 108, as in Nicolina Montesano Montessori, Hans Schuman, Rob de Lange, *Kritische Discoursanalyse, De machten kracht van taal en tekst* (Brussel, Academic and Scientific Publishers NV 2012), 177.

169 Fairclough's approach to discourse has been adopted to study (aspects of) intelligence as part of a single (US or Swedish) social domain, but not to distinguish and study multiple social domains. For example see Bean, *No More Secrets*, Eriksson, *Swedish Military Intelligence*.

170 Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Boston, Addison Wesley 1995), Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse, Textual analysis for Social Research* (London, Routledge 2003), Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition.

171 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 294-295.

172 Montesano Montessori, Schuman, De Lange, *Kritische Discoursanalyse*, 101-128.

173 Teun A. van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Studies, a sociocognitive approach', in Ruth Wodak, Michael Meyer, (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, (London, Sage 2009) 62-86.

174 Martin Reisigl, Ruth Wodak, 'The discourse-historical approach (DHA)', in Wodak, Meyer, (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 87-121.

The theoretical roots of DHA show overlap with those of CDS and the dialectical-relational approach. However, Fairclough's CDA excels in its sociological analysis by distinguishing three levels or dimensions: he separates social structures, social practices, and social events, in correspondence to a discursive division between language, orders of discourse, and texts. This informs the analytic distinction between various narratives that characterizes the ACN methodology developed in this thesis. The CDA terms and concepts are clarified further in chapter 2.

In general, the term critical discourse analysis (or CDA) is used in this thesis to refer to Norman Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach. Some of his major contributions to CDA theorizing include *Language and Power*, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, and *Analyzing Discourse: Textual analysis for social research*.¹⁷⁵ He has been influenced by various theorists. Most noteworthy are British philosopher Roy Bhaskar's thinking on critical realism, Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and ideology, French philosopher Michel Foucault's study of power and knowledge, Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophy of language, and Australian linguist Michael A.K. Halliday's concept of systemic functional linguistics. To this day, Fairclough continues to develop his thinking. In essence, he recognizes Roy Bhaskar's idea that 'the natural and social worlds are different in that the latter but not the former depends upon human action for its existence and is "socially constructed"'.¹⁷⁶ Fairclough considers CDA as

[D]iscourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practice, 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.¹⁷⁷

Responding to the new directions that the field of CDA developed, in 2010 he added:

[R]esearch and analysis counts as CDA in so far as it has all of the following characteristics. 1. It is not just analysis of discourse (or more concretely texts), it is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process. 2. It is not just general commentary on discourse, it includes some form of systematic analysis of texts. 3. It is not just descriptive, it is also normative. It addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting or mitigating them.¹⁷⁸

175 Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, third edition (New York, Routledge 2015), Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*.

176 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 4.

177 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 132.

178 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 10-11.

These measures are not strict rules and open to interpretation. In light of this study, the normative aspect of addressing ‘social wrongs’ translates to identifying processes of securitization and identification in terms of an emerging ‘social difference’. Fairclough’s CDA framework is thus also suitable in its centrality of difference and the related processes of identification. In general, CDA is distinctive in the way discourse is systematically described, interpreted, evaluated, critiqued, and explained in terms of ‘contradictions between what is claimed and expected to be and what actually is’.¹⁷⁹ Discourse is explained with regard to how such contradictions are (necessary) elements of the broader social reality of which they are part. Apart from analyzing discourse, CDA also includes reflection on the interpretations, evaluations, critiques, and explanations of discourse participants.

What separates CDA from normal discourse, as any analysis is itself anything but discourse? CDA asks why discourse is the way it is, and develops systematic analytical procedures to interpret the same resources as discourse participants. It is self-consciousness that separates the analyst from other participants when interpreting discourse. The analyst makes his observations and thoughts explicit. CDA research interprets meaning, but also studies the causal effect of discourse on other social elements (and vice versa) by systematically making use of social science theorizing. In the systematic use of theory, the researcher (or analyst) differs from discourse participants. Moreover, CDA also includes forms of critique. There is a difference between explanation (or transcendental explanatory critique) and critique (or immanent normative critique) to discourse.¹⁸⁰ The latter remains within the same social reality and is concerned with internal inconsistencies: what is the norm in a social reality versus what happens there? Explanatory critique opens up the possibility of transformative action. It uses discourse as a ‘point of entry’ but is ultimately aimed at the wider social reality of which the discourse is part.¹⁸¹ How does power keep certain ideologies dominant, and how do dominant ideologies maintain power relations and difference? Explanation focuses on how discourse functions as an element of agency (for this research securitization efforts) and dialectically relates to social structures. CDA is also normative. Comparing what is ‘there’ with what could or should be ‘there’ is part of the analysis as a stepping stone for explanation. For ACN, this function is performed by a critical narrative that serves as ‘commentator’ on discursive and non-discursive actions as defined in other narratives.

CDA represents a discursive approach that emphasizes how meaning-making in communication is central to the shaping of social relations. It also focuses on the dialectical relationship between discourses (or narratives) and wider social practices (e.g. international politics), grasping discursive and non-discursive struggles of power over meaning. Social structures (such as nations, or the global network society) enable and constrain the use of language, while texts reflect and (re)create these social structures. It is impossible to see discourse as a separate object, and CDA is therefore about the study not only of discourse, but

179 Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 9.

180 *Ibid.*, 12.

181 *Ibid.*, 14.

also of the relations between discourse and other social elements. There is an interdisciplinary character, which becomes evident in the next chapter as non-semiotic elements of social practices are related to various fields, such as international relations theory, sociology, and religious studies.

Discursive analysis thus encompasses the study of production and consumption of multiple texts (written or spoken language, symbols, signs, images, music) within contextualized discursive practices that are woven together to form discourses or narratives. Texts are constituent and constitutive, they reflect and create reality. Yet, they do so while production and consumption are subject to relations of power. Who has the means and authority to say what about whom or what, or to keep others from speaking in this respect? Who has the ability and willingness to listen? Non-discursive power relations enable and constrain entities to produce, combine, reproduce, or consume texts. CDA studies the forming and workings of knowledge and power through language against the background of social reality. It enables to identify distinct narratives in different social domains. What should be looked for in narratives? How and for what are power relations enacted or activated? The concept of securitization provides the necessary focus to analyze narratives.

Securitization

The debate in critical security studies on securitization is highly significant to intelligence analysis. The theorizing on this critical concept of security has been part of an effort to broaden and deepen the scope of traditional concepts in security studies.¹⁸² Security is not defined as an objective reality, but as a social construct or a form of interpretation manifested in the use of language. The traditional positivist paradigm limited security to the survival politics of states, primarily with a military focus. In general, the concept of securitization is associated with two generations of theorists. First, in 1998 British, Danish, and Dutch international relations scholars Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde (the Copenhagen School) introduced 'a radical new framework' for the analysis of security.¹⁸³ According to this framework, a political issue can be 'securitized' before a public audience by a 'securitizing actor' when a 'speech act' is uttered that a 'referent object' is existentially threatened.¹⁸⁴ The speech act has to be accepted by an audience.

The concept is grounded in Austin's speech act theory, which holds that words can do more than merely describe a situation, they can lead others to perform certain action.¹⁸⁵ Austin distinguishes between three levels of description of speech acts: locutionary (the actual utterance of words and their ostensible meaning), illocutionary (the pragmatic force,

¹⁸² Krause, Williams, *Critical Security Studies*.

¹⁸³ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security, A New Framework for Analysis* (London, Lynne Rienner 1998) 204.

¹⁸⁴ Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, *Security*, 1-47.

¹⁸⁵ John L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press 1975).

its intended significance), and perlocutionary (the consequential effects, such as convincing or motivating action).¹⁸⁶ The Copenhagen School centralizes the attribution of meaning, the illocutionary act. A securitizing speech act is a conventional procedure that is successful when all required conditions are met. Security can be spoken, like a marriage becomes a fact after the verbal procedure is completed. 'The utterance itself is the act.'¹⁸⁷ The result of securitization is that issues are shifted from normal politics to emergency politics, which allows for the adoption of special measures. Any extraordinary measures taken to deal with the threat are not considered part of securitization. The opposite, desecuritization, is characterized as bringing securitized issues back into the realm of normal politics. According to the Copenhagen School, this is eventually desirable for all security problems as securitization represents the failure to deal with issues of normal politics.¹⁸⁸

Apart from an (inter)subjective view of security, Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde define security in five sectors: military, political, economic, environmental, and societal. The military sector is state-centric, while the societal sector (or 'identity security') is concerned with diverse collectives such as clans, ethnic groups, social networks, or nations that defend their 'we identity'.¹⁸⁹ The authors also distinguish between different levels of analysis: local, regional, interregional, and global. Security problems at a specific level in one sector can affect security problems in other sectors and at other levels. Environmental problems such as global warming, desertification, and pollution can cause military security issues at a local level, as states fight for control over water and food resources. The sectors and levels function as different lenses to look at the units and their security concerns (the securitizations) that can form multi-layered, clustered security complexes or constellations.¹⁹⁰ More recently, Buzan and Wæver have addressed the gap between the 'middle level' of security and the 'systems level'.¹⁹¹ Macrosecuritization represents a larger social formation, such as the Global War on Terror defined by US President George W. Bush, to which lower-level securitizations relate, affecting their scope and temporality.

The Copenhagen School's speech act concept of securitization appears to offer a practical way to widen the scope of security in a constructivist manner. However, it only covers part of the story. First, securitization is conceived only as a discursive process, excluding the securitizing effect of security practices and other non-discursive actions. Second, in terms of causality, the Copenhagen School only acknowledges that securitization has effects. Without it, the process would not be worthwhile for actors to pursue. Instances or

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186 Ibid, 94-108.

187 Ole Wæver, 'Securitization and Desecuritization', in Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed.) *On Security* (New York, Columbia University Press 1995) 55.

188 Ibid.

189 Ole Weaver, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup, Pierre Lemaitre, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Order in Europe* (London, Pinter 1993), Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, *Security*, 120.

190 Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, *Security*, 204

191 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, 'Macro-Securitization and Security Constellations, Reconsidering the Scale in Securitization Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 35 (2009) 2: 253-276.

processes of securitization are deemed 'discontinuous changes' or social 'quantum jumps' that have no preceding causal relations, for example to non-discursive aspects of reality.¹⁹² How, then, can we trace and explain how it is possible that securitization occurs, and what social elements are integrated and combined to generate effects? The discursive speech act approach omits the enabling or constraining of wider social conditions, underlying forces, and non-discursive factors from the analysis.

A second generation of securitization scholars argue that securitization is more complex, dynamic, and nuanced.¹⁹³ Some of the early first-generation theorists have been deemed 'internalists' for their emphasis on the speech act itself, whereas second-generation theorists have been called 'externalists'.¹⁹⁴ Another distinction often made is between a philosophical and a sociological approach. Belgian international relations professor Thierry Balzacq is a leading figure in the second generation. His concept of contextual sociological securitization is grounded in critical realism.¹⁹⁵ He argues that securitization is not a speech act, but a pragmatic act. This means that the use of language is explained within certain contexts, rather than as utterances of a sovereign speaker to a sovereign hearer. Furthermore, securitization can exist in practices other than words, such as bureaucratic procedures or technologies. This is an approach that clearly conforms more to the philosophical underpinnings of causal relations outlined in a previous paragraph. Balzacq draws on Dutch language scholar Jacob Mey's theory of pragmatic acts.

The theory of pragmatic acts [...] does not try to explain language use from the inside out, that is, from words having their origin in a sovereign speaker and going out to an equally sovereign hearer [...]. Rather, its explanatory movement is from the outside in: the focus is on the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation.¹⁹⁶

Balzacq's main critique of the Copenhagen School is built on three assumptions.¹⁹⁷ First and foremost, he assumes that securitization as a speech act leaves the status of the receptive, predefined audience unaccounted for. He recognizes the practical difficulties with identifying and analyzing audiences, but nevertheless argues that the concept of audience

192 Ole Wæver, 'Politics, security, theory', *Security Dialogue*, 42 (2011) 4-5: 476.

193 For example, Thierry Balzacq, Maria Trombetta, Holger Stritzel, Roxanna Sjöstedt, Dirk Schmittchen, Juha Vuori, Michael Williams, Sarah Léonard, Christian Kaunert, Fred Vultee, Cai Wilkinson, Mark Salter, in Thierry Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security* (New York, Routledge 2015), and in Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, Faye Donnelly, *Securitization and the Iraq War, The rules of Engagement in World Politics* (New York, Routledge 2013), 49

194 Holger Stritzel, 'Towards a Theory of Securitization, Copenhagen and Beyond', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13 (2007) 3: 375-383.

195 Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*, Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, Thierry Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization, Political Agency, Audience and Context', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11 (2005) 2: 171-201

196 Jacob L. Mey, *Pragmatics, An introduction* (Oxford, Blackwell 2001), 221, as in Balzacq, 'A Theory of Securitization, Origins, core assumptions, and variants', Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 25.

197 Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization'.

requires differentiation.¹⁹⁸ Hence, Balzacq proposes a distinction between formal and moral support of securitization.¹⁹⁹ Formal support comes from the audience that provides the necessary legitimate mandate to execute special measures to deal with the threat. Moral support conditions formal support, and securitizing actors strive to prompt a moral audience as large as possible to strengthen social relations and their position of authority. For this, the securitizing actor has to take into account the audience's frames of reference, their readiness to be convinced (depending on their trust in the securitizing actor), and the ability to (indirectly) grant or deny a formal mandate.²⁰⁰

Other theorists, such as Finnish international politics professor Juha Vuori, have similarly argued that 'various types and parallel audiences' relate to the different (general or specific) functions of securitization processes, such as raising an issue on the agenda, reproducing a certain security status, or legitimizing past and future actions.²⁰¹ Ultimately, audiences have to have the ability to somehow contribute to the underlying goal of the securitizing actor. This is a wider view of the role audiences can fulfill than the idea that they provide a mandate for deontological powers to the securitizing actor. Securitization maintains or strengthens processes of identification among general and specific audiences. The attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941 or the World Trade Center in 2001 caused a rally-round-the-flag effect and binary perceptions of identity.²⁰² Following the 2001 attacks, US President George W. Bush emphasized 'one is either with, or against us'.²⁰³ In some instances, audiences might not even exist prior to securitization, as it is the effort itself that brings the awareness to people that they are part of a unified audience in relation to an issue.²⁰⁴ In case of existing power relations in a non-democratic environment, such as a dictatorial state or a fundamentalist organization, securitization might be targeted at a highly specific elite or group to enable a particular action. For Vuori, predefining specific types of audiences in theory is difficult because of the socio-historical, cultural, and political conditions in which securitization takes place.²⁰⁵

198 Balzacq, Léonard, Ruzicka, "Securitization' revisited', 494.

199 Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization', A point developed further by Paul Roe, 'Actor, Audience(s) and Emergency Measures, Securitization and the UK's Decision To Invade Iraq', *Security Dialogue*, 39 (2008) 6: 615-635.

200 Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization', 192.

201 Juha Vuori, 'Illocutionary logic and strands of securitization, applying the theory of securitization to the study of non-democratic political orders', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14 (2008) 1: 65-99, as in Sarah Léonard, Christian Kaunert, 'Reconceptualizing the audience in securitization theory', Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 57-76.

202 John E. Mueller, 'Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson', *The American Political Science Review*, 64 (1970) 1, 18-34 and Gallup, 'Presidential Job Approval Bush', <http://www.gallupoll.com/content/default.aspx?ci=1723> (last retrieved February 7, 2018), Gallup, 'Presidential Job approval Roosevelt' <http://brain.gallup.com/search/results.aspx?SearchTypeAll=Roosevelt%20approve&SearchTypeExa=job&SearchTypeAny=&SearchConType=1> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

203 CNN, 'You are either with us or against us', November 6, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/> (last retrieved December 10, 2016). CNN, 'Former aide: Powell WMD speech 'lowest point in my life'', Interview with Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson for CNN, August 23, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/08/19/powell.un/> (last retrieved January 3, 2018).

204 Michael C. Williams, 'The Continuing Evolution of Securitization Theory', Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 215.

205 Juha Vuori, 'Illocutionary logic and strands of securitization', 72.

In an effort to tackle this challenge, Dundee politics and security scholars Sarah Léonard and Christian Kaunert advance the idea of differentiated securitization audiences along the lines of three processes that occur in parallel.²⁰⁶ They draw on American social science professor John Kingdon's 'three streams model' of policymaking.²⁰⁷ When the recognition or agenda-setting of a *problem*, the availability of adequate (possible, ethical, sustainable) solutions or *policies*, and the resonance among the general public and decision-makers to engage in a particular *politics* all converge, a *window of opportunity* emerges for the securitizing actor (or *policy entrepreneur*) to engage effectively in securitization efforts. Agenda-setting can be triggered by sudden external events or an interpretation of indicators by technocratic communities who seek to convince decision-makers. These technocratic communities can be part of the decision-maker's institution (bureaucracy) or separate from it (think tanks, academia). For each process, Léonard and Kaunert define different types of audiences that follow a different logic of persuasion. The securitizing actor needs to convince (other) decision-makers to raise the issue on the agenda, technocrats and specialists need to be convinced of the urgency to come up with possible solutions, and the sentiment of the wider public needs to be 'ripe' for implementing policies. Thus, in essence Léonard and Kaunert also recognize both formal audiences that enable or functionally contribute to securitization efforts, and moral audiences that are potentially or indirectly of influence.

Interesting as their approach is, similar to other attempts to further operationalize audiences, the findings are primarily applicable to (democratic) institutionalized environments in which power relations have been established to a certain extent.²⁰⁸ Based on the case studies in this thesis, the role of various types of audiences in both an institutionalized national and social transnational social domain will be analyzed. The aim is not to filter out singular essential characteristics, but to generate more insights into the nature and status of securitization audiences in these different contexts. This thesis reflects the position that identifying audience assent and declaring securitization 'successful' is not necessary to adequately analyze the causal relations and effects involved in securitization efforts. Audiences are an essential component of securitization efforts, but not necessarily in terms of granting deontological powers to securitizing actors. Empirical evidence regarding audiences and their responses might be fragmentary or absent, but that does not a priori imply that no valid inferences can be reached based on alignment of securitization efforts with particular social structures and practices. As such, this research can also contribute to the debate on securitization within critical security studies in its analysis of various types of audiences associated with the narratives or resonating with the securitization efforts.

A second aspect of Balzacq's critique concerns how the use of security modifies the context, yet to be 'effective' such use must be aligned with an external context that is independent

206 Léonard, Kaunert, 'Reconceptualizing the audience'.

207 John Kingdon, *Agenda, alternatives and public policies* (Boston, Little Brown 1984).

208 Adam Côté, 'Agents without agency: Assessing the role of the audience in securitization theory' *Security Dialogue*, 47 (2016) 6: 541–558, Lee Jarvis and Tim Legrand, "'I am somewhat puzzled", Questions, audiences and securitization in the proscription of terrorist organizations', *Security Dialogue*, 48 (2017) 2: 149–167.

from the use of language. In other words, there is a distinction between the situational context of the securitization effort and the background context or *zeitgeist*. American discourse scholar Margaret Wetherell refers to the same division as proximate and distal contexts.²⁰⁹ The proximate context comprises the occasion or genre of interaction, such as a political summit, a press statement, a religious service, or a post on Twitter. This is similar as to what Canadian political science professor Mark Salter refers to as situational context or setting. According to Salter, different audiences (both moral and formal) find themselves situated in various settings (for example popular, elite, technocratic, scientific, religious).²¹⁰ Each of these settings can be characterized by particular expectations, specialized language, conventions, and procedures. Hence, while a securitizing actor and his effort might resonate with some audiences in some settings, this might not be true for other audiences in other settings. The situational context can also be characterized by circumstances, such as a large scale natural disaster, that make other securitized threats relatively less important. The concept of settings emphasizes that what entails ‘security’ or a threat to it differs over time and space, and the practical effects of securitization efforts depend on the situatedness of the security discourse itself.²¹¹ But ultimately, these more dynamic settings can be situated in more durable social structures. Wetherell’s concept of distal context represents background knowledge or embeddedness of utterances in more constant or stable social institutions, class, and culture. For example, the extent to which a society is sensitive to xenophobia can relate to the degree of geographical, social, or technological isolation. In essence, Salter’s approach also points to the differentiation of audiences as discussed above. The concept of a background context positions these various and parallel audiences as part of a broader social domain, or particular social order. Discourses or narratives that encompass securitization efforts do so with respect to different audiences within an overarching social structure.

Third, the power of securitization efforts is related to the social position of the speaker and his unequal access and ability to use discursive resources. This is part of what Michel Foucault refers to as a wider ‘system of relations’ or ‘dispositif’ that links ‘a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid.’²¹² Securitization is subject to constellations of power, but Balzacq holds that it is also the language itself that has ‘an intrinsic force that rests with the audience’s scrutiny of truth claims, with regard to a

209 Margaret Wetherell, ‘Debates in discourse research’, in Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon Yates (eds.), *Discourse theory and practice, A reader* (Thousand Oaks CA, Sage 2001), 380–399, as in Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 37.

210 Mark Salter, ‘Securitization and Desecuritization, A Dramaturgical analysis of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 11 (2008) 4: 321–349, Mark Salter, ‘When securitization fails, The hard case of counter-terrorism programs’, in Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 116–132, Erving Goffman, *The presentation of the self in everyday life*, (New York, Doubleday 1959).

211 Matt McDonald, ‘Contesting border security, Emancipation and asylum in the Australian context’, in Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*, 158–159.

212 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews 1972–1977*, edited and translated by Colin Gordon e.a. (New York, Pantheon Books 1980), 194.

threat, made by the speaker'.²¹³ A securitizing actor needs to use the appropriate words that fit the frames of reference of audiences to win support. In sum, Balzacq's pragmatic model of security specifically aims to accommodate analysis of 'the psycho-cultural orientation of audiences, the wider context, and the differential power between the speaker and the listeners' as key aspects.²¹⁴ He defines securitization as

an articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block its development.²¹⁵

This definition emphasizes the difference between securitization as conceived by the Copenhagen School and by Balzacq. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde centralized three units of analysis: referent objects, securitizing actors, and functional actors (that is, actors of influence on the security dynamics not being either referent object or securitizing actor).²¹⁶ For Balzacq, in contrast, these 'units of analysis' fall within the same 'level of analysis': agents.²¹⁷ Summarizing his critique on practically excluding the context, status, and nature of the audience, Balzacq defines three dimensions or levels of analysis that provide different perspectives on securitization: agents, acts, and context. The level *agents* encompasses the various actors, including audiences, the personal and social identities, and the power relations involved. The discursive and non-discursive practices that endorse securitization are the focus of the second level: *acts*. This includes the type of language used, the strategic use of heuristic artefacts as social devices to generate the conditions that enable the mobilization of audiences, the *dispositif* of (or generated by) the securitization process, and the customized policies generated by securitization. The third level, *contexts*, refers to the way securitization is situated socially and historically in situational and wider background contexts.

Among second-generation securitization theorists, academic debate is also ongoing about the nature of reverse processes of securitization. There is always the potential for any securitization debate to 'open up', unmake, desecuritize, or transcend.²¹⁸ Whereas the Copenhagen School emphasizes desecuritization as issues becoming political again, Balzacq and others hold that it can also be a process of transformation to the non-political.²¹⁹ Scholars

213 Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization', 173.

214 Ibid.

215 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 3.

216 Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, *Security*, 36.

217 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 35-37.

218 Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*.

219 Ibid, 86.

have discussed the nature and workings of several logics or strategies of desecuritization and contesting security, such as resistance, emancipation, and societal or organizational/infrastructural resilience.²²⁰ However, it is also recognized that the meaning of these logics or concepts and the way they relate is fragile and highly debated.²²¹ Because critique of securitization efforts is central in one of the case studies, it is necessary to at least describe these concepts somewhat further.

In general, resistance is referred to as a form of reframing and 'counter-politics' against a dominant power or discourse. This implies that there is an autonomous space, separate from the dominant security discourse, in which there can be resistance.²²² However, as resistance is conceptually bound to the social structures and conditions that are being resisted, it proves to be difficult to strictly separate domination and resistance. In practice, both the power to dominate and the power to resist are fragmentary and inconsistent to varying degrees.²²³ Forms of dissent embody elements and aspects of resistance that can be found in the dominant security discourse.

The concept of emancipation is distinct in its progressive nature. Resistance, for example, can also be directed at maintaining the status quo. There is lively discussion among securitization theorists as to whether it is something that can be granted by a dominating power or something that can be fought for. In general, however, emancipation is thought of as an inclusive concept with regard to diversity, whereas securitization has an exclusionary tendency in that respect. Resilience refers to the ways subjects can to some extent offset negative and constraining consequences of security policies in the conduct of their normal practices. Like emancipation, it is a more proactive concept, but instead of transforming security policies it emphasizes the way these policies are dealt with.

In some of the securitization literature, desecuritization is viewed as the reverse *outcome* of a securitization process: a securitized topic is brought back into the realm of normal politics.²²⁴ Some argue that desecuritization is strategy that can take various forms, such as resistance, emancipation, and resilience.²²⁵ Yet, as mentioned, the concepts of desecuritization, resistance, emancipation, and resilience are all subject to lively debate with respect to definition and meaning. This thesis conforms to the view that desecuritization is a broad term that overarches the other discussed concepts. It is more fruitful to consider desecuritization as an ongoing *process* or social force influencing securitization efforts.²²⁶ Parallel to the approach that it is difficult and unproductive to declare 'instances' of

220 Ibid; Matti Jultila, 'Desecuritizing minority rights, against determinism', *Security Dialogue*, 37(2006) 2: 167-185.

221 Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*, 85.

222 Ibid, 11.

223 Ibid, 12.

224 Jeff Huysmans, 'Desecuritization and the aesthetics of horror in political realism', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 27(1998) 3: 569-589.

225 Juha A. Vuori, 'Contesting and resisting security in post-Mao China', in Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*, 29-43, Florent Blanc, 'Poking holes and spreading cracks in the wall', in Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*, 63-84, Thierry Balzacq, Sara Depauw, Sarah Léonard, 'The political limits of desecuritization', in Balzacq, (ed.) *Contesting Security*, 104-121.

226 Rita Floyd, 'Just and unjust desecuritization', in Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*, 128.

successful securitization, it is equally problematic to speak of a reverse *outcome*. The view of securitization and desecuritization advanced in this thesis is gradual and contextual. This also leaves open the possibility to view desecuritization in terms of both management and transformation: the attempt can be either to relocate the issue and deal with it in the political realm, or to deconstruct the exclusionary logic and decompose the issue.²²⁷

At the basis of desecuritization lies a form of critique that relates to an aspect of securitization. First, critique can focus on the objective behind the identified securitization efforts. Why is this securitization necessary? Where does it lead? And what are the motivations of the securitizing actor? Second, the effectiveness of securitization efforts and related security practices can be criticized. Whether or not the underlying goal is accepted, the (potential) consequences of customized policies can be critically viewed. This can be in both functional and moral terms. Will the measures taken also have a negative or counterproductive effect? What does engaging in the practice of taking certain actions mean for processes of self-identification? Is it morally and legally justifiable to do so? Third, a discrepancy can be highlighted between the (simplified) frames or problem definition associated with securitization and different (possibly more complex) views on social reality. How are threatening entities delineated? What are the reasons for entities to threaten others? Critique of securitization efforts can add up to a degree that it has a desecuritizing effect. But not for all critique this is not the case, as not all securitization efforts necessarily lead to 'successful' securitization. Critique can also be uttered outside the social reality or context of the securitizing actor and his audiences. Even if critique is expressed in interaction with securitization efforts within the same social reality, its reversing or deconstructing impact can still be limited due to a lack of intent or momentum.

Balzacq's securitization theory and Fairclough's theoretical discourse model complement each other and enable one to *identify* and *analyze* distinct narratives. The differentiated critical realist view of reality and Aristotle's four-fold typology of causes provide a broader outline or philosophical theoretical foundation, grounding CDA and securitization theory. The latter theoretical components enable to zoom in on the dialectical relationship between social events, practices, and structures. In and through discursive and non-discursive action, the manifestation and workings of power relations and processes of identification take shape. Consistently attributed meanings in service of maintaining power relations and articulating difference between a particular 'self' and others can gradually transform into ideology, or even become generally accepted 'common sense'. This process of naturalization describes how the various types of causes as defined by Aristotle relate, interact, and also transform each other.²²⁸ This is outlined further in the next chapter. CDA and securitization provide the theoretical components and logic to trace how various facilitating conditions and drivers (or causes) combine, and to explain how such causal complexes affect social realities.

²²⁷ Balzacq, Depauw, Léonard, 'The political limits of desecuritization', 109.

²²⁸ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 35, 126, Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 218, Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 9, 27.

Analysis by contrasting narratives

Analysis by contrasting narratives (ACN), the term devised in this thesis, is a banner for the methodology of comparing and contrasting processes of (de)securitization between different narratives (or discourses). The approach broadly aligns with critical or ‘revolutionary’ contributions to the intelligence literature, such as Moore’s intelligence sensemaking, but involves perhaps a more radical practice. Especially as the intelligence environment has become increasingly complex, new ways of thinking are required more than rearranging responsibilities and structures. Rather than problematizing any ‘duplication of function’ between intelligence analysis and policy analysis, a *more* integrative (or hybrid) approach is called for.²²⁹ This is partly a rendition of the critical self-reflection on the socio-political situatedness of intelligence analysis, and recognizes how the perspective and actions of the intelligence consumer essentially shape the intelligence problem. ACN advances cooperation and jointness among intelligence professionals and working-level policymakers as they are necessary to contribute to a holistic sensemaking of complex intelligence problems. The strategic narrative of the intelligence consumer is incorporated in the overall analysis. It is possible for trusted outside experts to become involved in analyzing additional narratives if the necessary expertise is lacking in intelligence organizations to function as situated (knowledgeable) critical (selfreflexive) interpreters.

Such approaches are also relatively uncommon in security studies.²³⁰ Research on securitization has mostly focused on the use of language in *a specific* discourse. The researcher takes a normative stance and deconstructs relations of power and meaning for this discourse. However, social events become part of *various* discourses or narratives as they are interpreted in various ways by different entities and at different levels. What makes the present research distinct is that *several* discourses are compared and contrasted (at least three), instead of studying and deconstructing one ‘dominant’ narrative. It seeks to identify *basic analytic narratives* for various entities that manifest at different levels and dominate the attribution of meaning, especially in terms of securitization. *Who has what power, on which level, in what setting, over what audience, to attribute what meaning of security, in what texts, which support what interests and motivates what action, by whom?* These multiple narratives relate to several of a set of social events (such as a terrorist attack, a declaration, or troop movements) that are part of an intelligence problem.

The terms *basic* and *analytic* are used to underline how defining the level and contours of any discourse is ultimately a matter of choice for the researcher that needs to be made explicit.²³¹ For example, as will be illustrated further in chapter 2, it is possible to define a United States institutional discourse on *Al Qaeda* at the national level. But at times, defending

229 Stephen Marrin, ‘Why strategic intelligence analysis has limited influence on American foreign policy’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 32 (2017) 6: 725-742.

230 One of the exceptions that considers two perspectives is Stritzel, Chang, ‘Securitization and counter-securitization in Afghanistan’.

231 Hansen, *Security as Practice*.

its cohesion can prove to be difficult as different readings of events at the subnational level add up. The attack on the US Embassy in Benghazi in 2012 led Republicans like House Intelligence chair Mike Rogers to conclude it was a ‘coordinated, military style commando-type raid’, a ‘pre-planned, organized terrorist event’ that was ‘led by *Al Qaeda*’.²³² Shortly after the attack, the Democratic US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice stated it was actually a street protest against an anti-Muslim video on YouTube that grew out of hand, and some extremist elements had eventually joined.²³³ Later, *New York Times* journalist David Kirkpatrick added another reading of the events.²³⁴

As also explained further in chapter 2, to avoid creating a straw man when analyzing narratives, it is important to ensure that the various narratives relate to the relevant and distinctive social practices such as international politics, investigative journalism in the global network society, or Salafi-jihadism. Each social practice enables distinctly different (non-)discursive practices such as the articulation of foreign policy, the publishing of memoirs, freelance research, or legitimizations of violent actions in Arabic genres such as memoranda, declarations (*hukm*), or decrees (*fatwa*). In each narrative, bombings and troop deployments are reflected in a specific way, (re)creating different processes of securitization (or desecuritization) and identification in co-existing realities. Some aspects of these narratives are secret or concealed, others are public, but in all cases, securitization requires an audience (albeit one that is sometimes hidden or compartmentalized).

ACN does not imply that traditional methods and analytic concepts are obsolete. However, traditional ‘puzzle solving’ becomes more relative as ACN allows analysts to highlight diversity at an initial stage and escape the limitations of the political strategic narrative that intelligence consumers use to legitimize their own policy.²³⁵ It leads intelligence analysts to ask important questions: In what way does our threat perception differ from others? Who are these others exactly and (while the name of an entity might not have changed) how do we know when their different identities have significantly changed so we need to adjust our views? Is this a consequence of our own (policy) actions or not? And ... who are *we* actually? For professionals working with intelligence, *all* of these are crucial questions. When confronted with ambiguous mysteries, intelligence analysts have to reflect on different

232 Catherine Herridge, ‘House Intelligence chair, Benghazi attack ‘Al Qaeda-led event’’, *Fox News*, December 29, 2013, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/12/29/house-intelligence-chair-benghazi-attack-al-qaeda-led-event/> (last retrieved January 10, 2015).

233 CBS News, ‘“Face the Nation” transcripts, September 16, 2012, Libyan Pres. Magariaf, Amb. Rice and Sen. McCain’, *CBS News*, September 16, 2012, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/face-the-nation-transcripts-september-16-2012-libyan-pres-magariaf-amb-rice-and-sen-mccain/> (last retrieved January 10, 2015), Hillary Rodham Clinton, ‘Remarks on the Deaths of American Personnel in Benghazi, Libya’ (September 12, 2012), <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2012/09/197654.htm> (last retrieved March 21, 2018), Anne Gearem, Colin Lynch, ‘U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice’, *The Washington Post*, October 15, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-ambassador-susan-rice/2012/10/15/c5a9fe04-16d9-11e2-8792-cf5305eddf60_story.html (last retrieved January 10, 2015).

234 David D. Kirkpatrick, ‘A Deadly Mix in Benghazi’, *The New York Times*, December 28, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/benghazi/#/?chapt=0> (last retrieved January 10, 2015).

235 Emile Simpson, *War From the Ground Up, Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics*, second edition (London, Hurst & Company 2013).

and multi-layered perspectives and give multiple meanings to a subject in coherence with various policy options.

ACN holds that it is more important to seek various meanings of discourses than to increase collection of rhetoric. Many intelligence analysts believe that the more means an intelligence organization has, the closer it can come to 'the truth'. This is debatable. The effort by the US to achieve 'total information awareness' by primarily focusing on increasing the quantity of available (meta)data seems of only limited use, as from an ACN perspective the 'causality' of correlations found in big data with poor content and context can be questioned. The methodology of ACN offered in this thesis points the way in a different direction. It is about understanding various meanings of events and circumstances by situating statements and actions in various causal complexes, and explaining their effects on social phenomena.

Operationalizing securitization theory and CDA for intelligence into ACN might receive criticism from two opposing fronts in intelligence studies. First, in the sphere of the study for intelligence, skeptics might argue that existing analytic methods are adequate to capture the multiple meanings entities attribute to (social) reality.²³⁶ They might hold that various structured analytic techniques (SATs) for intelligence analysis aim to reframe and improve accuracy of assessments by widening the analytical spectrum and assessing alternative points of view. As noted in the introduction of this thesis, in the (US) intelligence practice, SATs have a special status.²³⁷ The set of techniques represents the ideal analytic tradecraft, or gold standard for analyzing intelligence problems. Yet, to an important degree this status has been granted mostly by 'lore and assertion'.²³⁸ Intelligence scholars have recognized problems with assessing their actual rigor and efficiency.²³⁹ Moreover, there are distinct differences between ACN and contrarian SATs, such as team A/B analysis or red hat analysis, devil's advocacy, premortem analysis, and structured self-critique.

At first glance, team A/B analysis seems suitable to grasp co-existing truths. Groups of analysts are formed and try to make the best case for different points of view or hypotheses with respect to the available data, providing policymakers with multiple assessments.²⁴⁰ Yet, such analyses often lack the theoretical considerations that guide the *selection* of various points of view, and they have been known to enable policymakers to follow a preferred (or predefined) policy.²⁴¹ An infamous example is the intelligence failure of assuming that there were 'numerous' connections, 'areas of cooperation', and a 'shared interest and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction' between the Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein, and *Al Qaeda*

236 A point raised by Stephen Marrin to the author.

237 US CIA, *A Compendium of Analytic Tradecraft Notes*, US CIA, *A Tradecraft Primer*, UFMS, *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook* 7.0.

238 Marrin, *Improving Intelligence Analysis*, 33.

239 Chang, e.a., 'Restructuring structured analytic techniques', Nicholaos Jones, 'Critical epistemology for Analysis of Competing Hypotheses', *Intelligence and National Security*, 33 (2018) 2: 273-289, Stephen J. Coulthart, 'An Evidence-Based Evaluation of 12 Core Structured Analytic Techniques', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 30 (2017) 2: 368-391, Stephen Artner, Richard S. Girven, and James B. Bruce, *Assessing the Value of Structured Analytic Techniques* (Washington, DC, RAND 2016).

240 US CIA, *A Tradecraft Primer*.

241 Mitchell, 'Team B Intelligence Coups'.

and its leader Osama bin Laden.²⁴² This assessment was advanced by PCTEG, a team B group of analysts situated at the US Pentagon who deductively assumed there was a connection and sifted through raw intelligence and analytical products to find supporting evidence.

Thus, in contrast to ACN, team A/B analysis lacks a theoretical foundation informing the selection of perspectives, and the deeper distinction between various forms of causality. The team A/B practice also differs from ACN in that the various assessments are laid before the intelligence consumer to choose from. In ACN, the various perspectives are generated in a cooperative process that involves working-level policymakers to generate one of the narratives. Comparing and contrasting various narratives empowers analysts to ask additional questions and direct collection, while finding comprehensive insights that can be shared. Red hat analysis or red teaming is sometimes used as synonym for team A/B analysis.²⁴³ However, it can also be viewed as a particularization, as it is performed by a group (associated with a “blue” entity) that is assigned to take on the perspective of a (“red”) adversary when viewing a problem and projecting possible courses of action, asking how the adversary would respond to developments and actions. In this case, the critique on a lack of theoretical backing for the selection of the perspective seems less applicable. Still, an implicit danger lies in the division between ‘red’ and ‘blue’. Red implies an opposition to the blue frame, similar to black versus white, and it is a characterization that is attributed from the ‘blue’ perspective. Are for both the same issues reason for conflict? A particular red hat technique or ‘tool’ is called four ways of seeing.²⁴⁴ It involves contrasting how two entities see themselves and how they see each other. But apart from the remark that ‘thorough research should be conducted’ on these perspectives, the theory lacks in terms of how to accomplish this.²⁴⁵ Moreover, although challenging conventional wisdom is an important function, ACN differs in the way it accomplishes this. Rather than a narrative and an anti-narrative, ACN seeks to understand narratives associated with a multitude of actors. The case studies in this thesis illustrate this. From a methodological viewpoint, identifying different additional macro and micro case studies can only be encouraged.

Devil’s advocacy is more about reviewing process than content, while ACN is about generating a variety of content or perspectives as a basis for analysis. With devil’s advocacy, proposed analytic assessments are challenged by one or more analysts who have not been involved in the analysis. Performed at the discretion of the management of the intelligence organization, it primarily provides critical peer review of the analytic rigor of assessments. Premortem analysis and structured self-critique are techniques that internalize the function of a devil’s advocate in analytic teams. They aim to reduce the chance of surprise by reframing the problem and legitimizing dissent in teams, asking during and after analysis: what could have gone wrong in the analysis? With premortem analysis, teams project a future

242 Ibid, 155.

243 Heuer, Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques*, 243.

244 UFMS, *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook* 7.0, 77.

245 Ibid.

state of affairs in which their analysis has failed. Participants are encouraged to draw upon 'their own life experiences', in contrast to a professional focus on the assumptions and key evidence central to the analysis.²⁴⁶ Structured self-critique also transforms supporters into critics (sometimes referred to as 'black hats') by imposing a series of questions on sources of uncertainty, critical assumptions, information gaps, and the use of cultural expertise. Is there any inconsistent evidence that would shift the assessment if its credibility had been rated higher? The various SATs in themselves are valuable, and ACN does not aim to become a substitute for any of them. As such, it is more fruitful to discuss ACN in terms of its potential contribution to the structured analytic techniques taxonomy that has been gradually developed within the US and other Western intelligence communities.²⁴⁷ This is considered in the last chapter.

At a different level, various scholars have also advanced 'critical thinking' in intelligence studies, which relates to simultaneously improving standards of reasoning (or *thinking about thinking*) and arriving at a conclusion (or *thinking*).²⁴⁸ In the self-reflexivity that is argued for, some parallels can be found to the theoretical critical approaches described in this chapter. An effort has been made to move beyond the practical day-to-day critical traits and techniques, to include a taxonomy of reasoning types. Combining critical traits and techniques with different types of reasoning (a taxonomy of abductive hypothesis testing, causal analysis, counterfactual scenario reasoning, and strategy assessment) would result in identifying the desired 'best explanations, relevant causes, probable scenarios and optimal decisions'.²⁴⁹ However, there are distinct differences compared to critical theory. Critical thinking is more of a short or middle range concept related to practical wisdom employed to improve intelligence analysis and education. The concept relates to all aspects of the intelligence cycle (i.e. requirements, collection, analysis, and dissemination), but the limitations of this critical thinking become most visible with the aspects of intelligence requirements and dissemination.

Critical thinking initially leaves the reference frames *of the customer* out of the equation. It focuses on identifying and serving the right customers by answering their key questions and recognizing a broader context for analysis that supersedes *the analysts'* initial frames. The 'knowing your customer checklist' does point out that other interested parties the customer might go to could have different perspectives on the issue at hand.²⁵⁰ Traditionally, debates on politicization of intelligence are cut short by adopting the view that both top-

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246 Ibid, 223.

247 US CIA, *A Compendium of Analytic Tradecraft Notes*, US CIA, *A Tradecraft Primer*, UFMS, *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook 7.0*, Heuer, Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques*, 19-25, Sarah M. Beebe, Randolph H. Pherson, *Cases in Intelligence Analysis, Structured Analytic Techniques in Action* (Washington, DC, CQ Press 2012) xx-xxi.

248 Katherine H. Pherson, Randolph H. Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence* (Washington, DC, CQ Press 2013), Moore, *Critical Thinking*, Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, Mitchell, Clark, *Target-Centric Network Modeling*, 27-29, UFMS, *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook 7.0*.

249 Noel Hendrickson, 'Critical Thinking in Intelligence Analysis', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 21 (2008) 4: 679-693.

250 Pherson, Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence*.

down ‘cherry-picking’ or bottom-up ‘self-censorship’ are ‘unprofessional’.²⁵¹ Objectivity and integrity are regarded as central to analysts, while it is the management of intelligence organizations that bears the responsibility to ‘bring intelligence into the realm of politics without corrupting it’.²⁵² At the stage of dissemination, the frame of the customer surfaces in the critical thinking literature as one of the criteria used to evaluate intelligence products. Is the product relevant to the customer’s interests, and ‘is it easy to translate it into the customer’s frame of reference and responsibility’?²⁵³

Literature on the study for intelligence has much to offer, but the concept of critical thinking and the various SATs certainly leave room for ACN as an additional or alternative approach. ACN provides the theoretical foundation to ensure the distinctness of the various selected narratives or perspectives. It actively takes into account the socio-politically situated dominant strategic narrative that, because of its inherent abstraction and limitations, could steer analysis off course by creating blind spots. Securitization efforts, or critiques of them, provide a focus for these basic analytic narratives.

Furthermore, a critique of less immediate concern among some scholars focusing on the study of intelligence is that any attempt to ‘operationalize’ critical theory to present-day intelligence analysis could be like trying to shoehorn an interpretivist epistemology into institutional processes that cannot realistically accommodate it.²⁵⁴ The argument is that any methodology informed by this kind of critical theorizing would result in organizational defensiveness. Critics might ask whether intelligence organizations would allow for their preferred meanings to be deconstructed in an effective way. As ‘telling truth’ to power provides ample challenges, discussing truths would be even more difficult in practice. However, this would greatly depend on the specific context situating intelligence and policymaking. As mentioned, for example, in the United Kingdom there is much more collaboration between intelligence and policy than in the much larger, more competitive and stove-piped US system. Moreover, rather than dictating ‘final assessments’ on narratives to intelligence consumers, ACN is much more about cooperation between analysts and working-level policymakers to increase understanding and sensemaking through more diversity of perspectives. In effect, the ACN approach might serve intelligence consumers more indirectly by informing their staff and subordinates as part of ongoing collaboration. Perhaps what is most necessary is to apprise intelligence consumers of how narratives partly reflect reality, but also shape it, with regard to complex intelligence problems. It is more about consumers and intelligence leadership allowing and facilitating the working-level cooperation necessary for ACN. The integrative approach outlined in this thesis would eventually also be reflected in finalized intelligence products, and would potentially open up discussions to include policy advice or recommendations for decision-making by intelligence consumers. But, ultimately, this

251 Ibid, 159-160.

252 Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*, 77.

253 Pherson, Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence*, 181.

254 A point raised by Hamilton Bean to the author.

thesis does not pretend to comprehensively cover how critical theories can contribute to organizational reform in intelligence.²⁵⁵ From a theoretical point of view, developing the methodology of ACN itself is not limited by dissemination or receptivity problems that could arise when implementing it in intelligence organizations.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to introduce some of the core aspects of intelligence studies and explore the status of critical approaches to the field. Intelligence encompasses both the process and the related products and activities to enhance security and support a relative decision advantage over competitors. Uncertainty is a fundamental condition of the dynamic environment in which complex intelligence problems emerge. As a result, intelligence is destined to fail from time to time. Initiatives to reform intelligence after such failures implicitly carry the risk of being counterproductive as they are focused on problems of the past. Intelligence and its study benefit from new thinking. A fundamental critical theoretical debate needs to be more explicitly articulated to enhance theory development and enable more thorough discussions, for example on the nature of causality. This is relevant for the practice of intelligence, and will also further legitimize intelligence studies in academia.

Various critical contributions have already signaled the importance of studying discourse for intelligence, the need to accept uncertainty as a basic condition for policy and intelligence, and how intelligence itself is not an objective eye but actively reproduces and creates political realities. Intelligence itself is situated in a socio-political context. Indeed, some contributions have described public strategies to deal with politicization, partly accepting it. ACN differs from other critical approaches to intelligence in its effort to combine CDA and securitization theory to analyze complex intelligence problems. It is also distinct from practices in critical security studies or critical terrorism studies, as multiple narratives (at least three) of self and others are studied, and multi-consequentiality is analyzed across social domains. The two lead authors who have provided the springboard for developing ACN in this thesis are Norman Fairclough and Thierry Balzacq. Fairclough's CDA guides the identification of narratives that emerge within various social practices from the production and consumption of texts and encompass specific kinds of knowledge, whereas Balzacq's contextual and sociological securitization theory provides the necessary focus of the analysis of the texts and narratives.

Central to ACN is the view that it is more important to understand various meanings of events than to invest in increasing the collection of more rhetoric and (meta)data without substantial contextual information. In contrast to traditional approaches to intelligence, ACN explicitly emphasizes the ideational context (or formal cause) as a distinct category,

²⁵⁵ Or other 'projects' on intelligence as for example defined in Wesley K. Wark, 'The study of Espionage, Past, Present, Future?', *Intelligence and National Security*, 8 (1993) 3: 1-13.

besides material, efficient, and final causes. It is also fundamental to include the dominant strategic narrative in which the intelligence process itself is situated in the analysis. Widening understanding of intelligence problems in this way opens up new perspectives for further analysis. Thus, the method derived from ACN is not necessarily intended to substitute traditional methods, SATs, and concepts. It can serve as an addition.

Finally, the various critical theories offer insights into different aspects of the intelligence process and practice, and improve debate in intelligence studies. Instead of focusing on differences among critical approaches to intelligence, it is perhaps more fruitful to emphasize what connects them, while acknowledging the fundamental difference with the objectivist/empiricist/positivist paradigm in intelligence. This is certainly more informing than a theoretical debate that sticks to the dominant positivist thinking that seemingly consumes Western intelligence communities.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 ACN: Theory, methodology, method, and object of research

A theory and methodology for complex intelligence problems

Intelligence involves analyzing how conceptions of various entities are socio-politically situated and reflected in narratives. This should include incorporating the strategic narrative of the intelligence consumer explicitly in the analysis. Securitization offers a valuable approach to focus analysis and contrast these efforts and practices among the various narratives under study. This chapter describes the theories and methodology that underlie the research method developed to accomplish plural analysis of the multiple co-existing meanings of social events. It explains how CDA, the concept of narratives, and securitization theory correspond to and complement each other. CDA enables one to identify and situate narratives that highlight social difference in distinct ways. Securitization provides a focus that is relevant for intelligence to compare and contrast these narratives. With these components, the critical realist philosophy can be brought into practice to study cases.

First, the chapter introduces general characteristics and concepts of CDA, such as discourse, social practice, and texts. It also reviews the centrality of power relations and ideology for the construction of difference. A discussion of these relations and processes is crucial to clarify how the various types of causes that make up the causal complex relate, interact, and transform. Through a process of naturalization, for example, the meaning consistently attributed to events can transform over time from a teleological aspect to a part of the ideational context. After discussing securitization in terms of CDA, the chapter discusses the ACN methodology further, and provides an appropriate method or tool to identify and analyze narratives: the narrative analysis framework. As an extension, narrative tracing is introduced as a way to trace effects of securitization efforts across narratives.¹ Thereafter, the chapter presents the object of research in this thesis and the ground plan for the case studies on *Al Qaeda*. The research is more than a series of case studies in the traditional sense of simply applying theory and method to empirical data: the cases informed understanding of and were instrumental in developing ACN. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 correspond to the three narratives identified at the end of this chapter. Chapter 6 then combines the findings of the case studies and deals with narrative tracing in more detail. It also discusses the value of the ACN methodology for intelligence studies.

The methodology introduced in this study helps to increase understanding of intelligence problems and widen the analytical spectrum at an initial stage of analysis. It does not provide the intelligence analyst or policymaker with an objective truth, nor does it deliver clear-cut predictions. As Treverton and Agrell note, this is inherently impossible for complexities and extremely complicated for mysteries. However, ACN is able to contribute to warning and prevention. The methodology prompts a widening of the perceptual spectrum. As such, it

¹ The author is grateful to dr. Berma Klein Goldewijk for suggesting the term narrative tracing.

reduces mirror-imaging and confirmation bias, and in turn decreases the risk in intelligence of self-deterrence from dissent in light of a dominant political/strategic narrative.

From discourse to narratives

Discourse, social practices, and texts

As stated in the preceding chapter, various approaches to CDA use the term *discourse* in different ways. This can be somewhat confusing. Norman Fairclough distinguishes three commonly used senses: '1) meaning-making as an element of the social process, 2) the language associated with a particular social field or practice, and 3) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective'.² It is discourse in the first sense, the intersubjective production of meaning, that is highlighted by Fairclough's CDA. To reduce confusion, he deems this notion of discourse *semiosis*.³

Varying dialectical relations between semiosis and other (non-semiotic) social elements contribute to the construction of social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and meaning.⁴ Both meaning-making (semiosis) and context influence each other as together they constitute social reality. CDA is about studying social processes as meaning-making in context.

The social process can be seen as the interplay between three levels of social reality: social structures, practices and events (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). Social practices 'mediate' the relationship between general and abstract social structures and particular and concrete social events; social fields, institutions and organizations are constituted as networks of social practices [...]. In this approach to CDA, analysis is focused on two dialectical relations: between structure (especially social practices as an intermediate level of structuring) and events (or structure in action, structure and strategy) and, within each, between semiotic and other elements. There are three major ways in which semiosis relates to other elements of social practices and of social events – as a facet of action; in the construal (representation) of aspects of the world; and in the constitution of identities. And there are three semiotic (or discourse-analytical) categories corresponding to these: genre, discourse and style.⁵

Figure 2.1 at the end of this paragraph summarizes these concepts in an overview and relates them to narratives. The semiotic element of *social structures*, the most abstract level, is

2 Norman Fairclough, 'A Dialectical-Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis in Social Research', in Wodak, Meyer, (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 162-163.

3 Fairclough, Jessop, Sayer, 'Critical Realism and Semiosis', 202-222.

4 Marianne Jørgensen, Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, reprinted (London, Sage 2011), p76.

5 Fairclough, 'A Dialectical-Relational Approach', 164.

language.⁶ In Fairclough's approach, the two other levels (*social practice* and *social events*) are the main focal points for analysis. Semiotically, the level of (networks of) social practices (a social field, institutions, organizations, etc.) corresponds with *orders of discourse*, that is the particular configuration of different genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing), and styles (ways of being).⁷ Examples of orders of discourse are the armed forces of a country, the (policy) field of security and defense, a university, or a technological branch or company, as they constitute a structuring of semiotic difference in distinct social practices.

An *order of discourse* (or 'discourse' as 2 - 'the language associated with a particular social field or practice') is characterized by specific *genres*, *discourses* (3- 'a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective'), and *styles*. *Genres* are categories of ways of (inter)acting characterized by specific rules for communication, such as a job interview, a parliamentary debate, or written memoirs. *Discourses* (3) construe representations of reality from a particular perspective that corresponds with particular groups of social actors (what is good or bad, strange or normal, noteworthy or not to whom). *Style* concerns ways of being that relate to the semiotic aspects of social identities. A king, president, or business executive is expected to abide the credo *noblesse oblige*, international aid workers or Buddhist monks demonstrate altruism, and independent journalists have a critical and investigative posture.

When (parts of) discourses are incorporated in other discourses, this is referred to as *interdiscursivity*, a possible indication of societal change occurring. A famous example is Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign slogan: 'Yes we can!'⁸ This slogan resonated with two fundamental American discourses that appealed to many citizens. Namely, Obama successfully combined Abraham Lincoln's discourse of the founding fathers on fundamental freedom, and Martin Luther King's discourse on civil liberties and living one's dreams.⁹ It is also an inclusive (*we*) and positive (*yes we can*) message. However, the campaign's success did not just come from the slogan itself, but also from the way texts were produced and consumed via social media such as YouTube and Facebook, adjusted with the right music and images to appeal to different audiences.¹⁰ *Recontextualization* of a discourse occurs when a discourse that originated in a particular social field (or order of discourse) is colonized or appropriated by another order of discourse.¹¹ For example, the political slogan became part of daily life.

6 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 163.

7 Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London, Edward Arnold 1995), 66, Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 232-233.

8 Neil Foxlee, 'Intertextuality, Interdiscursivity and Identification in the 2008 Obama Campaign', in Ioana Mohor-Ivan, Gabriela Iuliana Colipcă (eds.) *Proceedings of the International Conference Identity, Alterity, Hybridity* (Galai, Galati University Press 2009) 27.

9 Ibid, 26-42.

10 Ibid.

11 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 230-234.

A discourse affects an order of discourse but also reflects the other elements of social practice, such as ‘action and interaction, social relations, persons (with beliefs, attitudes, histories, etc.) and the material world’.¹² Discourses can in some cases become ‘enacted as new ways of (inter)acting, inculcated as new ways of being (identities), and may be physically materialized as new ways of organizing space’.¹³ A new informal (or even blunt/improper) political discourse introduced by a popular party might (incrementally) change parliamentary genre conventions. The discourse of a large-scale stock exchange scam can unite ‘victims’ in a collective of which they were previously unaware. A security discourse on the threat of terrorism can cause public buildings such as airports and railway stations to undergo architectural changes to limit public access to certain areas, affecting the wider orders of discourse.

CDA oscillates [...] between a focus on structures (especially the intermediate level of social practices) and a focus on strategies of social agents, i.e. the ways in which they try to achieve outcomes or objectives within existing structures and practices, or try to change them in particular ways. This includes a shift in the structuring of semiotic difference (i.e. shifts in orders of discourse) which constitute a part of social change, and how social agents pursue their strategies semiotically in texts. In both perspectives, a central concern is shifting relations between genres, discourses and styles, and between different genres, between different discourses and between different styles.¹⁴

Further illustrating the dialectical-relational character of Fairclough’s approach is how he draws on British professor of anthropology and geography David Harvey and his concept of different types of ‘moments’ or elements of social practice.¹⁵ There is a complex interplay between these moments. The discursive and non-discursive each ‘have their own generative effect but are always mediated by one another in producing events’.¹⁶ As distinct elements, these moments draw on different theories. When two people e-mail each other, this involves discursive expression and technological knowledge on how to operate computer hardware and software (as material practice). Going shopping includes talking and an economic transaction (institution/ritual). Some social practices involve very few discursive moments, such as playing a musical instrument.

12 Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 25. Here Fairclough still refers to semiosis as discourse, a distinction made in Fairclough, Jessop, Sayer, ‘Critical Realism and Semiosis’, 202-222.

13 Fairclough, ‘A Dialectical-Relational Approach’, 165.

14 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 233-234.

15 David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (London, Blackwell 1996), as in Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 7.

16 Lilie Chouliaraki, Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity, Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 1999), 19, Jørgensen, Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 70-71.

At the micro level, social events correspond semiotically with texts (or ‘communicative events’), the building blocks of discourses. Texts are not only written or spoken language, but can include symbols, signs, images, or music to a degree that language is only a small part or even absent. What all texts have in common is that they express meaning in a context. Analyzing texts includes *intratextual aspects* such as visual form, structure, vocabulary, symbolism, and language. Findings are indicative of the producers’ aim (e.g. to convince, inform, or guide).¹⁷ However, analyzing texts must also take into account their consumption and can thus only take place within the context of discourse. Texts include parts of other texts and form *intertextual chains*.¹⁸ Intertextuality is a concept derived from Michail Bakhtin’s work and defined by Fairclough as

‘the property that texts have of being full snatches of other texts, which may be demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo and so forth’ and it ‘stresses the historicity of texts’, how they constitute additions to what Bakhtin calls existing ‘chains of communication’ (Fairclough 1992a: 84). It is ‘the textual aspect of the articulatory character of social practice’ (Fairclough 2000b).¹⁹

Whereas genre, discourse, and style are the three main ways in which an order of discourse figures as an element of social practice, this corresponds at the level of social events to three major types of meaning of (certain parts of) texts: action, representation, and identification.²⁰ These major types of meaning are simultaneously present in texts, yet to varying degrees in different parts. Action refers to texts or parts thereof as being a certain form of exchange: texts do things. This can (partly) conform to or oppose certain more stable genres. Representation concerns the construal of human experience of relations among things, people, ideas, and the meanings that arise from doing, sensing, and being. Texts describe things. These meanings can relate to or depart from discourses. Identification relates to how texts are ways in which identities are (re)constructed and maintained. This corresponds to styles at the discursive level.

The discursive practice of text production and consumption forms a bridge between texts and orders of discourse, and hence wider social practices. This concept is a two-way bridge. Due to contextual differences in social identity, social relations, knowledge, and meaning, the discursive practice of production and consumption of texts can vary. Multiple actors can interpret the same text differently as for each of them the configuration of genres, discourses, and styles differ. Texts have the potential to mean multiple (contradicting) things. The Bible, Quran, or Torah have been interpreted in various religious discourses (preaching in a

17 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 43.

18 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 77.

19 Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 37, Michael Holquist, (ed.) *The Dialogical Imagination, Four Essays by Mikhail M. Bakhtin*, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, University of Texas Press 1981).

20 Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 27.

religious community) and orders of discourse (Protestant, Catholic, Shia, Sunni, Humanistic Judaism, Orthodox Judaism). Some extremists understand a religious script to legitimize 'defensive' killing, while others read in it that killing is antithetical.

Basic analytic narratives

The lexicon of CDA is complex; there is overlap in both the names and meaning of concepts. In particular, using different concepts of *discourse* alongside the concept of *order of discourse* can become confusing and requires constant explication. Does discourse refer to contextualized real-time utterances, a specific language event consisting of several of these utterances, or the use of language in particular fields or institutions? The latter is also referred to as an order of discourse. In this study, discourse as order of discourse, and discourse as the intertextual chains of utterances are both important concepts as the former situates the latter.²¹ It is beneficial to provide definitional clarity and use the concept of *narrative* instead of 'discourse' to identify and analyze discursive data situated in particular orders of discourse.²² A narrative combines basic elements, such as events, actors, time, and locations, to form stories 'with a beginning, a middle and an end, containing a conclusion or some experience of the storyteller'.²³ Elements are selected and connected based on a certain logical and chronological order. Sequencing and presenting (or framing) elements in certain ways gives focus from particular points of view. Narratives have a referential and explanatory intention to describe actual (non-fictional) events, but are interpretative in nature due to selection, focus, and salience attributed to their elements.²⁴ Narratives are tools that fulfill strategic functions by creating, maintaining, resisting, or changing meaning, identities, and relations of power. They not only describe stories, but 'do something' and have performative power. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the nature of this performative power is wider than only speech acts and comprehensively involves audience and context.²⁵ In this light, orders of discourse can be viewed as systems of power that are part of social practices which constitute a domain of struggle over power, while narratives represent important tools of struggle for political, hegemonic, or institutional continuity or change. Using the concept of narratives in this way for studying securitization is advantageous as its distinctive name clarifies how the concept corresponds to orders of discourse and social practices (as opposed

21 Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, Nicolina Montessano Montessori, *A discursive analysis of a struggle for hegemony in Mexico*, 147.

22 Similar to for example Montessori, *A discursive analysis of a struggle for hegemony in Mexico*, 147-150.

23 Stefan Titscher, Michael Meyer, Ruth Wodak, Eva Vetter, *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis* (London, Sage 2000), 125, Margaret R. Somers, 'The narrative constitution of identity, A relational and network approach', *Theory and Society*, 23 (1994) 5: 605-649 as in Montessori, *A discursive analysis of a struggle for hegemony in Mexico*, 147-148.

24 Mieke Bal, *Narratology, Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press 1997), Alex Callinicos, *Theories and Narratives, Reflections on the Philosophy of History* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press 1995), Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 83-86.

25 Balzacq, 'A Theory of Securitization', 6-18.

to 'discourse'). It allows the definition and contrastive analysis of various narratives (within and) among orders of discourse.

Defining the boundaries of a narrative is ultimately a distinction that is determined not by subjects, but by the researcher. A narrative does not exist as a simple and separate stack of texts. In interpreting and contextualizing texts, also by defining their audiences and producers, the basic core of narratives can be distinguished. The case studies presented in the following chapters each reflect both this narrative core and its inseparable research interpretation in terms of securitization. Any narrative is only a *basic analytic* narrative that is intertextually and interdiscursively linked beyond the boundaries of its definition. Because of the dialectical relation between structure and agency, social and discursive circumstances are dynamic. Power and hegemony are processes or struggles that are always underway. They are relations defined by interaction. Narrative stasis would mean the end of institutions and identities.²⁶ As narratives are always challenged, the extent to which narratives and counter-narratives can be clearly defined is limited. It is like trying to define the boundaries of light beams. Where do they end, or at what point do additional reflections change the beams to such an extent that 'original' characteristics are unrecognizable? Yet, looking at the middle of the beams, they are unquestionably there. Different social practices function as prisms or looking glasses that situate discursive practices and identify narratives. The value of reflexive pluralism for the practice of intelligence analysis, analyzing and contrasting different narratives, lies in embarking on the enriching divergent, cognitive, and conceptual endeavor itself of seeking multiple meanings of events.

26 After 'Stasis is death really seems to be the general law of the World' in Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, translated by Mark Polizzotti, (New York, Semiotext 1986) 67, as in David Campbell, *Writing Security, United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press 1992), 11-12.

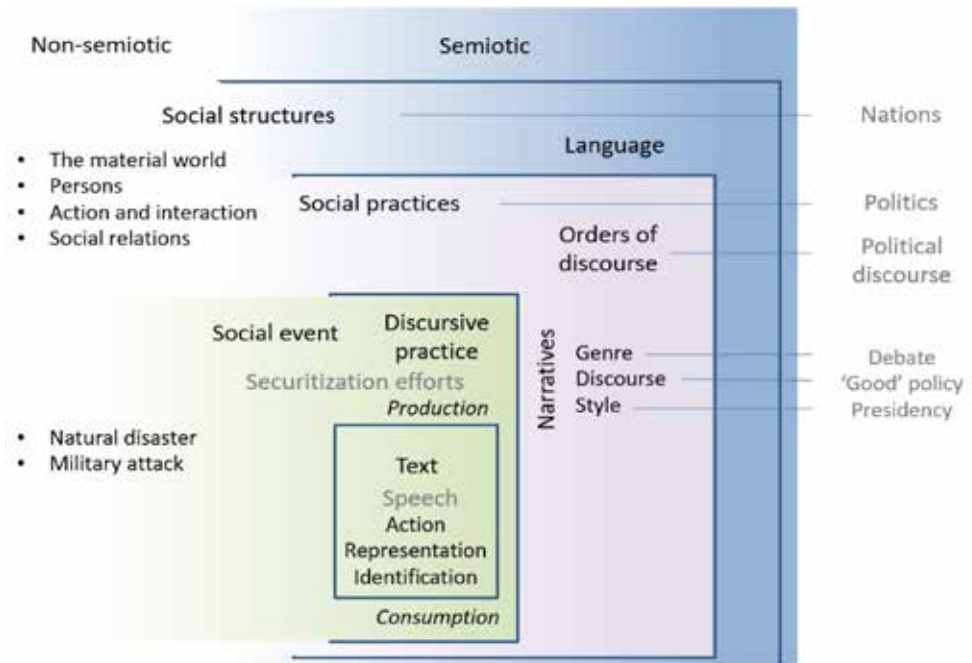


Fig 2.1 Overview of core concepts of CDA (examples in grey)²⁷

Power, ideology, and difference

Core themes for CDA are power, ideology, and difference. CDA is concerned with the effect of structural power relations in producing social inequality (or *difference*) and the discursive aspects of (re)producing social domination. Structural power relations and the statements and actions through which difference is articulated can be thought of as a result of the various facilitating conditions and drivers that make up the causal complex. The discourse of those in power is often analyzed as they are responsible for the existence of inequalities. The intertextual opportunity to realize unbounded creative imagination in texts on what might, could, or should be (imaginaries) by combining new and old parts is in fact restrained by relations of power. To some extent, Fairclough draws on Michel Foucault's concept of *dispositif*, the system or apparatus consisting of heterogeneous semiotic and non-semiotic elements such as 'discourses, institutions, rules, laws, decisions, administrative measures, scientific statements, and philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions'.²⁸ Yet,

²⁷ Partly derived from Fairclough's three-dimensional model for critical discourse as in Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 73. Fairclough has refrained from using the three-dimensional model, but as a whole this scheme is sufficient to provide an overview of CDA core concepts.

²⁸ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 194-228, Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 22, 37.

Fairclough critiques Foucault for his lack of operationalization of *dispositif*, and states the imposing of power is not always successful.²⁹ Actors are able to influence power relations. This represents the middle ground with a dialectical position on structure and agency.

According to Fairclough, the power to do things is generally a social good.³⁰ The *power to* do things and having certain *power over* people are distinct but dialectically related forms of power.³¹ One form is necessary and of influence on the other. When legitimately attributed, power over people is not necessarily a negative thing either. When power is used in an illegitimate way, however, it becomes open to critique. As part of discourses, we can find two kinds of power over people. The first is *power in* discourse as an exercise of ‘unequal encounters’ in which the contribution of others is controlled. The most common examples are doctor-patient interviews and teaching in schools.³² More hidden is *power behind* discourse, for example the ability to standardize language use, to police the boundaries of genre conventions, and to decide who has access to what kind of discourses.³³

For intelligence agencies, news media, and governmental advisory boards, hidden power resides in their ability to choose and select certain pieces of information over others. As their consumers are not co-present during this process, unlike in a doctor-patient interview or in a class, the effect of the power is less clear. Perhaps it is therefore more powerful than power in discourse. Power in discourse does not exclude power behind discourse. There is also hidden power behind medical examinations or lessons. A doctor is bound by genre conventions to ask only functional questions related to the problem at hand and can be disciplined for not conforming to this. In a sense, this hidden power lies behind the discourse of the interactions.

Fairclough acknowledges Antonio Gramsci’s concept of *hegemony*, that is, ‘one of the fundamental defined classes having leadership over society as a whole in alliance with other social forces’.³⁴ Hegemony is always partial, gradual and temporary. Integration of blocs into alliances is central and requires cooperation and acceptance of the groups that are not in the lead rather than their submission to domination. Hegemony is

[a] particular way (associated with Gramsci) of conceptualizing power and the struggle for power in capitalist societies, which emphasizes how power depends on consent or acquiescence rather than just force, and the importance of ideology. Discourse, including the dominance and naturalization of particular representations (e.g. of ‘global’ economic change) is a significant aspect of hegemony, and struggle over discourse of hegemonic struggle. (Forgacs 1988, Gramsci 1971, Laclau and Mouffe 1985)³⁵

29 Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*.

30 Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 26.

31 *Ibid.*, 26.

32 *Ibid.*, 27.

33 *Ibid.*, 73-100.

34 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 61.

35 Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 218.

Consequently, Fairclough also aligns with Antonio Gramsci's concept of *ideology*:

Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation. They may be enacted in ways of interaction (and therefore in genres) and inculcated in ways of being identities (and therefore styles). Analysis of texts [...] is an important aspect of ideological analysis and critique [...].³⁶

The many different interpretations of the concept of ideology that exist in language and approaches to CDA often leads to confusion. In this respect, Fairclough suggests it might even be better to refrain from using ideology as label.³⁷ Multiple forms of 'ideology' appear in texts or other forms of interaction, such as 'worldviews' or 'political ideologies'. Analyzing how worldviews and political ideologies relate to each other is not the same as ideological analysis in Fairclough's terms: ideology is a form of 'negotiations of meaning in the service of power'.³⁸

Following Gramsci (Forgacs 1988), the conception of ideology here focuses upon the effects of ideologies rather than questions of truth, and features of texts are seen as ideological in so far as they affect (sustain, undermine) power relations. Ideology is seen as 'located' in both structures (discourse conventions) and events.³⁹

Ideology concerns the way certain relatively more stable ideas present in discourse relate to other social elements:

[C]ases where particular discursive elements or features which are subject to normative critique are not only explicable as effects of particular non-discursive social elements, but also necessary for sustaining and reproducing them.⁴⁰

Meaning is ideological if it is not just emphasizing difference but also necessary to establish or maintain dominant power relations.⁴¹ Therefore, ideology critique on constructions of difference that enable and maintain power relations is an explanatory (transcendental) critique. Whereas meaning can be local and specific, ideology is more stable, enduring, and generic because of existing or emerging power relations. It is not the end of the spectrum, however, as 'common sense' is 'the consent to (or at least acceptance of) ruling class

36 Ibid.

37 Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 35.

38 John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge, Polity Press 1984) as in Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 8.

39 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 27.

40 Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 35.

41 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 9.

attitudes and interests by the masses of a given social order as their own'.⁴² This is the result of a process of naturalization.

A dominant discourse is subject to a process of naturalization, in which it appears to lose its connection with particular ideologies and interests and become the common-sense practice of the institution. Thus when ideology becomes common sense, it apparently ceases to be ideology; this is itself an ideological effect, for ideology is truly effective only when it is disguised.⁴³

Meaning, ideology, and common sense are overlapping stages on a continuum, and their applicability depends in part on the defined boundaries of the social reality. How much or little resistance among 'the masses' makes a dominant ideology common sense? What are the boundaries of an ideology and how much resistance breaks a relatively stable set of unchallenged beliefs and values down to meaning? Resisting does not have to be a conscious decision. People might not necessarily be aware of the ideological dimension of their practice.⁴⁴

[S]ubjects are ideologically positioned, but they are also capable of acting creatively to make their own connections between the diverse practices and ideologies to which they are exposed, and to restructure positioning practices and structures.⁴⁵

The conceptual value of placing meaning, ideology, and common sense on a scale or continuum, related through a process of naturalization, is that it highlights the connection between different types of causes, most prominently efficient, final, and formal causes. It illustrates how structure and agency are dialectical as both interact with and transform each other.

Power and ideology (as a form of hegemonic power) are important concepts for understanding social difference. They manifest through genres, discourse and styles. As rules for communication, certain genres enable and constrain actors to express themselves (or express in certain ways) and allow or limit an audience to conceive expressions. The genre of giving an interview or press conference reflects underlying power relations. The social identity of actors enables and constrains these actors to speak with authority (or lack thereof). Being a head of state or a whistle-blower positions a speaker in such a way that comes with certain expectations of credibility. The everyday production of meaning, informed by ideology and constrained and enabled through power relations, is important for maintaining the social order. One could state ideological processes and ultimately common sense inform

42 Ibid., 67, Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.

43 Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 126.

44 Jørgensen, Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 76.

45 Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 91.

a wider 'background context'. Fairclough opposes the term 'background knowledge' as the notion of 'knowledge' obscures the ideological process involved.⁴⁶ However, in this thesis the critical realist epistemological approach to knowledge sufficiently explains the relativity of 'knowledge' as a form of theory. Hence, it is not necessary to reject the term 'background knowledge' as it is similar to common sense. Both common sense and background knowledge are relatively stable beliefs, although all knowledge is ultimately dynamic.

The theoretical concepts and themes introduced in the first part of this chapter inform the ACN methodology. When operationalizing these into a method, some challenges will have to be met. Analytically, the concept of ideology is useful for its focus on power, but empirically it will be somewhat problematic for researchers to distinguish between less stable meanings and relatively more stable ideology or common sense (*zeitgeist*). In the case studies, consistency of utterances over time and signs of resonance among different types of audiences serve as important indications of naturalization. These indications show the extent to which the meanings in narratives become ideological and over time affect social practices. Furthermore, the analytical difference between interdiscursivity and recontextualization is difficult to operationalize. Theoretically, the difference lies in the extent to which a narrative is colonized or interwoven with another narrative's topic. It can be viewed as a matter of permanence.⁴⁷ But at what point does interdiscursivity turn into recontextualization? Both interdiscursive links and recontextualization are indications of the nature and degree to which a narrative relates to one or several social orders (either incorporating or rejecting them). At the level of texts, intertextual chains (or links) are formed by reproduction and recontextualization of texts. This is the fabric of narratives. Texts are rarely the work of a single person, and mostly the site of discursive struggles and negotiation. For the case studies in this research, reproduction and recontextualization of texts are related to key texts produced by the actors or entity deemed central to each different narrative. The theoretical concepts defined in this paragraph will become livelier as they are illustrated by examples in the rest of the chapter.

Securitization in terms of CDA

One or more securitization efforts provide the logic that binds narratives. In and through narratives, securitization can be challenged, supported, or transformed. It concerns the consistent attribution of a specific meaning of events regarding a possible existential threat. Emphasizing *difference* between *referent subject* and *referent object*, and between threat and those threatened, lays the groundwork for the hegemonic practice of naturalization in which meaning becomes a form of ideology (or even ultimately common sense). Although certain utterances are central to securitization, the whole process stretches over a series of events,

⁴⁶ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 26, 46.

⁴⁷ Fairclough, 'A Dialectical-Relational Approach', 165-166.

statements, and actions, forming *intertextual chains* at the discursive level. The aimed effect of securitization efforts over multiple texts can thus be viewed as primarily ideological. It concerns a more durable semiotic construal of aspects of the world (ways of interpreting, discourse) in service of establishing and maintaining power relations.⁴⁸ In the words of Thierry Balzacq, securitization concerns the construction of meaning as a ‘coherent network of implications’ through an ‘assemblage of practices’.⁴⁹

Despite its seemingly narrow definition, securitization is a broad concept as what constitutes the existential ‘threat’ and what is ‘extraordinary’ about the measures are ultimately defined by ‘what actors have made of it’ as they have combined narrative elements together.⁵⁰ Securitization efforts are multifaceted, multi-layered, and situated in specific networks of social practices. Not every securitization effort has the same impact, as each is context-dependent and centered around different audiences. Any successful effort must resonate with general background knowledge or the *zeitgeist* of audiences. For that a narrative can draw on and relate to other narratives or wider orders of discourse. For example, a narrative on the threat of terrorism can relate to a narrative on liberty and freedom. Through these interdiscursive links, the securitization narrative gains legitimacy with certain audiences in certain settings. A securitization narrative also represents and contributes to these other narratives and also affects (if only tacitly or marginally) other orders of discourse. It can affect the way liberty (and for example American citizenship) is perceived and defined.

Securitization efforts are also tied to the practice of security.⁵¹ The use of *power to execute* extraordinary measures that ensure the safety of a group of people is inherent. Studying securitization also involves taking the relation between discursive and non-discursive aspects of events as a central avenue of approach. This includes non-discursive action such as pre-emptive military strikes on foreign military installations or terrorist training camps, but also the actual terrorist bombings, the people killed, and the damage done. Using this power to act strengthens the power base of the *securitizing actor*.

Processes of securitization also involve *power over* people. Non-discursive actions mix with discursive practices such as leadership statements before and after military strikes. The leadership’s ability to comment on the timing, execution, and effectiveness of the strikes represents the *power* that lies *in* discourse. During press conferences, the president has a conversation with journalists on the military strikes. The unequal nature of the encounter and the *power in* discourse becomes visible in the way the president is allowed to interrupt the journalists and hence control their contributions to the discourse. In case of mass media communication, such as a nation-wide address, this power is more hidden from sight. The

48 Fairclough, ‘A Dialectical-Relational Approach’, 163-164.

49 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 3.

50 Rita Floyd, ‘Just and unjust desecuritization’, 126.

51 Ibid, Rita Floyd, *Security and the Environment: Securitization Theory and US Environmental Security Policy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2010), May, G. (2014). Conceptualizing Security: The Strategic Practice of Security, E-IR, www.e-ir.info/2015/04/09/conceptualizing-security-the-strategic-practice-of-security/, last viewed December 11, 2015.

president appeals to the ideal type of patriotic citizen he chooses to represent. He can also select and emphasize certain aspects of social events over others. The same applies to the leader of a terrorist organization or network, as he also addresses an ideal type of supporter and chooses to highlight a particular version of events.

Power *behind* discourse manifests more in the longer term. As language use becomes more standardized, it becomes more difficult to challenge basic assumptions without placing oneself outside of the ongoing debate. Discussing communist ideals in the West during the Cold War became difficult at times of heightened tensions and increased threat perception, such as during the Cuba crisis in 1962. Right after a terrorist attack, it becomes inappropriate to consider whether there is any legitimacy to the motivations of the perpetrators. When this is transformed into more epic terms of good versus evil and us against them, this sense of inappropriateness becomes more standardized.

The ideological intent behind securitization efforts is key as power relations or hegemony depend on consent. Securitization emerges from the interplay of the status and psycho-cultural orientation of the audiences, the wider context or *zeitgeist*, and the differential power between speaker and listener.⁵² As conditions change and discourses evolve, relations of power are always dynamic. This implies that there is always the potential to change the momentum or effects of securitization efforts. Apart from being a narrative in its own right, any narrative can provide a form of critique to the naturalization of meaning in other discourses or narratives. Its effectiveness depends on the extent to which narratives become interdiscursively linked in and through the occurrence of social events, such as text production. Actively contesting security is a counter-practice often residing in smaller critical narratives that are suppressed by dominant institutional narratives. Entities associated with these critical narratives lack the *power to* act with similar means or in similar ways as those associated with dominant institutional discourses. Their main strength lies in challenging and critiquing relations of *power over* people, highlighting differences in the selection and availability of discursive resources, the standardization of language use, and challenging genre conventions. The critical narrative identified in the third case study does not perform such a role, as it is situated in a distinct social order. However, in its critique, it widens understanding of the overall object of research for all case studies: *Al Qaeda*. Besides understanding other entities and adversaries, analyzing such contrast between narratives also offers new insights that aid to review the dominant political strategic narrative in which intelligence organizations are encapsulated through their intimate relation with intelligence consumers.

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52 Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization', 173,

ACN: from methodology to method

The ACN methodology of comparing and contrasting threat articulation between different narratives highlights diversity, and emphasizes the role and influence of narratives in the reflection and shaping of intelligence problems. For intelligence as a practice, it can broaden the analytical spectrum at an initial stage to inform further analysis and drive additional collection efforts. The ACN methodology consists of two phases. First, basic analytic narratives are identified and analyzed in terms of securitization efforts. The narrative analysis framework (NAF) outlined in this section provides a method to accomplish this. As stated, it guides the case studies described in chapters 3, 4, and 5. The second step is then to consider the multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts, both within and across social domains. To what extent is the development of macro narratives related? Narrative tracing (NT) extends the NAF method to focus on the second task.

A typical object of research for ACN is a complex intelligence problem characterized by 'sets of interacting issues such as themes, entities or activities, evolving in a dynamic social context'.⁵³ Examples include international terrorism, cyber security, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Each narrative relevant to a complex intelligence problem can be considered a separate case study focused on different bounded units of analysis, often at different levels (e.g. individual, group, institution). In terms of CDA theory, narratives are either part of different social orders (social structures, practices, events) or manifest at different levels within the same social order.

For example, a critical (personal) narrative from within an institution can provide new perspectives on the organization and highlight possible alternatives to processes of naturalization of meanings in the institutional narrative. In particular, identifying and studying critical narratives is a way of investigating inconsistencies and tensions in dominant narratives, and of increasing understanding of the construction of these dominant narratives. However, it is also essential that narratives be compared and contrasted with other narratives situated in different orders of discourse (and wider social orders) to sufficiently widen the analytical spectrum. By integrating a narrative in the analysis that is associated with the intelligence consumer, assessment neutrality is improved in the initial stage of intelligence analysis. In this thesis, the terms macro and micro narratives are used. Macro narratives relate to entities that have considerable discursive power over audiences and are able to engage in extraordinary security practices. Micro narratives concern accounts that often reflect critically on securitization efforts in the macro narratives, while the producing entities lack power to act in terms of security.

The basic and analytic character of all narratives implies that choices have to be made to define their core and boundaries. This is accomplished by focusing on key actors and entities involved with the production of key texts and relevant non-discursive actions. When investigating an institutional narrative, for example, data is selected from texts generated

53 Agrell, Treverton, *National Intelligence and Science*, 34.

by or related to the institutional leadership. For a personal narrative, the focus is on texts produced by that person. Further sampling can then be guided by searching for key words in texts related to the issues defining the complex intelligence problem. For example, what (part of) speeches or which actions reflect (on) international terrorism?

As elements of (de)securitization are identified, further analysis puts them in the broader perspective of the other parts of the texts, the various settings, and the wider context. Therefore, based on identification of these elements in chapters 3, 4, and 5, securitization efforts are central, rather than 'successful instances of securitization'. Neither social nor linguistic conditions can guarantee successful securitization for the initiating *securitizing actors*, as this also depends on the response of moral and formal audiences. It is assumed that reproduction and recontextualization in news media mirror the responses of audiences to some extent, as media outlets strive to maximize news consumption by aligning news frames with those of their audiences. This is combined with other sources to contextually infer or study signs of resonance among various types of audiences. Securitization is a process that involves moves (and countermoves) and is not limited to a speech act or formula, much like a presidency is not limited to the swearing in, or a marriage to the wedding. Instead, it includes the continuous perception, workings, and interactions of day-to-day activities and experiences. The three case studies represent various events and efforts that are stitched together into narratives.

Ultimately, once various narratives have been established, comparing and contrasting them can reveal additional insights into the complex nature of the intelligence problem. To what extent do the meanings attributed to events and processes of (de)securitization between the various basic analytical narratives relate? Does a securitization effort in one narrative correspond to a rally-round-the-flag effect or securitization effort in another, or in fact a critique?

But also, what is revealed about the relationship between the social structure, practice, and events for each narrative? To what extent is the difference (us versus them) identified in narratives inherent to the social order of which each narrative is part? Ideology and meaning fuel processes of identification of others *and* self, and as such sustain domination and power relations. A perception of difference emerging from the (outside) threat of terrorism might constitute a process (or effort) of self-identification, just as much as the threat of terrorism presents an actual threat to the self. Conflicts between entities might reflect the shaping of entities, rather than a clash between them. This would be reflected in the extent of self-identification in securitization efforts. To what extent does *Al Qaeda* need the image of the US it propagates, or vice versa? Politicians, opinion leaders, or news channels might for example portray groups of people in certain (negative) ways because of political, religious, or economic social practices of trying to gain votes, maintain popular support, or increase viewing rates.

Al Qaeda has been selected as an appropriate object of research in this thesis. The narratives (or case studies) illustrate the ACN methodology but also serve as a means of developing the

derived method further. There is a dialectical relation: the method highlights and defines the cases, and the cases point to theoretical and methodological aspects that require additional studying. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Narrative analysis framework

The following framework offers a research focus that enables one to relate texts to core analytical categories and to identify narratives. These categories reflect Norman Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach to discourse and the internal and external relations of texts, emphasizing both semiotic and other social elements.⁵⁴ Given his relational dimension and interdisciplinary orientation, concepts associated with functional grammar and the critical linguistic approach of pragmatics are also part of this framework.⁵⁵ In addition, the framework mirrors the way Thierry Balzacq accentuates the role of audience, context, and *dispositif* (power relations) in processes of securitization.⁵⁶ As discussed in the first chapter, securitization is not a universal speech act, but a pragmatic practice that relates to various types and parallel audiences.

Narratives centralize different actors and entities that diverge regarding the extent to which they are institutionalized and concerned with a number of different topics, the objectives they have, and the audiences they seek. Therefore, the framework must not be taken for a simple checklist. The core analytical categories represent different perspectives and points of entry to analyze texts. Every text is different and has a different function in different narratives. Some can be considered as key texts signifying social change, while others can be grouped as reproductions or minor recontextualizations of other key texts. As such, the analytical framework offered here might be considered as a sort of versatile Swiss knife that enables the researcher to shift focus between the core analytical categories while studying texts as part of a particular narrative, although to some extent all categories remain relevant for studying texts.

A prime illustration of using the NAF is to compare it to studying the anatomy of the human body. When studying how a person is kept alive, one can focus on the primary functions of the body: its vital organs, such as the heart, lungs, and the brain. In another case, certain muscle groups and bone structures are important to take into account to analyze the extent to which a person can move. When concentrating on disease, studying viruses, bacteria, and cell structures becomes most relevant. The example can be extended to include feelings and sensations, and even perceptions of pain, emotions, or the will to achieve something

54 Fairclough, 'A Dialectical-Relational Approach', 163, and Montesano Montessori, Schuman, De Lange, *Kritische Discoursanalyse*, 115.

55 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 92, Halliday, M.A.K., Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2014). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, fourth edition, London: Routledge, Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and Discourse: A resource book for students*, Florence, KY, USA: Routledge.

56 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*.

as relevant factors for performance. The point is that it is impossible to take *all aspects* into account *at all times* when studying aspects of the performance of the human body. The same applies to the study of texts, settings, meanings, and wider backgrounds. Analyzing every word of a text takes an enormous amount of effort, and can result in relatively little gain. Hence, it is necessary to focus on key texts, key parts, key words, etc. The researcher must make explicit what aspects are most relevant for understanding and explaining the function of texts as part of the particular narrative.

The core analytical categories concentrate on A) the manifestation of securitization efforts in narratives through meanings in texts, B) textual analysis of key texts, C) the setting or situational context of text production and text consumption, and D) the wider external (non-semiotic) context. These categories partly overlap as meanings arise from the interplay of genres, discourses, and styles of intratextual aspects within extratextual settings, and against the backdrop of wider background contexts. Eventually, all categories aim to highlight struggles over power, and examine constructions of social phenomena through securitization and identification. Identifying narratives ultimately allows the comparison and contrasting of processes of (de)securitization between these narratives, providing new perspectives on threat perception. For the practice of intelligence, this holds the promise of widening the analytical scope at an initial stage when studying complex intelligence problems.

A) Meanings and narratives: securitization

The first and most central analytical category focuses on meaning (or semiosis) that emerges in texts, discourses, and orders of discourse as one of the elements of social practice. **Meanings** arise from the way events are represented in situated texts, and how these events are woven together with other events within situated texts. How does the text producer experience the natural and social world? What social relations are enacted via the text in the discourse? And how does the text producer evaluate subjects? Fairclough suggests a series of questions for analysis; the following remarks are a derivative.⁵⁷

What elements (aspects of events, voices/perspectives on events) are prominent or absent? How does the level of abstraction in texts vary (general, specific)? In what way are the various social entities portrayed? What discourses are drawn upon or mixed in the text? Does the text constitute 'an openness to, acceptance/recognition or an explanation of difference by means of dialogue'? Is it 'an accentuation of conflict and struggle over meaning, ideology and power'? Or, in contrast, is it 'an effort to overcome difference by focusing on commonality and solidarity'? Is there 'normalization and acceptance of differences of power which suppresses differences of meaning and differences over norms'?

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57 Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 191-194.

Central to the research is the concept of **securitization**. Securitization efforts aim to classify something as an existential threat and establish an ultimate form of difference. What processes of securitization and identification, and critiques of them, can be distinguished? What discursive and non-discursive elements constitute securitization efforts? How do securitization efforts reflect and relate to underlying power relations and social roles? The unprecedented and imminent nature of the threat aims to legitimize an extreme exercise of power that supersedes normal politics. An exception to the norm is proposed. This does not mean normal politics is not concerned with difference and social change, or security and threats for that matter. Nor does it mean that securitization efforts necessarily achieve such an aim. However, researching such moves or efforts offers more focus and is theoretically the most promising approach to finding contrast between different narratives. As stated in the previous chapter, Balzacq defines securitization as an articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexity that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block its development.⁵⁸

The concept emphasizes the role of various types of and parallel audiences, a wider context, and social power relations in establishing and maintaining perceptions of otherness and difference. The definition of the referent object implies that the entity is a (potential) audience. In addition, the 'consumers' of the statements or actions that constitute securitization efforts might include other groups. The efforts and their effects can resonate with these audiences in different ways. Another aspect of interest is the multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts. How does the securitization effort relate to processes of identification in other (contrasting) narratives? For example, what narrative is produced by the defined referent subject, and before what audience? Do the efforts of the securitizing actor (either statements or security practices) affect the referent subject's rhetoric or actions? Is perhaps a form of polarization or rally-round-the-flag occurring on the side of the referent subject? Does securitization lead to securitization?

Not all narratives encompass securitization efforts themselves. The ACN methodology explicitly seeks to include one or several narratives that reflect a perspective critical of securitization efforts in other narratives. For critical perspectives, the definition of securitization serves as an analytical starting point to reference how and against what critique is uttered.

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58 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 3.

B) Communicative event: text

Textual analysis of key data concerns a functional approach to the internal relations of language in **text** elements. What do key paragraphs and phrases mean, what do they do? As 'texts' also include non-textual communicative events such as signs and sounds, analysis includes visual and phonological aspects. Broadening the concept of texts beyond written texts enables a thicker description of events and social practices that fits Balzacq's conceptual ideas of sociological securitization. Most images and audio include a form of written or spoken language, making grammatical and lexical cohesion of the language used the most important elements of this category.

To analyze cohesion, we need to elaborate on what texts are made of. Michael Halliday defines clauses as the primary building blocks of texts.⁵⁹ They are textual elements that consist of words and phrases.⁶⁰ Clauses can configure three functional components of meanings; they have three metafunctions.⁶¹ Textually, clauses have a theme or subject that forms the central perspective: what is the clause about? Interpersonally, clauses express interactions (the *exchange*): is the clause a question or a declaration? And ultimately, ideationally, clauses reflect the experience of processes, participants, and circumstances: what is happening?

For instance, in the clause 'we were attacked by terrorists', the 'we' represents the theme or perspective, while 'were attacked by' corresponds to the indicative and declarative process as an aspect of both the subject ('we') and the active participant or actor ('terrorists'). Elements of clauses can have multiple functions as texts can mean multiple things at the same time. An imperative function of the clause 'we were attacked by terrorists' might emerge from other text elements, settings, or wider contexts. The clause effectively means 'we must do something' or 'it is us against them'.

Meanings of clauses arise from the total configuration of their functions, but also from part-whole relations, as several clauses can form clause complexes or sentences. The significance of individual words or phrases, clauses, and clause complexes not only varies per text, but can also vary between different instances of consumption of the same text. Of relevance in this respect is also the location in time (tense), fabric of time (aspect), and spatial dimensions. Is something currently relevant or imminent? Where and on what scale? In Fairclough's terms, the logic of securitization represents a semantic problem-solution relation⁶² and implies causal and conditional semantic relations between clauses and sentences.⁶³ Clauses involve statements of facts and predictions (speech functions), and

59 Halliday, M.A.K., Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2014). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, fourth edition, London: Routledge.

60 Distinguishing further between different functions and aspects of elements within clauses such as words, groups of words and phrases lies beyond the scope of this thesis as far as it is beyond the discussion of grammatical and lexical cohesion presented in this chapter.

61 Halliday, M.A.K., Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2014). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, fourth edition, London: Routledge.

62 Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 91.

63 *Ibid*, 89.

have a declarative nature (or ‘grammatical mood’).⁶⁴ Because there is a problem, action is required.

The meaning in selected key parts of texts emerges through grammar, lexicon, and non-textual aspects. **Grammar** can bind text together in various ways. Certain parts within a text, such as groups and phrases, clauses, or clause complexes, are held more strongly together than others, affecting their interpretation. Reference is ‘the act of using referring expressions to refer to referents in the context’ and can link with preceding (*anaphora*) or following (*cataphora*) elements in the text (*endophoric reference*). When text elements relate to elements outside the text itself (*exophoric reference*), this is not considered part of grammatical cohesion.⁶⁵ Typical words are ‘them’ and ‘we’. Another grammatical device is substitution, a way of replacing one word for another to avoid repetition. For example, replacing ‘cup’ with ‘one’ in ‘it’s the last cup/one’. A third form of grammatical cohesion is maintained by ellipsis, leaving out certain words or a clause in a sentence that is nevertheless understood because of the remaining text. An example is the way a lover can respond with ‘I do too’. Substitution and ellipsis are forms that can only be effectively used when it is sufficiently clear what is being substituted or left out. To some audiences, leaving out what is obvious to them is a powerful rhetorical tool, while for other audiences such a socio-cultural silential dimension might not resonate.

Lexical cohesion is achieved through the selection of particular vocabulary. Most importantly, the use of *metaphors*, *synonyms*, and *superordinates* influence interpretation.⁶⁶ Metaphors are a figure of speech that connect descriptions (words, phrases) to an entity, object, or action though they do not have literally identical meanings (describing locations or situations as ‘paradise’, defining countries and organizations as ‘evil’).⁶⁷ Synonyms are broadly accepted substitutes. Superordinates are generalizations that can link an event to a phenomenon, or an entity to a category: a cow is an animal, and an animal is a living creature.⁶⁸ Similarly, one could state a terrorist attack is a form of terrorism, and terrorism is related to terror. When responding to a terrorist attack, declaring a global war against ‘terror’ or defining an ‘axis of evil’ is of a different nature than starting a case-specific criminal investigation. Synonyms and superordinates are different from metaphors because of higher levels of intersubjectivity. In texts and discourses, a connection is often sought between synonyms, superordinates, and metaphors, for example in stereotyping entities. Although certain vocabulary can serve as devices for lexical cohesion within certain settings and a wider context, it may not in other situations.

Visual images and other **non-textual** signs and signals influence interpretation in specific ways. Despite the possibilities of manipulating visual recordings, images are historically

64 Ibid. 105-119. (107-109)

65 Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and Discourse: A resource book for students*, Florence, KY, USA: Routledge, 9.

66 Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and Discourse: A Resource Book for Students*, Florence, KY, US: Routledge.

67 Retrieved from <http://www.strath.ac.uk/aer/materials/6furtherqualitativeresearchdesignandanalysis/unit3/howtodocdaaframeworkforanalysis/>, Metaphor – Literal and Grammatical

68 Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and Discourse: A Resource Book for Students*, Florence, KY, US: Routledge.

associated with truth and objectivity and have primacy over words.⁶⁹ Objects placed in the background while giving a speech can underline the statements made, hence becoming symbols for the message. A Soviet rifle resting against a wall in the background while Osama bin Laden records a speech on video in which he threatens the United States underlines his determination, fits his war rhetoric, and adds to his status for some audiences.

Studying the interplay of grammatical and lexical cohesion within and between clauses with visual and phonologic relations indicates the level of text consistency and the force or strength with which meanings are signified. Focusing on textual aspects in these terms enables one to better explain and substantiate the function of text elements with regard to securitization coding categories and the other elements of the NAF: settings and the wider background.

C) Settings

Meanings are also shaped by extratextual aspects, such as the **setting** or situational context of text production and consumption. This is one of the central aspects of sociological securitization that distinguishes the pragmatic act of securitization from its speech act predecessors.⁷⁰ Settings partly shape the nature and status of various types of parallel audiences. What types of **audiences** (formal and moral, institutionalized or not) can be identified within the same setting, or in different ones? A formal audience could be thought of as a nation's parliament or congress, while the moral audience might be a nation's population, which expresses itself through opinion polls on presidential popularity. Both affect securitization processes in different ways, as formal audiences can be influenced by moral audiences. Other types of less institutionalized or formalized moral audiences could be a supportive global community of some sort. Securitizing actors and audiences relate in a causally adequate manner: without one or the other, there can be no securitization. However, it is unnecessary for formal audiences to grant deontological powers before statements or actions can be viewed in terms of securitization.

The situational context of the production and consumption of texts (the discursive practice) is strongly related to ways of communicating (genre), also influencing ways of being (styles) and ways of construing aspects of the world (discourse). Texts are ways of acting. Genre conventions are reflected in communicative forms, and temporal and spatial dimensions. This includes the type of medium used, the practical constraints and institutional formalities or roles that come with the use of these mediums, and the emergence of idealized audiences. Settings can constrain meaning-making. As a US presidential candidate, Barack Obama had to use the Bush-type language of a 'global war on terror' (GWOT) to avoid placing himself

69 Retrieved from <http://www.strath.ac.uk/aer/materials/6furtherqualitative-research-design-and-analysis/unit3/howtodocda-languageaspects/> and Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*, London: Longman, 7.

70 Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization', Salter, 'Securitization and Desecuritization', Salter, 'When securitization fails', Goffman, *The presentation of the self*.

outside the debate in the run-up to the elections. Yet as soon as Obama was in office, the US government stopped using this term.⁷¹

Reproduction and recontextualization of texts are also influenced by situational context. This has important consequences for the various audiences that are actually reached. For example, a US presidential speech in the Rose Garden of the White House only has a small physical audience, yet news media choose to broadcast (parts of) it live, adding comments on screen, introducing or summarizing it by a news anchor, or asking experts to comment on it. When the connection between different texts that are part of different genres (for example, speech and broadcast) becomes systematic, Fairclough refers to this as ‘genre chains’:

[D]ifferent genres which are regularly linked together, involving systematic transformations from genre to genre. Genre chains contribute to the possibility of actions which transcend differences in space and time, linking together social events in different social practices, different countries, and different times, facilitating the enhanced capacity for ‘action at a distance’ which has been taken to be a defining feature of contemporary ‘globalization’, and therefore facilitating the exercise of power.⁷²

A text or communicative event rarely reaches only a single (type of) audience. In different settings, there are different expectations, or logics of persuasion. The relations of power ‘in’ and ‘behind’ discourse vary. Hence, securitization operates differently within these different settings. To illustrate this, Mark Salter exemplifies four types of settings: popular, elite, technocratic, and scientific.

In each of these different settings, the core rules for authority/knowledge (who can speak), the social context (what can be spoken), and the degree of success (what is heard) vary. This goes far beyond linguistic rules towards norms and conventions of discourse, as well as bureaucratic politics, group identity, collective memory and self-interest.⁷³

Settings situate a particular local ‘regime of truth’ among audiences.⁷⁴ They are power-related and dynamic. The speaker’s social position and unequal access and ability to use resources influence this truth, but language also has an intrinsic value to audiences. An audience considers the extent to which information is available and perceived to be credible at a certain moment in time.⁷⁵ Speakers must use words, signs, and symbols that fit the reference frames of audiences within particular settings. The semiotic and non-semiotic aspects of the medium used in communicating the message also influence this. Who has the

71 Hodges, *The “War on Terror” Narrative*.

72 Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 31.

73 Salter, ‘Securitization and Desecuritization’, 322.

74 Ibid, Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 109–133.

75 Colin Wilkinson, ‘The limits of spoken words, From meta-narratives to experiences of security’, in Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 97.

knowledge to access certain modes of communication like satellite TV or chat applications on computers and smartphones, and what technological constraints or possibilities are tied to certain (new) media?

There are different expectations in different settings. Fairclough studied the ‘marketization’ of universities, the operation of universities as if they were businesses that sell education as a product to consumers.⁷⁶ This concerned a shift from faculties as intellectual knowledge-centers to marketed learning-centered environments. Science is increasingly becoming part of popular settings such as infotainment television shows. This can shift the primary role of professors from managing and engaging in long-term research to becoming public figures who provide instant meaning to current news topics with brief statements. In this altered setting, their comments on whether a certain incident is possibly the tip of the iceberg might be perceived as a form of securitization instead of a contribution to an academic debate.

Ideally, studying settings requires that a researcher or intelligence analyst performs as a ‘situated critical interpreter’.⁷⁷ He cannot be an objective observer because it is necessary to absorb the specific language and the customs of the situational context, but at the same time, he must maintain enough distance or ‘stranger-ness’ to be able to rise above the setting and offer an outside view.⁷⁸ In practice, this will be challenging for scholars and intelligence analysts, and necessitate the knowledge of various experts.

D) Wider background: non-semiotic elements

Apart from discourse (or semiosis), non-semiotic elements shape the social practice within which a securitization effort manifests. Securitization can only be effective if it is sufficiently aligned with the **external context** or *zeitgeist*. Fairclough primarily identifies four non-semiotic elements: action and interaction, social relations, persons (with beliefs, attitudes, histories, etc.), and the material world.⁷⁹ The distinct properties of these elements are researched on different theoretical bases than the way this study researches language and discourse. However, these non-semiotic elements also relate dialectically to each other and to semiotic elements. They internalize or contain parts of the other elements without being reducible to them, as ‘social relations *are* partly discursal in nature and discourse (or narrative) *is* partly social relations’.⁸⁰ Processes of identification are relational, and relations manifest in narratives.

76 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, second edition, 100-125.

77 Wilkinson, ‘The limits of spoken words’, 100.

78 Ibid.

79 Norman Fairclough, ‘The Discourse of New Labour, Critical Discourse Analysis’, in Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, Simeon Yates, (eds.) *Discourse as Data, A Guide for Analysis* (London, Sage 2014), 234.

80 Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 25.

For example, the politics of nations can be seen as a social practice that involves diplomatic, military, or economic action and (friendly, neutral, or hostile) interaction, defined by and defining various national and international organizations and institutions, along with people's citizenship and the organization of geographical space. These aspects can be studied with theories of international relations, economics, war studies, organizational studies, ethnography, anthropology, social identity theory, etc. Yet, all these aspects are also reflected in discourse and all gain or maintain meaning through it. It is often in the national security strategy that one can find the clearest references to what values define the nation.⁸¹ Threats that need to be countered point to these values and hence underline national identity. In a similar way, securitization efforts (re)create or (re)define various types of audiences, and lead to (preventive) action or the restructuring of physical space. Thus, important questions are: How are securitization efforts affected by non-semiotic elements (including material security practices and actions), and in what way do securitization efforts affect these elements? To what extent do they influence (networks of) social practices?

Some background knowledge or fundamental existential/social beliefs are undetectable in texts. They relate to a **silential dimension** of things that remain unsaid. The unsaid is presupposed for audiences and becomes apparent as intertextual chains are formed and interdiscursive links are identified. This core analytic category relates to social structures like culture, religion, institutions, and power relations that manifest in and are shaped by social practices. Suggestions on what is 'normal' or on what individuals are socially less valued are good indicators of presuppositions.

How can we separate discourse from scientific theories on non-semiotic elements in other disciplines? Similar to the distinction between discourse and discourse analysis, it is the specific nature of these other scientific theories that distinguishes them from other discourses. Scientific theory is situated, but the systematic and transparent nature of the approach makes underlying knowledge explicit.

Through the framework of analyzing social events, settings, meanings, and the wider background, texts relating to specific actors and audiences constitute the building blocks for drawing up distinctive narratives around processes of securitization, and also for critiquing them.

Narrative tracing

Stories reflect reality but they can also 'do something', have performative power. For the case studies, securitization efforts lie at the heart of performative effects. The NAF accommodates the study of this social influence on various types of audiences. In an institutionalized setting, various formal and moral audiences can be distinguished that hold different perceptions

81 See for example The White House, 'United States National Security Strategy 2015', https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf (last retrieved February 8, 2018).

on policies. Some might be convinced of the need to trade some privacy for security, while others might oppose proposed policies. In an open democratic society, for example, physical protective measures might be taken in the public space as a result of a terrorist threat. Whereas this might make some citizens feel more secure, others could feel less so as they are constantly reminded of the threat by barriers and armed security personnel. For less institutionalized entities such as social movements or networks, other differentiations of audiences can be made, for example between active supporters or followers, more indirect sympathizers, and those with a general understanding of some of the anger and grievances that bind followers. Some 'audiences' might not necessarily agree with all a movement stands for, but in general align with feelings of anger or demands for freedom from interference.

But apart from influencing various audiences in a particular social domain in different ways, securitization efforts can also be multi-consequential across social domains. These 'consequences' of narratives can be intended or unintended, direct or indirect. Whereas a promise by national leaders to aggressively deal with a terrorist threat might be expected by their constituents, this might also provide the antagonist status and recognition among his own followers. Taking the discursive performative effects of security measures and policies into account in such a way seems especially fitting for the complex problem of international terrorism represented by *Al Qaeda*. Based on historic research, although focused on a different (domestic) context and a different timeframe, some have tentatively concluded that the expressive aggressive statements and actions that served to mobilize the population against terrorism actually nourished a climate favored by terrorists.⁸² This leads to interesting questions: To what extent do one entity's securitization efforts lead to securitization efforts by the defined referent subject? Do securitization efforts enhance self-identification and a sense of purpose among the antagonist's audiences? What is the role of leadership, or the securitization actor? How do bureaucratic practices or (uncoordinated) subgovernment institutional statements and actions affect the security problem? Since threat articulation seeks to enable an extraordinary response to deal with the threat, it would be antithetical if associated statements and actions also further actualized the threat.

In addition to the NAF, NT involves focusing on multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts and linking the development of distinct narratives. Using the term 'process tracing' is deliberately circumvented to avoid the suggestion that NT involves focusing on the most dominant or singular causal relation that explains particular social effects. Rather, NT entails focusing on the (potentially counterproductive) effects of securitization efforts in other narratives. It proceeds along the following questions:

82 Beatrice A. de Graaf, *Theater van de Angst, De strijd tegen terrorisme in Nederland, Duitsland, Italië en Amerika* (Amsterdam, Boom 2010), Graaf, Beatrice, A. de, Bob G. J. de Graaff, 'Bringing politics back in: the introduction of the 'performative power' of counterterrorism', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 3 (2010) 2: 272.

- *What is the analytical beginning and end of each macro narrative?* The NAF is instrumental in defining and outlining the three case studies (introduced in the last sections of this chapter).
- *What facilitating conditions and drivers, or factors and events, account for the overall transformation of the narrative trajectories between these points?* Identification of the patterns and dynamics that explain the development of the two macro narratives is a precondition for comparing and contrasting the narratives in terms of multi-consequentiality. Micro narratives serve to enhance, contrast, or highlight additional aspects of facilitating conditions and drivers.
- *How do macro narratives incorporate statements and actions that are reflected in (or are part of) other macro narratives?* This question relates to both the qualitative and quantitative extent to which this type of recontextualization occurs. The significance lies in the interdiscursive nature of these narrative elements, and less in their impact on narrative content. The latter is also relative to other factors and events influencing the development of a macro narrative.
- *How do such statements and actions resonate (add or remove momentum) among the various audiences of a narrative?* This can be derived from explicit audience responses such as polling data and voting behavior, or street protests and public debate. However, additional study of the alignment of audiences with the ideational background and situational context of the narrative can also be performed. What audiences are addressed in the narrative content, who is characterized as referent object, and what audiences actually consume the texts that make up the narrative? It is also possible for external factors or events to strengthen or weaken alignment of audiences to particular narratives. Terrorist attacks, military strikes, scandals, or hypes can have more fluctuating effects, whereas deteriorating socioeconomic conditions could have a more gradual impact on shifts in the alignment of audiences.

The approach can be graphically summarized as follows:

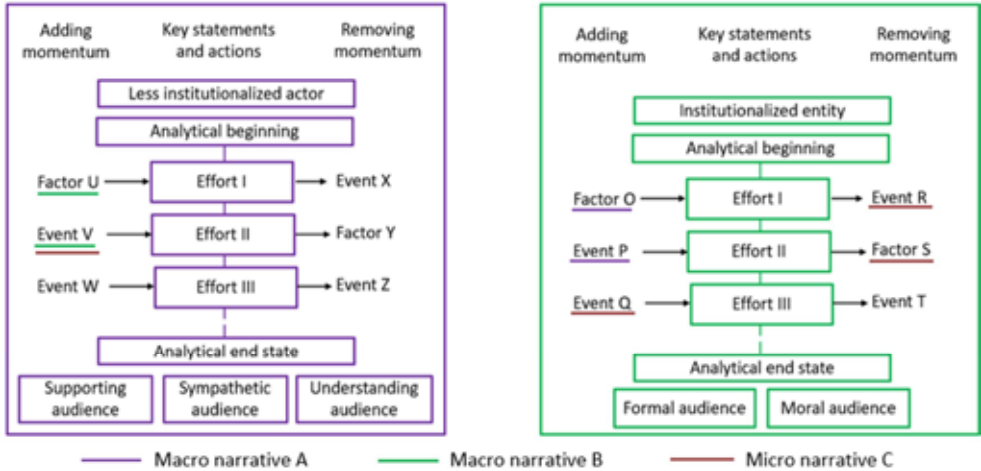


Fig 2.2 Schematic overview of narrative tracing

Now that the theory, methodology, and method for ACN have been discussed, the remainder of the chapter presents the object of research and the plan for the case studies.

The object of research: the complex intelligence problem of Al Qaeda

The organization, network, and ideology represented by *Al Qaeda*, and more particularly the evolution of meanings of *Al Qaeda* over time and the meanings of actions associated with it, serve as an appropriate object of research. In this study, the term *Al Qaeda* refers to the group of people and social network that associate themselves with the name *Al Qaeda*, the leadership of Osama bin Laden, the world view, beliefs, and values of a jihad against a far (Western) enemy, and public representations and non-discursive (violent) activities of *Al Qaeda* members.

To the US, the international terrorism associated with it represents a complex intelligence problem in which narratives clearly play a highly significant role. Non-discursive attacks need narratives to provide meaning in context. Moreover, threats made in video messages or manifestos are strongly discursive in nature. The name *Al Qaeda* connects and represents inter- and transnational phenomena that in different ways are part of separate yet partially overlapping narratives that manifest at different levels. It is also a case with which many people (scientists, intelligence professionals, politicians, citizens, etc.) are familiar and to

which they can thus relate. In the last 15 years, an extensive number of original documents found with *Al Qaeda's* leader Osama bin Laden in Pakistan have become publicly available. Partly as a consequence, much scientific research has been conducted on *Al Qaeda*, based on different theories.

In contrast to the analysis of narratives as projected here, quantitative pattern seeking approaches have mostly originated from an outside perspective.⁸³ They have a tendency to think about what could possibly pose a threat, and thus include the most dangerous scenarios: Can terrorists acquire weapons of mass destruction or nuclear material? Are our borders secured? What financial resources enable terrorist activities? Is there a pattern so we can predict future attacks? Such questions echo the positivist zero sum games and prisoner's dilemmas that guided Western policymakers during the Cold War. Most conveniently, one is able to calculate the most preferable policy or the extent to which taking out a leader will 'degrade' the organization. However, this level of certainty is a mirage if various meanings, settings, and contexts of social events are insufficiently taken into account.

The analytical relevance of narratives is closely related to the scope, aim, and object of this study. While its primary focus is on *Al Qaeda* on a global (international) scale, analysis at other levels, such as the US national level, can equally be of value. One of the four basic analytic narratives identified for this study is a (nation-wide) *United States institutional terrorism narrative*. However, the following example illustrates power struggles at the national level to remind us of the relative basic and analytic nature of this single nation-wide narrative.

Benghazi and the meaning of Al Qaeda: ideological struggles in the US

On the evening of September 11, 2012, a group of Islamic militants attacked the US Embassy in Benghazi, Libya. A few hours later, another US location was attacked in the city. Four Americans were killed in the attacks, including US Ambassador John Christopher Stevens. That same night, a large crowd of approximately 1,500 people had also gathered outside the US Embassy in Cairo, Egypt. They were protesting against the posting of an anti-Muslim video on YouTube that was allegedly (falsely) linked to American preacher Terry Jones.⁸⁴ As a number of Egyptian sheiks criticized the video on national television, it increasingly became an issue in the public domain. That night, the protesters temporarily entered the Embassy grounds in Cairo, but refrained from entering buildings.

What events preceded the attacks in Benghazi and what people and organizations were involved became subject to debate in the United States. Initially, news channels related the

83 See for example V.S. Subrahmanian, Aaron Mannes, Amy Sliva, Jana Shakarian, John P. Dickerson, *Computational Analysis of Terrorist Groups: Lashkar-e-Taiba* (New York, Springer 2013), Jonathan D. Farley, 'Breaking Al Qaeda Cells, A Mathematical Analysis of Counterterrorism Operations (A Guide for Risk Assessment and Decision Making)', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 26 (2003) 6: 399-411.

84 Ashraf Khalil, 'Cairo and Benghazi Attacks, Two Sets of Fundamentalisms Unleash Havoc', *TIME*, September 11, 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/09/11/cairos-u-s-embassy-incident-two-sets-of-fundamentalisms-unleash-havoc/> (last retrieved March 21, 2018).

Benghazi attack to the YouTube video, but later broadcasted that the incident was ‘a planned assault by extremists, in other words a terrorist attack’.⁸⁵ The group responsible reportedly either had links to *Al Qaeda* or supported *Al Qaeda*, as the attacks coincided with the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

It is possible to view texts on the Benghazi attack as part of a Republican, Democratic, and *New York Times* (press) discourse. The following analysis offers slices of texts that constitute parts of these different narratives. The timeframe is limited from September 11, 2012 to December 31, 2013. It does not represent an extensive and in-depth analysis of narratives on Benghazi, but serves to remind the reader of the basic analytic nature of the narratives defined in the remainder of this study. It also illustrates, on a general level, the interplay of texts and settings, meanings, and wider backgrounds.

After years of congressional hearings and investigations, the US Republican Party and the Obama administration still disagreed on the *meaning* of the attack. US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice (supported by the State Department) stated shortly after the attack that it was actually a street protest against an anti-Muslim video on YouTube that grew out of hand.⁸⁶ Some extremist elements eventually joined. The Obama administration claimed the attackers were locals with no direct ties to *Al Qaeda*.⁸⁷ In a letter to Congress on December 18, 2012, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did claim the department had learned from ‘the terrorist attacks on our compounds in Benghazi’.⁸⁸ *Al Qaeda* and ‘its far-flung affiliates’ were also mentioned as a threat in a wider global and regional context, but were not directly related to the attack in Benghazi.⁸⁹ Clinton stated that she had ordered an investigation into ‘what exactly happened in Benghazi’ and increased diplomatic efforts to ‘bolster the region’s emerging democracies’ of the ‘Arab Awakening’ and to counter the threat of terrorism.⁹⁰

[W]e are focused on confronting Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and helping our partners in North Africa target its support structure – closing safe havens, cutting off finances, countering extremist ideology, and slowing the flow of new recruits. We continue to hunt the terrorists responsible for the attacks in Benghazi and are determined to bring them to justice. [...] We are partnering with security officials who are moving away from the repressive approaches

85 For example CBS News, ‘Mobs hit U.S. buildings in Libya, Egypt; American diplomat killed’, October 18, 2012, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/mobs-hit-us-buildings-in-libya-egypt-american-diplomat-killed/> (last retrieved March 21, 2018), FOX News, ‘State Department officer killed in attack on US Consulate in Libya, following Egyptian protest at US embassy’, September 12, 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/09/12/egyptian-protesters-scale-us-embassy-wall-in-cairo/> (last retrieved March 21, 2018), Anup Kaphle, ‘Timeline, How the Benghazi attacks played out’, *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/timeline-how-the-benghazi-attack-played-out/2014/06/17/a5c34e90-f62c-11e3-a3a5-42be35962a52_story.html (last retrieved March 21, 2018).

86 CBS News, ‘“Face the Nation” transcripts, September 16, 2012, Clinton, ‘Remarks on the Deaths of American Personnel in Benghazi, Libya’, Gearem, Lynch, ‘U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice’.

87 CBS News, ‘Susan Rice to meet with McCain on Benghazi’, November 27, 2012, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/susan-rice-to-meet-with-mccain-on-benghazi/>, viewed on 2 January 2014.

88 US State Department, ‘Secretary Clinton’s Letter to Congress’, December 18, 2012, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/202447.pdf> (last retrieved March 21, 2018).

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

that helped fuel radicalization in the past and instead are developing strategies grounded in the rule of law and human rights. [...] In the days after the terrorist attack on our post, tens of thousands of Libyans poured into the streets to mourn Ambassador Stevens. They overran extremist bases and insisted that militias disarm and accept the rule of law. It was as inspiring a sight as we saw the revolutions across the region.⁹¹

The letter was sent four months after the attacks occurred. The *text* addressed US Congress and additionally reached the broader audience of the American people through its reproduction and recontextualization in news media. It was an institutional response to the attacks on the Embassy, a compound that symbolized the nation. In the letter, the Benghazi attack was signified as ‘violent attacks’ and ‘the terrorist attack’. At the same time, an investigation was ordered to ‘determine exactly what happened in Benghazi’. The US focused ‘on confronting *Al Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb’, continuing the ‘hunt for the terrorists responsible for the attacks in Benghazi’ while ‘moving away from the repressive approaches that helped fuel radicalization’. There was explicit reference to the ‘inspiring sight’ of the mourning Libyans, similar to ‘the revolutions across the region’, the ‘Arab Awakening’. As such, the letter provided assurance to US citizens and civil servants, a warning to terrorists, and hope for dialogue and a peaceful future for Libya and other Arab states that had ‘awoken’. References to the wider background included the protests, uprisings, and revolutions that had taken place in the Arab world over the preceding years, and the United States democratic political system and values. Despite the national institutional setting of the production of the letter, its consumption by the US Congress indicated its function as part of American bipartisan politics (as opposed to a nation-wide address by the US president). This opened up the possibility for debate, as members of Congress hold authoritative positions to question administration statements.

Republican Party members claimed *Al Qaeda* was involved in the attack: it was well planned to celebrate the attacks on the US in 2001. They accused the Obama administration of failing to increase security measures before the attack. Republicans also claimed that the administration’s denial of *Al Qaeda* involvement was driven by the desire to keep the narrative alive that the organization was decimated after the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan on May 2nd, 2011.

One day after the assault, on September 12, 2012, Rogers was among the first on Capitol Hill to describe the strike as a pre-planned attack. ‘I have no doubt it was a coordinated, military style commando-type raid that had both direct fire and indirect fire, military movements involved in it. This was a well-planned, well-targeted event. No doubt about it.’⁹²

91 Ibid.

92 Catherine Herridge, ‘House Intelligence chair, Benghazi attack ‘Al Qaeda-led event’.

The 2012 terrorist attack in Benghazi, Libya was an 'Al Qaeda-led event' according to multiple on-the-record interviews with the head of the House Intelligence Committee who receives regular classified briefings and has access to the raw intelligence to make independent assessments. 'I will tell you this, by witness testimony and a year and a half of interviewing everyone that was in the ground by the way, either by an FBI investigator or the committee: It was very clear to the individuals on the ground that this was an Al Qaeda-led event. And they had pretty fairly descriptive events early on that lead those folks on the ground, doing the fighting, to the conclusion that this was a pre-planned, organized terrorist event,' Rep. [Representative] Mike Rogers, R-Mich. [Republican, Michigan], told Fox News in a November interview.⁹³

This news report was published and broadcasted in December 2013, over a year after the attacks happened, in response to a *New York Times* (NYT) report. It summarized statements made in various earlier interviews with Republican House Intelligence chair Mike Rogers. *Fox News* is a news channel that reports on many topics in a conservative way, aligning with positions many members of the Republican Party hold. Rogers was quoted characterizing the Benghazi attacks in 'on the record interviews' with *Fox News* as a 'coordinated, military style commando-type raid', a 'pre-planned, organized terrorist event' that was 'led by *Al Qaeda*'.⁹⁴ The news broadcast summarized the 'Republican position' on the topic and, as such, was a direct challenge of findings published by the NYT that same month.⁹⁵ After an investigation that took several months, interviewing officials, locals, and militia leaders in Benghazi, NYT journalist David Kirkpatrick had stated:

The reality in Benghazi was different, and murkier, than either of those story lines suggests. Benghazi was not infiltrated by Al Qaeda, but nonetheless contained grave local threats to American interests. The attack does not appear to have been meticulously planned, but neither was it spontaneous or without warning signs.⁹⁶

According to Kirkpatrick, the only intelligence on a link with *Al Qaeda* was a phone call from one of the attackers to a friend in another African country, who allegedly was tied to members of *Al Qaeda*.⁹⁷ However, the call that night appeared to be the first time this friend heard about the attack. Other intelligence suggested *Al Qaeda* was far from directly involved in Benghazi.⁹⁸ The NYT reported that too much focus on *Al Qaeda* might even harm US interests.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 See for example David D. Kirkpatrick, 'A Deadly Mix in Benghazi' and Mark Morgenstein, Chelsea J. Carter, 'New York Times report casts doubt on al Qaeda involvement in Benghazi', CNN, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/12/28/us/libya-benghazi-nyt-report/> (last retrieved March 21, 2018).

96 David D. Kirkpatrick, 'A Deadly Mix in Benghazi'.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

It shows the risks of expecting American aid in a time of desperation to buy durable loyalty, and the difficulty of discerning friends from allies of convenience in a culture shaped by decades of anti-Western sentiment. [...] The attack also suggests that, as the threats from local militants around the region have multiplied, an intensive focus on combating Al Qaeda may distract from safeguarding American interests.⁹⁹

The NYT investigation started months after the attacks and the report was eventually published by the end of 2013. By stating the reality was ‘different’ and ‘murkier’, Kirkpatrick challenged both Democrats’ and Republicans’ accounts as relatively simplistic, positioning his own as a more complex middle road. Republicans Mike Rogers and Darrell Issa publicly dismissed the NYT report, stating the involvement of *Al Qaeda* was based on an examination of thousands of classified cables.¹⁰⁰ Rogers and Issa framed the classified character of the information they had seen as a basis for making authoritative statements. The NYT Editorial Board reversed the argument, enabling a division among the wider audience of US citizens.

If Mr. Rogers has evidence of a direct Al Qaeda role, he should make it public. Otherwise, The Times’s investigation, including extensive interviews with Libyans in Benghazi who had direct knowledge of the attack, stands as the authoritative narrative. [...] Americans are often careless with the term ‘Al Qaeda,’ which strictly speaking means the core extremist group, founded by Osama bin Laden, that is based in Pakistan and bent on global jihad. Republicans, Democrats and others often conflate purely local extremist groups, or regional affiliates, with Al Qaeda’s international network. That prevents understanding the motivations of each group, making each seem like a direct, immediate threat to the United States and thus confusing decision-making.¹⁰¹

Although the White House had no formal response to the NYT report, statements made by Obama’s former national security spokesman Tommy Vietor were quoted in news media.

If Rs [Republicans] spent 1/50th as much time as @ddknyt [David Kirkpatrick, New York Times] learning what really happened in #Benhazi, we could have avoided months of disgusting demagoguery. [...] Republicans inflated the role of Al Qaeda in #Bengazi to attack Obama’s CT record. They were wrong, and handed our enemy a propaganda win.¹⁰²

The informal character of the message, its platform, and the producer enabled the use of expressive language such as ‘demagoguery’. Because CNN decided to reproduce and

99 Ibid.

100 The Editorial Board, ‘The Facts About Benghazi’, December 30, 2013, *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/31/opinion/the-facts-about-benghazi.html?_r=0 (last retrieved March 21, 2018).

101 Ibid.

102 Morgenstein, Carter, ‘New York Times report casts doubt on al Qaeda involvement in Benghazi’.

recontextualize the tweet, Democrats were able to respond before the general public, indirectly influencing the US political process without any formal genre restrictions.

The NYT report mentioned Abu Khattala, one of the US prosecution prime suspects of the attack, and the Islamist militia *Ansar al-Shariah*. According to the NYT, they were falsely linked *directly* to *Al Qaeda*. Both *Ansar al-Shariah* leaders and Abu Khattala were embraced after the attacks by elected Libyan leaders. In interviews with the NYT and CNN, Khattala denied any connection to *Al Qaeda*, but he did not hide his admiration for its vision.¹⁰³ According to Khattala, this was in line with the ‘old case’ of enmity between the US and ‘the peoples of the world’ as the US was always enforcing its agenda on others.¹⁰⁴ In June 2012, Khattala and his followers participated in a wider motorized parade under the black flags of militant Islam, a symbol also used by *Al Qaeda*. Other participants of the parade had markings of major militias that allied with the government and effectively controlled Benghazi. The *Ansar al-Shariah* leadership denied participating in the attack on the US Embassy, but supported the attack as a justified reaction to the anti-Muslim video. They insisted it was a peaceful protest that escalated and led to the suffocation of the Ambassador. According to the NYT, there appeared to be no other link to *Al Qaeda* than solidarity. In a BBC interview, *Ansar al-Shariah* member Mohammed al-Zahawi had praised *Al Qaeda* leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.¹⁰⁵ Another group by the name of *Ansar al-Shariah* exists in Yemen that has affiliations with *Al Qaeda* in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).¹⁰⁶ Identification of Khattala or *Ansar al-Shariah* by their names, social network, intent, role, and rhetoric differed between Republicans, Democrats, and journalists, providing an important front in the struggle over meaning and power.

Ideology: the power of meaning

The short and by no means comprehensive selection of texts above illustrated the struggle over ideology and power in US discourses on Benghazi.¹⁰⁷ Whether it was Republican House Intelligence chair Mike Rogers, Ambassador Susan Rice, or NYT journalist David Kirkpatrick, they all made authoritative yet conflicting claims based on their position and access to what they saw as reliable and accurate information. Mike Rogers received numerous classified briefings and referred to ‘thousands of classified cables’ that enabled him to judge independently on behalf of the people he represented. From his side, the classified character

103 Ibid.

104 David D. Kirkpatrick, ‘A Deadly Mix in Benghazi’.

105 Ahmed Maher, ‘Meeting Mohammad Ali al-Zahawi of Libyan Ansar al-Sharia’, September 18, 2012, BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19638582> (last retrieved March 21, 2018).

106 Morgenstein, Carter, ‘New York Times report casts doubt on al Qaeda involvement in Benghazi’.

107 For a comprehensive analysis of US discourses on the Benghazi attack more relevant texts should be reviewed (in its entirety), including the context of production of each text and the various ways in which audiences perceived the texts. Furthermore discursive and social practices should be described in more detail. This paragraph merely provides an introduction of CDA concepts to illustrate the relative *basic* and *analytic* nature of a nation-wide US institutional terrorism narrative.

of the information added to his credibility. It was a symbol of power, the power of (exclusive, high-value) knowledge. Journalists gained their authority from transparency and thus saw any lack thereof as a sign of weakness. At times, the discursive power struggle became highly explicit: Republicans were accused of ‘demagoguery’ by Tommy Vietor, and the NYT Editorial Board stated ‘the Times’s investigation stood as the authoritative narrative’.

The *setting* in which the selected texts were produced varied greatly. A formal letter from the US Secretary of State to Congress had a different social status than 140 characters posted on a Twitter account. Either way, both were not necessarily read by large groups of citizens themselves. It was the news media that fulfilled a crucial role in facilitating interpretation by persistently (mass) communicating certain frames. News media can be perceived by actors as a neutral bridge, a fact-checking filter, or biased spectacles, depending on their interpretative alignment with these actors. In any case, the news media are forced to make a selection of the number of topics and the depth in which these are discussed. Time and space are limited, and selection implies simplification. This changes the impact of source material, as parts of the material are used to create new texts such as news articles and reports.

News media also provide a platform that can amplify the impact of short statements on social media. The short messages Tommy Vietor sent to his followers on Twitter certainly gained momentum as CNN decided to quote them in an article that commented on the NYT report.¹⁰⁸ Media exposure influences the general public and increases the power to dominate at a formal level. In the case of the NYT report, the newspaper presented an independent view as it refrained from solely reproducing or recontextualizing either a Democratic or Republican perspective. Further analysis of (re)contextualization is required to provide more depth to the discursive study of the Benghazi attack.

The Benghazi attack occurred two months before the US presidential elections, which is why it became so crucial for Republicans and Democrats that the dominant account of the attack in news media fit their wider narratives. One of these narratives concerned the Global War on Terror: was the current administration successful in combating *Al Qaeda* after Osama bin Laden had been killed? The main differences between Republicans and Democrats on the Benghazi attack lay in whether *Al Qaeda* was involved, in what detail the attack was planned, and whether an anti-Muslim video was the reason for the attack.

Key to understanding the extent to which the interpretations of the available information on the Benghazi attack differed is reviewing the wider background. This background was reflected in underlying constructions on the nature of *Al Qaeda* (or what it meant to have any type of link with it) and how this fit with wider cultural divisions, like for example a ‘clash of civilizations’.¹⁰⁹ What constituted a terrorist attack? How did execution of the attack relate to levels of planning? These constructions drew on the wider world view of Republicans, Democrats, and reporters, and their relatively stable sets of beliefs and values.

¹⁰⁸ Morgenstein, Carter, ‘New York Times report casts doubt on al Qaeda involvement in Benghazi’.

¹⁰⁹ For example in line with Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster, New York 1996).

How was *Al Qaeda* defined? The NYT Editorial Board made a clear distinction between *Al Qaeda* as a core extremist group in Pakistan and local extremist groups or regional affiliates that (to some extent) were linked to *Al Qaeda* via an international network. Republicans like Mike Rogers defined that anyone was part of the terrorist network if he (a) communicated with people who were (in)directly linked to the leadership, (b) supported the thought propagated by the *Al Qaeda* leadership, and (c) acted accordingly. The US State Department initially backed the statement of Ambassador Rice that the attack was a street protest that grew out of control (eventually involving some extremists). Yet, in December 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton framed the attack as a terrorist act and referred to the perpetrators as terrorists. Despite that, she did not publicly conclude that there was a link to *Al Qaeda*. The hunt for the terrorists was 'ongoing', she stated. Clinton's statement was more reticent than statements made by Rogers: she still recognized the need to combat terrorism, but as part of a more holistic approach to the region, it seems. This is not a solid conclusion as none could be supported by the limitative selection of presented texts, but it does resonate with the respective world views or basic beliefs of Democrats and Republicans.

Different definitions of *Al Qaeda* relate to different world views on the nature of people and their social relations. The Republican Party is known for its American conservatism, with its roots in classical liberalism. Liberty, unalienable rights, and free enterprise are its core values. Most party members have supported a strong foreign policy and the need for a strong military to protect these values. Neoconservatives played an important role in the Bush administration by advocating the invasion of Iraq as part of US interest and an assertive promotion of democracy. Conservative Republicans have a tendency to divide the world into good and evil and usually have little tolerance for diplomacy. In terms of (neo)realist international relations theory, states primarily act to survive in an anarchic and competitive international system, consisting of self-centered states.

The world view of the Democratic Party is based upon American liberalism, with its roots in modern or social liberalism. Government should mitigate social injustice and poverty by progressive taxation. Traditionally, the party has supported a (neo)liberal foreign policy of cooperation among nations for the benefit of all. The focus has been on absolute instead of relative gain. Unilateral military action in response to security threats is less preferable than building strong international alliances before engaging threats. The majority of Democrats have favored diplomacy over military action.

Even in selecting the news, there is a difference between *Fox News*, CNN, and the NYT. Although all claim objectivity, it is through their selection of news that a different world view on what matters becomes clear. *Fox News* is widely seen as a more conservative news channel, whereas the NYT somewhat reflects the liberal values of its city. Without going into much detail here, there are evidently differences between the world views of the Republican Party and the NYT.

The ideological power struggle over meaning in the Benghazi narratives, but also the attempts to blur differences between narratives, must be viewed in light of the US presidential

elections. A practical approach was necessary for Republicans and Democrats to obtain as many votes as possible. It could potentially have had a devastating effect on electoral support for the Democratic Party if the Obama administration had appeared too soft on countering terrorism. The letter to Congress was sent two months after the elections but reflected a position taken before the voting started: the Democrats could not afford to not clearly refer to the Benghazi attacks as an act of terrorism. Who has the power to say what to whom, by what means, in what setting, and drawing on what wider background? The meanings related to different power positions, determined by authority and audience acceptance.

This example demonstrated that any narrative on *Al Qaeda* is only a basic analytic narrative that is intertextually and interdiscursively linked beyond the boundaries of its definition. It is possible to define a national US political narrative on *Al Qaeda* that is primarily reflected in US foreign and domestic counterterrorism policies. However, it is also possible to define various contrasting narratives within the US. The same applies to *Al Qaeda* from a jihadi perspective. It is only up to a certain level that one can defend an established 'Al Qaeda narrative'. One could also identify many contrasting narratives among the people who form its organization, network, or ideology. In that sense, one could ultimately state that to a certain extent, *Al Qaeda* is what people make of it.

Identifying the narratives on Al Qaeda for ACN

Central to this research was the identification of actors and their fundamentally different narratives in which 'Al Qaeda' was articulated. Instrumental in this process was distinguishing between different social and discursive practices that situate narratives. These were different overlays that could be placed over a map formed by landmark events such as attacks or declarations. This section describes the orientation of the three narratives central to this research with respect to their different social orders. They are situated in the social practices of Salafi-jihadism, the international politics of nations, and the information society.

First, *Salafi-jihadism* is a violent form of Islamic fundamentalism or fanaticism, also referred to as Islamism, which manifests at the transnational and global levels within the social structure of Islamic society.¹¹⁰ Central to Islamic fanaticism is the belief that a complete transformation of society is required to establish the end state of a 'true' Islamic social order: a society built on Sharia, the Islamic law revealed by God in the Quran and the way the prophet Muhammed lived.¹¹¹ Salafi-jihadism is a hybrid Sunni ideology that propagates violence.¹¹² It emerged as an order of discourse and social practice among Muslims fighting a jihad against

110 Bob G.J. de Graaff, *Op Weg Naar Armageddon, De Evolutie van Fanatisme* (Den Haag, Boom 2012), Gilles Kepel, *Jihad, The Trail of Political Islam*, fourth edition, translated by Anthony F. Roberts (London, I.B. Tauris 2006), Martin Kramer, 'Coming to Terms. Fundamentalists or Islamists?', *The Middle East Quarterly*, 10(2003) 2: 65-77.

111 Pieter Nanninga, *Jihadism and Suicide Attacks, al-Qaeda, al-Sahab and the Meanings of Martyrdom*, PhD thesis University of Groningen (Zutphen, CPI Koninklijke Wöhrmann 2014).

112 Kepel, *Jihad*, 219-222.

Soviet troops in Afghanistan and linked their experience with Salafism, a call to return to the ancient traditions of Muslim ancestors. After the war ended in 1989, Salafi-jihadism became a fight related less to a specific territory and more to identity. The social practice relates to the articulation of Salafi-jihadi groups as part of a distinct identity and belief, a way of life at the individual, group, and social network levels. To further clarify its distinctive nature, Salafism can be differentiated between quietist, activist, and jihadi approaches. First, quietist Salafism involves the rejection of religious innovation in its purest form, without any political or violent action.¹¹³ Salafi activists are involved in politics and society to advance their beliefs and ideals.¹¹⁴ Finally, Salafi-jihadis strive to return to what they believe is the 'true' version of Islam by using violence.¹¹⁵ Salafi-jihad is therefore the most distinct of the orientations. Corresponding discursive practices that bridge this social practice with events are Salafi-jihadi doctrine and justifications for or the threat of conducting violent acts (or jihadism). In case of *Al Qaeda*, this is specifically related to conducting high-profile terrorist attacks against the United States as a global power. Non-semiotic elements could be approached from a variety of theoretical angles, including religious studies (and its subfield Islamic studies), anthropology, and sociology.

Within the social practice of global Salafi-jihad and the Salafi-jihadi order of discourse, Osama bin Laden's 'counter-colonial' or 'global jihad' narrative was identified as the *Al Qaeda narrative* in this study. Communicative events that constituted the narrative embodied violent and kinetic acts or terrorist attacks, along with the public statements made by Osama bin Laden on behalf of or generally attributed to *Al Qaeda*. These included public statements such as interviews, open letters, and online videos, but also involved reports of attacks available and translated into English.¹¹⁶ For the purpose of demonstrating ACN, the selected texts were sufficient because relevant reflections on translation limitations were taken into account and multiple translations of the same texts were cross-referenced.

Second, from a United States policy perspective, security threats like *Al Qaeda* related to the social practice of the international *politics of nations* as part of the broader national security order of discourse. For the US, this social practice encompassed an effort to maintain hegemony in an anarchic world. It arose in the social structure of states and international organizations. This social practice relates to the articulation of nation states in terms of territory, citizens, governance, international institutions, and symbols, signs, and texts reflected in orders of discourse. Diplomacy, trade and other forms of exchange, and armed conflict take place in a collective political sphere that is governed mostly by treaties and

113 Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi, The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2012).

114 Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism, Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and state power in Jordan* (Albany NY, State University of New York Press 2001).

115 Assaf Moghadam, 'Motives for Martyrdom, Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks', *International Security*, 33 (2009) 3: 46-78.

116 For example Gilles Kepel, Jean-Pierre Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its own words*, translated by Pascale Ghazaleh (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press 2008) and Bruce Lawrence, (ed.) *Messages to the world, the statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London, Verso 2005).

agreements. For the US, especially as it remained the only super power after the Cold War, this applies to a lesser extent. Because of its military capabilities and global involvement, the US was able to conduct unilateral (or lead multilateral) military interventions such as in Iraq (1991, 1998) and Kosovo (1999). Non-semiotic elements of the politics of nations could draw on theories in the broad fields of international relations and political science.

The discursive practice relating to the second narrative, the *US institutional terrorism narrative*, was institutional communication and execution of national policy by the US administration under President Bill Clinton. The President of the United States represented the US institutional order, and for this study his public speeches, letters, and actions on terrorism were considered to represent the formal *US institutional terrorism narrative*. This included non-discursive institutional action such as military strikes. Two remarks are necessary here. First, other formal publications such as reports from Congress or policy presented by US Departments were included to provide additional context, but it was the presidential declarations that provided the backbone of the analysis of this narrative. Second, presidential declarations represented a continuing institutional narrative, but also included more personal idiosyncratic rhetorical elements. Personal circumstances of the president had to be taken into account when analyzing statements. In some form, this applied to all three main actors in the case studies or narratives.

The third narrative, named the *critical terrorism narrative*, was identified in a different manner than the previous two. After the case studies on the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives were concluded, a social practice or space was identified that could cultivate a relevant narrative with a potentially critical perspective on the preceding case studies: the *information society*. Since the 1980s, the information revolution and processes of globalization have enabled the emergence of the network society, a social and media network structure facilitating the social practice of the information society on the global level.¹¹⁷ Increasingly, individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions are networked together, organized around (electronic) streams of information; they surpass the traditional Westphalian chokepoints such as embassies and (inter)national institutions. The information revolution has enabled critics to make their views public and hold governments or other powerful actors accountable for their actions. Non-semiotic elements of this social practice could relate to a variety of theoretical fields, including information and communication sciences.

The first two narratives could be considered macro narratives in that they demonstrate a considerable performative power with respect to their audiences and power to act with regard to the security problem. In comparison, this third narrative is more that of a commentator at the micro or personal level. To varying degrees, journalists were able to comment on tensions and inconsistencies in other narratives. They could publish on matters from around the world via satellite phone, television broadcasts, or the internet, providing unique perspectives via diverse media to even more diverse audiences. A relevant order of discourse that manifested in and through electronic media at the global and transnational

117 Castells, Cardoso, *The Network Society*.

level was news correspondent reporting, in this case related to *Al Qaeda*. The genre of reporting varied along a spectrum from investigative journalism to mass media reporting, situating journalists somewhere on that spectrum. Meanings in texts could surpass dominant constructions of meaning in the other two narratives.

Robert Fisk, a British journalist and correspondent in the Middle East for the London-based newspaper *The Independent*, was selected as a central contributor for this critical narrative. Before conducting the case study, it was unknown to what extent Fisk's texts would provide a narrative with different meanings of events that were useful for ACN; however, selection was informed by several arguments. Unlike any other journalist, Fisk interviewed Bin Laden in Arabic three times in both Sudan and Afghanistan. Furthermore, he had been recognized by a relevant former US intelligence officer as a reputable and reliable.¹¹⁸ However, contrary to other English-speaking reporters, Fisk did not extensively use American official sources in his reports on *Al Qaeda* and Bin Laden. Other British and American journalists who interviewed and reported on Bin Laden, such as Gwynne Roberts, Peter Arnett, Peter Bergen, Scott MacLeon, and John Miller, were included in the narrative to varying degrees for comparison. It was not the impact or performative power, but the potential of the meanings attributed to events in the third narrative to reveal tensions and inconsistencies in other narratives, that analytically served the methodology of ACN.

Events and text selection

Narratives take shape around social events that are manifested in texts. The identification of relevant events emerges from data in the texts, but the analysis of these events is also informed by other sources, such as the review of literature. Gathering data and identifying events and core elements of narratives is in fact a dialectical process that gains focus as available literature and data accumulate and key events emerge. A mixture of different types and a sufficient amount of texts are needed to ensure an adequate intertextual level to represent a narrative. For this research, these texts included public statements like press conferences, institutional reports, news articles, open letters, online video statements, reporting on terrorist attacks, memoirs, historical research, and discussions on television. Further research was conducted on (sometimes declassified) studies that were informative for analyzing settings and the wider background context of narratives.

Based on a search for *Al Qaeda* related texts in a wide range of sources, significant events were identified and chronologically ordered in a timeline.¹¹⁹ From this timeline, themes and

118 Michael Scheuer, *Osama Bin Laden* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2011), 225, Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris, Why the West Is Losing the War on Terrorism*, Kindle edition (Dulles, Potomac Books 2005).

119 For example Kepel, Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its own words*, Lawrence, *Messages to the world*, CBC News, 'Timeline, Key events in the history of Al Qaeda', May 2, 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/timeline-key-events-in-the-history-of-al-qaeda-1.1070653> (last retrieved March 21, 2018), Simon Jeffrey, 'Timeline, the al-Qaida tapes', *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/alqaida/page/0,12643,839823,00.html> (last retrieved March 21, 2018), NBC News, Timeline of

events were clustered. This study focused on events between 1994 and early 2001, as this period reflected the emergence of *Al Qaeda* (as organization, network, or ideology) in various narratives. Events included Osama bin Laden's statements between 1994 and early 2001, with a special emphasis on his 1996 declaration, the 1998 World Islamic Front statement, and interviews in Western media. Other important events were the 1998 attacks on US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the consequential US military strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan. The foiled millennium plots and the attack on the USS Cole in 2000 were also highlighted as key occurrences.

Empirical limitations of the research were twofold. First, only a selection of texts was studied. The selected texts were combined into basic analytic narratives. This always leaves open the possibility to expand or adapt narratives. Furthermore, among the selected texts, a distinction was made between *key texts* and other texts. Key texts were those that were extensively reproduced and contextualized in other texts and as such signified social change or action to a greater extent. They were selected over other texts that had less impact on narratives, as the latter merely added to what had already been said. Second, the research was based on publicly available data. This left out classified information that could have affected further analysis. It should be emphasized here that the ACN methodology is itself not limited to public discourse. Classified information collected by means of signals intelligence, human intelligence, or imagery intelligence will only improve and enrich narratives and their settings and contexts. Constructing these narratives solely on secretly obtained information is a less productive approach, however. Securitization efforts require audiences. Terrorists aim to spread fear with their actions and mobilize support. A public dimension hence provides a crucial context to narratives. All in all, the two limitations did not conflict with the overall purpose of the research, as the primary aim was to develop and demonstrate the methodology of ACN and the derived method. The texts selected for the identified basic analytic narratives provided ample material to achieve this.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an outline of the theoretical concepts and assumptions that informed ACN. It also presented the NAF, NT, and the delineation of different narratives on *Al Qaeda*. The core elements of the ACN methodology draw on Norman Fairclough's CDA and Thierry Balzacq's securitization theory. Fairclough provides the most significant theoretical thrust for this chapter, outlining how social orders of structures, practices, and orders of discourse situate narratives. CDA concerns the social function of language in discourse; it connects language to wider social and political thinking. In particular, Fairclough's CDA is concerned with how power relations and ideology work to (re)create social difference.

The overlapping terminology in CDA has proven to be somewhat problematic, especially regarding the term 'discourse'. By adopting the term 'narratives' in this study, the confusion is limited. Figure 2.1 in this chapter was developed based on an early version of Fairclough's three-dimensional model and made it possible to locate narratives in social orders. Complemented with non-semiotic elements, it provided a practical reference to pinpoint the concepts of narratives and securitization efforts. As a supporting theory adopted by Fairclough, insights from Halliday's functional linguistics allowed the analysis of key parts of texts in more detail, informing a sense of lexical and grammatical cohesion with respect to those parts.

Balzacq's theory of securitization delivered the necessary focus to analyze meaning in narratives. Central to securitization efforts is mobilizing support for extraordinary measures in light of the construction of social difference, the identification of a self-versus-other, and an articulated threat. His contextual approach to securitization departs from the earlier, more limitative concept of securitization as a speech act. Balzacq highlights the importance of the status of (moral and formal) audiences and underlines how securitization efforts themselves influence processes of identification. For securitization efforts to have effects, they must not only fit settings of text production and consumption, but also align with a wider background context or *zeitgeist*. Lastly, the power of securitization efforts corresponds to the social position of the securitizing actor and his access and ability to use resources. At the discursive level of text production and consumption, this is shaped by the extent to which genre conventions allow the speaker to take on the role of securitizing actor over others. At the level of social structures and practices, this is equivalent to the knowledge of languages and the skill to use them or introduce a new kind of security language. Non-discursively, material security practices can contribute to and express securitization efforts. The elements of the definition of securitization, such as securitizing actor, referent object, and referent subject, provided core coding categories when analyzing the data in source material. This allowed the analysis of a far greater number of texts than if a detailed discourse analysis had been performed on texts to 'discover' patterns or discursive strategies. For key texts, or parts of texts, verbal and non-verbal data was coded in terms of reference, metaphors, synonyms, superordinates, stereotypes, and auditive, visual, and behavioral aspects with respect to those categories. Written texts, such as news articles and transcripts, generally constituted the major part of the analyzed data, whereas imagery and sound served more as an (incidental) additional resource for triangulation.

The resulting NAF was a discursive approach to security and intelligence that emphasized the role of settings and audiences, the wider context, and underlying power relations. This systematic approach helped to identify how the workings of power and ideology in terms of securitization efforts and material security practices affected the connection between texts, discursive practices, and social practices, along with non-semiotic elements. In other words, to identify how the various facilitating conditions and drivers integrated and together shaped the workings and effects of causal complexes. How did the *US institutional*

terrorism narrative and US foreign policy influence each other? How did Salafi-jihadism shape the message spread by Bin Laden? And how did statements and attacks against the American 'far enemy' affect the Salafi-jihadi social order? In addition, NT entailed a focus on the multi-consequentiality of statements and actions across social domains. How did terrorist attacks or threats influence US international and national security policies? What influence did US government statements and actions have on the development of the *Al Qaeda* narrative? These issues will be part of the synthesis in the last chapter.

In this chapter, theory and methodology were developed into a method: an applicable, concrete analytical framework to examine various case studies of *Al Qaeda*. The cases in the next chapters not only served to apply and illustrate ACN, but also aided in developing the methodology further. Empirical gaps and problems were interpreted both as a sign of a lack of appropriate or publicly available data, and as a problem in the selection process that had theoretical or methodological origins. The research process included reviewing the inclusiveness of the reference timeline of significant *Al Qaeda* related events that was initially created at the start of the study. Furthermore, additional texts were collected from different actors to substantiate and situate the initial selection for the critical terrorism narrative. A major challenge when analyzing different narratives is always the extent to which the researcher has been able to sufficiently grasp the various background contexts and situational genre conventions. To deal with any lack of such knowledge, this research was able to extensively draw on the work of other scholars.

Developing the ACN methodology is highly relevant for the practice of intelligence analysis. ACN does not reveal an ultimate truth but enriches one's perspective on complex intelligence problems by highlighting different efforts of securitization and identification, and also their critiques, in various narratives. This methodology allows for a reflexive attitude to counter the dominance of one's own interpretation, or the interpretation of the intelligence consumer defining requirements. As such, it contributes to the continuously developing situational understanding of complex, ambiguous, and ambivalent intelligence problems for intelligence producers and consumers. The ACN methodology is not only an asset for intelligence studies, but is also an addition to academia. Securitization theory has rarely been applied simultaneously to multiple cases. Similarly, the methodical analysis of at least three narratives in parallel, at both a macro and a micro level, is an uncommon approach for historians and discourse scholars.

The three following chapters outline an analysis of each of the three narratives described in the scheme below. Whereas the *Al Qaeda* and US narratives could be viewed as discourses at a macro level and with considerable social influence (or performative power), the critical narrative provided additional insights by reflecting on the securitization efforts and dynamics identified in the macro narratives from a micro perspective. Its influence on social orders was low, and was also not the primary concern for this research. In the last chapter, more insights are generated by comparing and contrasting all narratives in terms of discursive and non-discursive action, identity, power, and social orders. In addition, the ACN

methodology is evaluated and organizational and practical concerns are described relating to the implementation of a derived method in intelligence organizations.

Fig 2.3 An overview of the three narratives

Narrative	Social practice	Order of discourse	Text examples
Chapter 3: <i>Al Qaeda narrative (macro)</i>	(Global) Salafi-jihad	Salafi-jihadi order of discourse	Osama bin Laden's 1996 speech and newspaper article (Ladenese epistle) and related newspaper interviews
Chapter 4: <i>US institutional terrorism narrative (macro)</i>	International politics of nations	National security order of discourse	Presidential speech and recontextualization in US news broadcasts
Chapter 5: <i>Critical terrorism narrative (micro)</i>	The information society	News correspondent reporting	Robert Fisk's interviews with Bin Laden

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Al Qaeda narrative

Introduction

The first case study relates to Bin Laden and his network, the entity that would receive the most attention from any intelligence effort on *Al Qaeda* regardless of method. The *Al Qaeda* narrative has a significantly different character than the US institutional terrorism narrative presented in the next chapter. This is, first, because it concerns a far less institutionalized (in the 1990s even diffuse) entity. There are no institutional genre conventions or strict formal structures, roles, or practices like those in the US. Furthermore, the *Al Qaeda narrative* has a more emotional character than the US institutional terrorism narrative, which includes more rational explanations of policy. Bin Laden sought to enhance a sense of solidarity among various intended audiences. Moreover, the narrative was based on grievances that accumulated over time, instead of being sparked by a high-impact non-discursive event.

Although the timeframe for this study is set between 1994 and early 2001, texts and non-discursive actions are clearly related to discourse and events preceding this timeframe. Making matters more complex are differences regarding the moment *Al Qaeda* ‘came into being’. The respected American writer Lawrence Wright states *Al Qaeda* was born as a terrorist organization in late 1991 and early 1992, as Osama bin Laden moved to Sudan and the East Africa cell that would bomb the US embassies was formed.¹ Former FBI agent Ali Soufan, who was involved with the Bin Laden investigation, describes how the East Africa cell was operational in early 1994.² The Lebanese-American academic Fawaz Gerges identifies May 1996 as the moment Bin Laden started to systematically operationalize *Al Qaeda*, and notes how there is a significant shift in *Al Qaeda’s* focus in the mid-1990s.³ British journalist and author Jason Burke concurs it was between 1996 and 2001 that *Al Qaeda* ‘matured’, although ‘it was still far from a structured terrorist group’.⁴ In contrast, according to American journalist and scholar Peter Bergen and investigative reporter Paul Cruickshank, *Al Qaeda* already existed as ‘a military base’ in the late 1980s.⁵ American religious studies scholar Flagg Miller appears to counter this notion most radically, stating

1 Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower, Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York, Vintage books 2006), 193, Tod Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War, The African Embassy Bombings and America’s Search for Justice* (Lebanon NH, University Press of New England 2014), 16.

2 Ali Soufan, *The Black Banners, Inside the Hunt for Al-Qaeda* (London, Penguin Books 2011), 75.

3 Fawaz Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2011), 60.

4 Jason Burke, *Al Qaeda* (London, Penguin books 2007), 8.

5 Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (New York, Simon & Schuster 2006), 78–82, Peter Bergen, Paul Cruickshank, ‘Revisiting the early Al Qaeda, Updated account of its formative years’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 35(2012) 1: 1–36, Holbrook, *The Al-Qaeda Doctrine*, 12.

only after 2001 does the term 'Al Qaida' come to be used by militants to signify a worldwide organization. [...] [T]he qaida's leverage as a resource for action or building consensus draws from a far more disparate range of narratives.⁶

What this illustrates is the extent to which authors choose to highlight different aspects, stages, or phases of 'Al Qaeda'. At any point in time between the 1970s and the present, between the time Arabs joined the Afghan mujahedeen in the fight against Soviet troops and the 'post-Bin Laden era', *Al Qaeda* has existed in some form at the level of networks of people, hardcore organization, and ideology. The 'Al Qaeda narrative' between 1990 and 2001 thus needs to grasp these different aspects as they developed.

To analyze the *Al Qaeda narrative* as defined in this study, one must start by focusing on the Saudi businessman and jihadi leader Osama bin Laden amidst his developing group of followers and associates. As this group evolved, especially during the late 1990s and early 2000, it becomes more applicable to speak of a 'central leadership' that served as the most suitable mode of entry into the narrative, consisting not only of Osama bin Laden but from the mid-1990s also the Egyptian doctor who joined him, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Data for analysis includes the statements of Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri, as well as (violent) non-discursive actions associated with these *Al Qaeda* leaders in either an inspirational or organizational sense. Public statements have been collected from various sources and databases.⁷ Western and Arab news media such as the London-based *Al Hayat* and *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* provide data on reproduction and recontextualization of the public statements before various audiences. Video reporting, photographs, and other news reports offer context regarding non-discursive aspects of violent attacks and other events. Flagg Miller's analysis of Bin Laden's extensive collection of audiocassettes captured in Kandahar in 2002 also adds valuable context. The value of audiocassettes to Arab culture compared to printed or digital media is discussed further on in this chapter.

Focal points for analysis of the *Al Qaeda narrative* are key texts: discursive and non-discursive events that signify social change, in terms of either narrative or mode of action. Important nodes in the *Al Qaeda narrative* are the 1996 Ladenese memorandum and the 1998 World Islamic Front declaration. Especially in the latter text, the tone became more aggressive and the focus narrower. Activities employed to prepare and execute attacks were mostly covert and only partially revealed by post-attack declarations, criminal investigations and intelligence gathering. Therefore, the center of gravity of the *Al Qaeda narrative* described in this chapter leans towards the public dimension. Still, as it includes descriptions of non-discursive actions and studies on non-public statements, this is distinctly different from

6 Flagg Miller, 'Al-Qaida as a 'pragmatic base'', Contributions of area studies to sociolinguistics', *Journal of Language and Communication*, 28 (2008), 386–408, 388. The term Al Qaeda has been used in an Islamic context as early as the eighth century, Flagg Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic, What the Bin Laden Tapes Reveal about Al-Qaeda*, Kindle edition (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2015), location 6533.

7 For example Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, Kepel, Milelli, *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, FBIS, 'Compilation of Usama bin Laden statements 1994- January 2004', www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ubl-fbis.pdf (last retrieved March 21, 2018). and CTC Harmony database.

other approaches. For example, British international relations scholar Donald Holbrook's analysis of 'the Al-Qaeda doctrine' is limited to public addresses.⁸ This chapter maintains a wider view and aims to include 'propagandists' and 'planners'.

Analyzing translations of Arab texts implies that a part of the meaning is literally lost in translation. There is a tendency in translations to 'unpack' complex constructions and enhance simplification.⁹ However, there are a number of similarities between Arabic and English that enable adequate analysis of English translations.¹⁰ In addition to text analysis, various academic studies of key texts have been incorporated in this analysis as they relate to either text, settings, meanings, or the wider background. The main theoretical focus in the narrative is the phenomenon of securitization. Language and culture together set the scene and provide messages to resonate within specific contexts. As Middle Eastern scholar at Duke University Mbaye Lo notes, Qur'anic or classical Arabic is mystified and elevated as a sacred language.¹¹ It is an Arabic tradition to equate good grammar with good morals.¹² Communicating in classical Arabic creates a religious setting and enhances Arab cultural identity, as the language is the primary vehicle of Islam.¹³ The wider context provided to situate the texts is rooted in an array of studies on Al Qaeda, Jihadism, and Salafism. They put the analyzed key texts and events in perspective.

8 Holbrook, *The Al-Qaeda Doctrine*.

9 Ashraf Abdul-Fatah, *A Corpus-based Study of Conjunctive Explication in Arabic Translated and Non-translated Texts Written by the Same Translators/Authors*, PhD thesis (Manchester, University of Manchester 2010).

10 Mohammed Ali Bardi, *A Systemic Functional Description of the Grammar of Arabic*, PhD thesis (Sydney, Macquarie University 2008).

11 Mbaye Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse, Language, Tradition, and the Message of Bin Laden* (New York, University Press of America 2009), 10.

12 *Ibid.*, 9.

13 *Ibid.*, 6, Al-Jahiz, Abu 'Uthman, *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin* (Lebanon, Dar al-Jil 1965), 98.

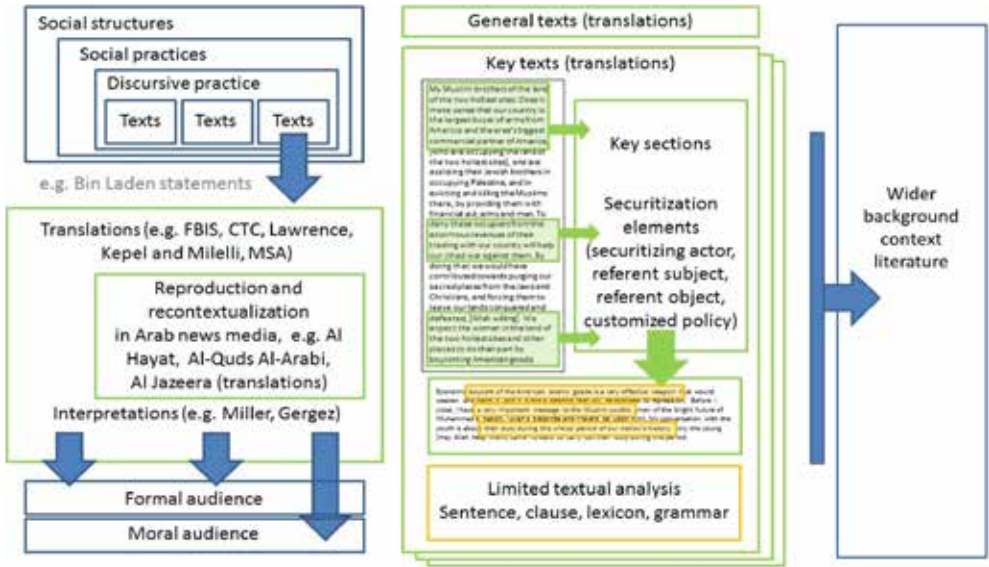


Fig 3.1 Schematic overview of text selection and analysis

Bin Laden’s base

To provide an understanding of the wider context, this chapter starts with an overview of preceding historical events and circumstances that are relevant to the narrative. A natural epoch to situate the *Al Qaeda* narrative is the Afghan war in the 1970s and 1980s, when Bin Laden and his followers, and the United States fought on the same side against the ‘godless’ communist regime. It is during this period that Bin Laden gained social status through his religious knowledge, his fighting reputation, the size and nature of his group of followers, and his moral standing.

Osama bin Laden held no formal religious degree. He was the son of an illiterate Yemeni who gained the trust of the al-Saud family and earned billions with building contracts, most notably for doing work on the Holy Sanctuaries in Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina. Osama bin Laden’s father died when he was 10 years old. Later, he studied economics at King Abd al-Aziz University in Jeddah in the 1970s. It gave him the chance to attend courses in Islamic studies taught by Muhammad Qutb and Abdullah Azzam, both members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁴ Muhammed Qutb was a brother of Sayyid Qutb, the highly influential Egyptian scholar who was executed in 1966 for being one of the main voices of the radical Islamist movement that threatened Arab nationalism. Abdullah Azzam was a professor of

14 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, xii.

Palestinian origin who lived in Jordan before he was forced to relocate to Jeddah in 1973 because of his radical thought.

The ideological and religious thinking of Azzam and Qutb that Bin Laden interacted with would prove to influence him for the remainder of his life. This will become apparent when analyzing some of the texts that are key to the *Al Qaeda narrative*. In the poetry of both Sayyid Qutb and Bin Laden, death for the sake of Allah appears as an honorable alternative for the oppressed. Humiliation, injustice, and oppression are central themes that necessitate resistance and prioritize the holy struggle of *jihad* against other enemies. Bin Laden admired Azzam's uncompromising attitude on armed struggle as an individual duty for Muslims. He left university without a degree and was eventually drawn to the war in Afghanistan, facilitated on his first trips by Abdullah Azzam.¹⁵

Initially, Bin Laden's developing network, which would later be referred to as *Al Qaeda*, was a continuation of a support network for jihadis fighting the Soviet invaders. The support network facilitated several Afghan training camps and was called *Maktab al-Khadamat al-Mujahidin al-Arab* (MAK), or services bureau for Arab mujahidin.¹⁶ Together with Abdullah Azzam, Bin Laden led the MAK from Peshawar in Pakistan. During the early 1980s, Bin Laden mostly focused on establishing a library of Arab-language religious texts, and he gave Islamic history and theology classes. However, as of 1986, tensions grew between the two men. Bin Laden set up *Al-Faruq*, his own Afghan training camp, which hosted more advanced weapons training and more in-depth religious classes.

Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), also joined the network. He and Bin Laden increasingly thought of spending MAK funds beyond Afghanistan.¹⁷ On the other hand, Azzam wanted to limit spending to Afghanistan, possibly including Palestine at a later date, but opposed using MAK funds in Egypt. Abdullah Azzam saw the concept of *Al Qaeda al-sulba* as a 'solid base' formed by actual territory and defended militarily. He thus opposed Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri's notion of a revolution instigated by a small clandestine group. This was contrary to Al-Zawahiri's interests. In November 1989, months after the Soviets had left Afghanistan, Azzam was assassinated. Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri continued to coordinate communication in the international network as jihadis left Afghanistan to fight elsewhere, like in Bosnia, Chechnya, Algeria, and the Philippines.

During the late 1980s, Bin Laden had established his credentials as a jihadi fighting the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, something that would continue to be illustrated in later interviews, picturing Bin Laden with captured Kalashnikov rifles. A myth founding his reputation describes a battle near the town of Jaji in 1987: outnumbered jihad fighters led by Osama bin Laden fought against Soviet special forces; Bin Laden had organized a training

15 De Graaff, *Op Weg Naar Armageddon*, 527, Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda, Global Network of Terror* (New York, Berkeley 2003) 17.

16 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 80.

17 De Graaff, *Op Weg Naar Armageddon*, 531-545.

camp there and was able to defend it for a week.¹⁸ Bin Laden became notorious especially for choosing to endure the harsh conditions in the camp despite being the descendant of a wealthy Saudi family. Many present day Western scholars and journalists have pointed out that it was useless for a few hundred Arab fighters to attempt to contribute to the war in Afghanistan from a small camp within range of Soviet forces. But from Bin Laden's perspective, such reasoning surpassed the true value of the experience there. The name of the camp, *Ma'sadat al-Ansar*, or 'Lion's den of the supporters', refers to the early days of Islam and is associated with courage and open defiance.¹⁹ Although the camp was of greatly limited use from a military perspective, it proved to be invaluable in symbolic terms for decades to come.²⁰

After returning to Saudi Arabia in 1989, Bin Laden became a famous speaker in public places. Some of his speeches on audiocassette were sold hundreds of thousands of times.²¹ These were loved not only because of Bin Laden's reputation, but perhaps even more because of his eloquent use of classical Arabic.²² As the traditional language of Islam, anyone who masters the language (*fasaha*) and art of good rhetoric (*balagha*) in such a high degree is held in high esteem.²³ Audiocassettes have a significant role in Arab culture as a decentralized medium to transfer messages among the population, including a large illiterate audience.²⁴ In addition to bringing across a message, it also enables the transfer of more emotion, sincerity, and refinement of the arguments through the sound and intonation of the speaker's voice.

It is mainly through audiocassettes and Arab newspapers that Bin Laden was able to present himself as a war hero with a testament of faith before a vastly superior Soviet enemy, and to advocate a purer and ascetic Arabian Islam.²⁵ The central theme of his speeches in the 1980s was the necessity to take up arms against the Soviets. Significant is that even in his early addresses to his Saudi audience, Bin Laden noted how 'Jerusalem has been taken' from the Muslims and 'Arabs have been shamed and disgraced'.²⁶

In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, giving reason for the Saudi government to be somewhat concerned for their security. Bin Laden offered them his international network of jihadi fighters to protect the Saudi borders, as they had 'successfully' fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan. After the Soviets withdrew, funding for the mujahedeen decreased drastically,

18 Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 49-74.

19 Osama Bin Laden, *Remembering the Lion's Den*, speech on cassette nr. 508, 1988, translated by Flagg Miller, as in Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 1480-1929, 3568, Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 54.

20 Nanninga, *Jihadism and Suicide Attacks*, 13.

21 De Graaff, *Op Weg Naar Armageddon*, 534.

22 Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, p3.

23 Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 92-108.

24 Flagg Miller, *The Moral Resonance of Arab Media, Audiocassette Poetry and Culture in Yemen* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press 2007).

25 Jamal Khashoggi, 'Arab youths fight shoulder to shoulder with Mujahedeen', *Al Majallah*, nr 430, May 4, 1988, as in Bergen, *The Osama Bin Laden I Know*, 58, Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 81.

26 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 77.

and attention for the Arab fighters there also faded. The recent developments in Kuwait provided a new sense of purpose for Bin Laden and his followers. However, the Saudi king rejected the suggestion as a grotesque idea. Instead, he accepted an offer from the United States to host their troops in defense of further aggression by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. This was insulting for Osama bin Laden at a personal and a religious level. To be patronized by a regime that allowed a non-Muslim military force in the land of the two Holy Places (*Al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca and Al-Masjid an-Nabawi in Medina*) remained a source of aggravation as US troops remained in the country after the Gulf War was over in 1991.

After becoming increasingly publicly critical of the Saudi government, Bin Laden was placed under house arrest and lost access to a significant part of his family wealth. With the help from his family, he fled to Africa, where he accepted an invitation from the Sudanese leader of the National Islamic Front, Hassan al-Turabi. Al-Turabi sought to establish a pan-Islamic network that could support his efforts against his domestic (Christian) enemies, and also welcomed Bin Laden's investments. With an estimated number of more than a thousand jihadi fighters associated with the *Al Qaeda* network, Bin Laden settled in Sudan in 1991 to train Sudanese forces in guerrilla tactics.²⁷ In the early 1990s, Bin Laden's religious and socio-political ideas took further shape. He also managed to transform his network into a more corporate-type organization. By setting up agricultural companies and other businesses, Bin Laden was able to ensure funding for his religious and socio-political activities and communiqués. In interviews, Bin Laden denied supporting any form of terrorism.²⁸

Bin Laden was providing support to groups fighting against US troops in Somalia – to what extent is subject to debate. Various sources claim different levels of *Al Qaeda* involvement. Rohan Gunaratna, for example, describes how *Al Qaeda* established a network in Somalia as Mohammed Atef, the 'deputy emir for military operations' prepared 'the mission' to have 'Al Qaeda's chief instructor' (Ali Muhammad) train 'the attack team' that eventually killed 18 US personnel in Somalia on October 3-4, 1993.²⁹ Gunaratna emphasizes how the blame was falsely focused on General Muhammad Farah Aideed. Jason Burke also describes how Mohammed Atef traveled to Somalia, but brands him as 'a senior figure in Islamic Jihad and nominally loyal to Bin Laden'.³⁰ Burke notes how it is possible that any of the other numerous Arab Afghan fighters present in Somalia (and not linked to Bin Laden) at that time could have been responsible for the training of Aideed's men. There were also many Arab-speaking fighters battling Aideed.

Ali Soufan explains how in 1992, a basic *Al Qaeda* network had been set up and was looking to target US troops.³¹ Abu Hafs al-Masri was sent to report on US activities in Somalia, and

27 De Graaff, *Op Weg Naar Armageddon*, 537. Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 30-31.

28 Robert Fisk, 'Anti-Soviet warrior puts his army on the road to peace, The Saudi businessman who recruited mujahedin now uses them for large-scale building projects in Sudan. Robert Fisk met him in Almatig', *The Independent*, December 6, 1993, 10.

29 Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 206.

30 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 148-149.

31 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 41.

his report caused the *Al Qaeda* leadership to release a statement demanding that the US leave the country.³² According to Soufan, *Al Qaeda* trainers were on the ground during the Battle of Mogadishu. It was *Al Qaeda* member Zachariah al-Tunisi who shot down a US Black Hawk helicopter.³³ Bin Laden celebrated the US withdrawal that followed as a major victory.³⁴ Fawaz Gerges delineates how Bin Laden often referred to the US withdrawal from Somalia as proof of the lack of political will to actually 'do battle'.³⁵

The precise relationship between Bin Laden and his followers, and the Arab Afghan fighters in Somalia has remained unclear. At various levels, they had shared experiences, acquaintances, and worldviews. However, Bin Laden never publicly claimed responsibility for the attacks. In a CNN interview in 1997, he pointed more generally to how Muslims in Somalia cooperated with 'Arab Mujahedeen'.³⁶ However, Bin Laden did refer in his rhetoric to how the US operation in Somalia had led to the death of tens of thousands of Muslims. Together with some of his close followers, he also issued statements in 1992 in which people were ordered to attack US troops in Saudi Arabia.³⁷ Years later, in 1998 and 1999, it was the bombings of the Mövenpick Hotel and the Gold Mohur Hotel in Aden on December 29, 1992, that Bin Laden claimed to be the 'first operational victory of *Al Qaeda* against the crusaders'.³⁸ An Austrian and a hotel employee were killed and seven others wounded. US soldiers had been staying at the hotels before the attacks, but no Americans were present during the bombings. The attacks occurred only weeks after the US operation Restore Hope had begun to support the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM).

Bin Laden and his closest followers viewed the battle of Mogadishu as another move from the United States to strengthen its grip on the region and impose its will on Muslims. These sentiments resonated with the wider Islamist movement represented across the Arab and Muslim world, of which the diverse leadership was brought together by Sudanese President Hassan al-Turabi during several conferences.³⁹ There was a perception among Bin Laden's closest followers that the battle was 'the second claw of a pincer movement' after the US had already stationed troops in Saudi Arabia, the land of the two Holy Places.⁴⁰ For them, the US humanitarian relief operation was possibly only the beginning of an increasing American

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid, 345.

34 Ibid.

35 Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 94.

36 Bernard Shaw, (Anchor), 'Impact, Holy Terror?, Osama bin Ladin Interview by Peter Arnett', television program, in CNN *Impact*, 9:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 10, 1997. Interview conducted in March 1997, transcript retrieved from LexisNexis and <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article7204.htm>, video viewed online via Conflict Studies (YouTube publisher), 'Osama bin Laden Interview (1997)', September 14, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcVV9snalOI> (last retrieved April 20, 2018).

37 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 51, Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 161.

38 Abu Shiraz, 'May 1998 Interview With Bin Laden Reported', *Pakistan*, February 20, 1999, 10, as translated in FBIS, 111-117.

39 Kepel, *Jihad*, 316-317.

40 Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War*, 17.

involvement in the region. In Sudan, the US could come to assist Christians against the Muslims, threatening the Islamist regime in Khartoum.

Bin Laden was settling and gathering followers in Sudan. One of them was Wadith el-Hage, a Lebanese who studied in the United States and had traveled frequently to Pakistan in the 1980s to do relief work. There, El-Hage also spent a year with the MAK and came to know Bin Laden more personally. As Bin Laden was leaving for Sudan in 1991, he hired El-Hage as his personal secretary.⁴¹ In 1991, Wadith El-Hage became involved with the *Al-Kifah Center* situated in the *Al-Farouq* mosque in New York, as he was contacted by Mustafa Shalabi to temporarily manage the center.⁴² At the center, two factions were fighting over the funds for the Mujahedeen that were left now that the Soviets had withdrawn from Afghanistan. Shalabi was leading the faction loyal to Azzam's vision of continuing jihad in Afghanistan. Also, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, known as the Blind Sheikh, had once studied under Azzam and lived in the US to recruit followers and manage some of Azzam's US assets. It was Rahman's intent to spend the funds in support of jihad in other countries, most notably Egypt. Shalabi was murdered and Rahman's faction took control of the center. Another key person in this respect is Ali Mohamed, a trainer at the center and member of EIJ, who had also helped Bin Laden move to Sudan. This illustrates the social interconnectedness of the people in Bin Laden's network with other radical Islamists, rather than some chain of command.

On February 26, 1993, a truck bomb exploded under the north tower of the World Trade Center (WTC). The organizer of the attack, Ramzi Youssef, developed his plan in Afghan training camps in the early 1990s. His uncle, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), provided some funding for the attack. A non-governmental organization run by KSM had supported fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan in cooperation with Abdullah Azzam. Despite this link to the MAK and Bin Laden, Youssef sent several letters to New York newspapers claiming he belonged to the 'Liberation Army, Fifth Battalion' and by no means referred to anything like 'Al Qaeda'.⁴³ During the investigation into the WTC bombing, the FBI connected the perpetrators to the Blind Sheikh.⁴⁴

The Egyptians

In the early 1990s, 'the Egyptians' belonging to the EIJ increasingly gained influence over Osama bin Laden. EIJ was a derivate of the Cairo faction within *Tanzin Al-Jihad*, a radical political Islamic (or Islamist) organization that emerged in the 1970s under Egyptian President Sadat and was allowed to counter the Marxist movement. This Islamist thinking was based on the

41 Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War*, 22.

42 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 46.

43 Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars, The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York, Penguin Press 2004).

44 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 48-50.

ideas of Abu al-A'la Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, and Ibn Taymiyya that Muslims had discarded traditional moral values (*jahiliyya*).⁴⁵ Muslim societies were no longer considered Islamic. After the Yom Kippur War, Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 that returned the Sinai to Egypt. The radical Islamists accused him of giving up Palestine and a rift occurred. Sadat was eventually assassinated in 1981 by *Al-Jihad* members hoping to start mass protests and instigate a Sunni revolution similar to the Iranian revolution in 1979. Vigorously battled by Sadat's successor Hosni Mubarak in the 1980s, the *Al-Jihad* leadership was arrested, and most radical Islamists went underground. Many of the Cairo faction fled to Pakistan and formed the EIJ. This was how their ideas inspired a wider movement across the region, including in Pakistan. Nominally still led by Abbud al-Zumur, who was imprisoned in Egypt, it was de facto Sayyed Imam al-Sharif (also known as Dr. Fadl) who headed the EIJ group. In 1988 in Peshawar, Al-Sharif wrote *The Essential Guide for Preparation (for Jihad)* in which he pointed out that defeating the Soviets was not the real victory: ultimately, that was eternal salvation and martyrdom.⁴⁶ This book would continue to have its influence among EIJ and Bin Laden followers, even after Al-Sharif stepped down as a de facto leader of EIJ.

In 1991, Ayman al-Zawahiri autocratically took control of the group and broke with Al-Zumur. It was Al-Zawahiri who wanted to train and build the group in Afghanistan and Sudan to eventually create an Islamic state in Egypt, and from there launch a jihad to liberate Jerusalem from the Jews (and fight Western influence). This resonated with Bin Laden's ideas of confronting the West or 'head of the snake', and contrasted those of Abdullah Azzam, who primarily wanted to rebuild Afghanistan.⁴⁷ The divide between Al-Zawahiri and Azzam was of a deeper nature, as Azzam had been a prominent Muslim Brotherhood member. In his 1992 book *The Bitter Harvest*, Al-Zawahiri critically reflected on 60 years of Muslim Brotherhood history.⁴⁸ He denounced the movement for an array of reasons, such as recognizing and allying rulers who did not govern 'according to revealed law', legitimizing the constitution as the proper way to establish change, and rejecting the use of violence.⁴⁹ Al-Zawahiri noted that *Al-Jihad* expected Muslim Brothers to repent their errors publicly, to condemn the apostasy of tyrants, to 'disavow these tyrants and their impious laws', and to believe and act according to the individual duty of jihad.⁵⁰ This was because if someone refused to wage a violent jihad, he would be punished by God and replaced by someone else. As terrorism consultant and former US foreign service officer Marc Sageman notes, when

45 Kepel, *Jihad*, 84, Nanninga, *Jihadism and Suicide Attacks*, 54.

46 As discussed in iyā Rashwān (ed.) *The Spectrum of Islamist Movements*, Volume 1 (Berlin, Verlag Hans Schiler 2007), 429-440.

47 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 30-32.

48 Years later in a second edition published in 2005 Al-Zawahiri 'deleted all the extreme phrases for which there was no proof' but maintained that the dangerous trend still stood but now was presented in a calmer less emotional way. As described in Laura Mansfield, *His Own Words, A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri* (US, LTG Publications 2006), 160-163.

49 Kepel, Milelli, *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, 171-181.

50 Ibid.

Al-Zawahiri took control, the EIJ became ‘a free-floating network without any real ties to its original or its surrounding society’.⁵¹

Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri found a common interest in sharing and combining Bin Laden’s wealth and network with Al-Zawahiri’s experience and rigid directions. This also resulted in the instalment of an Egyptian security detail, limiting access to Bin Laden to the extent that it even became more difficult for Abdullah Azzam to speak with him in private. This caused friction among other followers of Bin Laden such as those of Arab origin and from other African countries.⁵² The Egyptians also increasingly strained Bin Laden’s relationship with the Sudanese government. The EIJ perpetrators of an assassination attempt on Mubarak (during his visit to Eritrea) were allowed to hide with Bin Laden in Sudan.⁵³ This led to increased international pressure on Sudan to expel them. On another occasion, Egyptian intelligence officers were able to blackmail the son of an EIJ member into spying. As this came out, EIJ members tried and executed the boy.⁵⁴ This led to an unforgiving response from the Sudanese government. EIJ members were welcome, but not allowed to judge and execute sentences. Also complicating the relation between the Sudanese government and Bin Laden were some associated members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. Under pressure from Libya, the Sudanese government was forced to oust all Libyan Bin Laden followers belonging to this group.

Shapes of Al Qaeda

Different sources have highlighted various aspects of Bin Laden’s messages and the activities of his followers in the early 1990s. In other words, different accounts have focused on discursive or non-discursive actions. While some public accounts have highlighted a non-violent (rhetorical) direction, other sources have pointed to initiatives and covert preparations for more violent actions that supported an international jihad. It was in these accounts of non-discursive actions that the outline of an organization or a ‘hard core *Al Qaeda* element’ emerged, in addition to the wider social network of which Bin Laden was part. The increase of Bin Laden’s discursive practices reflected the development of his ideas and intent to reach an increasing Arab and Western audience.

The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States’ (the 9/11 commission) extensive two-year inquiry contextualized the events and circumstances related to Bin Laden in light of the attacks on the US on September 11, 2001. Its final report mentioned how Bin Laden’s offices in Cyprus, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Baku covertly ‘provided financial and other support for terrorist activities’ as he simultaneously built an ‘Islamic

51 Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press 2004), 148.

52 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 30, 65, 122.

53 Ibid, 52.

54 Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 125.

army' by joining forces with Islamist groups across the Arab world, Africa, and Asia.⁵⁵ Because of his links with these other groups, the report associated Bin Laden with several attacks occurring in the 1990s. He was reportedly involved in transporting weapons across the region and unsuccessfully sought the 'capability to kill on a mass scale' by attempting to acquire uranium.⁵⁶ This episode was also described in detail by Ali Soufan.⁵⁷

In contrast, Mbaye Lo stated Bin Laden was predominantly a passive businessman during his Sudan years, involved with road building and agricultural activities. He 'only became active as a Jihadi when the French and the Americans engaged the Sudanese government to surrender him'.⁵⁸ Between 1992 and 1994, Bin Laden coordinated his activities with the Saudi opposition Committee for the Defense of Islamic Rights and even attempted to establish 'a proxy political party in Saudi Arabia'.⁵⁹ It was after the committee released a 'Memorandum of Advice' in 1992 which was critical of the Saudi regime that the 107 signatories were harassed and jailed, forcing several of them to flee to London.

Bin Laden started to gain a profile in Western and Arab media in the early 1990s. In the London-based Arabic newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, Bin Laden dismissed accusations of supporting terrorism as a 'hostile imperialist method designed to suppress Muslims' determination and paralyze their movement toward one another and toward their religion and faith'.⁶⁰ He increasingly sent messages that were critical of the Saudi government and US foreign policy in the region: the presence of US troops in the land of the holy two places was disgraceful; Saudi man-made laws that contradicted fundamental Islamic values indicated the lack of religious legitimacy; and incidents during the annual pilgrimage in Mecca, *hajj*, illustrated the inability of the Saudi government to function as the protector of the Holy Places.

Bin Laden was not the only one opposing the Saudi regime. In 1992, a group of 109 religious scholars and clerics forwarded an extensive document, titled *Memorandum of Advice and Reform*, to the Saudi king.⁶¹ They criticized the state of the country and corrupt government practices, but most of all they contested the enduring presence of American troops in the country. King Fahd asked the highest religious body in Saudi Arabia, the Grand *Ulama*, to denounce the statement. The seven members who refused to do so were discharged from their official positions. In 1994, the Saudi regime sent another message to oppositionists in the country. Many of the 1992 memorandum signatories were arrested and tortured. Bin Laden was stripped of his Saudi nationality. Over the next few years, the Saudi government

55 9/11 Commission Report, 58.

56 Ibid, 60.

57 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 33-55.

58 Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 84-85.

59 Ibid, 85.

60 Ali Abd-al-Karim, Ahmad Al-Nur, 'Usama Bin Ladin Denies 'Terrorism' Link', *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, March 9, 1994, 4, as translated in FBIS, 1-3.

61 Abdul Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda*, Kindle edition (London, Saqi Books 2008) location 2957

arrested 200 junior and senior scholars for supporting *jihad* and challenging the American footprint in the country.⁶²

For Bin Laden personally, these developments motivated him to request that his trusted Saudi lieutenant Khalid al-Fawwaz set up the Advice and Reform Committee (ARC) in London. In 1994, this office was established, professionalizing and simplifying the circulation of communiqués. Its activities entailed both managing email distribution lists of radical Muslims, and releasing statements to various official news outlets such as pan-Arabic newspapers.⁶³ The ARC became an important node in the network of Saudi oppositionists. Through the media office's use of faxes and the developing internet, Bin Laden was able to circumvent Saudi state media control and publish freely to reach a global Arabic-speaking audience. Starting satellite TV stations like *Al Jazeera* were an addition to the internet. Furthermore, as an alternative to newspaper articles, speeches were distributed on audiotapes across the Arab world. Consequently, the number of his communiqués increased starkly. Between April 1994 and May 1996, at least 16 open letters were released, and one interview held. Repeatedly, Bin Laden discussed the legitimacy of Saudi social, religious, and security policies, warning Saudi security officials and raising objections on rulings of Sheikh Bin Baz, the country's highest religious authority.⁶⁴

In November 1995, a US operated military training center in Riyadh was attacked with two truck bombs. Five Americans and two Indians were killed. Another attack on US military personnel occurred in Saudi Arabia seven months later. On June 25, 1996, a truck exploded before an apartment building in Khobar, killing 19 US airmen and wounding almost 500 other people of various backgrounds. The attacks marked heightened tensions in Saudi Arabia as radical Islamist elements sought to resist what they saw as the 'man made laws' in the country, the poor economic state of the country, and US presence on the peninsula. The Riyadh attack occurred two months after Bin Laden published an open letter to King Fahd in which he addressed these issues. Regarding US influence in Saudi Arabia and the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli peace process, he stated:

It is no wonder that even if you were not personally satisfied with the so called peace process, all you have to do is to condescend in response to the orders of your American guardian. Was it not the American President Clinton on a visit to the country who refused to visit you in Riyadh? Did not he insist that you submissively and humiliatingly go to meet him in the American bases in Hafar-al-Batin? With that kind of behavior, the American president wanted to prove two points: First, to emphasize that the nature of his visit was basically to inspect his forces stationed in those bases. Second: to teach you a lesson in abjectness and scorn so that you are

62 Ibid, location 3051.

63 Ibid, location 2252.

64 See Annex 'Selection of Texts' under Chapter 3.

aware that he is your true guardian even in your alleged kingdom which, in reality, is nothing else but an American protectorate governed by the American Constitution.⁶⁵

This fragment demonstrates how Bin Laden emphasized the constellation of a submissive power relation to the United States that characterized Saudi foreign policies such as the peace process. This power relation served American interest and enabled them to project a military capability in the region.

Although the incidents in Saudi Arabia fit with Bin Laden's views and statements, he did not publicly claim responsibility for the attacks. At the time, the US did not hold him directly responsible. The bombings in Khobar occurred one month after Bin Laden was forced to relocate to Afghanistan following heavy international pressure on the Sudanese government to stop hosting him. As mentioned, apart from the Riyadh attack and Bin Laden's statements, there was also the failed attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa that was linked to some of the Egyptians in Sudan. In May 1996, the political pressure increased to such an extent that Bin Laden was not only asked to leave the country, but also stripped of his Sudanese nationality. As a stateless person, he and his family left for Afghanistan. It was an area he knew well, and Bin Laden was successful in gaining trust with the Taliban by offering investments and equipment in support of their fight for control over the country. Despite this, however, Miller notes that this was a time when he was 'confronting the bleakest prospects of his career'.⁶⁶ He was stateless, accompanied by only several hundred followers, deprived of millions in family funding, and unable to retrieve his immense investments from the Sudanese government.

By examining Bin Laden through the various prisms offered by Flagg Miller, Fawaz Gerges, the 9/11 Commission, Mbaye Lo, and others, it becomes clear that his presence and activities in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Sudan up to 1996 were multifaceted, and not all in light of financing or organizing terrorist activities against the United States. Moreover, it was not until after his 1996 declaration that the United States became a more prominent (or as some say, the most prominent) evil to target.⁶⁷ But for all the anti-American language used, it was still the 'Islamic community's own weakest link', the Muslims themselves and the corrupted regional Muslim regimes, against which the messages were directed.

Ultimately, the communiqués of the early 1990s culminated in the 'Ladenese epistle', the comprehensive and key text distributed on audiocassette to tens of thousands of people, published in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* on August 23, 1996, and translated in English by Saudi oppositionist Al-Mas'ari, the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service, and others.⁶⁸

65 Osama Bin Laden, 'Open Letter to King Fahd On the Occasion of the Recent Cabinet Reshuffle', Communiqué 17, August 3, 1995, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/An_Open_Letter_to_King_Fahd_on_the_Occasion_of_the_Recent_Cabinet_Reshuffle (last retrieved April 20, 2018), and AFGP-2002-000103-HT-NVTC, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Open-Letter-to-King-Fahd-from-bin-Laden-Translation.pdf> (last viewed February 21, 2016).

66 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 19.

67 Ibid, 34, location 735, Kindle edition.

68 Osama Bin Laden, 'Ladenese Epistle', August 23, 1996, multiple translations. See Annex 'Selection of texts', chapter 3.

Partly as a consequence, between late 1996 and early 1998, there was a period of extensive media exposure for Bin Laden. The following section presents the textual and contextual analysis of this key text.

Bin Laden's speech in 1996

Texts and genres

The most comprehensive text serving as a point of departure for this analysis is a speech Bin Laden recorded in 1996. He had just returned to Afghanistan after being expelled from Sudan. Unable to retrieve the millions in investments he had made in the latter, he found himself with very limited resources and a couple hundred followers. Later documentation found in 2011 in his home in Abbottabad, Pakistan showed he had been unable to collect an amount of 29 million US dollars from Sudan.⁶⁹

A recording of this speech was found in December 2001 among an audiocassette collection of almost 1,500 tapes in a former home of Bin Laden's in Kandahar, Afghanistan.⁷⁰ Flagg Miller has estimated that tens of thousands of copied recordings of the speech probably circulated throughout the Arab world. The medium allowed for a decentralized distribution of a message that contained not only the words, but also the sound and emotion of the speaker, emphasizing certain parts of the speech over others. It was a genre with which Bin Laden was quite familiar. Partially helped and promoted by the Saudi government, an earlier recorded speech of Bin Laden in 1990 had been sold over 250,000 times in the kingdom.⁷¹ That was at a time when Bin Laden mostly reflected on the deeds of the Saudi supported Arab Afghan mujahedeen. The favorable Saudi attitude towards Bin Laden had shifted gradually as Bin Laden became increasingly critical of the Saudi regime.

The 1996 key speech was submitted via Bin Laden's London-based media office, the ARC, to the London-based Pan-Arabic newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*. However, in contrast to earlier statements, it was emphasized that this text came from Bin Laden personally, not the ARC.⁷² On August 23, 1996, a 750-word summary was published in the Arabic newspaper. With an estimated circulation of 15,000 or more, the article reached a significant literate Pan-Arab audience spread over major cities in the world.⁷³ It was the leading story of that edition, titled

69 Letter found in Bin Laden's home by US special forces, declassified by the US government on March 3, 2016, <http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/english/In%20regard%20to%20the%20money%20that%20is%20in%20Sudan.pdf> (last retrieved March 4, 2016).

70 Miller, 'Al-Qaida as a 'pragmatic base'.

71 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 21.

72 Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda*, location 818.

73 William A. Rugh, *Arab Mass Media, Newspapers, Radio, and Television in Arab Politics* (Westport, CT, Praeger 2004), 173.

Bin Laden Calls for Guerilla War to Expel 'The American Occupiers' from Saudi Arabia (Bin Ladin Yadú li-Harb 'Isbat li-Ikhraj 'Al-Muhtallin Al-Amrikiyin'min Al-Sa'udiyah)⁷⁴

The tape with the speech studied by Flagg Miller had no label. Taking into account the elements that were left out of the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* publication, it would be more adequate to balance the focus on the US in the headline with a critique on the Saudi regime, and to include other types of resistance than guerrilla warfare against the regime and the occupier. Miller, Lo, and Holbrook have argued that it is mostly through this printed publication that Bin Laden's message became known in the Arab world.⁷⁵ However, despite the difference in the circulation speed between audiocassettes and printed newspapers, it is also the audiocassettes that had a major impact in the Arab world as a medium, especially among illiterate Arabs hearing messages in a taxi, cassette shop, cafe, or other public place. Thus, the impact of the Bin Laden speech on audiocassette should not be underestimated. Lastly, differences between the article and the recording are less significant than differences between both Arab texts and the English translations that found their way to Western news media and became part of a US institutional narrative.⁷⁶

It is insightful to problematize the genre of Bin Laden's 1996 speech. English translations are most commonly titled a 'declaration of war' or defined as an Islamic juridical decree (*fatwa*). A *fatwa* is characterized by a lack of political motives, however, and such motives were not missing in the text. The speech also deviated from the *fatwa* tradition as it did not relate to a specific question with a narrow and specific response. According to Islamic intellectual tradition, what was allowed for Muslims, was to conduct prayer to Allah, the Prophet Muhammed, and his companions (*basmalah*), and to remind other Muslims of their individual religious duties (*tadhkiir*), even without a formal religious degree.⁷⁷ Bin Laden translated this individual duty to economic resistance and physical jihad against the corrupt Saudi regime and the 'Zionist Crusader occupation' in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi regime was oppressive and increasingly following man-made laws instead of Islamic law. To motivate this view, Bin Laden provided an array of political and religious arguments.

Also illustrative of the extent to which the speech deviated from a carefully crafted *fatwa* was Bin Laden's selective reciting of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammed's deeds (*ahadith*) to suit his argument. Most notably, Bin Laden selectively recited a Medinan verse on repentance (*surah At-Tawbah*).

The most Exalted said in the verse of As-Sayef, The Sword 'so when the sacred months have

74 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 244.

75 Ibid, Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 16, Holbrook, *The Al-Qaeda Doctrine*, 65.

76 Bin Ladin, 'Ladenese Epistle', multiple translations. See Annex 'Selection of texts', chapter 3.

77 Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 20-24.

passed away, then slay the idolaters where ever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush'. (At-Tawbah 9:5)⁷⁸

The second part of the phrase on repentance was excluded:

[...] But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. (At Tawbah 9:5)⁷⁹

Characterizations of the text as *fatwa* or declaration of war were also somewhat problematic as they implied Bin Laden was a leader of a defined group of followers, and had the legal and religious credentials and the moral authority to declare a war. In the mid-1990s, this was not the case. However, through his epistle and previous publications, Bin Laden's legitimacy as a scholar of the moral intent of Islamic law was beginning to emerge. In December 1994, he had written a letter to the Saudi Chief Mufti Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz critiquing his endorsement of the Oslo agreement between Israel and Palestine. In 1995, he wrote a letter to the Saudi King Fahd objecting to his decisions to invite American troops to Saudi Arabia and to adopt man-made laws. The 1996 Ladenese epistle was his third major statement intended for a wider audience.

Bin Laden's leadership status initially came from his family's status and his fundraising ability, which in part also relied on his connections with the Saudi elite. In the Saudi and wider Arab public eye, Bin Laden had managed to present himself as a courageous leader of Arab Afghan mujahedeen fighters. Illustrative was that in Afghanistan and Sudan, Bin Laden was photographed many times riding a horse: in Muslim tradition, this is an important symbol of courage and heroism.⁸⁰ The closing statement of the Ladenese epistle also appealed to this symbol and projected an image of Bin Laden leading the 'cavalry of Islam'.⁸¹ The actual size of his group of followers at the time was less important in the epistle than the location where the group resided. Bin Laden also explicitly referred to 'myself and my group' once in the text as he explained that they had suffered from injustice like others.⁸² There was no mention of the name *Al Qaeda* or anything resembling an organization in the epistle. But it was from the mountains of Khurasan that the group began the work of 'talking and discussing the ways of correcting what has happened'.⁸³ For jihadis, Khurasan was a highly symbolic base from which to operate. Several Islamic hadiths refer to an army led by the Mahdi, a descendant of Prophet Mohammed, marching from Khurasan to Jerusalem to liberate all Muslims.⁸⁴ The

78 MSANEWS, 'The Ladenese Epistle, Declaration of war against the Americans occupying the land of the two holy places', October 2, 1996, <http://msanews.mynet.net/MSANEWS/199610/19961012.3.html>, (last retrieved January 14, 2016).

79 Sahih International, 'Surah At-Tawbah', www.quran.com/9/5 (last retrieved April 20, 2018).

80 Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 86.

81 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 30.

82 MSANEWS, 'The Ladenese Epistle'.

83 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 27, MSANEWS, 'The Ladenese Epistle'.

84 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, xvii-xix.

Madhi was a redeemer at the end of times. Bin Laden was respected for his deeds against the Soviets in Afghanistan, his influence, network, and financial resources. But in the mid-1990s he was deprived of most of that when he had been forced to leave Sudan.

Given cultural and religious norms and values, his deprived situation in 1996 did not degrade the strength of Bin Laden's message before Arab and Muslim audiences. One of the most powerful and inspiring aspects of Bin Laden's public image was that he had traded the possibility of a luxurious life for caves and trenches in Afghanistan out of principal beliefs. Self-abnegation or asceticism (*zuhd*) is an important and powerful idiom in Islam;⁸⁵ it has been practiced by historic figures and exemplary Muslims. Leaving wealth and belongings aside enables one to practice self-discipline and prepare for the afterlife. In the epistle, asceticism became an apparent theme as Bin Laden called upon Muslims to boycott American goods. Compared to the Arab recording, this and other references to *zuhd* were more hidden to English-speaking audiences consuming the translated texts.⁸⁶

Depicting the text as a memorandum (*mudhakkira*), instead of a declaration of war or *fatwa*, expresses how especially the audio recording was a more versatile message.⁸⁷ In a memorandum, an author attempts to give his advice or 'legal opinion' to his audience in a dignified way. According to Miller, the extensive epistle articulates eloquence and provided Bin Laden with ample opportunity to 'artfully combine colorful pleasantries, competitive verbal jousts, and political wrangling'.⁸⁸ Miller notes how it was especially Bin Laden's extensive use of poetry (*qasidah*) that strengthened the emotional appeal of specific topics in the message. It increased the passion rather than the ideas in the texts.⁸⁹ As an example, Miller highlights the poem about 'Amru Ibn Hind, a Nestorian Christian regent whose dynasty capitulated to Persian conquerors. The poem was produced by 'Amru Ibn Kulthum Al-Taghlibi, king of a powerful Arab tribe in pre-Islamic times who felt humiliated and killed 'Amru Ibn Hind. It was positioned in the part where Bin Laden directly addressed US secretary of Defense William Perry about the spirit and willingness of the Muslim youths to fight.

If the King exceeded all disgrace among people
 We give shame no sanctuary among us
 By what volition, O 'Amru Ibn Hind
 Do you want the land to be so pliant?
 By what volition, O 'Amru Ibn Hind
 Do you subject us to betrayal and slight us?

85 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 631.

86 Ibid, location 653.

87 Ibid, location 5215.

88 Ibid.

89 Thomas Bauer, 'Die Poesie des Terrorismus', in Andreas K. W. Meyer (ed.), *Siebenjahrbuch Deutsche Oper Berlin MMIV–MMXI* (Berlin, Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung 2011), 125, Saskia Lutzinger, *Die Sicht des Anderen. Eine qualitative Studie zu Biographien von Extremisten und Terroristen* (Köln: Luchterhand, 2010), as described in Behnam Said, 'Hymns (Nasheeds), A Contribution to the Study of the Jihadist Culture', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35 (2012) 12: 863–879.

In truth, O 'Amru, our spear vitiated
The enemies even before your pliancy⁹⁰

Among Arabs familiar with this well-known poem, it caused or resonated with feelings of resistance and the rejection of a regent who was illegitimate. As such, even though it was cited while addressing William Perry, it underlined Bin Laden's argument against the Saudi regime that allowed US forces onto the land of the two Holy Sanctuaries and followed man-made laws instead of Islamic law. What this indicates is that the argument against the Saudi regime was the primary argument in the 1996 text, and of greater significance than arguments made against the US. For an important part, this was strengthened by the moral resonance of the poetry that made up roughly a third of the speech on the audiocassette – a part that was left out of most English translations and to some extent the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article.

Regarding this aspect, Fawaz Gerges even states that 'stripped of its anti-US rhetoric and drama, transnational jihad was Bin Laden's fig leaf, masking a desire to seize power in his native land'.⁹¹ Flagg Miller obviously shares a similar opinion: anti-US rhetoric provided the necessary stepping stone to rally support for this objective in the long term. Others like Donald Holbrook and Dutch Middle Eastern studies scholar Pieter Nanninga have acknowledged critical references to the house of Saud, but argue that the focus of the text is in fact on the US.⁹² Reasoning in hindsight, with future attacks and declarations in mind, has created a different, more US-centric perspective than was perhaps justified based on Bin Laden's letters and declarations in the early 1990s. When taking into account his 1995 open letter to King Fahd, many of the themes reoccurred and the form of both texts was quite similar.⁹³

Of course, the focus and meaning of a text emerges from the combination of language use, genre, and setting, and from the production and consumption of that text. It was before a Western audience with the absence of poetry in English translations and the lack of cultural, emotional, and moral resonance that the 1996 Ladenese text was foremost a 'Declaration of War against American occupiers', instead of a memorandum. Miller has pointed towards the textual differences compared to the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article and the audiocassettes, and derived how including the *qasidah* poetry made the meaning of the Saudi nationalism argument more prominent before Arab audiences.⁹⁴ This shows that opposing the Saudi regime and the US occupiers was at least meant to be equally important in the speech version of the text.

90 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 236.

91 Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 79.

92 Holbrook, *The Al-Qaeda Doctrine*, 15, Nanninga, *Jihadism and Suicide Attacks*, 55-57.

93 Bin Laden, 'Open Letter to King Fahd', Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 23.

94 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 253, location 5361 Kindle edition.

Audiences: identifying and relating self and other

As stated, in 1995 Osama bin Laden wrote a letter to the Saudi king indicating many of the same issues he addressed in the 1996 memorandum.⁹⁵ The greatest difference in the memorandum was that Bin Laden did not address the king, but primarily turned to Saudi and Yemeni militant jihadis and in a wider sense all Muslims, especially Muslim youths. He also addressed Saudi military and security personnel. Besides this, he faced a portrayed enemy by directly addressing US Secretary of Defense William Perry.

The memorandum began by addressing all Muslim believers around the world.⁹⁶ The *ummah*, or the global community of Muslims, represented the idealized broader audience of the text in the widest sense. Substitutes such as ‘my Muslim brothers’ or ‘the people of Islam’ all related to the community of which Bin Laden and ‘his group’ felt they were part. Bin Laden also portrayed himself specifically as being among the group of Islamic scholars (*ulema*), highlighting how they had suffered oppression in Saudi Arabia and were unable to express their legitimate critical opinions as ‘advocates of correction’. He subsequently added how he himself had been pursued in Pakistan, Sudan, and Afghanistan by the Saudi government and its allies.⁹⁷ Finally, after a long absence, he found a ‘safe base’ in the Hindukush mountains in ‘Khurasan’.⁹⁸ In the speech recording, Bin Laden’s voice reached its highest pitch the moment he mentioned this, signaling relief and gratitude.⁹⁹ From there, he and his group began ‘the work, talking and discussing the ways of correcting’. Bin Laden went to great lengths to highlight the intellectual and non-violent nature of the efforts made by the *ulema*, as they were merely trying to provide ‘polite’ advice to the Saudi regime.

In terms of action, a prominent audience of the memorandum was the Saudi population. Saudi Muslims were addressed as Bin Laden attributed the deteriorating economic situation of the country to Saudi government corruption, mismanagement, and US policy and presence. The frequency of terms referring to the Saudi ‘regime’ indicated its central position in the text, as that was what the Saudi population had to oppose. The Saudi regime adopted man-made laws over religious laws, controlled the news media, neglected social services, and insufficiently invested in infrastructure and security forces. The regime was unable to facilitate and protect visitors of the pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) while Saudi officials gave priority to American oil interests and personal gain over the wellbeing and living conditions of the people. These complaints were also raised by Bin Laden and other Saudi scholars in earlier open letters to the Saudi regime.¹⁰⁰ On this point, the 1996 Ladenese text resembled

95 Bin Laden, ‘Open Letter to King Fahd’

96 MSANEWS, ‘The Ladenese Epistle’, Sahih International, ‘Surah Ali’Imran’, www.Quran.com/3/102 (last retrieved April 20, 2018).

97 MSANEWS, ‘The Ladenese Epistle’.

98 Ibid

99 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 5226.

100 Mansoor J. Alshamsi, *Islam and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia, The Quest for Political Change* (New York, Routledge 2011), 99-116.

previous public correspondence the most, like a Memorandum of Advice signed in 1992 by many Saudi Islamic scholars, and Bin Laden's open letter to King Fahd in 1995.

The reason for action was suppression. The regime 'had closed all peaceful routes and pushed the people to armed action'.¹⁰¹ They had betrayed the *ummah* and joined the unbelievers or polytheists who did not believe in the oneness (*tahwid*) of God. Bin Laden called upon the Saudi Muslim population to reject the legitimacy of the Saudi regime and fight the occupation by all means. American goods had to be boycotted. Before Arab audiences, the strength of the reasoning for this boycott was enhanced through its reference to asceticism (*zuhd*). Moreover, Bin Laden warned Saudi security personnel that the regime wanted to play civilians and military personnel against each other, and warned them not to act against people resisting oppression.

Mentioned almost as much in the texts as the Saudi regime was the 'Zionist-Crusader Alliance' (ZCA) and its regional allies in the Arab world. The United States was portrayed as the main or 'greatest unbeliever' (*Kufr*) which unrightfully controlled the Islamic countries, as it led the alliance with the Jewish people. The terms 'crusader' and 'Zionist' were metaphors for the United States, Israel, and other allies, with a connotation to the history of Islam. In general Arab discourse, these terms have a negative connotation.¹⁰² Other derogatory terms used frequently in a related manner in the memorandum were 'iniquitous', 'enemies', 'occupiers', 'horrifying', 'massacres', 'a clear conspiracy', and 'propaganda'. They added to processes of identification of self (the Muslim Ummah) and other (ZCA). According to the memorandum, the people of Islam had 'suffered from the aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed on them by the ZCA and its collaborators' in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Tajikistan, Burma, Kashmir, Assam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Somalia, Eritrea, Chechnya, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁰³ A 'clear conspiracy' between the US and its allies 'under the cover of the iniquitous United Nations' prevented the people from obtaining arms to defend themselves.¹⁰⁴ According to Bin Laden, the ZCA had killed important mujahedeen, including Abdullah Azzam. The American profits made in Saudi Arabia had been used to pay for the bullets with which Palestinians were killed. The rich were growing richer and the poor were growing poorer while the US enabled the Saudi regime to intimidate and suppress Muslim scholars and political opposition. The extensive use of the Zionist Crusader Alliance metaphor brings the question to mind of whether the word group was in fact a synonym or widely accepted substitute for the Arab audience.

The most recent and gravest of the 'aggressions' described was the occupation of Saudi Arabia, the land of the two Holy Places, by the armies of the American crusaders. The 'American occupiers' exerted control over the Saudi regime and the country's economy.

101 MSANEWS, 'The Ladenese Epistle'.

102 Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 45.

103 MSANEWS, 'The Ladenese Epistle'.

104 Ibid.

As long as the country was under control of the ZCA, it was useless to act against the Saudi regime. The use of the word 'occupation' as superlative of control was extensive.

It was in relation to this 'greatest unbeliever' that Bin Laden's main focus on the youths of Islam, the 'men of the bright future of Mohammed's nation', became clear.¹⁰⁵ As a subgroup of both the global Muslim community (*Ummah*) and the Saudi population, Bin Laden devoted roughly a quarter of the memorandum to very explicitly addressing the heroic deeds of the courageous 'youth of Islam'. These youths, or 'sons' of the land of the two Holy Places, had come out to fight and defend Afghanistan against the Soviets, Bosnia-Herzegovina against the Serbs, and Chechnya against the Russians. As Bin Laden reminded the youths, the battle they fought was not finished yet; and he also claimed they were prepared to die to defend the Holy Land.¹⁰⁶ The appropriate remedy for the threat against the Muslim Ummah lay in the hands of the youths.¹⁰⁷

Our youths knew that the humiliation suffered by the Muslims as a result of the occupation of their sanctities cannot be kicked and removed except by explosions and Jihad.¹⁰⁸

Bin Laden addressed US Secretary of Defense William Perry directly as he threatened the United States:

The youths also reciting the All Mighty words of: {so when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, then smite the necks.....} (Muhammad; 47:[4]). Those youths will not ask you (William Perry) for explanations, they will tell you singing there is nothing between us need to be explained, there is only killing and neck smiting. And they will say to you what their grandfather, Haroon Ar-Rasheed, Ameer-ul-Mu'meneen, replied to your grandfather, Nagfoor, the Byzantine emperor, when he threatened the Muslims: 'from Haroon Ar-Rasheed, Ameer-ul-Mu'meneen, to Nagfoor, the dog of the Romans; the answer is what you will see not what you hear.' Haroon El-Rasheed led the armies of Islam to the battle and handed Nagfoor a devastating defeat. The youths you called cowards are competing among themselves for fighting and killing you. Reciting what one of them said: The crusader army became dust when we detonated al-Khobar.¹⁰⁹

They love death as much as you like life; they inherited honor, generosity, truthfulness, courage, and sacrifice from generation to generation.¹¹⁰

105 Ibid., Osama Bin Laden, 'Declaration of War', 1996, translated by CTC West Point, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Osama_bin_Laden%27s_Declaration_of_War (last retrieved April 20, 2018).

106 MSANEWS, 'The Ladenese Epistle'.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid., Bin Laden, 'Declaration of War'.

Two things stood out in these phrases. First, a parallel was drawn between Muslims battling Byzantines in the eighth century, and the current youths of Islam opposing the United States and the ZCA. Second, Bin Laden used ‘youths’ as a superordinate for the Khobar attackers. Even though Bin Laden had not claimed responsibility for the attack at the time, he ‘connected’ with the attackers through his plea in the text; he understood and supported them. A ‘blessed awakening’ was sweeping the Islamic world.¹¹¹ As a metaphor, the explosions in Riyadh and Khobar were compared to ‘warning signs a volcanic eruption was emerging’. It was through reference to the Muslim youths and the ZCA, an ‘us versus them’ relation, that the distinct social identity of his audiences took further shape.

The section in which William Perry was mentioned did not per se indicate the US government as an audience. Addressing William Perry was a rhetorical form mirroring the heroic attitude of the seventh century Islamic knight Qatari in facing enemies in a direct manner. From the perspective of his idealized Muslim audiences, doing so added to Bin Laden’s prestige. It also contributed to the bipolar identification of ‘the Ummah’ against the Saudi regime and the ‘Zionist Crusader Alliance’ led by the United States. While Muslims abided by the divine will of Allah, the United States only intended to serve its own interest. In the memorandum, Bin Laden referred to a speech given by Perry after the Khobar bombings in which Perry had stated that US troops were in Saudi Arabia to serve US national interests. Although it has not been possible to confirm the exact speech referred to by Bin Laden, communication between Perry and US President Clinton in this same period seemed to corroborate the statement. Three weeks after the memorandum was published, Perry sent a letter to President Clinton on necessary improvements to US force protection after the Khobar attack.

To achieve our strategic objectives and protect our vital national interests, the United States must maintain overseas force deployments. [...] I am confident that as the new initiatives I am announcing today are fully implemented in the coming weeks, they will minimize the risks our forces face from terrorism, while keeping us fully engaged in the difficult business of defending our interests throughout the world.¹¹²

The message was also a form of self-identification. Bin Laden characterized himself and his group in the speech and its reproductions. In contrast to the criticized state officials, Bin Laden did not lead and represent an institution. He placed himself among other groups and amidst the social scenery he painted in the memorandum through his rhetoric.

We, myself and my group, have suffered some of this injustice ourselves; we have been prevented from addressing the Muslims. We have been pursued in Pakistan, Sudan and Af-

111 MSANEWS, ‘The Ladenese Epistle’.

112 The letter, dated September 15, was released at a House National Security Committee hearing on September 18, US State Department, ‘Perry Releases Letter To President On Khobar Tower Bombing’, September 18, 1996, http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/press/defence/archive/septmbr/dd2_9-19.htm (last retrieved November 5, 2014).

ghanistan, hence this long absence on my part. But by the Grace of Allah, a safe base is now available in the high Hindukush mountains in Khurasan; where—by the Grace of Allah—the largest infidel military force of the world was destroyed. And the myth of the super power was withered in front of the Mujahideen cries of Allahu Akbar (God is greater). Today we work from the same mountains to lift the iniquity that had been imposed on the Ummah by the Zionist-Crusader alliance, particularly after they have occupied the blessed land around Jerusalem, route of the journey of the Prophet (ALLAH'S BLESSING AND SALUTATIONS ON HIM) and the land of the two Holy Places. We ask Allah to bestow us with victory, He is our Patron and He is the Most Capable. From here, today we begin the work, talking and discussing the ways of correcting what had happened to the Islamic world in general, and the Land of the two Holy Places in particular. We wish to study the means that we could follow to return the situation to its normal path.¹¹³

An obvious conclusion from a Western perspective could be that the above English translation of Bin Laden's statement illustrated how he positioned himself primarily in opposition to the ZCA. However, this could also be seen as a means to an end, because ultimately Bin Laden opposed and aimed to oust the Saudi regime. The 1996 memorandum was thus in fact more of a mixed message. It contested illegitimate and un-Islamic domestic and foreign policies, and called upon Saudi Muslims, Saudi security personnel, and most prominently the (Saudi) youths of Islam to engage in (irregular) armed action against US military forces (though not civilians) by any means possible. But it also called for mass protests, economic boycotts, and other non-violent approaches such as debate to attempt to correct these mistakes. The significance of non-violent approaches became even more prominent in the way the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* newspaper characterized Bin Laden: as 'one of the most prominent members of the Saudi Opposition, not a religious figure, organizational leader, financial executive or proponent of global jihad against the West'.¹¹⁴

In the Arabic speech recording, religious and poetic aspects of the original message were significantly more prominent than in other versions of the text. The key words and groups of words not only highlighted social identities and relations among the most important actors and elements because of their frequency and lexical and grammatical cohesion, they also related to symbolic, historic, cultural, and religious meanings rooted in wider contexts.

The wider background: a social practice of Islamic militancy and Salafi-jihadism

Bin Laden's speech and the article published in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* were rooted in a form of Salafi-jihadism and situated in the social and political contexts of Saudi Arabia. In academia, Salafism is characterized as a school of thought that emerged as a reaction to the spread

113 MSANEWS, 'The Ladenese Epistle'.

114 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 245.

of Western ideas in the second half of the 19th century.¹¹⁵ For the Salafists themselves, they represented the true, literal, and traditional understanding of the rulings in the sacred texts. Dutch Islamic studies scholar Joas Wagemakers defines Salafism as referring to Muslims who try to live their life as narrowly as possible in the same manner as the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-salih*), the first three generations of Islam.¹¹⁶ He identifies monotheism, or the unity of God (*tawhid*), as the most central concept to Salafis. The concept has three components: 'God is the sole creator and sovereign of the universe, God is supreme and entirely unique, and God alone has the right to be worshipped'.¹¹⁷ In the strict Salafi interpretation any deviation from this core concept, such as the worshipping of saints or secularism (accepting man-made laws over God), is seen as a form of polytheism (*shirk*) and unbelief (*kufir*).¹¹⁸ People guilty of polytheism or unbelief have to be excommunicated (*takfir*) as they can no longer be seen as Muslims.

Religious innovations (*bid'a*) such as regional and cultural deviations not enjoined by the Qur'an or the Prophet's deeds have to be avoided and reversed as much as possible. The application of the human intellect and logic to the original sources (rationalism) is a dangerous challenge to Islam as it will lead to religious pluralism. This is different from the movement of Salafism that emerged in the late 19th century out of a desire to rid Islam of its historic burden, which holds that returning to its ancient foundation enables the reconstruction of Islam to function better in modern times. Attempts aimed only at purifying and not modernizing Islam are deemed contemporary Salafism.¹¹⁹ This is the Salafism discussed in this chapter.

Rejecting deviations from ancient Islam includes declining the four major Sunni legal schools or interpretations of Islam: the Hanafi, Shaf'i, Maliki, and Hanbali schools. While each of these schools recognizes the other three, Salafists consider the Qur'an and the hadiths to be the only two original sources of Islam that could inform any further independent reasoning. This is why the relatively new movement of Salafism was strongly influenced by the eighth century Medinan movement *ahl al-Hadith* of Muslims searching to expand the number of hadiths instead of relying on reasoning, legal opinions, and other non-scriptural sources.¹²⁰ As a widely accepted source, however, the *ahl al-Hadith* movement also influenced the four legal schools, particularly the Hanbali school, of which for example Ibn Taymiyya was a prominent scholar as well.

The creeds (*'aqida*) of reading sources literally and finding textual evidence instead of relying on reasoning are mostly agreed upon by Salafists. As American Islamic studies scholar and senior intelligence analyst Quintan Wiktorowicz notes, it is the assumed

115 See for example Kepel, *Jihad*, 219.

116 Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*, 2-10.

117 Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 29(2006) 3: 208.

118 Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*, 4.

119 *Ibid*, 6.

120 *Ibid*, 5.

appropriateness of the method (*manhaj*) of applying creeds that significantly separates various types of Salafists.¹²¹ It is not belief that divides them, but the contextual analysis and the selected strategy: What is the current state of affairs? Are Muslims under attack? If so, by whom? Then what is to be done?

First, those emphasizing propagation (*da'wa*) of the message through teaching and preaching are 'purists'. They avoid taking part in politics or violent activity and view politics as something that deviates from faith. Because of the great emphasis on literally following the Qur'an and the hadiths, studying and student-teacher relations are of great importance for purist Salafists. This also applies to the other two types of Salafists. Second, 'politicos' engage in political debate and sometimes even in elections or political institutions. For them, it is ultimately in the political arena that they can make a significant impact on society, advocating their perspectives on social justice and the right of God alone to legislate. Lastly, and for this chapter most importantly, 'jihadis' hold the militant view that the current context requires a violent revolution. Wagemakers notes that jihadism is perhaps the least defined Salafi subgroup in scholarly literature.¹²² This is in part because in principle, all Salafists view both the greater and lesser holy struggle (*jihad*), or the internal fight against temptations and sins and the external fight against invading non-Muslim enemies, as legitimate concepts.

A difference lies in the contextual analysis of situations and the practical objections to actually pursuing war. Whether a Salafist becomes a non-violent or violent extremist is more a matter of political views than one of radical religious beliefs. It is the substantial difference between violent and non-violent forms of Salafism that results in the distinct social practices to which this and other potential (political) Salafi narratives relate.

The Salafi-jihadi faction arose from the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. They advanced the concept of jihad beyond a classical fight against external enemies and saw it as legitimate to wage a revolutionary war within Muslim societies to oust unjust or unbelieving rulers.¹²³ In the context of the military training offered and the ongoing fighting, the Arab Afghans or Saudi Salafists fused their ideas with some of the Egyptian groups present, such as Islamic Jihad. It was this new type of reasoning that inspired the Salafi-jihadi Islamist movement on various fronts in Bosnia, Algeria, and Egypt after the Afghan war ended in 1979. For those who had gained experience as Arab Afghan mujahedeen and had continued to fight elsewhere, the 1996 Bin Laden speech and memorandum came at a moment of declining success at the various fronts.¹²⁴

Several Islamist leaders, ideologists, and intellectuals sought a break from waging war and pursued their goals through political means as politicians. The concentration in London of radical and militant Islamist groups such as the Algerian Gamaa Islamiya and factions of the Egyptian *Al-Jihad* had grown over the last two decades because of the city's relatively

121 Wiktorowicz, 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', 207-240.

122 Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*, 9.

123 Ibid.

124 Kepel, *Jihad*, 13.

permissive discursive climate. By the mid-1990s, all groups represented in ‘Londonistan’, including Bin Laden’s ARC, still benefited from being able to spread their ideas to a global Arab audience through the daily newspapers *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* and *Al Hayat*.¹²⁵ This enabled Bin Laden to propagate his critical views on the Saudi government at a time when political dissidents in the country were heavily repressed. Although the Saudi chief mufti Abd Al Aziz Bin Baz was a purist in Salafi terms, Bin Laden accused him of either being ignorant or consciously hiding the truth of the state of affairs in the country from the people.¹²⁶

The discursive practices in the *Al Qaeda narrative* that link events to the Salafi-jihadi social practice are the doctrine and justifications for the threat of conducting attacks in texts. For Bin Laden, justifications such as those in the 1996 memorandum were rooted in the Qur’an and hadiths, but also supplemented by an array of other Islamic and Arab literature, such as the works of Qatari and Ibn Taymiyya. It is through references in the text to their work that Bin Laden’s specific interpretation of Islam and Islamic duties in relation to jihadism emerge.

Qatari lived during the first Islamic century, the seventh century AD, and was appointed caliph of the nomadic Khawarij rebel group in Khurasan (Afghanistan nowadays). He corresponded directly with political opponents, glorifying death and war in the name of Allah.¹²⁷ Qatari’s interpretation of Islam and Islamic scriptures was literal, and those Muslims who failed to literally follow the Quran became enemies. Bin Laden often cited Qatari’s poems and spoke of his followers in terms of ‘knights’. In the Ladenese memorandum, he referred to his exile in a safe base in the ‘high Hindukush mountains in Khurasan’.¹²⁸ Identifying with such a historical persona, who had no respect for central authority and was willing to die in pursuit of his strict interpretation of Islam, legitimized Bin Laden’s call for jihad. In this light, Bin Laden’s direct address to US Secretary of Defense William Perry was a courageous act of confronting an enemy directly, rather than an effort to seek his attention as an audience.

In the 1996 text, Bin Laden also projected historic examples on the current ‘occupation’ of Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the important role for the Islamic youth. He recited a well-known hadith from Bukhari that described two youths eagerly killing Abu Jahl, a seventh century Meccan Quraysh leader who opposed Mohammed.¹²⁹ At the battle of Badr, the two youths asked Abdul-Rahman Ibn Awf, one of Mohammed’s apostles, to point out Abu Jahl, for he was ‘abusing Allah’s apostle’. After Abdul-Rahman did so, both youths killed Abu Jahl and returned to report it. According to Bin Laden, the youths of Islam ‘today’ also had no fear

125 Ibid, 304.

126 Osama Bin Laden, ‘Open Letter for Shaykh Bin Baz on the Invalidity of his Fatwa on Peace with the Jews’, December 29, 1994, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Open_Letter_to_Shaykh_Bin_Baz_on_the_Invalidity_of_his_Fatwa_on_Peace_with_the_Jews (last retrieved April 20, 2018), Bin Laden, Osama, ‘Second Letter to Shaykh Abd Al Aziz Bin Baz from the Reform and Advice Foundation’, January 29, 1995, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Second_Letter_to_Shaykh_Bin_Baz (last retrieved April 20, 2018), Wiktorowicz, ‘Anatomy of the Salafi Movement’, 226.

127 Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 57.

128 MSANEWS, ‘The Ladenese Epistle’.

129 Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 53, Number 369. https://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari_4_53.php (last retrieved January, 5, 2015).

of death. Recent bombings in Ryadh and Khobar were warning signs to the United States and its allies. By connecting the historic example to the current context, Bin Laden also implicitly identified with Abdul-Rahman, as through the text he pointed eager youths of Islam towards the kufr ZCA and the Saudi regime.

Bin Laden cited Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya several times in the memorandum, a 13th and 14th century Syrian Hanbali scholar who stands unquestionably as an authoritative Islamic figure to many orthodox Muslims in the Salafi, Wahhabi, and wider Sunni movements, and also to Muslim Sufis. Ibn Taymiyya was a leading theologian in the days when Mongols invaded Muslim lands. He stated that even Mongol leaders converted to Islam could be seen as unbelievers based on their deeds. Like Ibn Taymiyya, Bin Laden projected the concept of *kufr* on rulers. The government of Saudi Arabia, in particular the king, was not adhering to the oneness of God (*tahwid*) and upholding his law: the Saudi king allowed man-made laws and invited United States servicemen into the land of the two Holy Places. It was the dicta of Ibn Taymiyya's ruling (*fatwa*) resonating in the Ladenese text that 'it is the first obligation after the profession of Faith to repel the enemy aggressors who assault both sanctity and security'.¹³⁰ This reasoning allowed Bin Laden to declare it an individual duty of every Muslim to fight a defensive *jihad* against the *kufr* regime and the ZCA with its allies. Bin Laden compared ancestral scholars of Islam such as Ibn Taymiyya to current scholars, as both had the intent of instigating the *Ummah*.

The notion that minor differences between Muslims needed to be set aside to fight a greater danger underscored the main focus of the memorandum: the necessity to fight and resist the Saudi regime, the United States, and their allies. It gave a collective character to the individual duty of every Muslim to fight a defensive *jihad*.¹³¹ Citing Ibn Taymiyya, Bin Laden even stated that if necessary, it was acceptable to fight the major danger to the religion with the help of non-righteous rulers, military personnel, and commanders.¹³²

Salafists have drawn heavily on Ibn Taymiyya because he rejected the 'rationalism' (the application of human intellect and logic) that was also dominant among Muslims in his time.¹³³ Due to his reference to Ibn Taymiyya, the audience of Salafi-jihadis were more receptive to Bin Laden's message. It also created the opportunity for Bin Laden to insert himself into the equation. In a subtle way, he added himself and his group to the category of oppressed Muslim scholars by underlining how he had gone into exile in the Hindukush after migrating to Sudan to avoid persecution in Saudi Arabia. For Muslims, migration (*hijrah*) was considered compulsory when persecuted and unable to practice faith. Another subtlety was that Ibn Taymiyya had also emphasized the supremacy and importance to Islam of classical Arab (*Fusha*), the language that Bin Laden was so skilled at eloquently using in a highly precise

130 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, xx.

131 MSANEWS, 'The Ladenese Epistle'.

132 Ibid.

133 Wiktorowicz, 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', 211.

manner.¹³⁴ Among Ibn Taymiyya's selection of *hadiths*, the sayings 'learn Arabic, because it is part of your religion' and 'whoever can speak Arabic, should not speak a foreign language because it implies hypocrisy' are highly illustrative of this.¹³⁵

The religious arguments in the memorandum were situated in the social, political, and also religious contexts of Saudi Arabia. Like Salafism, the Saudi state-sponsored Wahhabi movement partially draws on Ibn Taymiyya. This movement can be traced to the preaching of Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the 18th century and embodies an effort to purify Islam from religious innovations and polytheism. Wahhabism follows the Hanbali Islamic legal school (*fiqh*), which is one of four, and the official school of interpretation in Saudi Arabia. Salafism also advocates for Muslims to revive Islam by studying its primary sources, but in contrast rejects all four schools of interpretation. Bin Laden drew on widely known religious sources and referred to events that were part of the history of Islam, but did so to depart from and criticize the Saudi state.

In the mid-1990s, demonstrators increasingly openly expressed opposition to the Saudi regime caused by the increasing divide between the haves and the have-nots. Opposition leaders such as Muslim scholar Dr. Salman al-Oudeh were able to mobilize thousands of followers in the streets. These followers were willing to speak up against the arrests of critics, directly confronting the Saudi police. Discontent over the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia, and the social and environmental costs of the oil industry was increasingly spreading among Sunni and Shia Muslims, Saudi media elements, and liberal, or secular, intellectuals.¹³⁶ The Shia minority that contributed substantially to the oil industry in the 1980s was side-tracked and repressed. Illustrative of this is how after the Khobar bombings in 1995, the Saudi government arrested several Shias as suspected perpetrators, linking them to 'archenemy' Iran. Traditional fishing grounds had become inaccessible and the decreasing water table significantly reduced the number of date palms. Despite official Saudi documentaries on state television that showed a prosperous country, sometimes images and stories were smuggled out of the country that indicated how minorities and poor citizens lived in rather primitive conditions. All in all, the Ladenese memorandum was firmly situated in the Salafi-jihadis' social practice, relating also to the Saudi political and social context.

Securitization in Bin Laden's 1996 speech

Through the use of politically charged and pejorative metaphors such as 'crusaders' and 'kufr regime', Bin Laden presented an image of the problematic situation for his intended audiences. This image had a local or regional and a global dimension. First, according to Bin

¹³⁴ Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 6-14.

¹³⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, Ahmad Ibn Abd al-Halim, 'Iqtida'au al-Siraat al-Mustaqim, Mukhallafatu Ashaab al-Jahim' (Cairo, Matba'ah al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah 1949), 205, as in Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 8.

¹³⁶ Alshamsi, *Islam and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia*, 78-98.

Laden, there was a religious and economic crisis in Saudi Arabia as the regime was corrupt, supported man-made laws, and allowed American infidels to 'occupy' the land of the two Holy Places. He emphasized that the Americans only intended to suit their own economy, ignoring that of the country. On a global scale, the Muslim world community (*Ummah*) was threatened because scholars of Islam were arrested and suppressed by the ZCA in various parts of the world. Bin Laden stated the Islamic world or the house of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) remained threatened and suppressed because of the occupation of Jerusalem and Palestine, the first direction of prayer (*qiblah*) for Muslims. The 1996 text aimed to inspire audiences to adopt the offered interpretative scheme and to support and implement the proposed practices. It called upon all Muslims to wage a defensive jihad as their duty and to expel the ZCA from Saudi Arabia by conducting bomb attacks against Saudi and US targets, adopting guerrilla tactics, and boycotting all American goods.

The Ladenese memorandum (or epistle) and speech primarily served three purposes. First, it was a comprehensive attempt to publicly strengthen Bin Laden's legitimacy as a leader. In the recorded speech, this was more related to jihad, while in the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article he was also characterized as an opposition leader. Second, with this call for religiously inspired action against primarily the Saudi regime, he tried to recruit new (young) followers. Third, to this end, Osama bin Laden threatened the US. Noteworthy for their meaning are the differences between the Ladenese speech, memorandum, and English translations. The recorded speech was the most complete text including poetry and many references to resisting the Saudi regime, whereas the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article title pointed more towards a declaration of war against the US and its allies, something that was even more prominent in English translations of the text.

The 1996 speech was a key node for the hegemonic practice of naturalization that formed the foundation of this analytical *Al Qaeda narrative*. It was an effort to lift meanings attributed to events and circumstances by Bin Laden to the level of ideology. The publishing network of the ARC in London enhanced Bin Laden's ability to make his point (power in discourse). Through his rhetoric and language skills, he also had inspirational power over the Arab audiences of his recorded speech and newspaper articles, but he lacked the power to execute the proposed solution for the problem with the means and number of followers he had at that time. With the texts, Bin Laden was shaping his ideology and building his power base.

In terms of meaning, the speech and articles were an accentuation of conflict, struggle, and difference. They separated from the normal practice of (political) opposition to national and foreign or international policymaking. The level of abstraction varied between local and global, specific and general. As a result, the referent object can be perceived as a global Muslim community or *Ummah* and the Saudi population. Bin Laden worked to strengthen the sense of solidarity for both. Similarly, in an abstract sense, the referent subject can be viewed as a global ZCA with its allies, or the oppressive Saudi regime. As illustrated, according to Bin Laden the threat came as much from the latter as from the former. The level of abstraction also varied with the appropriate actions that needed to be taken to reach that state. The

attacks in Khobar and Riyadh were portrayed as a first sign of ‘an erupting volcano’. The substantial portion of the text directed at the (Saudi) ‘youths of Islam’ who were called to action signified a process of identification of Salafi-jihadi youths whom Bin Laden was willing to lead.

The speech and memorandum were multifaceted lamentations of a varying tone that did contain elements of securitization, but did not represent a single, unified effort of securitization. This was due to the complex structure of the texts, the abstract definition of the referent object, the multi-layered referent subject, and the customized policy of waging *jihād* with bomb attacks, guerrilla tactics, and economic boycott. This leads to the questioning and further investigation of whether Bin Laden covertly did provide and plan for a customized policy in the sense of organizing attacks. Moreover, how was the message in the 1996 speech and memorandum reproduced and recontextualized in the statements and media reports that followed?

Subsequent statements: reproduction and recontextualization of the memorandum message

Between 1996 and 1998, Bin Laden worked to expand and organize his network of followers, pledged allegiance to the Taliban, and also facilitated and coordinated planning for the 1998 attacks against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Meanwhile, he was interviewed by several English, Arab, and Urdu news media. These developments and activities sometimes contradicted each other and caused friction among those who had pledged allegiance to Bin Laden. This friction will be the subject of the next section. First, a description is provided of Bin Laden’s public discourse in the two key texts of the Ladenese speech and memorandum in 1996, and the World Islamic Front declaration published in May 1998.

Following the publication of the article in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* on August 23, 1996, the message echoed in an October interview in *Nuda’ul Islam*, a Muslim activist journal in Australia, and in an *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* interview with editor Abdul-Bari Atwan on November 27. The *Nuda’ul Islam* article started with a biography of Bin Laden, making the jihadi leader behind the message a central aspect.¹³⁷ The global character of the growing ‘jihād movement’ against the corrupt Saudi regime and the ZCA was also emphasized. Similarly, the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article characterized Bin Laden as a ‘Sheykh’ and ‘the most prominent Saudi oppositionist’, synonyms that underlined both his political and religious status as a leader.¹³⁸ The Saudi regime had to reconcile with the population and honest scholars or face an escalation against the American occupiers with the goal of changing the current regime.

On several occasions, Bin Laden used the interview with Atwan to deny negative rumors and thoughts as accusations to weaken and disperse the jihadi movement and his personal

¹³⁷ Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 31-32.

¹³⁸ Abdul Bari Atwan, ‘Bin Ladin Interviewed on Jihad Against US’, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, November 27, 1996, 5, as translated in FBIS, 28-36.

reputation. When Atwan addressed the Khobar attacks and accusations of terrorism, Bin Laden denied that the attacks were related to Shia Muslims, and saw any such accusations by the US and the Saudi regime as an effort to divert and disperse support for the jihad movement. He rejected the statement that Khobar and Riyadh operations against US forces were terrorism. It was an honor for Muslims to defend their *qiblah* and protect it from 'plundering'. He also discussed attacks on US forces in Yemen and Somalia in the early 1990s as examples of how to force the US to retreat.

In both articles, Bin Laden denied that there were any problems for him to continue his stay in Afghanistan, and stated that relations with the Taliban were good. He also rejected that any un-Islamic European country was an option for him to stay if he was forced to leave Afghanistan. According to Bin Laden, rumors about this had been spread to defame him. He stated the Islamic world was a single state in which people cooperate 'based on piety and righteousness'. Bin Laden continued to support the movement, although it was not clear exactly in what capacity. Atwan asked Bin Laden why nothing had happened along the lines of the 'Khobar operation' since he 'declared jihad against US forces and demanded the boycott of Washington goods'.¹³⁹ Bin Laden's response was that 'major operations require time, in contrast with small operations' and 'the nature of the battle requires good preparation'.¹⁴⁰ It was a lexicon of warfare that aligned with the duty of *jihad*.

Compared to the Ladenese speech or memorandum, the interviews in the Arab newspapers had a more action-oriented perspective, explicitly covering attacks on US and allied forces. The issue was even more central to the English interviews conducted by Robert Fisk, Gwynne Roberts, and Peter Arnett.¹⁴¹ Between early 1997 and early 1998, 9 additional statements and Bin Laden interviews were published: six in the Urdu newspapers *Pakistan*, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, and *Rawalpindi Jang*, one in the English Islamabad-based newspaper *The Muslim*, and one in each of the London-based Arabic newspapers *Al Quds Al-Arabi* and *Al-Islah*, respectively. Bin Laden continued to challenge the US while seeking to strengthen his relations with his audiences in Sudan, the Arabian Peninsula, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

The publications in Urdu signified how Bin Laden was addressing Pakistani audiences to boost his image in the region. The interview with Hamid Mir on March 18, 1997 extensively introduced Bin Laden's personality and embedded his views in a regional Pakistani context.¹⁴² The importance of Bin Laden's father during his life as a Saudi minister expressed Bin Laden's wealthy roots. The Jaji myth underscored how Bin Laden had heroically lost his fear of death

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ These interviews will also be a central part of the fifth chapter that comprises of the critical terrorism narrative. Gwynne Roberts (Director and reporter) 'The Saudi Tapes', Television program, in *Channel 4 Dispatches*, February 20, 1997, London, RWF World, <https://vimeo.com/48150820> (last retrieved March 15, 2016), Fisk, 'Anti-Soviet warrior puts his army on the road to peace', Robert Fisk, 'Arab rebel leader warns the British 'Get out of the Gulf'', Robert Fisk tracks Saudi Arabia's most wanted man to his lair in Afghanistan', *The Independent*, July 10, 1996, 11, Robert Fisk, 'The man who wants to wage holy war against the Americans, A pilgrimage through a broken and dangerous land of death', *The Independent*, March 22, 1997, 14, Robert Fisk, 'Muslim leader warns of a new assault on US forces', *The Independent*, March 22, 1997, 1, Shaw, 'Impact, Holy Terror?', Osama bin Ladin Interview by Peter Arnett'. See also chapter 5.

¹⁴² Hamid Mir, 'Pakistan Interviews Usama Bin Ladin', March 18, 1997, as translated in FBIS, 41-48.

in Afghanistan in the 1980s. At the same time, he emphasized how the CIA only marginally supported the Arab Afghans and did not share their cause. Bin Laden spoke of his substantial contribution to the battle of Mogadishu, while at the same time explaining how any Pakistani UN soldiers who had died in Somalia were killed because they were sent to a mined area by the US. Furthermore, Bin Laden stressed the legitimacy of the Taliban in metaphorical terms and asked all Muslims to support and assist them. They 'have established the rule of Allah' (*shariah*) and the 'pious caliphate will begin from Afghanistan'.¹⁴³ According to Bin Laden, the former Pakistani government of Benazir Bhutto and Nasirullah Babar gave the impression that they supported the Taliban, which gave the Taliban a bad name. Moreover, the US did not support the Taliban as they opposed the rule of Allah.

Bin Laden was known in some parts of Pakistan from the days of the fight against the Soviets, and this series of publications in Urdu revived those memories. It also gave him a broader audience in the country and its region. Together with the English and Arab articles, the posters, and the audiocassettes, Bin Laden's public exposure increased during those years. More than a state or national institution, Bin Laden depended on the reproduction and recontextualization of his message for the development and prominence of his social identity. Hence, for Bin Laden the *Al Qaeda narrative* embodied his primary occupation, while the Saudi and US governments were involved with an array of national and foreign policy issues and responsibilities. In all publications, Bin Laden continued to challenge the Saudi regime and the United States. Not only did this perceived preoccupation with the media cause friction with his closest advisors, but it was also against the wishes of his host, Taliban leader Mullah Omar.¹⁴⁴

Bin Laden's allegiance to the Taliban

In May 1996, Bin Laden arrived in Afghanistan; it was one month after the Taliban had taken control of the southern city of Kandahar, but it would still have to seize power in most parts of Afghanistan that autumn. Bin Laden pledged allegiance to his host, Taliban leader Mullah Omar. Like Bin Laden, Omar had fought the Soviets during the 1980s. He had lost sight in one eye as a result. Their common history proved to be one of only few similarities. Another was their push for a conservative Wahhabi or Salafi form of Islam. Yet, the two leaders had starkly contrasting goals. While the Taliban was mostly concerned with controlling and stabilizing Afghanistan under its rule, Bin Laden primarily wished to incite the global Muslim community to wage a transnational jihad. To Omar, using Afghanistan as a base for Bin Laden's activities and staging ground for international attacks only endangered the

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143 Ibid.

144 As described by Abu al-Walid al-Masri, a former close confidant of both Bin Laden and Omar, in his memoir 'The Story of the Afghan Arabs, From the Entry to Afghanistan to the Final Exodus with the Taliban', see *Ashraq al-Awsat*, 'The Afghan-Arabs Part One', June 29, 2005, <https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/theaawsat/features/the-afghan-arabs-part-one> (last retrieved April 26, 2018), and Gerjes, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 64-72.

stability sought by the Taliban. The divergent goals provided a certain bandwidth in which Bin Laden could operate without losing the Taliban's hospitality. The relationship between Bin Laden and the Taliban had never been easy. However, Bin Laden used his construction equipment and knowledge to support the Taliban's offensive, and also donated significant amounts of funds and vehicles to the Taliban several times.¹⁴⁵

But the relationship between Bin Laden and the Taliban leadership remained complicated. Bin Laden's urge to conduct interviews and publish statements countered the Taliban's interest. Saudi Arabia had been supportive of the Taliban's Islamic ideology from its rise in 1994; it was one of only three countries (next to Pakistan and the UAE) that recognized the Taliban as the legitimate Afghan government in May 1997. At that time, the fighting over the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif was still ongoing and the Taliban still had to gain control over large parts of the country. Strengthened by this diplomatic support, the Taliban sought recognition by the United States and the United Nations. This was declined. In part, this was a consequence of the Taliban's own actions, as they hindered the work of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Program, and several non-governmental organizations in the country.¹⁴⁶ Partly as a consequence, Mullah Omar told Bin Laden several times that he was to refrain from seeking international media exposure.¹⁴⁷ In his memoir, Abu al-Walid al-Masri, who had close ties to both Bin Laden and Omar at the time, recalled a meeting between the two in 1997.¹⁴⁸ Bin Laden did not change his course and took Omar's concluding remarks literally, in spite of the intense two hour discussion that preceded it:

You are a Mujahid [Islamic warrior]. This is your country and you are welcome to do whatever you like.¹⁴⁹

The use of the synonym *mujahid* stressed their common history in Afghanistan and hence their friendly (but complicated) relation. Bin Laden's allegiance to the Taliban and focus on the advancement of the transnational agenda also led internally to divisions among his followers. First, there were those who disagreed with pledging allegiance to Mullah Omar and the Taliban. The Islamic law or *shariah* the Taliban claimed to implement was actually more related to the Afghan Pashtun tribal code, Pashtunwali.¹⁵⁰ According to some of Bin Laden's followers, pledging allegiance to this was heretical as there were several indicators

145 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 183, Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 284.

146 W. Hays Parks, 'Combatants', *International Law Studies*, 85 (2009), US Naval War College, 256-257.

147 Gerjes, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 67

148 Abu'l-Walid, *The Story of the Arabs' Pledge to the Commander of the Faithful Mullah Muhammad Omar (Qissat al-bay'at al-'arabiya li-amir al-mu'minin Mullah Muhammad 'Umar)*, undated, posted on various jihadist web forums on July 19-20, 2007, as described by Vahid Brown, 'The Facade of Allegiance, Bin Ladin's Dubious Pledge to Mullah Omar', *CTC Sentinel*, 3 (2010) 1: 1-5.

149 Gerjes, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 67

150 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 58, Vahid Brown, *Cracks in the Foundation, Leadership Schisms in Al-Qa'ida from 1989-2006*, CTC Harmony Project (West Point, NY, CTC West Point 2007), 12-18 and Combating Terrorism Center, AFGP-2002-801138, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/various-admin-documents-and-questions-english-translation-2> (last retrieved April 22, 2016).

of polytheism, such as shrines in mosques. In the background, tensions between Arabs and Afghans continued to have their effect, as Arabs looked down on the local population and their primitive and remote living conditions. Second, several of his senior associates were critical of Bin Laden's eagerness to invite journalists and participate in interviews in which his persona became almost as prominent as his message. Third, there were those who still agreed with the initial orientation of Ayman al-Zawahiri and Sayyed Imam al-Sharif (or Dr. Fadl), and who worked to avoid too much of a transnational focus on the US and Saudi Arabia in favor of more momentum to first continue the fight on other fronts, such as Egypt.¹⁵¹ This discussion went back to the days of Bin Laden's cooperation with Abdullah Azzam in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

However, Al-Zawahiri's options were limited. The militant Islamist movement in Egypt was crushed by regime oppression, and support for jihadism among the population had diminished starkly in the late 1990s as a result of the militants' own actions.¹⁵² On November 17, 1997, the *Gamaa Islamiya* (EIG) bomb attack at the Luxor hotel in Cairo killed 60 people, among them many tourists. This tilted the momentum against groups such as EIJ and EIG. As Gerges describes it, 'the war against the Egyptian regime had been lost'.¹⁵³ Desperate for finance, Al-Zawahiri had become highly dependent on Bin Laden's funding, and in choosing this direction he had burned the bridges to the majority of *Al-Jihad* members. Because of their experience, those *Al-Jihad* fighters who did accompany Al-Zawahiri were able to secure positions as some of Bin Laden's most trusted associates. In the late 1990s, they joined the former Arab Afghan fighters to form the inner circle or *shura* council that was at the core of what had become *Al Qaeda*.

The Taliban followed a dual strategy to contain the negative consequences of Bin Laden's public statements as much as possible. He was allowed to set up and run training camps to host the young Muslims who sought training for jihad in Afghanistan, but was also asked to refrain from making explicit public statements on international jihad. However, it proved impossible to silence Bin Laden. On February 23, 1998, the 'World Islamic Front' (WIF) issued a religious decree, often referred to as *fatwa* by Western media, 'against the Jews and the Crusaders'.¹⁵⁴ It summarized Bin Laden's recent interviews and statements in a powerful, more focused, and more aggressive manifesto.

151 Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 46.

152 Kepel, *Jihad*, 277.

153 Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 68.

154 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 58-62.

World Islamic Front declaration 1998

Text and genre

The text of the 1998 manifesto was first published in the pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, titled 'Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders' (*Nass Bayan al-Jabhah al-Islamiyah al-Alamiyah li-Jihad al-Yahud wa-al-Salibiyyin*).¹⁵⁵ The main differences compared to the Ladenese memorandum in 1996 were that the 1998 declaration was significantly shorter, that it was not only signed by Bin Laden but also by four co-signatories, and that it had a much narrower focus on the role of the United States in the Middle East. Furthermore, not only military and security personnel were threatened, but also civilians, and not only on the Arabian Peninsula but in 'all countries'. The problem was defined in fewer words but with a similar pejorative and politically charged lexicon as in 1996. The Muslim people suffered from America's 'excessive aggression', 'horrific massacres', and the 'devastation inflicted upon them'. The American 'crimes and sins' were a 'proclamation of war' against Islam. The ZCA had attacked Muslim countries in the Islamic world, most recently the Arabian Peninsula, and the Saudi regime had failed to follow God's will and protect the land of the two Holy Places. The introduction of the 1998 text recited the first half of the Quranic verse on repentance (*Surah At-Tawbah*, 9:5). Similar to the 1996 text, it was the first phrase on 'slaying the idolaters', also referred to as the verse of the sword (*surah As-Sayef*), that was narrated.¹⁵⁶ The subsequent phrase on how Allah could be merciful if these idolaters 'should repent' was not recited.¹⁵⁷

Compared to the 1996 memorandum, it seems more appropriate to characterize this text as a focused religious decree on a specific issue. Most English translations adopted the term *fatwa*. Several of the signatories were established leaders of known groups, and Bin Laden's moral authority certainly had increased as a widely recognized Saudi oppositionist. But did the WIF actually declare a *fatwa* against the United States? The term 'judgement' used in the text referred to a 'considered judgement' (*hukm*) in contrast to a 'juridical decree' (*fatwa*).¹⁵⁸ The difference is subtle but of interest. In contrast to the universally applicable *fatwa*, a considered judgement is issued by an authoritative leadership in light of specific prevailing conditions. The *hukm* remains in place as long as those conditions prevail.¹⁵⁹ So compared to *fatwa*, the term *hukm* had a more political connotation. In the text, the US 'occupation' or foreign policy in the Middle East shaped the specific conditions on the Arabian Peninsula.

¹⁵⁵ Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 8908.

¹⁵⁶ Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 58–62.

¹⁵⁷ Sahih International, 'Surah At-Tawbah'.

¹⁵⁸ Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 61, footnote 10.

¹⁵⁹ *Hukm* as described in *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e890> (last retrieved April 27, 2016), A *kām* (plural of *hukm*) as described in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ahkam-SIM_0376?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.cluster.Encyclopaedia+of+Islam&s.q=ahkam (last retrieved April 27, 2016).

Although criticized, it was not the American ‘way of life’ that the authors sought to destroy *per se*.

A key aspect was the name of the entity producing the text, the ‘World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and the Crusaders’. In addition to the 1996 Ladenese memorandum, ‘World’ signified the large scale of the ‘front for jihad’ that had allegedly been founded, whereas ‘Islamic’ specified the character of the inclusiveness as opposed to others, the ‘Jews and the Crusaders’. By choosing this title, the authors sought to underline collaboration and unity over a cause amidst diversity. To what extent did the signatories represent a newly established WIF? Did they have the authority to declare a *jihad* or holy war against the United States and its allies on behalf of their groups? The signatories were presented in the text as

Sheikh Osama bin Muhammed bin Laden
 Ayman al-Zawahiri, amir of the Jihad Group in Egypt
 Abu-Yasir Rif’ai Ahmad Taha, Egyptian Islamic Group
 Sheikh Mir Hamzah, secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan
 Fazlur Rahman, amir of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh¹⁶⁰

First, despite its name, the WIF represented only a fraction of the jihadi groups around the world. Illustrative was how even Yemeni jihadis of the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army who were associated with Bin Laden were piqued that they were not consulted before publication of the text.¹⁶¹ After publication, Bin Laden made efforts to increase support for the publication in Yemen by discussing revisions. The Taliban, to which Bin Laden had pledged allegiance (as the ‘pious caliphate would begin from Afghanistan’), did not support the WIF statement.¹⁶² On the contrary, they tried to limit Bin Laden’s ability to make public statements. Some Afghan factions deemed Bin Laden’s behavior so reckless that they accused him of being an agent of the United States who wanted to destroy the Taliban Islamic Emirate.¹⁶³ Further on, this chapter will describe how the strong shift in focus on a ‘near enemy’ (or a local regime) towards a ‘far enemy’ (or global enemy) was a major dividing factor among Salafi-jihadi groups.

Second, there were internal differences among the jihadi groups ‘represented’ by the signatories, also concerning the international or global orientation of the top priority. Before the early 1990s, even Bin Laden had not explicitly targeted the US, Jews, or the West in his writings.¹⁶⁴ Now, there was apparently no question in this regard. But among Bin Laden’s closest Afghan Arab followers, there had already been long-standing fundamental discussions on goals and strategies since the 1980s, for example between Al-Zawahiri and

¹⁶⁰ Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 60–61.

¹⁶¹ Camille Tawil, *Brothers in Arms, The Story of al-Qa’ida and the Arab Jihadists* (London, Saqi 2010) 153–154.

¹⁶² Mir, ‘Pakistan Interviews Usama Bin Ladin’.

¹⁶³ Geroges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 65.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 52

Azzam. In the early 1990s in Sudan, Sayyed Imam al-Sharif (Dr. Fadl) had argued with Al-Zawahiri that conducting violent attacks in Egypt was counterproductive to the goal of EIJ to increase influence.¹⁶⁵ The 1998 WIF declaration took discussions to a new level.

Now Al-Zawahiri had declared support for Bin Laden against the will of the majority of the EIJ. He had faced internal problems with the *shura* council, the executive decision-making body of his EIJ, on whether a transnational jihad was in the interest of the organization. Over the last years, thousands of EIJ members had been arrested by the Egyptian authorities, significantly weakening the organization. Fawaz Gerges notes how several jihadis he interviewed in 1998 and 1999, including a former lieutenant of Zawahiri, were convinced that 'opening a second front on the sole surviving superpower and its Western allies was suicidal'.¹⁶⁶ Among EIJ senior members, a debate was ongoing on whether the costs of militant jihadism to the *ummah* were too high, and on whether teaching and preaching (*dawa*) would not be a better way to Islamize the Egyptian and wider Muslim society. It seemed Al-Zawahiri wanted to pursue a new jihadi agenda to substitute for a losing old one.

At a personal level, this new text marked Al-Zawahiri's definitive departure from prioritizing the struggle against the Egyptian government, the near enemy. He had been involved in this struggle since the 1960s and had rejected any diversion towards international or transnational enemies. The former associates whom Gerges interviewed at the time stated Al-Zawahiri was bankrupt and desperate to secure the survival of his organization, and pay the 'martyrs' families' and salaries of his followers.¹⁶⁷ These statements illustrate other obtained internal EIJ correspondence on how Al-Zawahiri had become increasingly dependent on Bin Laden's funding.¹⁶⁸ Eventually, only eight lieutenants followed Al-Zawahiri in joining the WIF. Al-Zawahiri had not consulted the EIJ *shura* council about his decision to sign the 1998 text and align 'his' organization to Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. In response, the EIJ *shura* council released a statement in which Al-Zawahiri and those loyal to him were all expelled, sealing the discussion within EIJ with the split.¹⁶⁹

Abu-Yasir Rif'ai Ahmad Taha (or Abu Nasir of Egypt) had appeared to sign on behalf of the Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG, *Al-Gamaa Al-Islamiyya*). Compared to Al-Zawahiri's EIJ, EIG was far greater in terms of followers and the number of violent attacks in Egypt, including the 1997 Luxor bombing. In fact, however, Taha was a mid-level hardliner, only representing a faction of the group's members.¹⁷⁰ He had not consulted the wider EIG leadership and was later forced to release a disclaimer in which he denied EIG was 'a party in any front against

165 Ibid, 46.

166 Ibid, 84-85.

167 Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy, Why Jihad Went Global*, second edition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2010) 121.

168 Ibid, 122.

169 Tawil, *Brothers in Arms*, Mohammed Salah, *Narratives of the Jihad Years, The Journey of the Arab Afghans* [in Arabic] (Cairo 2001) as in Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 84, note 17.

170 Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 158, 352, Rohan Gunaratna, Aviv Oreg, *Global Jihad Movement* (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield 2015) 248-249.

Americans'.¹⁷¹ The large number of casualties caused by the attack in Luxor and the fierce repression by the Egyptian government had split EIG. The vast majority of EIG supported an announced cease-fire and pursued a political debate with the Egyptian government.

Later, EIG leader Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman (the Blind Sheikh) spread a written statement supporting the formation of another world Islamic front to spread and defend Islam, but by means of peaceful action only.¹⁷² This was also after the Embassy bombings that will be described further on in this chapter. Abdul Rahman was serving life imprisonment in the United States for his involvement in the 1993 bombing of the New York WTC. As described earlier in this chapter, during the fight against the Soviets in training camps such as the one in Khost, Afghanistan, ties had been formed between Omar Abdul Rahman, other Islamic Group members, several EIJ members, and Bin Laden's network of Afghan Arabs. In the Egyptian context, Abdul Rahman had also cooperated with EIJ in the past. However, Al-Zawahiri eventually pursued his own course after fierce discussions with Abdul Rahman over strategies and methods of spreading Islam in Egypt after 1997.¹⁷³ Apart from differences between Rahman and Al-Zawahiri, the nature and status of Taha's support on behalf of EIG to the WIF declaration was also disputed.

Representing the Sunni Hanafi Barelvi religio-political party Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) was secretary-general Sheikh Mir Hamzah. From a religious perspective, the Barelvi differ from Deobandi schools in Pakistan and India because of their personal devotion to the Prophet Mohammed and their adoption of Sufi practices of worshipping saints. Although the Barelvi and Deobandi strands are both situated within the Sunni Hanafi legal tradition, Barelvi leaders have referred to Deobandi followers as unbelievers and apostates.¹⁷⁴ The two groups have been characterized as 'sworn enemies'.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, different Barelvi brotherhoods also vary from each other, as some Barelvi Muslims are liberal while others act more in line with Salafism, making segmentations more diffuse. Politically, the Barelvi JUP formed a coalition with the Deobandi *Jamiat-Ulema-e-Islam* (JUI) and *Jamaat-e-Islami* in the 1980s and early 1990s against the Pakistani People's Party of Benazir Bhutto. In 1993, Bhutto succeeded in gaining significant support among JUI followers, breaking up that coalition.

From an international perspective, the bond between the Barelvi and the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein had traditionally been strong, as the movement's patron saint had been buried near Baghdad. Still, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, most Islamists, including the Pakistani JUP, condemned the action of invading another Muslim country. However, disagreement soon transformed and shifted to anger towards the Saudi regime that allowed American troops on its lands.¹⁷⁶ In contrast, Deobandis, such as the JUI political party and

171 Salah, Al Hayat, December 28, 1998, as in Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 69.

172 Alison Pargeter, *The New Frontiers of Jihad, Radical Islam in Europe* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press 2013), 75.

173 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 67.

174 Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1990), 71.

175 Kepel, *Jihad*, 226.

176 *Ibid.*, 218.

later the Taliban in the madrassas in Pakistan, received support from Saudi Arabia as their religious conservatism had similarities to Saudi Wahhabism. It was an effort of the Saudi regime to maintain influence in religious and political developments in Pakistan. Sheikh Mir Hamza represented the political vehicle for the religious Bareilvi strands in Pakistan. As an opposition party, the JUP was represented in the national parliament, which brings the political dimension in the 1998 WIF declaration more to the forefront.

Fazlur Rahman, also known as Sheikh Abd al-Salam Muhammad Khan, was the ideologue of the Deobandi Jihad Movement in Bangladesh, known as *Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh* (HUJI-B). The wider Pakistan-based militant jihadi HUJI organization originated from the Party of the Friends of the Afghan People (*Jamiat Ansar ul Afghani*, JAA), which was established by students from Karachi during the Afghan-Soviet war, and later merged with the splinter group *Harkat ul-Mujahedeen* (HuM).¹⁷⁷ After the war in Afghanistan was over, HUJI and HuM had reoriented towards fighting for (Muslim) independence in the northern Indian districts of Kashmir and Jammu under the flag of Harkat ul-Ansar (HuA), and later again of *Jamiat-ul-Ansar* (JuA).¹⁷⁸ In the early 1990s, the Pakistani intelligence service reportedly supported the destabilizing efforts of HUJI/HuA in India.¹⁷⁹ In 1997, the United States designated HuM and HuA as terrorist organizations as they were involved in kidnapping Westerners.¹⁸⁰ Only years later, in 2008 and 2010, would HUJI-B and HUJI be declared terrorist organizations.¹⁸¹

HUJI-B was founded in 1992 and became an active branch in terms of rhetoric and attacks. The creed of HUJI-B was for 'all to become Taliban (or Muslim students) and turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan'.¹⁸² After signing the 1998 text, the HUJI-B became increasingly involved in violent attacks against Hindus and progressive intellectuals in Bangladesh.¹⁸³ With the support of Fazlur Rahman for the WIF and its first declaration, the symbolic reach of the message in the Muslim world stretched further into Asia. Still, compared to other militant Islamic organizations in the Arab world and Asia, HUJI-B remained a relatively minor group.¹⁸⁴

177 Guaratna, Oreg, *Global Jihad Movement*, 245, Institute for Conflict Management, 'Harkat ul-Ansar', South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/terrorist_outfits/harkat_ul_ansar_or_harkat_ul_jehad_e_islami.htm (last retrieved November 20, 2016).

178 Stanford University, 'Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami', Mapping Militant Organizations, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/217> (last retrieved November 20, 2016).

179 Ibid.

180 US Department of State, 'Patterns of Global Terrorism', 1997, <http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1997Report/asia.html>, (last retrieved November 20, 2016),

US Department of State, 'Foreign Terrorist Organizations', 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>, (last retrieved November 20, 2016).

181 Ibid.

182 Stanford University, 'Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami'.

183 Subir Bhaumik, 'Jihad or Joi Bangla, Bangladesh in Peril', Jaideep Saikia, Ekatarina Stepanova, (eds.) *Terrorism, Patterns of Internationalization* (London, Sage 2009) 84.

184 Kepel, Milelli, *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, 282, note 18.

Examining the WIF declaration in terms of text production, the various signatories claimed to represent several Islamic organizations in the Middle East and Asia that comprised a 'World Islamic Front'. However, the WIF was far from encompassing a global Salafi-jihadi movement. Moreover, the authority of the signatories to declare *jihad* on behalf of 'their' groups was debatable – especially Al-Zawahiri, who was a driving force during the drafting of the declaration, but also Taha, who was more outsider than mainstream to most EIG members and was later forced to withdraw his name.¹⁸⁵ As for the aspect of unity between the five Salafi-jihadi groups, there were personal differences between Abdul Rahman and Al-Zawahiri, and partly as a consequence, a rift between EIG and EIJ. Furthermore, in terms of religious views, the Deobandi tradition of HUJI-B and the JUP's Barelvi orientation do not allow for a natural fit in every way.

The WIF was somewhat of a bricolage of small groups of Salafi-jihadis. This brings back to the forefront the discussion in the introduction of the chapter on the nature of *Al Qaeda* with respect to the WIF: was *Al Qaeda* more of an ideology, a network, or a coordinated group? Analyzing the signatories of the WIF declaration points towards the perspective of a 'loose network of networks' of individuals and minority groups that were affiliated.¹⁸⁶ Although Bin Laden's followers had pledged allegiance, there were frustrations and differences among them. Defining *Al Qaeda* at this stage is thus more a matter of perspective. It seems the common cause of fighting 'the Jews and the Crusaders' was primarily an effort to bring diverse and divided groups of jihadis closer together.¹⁸⁷

Focusing the argument of the Al Qaeda narrative

After religious introductions and a focused arrangement of some of the arguments presented earlier in the 1996 Ladenese text, the sentence carrying the considered judgement (*hukm*) was the central message of the 1998 text:

On this basis, and in accordance with God's will, we pronounce to all Muslims the following judgement: To kill the Americans and their allies – civilians and military – is an individual duty incumbent upon every Muslim in all countries, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Holy Mosque from their grip, so that their armies leave all the territory of Islam, defeated, broken, and unable to threaten any Muslim.¹⁸⁸

185 *Al Jazeera* , 'Bin Laden interview', December, 1998, as in Lawrence, *Messages to the world* , 89, Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* , 81-87, Wright, *The Looming Tower* , 295.

186 Burke, *Al Qaeda* , 13.

187 Lawrence, *Messages to the World* , 60.

188 Lawrence, *Messages to the World* , 61.

It was an extreme standpoint to kill servicemen *and* civilians, regionally *and* globally, that required strong argumentation, especially as the WIF statement intended to appeal to a diverse Muslim community. God was praised as in the Quran (*basmallah*) and presented as ‘defeater of factionalism’, a group of words that referenced the various contrasting strands, schools, traditions, views, and opinions in Islam, and specifically Salafism.¹⁸⁹ It illustrated how Bin Laden and the co-signatories strived to unite the *ummah*, address their audiences, and incite them to adopt their cause of ‘liberating’ the land of the two Holy Places. Never in its history had the Arabian Peninsula

suffered such a calamity as these Crusader hordes that have spread like locusts, consuming its wealth and destroying its fertility. All this at a time when nations have joined forces against the Muslims as if fighting over a bowl of food. When the matter is this grave and support is scarce, we must discuss current events and agree collectively on how best to settle the issue.¹⁹⁰

According to the statement, for seven years the US had projected its power and ‘excessive aggression’ through US military bases in the region, for example against the people of Iraq.¹⁹¹ They had come ‘to annihilate what was left of the Iraqi people and humiliate their Muslim neighbors’ while ensuring the survival of Israel.¹⁹² The situation served US religious and economic purposes, but also diverted attention from the Jewish occupation of Jerusalem. These actions were a ‘clear proclamation of war against God, his messenger, and the Muslims’.¹⁹³ The text cited religious authorities and scholars as stating that *jihad* was an individual duty when Muslim countries were attacked. Of note is that ‘Muslim’ referred to the people, whereas ‘Islamic’ would have referred to the ‘state’. Among the cited works were Muwaffaq al-Din ibn Qudama’s book *The Resource (Al-Mughni*, primary Hanbali jurisprudence), Al-Qurtubi’s exegesis of the Quran, and the remarks of Ibn Taymiyya (often referred to as ‘the Sheikh of Islam’) that after faith there was no greater duty than fighting to defend the religion and the world from corruption.¹⁹⁴ In line with the audiences and actors identified in the Ladenese memorandum, scholars, leaders, youths, and security personnel were called upon to kill Americans and seize their money wherever they found them. However, the 1998 text was more explicitly focused on the United States as the root cause of the problem. Furthermore, highly significantly, instead of limiting the threat to US military troops in the region, US civilians and servicemen around the world were also included explicitly as a target in the text.

■
189 Ibid, 59.

190 Ibid.

191 Ibid, 60.

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid, 60-61.

When analyzing the meaning of the message's content that emerged from the language used, it becomes clear that the declaration itself had a powerful coherence. Jason Burke states that Bin Laden 'was able to provide a central focus for many disparate elements' through his actions and rhetoric in the late 1990s.¹⁹⁵ Yet, it did not lead to the forming of a 'huge and disciplined group', but to more of a 'temporary focus' of different Islamic militants who sought the resources and safe haven Bin Laden was able to provide.¹⁹⁶ Fawaz Gerges claims that the late 1990s was a phase in which Bin Laden was able to operationalize the ideas that had been developing into concrete action and set up a 'military operational hierarchical organization', despite the challenge provided by fragmentation.¹⁹⁷ Whether it was mostly about ideology or an organizational effect, the 1998 WIF statement served as a landmark declaration in the *Al Qaeda narrative* because of the focus of its content.

The near and far enemy

Throughout history, Salafist scholars have debated the meaning of Islamic concepts such as *jihad*, *kufir* (or unbelief), and *kaffirs* (or unbelievers). Pivotal in Salafi thinking is defending the concept of *tawhid*, the notion of the oneness of God as he is the sole divine creator. Throughout history, *Jihad* has had various meanings among Muslims, not necessarily referring to armed struggle. In traditional Islamic jurisprudence, the 'greater *jihad*' referred to an inward struggle in which every Muslim engaged to live in accordance with Islam, while the 'lesser *jihad*' was the duty of Muslims to defend Islam against threats.¹⁹⁸ Violent (lesser) *jihad* has been an important Islamic concept throughout history, consisting of two dimensions: defensive and offensive.¹⁹⁹ Defensive *jihad* is defined as an individual duty (*fard ayn*) in which all Muslims are required to engage when a community is attacked, while offensive *jihad* is the collective requirement (*fard kafiya*) of Muslims to spread Islam. Only a specific group of trained and experienced Muslim fighters are to engage in spreading Islam by conquering lands and implementing God's rule (*shariah*). This sets the condition for communities to convert to Islam, although forced conversion is not allowed. Another, less violent way to spread Islam's reach is by preaching (*dawa*).

For jihadis, Sayyid Qutb was one of the most influential modern Islamic scholars, introducing in 1965 the new *jihad* paradigm of attacking the 'near enemy'.²⁰⁰ The repression

195 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 8.

196 Ibid, 8.

197 Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 70.

198 Kepel, *Jihad*, David Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, second edition (Berkeley, UC Press 2015), Richard Bonney, *Jihad, From Qu'ran to Bin Laden* (London, Palgrave Macmillan 2004), Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam, A Reader* (Princeton, Marcus Wiener Publishers 1996).

199 Anne-Marie Delcambre, *Inside Islam* (Milwaukee, Marquette University Press 2005), Patricia Crone, *God's Rule, Government and Islam* (Princeton, Princeton University Press 2004), Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam (Al-Halal Wal Haram Fil Islam)*, translated by Mohammed M. Siddiqui (Oak Brook, IL, North American Islamic Trust [1960] 1999).

200 Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones (Ma'alim fi-l-Tariq)*, translation (USA, SIME journal [1965] 2005).

by Nasser's socialist regime of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the imprisonment of Qutb as one of its prominent ideologues created the conditions in which the thinking based on historic figures such as Ibn Taymiyya ripened. *Jihad* was an 'eternal struggle against any obstacle that came into the way of worshipping God and the implementation of the divine authority on earth', Qutb concluded.²⁰¹ Every Muslim had to honor the universal role of Islam in the world and the sovereignty of God. Rulers who did not follow the strictest form of Islam were identified as *kaffirs* who had to be removed from power. This included any ruler who deemed himself a Muslim or Islamic leader, as the only true leader of Muslims was *Allah*.²⁰² Instead of a limited and offensive collective fight against foreign enemies, the situation in Egypt required Muslims to perform their individual defensive duty against the *kufir* regime. Omar Abdul Rahman built on these ideas to legitimize his role in the killing of Egyptian President Sadat, stating that 'Muslim rulers must not change a single letter'.²⁰³

Another important contribution was EIJ member Mohammed Abd al-Salam Faraj's coining of the term 'far enemy' (*al-Adou al- Baeed*) in contrast to 'near enemy' (*al-Adou al-Qareeb*). His pamphlet, *The Neglected Duty (Al-Farida Al-Gha'eba)*, circulated among Egyptian jihadis in the early 1980s and contributed to the elevation of the status of *jihad*.²⁰⁴ It was more expansionist in its underlying motivation than Qutb's *Milestones*. Also inspired by Ibn Taymiyya, Faraj concluded that unbelievers or Muslims not adhering to Islamic law (*shariah*) must be fought to reestablish the Islamic Caliphate from which the world could be conquered. Although the ultimate aim was to 'liberate' Jerusalem from the Jews, whom Faraj characterized as the 'far enemy' (*al-Adou al-Baeed*), the route to accomplish this went through national capitals such as Cairo, Amman, and Riyadh. According to Faraj, modern Muslim rulers were apostates who had been brought up 'at the tables of colonialism' as they allied with (Western) unbelievers.²⁰⁵ Faraj propagated that defeating the near enemy was the first priority that served as a precondition for liberating Jerusalem and ending the colonial presence in Muslim lands. Both Qutb and Faraj informed the thinking among Salafi-jihadis that attacking the near enemy was necessary.

Given the divisions in the Salafi-jihadi landscape, how did the stance of attacking American military *and* civilians, locally *and* globally fit in the wider context of the Salafi-jihadi order of discourse? The WIF declaration marked a radical or strategic ideological transformation of the concept of defensive *jihad*, away from the focus on the near enemy. The latter was a traditional focus that Al Zawahiri himself had defended for decades, for example in Afghanistan while discussing it with Abdullah Azzam. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, Abdullah Azzam had been an advocate of turning attention towards

201 Qutb, *Milestones*, 45.

202 De Graaff, *Op Weg Naar Armageddon*, 503-521.

203 Omar Abdel Rahman, *A Word of Truth, Dr. Omar Abdul Rahman's Legal Summation in the Jihad Case* [in Arabic] (no date no publisher), 75, as in Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 5.

204 Steven Brooke, 'Jihadist Strategic Debates before 9/11', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31(2008) 3: 205.

205 Mohammed Abd al-Salam Faraj, *The Neglected Duty*, 1991, in R. Sayed (ed.) *The Militant Prophet, The Revolutionaries*, II [in Arabic] (London, Riad El-Rayyes Books 1991), 130, as in Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 10.

liberating Palestine, instead of taking the jihad to Egypt and other local Muslim regimes.²⁰⁶ This had led to serious disagreements with other members of the Afghan MAK support network such as Al Zawahiri and Omar Rahman. Long after Azzam's death, and with the situation in Egypt changed dramatically, the 1998 WIF declaration now marked a shift in focus from fighting the 'apostate near enemy' to the 'greater power' behind the local regimes: the ZCA.

The WIF intended to aggregate highly diverse groups of Salafi-jihadis. But among the various strands of Salafi-jihadi thought that had developed over the last century, the WIF declaration was an extreme standpoint, unparalleled in this form. A radical creed and method of *jihad* was advanced in which it was the duty of individuals to proactively attack the ZCA enemy in all its forms and in every place on earth. Its global scope contrasted with the local concerns of most of the Salafi-jihadi groups that the message sought to address.²⁰⁷ It was a direction that was anything but widely supported among Salafi-jihadis.²⁰⁸ Yet, underneath the radical innovation of *jihad* lay a sentiment, also captured by Bin Laden's earlier rhetoric, that resonated widely among Salafists and broader Muslim communities.

In the wider Muslim and Arab world, popular anger had risen since the early 1990s over US presence in the land of the two Holy Places, Saudi Arabia, and the civilian casualties of the American-led Gulf War.²⁰⁹ This anger grew even more as the US had first supported Saddam during the war against Iran in the 1980s and now pragmatically defended its interests in a different way. American support for the state of Israel and its policy towards Palestinians added to the negative sentiments among Muslims. In Saudi Arabia, political opposition had also increased over the poor socio-economic position of minorities, contrasting with the wealthy lives of the Saudi royal family that made oil deals with US companies. However, the Saudi ruling family had sought to advance foreign policy along two contrasting lines.

Since the foundation of the country, the House of Saud had cooperated with strict Wahhabi Muslims to maintain regional influence. Islamic fundamentalists had proven to be a useful instrument in the fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan and to counter Iranian regional influence after the Islamic revolution in 1979. Saudi Arabia was also one of the few supporters of the Taliban. As a concession to the strict Saudi Wahhabi scholars (*ulema*), the decision to allow the stationing of 500,000 American troops on Saudi soil was accompanied by a decree that gave Islamic religious police (*mutaween*) officers and volunteers more competence in the country to oversee and enforce conformity to *shariah* in the country.²¹⁰ Thus, despite the radical nature of the approach to jihad propagated by the WIF, in a broader sense an

206 Abdullah Azzam, 'From Kabul to Jerusalem', *Al Jihad* 52 (February–March 1989), as in Brooke, 'Jihadist Strategic Debates before 9/11'.

207 Vahid Brown, 'Classical and Global Jihad, Al-Qa'ida's franchising frustrations', in Assaf Moghadam, Brian Fishman, (eds.) *Fault Lines in Global Jihad, Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures* (New York, Routledge 2011), 88–89.

208 Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 27–28.

209 Maha Azzam, 'The Gulf crisis: perceptions in the Muslim world', *International Affairs* 67 (1991) 3: 473–485, Ann Mosely Lesch, 'Contrasting Reactions to the Persian Gulf Crisis: Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians', *Middle East Journal*, 45 (1991) 1: 30–50.

210 Milton Viorst, 'The Storm and the Citadel', *Foreign Affairs*, 75 (1996) 1: 93–107.

increasing number of Muslims were somewhat sympathetic to some of the sentiments in the 1998 WIF declaration.

Securitization in the 1998 declaration

It was the 1998 WIF declaration that accelerated and unquestionably lifted the *Al Qaeda* narrative, which had been marked comprehensively for the first time in the 1996 memorandum, further from the realm of 'normal' moral and political opposition to securitization. As securitizing actors, Bin Laden and the co-signatories presented themselves united as leaders of a vanguard for all Muslims. This was potentially more powerful than if Bin Laden had only sought to improve his authority and position by increasing his profile and media exposure. The primary referent subject was more clearly defined as the United States, represented by both military and civilian Americans, and the Jews and their allies. This was also a result of the customized policy projected: kill them and seize their money whenever and wherever it is possible.

However, it was the referent object that perhaps formed the weakest aspect of this securitization effort. Despite negative sentiments among Muslims regarding Iraqi population casualties, or the situation of the Palestinians and Jerusalem, there appeared to be a lack of congruence between the frame of reference and strategy of the securitizing actor, and the various frames of reference among the audience, the Muslim *ummah*. The argument in the text was that in the history of the Arabian Peninsula, the calamity at hand had never been greater and required violent resistance. However, transnational militant jihadism only resonated with a small Salafi minority within the global Muslim community. Although other Salafists agreed with the specific context that situated the *hukm*, politicos and quietist Salafists pursued non-violent methods to reach their goals. Thus, among more moderate Sunni, Shia, and Sufi Muslim communities in Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Iraq, and the wider Arab world, some of the grievances described were felt but failed to rally support for the WIF statement. The considered judgement caused significant debate among the readers of the pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* and the various Muslim groups, instead of all-out unity and incitement. Of the 20 groups operating in Afghanistan, only three had supported the statement.²¹¹ For a small group of Salafi-jihadi followers, the text would prove to offer a natural fit with their beliefs and legitimize an operation in Africa that would catch the attention of the US president.

The statement marked yet another step in the development of the network into an organization that would become known as *Al Qaeda*. At its core was Osama bin Laden, surrounded by his *shura* council of closest associates. In London, the ARC represented the executive element of *Al Qaeda's* media committee that was led by chief propagandist Khalid al-Fawwaz. Other *shura* members and related subgroups focused on funding and

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211 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 5150.

conducting business, or on scholarly research on Islamic law (*shariah*). Abu Ubaidah was *Al Qaeda's* chief planner and military commander until he died in a ferry accident in Africa on May 21, 1996. Then, Abu Hafis al-Masri (also known as Mohammed Atef) took over preparing and coordinating the execution of several operations against the adversaries defined in Bin Laden's statements. After Ubaidah's death, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah (also known as Abu Mohammed al-Masri or Saleh) headed the al-Qaeda cells that would execute the bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania a few months later.

Among those who disagreed with the 1998 text, and who were quite unpleasantly surprised by this latest statement made by Bin Laden, were Taliban leader Mullah Omar and Foreign Minister Maulana Muttawakil.²¹² For his efforts to gain international credibility, Bin Laden's behavior and statements continued to cause frustration. In response, several of the Afghan training camps that facilitated training for fighters and followers associated with Bin Laden were shut down. As a reprisal, the Taliban leadership also told Bin Laden to move from Jalalabad to the more remote city of Kandahar in March 1998. They confiscated his satellite phones, hoping to reduce his ability to communicate. Nevertheless, on May 26, 1998, Bin Laden held a major press conference in one of his training camps in Khost discussing the WIF declaration.²¹³

Reproduction and recontextualization

Between February 23 and August 7, 1998, Bin Laden actively sought the attention of Arab and English news media for interviews and discussions on the WIF declaration. In an *Al-Akhbar* article in Urdu, published on March 31 after a brief radio interview the day before, Bin Laden denied terrorism and responded laughingly to rumors that the US CIA had been sent to capture him as a consequence of the WIF statement.

The United States is the biggest terrorist and rogue and it is the duty of every Muslim to struggle for its annihilation. [...] It is up to you whether you consider it jihad or terrorism. I am not afraid whether they arrest me or kill me. I am ready to face any situation. Two CIA teams have already failed and, God willing, the same will happen again.²¹⁴

Of the 11 news articles that appeared in various news media, eight were published in the London-based pan-Arab *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (6) and *Al-Hayah* (2), which illustrated the efforts

²¹² Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 250.

²¹³ Dalbah, Muhammad, 'United States Admits that Keeping Its Troops in the Gulf Is Causing Dissatisfaction, Bin Ladin Threatens To Launch Attack Soon', *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, May 28, 1998, 1, as in FBIS, 70-71, Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 227.

²¹⁴ Azeem Siddiqui, 'Interview With Usama Bin Ladin Reported', *Al-Akhbar*, March 31, 1998, 1, 8, as translated in FBIS, 61-62.

made by *Al Qaeda's* media committee and the ARC office.²¹⁵ The Pakistani newspapers *The News* (English) and *Al-Akhbar* (Urdu) published three articles in May and June, a spin-off from the Khost press conference on May 26. Apart from reproduction and recontextualization of Bin Laden's core message, these articles also reported on other developments such as the listing of Afghanistan as a state sponsor of terrorism by the US, and nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan.

In April 1998, a high-level US delegation led by US ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson visited the Taliban leadership in Kabul. Apart from attempts to start peace negotiations, a discussion on the hostile rhetoric and activities of Osama bin Laden against the US was also on the agenda.²¹⁶ In an *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article, Bin Laden warned the Taliban regime against any US temptations and stressed how any peace negotiations were linked to the US conspiracies against the Islamic nation that prevented *Shariah* law. In the same article, he stated the Arab Afghans now 'spearhead the Islamic rejection of US policy against the ummah'.²¹⁷ The US visit was unsuccessful in both respects. Soon after, the US added Afghanistan to the list of states sponsoring terrorism. In another Bin Laden statement published in an *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article on May 18, this decision was deemed a 'certificate of good conduct'. According to Bin Laden, the listing as a sponsor of terrorism was without any practical consequences. There were no diplomats to expel from the US and economic ties were non-existent. Bin Laden stated the underlying reason for this decision was that the Taliban were hosting him.²¹⁸

Bin Laden was by no means planning to stop making statements. Just on May 14, *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* had outlined how Bin Laden supported a religious decree of the 'Ulema Union of Afghanistan' that 'urged Islamic governments to perform the duty of armed jihad against all atheists, the enemies of Islam'.²¹⁹ Muslims should not become lax, as this might lead to the occupation of the two Holy mosques, like the occupation of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. On May 19, *Al-Hayah* published an article on the second statement issued by the WIF titled 'Wounds of Al-Aqsa Mosque'. It widened the focus of the WIF from the US back to the ZCA and stated 'the US Jews and Christians are using Israel to bring Muslims to their knees', hoping to increase the group that was attracted to the cause.²²⁰ However, the apotheosis of Bin Laden's efforts during this time was the press conference on May 26 in the Khost training camp *Al-Badr*, which resulted in three news articles and a television interview with ABC. Accompanied

²¹⁵ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 'Bin Ladin Warns Against US Plan To Eliminate Arab Afghans', April 15, 1998, 1, as translated in FBIS, 62-63, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 'Clerics in Afghanistan Issue Fatwa on Necessity To Move US Forces Out of the Gulf, Saudi Oppositionist Usama Bin Ladin Supports It', May 14, 1998, 4, as translated in FBIS, 63-65, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 'Bin Ladin, Afghanistan's Inclusion on US 'Terrorism List' Is 'Certificate of Good Conduct' for Taliban', May 18, 1998, 3, as translated in FBIS, 66-67, Muhammed Salah, 'World Islamic Front Backs 'Intifadah of Palestine's Sons'', *Al-Hayah*, May 19, 1998, 4, as translated in FBIS, 67-68, Dalbah, Muhammad, 'United States Admits that Keeping Its Troops in the Gulf Is Causing Dissatisfaction', *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 'Bin Ladin Congratulates Pakistan on Its Possession of Nuclear Weapons', June 1, 1998, 2, as translated in FBIS, 71.

²¹⁶ Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 185.

²¹⁷ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 'Bin Ladin Warns Against US Plan To Eliminate Arab Afghans'.

²¹⁸ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 'Bin Ladin, Afghanistan's Inclusion on US 'Terrorism List' Is 'Certificate of Good Conduct' for Taliban'.

²¹⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 'Clerics in Afghanistan Issue Fatwa on Necessity To Move US Forces Out of the Gulf'.

²²⁰ Muhammed Salah, 'World Islamic Front Backs 'Intifadah of Palestine's Sons''.

by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden seized the opportunity to highlight that the Muslim world faced a large and tragic problem. An article on the press conference in *The News* (in English) also outlined how, according to Bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri had an important role in launching the WIF.²²¹ But overall, it was Bin Laden who was presented in the media as leader and orchestrator of a well-thought-out agenda.²²²

By now, reporters again questioned how long Bin Laden would be able to stay in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban. Bin Laden stated to the press that Mullah Omar had ‘only asked him not to indulge in military activities from Afghanistan’, but the reality was less positive. With the efforts of the Taliban leadership to limit Bin Laden’s rhetoric remaining fruitless, and with that rhetoric negatively affecting their own goals of internal stability, they were willing to discuss other options. In June 1998, the head of Saudi intelligence Prince Turki al-Faisal was able to make a secret deal with the Taliban to have Bin Laden expelled from Afghanistan.²²³ The ‘*fatwa*’ and press conference were decisive signs for the Taliban leadership that it was simply impossible to keep their Arab guest silent and prevent international problems.²²⁴ However, as a consequence of the US military strikes on Afghanistan that followed the Embassy bombings in Africa, the deal would not be executed.²²⁵

Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania and US missile strikes

At 10:39 am on August 7, 1998, a Toyota Dyna truck detonated in front of the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. Ten minutes later, a Nissan truck exploded at the US Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In total, 224 people were killed and over 4,700 people wounded. Most of the 4,500 wounded in Nairobi were civilian bystanders who stopped in the street or came to the windows of their civilian offices in response to the stun grenades thrown by the attackers. The stun grenades drew people near out of curiosity and did not scare civilians away, as *Al Qaeda* members would later testify to be the intent. It was Friday, and around that time the Mosques in the vicinity were holding their religious services – an argument that would surface later among Bin Laden’s followers to justify that the civilian casualties were either not true Muslims or would be accepted by God as martyrs.²²⁶

The Nairobi embassy, which was the largest US Embassy in the region, was severely damaged by the blast. Although not as much as the weaker civilian office building next to it, which had collapsed and housed 400 people daily. The windows of the nearby Cooperative Bank, a Nairobi landmark, were shattered. Among the rubble and twisted steel were scattered

221 *The News*, ‘Bin Ladin Creates New Front Against US, Israel’, May 28, 1998, 12, as translated in FBIS, 68-69.

222 Rahimullah Yusufzai, ‘In the Way of Allah’, *The News*, June 15, 1998, internet version, as translated in FBIS, 72-74.

223 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 185.

224 Rahimullah Yusufzai ‘Taliban let Bin Ladin break his silence’, *The News*, January 6, 1999, internet version, as translated in FBIS, 79-82.

225 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 244.

226 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 78, 319.

human remains and burnt corpses. As aid workers and news agencies rushed to the scene, hundreds of wounded were filmed walking to receive treatment in the street. The captured images were widely distributed among global news media.



Fig 3.2 Kenyan K24TV imagery. Left: the US Embassy on the right. Right: people rushing in to help at the collapsed building next to the US Embassy in Nairobi, August 7, 1998.²²⁷

In Tanzania, a water truck had blocked and absorbed part of the explosion as it was thrown from its place at the gate towards the Embassy. The bomb still caused substantial damage to two thirds of the Embassy, and a significant number of people were killed and wounded. However, probably because of the scale of the first blast in Nairobi, most video material was made and broadcasted from Kenya.



Fig 3.3 Left: the damaged US Embassy in Dar es Salaam, August 1998.²²⁸ Right: water truck remains next to the Embassy, August 8, 1998.²²⁹

227 K24TV (YouTube publisher), 'Kenya Remembers 1998 Terror Attack I', August 7, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4NjoeHApv4> (last retrieved May 13, 2016).

228 The National Security Archive, Associated Press image, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB253/> (last retrieved May 13, 2016).

229 New York Daily News, Associated Press image, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/osama-bin-laden-dead-gallery-1.15780?pmSlide=1.17207> (last retrieved May 13, 2016).

Two claims of responsibility were made by 'platoons' belonging to 'the Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places'.²³⁰ One platoon from the Arabian Peninsula was named after Martyr Khalid al-Saeed, who was behind the attack at Al-Khobar; the other was named after Abdullah Azzam. They had almost identical words and were distributed to various Arab media outlets.²³¹ Initially, Bin Laden denied any personal involvement. According to the Hong Kong office of AFP, Bin Laden relayed a message via Ayman al-Zawahiri to the Pakistani newspaper *The News* on August 20, 'calling upon the Muslim ummah to continue jihad against Jews and Americans' while 'denying any involvement in the Nairobi and Dar es Salam bombings'.²³² Of note, in the AFP report Al-Zawahiri was introduced as 'head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad Organization', not as a leader of Bin Laden's group or *Al Qaeda*. Later Afghan Islamic Press also quoted Bin Laden categorically denying any involvement in the attacks, while feeling no sorrow over the blasts.²³³

The actions of Bin Laden's associates demonstrated how he was in fact involved. In 1994, Khalid al-Fawwaz, a trusted lieutenant of Bin Laden, had not only started the ARC in London, but before that had worked to set up businesses and charities in Nairobi for the network that was evolving into *Al Qaeda*.²³⁴ These allowed Al-Fawwaz to provide financial and logistical support to others within the network, such as Ali Mohammed and Anas al-Liby. As a member of the EIJ, Ali Mohammed was closely connected to Al-Zawahiri. Mohammed and Al-Liby conducted surveillance on US, British, French, and Israeli potential targets in Nairobi; one of those targets was the US Embassy. Staying with them was L'Houssaine Kherchtou, who took flying lessons to become Bin Laden's personal pilot in Sudan. They all knew each other from their days in the Afghan training camps.²³⁵

Between 1996 and 1998, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah traveled between the Afghan training camps and Kenya to fill the gap when the person responsible for the 'East African cell', Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, drowned in a ferry accident in May 1996. Ahmed Abdullah coordinated the planning of the double suicide operation against the US East African Embassies. The operation was to be executed in Nairobi by Saudis Mohamed al-Owhali and Mohammed Ali al-Hazari (also known as Abu Obeydah al-Maki), and in Dar es Salam by Egyptian Hamdan Khalif Alal.²³⁶ Mohamed al-Owhali fled the scene and survived the shooting that preceded the bombing. He was arrested several days after the blast in Nairobi. Also, on the day before the Embassy bombings, Mohammed Sadiq Odeh was arrested while flying from Kenya to

230 Gus Martin (ed.) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, second edition (Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage 2011) 307-308.

231 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 85.

232 Ayman Al-Zawahiri, 'Bin Ladin calls on Moslem Ummah (nation) to continue Jihad against Jews and Americans to liberate their holy places', *The News/Agence France Presse*, August 21, 1998, as translated in FBIS, 74-75.

233 Agence France Presse, 'Bin Ladin Denies Role in Bombings of US Missions', December 24, 1998, as in FBIS, 78-79.

234 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 75.

235 *Ibid.*, 76.

236 *Ibid.*, 78.

Karachi, Pakistan.²³⁷ He had worked with Ahmed Abdullah in setting up businesses in Kenya and confessed to the FBI on his activities for Bin Laden and training experience in Afghanistan. Due to the nature of the network, various other people were involved or linked to activities related to the Embassy bombings.

US President Clinton responded by ordering missile strikes on targets related to Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* in Afghanistan and Sudan. The Khost training camp *Al-Badr*, scene of Bin Laden's May 26 press conference, was one of the targets, as were the *Al-Farouq* training camp near Kandahar and the *Al-Shifa* pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. US companies were among the international businesses that delivered parts for the Sudanese factory that now allegedly produced and stored chemical weapons. The 75 cruise missiles failed to kill Bin Laden or any of his senior followers. Bin Laden had left the *Al-Farouq* training camp and other *Al Qaeda* members had been ordered to move as well. Among those killed were militants of Pakistani, Egyptian, Saudi, and Yemeni origin. A few buildings were damaged, but complete camps were not destroyed. The attacks failed to strike or intimidate Bin Laden and his followers, or other jihadi groups and those aspiring to join the jihad.

But more important was how Muslims' distaste for the civilian casualties of the Embassy bombings was diminished by anger over the missile strikes, and a genuine wider feeling that the United States was pursuing self-interest in the Middle East and was unconcerned with Muslim suffering.²³⁸ The strikes resulted in several mass protests in the Muslim world, especially in Pakistan and Sudan. In Islamabad, hundreds of protesters burned an American flag before the US Information Service center, and in Karachi thousands gathered and Clinton cartoons were burned while others held pictures of Bin Laden.²³⁹ The Pakistani government denounced the attacks. The Taliban denounced the bombing as having been aimed at and showing enmity towards the Afghan people. In Sudan, thousands gathered in the streets of Khartoum in protest under the leadership of President Omar al-Bashir.²⁴⁰ The Arab league, at the time chaired by Sudan, unanimously demanded an investigation into the targeting of the pharmaceutical factory. As a prominent target of the strikes, Bin Laden became more widely known in the Arab and Muslim world as a heroic figure.²⁴¹

237 Federal Bureau of Investigation, 'Interview of Mohamed Sadiq Odeh', August 31, 1998, <http://www.americanjihadists.com/1998-08-31-FBI-FD302-Odeh-all.pdf> (last retrieved May 5, 2016) and Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War*, 60.

238 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 181, Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 309.

239 CNN, 'Muslims, Yeltsin denounce attack', August 21, 1998, <http://web.archive.org/web/20020817231051/http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/9808/21/strikes.world.reax.02/> (last retrieved April 27, 2018), The New York Times, 'The World, Rethinking the Ban on Political Assassinations', August 30, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/30/weekinreview/the-world-rethinking-the-ban-on-political-assassinations.html> (last retrieved April 27, 2018).

240 CNN, 'Thousands stage anti-U.S. protest in Sudan', August 22, 1998, <http://web.archive.org/web/20080725203216/http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/9808/22/air.strikes.follow/> (last retrieved April 27, 2018).

241 Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes, Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, revised edition (Washington, DC, Potomac Books 2007), 311-312.

Securitization after the US missile strikes, not the Embassy bombings

The events that occurred in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998 were lethal attacks that led to damage and destruction, killed 224 people, and wounded thousands. Many of the victims were not related to the US embassies. One of the 'suicide attackers' (or *martyrs*) was not among the dead as he had survived the bomb blast and fled the scene after the attack. The timing of the events, within 10 minutes of each other, combined with the spatial (geographical) separation of the locations highlighted the coordinated and regional or international character of the events.

The day of the attacks marked the eighth anniversary of the arrival of US troops in Saudi Arabia. In the weeks after the bombings Bin Laden did not make efforts to enhance his securitization of the ZCA occupation. Possibly, the denial of Bin Laden's personal involvement was of a tactical nature, to avoid losing the support of the Taliban regime due to involvement with planning or facilitating the violent operation. More strategically, it also served to strengthen the *Al Qaeda narrative* that the youths of Islam were answering the call made by Bin Laden. Even though one of the attackers failed to *martyr* himself. As Bin Laden anticipated the US would respond militarily, it is possible he wanted to wait for this as the best opportunity to exploit feelings of hostility among jihadis and other Muslims. After all, the Afghan training camps were also used by other jihadi groups that had not pledged loyalty to Bin Laden. Lastly, the high number of civilian casualties could also have prevented Bin Laden from making securitization efforts. Among Muslims and Arabs in Africa, the Middle East, and other regions, there was dismay over the extensive number of casualties who were ordinary Africans.²⁴²

However, any doubts or reservations among Bin Laden's audiences were pushed to the background after and in the context of the US missile strikes on August 17, 1998 that followed as a reprisal. After that, Bin Laden used the bomb attacks in Kenya and Tanzania more explicitly to illustrate the rising spirit of jihad among the global Muslim *ummah* against the ZCA led by the United States.²⁴³ The US missile strikes had a limited physical impact, but a significant symbolic one. They brought Bin Laden's rhetoric on US foreign policy and the military occupation of the Arabian Peninsula to life, and as such enhanced his ability to contextually mobilize the emotions and images he had presented. It offered a sentimental wave for Bin Laden to ride, which naturally enhanced his status as a securitizing actor. The strikes were 'an expression of enmity against Muslims and the Islamic world'.²⁴⁴ The US was 'scared of the implementation of the Islamic system in Islamic countries'.²⁴⁵ Because 'the youths of Islam' were 'determined to implement Islam in their countries' and were waging

242 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 309.

243 Abdul Bari Atwan, 'Bin Ladin Tells al-Quds al-'Arabi, "The Battle Has Not Yet Started, We Will Reply to Clinton in Deeds"', *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, August 22/23, 1998, 1, as translated in FBIS, 75-76, *Al-Akhbar*, 'Usama Bin Ladin Sends Message to Anti-US Conference', September 12, 1998, 7-8, as translated in FBIS, 77.

244 *Al-Akhbar*, 'Usama Bin Ladin Sends Message to Anti-US Conference'.

245 *Ibid*.

jihad in Kashmir, Palestine, and Afghanistan, they all belonged ‘to the same breed’.²⁴⁶ According to *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, in light of the missile strikes Bin Laden was becoming an ‘Islamic symbol’ for more and more Muslims.²⁴⁷ The US attacks in Afghanistan also caused a shift of Taliban policy towards Bin Laden. The deal with the Head of Saudi intelligence was off the table; Bin Laden claimed in an *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* interview that Mullah Omar had vowed that he would not extradite him.²⁴⁸ On his part, Bin Laden renewed his allegiance to the Taliban leader in mid-September and increased his public support of the Taliban. In an open letter to its spiritual leader, Bin Laden connected the Taliban to the ‘sacred struggle’ and stated supporting the Taliban was a similar duty to waging jihad.²⁴⁹

Reproduction and recontextualization and the role of new media: Al Jazeera

The late 1990s saw a significant development of new media platforms in the Arab world, which came in addition to the spread of audiocassettes and pan-Arab newspapers. Arab satellite television stations such as *Al Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya* were setting up and expanding their broadcasting activities. Major events such as Operation Desert Fox, the US-led bombing campaign over Iraq in 1998, provided the stepping stone for *Al Jazeera* to become the primary news channel in the Arab world. Viewers were able to express their outrage over the militarization of American interventionism in the region during TV call-in shows. The Qatari government allowed *Al Jazeera* to broadcast documentaries, editorials, and news reports with critical perspectives that previously could not reach Arab audiences on such a global scale. Furthermore, the number of jihadi websites on the internet, such as *azzam.com*, was increasing. Satellite technology and the internet enabled a new, more critical, social dynamic in the Arab world. It empowered Bin Laden to reach larger and broader audiences in a shorter time, using the ARC in London, the jihadi website run by his confidant Yusuf al-Ayiri *www.alneda.com*, the newly founded *Al-Sahab* media office, and *Al Jazeera*.²⁵⁰ These platforms also allowed him to evade Saudi state censorship and the Taliban’s ban on giving interviews.

A highly significant Arab text in which the 1998 Embassy bombings were discussed and recontextualized was a 90-minute *Al Jazeera* interview with Bin Laden conducted in mid-December 1998.²⁵¹ Parts of the interview were rebroadcasted by other Arab and Western media over the following months, illustrating the significance of the text. *Al Jazeera* reran the entire interview in 2001, after the attacks on September 11. The interview confirmed Bin Laden’s

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246 Ibid.

247 Abdul Bari Atwan, ‘Bin Ladin Tells al-Quds al-‘Arabi, “The Battle Has Not Yet Started”’.

248 Ibid.

249 Jamil Khan, ‘Bin Ladin, Expel Jews, Christians From Holy Places’, *Rawalpindi Jang*, November 18, 1998, 1, 7, as translated in FBIS, 78.

250 Nanninga, *Jihadism and Suicide Attacks*, 69.

251 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 65-94.

leadership position and covered a highly diverse array of topics. The visual introduction produced by *Al Jazeera* featured Bin Laden on the back of a horse, indicating his status as a respected leader. Other imagery showed him firing a Kalashnikov rifle, thus demonstrating his fighting skills, and operating an excavator, which emphasized his knowledge and capability to improve infrastructure and build constructions. During the interview, Bin Laden was seen sitting in a tent with a Kalashnikov rifle by his side, a camouflage jacket, and a white turban. The Kalashnikov and jacket referred to his experience as a jihadi fighter against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and also to his description of the current state, or occupation, of the *ummah*. The white dress and turban indicated his eloquence and moral standing as a leader.

Bin Laden mostly sat still during the interview, spoke calmly and measuredly, looked to the side several times, and occasionally lifted his hands while answering. The emphasis was on his words. The wide-ranging topics addressed were both a consequence of the questions asked and Bin Laden's own initiative. He approached topics from various angles. Most probably, there had been conversations preceding the interview to discuss the type of questions and answers. The production of this in-depth interview represented the intent and consent of both *Al Jazeera* and Bin Laden to broadcast it in this way.



Fig 3.4 *Al Jazeera* video imagery introducing Osama bin Laden prior to the interview, December 1998.²⁵²

²⁵² AbuOsamaBinLaden (YouTube publisher), 'Al Jazeera – Osama Bin Laden Interview 1998 (Arabic)', September 12, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOQnqW-nwyo> (last retrieved June 6, 2016).



Fig 3.5 Al Jazeera, Bin Laden interview with imagery of Operation Desert Fox (right), December 1998.²⁵³

In the interview, the most prominent recontextualization of the Embassy attacks was Operation Desert Fox, a four-day American and British bombing campaign against Iraqi military and regime targets in mid-December 1998. The operation started on December 16, an hour after the head of the United Nations Special Commission inspectors declared before the UN Security Council that Iraq was not cooperating with the inspections. The aim of the operation was to target the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction program. In the Arab world, the attacks triggered much criticism, and public protests were held across the region in Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, and the Palestinian territories.²⁵⁴ Several regional US allies denied the use of local bases to conduct airstrikes. Also within the UN Security Council, China, France, and Russia, the other permanent members, expressed critique and in response pleaded to lift Iraqi oil sanctions. Iraqi government officials had already accused UN weapons inspectors of spying for the US, and in early 1999 the UN acknowledged that this had occasionally happened. Furthermore, because a significant part of the targets was related to the Iraqi (Air) Defense structure, there was widespread criticism on the actual goal of the operation, not least in the Arab world. The feelings of anger over the military bombings added to the negative sentiment among large groups of Arabs regarding the earlier US cruise missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan.

In that same timeframe (late 1998 - early 1999), several interviews with Bin Laden were also (partly) published or broadcasted in American and British news media.²⁵⁵ In the Western

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Daniel Williams, 'Protests, Violence Flare in Arab World', *The Washington Post*, December 20, 1998, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/iraq/mideast122098.htm> (last retrieved April 27, 2018), Tracy Wilkinson and Marjorie Miller, 'Arab Protesters Demonstrate Their Anger Over U.S. Airstrikes', *Los Angeles Times*, December 20, 1998, <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/dec/20/news/mn-56057> (last retrieved April 27, 2018).

²⁵⁵ Richard Pyle, 'Associate Press Carries Excerpts From bin Ladin Interviews', *Associated Press*, January 4, 1999, as in FBIS, 86-88, Rahimullah Yusufzai, 'Osama bin Laden, Conversation With Terror', *TIME*, January 11, 1999, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,989958,00.html> (last retrieved April 27, 2018). Also as in FBIS, 83-8, Jamal Ismail, 'I am not afraid of death', *Newsweek*, January 11, 1999, online version, <http://www.newsweek.com/i-am-not-afraid-death-165374> (last retrieved April 27, 2018), Thalia Assuras, (Anchor) 'Accused terrorist leader Usama bin Ladin declares War on all Americans',

news reports, US troop deployments and the Gulf War in 1990 provided most of the context for Bin Laden's anti-American posture, not Operation Desert Fox. In the Bin Laden interview in *TIME Magazine* on January 11, 1999, the devastating effects of the Embassy attacks and questions of Bin Laden's involvement were more central than the US military interventions in Iraq.²⁵⁶ Compared to those interviews, in the *Al Jazeera* interview Bin Laden was asked and also chose to comment significantly more extensively on the recent US military interventions in Iraq.

The formulation of the opening questions from the *Al Jazeera* correspondent reflected the wider anger and resentment among Arab audiences against the recent bombing campaign.²⁵⁷ Bin Laden noted how these were not attacks on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, but against the growing power of the Arab and Islamic world. He pointed out that weapons of mass destruction were not the actual issue. According to Bin Laden, America had accused Iraq of using poison gas against the Kurds and lethal weapons against Iran, while actually supporting Iraq in those days. He stated it was the US that had really used weapons of mass destruction against Japan during World War II. Now that Iraq had become too great a power and a threat to Israel, the 'Jews were able to employ American and British Christians to do the job of attacking Iraq'.²⁵⁸ As an illustration, Bin Laden named various US government officials who were Jewish. Because Israel possessed nuclear weapons, it was a right and duty for Muslims to acquire the same. Bin Laden praised Pakistan, the Muslim state that had been able to test five nuclear devices in May 1998. By doing this, he avoided answering whether *Al Qaeda* was actively acquiring nuclear weapons itself.

Similar to Bin Laden's 1996 and 1998 statements, the *Al Jazeera* interview served to strengthen the legitimacy of his ideas and persona, threaten the United States, and recruit or inspire young followers. Contributing to all of these goals was Bin Laden's discussion of the value and symbolism of money as the antithesis of asceticism. For Bin Laden, the US reward of 5 million dollars for information leading to his capture merely illustrated the contrast between the values of the fighters who abandoned the material world as they came to the Afghan camps, and the US pursuit of self-interest, the adultery of American leadership, and its general lack of moral values. For some of the more ordinary illiterate followers, it could have been virtually impossible to imagine the magnitude of such an amount of money. US attempts to drain Bin Laden's financial resources with sanctions were only partially effective. With respect to American goods, Bin Laden had already called for a boycott himself in the 1996 memorandum. He stated that instances in which 'countries on our side ordered us to stop attacking America' were a test of faith beyond the understanding of the 'hypocrites'.²⁵⁹

television program, *CBS This Morning*, 07:00 am ET, New York, CBS News, January 13, 1999, as in FBIS, 102-103, John Miller, 'Greetings, America. My name is Usama Bin Ladin. Now that I have your attention...', *Esquire*, online, February 1999, <http://classic.esquire.com/my-name-is-osama-bin-laden/> (last retrieved April 27, 2018). See also FBIS, 88-102.

²⁵⁶ Yusufzai, 'Osama bin Laden, Conversation With Terror'.

²⁵⁷ Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 66, 68.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

'Hypocrites' was used as a key synonym for the enemies of Islam, the ZCA, and their regional allies that pursued self-interest and personal wealth. This referred to the Quranic verse on hypocrites (*Surah Al-Munafiqun*) recited by Bin Laden in the interview.

They are the ones who say, 'Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they disband.' And to Allah belongs the depositories of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand.²⁶⁰

Other religious and historic references included the recurring referrals to Ibn Taymiyya, and in this case also one of his students, Ibn Kathir. As stated, after faith and prayers, *jihad* was the most important individual duty of every Muslim. Moreover, *hadiths* from the widely accepted volumes of *al-Bukhari* and Muslim, and Quranic verses such as the verse on the spoils of war (*Surah al-Anfal*, Quran 8:5) and the one on repentance (*Surah at-Tawbah*, Quran 9:118), underlined that there was no alternative but to rely on God. The interview focused on interpreting current events, Bin Laden's intentions, and the state of his efforts in a general sense, speaking to the *Al Jazeera* audiences.

Flagg Miller has noted that some of the 'divisive implications' of Bin Laden's Salafist background and Arabian ethnic-privileging were downplayed in the interview.²⁶¹ In a general sense, this was the case, but at one point the *Al Jazeera* correspondent did ask whether Bin Laden's position was contrary to the wider current of the Islamic movement, since many Islamist organizations had become more sympathetic towards democracy.²⁶² Bin Laden used this question to distinguish several groups of Muslims within the *ummah*. He stated that if circumstances prevented Muslims from gaining military knowledge, then it was sometimes impossible to wage *jihad* as an individual duty. Furthermore, Bin Laden singled out the Muslim youths between 15 and 25 years old: they were old enough to gain knowledge and young enough not to be committed to families and children. Older Muslims, who had done their share of fighting, for example in Afghanistan, now had the different and important role of inciting and guiding (with their voices and pens) the young and energetic. Because of the US and allied Arab governments' power over the media, many youths had not learned about the true nature of the occupation in the early 1990s. In general, Bin Laden stated that Muslims should take care not to be 'afflicted by the disease of holding back'.²⁶³

At times, Bin Laden's answers appeared diffuse or conflicting. When asked why nothing had been heard from the WIF since its founding declaration, he replied that 'these months' could not 'be considered a long time in the renaissance of the *ummah* and resistance against the biggest enemy in the world'. Bin Laden further outlined how not all activities were advertised. Yet, he also tried to highlight a sense of urgency with respect to Palestine, stating

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260 Sahih International, 'Surah Al-Munafiqun', www.quran.com/63/7 (last retrieved June 3, 2016).

261 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 6355.

262 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 79.

263 *Ibid*, 80.

'I don't know what people are waiting for after this clearest of betrayals' as Arab rulers had acted in the interest of the Jews in America.²⁶⁴ Asked about the position of the EIJ within the WIF, Bin Laden stated, 'they have links to us'. He clarified that they had signed and supported the declaration but were not part of the WIF. There had been 'some confusion over an administrative issue' because 'the issuing of the ruling coincided with the founding of the Front'.²⁶⁵

The interviewer appeared to formulate his questions in a critical way now and then, making Bin Laden deny several issues. He denied any involvement in the killing of Abdullah Azzam in 1989 and underlined that they had greatly relied on each other. Rumors about the Arab Afghan mujahedeen receiving funds from the CIA or American government were refuted. He also rejected reports on his being in bad health, and contrasted them to his status as the most dangerous man in the world. Any doubts about his good relationship with the Taliban and scenarios of leaving the country were countered, as Bin Laden used the powerful and historic synonym 'Commander of the Faithful' (*amir al-muminin*) to describe Taliban leader Mullah Omar as leader of Muslims.²⁶⁶ However, a critical point of the collateral damage done by followers (or himself) was not addressed: the victims of the 1998 Embassy bombings were not subject to debate. Bin Laden mentioned that people were 'sorry to see the killing of innocents' but in the same breath stated that his efforts to incite the *ummah* with declarations had 'brought happiness to Muslims in the Islamic world' and underlined 'the extent of the sympathy in the Islamic world for strikes against Americans'.²⁶⁷ The attacks were 'a popular response from young men who have put themselves forward and are striving to please God', according to Bin Laden.²⁶⁸

Less prominent in the interview was the economic and security situation in Saudi Arabia that was so central to the 1996 Ladenese memorandum. On the other hand, some new topics were introduced, like North Korea's position on the international stage as a country with wise non-Muslim men resisting international organizations such as the UN. After the specific 1998 WIF declaration, this interview perpetuated the focus of the *Al Qaeda narrative* on the United States as the greater enemy. Gulf states were blamed for falling into the trap of deceit the US has set for them. The securitization of the US as an existential threat for the Islamic world that was at the core of the *Al Qaeda narrative* was reproduced in the *Al Jazeera* interview and hence amplified before a greater audience. It resonated well with wider Muslim sentiments and allowed Bin Laden to benefit from growing anti-American feeling among the greater *Al Jazeera* Arab audiences. The interview strengthened his position and image as a prominent opinion leader whose doings were in the service of activating young Muslims. The dual aim was to recruit them to join the Afghan training camps, and also spark

264 Ibid, 75.

265 Ibid, 88.

266 Ibid, 86.

267 Ibid, 74.

268 Ibid.

violent activities beyond the direct capability of his networked organization. Between 1998 and 2001, many thousands of recruits joined the Afghan training camps.²⁶⁹

In June 1999, *Al Jazeera* broadcasted a documentary on Bin Laden called 'The destruction of the Base'.²⁷⁰ It presented a history of Bin Laden going back to his days fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan and featured clips of his earlier interview, along with commentaries from *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* editor Abdul Bari Atwan, US terrorism expert Larry Johnson, and journalist and social science professor at the American University in Cairo S'ad-al Din Ibrahim. While Atwan elaborated on Bin Laden as a modest person, Johnson stressed the number of American victims blamed on Bin Laden. Ibrahim's description of how a marginalized person can become a rebel against the system was more distant.

The introduction by journalist Salah Najm suggested a balanced and multi-sided report on Bin Laden, describing him in terms of 'wealth, asceticism, terrorist, heroism, jihad', wondering whether he was a devil or a fighter. However, a large portion of the report consisted of Bin Laden's own quotes explaining his position. It created another opportunity to increase the importance and reach of the *Al Qaeda* narrative in the Arab and Islamic world.

In 1999, several Pakistani news media reported on statements from Bin Laden, addressing a regional Urdu-speaking audience. These reports recontextualized regional topics, such as the threat from India and the situation in Kashmir, as waging jihad in terms of the *Al Qaeda* narrative. Reproducing parts of the press conference in Khost in May 1998, Bin Laden was quoted in the newspaper *Pakistan* on how the alliance between India and Israel was a great threat to the Muslim world.²⁷¹ The Pakistani government should end the sectarianism provoked by its opponents. Two weeks before the press conference, India had tested five nuclear bombs, while Pakistan had yet to do the same. Several months later in June, as the war between India and Pakistan over control of the Kashmiri Kargil district was ongoing, *Wahdat* reported on Bin Laden's open letter in support of jihad in Kashmir.²⁷² The letter compared the situation of the Afghan mujahedeen with the Pakistan-backed Kargil militants and threatened that jihadis could attack in India if conditions were right. In September 1999, the Urdu newspaper *Rawalpindi Jang* reported on Bin Laden, denying that 'his companions were active in the Kashmir war' or that he was providing military aid.²⁷³ Reportedly, the Indian foreign intelligence agency RAW was using such allegations to gain US support. Two Urdu reports in June and September outlined that Bin Laden was expecting US commandos.

269 Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda*, location 3069.

270 Salah Najm (Anchor), 'Usama Bin Ladin, the Destruction of the Base' television program, *Al Jazeera*, 18:05 GMT, June 10, 1999, as translated in FBIS 119-133.

271 Shiraz, 'May 1998 Interview With Bin Ladin'.

272 *Wahdat*, 'Usama Bin Ladin Pens Letter in Support Of Kashmir Jihad', June 8, 1999, 1, 5, as translated in FBIS, 118-119.

273 Zafer Mehmood Malik, 'UBL Denies Providing Military Aid to Kashmiris', *Rawalpindi Jang*, September 28, 1999, 1, 7, as translated in FBIS, 135.

His order to ‘shoot them on sight’ and disdain for financial rewards stressed his confidence in the loyalty of his followers.²⁷⁴

The foiled millennium plots

The turn of the millennium was not a prominent episode in Bin Laden’s *Al Qaeda narrative*. There was a lack of statements. In the US, the last months of 1999 were a phase in which fear of terrorist attacks was widespread. One of scarce references by Bin Laden to this timeframe was made in an Urdu newspaper in June 1999.

[T]he United States’ journey towards destruction will start before the arrival of the 21st century because this is the century of Islam and therefore the Muslim Ummah should declare a jihad against the United States.²⁷⁵

It seems an opportunistic argument to make a reference with the ‘century of Islam’ to the 21st century on the Gregorian calendar. No major terrorist attack occurred as the (Western) world changed from 1999 to 2000, but two plots were thwarted. In late November 1999, sixteen suspects were arrested on terrorism charges in Jordan. Among them were several Arab Americans; they had been planning attacks on an SAS Radisson Hotel in Amman and several tourist sites in the country to target Westerners. In December, the Algerian Ahmed Ressay was arrested in Port Angeles, Washington, with a stack of explosives hidden in his car. His nervous behavior while leaving the ferry from Canada had apparently caught the attention of one of the border guards. The investigation that followed revealed the intended target as Los Angeles international airport.

Those directly involved with the plots had sought support and received training in the Afghan training camps facilitated by Bin Laden and others. Ressay was not an actual ‘*Al Qaeda operative*’, but had received training to make bombs in a camp facilitated by Bin Laden in Afghanistan.²⁷⁶ Similarly, some of the Jordanian cell members received explosives training at al-Farooq training camp in Afghanistan. One of them, Raaed Hijazi, was born in California and grew up in Saudi Arabia. He had met Abu Zubaydah, who was responsible for running training camps for Bin Laden, and pledged allegiance (*bayat*) to Bin Laden in return for the training and support he had received. It was reportedly the call from Abu Zubaydah to Jordanian cell leader Abu Hoshar that ‘training was over’ that led to the arrest of the 16 cell

274 *Rawalpindi Jang*, ‘Bin Ladin Calls On Muslims To Declare Jihad Against US’, June 25, 1999, 1, 6, as translated in FBIS, 133-134, *Islamabad Khabrain*, ‘UBL Orders Mujahidin To Shoot US Commandos ‘on Sight’’, September 12, 1999, 1, 6, as translated in FBIS, 134-135.

275 *Rawalpindi Jang*, ‘Bin Ladin Calls On Muslims To Declare Jihad Against US’.

276 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 199, Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 336.

members.²⁷⁷ As a consequence of the training, Bin Laden, Abu Zubaydah, Mohammed Atef, and Ayman al-Zawahiri all probably knew of the foiled millennium plots in advance.

Another failed attack was the attempt to bomb the USS The Sullivans in the Yemeni port of Aden on January 3, 2000. A small boat was loaded with so many explosives that it sank before reaching the US Navy vessel. This would remain hidden from the public eye until a second attempt against the USS Cole succeeded.

The USS Cole

On October 12, 2000, the small sunken boat had been recovered and was piloted alongside the American destroyer USS Cole which was arriving for a refuel stop in the port of Aden. After making friendly gestures on approach, the attackers detonated the boat, killing 17 and wounding 39 US sailors waiting for lunch aboard the ship. An *Al Qaeda* operative tasked to videotape the attack for propaganda purposes, Fahd al-Quso, had overslept and failed to accomplish his task. Yet, soon images of the damaged destroyer were broadcasted globally by Western and Arab news media such as CNN and *Al Jazeera*. These pictures would later be used extensively as propaganda or *dawa* outreach recruitment material by Al Qaeda.



Fig 3.6 The USS Cole after the attack.²⁷⁸

The attack marked the end of years of preparation that had involved Bin Laden directly. The intended target was initially a commercial vessel, but Bin Laden had shifted the focus to US military ships. The USS The Sullivans and USS Cole represented the type of vessel used in the retaliatory strikes with cruise missiles on Afghanistan and Sudan. Bin Laden knew the

²⁷⁷ 9/11 Commission Report, 174-175.

²⁷⁸ CNN, 'USS Cole Bombing Fast Facts', September 18, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/18/world/meast/uss-cole-bombing-fast-facts/> (last retrieved June 7, 2016).

operational coordinators well. Since 1998, Khallad and Abdul Rahim al-Nashiri (or Nashiri) had been involved in planning to attack a ship off the coast of Yemen. Khallad was the younger brother of Muhannad bin Attash, who had become one of Bin Laden's most trusted aides. Their Yemeni father had known Bin Laden's father well. Together with Khallad, Nashiri had joined Bin Laden's *Al Qaeda* in the late 1990s as part of a group that was initially drawn to fighting jihad in Tajikistan.²⁷⁹

The Yemeni attackers operating the small boat, Hassan al-Khamri and Ibrahim al-Thawar, knew Bin Laden too. Hassan al-Khamri had been the emir of the *Al-Farouq* training camp in Afghanistan until the US missile strikes targeted the camp. Ibrahim al-Thawar (or al-Nibras) became a suicide bomber after conducting other activities for Al Qaeda, such as transporting the large sum of 36,000 US dollars from Yemen together with Fahd al-Quso to Khallad (or Walid bin Attash) in Bangkok; this money was used in the preparation of the attacks on September 11, 2001.²⁸⁰

In November 2000, Bin Laden confided before a small audience of trusted aides and *Al Jazeera* reporter Ahmed Zaidan that he had been involved in the planning for the USS Cole attack.²⁸¹ Later, Zaidan commented on how, contrary to the perception of many *Al Jazeera* viewers, Bin Laden was not only 'talking about religion' but was also using it to prove his ideas on world affairs.²⁸² Bin Laden wanted and anticipated a reprisal attack by US forces on Afghanistan, like the missile strikes in 1998 that had caused so much anger in the Arab world. If the US was to invade Afghanistan on the ground, it would situate them in the same position as the Soviet forces during the Cold War. It would set them up for defeat from jihadi mujahedeen.

Reproduction and recontextualization: As Sahab video productions

Bin Laden made another statement on the USS Cole attack during his son Muhammad's wedding with the daughter of Al Qaeda's military commander Abu Hafs al-Masri (or Mohammed Atef) in Kandahar.²⁸³ The wedding consisted of two ceremonies held in January 2001. Again, *Al Jazeera* reporter Ahmed Zaidan was present, and the news channel broadcasted on the event.²⁸⁴ During the first ceremony, most speakers, including Bin Laden, commented

279 Unable to cross into Tajikistan because of snow and the presence of Russians along the border the group was forced to relocate to Kabul amidst the complexities of ongoing fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. There it was Muhannad who arranged for the group to meet Bin Laden. About half of the forty men eventually pledged allegiance (*bayat*) to Bin Laden and became part of Al Qaeda.

280 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 350, Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 562-563.

281 Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 254-257.

282 Ibid.

283 Ibid.

284 For a reflection of Ahmed Zaidan on this event, see Ahmad Zaidan, 'Al Jazeera's A. Zaidan, I am a journalist not terrorist, May 15, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/05/al-jazeera-zaidan-journalist-terrorist-150515162609293.html> (last retrieved June 7, 2016).

on the situation in Palestine. It was in the second ceremony that Bin Laden delivered a poetic speech that clearly referred to and praised the attack on the USS Cole. He was also seen wearing a Yemeni dagger (*jambiya*) as he stood before a large world map. Bin Laden was purportedly not content with his initial address and arranged another rehearsal before camera in the same hall the next day. He was highly thoughtful of his media presence: his image management included asking people to take new pictures when his appearance did not satisfy him.²⁸⁵

The internet increasingly enabled decentralized distribution of propaganda videos. Despite the failure to record the attack on the USS Cole itself, Al Qaeda's media office *As Sahab*, under the direction of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, produced a video titled 'The Destruction of the American Destroyer USS Cole'. It featured fragments of Bin Laden's speeches, such as at the wedding, images from CNN and *Al Jazeera*, and clips from jihadi training camps in Afghanistan. It also addressed Muslim suffering in Palestine, Kashmir, and Chechnya. The propaganda video would circulate widely on jihadi websites, among those training in Afghan camps, and youths in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Some parts of the video material were broadcasted on Western and Arab news channels.



Fig 3.7 Bin Laden speaking at his son's wedding in January 2001. Images of raw footage (left) and the *Al Jazeera* broadcast (right).²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 377.

²⁸⁶ Intelcenter, 'Video ID # 2071', June 7, 2001, <https://icd.intelcenter.com/fmi/webd/?homeurl=https://icd.intelcenter.com/icd.html#IntelCenterDatabase> (last retrieved March 15, 2016), *Al Jazeera* excerpt in FBIS, 'Bin Ladin Implicitly Praises USS Cole Bombng at Son's Wedding', March 7, 2001, 148-150.



Fig 3.8 The same images were used in the *As-Sahab* production, in combination with CNN and Al Jazeera recordings of the damaged USS Cole and other video material of Afghan training camps.²⁸⁷

The attack on the USS Cole is contextualized in the following speech fragment.

You have awakened History from its slumber, bringing back memories. Here, Salahuddin carrying his sword, dripping infidels blood. And the memories of Hitteen, after having been long since lost, came back to us, with it came back memories of Badr and Khaybar. Here, you see the Muslim Ummah aflame seeking [to] avenge, and your brothers in the East have prepared themselves. And Kabul got equipped, and Najd, the youth sprung forward for jihad. And in Aden, they rose and set to destroy a destroyer, the powerful fear. It fills you with fright whenever it is anchored, or set to sea. It cuts through the ocean by its arrogance and false competence, as it races to its end shaded with illusion. It comes to a tiny boat that rocks with the

²⁸⁷ *As-Sahab*, 'The Destruction of the American Destroyer USS Cole', June 2001, as in US Military Videos (YouTube publisher) 'The Al Qaeda Plan, videos by the terrorist, for the terrorist', May 31, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZqbZeQmInk> (last retrieved June 7, 2016).

waves. The ocean teases its light weight, and so many small ones are feared. And when the two groups met—the Army of Mohammed, two martyrs sprung and said, ‘Allahu Akhbar!’ facing an army of infidels led with Crusaders hatred by Caesar. The battle begun and in a fraction of a second ended. There, the promised victory was met. The heads of infidels flew in every direction surrounded by their body parts.²⁸⁸

Another English translation that is even more poetic is often cited.

A destroyer, even the brave fear its might,
It inspires horror in the harbour and in the open sea,
She sails into the waves
Flanked by arrogance, haughtiness and false power,
To her doom she moves slowly,
A dinghy awaits her, riding the waves.²⁸⁹

Featuring prominently in the fragments is the aspect of how a tiny boat can ‘destroy a destroyer’. The most recent attack on the USS Cole was situated in line with legendary Islamic leaders and battles, such as Sultan Sallahudin who successfully fought the Crusaders in Jerusalem during the battle of Hitteen in 1187; the divine intervention that influenced the Battle of Badr in favor of the Prophet Mohammed in 624; and the battle of Khaybar against the Jews near Medina in 629. The tiny boat or dinghy versus the slow-moving mighty destroyer represented the asymmetrical relationship between the Muslim youth of the ummah who ‘sprung forward for jihad’ versus the large US occupation force. Like the battle of Badr, the attack on the USS Cole could be viewed as a turning point and demonstration of heroism and success. In Yemen and Pakistan, Bin Laden’s name was written on walls, sales of T-shirts with Bin Laden prints and audiocassettes of his speeches peaked, and he appeared on magazine covers like an icon.²⁹⁰ According to Bin Laden, the attack demystified the false competence and illusion of power, similarly to how US troops proved to be a paper tiger as they withdrew from Somalia after a few casualties, and how Soviet Special Forces were forced out of Afghanistan. Bin Laden’s efforts to activate and lead the Muslim youths into waging jihad against Americans, the wider ZCA, and their regional allies appeared to have been effective.

The wedding of Bin Laden’s son as setting for the speech was illustrative of how the tight family bond between father and son, and between the offspring of the two jihadi leaders, was used as a symbolic projection of the nature of *Al Qaeda* as a jihadi organization or movement, and the wider Muslim ummah. During the wedding ceremony, another son of Bin Laden, Hamza, addressed the audience. His complaint against the US mirrored a text from Bin Laden published later by daily newspaper *Ausaf* in Urdu in March 2001. It consisted of a conversation

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288 Ibid, at 1:08:30.

289 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 213, Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 256, Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 376.

290 Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies’ Eyes*, 307.

between a father and his son. The son complained about why the US continued to pursue Bin Laden only because ‘you want to sacrifice yourself for the respect and magnificence of the Holy Kaaba and the eminence of Islam’.²⁹¹

The attack and the propaganda outreach or preaching (*dawa*) that followed generated financial donations and spurred Al Qaeda’s recruitment efforts, resulting in many new young fighters.²⁹² They became part of Bin Laden’s base of followers who had pledged allegiance (*bayat*) to him. On a broader scale, the video helped to strengthen the pre-eminence of Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* among the population in various Arab and Muslim countries and specifically other jihadi groups. Some stated a Bin Laden cult or hype was occurring in the Islamic world that resonated with wider feelings of anger and resentment against Western, and specifically US, economic involvement and military intervention in the Arab and Muslim world.²⁹³

For the *Al Qaeda narrative*, developments in Israel and the Palestinian territories at the time of the attack on the USS Cole provided a regional context that illustrated and amplified the wider meaning of the bombing in Yemen. The visit of Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon on September 28, 2000 to the *al-Haram al-Sharif* complex in Jerusalem where the *Al Aqsa* mosque was located, referred to by Jews as the Temple Mount, provoked anger among Palestinians and caused riots in Jerusalem. Just 10 days before, the Palestinians had remembered the massacre of Palestinians and Lebanese Shiites in Beirut’s Sabra and Shatila neighborhoods. Sharon was held personally responsible by the Palestinians as he was the Israeli Defense Minister at the time. Following the visit, a second Palestinian uprising (*intifada*) broke out, with riots spreading across Israel and the Palestinian territories. On October 12, the day the USS Cole was attacked, Israeli reservists were arrested after accidentally entering the Palestinian city of Ramallah. An angry mob lynched them while the recordings of an Italian television crew were broadcasted across the globe. The *Al Qaeda narrative* on fighting the far enemy focused on the US as the ‘head of the snake’, but Israel was very much part of the ZCA too. Bin Laden sought to also recruit Palestinian youths by stating that liberating Jerusalem was one of his ultimate aims.

The World Islamic Front, the Egyptians, and Ayman al-Zawahiri

As described, the debate among and within the parties that supported the WIF declaration had been lively.²⁹⁴ It resulted in Ayman al-Zawahiri being expelled and abandoning his position as emir of EIJ in 1999, because he did not consult the organization’s executive *shura*

291 Islamabad Ausaf, ‘Ausaf Receives Bin Ladin’s Poem on Resolve To Continue Jihad’, March 3, 2001, 1, 7, as translated in FBIS, 147-148.

292 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 331, 374, Thomas Hegghammer, ‘Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia’, *Middle East Policy*, 8 (2006) 4: 39-60, Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda*, location 3083.

293 For example Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 302, location 6338, Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 127, Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 181.

294 See paragraph World Islamic Front declaration 1998, Text and Genre of this chapter.

council. For Al-Zawahiri, the ideological and political shift of his primary focus on fighting the Egyptian regime to the United States and its allies came at a time when his financial resources were scarce. Moreover, numerous Egyptian jihadi leaders had called for a shift from violence to preaching (dawa).

On September 21, 2000, three of the signatories of the founding declaration, Bin Laden, Al-Zawahiri, and Taha, together with the son of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, Assadullah, were screened on *Al Jazeera* pleading for a jihad to release prisoners from US and Saudi jails.²⁹⁵ All four men spoke in the news report, demanding the release of Omar Abdul Rahman, who was serving life imprisonment in the United States for his involvement in the 1993 WTC bombing. Bin Laden remarked that one of his supporters had been captured as he had attempted to carry out an operation. Later, he named Mohammed Rashed Daoud al-Owhali, the operative who had survived the attack on the US Embassy in Kenya. He also referred to Sayyid Nusayr, who was in prison on charges of conspiracy to terrorism, similar to Rahman. The four leaders demanded the release of Rahman and the other prisoners. This underlined the bond among jihadis that was formed during the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets. Through a network of family and friends, funds from Bin Laden reached the imprisoned mujahedeen regularly.

The news report was one of the first in which Bin Laden clearly shared the media stage with others, most notably Ayman al-Zawahiri. Before this report, Bin Laden had recognized Al-Zawahiri in public for his prominent role in ‘supporting and supervising’ the signing of the initial WIF declaration during the May 1998 press conference in Khost and the December 1998 interview with *Al Jazeera*.²⁹⁶ In this report, however, Al-Zawahiri featured more prominently himself, stating:

Dear brothers, I am not trying to play on your emotions or ask you for your sympathy; rather, we are now talking business, we are talking jihad. The situation now is not that of glittering statements; today’s struggle —brothers—is a relentless one. Paganism has grouped itself against Islam and the mujahidin. It is attacking them, imprisoning them, killing them, and targeting on them. [...] Brothers, we have spoken much and done little. [...] Today is the time of the great ones and the mujahidin to confront this heathen tyrannical power that do not [words indistinct] and have occupied our mosques and the two holy mosques. These heathens have spread their forces in Egypt, Yemen, and the Gulf killing our children, persecuting our scholars, soiling our holy shrines, and stealing our wealth. Dear brothers, let’s start working and stop playing.²⁹⁷

295 Jamal al-Rayyan, (Anchor) ‘Bin Ladin, Others Pledge ‘Jihad’ To Release Prisoners in US, Saudi Jails’, television program, *Today’s Harvest*, 20:35 GMT, Doha, *Al Jazeera*, September 21, 2000, as translated in FBIS, 144-146.

296 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 89.

297 Rayyan, ‘Bin Ladin, Others Pledge ‘Jihad’ To Release Prisoners in US, Saudi Jails’.

Through reference and ellipsis, Al-Zawahiri repetitively enforced the otherness of ‘them’ versus the equality of Muslim brothers and the mujahedeen. His contribution to the news report was also the most provoking and action-oriented of the four leaders. The trend of Al-Zawahiri stepping into the limelight on behalf of *Al Qaeda* would only increase in the years to come.²⁹⁸ In June 2001, those who had followed Al-Zawahiri and had formed a drained faction of EIJ formally merged with Bin Laden’s followers into ‘*Qaeda al-Jihad*’ or *Al Qaeda*.²⁹⁹ After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Al-Zawahiri would become increasingly prominent as an *Al Qaeda* leader, a media figure, a principal ideologue, and a polemicist.

By now, *Al Qaeda* consisted of an executive *shura* council headed by Bin Laden, and several committees occupied with religious, political, military, administrative, media, and security affairs.³⁰⁰ In addition to some of the rigid structure overviews of *Al Qaeda* that have been presented, it is important to recognize how multifaceted *Al Qaeda* has always been. As groups and individuals still maintained multiple links and associations regarding ideology, logistical support, and social networks, it is perhaps most accurate to describe Bin Laden’s *Al Qaeda* as a networked organization consisting of close associates, advisors, and personal security confidants, wider groups of followers, and associated organizations that had received training to varying degrees.³⁰¹ Furthermore, there was disagreement over various issues among *Al Qaeda* members and associates, leading them to leave, and there was criticism among those who trained in the camps.³⁰² Nevertheless, it is apparent that the senior *Al Qaeda* leadership was able to coordinate and facilitate the planning and execution of complex terrorist attacks on US embassies in Africa, the USS Cole in Yemen, and not least the attacks on Washington and New York on September 11, 2001.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who had provided some funding to his nephew Ramzi Youssef for the 1993 WTC bombing, was not only managing *Al Qaeda*’s media office in late 2000 but also had a leading role in the military committee. Two years earlier, he had convinced Bin Laden of a plan to use hijacked commercial airliners as a weapon of mass destruction. In 1999, the first operatives began training in Afghanistan, and by the next year several of them had traveled to the United States. Before the attack on the USS Cole occurred, preparations were well underway for the ‘big wedding’ or ‘planes operation’: the attacks on September 11, 2001 in the US. In the summer of 2001, the Taliban was increasing its fighting against Ahmad Shah Massoud and the Northern alliance in Afghanistan. In a speech before his followers in Afghanistan that summer, Bin Laden hinted at the ‘martyrdom operation’ that

²⁹⁸ Holbrook, *The Al-Qaeda Doctrine*.

²⁹⁹ Kepel, Milelli, *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, 160, Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 380.

³⁰⁰ See for example Oreg Gunaratna, *Global Jihad Movement*, 58.

³⁰¹ Bruce Hoffman, ‘Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism since 9/11’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 25 (2002) 5, 309-310.

³⁰² Central Intelligence Agency, AFGP-2002-003251, https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/EF706DCBBCE2B1997968EC96F48BE62A_AFGP-2002-003251-Trans.pdf (last retrieved April 27, 2018).

was underway.³⁰³ According to Bin Laden, conditions after that future strike would require faith from his followers. For the time being, he asked his audience for patience.

Securitization, power, and identity in the Al Qaeda narrative

This chapter has produced a situated and developing *Al Qaeda narrative*. As a key text, the 1996 memorandum represented the analytical beginning for this thesis, while marking its end were the *As Sahab* video and interviews which described the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen on October 12, 2000. Over the years, Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* adjusted to the new media environment. Via a network of media offices and representatives, they were able to use satellite news channel *Al Jazeera* and the internet, which empowered them to reach larger and broader audiences in the Arab and Muslim world. The selected data in this study comprised translated Bin Laden speeches and statements that were either reproduced or recontextualized by Arab and Urdu news media, and on the internet. Discursive practices of text production and consumption were situated in Arab culture, Islam, and an Islamist Salafi-jihadi order of discourse. To perform adequate textual and contextual analysis of the translations, a body of scholarly work on many of these texts was studied. The following now offers an analysis of the *Al Qaeda narrative* in terms of securitization, power, and identity.

Bin Laden made various securitization efforts over the course of the *Al Qaeda narrative*. They built on and enforced each other, while also gradually transforming and developing the overall focus and meaning of Bin Laden's strategic message. For Bin Laden and the close associates who formed the core of what had become known as the networked organization *Al Qaeda*, the institutionalization of structure, roles, and activities was developing. This was unlike the relatively stable structures and conventions that lie at the basis of a nation state. More than in the US institutional narrative described in the next chapter, the *Al Qaeda narrative* was as much a reflection of its institutionalization process as it was an element of its institutional development. By examining the constituent elements of securitization over time, the transformation of the *Al Qaeda narrative* could be mapped.

As **securitizing actor**, Bin Laden fulfilled the central role throughout the *Al Qaeda narrative*. This is not a conclusion based upon the analysis of the narrative (that would be rather tautological), but a result of the data selection for this study: statements and news reports on Osama bin Laden between 1992 and 2001. Yet, as various sources have indicated, the 1990s marked a 'golden age' or high tide for *Al Qaeda* in which Bin Laden was the central figure.³⁰⁴ The narrative analysis framework, in addition, highlighted some nuances that were valuable

303 *As Sahab*, 'Knowledge is for Acting Upon: The Manhattan Raid, part 1 & 2', June 6, 2013, <https://archive.org/details/AsSahab-TheManhattanRaid1>, <https://archive.org/details/AsSahab-TheManhattanRaid2>, (last retrieved June 7, 2016), and excerpts in US Military Videos, 'The Al Qaeda Plan'.

304 For example see Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad, Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press 2008), 49-50, Holbrook, *The Al-Qaeda Doctrine*, 14, Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, 302, location 6338, Gerger, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, Gerger, *The Far Enemy*, 127, Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 181, Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, 313.

when studying the process of securitization. In the early 1990s, Bin Laden's activities in Sudan were multi-faceted, including setting up agricultural business and infrastructural projects while writing critical letters to the Saudi regime. He was also involved in providing guerilla training to the Sudanese military and some of his own followers and associated groups. In the 1996 memorandum, Bin Laden introduced himself and his group as 'a concerned element' within the community of Muslim scholars (*ulema*). He was presented in the mid-1990s in political terms as an 'oppositionist leader', but also with religious knowledge and credentials, and relevant fighting experience. This positioned him to criticize the situation in Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula, to challenge the wrongdoings of the Saudi regime, and to denounce US regional military interventions and foreign policy. Bin Laden connected socio-economic, political, and security problems with Islamic literature and jihadism, although contrary to several English translations of the 1996 memorandum, the text could not be equated to a formal religious decree (*fatwa*). His position, power, and responsibilities were ill-structured in the beginning. Hence, Bin Laden 'grew' into the role of securitizing actor who consistently worked to communicate his message.

In exploiting the opportunities new media offered to present his personality, Bin Laden also caused tensions among his followers and some of the associated groups. In 1998, the WIF against the Jews and the Crusaders was launched, formally decentralizing Bin Laden to one of the five (although the first) signatories while allegedly signifying the growth of a movement. It proved difficult to expand and formalize coalitions such as the WIF, however. The front only represented a fraction of the Salafi-jihadi groups around the world, and several of the signatories had to confront internal differences in the groups they represented. Al-Zawahiri's decision to sign without consulting the EIJ's *shura* council resulted in an organizational split. Following the foundation of the WIF and Al-Zawahiri's personal shift of focus primarily on the far instead of the near enemy, he and some loyal supporters officially merged with *Al Qaeda*. Because of this, Al-Zawahiri gained more prominence as a leading figure in *Al Qaeda* at the cost of the influence of others. Overall, the WIF declaration marked a strategic ideological transformation with respect to the existing Salafi-jihadi order of discourse, separating Bin Laden, Al-Zawahiri, and other loyal followers from other Salafi-jihadis.

The transformation was also strategic in that it unquestionably provided Bin Laden and his followers with a unique profile, which they strengthened further over the years as part of a distinct strand within the Salafi-jihadi order of discourse. The Taliban wanted Bin Laden to maintain a low profile while residing in Afghanistan, but Bin Laden chose to continue publishing statements and holding press conferences and interviews. Several of Bin Laden's followers were critical of his allegiance to the Taliban and his eagerness to be interviewed. Thus, many personal and organizational fault lines fractured the 'front', whose global character was rather disputable too. Yet, as a consequence of the dynamic caused by the WIF declaration, the '*Al Qaeda* core' also grew, and in a way some of the former EIJ members became closer to Bin Laden as they institutionalized further.

Bin Laden used attempts by the US to target him to increase his status and moral stance. The US economic sanctions against Bin Laden and Afghanistan, and the reward issued for information on him were in fact used as clear examples of the false, ego-centric, and material US values. For Bin Laden and his followers, these developments provided an opportunity to stress how Bin Laden had left behind his family fortune to engage in *jihād*, accentuate the value of asceticism, and confirm their faith. Expressions that Bin Laden was being hunted by the CIA or the US missile strikes on Afghanistan also provided him with additional legitimacy. In general, Arab and Urdu news media enabled Bin Laden to express his views and at times provided textual or visual introductions that underlined his status as a leader.

According to Bin Laden, the **referent object** threatened was essentially the global Muslim world (*ummah*). It was more an ideological, cultural, and religious entity than an institutionalized nation. Bin Laden used examples of suppression of Muslims, and specifically scholars, to illustrate how the essence of the *ummah* was under attack. Local illustrations of this wider threat were violence and aggression against Muslims in Palestine and Jerusalem, Egypt, Iraq, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kashmir, Indonesia, Somalia, and Sudan. The Arab world, and specifically the Arabian Peninsula or the Land of the two Holy Places, were of special prominence to all Muslims. The stationing of US troops in Saudi Arabia in 1990 represented clear and alarming proof of the growing involvement and intervention, or occupation, of the Americans in this holy region. This gave the Saudi population and particularly the Saudi youths a special status within the *ummah*. The critical vulnerability of the referent object lay in its physical and social security, as well as the protection of its values. In Saudi Arabia, the Holy Places were threatened by the combination of adopting 'man-made' laws over the law of God, the inability of the Saudi regime to fulfill its religious duty of protecting the Holy Places, the oppression of any resistance from Islamic scholars, and also the poor socio-economic conditions of minorities and the power and influence of international oil concerns on the Saudi regime. As such, the *ummah* as a whole was threatened.

Bin Laden also 'localized' the broader concept of the *ummah* as referent object before various other regional audiences. This was sometimes driven by aspirations to demonstrate the relevance of the message as the *Al Qaeda* coalition expanded, while in other cases it was given by the setting of text production, such as newspaper interviews, or out of a necessity to ensure support. In the case of Pakistan, newspapers were used frequently as an outlet for statements from Afghanistan, in parallel to and as a substitute for media contacts in London. Two of the signatories of the WIF declaration, Mir Hamzah and Fazlur Rahman, represented jihadi movements in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Responding to topical issues in Pakistan, Bin Laden congratulated the country for its successful nuclear tests in 1998. According to him, Pakistan had provided Muslims with an 'Islamic nuclear bomb'. Earlier tests by India were a cause for concern as India's alliance with Israel threatened the Muslim world. During the major Kargil war between India and Pakistan, Bin Laden compared the Pakistani-backed jihadi fighters to the Afghan mujahedeen. He also spoke repeatedly of the Iraqi people who suffered from the indiscriminate US aggression during the Gulf War in 1990, through UN

and US economic sanctions against Iraq, and through Operation Desert Fox in 1998. Many references were made to the dire conditions in which the Palestinian people lived. According to Bin Laden, the Jews supported by the United States suppressed them and occupied Jerusalem.

Despite the efforts to relate *jihad* to local contexts, as noted there were many fault lines to overcome. Bin Laden's message resonated only with a small part of the Salafi-jihadi groups, themselves a small minority among Muslims. There was an ideological gap regarding the nature of the referent subject between the Salafi-jihadis willing to confront the near enemy (by either preaching, politics, or violence) and the small group that supported Bin Laden's focus on the far enemy. This translated to weaknesses in the definition of the referent object. Who was threatened, by whom? Even though Salafi-jihadis might have shared feelings of hostility towards the US, many held different opinions on defining them as the primary enemy, or even explicitly declaring war.

Another issue causing friction among Salafi-jihadis was Bin Laden's relation with the Taliban. According to Bin Laden, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had established the pious Islamic Caliphate based on God's law (*shariah*). After the attacks on the US Embassies in Africa, Bin Laden increased his show of support for the host on which he depended. Bin Laden announced that Taliban leader Mullah Omar was the Commander of the Faithful (*amir al-muminin*) and that supporting him was a religious duty. This statement was contested among some of his followers, but also deviated from the essence of Bin Laden's developing securitization effort. Therefore, attributing Omar with such symbolic Islamic credentials was probably a pragmatic move to maintain the support of his host. According to Bin Laden, the fact that the US had added Afghanistan to the list of sponsors of terrorism was 'a sign of good conduct'.

Opposing and threatening the *ummah* was the **referent subject**, the ZCA and its regional allies, of which one of the most prominent was Saudi Arabia. In the early 1990s, Bin Laden's focus was on both the threat posed by policies and practices of the corrupt Saudi regime and the American troops that occupied the Arabian Peninsula. For Bin Laden, this occupation was the greatest and gravest of all ZCA aggressions. The 1996 memorandum published in *Al Quds Al Arabi* pointed more towards the United States as leader of the ZCA than the recorded speech did, which considered the threat posed by the oppressive activities of the Saudi regime as being more equal to that posed by the US. The 1998 WIF declaration, with its more aggressive tone towards both the military and civilians, narrowed the focus on the Americans who were leading the alliance. As mentioned, this signified a distinct ideological shift or variation within the Salafi-jihadi order of discourse.

According to Bin Laden, the 'crusader hordes acted like locusts, draining the region of its wealth and fertility', and (as a result) the Saudi regime was unable to fulfill its religious and social duties. Moreover, he stated, it was this acquired wealth that was used to buy the bullets that killed Muslims. According to Bin Laden, the ZCA was also responsible for killing mujahedeen, like Abdullah Azzam, and US Jews and Christians were using Israel to bring

Muslims in Palestine to their knees. But also, it was under the influence of the Jews that the US acted on behalf of Israel. In the context of Operation Desert Fox, Bin Laden noted in 1999 that Iraq had gained too much power and posed a threat to Israel, leading the Jews to employ American and British Christians to do the job of attacking Iraq.

Although several members of the United Nations Security Council objected to the US-UK bombing campaign over Iraq, Bin Laden continued to portray the UN as a cover for US and ZCA activities. In the early 1990s, it was the UN sanctions that prevented Muslims from obtaining arms, such as in Bosnia, and it was a UN umbrella that covered the US invasion of Somalia. Clear proof of how the UN was an instrument to the US, Bin Laden stated, was that UN weapon inspectors were spying for the US during their duties for the UN in Iraq.

The negative connotation of 'crusader' and 'Zionist' in the Muslim and Arab world resonated especially well with public resentment over US missile strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan, Operation Desert Fox, and the presence of US troops in the Arab world. The visits to Yemen by the USS The Sullivans and USS Cole were presented as clear proof of US military involvement and intervention in a central Islamic region. Other powerful synonyms such as 'hypocrites' and great unbeliever (*kufir*) strongly situated the referent subject in Islamic and historic terms as the enemy.

The **customized policy** aired the dicta of Ibn Taymiyya that the first individual obligation after faith and prayer was to defend Islam against intruders who assaulted sanctity or security. However, as the definition of the referent subject developed over the years, the character of this 'defense' changed. From expelling ZCA presence from the Arabian Peninsula and ousting the Saudi regime with bomb attacks, guerilla warfare, and boycotting American goods, it altered to a *jihād* against primarily American servicemen and civilians all over the world. In the early 1990s, the bombings in Khobar and Riyadh served as clear indications for the ZCA to leave. Because of the large number of civilian casualties, the attacks on the US Embassies in Africa were at first less symbolic for the *jihād* Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* sought to instigate against the aggression of the ZCA; Bin Laden denied personal involvement in the attack. Yet, as distaste among Muslims for civilian casualties diminished through anger over the US missile strikes, Bin Laden stated he felt no sorrow for the Embassy attacks.

Although not emphasized or exploited in the *Al Qaeda narrative*, the people arrested for plotting attacks at the turn of the millennium did embody the customized policy of an inspired Muslim vanguard taking the initiative to conduct assaults. The bombing of the USS Cole was in many respects the most symbolic illustration of how a courageous front of Muslim youths could defy the illusion of American military superpower. The asymmetrical character of the small boat versus a colossal military vessel was emphasized in *As Sahab* media publications. Bin Laden was screened expressing the key words and phrases that marked his earlier securitization efforts. Similar to the historic battle of Badr in 624 AD, the attack was presented as a turning point that could lure the US into a losing ground war in Afghanistan.

Resonance with the identified audiences

The *Al Qaeda* narrative worked to inspire and incite, offering a framework for others to adopt and base their actions on. Ultimately, the goal was to (re)establish the *Shariah* in the land of Islam, free the sacred places from the ZCA, and liberate oppressed Muslim scholars (*ulema*) around the world. This was to be accomplished by mobilizing a wide Muslim movement, including and beyond the direct capability of *Al Qaeda* and its associated groups, to engage in *jihad* with word and deed. Publicly, Bin Laden chose to deny his personal involvement in the various attacks after they had occurred, while welcoming the efforts. It is possible he needed to avoid losing the support of his host in Afghanistan, the Taliban. Yet, such a stance also strengthened the narrative that Bin Laden was primarily offering his leadership to a vanguard of youths expressing the will of the *ummah*. What has become clear from US investigations following the attacks on US Embassies in Africa and the USS Cole, however, is that Bin Laden and his associates were closely involved in planning these actions.

Over the years, Bin Laden sought to establish, activate, and expand various types audiences of the *Al Qaeda* narrative in parallel. Since his activities in Afghanistan in the 1980s, he had become a public figure. Across the Muslim world, pictures and posters of Bin Laden could be found in bazars and religious schools, and audiocassettes of his speeches were among those played in taxis or cafes, as he was deemed in many circles to be an inspirational ascetic figure.³⁰⁵ Initially, the Saudi population was a key audience for the 1996 memorandum, while the wider global Muslim community remained more in the background. Bin Laden specifically sought to address the Muslim (and specifically Saudi) youths as potential followers who could become inspired and form a vanguard of the *ummah* to take action. He also addressed Saudi security personnel to rise up against the Saudi regime. His most primary audience consisted of young men aged between 15 and 25 years old. According to Bin Laden, it was because some of them had not experienced the start of the ZCA occupation in 1990 that it became so important to educate and lead them. In later interviews and news reports, other regional audiences were also addressed, such as in Sudan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

The 1996 speech and memorandum, and the 1998 WIF declaration were key texts in the development of securitization within the *Al Qaeda* narrative. However, it was also the reproduction and recontextualization of these texts in international news media, accelerated by the technological developments in the media environment, that amplified the narrative. Highly prominent was the 1998 *Al Jazeera* interview, which served to improve the legitimacy and status of Bin Laden's ideas and his persona. Satellite television brought not only Bin Laden's words, but also his pronunciation, tone, gestures, and facial expressions as part of the message, directly to *Al Jazeera's* Arab viewers around the world. Thus, the securitization effort of the 1998 WIF declaration was reproduced and amplified before a greater audience. The ARC office in London and media contacts in Pakistan also gave Bin Laden power in discourse and enabled him to similarly circumvent Saudi state control. Through his eloquent

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305 Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, 306-307.

language use and leadership status, Bin Laden had authority and a potential form of power over Arab and Muslim audiences to inspire.

As the attacks on the US Embassies in 1998 and the USS Cole in 2001 demonstrated, Bin Laden also had the power to instigate and facilitate executive action. Publicly, Bin Laden often denied direct involvement and sought to advance the notion of a vanguard of Muslim youths as the engine for such attacks. But until the US missile strikes in 1998 that followed the Embassy attacks in Africa, Bin Laden had only been able to a limited extent to inspire a broad popular audience and extend or mobilize his loyal followers with the developing (and strategically innovative) *Al Qaeda narrative*. His efforts went against the dominant current of Islamist or Salafi movements, such as in Egypt, that were turning away from violence. Moreover, although many in the Arab and Muslim world felt the grievances addressed by Bin Laden, only those belonging to a small segment of Salafi-jihadis agreed with the proposed strategies. In terms of organization, it is fair to characterize this small group of people who had pledged allegiance to Bin Laden as '*Al Qaeda*' in its early organizational form. At one end of a spectrum, they could be considered his **formal audience** (or perhaps more accurately, clusters of formal audiences) who were willing to plan, facilitate, or conduct attacks.

After the US missile strikes on a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan and several jihadi training camps in Afghanistan (Operation Infinite Reach), popular protests occurred in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sudan. Protesters expressed their anger over the killing of innocent Muslims by the US, and some carried posters of Bin Laden. As a prominent target of the strikes, Bin Laden became better known to groups of Arabs and Muslims. The protesters could be considered part of his **moral audience**, as they strengthened Bin Laden's position of authority and indirectly or potentially influenced opinions among Salafi-jihadis about his securitization efforts.

The bombing campaign over Iraq (Operation Desert Fox) resulted in further resentment in the Arab and Muslim world over US economic involvement and military intervention or 'occupation' in the region. It increasingly aligned Bin Laden's securitization efforts with the situational perception of these wider populations, not just his group of loyal followers. To a certain extent, doubts and reservations regarding the African civilians who had been killed in the Embassy attacks were backgrounded. The successful bombing of the USS Cole with a small dinghy only added to this backgrounding effect. The video of the attack produced by *As Sahab* was a powerful tool for inspiration and recruitment that aligned with Muslim discontent and resentment against the US. As mentioned, the imposing of economic sanctions against Bin Laden, his followers, and the Taliban only confirmed and substantiated the *Al Qaeda narrative*. In 1996, Bin Laden had called for a boycott on American goods in Saudi Arabia, and for Salafi-jihadis, asceticism was an essential way of life that contrasted with Western materialism. Practically, the sanctions had a highly limited effect on Bin Laden's funds or US-Afghan trade. Efforts by the US to target Bin Laden and offer rewards were perceived as proof of US materialism and power politics.

The character of the narrative

The elements above described the transformation of Bin Laden's *proactive* securitization efforts between the early 1990s and early 2001. Bin Laden increasingly dedicated his time and effort to the single cause of securitizing the 'far enemy' that he had come to define so explicitly during the late 1990s. The narrative highlighted the gradual development of characterizations of entities in texts as an ideological process of naturalization. Some of the early efforts were complex or diffuse, but later ones were accelerated by clear statements and powerful events. In the narrative, US foreign policies in Saudi Arabia, Israel and Palestine, Iraq, and the wider Middle East were a central concern. This provided the basic condition of 'occupation', which transformed the nature of the *jihād* and legitimized attacking US servicemen and civilians around the globe as an individual duty for Muslims. Any peaceful intentions Americans might have had, and any positive effects of their influence in the region were not considered.

In terms of power, Bin Laden employed his discursive ability to establish and maintain a narrative against the dominant Salafi-jihadi current. In a way, this involved working cautiously around the power 'behind discourse' of established mainstream Muslim scholars to standardize language use and decide on genre conventions. For example, questions were raised regarding whether the signatories of the 1998 WIF declaration were in fact authorized to make the statement, and with that, what the nature or character of the declaration was in terms of genre. Because of Bin Laden's moral and somewhat mythical status, his eloquent use of Arabic, and more practically his ARC platform, he had the power in discourse to declare what he wanted before a wide Arabic-speaking audience – at some stage even in spite of attempts by his host in Afghanistan, the Taliban, to keep him silent.

Financial and physical resources allowed Bin Laden to employ power to instigate and facilitate actual attacks. However, these attacks required only the consent of those engaged in their planning and execution. There was compartmentalization of attack plans, and the network structure of individuals and groups gave Bin Laden's formal audience of loyal followers a fragmented character; Bin Laden did not need the consent of his formal audience as a whole. In a wider sense, given the unconventional direction of his efforts (against the 'far enemy'), gaining momentum with the narrative among broader (moral) audiences was at times something of an uphill battle. The narrative struggled to gain assent among Muslims, against more traditional Salafi-jihadi and wider Arab and Muslim philosophical, moral, and institutional propositions. For securitization efforts, audiences are as necessary an element as the securitizing actor, but what this *Al Qaeda narrative* has shown is that in the case of Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, defining the nature, status, and function of moral and formal audiences was complex. This issue is addressed further in chapter 6.

The US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan, the US indictment, reward, and sanctions against Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, the US sanctions against the Taliban, Operation Desert Fox, and the attack on the USS Cole were just as crucial as Bin Laden's numerous

media performances for the momentum or progress of the narrative. It was because of the combination of these events and circumstances that the late 1990s and early 2000s became the glory days for Bin Laden and the *Al Qaeda* narrative. It signified a process of naturalization of Bin Laden's Salafi-jihadi message among small but growing formal, and larger moral audiences. Meanings attributed to statements, events, and circumstances resonated with feelings of outrage and resentment, and became more ideological to an increasing number of new followers.

For *Al Qaeda*, the 1996-2001 timeframe simultaneously marked a process of *self-identification*. As narrative and events took shape, social roles became more institutionalized, and so did *Al Qaeda* as an organization. Over time, a limited number of other jihadis joined Bin Laden's effort, and he started to share the public stage with some of them, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri. *Al Qaeda's* *shura* council and the various military, political, religious, administrative, security, and media subcommittees developed as they coordinated and facilitated activities in support of the proposed customized policy. *Al Qaeda* was reflected in the narrative, but also became more of an organization because of and through the narrative as securitization efforts and attacks escalated.

Reflection

How adequate is the basic analytic narrative captured in this chapter? The selected key texts generated a strong anchor for the *Al Qaeda* narrative, complemented by the analysis and interpretation that followed from the narrative analysis framework. The introductory and descriptive paragraphs that provided the background and outline for the narrative were also essential. Identifying audiences was more difficult, however, and determining resonance of the securitization efforts was challenging. Nevertheless, the narrative has provided clues, such as referent object definition, text reproduction, and anecdotal evidence of resonance. These will be used in the last chapter to more comprehensively position audiences and discuss their nature and significance for the securitization efforts.

Limiting the research, though not making it impossible, was the necessary use of (multiple) English translations of texts. As a result, linguistic analysis was restricted. By contrasting English translations, some irregularities could be identified and excluded from analysis. For example, two respected academic sources identified Fazlur Rehman, one of the WIF declaration signatories, as a different person.³⁰⁶ English translations classified both the 1996 Ladenese memorandum and the 1998 WIF declaration as *fatwas* (formal religious decrees), whereas from the detailed analysis and a discussion of the literature, it became apparent that neither text could be characterized as such. Furthermore, by taking Arab poetry (*qasidah*) and other religious references in the 1996 speech recording and text more explicitly into account, another conclusion of this study was that the Saudi regime was a more equal

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306 Kepel, Milelli, *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words* versus Lawrence, *Messages to the World*.

part of the referent subject compared to the US or ZCA than several English translations of the memorandum had indicated.

Some of the extensive available literature on Bin Laden, *Al Qaeda*, jihadism, and Islam was invaluable for interpreting and contextualizing the texts.³⁰⁷ All in all, the *Al Qaeda narrative* has highlighted how this case study as part of the wider ACN methodology could not be performed in a vacuum. Using translated texts and various linguistic, cultural, and religious interpretations of various renowned scholars and writers proved to be an adequate approach to capture this basic analytic narrative in this thesis.

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307 Especially Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* and Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, Kepel, *Jihad*.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 US institutional terrorism narrative on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*

Introduction

Like the previous chapter, this one serves both a descriptive and an analytical purpose. In portraying US institutional statements on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, and their reproduction and recontextualization in US media, common themes emerge from the narrative. Several securitization efforts can be identified, along with more indirect strategies to manage the threat of terrorism to the US by Bin Laden and his followers. Since its foundation, the US has experienced terrorist acts of various kinds, with various motivations. However, this study deliberately limits terrorism to Bin Laden or *Al Qaeda*. The strategic narrative of the intelligence consumer is something traditionally kept separate from intelligence analysis, yet considering this perspective is key to examining the multi-consequentiality of US and *Al Qaeda* securitization efforts across social domains.

The following chronologically describes the *US institutional terrorism narrative* on Osama bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* during the 1990s and the year 2000. Situated in the social practice of *the politics of nations*, the narrative is based on source material that embodies a wide variety of US government statements: ad hoc and planned press meetings, formal declarations to US Congress and international fora such as the UN, weekly radio addresses from the White House, and live televised presidential statements. Furthermore, other official US government communiqués such as annual reports on terrorism have also been studied. Texts were selected based on a set of search queries of key words relating to President Clinton, the US government, Osama bin Laden, *Al Qaeda*, and various significant events, such as the US Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, foiled plots at the turn of the millennium, and arrests of terrorist suspects by US law enforcement agencies. Most central to the narrative are statements made by President Clinton.

Some investigative reports and publications that were declassified or published years after the events of the 1990s occurred are incorporated in the analysis. In the intelligence practice, the ACN methodology would entail cooperation between intelligence professionals, working-level policymakers, and possibly trusted outside experts with access to an array of classified information, especially regarding national security policymaking. For this case study, post mortem evaluations, such as the 9/11 Commission report, represent the attribution of meaning to social events that was relevant at that time but only became publicly accessible through interviews and research conducted years later. Both types of documents improve interpretation and situate the US institutional terrorism narrative.

The analysis also includes reproduction and recontextualization of the speeches and communiqués in US televised and printed news reports. Television broadcasts embody various news genres, including news bulletins, live recordings of official statements, documentaries, infotainment programs, and in-depth interviews. Broadcasts represent a

form of communication that responds in an extremely timely manner to social events such as presidential speeches. In addition, the visual nature of the information enables the quick switch between an anchor introducing the topic and a correspondent, research journalist, expert, (former) government official, or (oppositional) politician explaining his views on the matter. By nature, news programs make a selection of available information and repetitively summarize previous broadcasts as topics develop. In contrast to written texts in newspapers, images and sounds accompany texts on screen.

This study makes a distinction between key texts and general texts. In general, key texts are texts that contribute to (de)securitization efforts and have been reproduced and recontextualized to a high degree. On the other hand, texts are deemed general texts when they mainly reproduce other (key) texts. More than in the case of the *Al Qaeda* narrative, the selected texts, such as presidential letters, government publications, news articles, and media transcripts, cover multiple topics; in many, only a segment related to Bin Laden or terrorism. This places more emphasis on the middle ground between key texts and general texts. The selected texts comprise more of a continuum, as they vary regarding the number of key parts. In terms of securitization, President Clinton's statements and letters following the attacks on the US Embassies in Africa and the US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan that followed in August 1998 were highly expressive. Other US government decisions, such as issuing a reward for information on Bin Laden and adding him to the US 'FBI Most Wanted' list, also had a securitizing performative effect. Clinton's executive orders to block all US trade with Bin Laden, and later the Afghan Taliban, are also key texts in the original sense of this thesis.

Like the other narratives, what needs to be taken into account is that this US institutional terrorism narrative is a basic and analytic narrative of interrelated texts. These texts are linked together as they were produced by US governmental institutions, refer to the same social events, address similar types of audiences, are part of specific genres in certain settings, and contribute to dominant styles that relate to US institutions (the presidency). The total body of selected texts encompasses a variety of approaches to terrorism: a focus on the victims of attacks, the perpetrators, and the wider terrorism phenomenon. Statements do not fit neatly together to form a single picture. Nevertheless, as each statement builds on previous ones, reproducing and recontextualizing them, a basic narrative can be identified for analytical purposes. This provides the groundworks to study processes of securitization and identification in the United States in relation to Osama bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*.

The social practice of the 'politics of nations' occurs within the social structure of states, international organizations, and regimes. Regardless of any domestic politico-administrative dynamics, states are articulated at the international stage in a relatively equal sense as entities that represent a territory, a population, and a legitimate government. Conducting foreign policy through diplomacy, trade, or military intervention reflects and merges the semiotic and non-semiotic elements of the social practice (and at the level of social events the discursive and non-discursive). Despite the effects of the information revolution

and processes of globalization, the international system is still mostly characterized by the treaties among and actions of nation states. To a limited extent, the social practice of international politics is also shaped by the US institutional narrative on international terrorism as a stimulant for cooperation among nations. For example, cooperation with the US and other states and international organizations intensified at the turn of the millennium

In the 1990s, the United States dominated the international system. In terms of the national security order of discourse, the nexus between defense and security had significantly shifted after the end of the Cold War towards managing risks and vulnerabilities instead of countering threats. National security was defined more extensively in wider (non-military) terms. In this new political reality, US policy priorities and preferences mattered significantly to other countries and international organizations. Throughout history, the protection of national security and the defense of national interests were always central to American foreign policymaking, and the US relied significantly on 'hard' military power projection for defense, deterrence, and compellence.¹ However, a debate on what exactly constitutes American national interests and how to pursue them evolved within the United States, especially after the end of the Cold War.² Security and national interests were increasingly perceived in broader terms. Drug smuggling and the environment featured more prominently on the agenda, as did economic policies. In this wider context, views on terrorism also changed.

Domestically, the US Constitution traditionally invites a struggle between the US president and Congress. At the level of structural policies, which for example covers the allocation of resources for defense spending, members of Congress are keen to exert influence and benefit from stimulating the economies of their constituencies. Strategic foreign policies are left more to foreign policy specialists and those interested in a particular policy for a specific region. As commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces and recipient of intelligence updates such as the President's Daily Brief, the president is best equipped to respond at the level of crisis policies. Yet, while the president can declare threats to national security, it is constitutionally up to Congress to declare a war.³ Because of the struggle that is inherent to the American political system, institutional narratives have a significant role in the formulation of United States foreign policy.

This section first describes early efforts by intelligence analysts to place Bin Laden on the national security agenda, and examines several Bin Laden statements. This situates US institutional statements in a brief historical context and identifies the status of

1 James Sperling, 'United States, A full spectrum contributor to governance?', Emile J. Kirchner, James Sperling, (eds.) *National Security Cultures, Patterns of Global Governance* (New York, Routledge 2010), 172-209.

2 Walter R. Mead, *Special Providence, American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York, Alfred Knopf 2001), Mead, *Power, Terror, Peace and War*, Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power, Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2002).

3 Underneath the bipartisan political landscape of Republicans and Democrats, and the various isolationist or interventionist traditions of American foreign policy, there lie some fundamental American values and views that attribute a special status to the United States as a nation. This is often referred to in terms of 'American exceptionalism' and 'Americanism'. For example see Seymour M. Lipset, *American Exceptionalism, A Double-Edged Sword* (New York, W.W. Norton 1996),

counterterrorism policies and operations in the US. Second, the US institutional terrorism narrative takes shape around the US Embassy attacks in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, US sanctions against the Afghan Taliban for harboring Bin Laden in 1999, foiled terrorist plots at the turn of the millennium, and the attack on the USS Cole in October 2000. How were these events reflected in Clinton's statements, and in what way did news media report on them? Then, processes of securitization and identification that emerge from the narrative are discussed. Lastly, the concluding remarks address the nature of the narrative: What are its strengths and weaknesses? What can be learned about the narrative analysis framework from applying it? The attacks on September 11, 2001 are not part of the analysis because this study seeks to emphasize the formative period of the US institutional terrorism narrative on *Al Qaeda* at an early stage. This period is more of a terra incognita. Furthermore, it is the exploration of this formative period that has the greatest potential for developing ACN, as it concerns the emergence of the security problem.

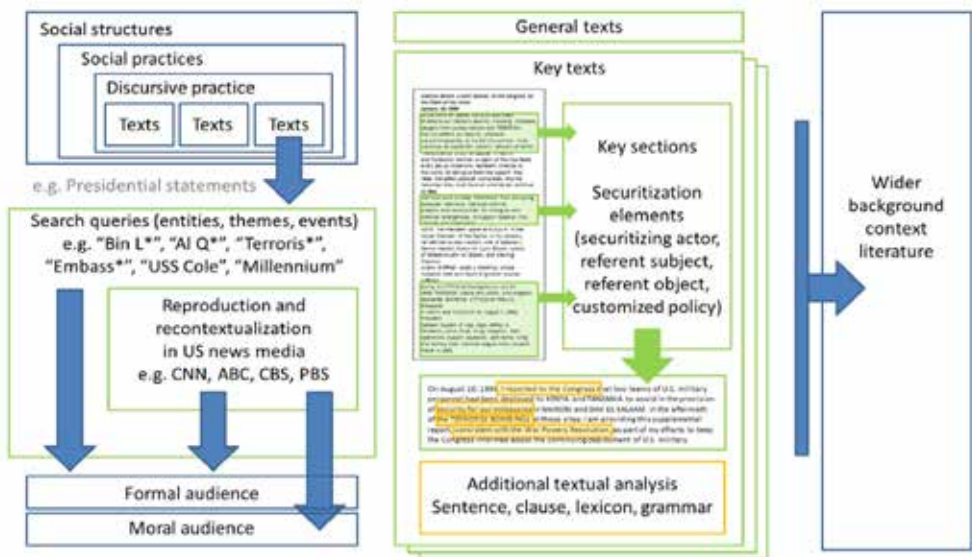


Fig 4.1 Schematic overview of text selection and analysis

Early efforts to put Bin Laden on the national security agenda

On February 23, 1993, a car bomb detonated in the parking garage below the WTC in New York. It signaled a new kind of religiously inspired catastrophic terrorism in the US that was about killing large numbers of people, rather than putting pressure on political decision-makers

regarding a specific agenda. The perpetrators were inspired by an Islamic fundamentalist belief and aimed to destroy symbolic American targets to express their grievances. The extent to which the organizational forms, methods, means, fields of action, and scale of this new kind of terrorism contrasted with the classical (political) terrorism that had been dominant during the Cold War has been subject to debate in academia.⁴ In general, however, the religious (Islamic) extremism that motivated fundamentalists was distinct from the separatist drives of political activists.

There is some disagreement on the way in which intelligence assessments of this new kind of terrorism, and later more specifically *Al Qaeda*, evolved and were part of the policy agenda in the early 1990s. Some scholars have argued that it was an effort by 'a hand full of analysts across the IC' trying to sell their ideas on 'young Arabs departing from Afghanistan and seeking new battlefields to the intelligence community at large'.⁵ In contrast, National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism Richard Clarke⁶ notes in his memoir how by 1994, he, President Bill Clinton, and National Security Advisor Tony Lake were convinced that terrorism 'would shape the post-Cold War world'.⁷ Clinton emphasizes in his own autobiography that the 1993 attacks on the WTC demonstrated 'the vulnerability of the open American society to terror'.⁸ Although Bin Laden (or *Al Qaeda*) was not on the forefront yet for Clinton, Clarke, and other senior officials, they recognized in a broader sense connections between 'terrorists from the Middle East' and acts of terrorism against Americans, such as the WTC bombing.⁹ However, it is important to recognize that there were other significant policy and intelligence priorities for the US, including developments in Russia, the security situation in the Balkans, and Indo-Pakistan nuclear tensions.

In the mid-1990s, several policy documents reflected the US government concerns over terrorism and mentioned Bin Laden for the first time. In June 1995, Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive number 39 on counterterrorism.¹⁰ It affirmed that the US would do all it could to prevent terrorist attacks by reducing vulnerabilities, responding swiftly and decisively if they did occur, and arresting or defeating perpetrators. Any supporting organizations or sponsoring states would be dealt with by all available instruments. In July 1995, the topic of terrorism was included in the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE),

4 For example see Walter Laqueur, 'Terror's New Face, The Radicalization and Escalation of Modern Terrorism', *Harvard International Review*, 20(1998) 4: 48-51, Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism, Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 1999), Isabelle Duyvesteyn, 'How New Is the New Terrorism?', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 27 (2004) 5: 439-454, Ersun N. Kurtulus, 'The "New Terrorism" and its Critics', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 34 (2011) 6: 476-500.

5 Mark E. Stout, 'The Evolution of Intelligence Assessments of al-Qaeda to 2011', in Lorry M. Fenner, Mark E. Stout, Jessica L. Goldings, (eds.) 9.11 *Ten Years Later: Insights on al-Qaeda's Past & Future Through Captured Records*, Conference Proceedings, (Washington, DC, The Johns Hopkins University Center for Advanced Governmental Studies 2011), 28.

6 Chairman of the Counter-terrorism Security Group (CSG) of the National Security Council (NSC).

7 Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies* (London, The Free Press 2004), 90.

8 Bill Clinton, *My Life*, Kindle edition (New York, Knopf 2004), location 10303.

9 Ibid.

10 Federation of American Scientists, 'PDD-39 U.S. Policy on Counterterrorism', June 21, 1995, <http://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd39.htm>, (last retrieved March 20, 2015).

the annual authoritative assessment by the US Director of National Intelligence. It stated the threat of terrorist attacks ‘against the United States and in the US’ would ‘increase over the next several years’.¹¹ Underlining that a ‘new kind of terrorism’ was emerging, it represented the early foundation of the US institutional terrorism narrative on *Al Qaeda*.¹² The US Department of State mentioned the name Osama bin Laden for the first time in its 1995 annual report to US Congress on international terrorism; in this report, Bin Laden was characterized as a ‘Khartoum-based major private financier of terrorism with radical Muslim followers’.¹³ He was positioned as an enabler, not an inspirer, linked to ‘numerous terrorist organizations’ and providing them with funding and logistical support through several of his companies.

In the margin of other international policy and intelligence priorities, the US government pursued a policy of obstruction towards Bin Laden in Sudan. The US government could not ask for his extradition, but US ambassador in Sudan Timothy Carney did receive the instructions to encourage the Sudanese government to expel Bin Laden, as it would disturb his financing activities. US policymakers also requested that the military develop plans for direct action against facilities related to Bin Laden or his host, Sudanese President Turabi.¹⁴ However, these plans were abandoned as they would essentially signal going to war with Sudan. There was also no indictment against Bin Laden at that time.¹⁵

In January 1996, the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center (CTC) dedicated a station to Osama bin Laden and his network of followers named Alec Station. It was partly the result of the CIA’s wish to test an in-house virtual station that focused on a topic in a similar manner as CIA stations in the field.¹⁶ Unable to recruit an operations officer and guided by National Security Advisor Anthony Lake’s interest in terrorist finance, a CIA analyst with a special interest in Afghanistan was recruited as station chief. The analyst, Michael Scheuer, proposed to focus on Bin Laden. From that moment, US intelligence efforts grew steadily, strengthened in mid-1996 by the testimony of Jamal Ahmed Mohamed al-Fadl, a defecting long-time member of Bin Laden’s network.¹⁷

Three United Nations Security Council resolutions in 1996 increased international pressure, and eventually the Sudanese government decided to expel Bin Laden from Sudan.¹⁸ In May 1996, Bin Laden migrated from Sudan to Afghanistan. One month later, the bombing

11 9/11 Commission Report, 341.

12 Ibid.

13 US Department of State, ‘Patterns of Global Terrorism’, 1995, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt/search?q1=bin+ladin&id=mdp.39015078359869&view=plaintext&seq=3>, (last retrieved February 25, 2015).

14 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 141.

15 9/11 Commission Report, 110.

16 Ibid, 108-109.

17 Ibid, 62, 109. In 2001 al-Fadl testified in the US legal case against Osama bin Laden. United States District Court Southern District of New York, ‘USA v. Usama bin Laden Trial Transcripts’, February 6, 2001, <https://cryptome.org/usa-v-ubl-dt.htm> (last retrieved March 6, 2015).

18 United Nations Security Council, resolutions 1044, 1054 and 1070, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/> (last retrieved April 28, 2018).

of an apartment building in al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, killed 19 US airmen. This attack followed an earlier one on an American-run military training center in Riyadh in November 1995. In both cases, attackers had gained experience in ‘translating their anti-Saudi, anti-American extremism into violence’ during the Afghan jihad and were now associated with Bin Laden.¹⁹ US intelligence analysts were also researching connections to an attempted bombing of US troops in Yemen in 1992, the 1993 bombing of the WTC in New York, or attacks against US and UN troops in Somalia in 1993.

In August 1996, Bin Laden published his ‘Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holiest Sites’ in a London-based Arabic newspaper.²⁰ Various translations of this text exist. One made by the US Counterterrorism Center excluded the ‘prophetic traditions, Quranic verses and poems’ in the translation.²¹ The translation emphasized *what* was said as opposed to *how* and *why* it was said, which reduced the extent of reproduction and limited possibilities of cross-cultural and -religious interpretation of meanings. In the text, Secretary of Defense William Perry was addressed by Bin Laden. Perry had condemned the terrorist attack on US servicemen in al-Khobar in 1996 as a cowardly act. Bin Laden also quoted a letter from Secretary Perry to President Clinton in the Ladenese epistle, giving the intertextual link almost the character of starting a dialogue. Secretary Perry had written that the US had to adopt a ‘radically new mind-set with regard to international terrorism’.²² Force protection had to become a top priority for civilian and military leaders to enable ‘the difficult business of defending our interests throughout the world’.²³

Years later, there was some debate on the extent to which the 1996 declaration caused a shift in awareness in the US intelligence and policymaking communities. Richard Clarke and Michael Scheuer stated they took the 1996 Bin Laden declaration very seriously and were able to ‘connect the dots to events as early as 1993’.²⁴ Other accounts, such as the 9/11 Commission report, are more conservative regarding the dynamic caused by the declaration in US intelligence. Nevertheless, the Ladenese epistle clearly garnered the attention of the US Department of State. By the end of 1996, the State Department reported in its ‘Patterns of Global Terrorism’:

Saudi-born extremist Usama Bin Ladin relocated to Afghanistan from Sudan in mid-1996 in an area controlled by the Taliban and remained there through the end of the year, establishing a new base of operations. In August, and again in November, Bin Ladin announced his intention

19 Philip Shanon, ‘The World, Holy War Is Home To Haunt the Saudis’, *The New York Times*, July 14, 1996.

20 English translations of Bin Laden’s text published in the London based newspaper *Al Quds al-Arabi* are often titled ‘declaration of *jihad*’, or ‘declaration of war’. See Annex ‘Selection of texts’, chapter 3.

21 Bin Laden, ‘Declaration of War’.

22 US State Department, ‘Perry Releases Letter To President On Khobar Tower Bombing’.

23 *Ibid.*

24 Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War*, 33.

to stage terrorist and guerrilla attacks against US personnel in Saudi Arabia in order to force the United States to leave the region.²⁵

Like in 1995, the annual report served as a national assessment. The US State Department referred to 'an area controlled by the Taliban' and 'stage terrorist and guerrilla attacks', and placed Bin Laden outside (and as a threat to) international politics by the US State Department.

In 1997 and early 1998, several US intelligence and law enforcement agencies increasingly began to perceive Bin Laden not just as an extremist financier but as a capable and central figure of *Al Qaeda*, a network or organization planning operations against US interests worldwide. They had reason to believe *Al Qaeda* was actively trying to obtain nuclear material.²⁶ On occasion, US government agencies such as the FBI and CIA worked together, for example in searching the house of suspected *Al Qaeda* member Wadith el Hage in Nairobi in August 1997. This was an attempt to find evidence linking el Hage to the 1993 WTC bombing.²⁷ In general, however, each agency pursued its own approach to deal with Osama bin Laden. The New York Field Office of the FBI worked to build a case with the US Attorney's office to have Bin Laden indicted for the involvement of *Al Qaeda* in international terrorism and conspiring to attack US defense installations.²⁸ In building this case, statements by former *Al Qaeda* member and FBI informant Jamal al-Fadl were crucial. In the spring of 1998, the indictment of Bin Laden by New York Attorney May Jo White became a reality.

While the FBI prepared a legal case, the CIA's CTC discussed operational plans with the White House to grab Bin Laden from his residence in Afghanistan, conduct sabotage attacks in Afghanistan and Sudan, and gather intelligence to support military strikes.²⁹ Strategies to arrest Bin Laden were reportedly even discussed during the visit of Saudi Defense Minister Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Saud to President Clinton, Secretary of Defense Cohen, and Secretary of State Albright in February 1997.³⁰ Without success, numerous plans to steal or disrupt Bin Laden's financial resources were proposed to the CIA leadership by Michael Scheuer, chief of the CIA station tasked with monitoring Bin Laden.³¹ Similarly, Richard Clarke remembers how CIA Director George Tenet vetoed plans to 'snatch' or covertly capture Bin Laden in Afghanistan.³² The possibility of collateral damage to US citizens or the risk of exposing US intelligence capabilities in the process was weighed as more important.³³ In his memoir,

25 US Department of State, 'Patterns of Global Terrorism', 1996, 3, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?q1=bin%20ladin;id=m dp.39015078359877;view=plaintext;seq=13;num=3;start=1;sz=10;page=search> (last retrieved March 6, 2015).

26 United States District Court Southern District of New York, 'Indictment 98 Cr.', retrieved from Federation of American Scientists, <http://fas.org/irp/news/1998/11/indict1.pdf> (last retrieved March, 6 2015).

27 Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War*, 34 and Soufan, *The Black Banners: Inside the Hunt for Al Qaeda*, London: Penguin, 45-50.

28 United States District Court Southern District of New York, 'Indictment 98 Cr.' and 'Indictment S(9). 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS)', retrieved from cns.miis.edu/reports/pdfs/binladen/indict.pdf (last retrieved March 6, 2015).

29 9/11 Commission Report, 112, 481, Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 149.

30 Mir, 'Pakistan Interviews Usama Bin Ladin'.

31 Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris*.

32 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 149.

33 Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War*, 34.

Tenet writes that the intelligence he had on which to base his advice to the president was often very thin.³⁴ In a broader context, the US State Department's regional focus at that time was primarily aimed at Indo-Pakistan nuclear tensions and ending the Afghan civil war.

In 1998 the WIF declaration was issued.³⁵ In English translations, the message was explicitly framed as a *fatwa*, a religious juridical ruling. In contrast to the 1996 declaration, this '*fatwa*' directly threatened US civilians across the globe, not just US troops on the Arabian Peninsula, and was co-signed by four other jihadis.³⁶ Again, this text was published in the Arabic London-based newspaper *Al Quds al-Arabi*, preventing the message itself from reaching any large English-speaking Western public. In the US intelligence community, however, a limited number of committed analysts became highly aware of this statement. For those analysts who had followed Bin Laden and still had any doubt about his intentions against the US, this '*fatwa*' convinced them.

There was a raised awareness of Bin Laden's intentions among some officials in the intelligence community, but it still remained difficult to establish a unity of effort at the US institutional level in relation to this threat. In May 1998, President Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive 62 on combating terrorism. It focused on protective security of US critical infrastructure and underlined the possibility of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction and the use of new technologies to conduct unconventional and cyber-attacks. By the end of 1998, the security in African embassies was assessed as adequate, with the threat level varying from low to medium across the continent.

The next section describes how the terrorist attacks in Africa caused Clinton to respond with securitization language and military action. Both the president and US news media identified Bin Laden as an organizer. For the development of a US institutional narrative on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, the attacks on the Embassies in Africa proved to be a pivotal event.

US Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania

The size of the attacks on the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the large number of casualties among US and local officials and civilians significantly impacted news reporting worldwide in August 1998. Unlike the earlier attacks in Riyadh and al-Khobar in 1995 and 1996, there were high numbers of civilian casualties. Information gathered during the investigation by US law enforcement and intelligence officers over the following weeks pointed to the involvement of Osama bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*.³⁷ The events gave reason for US

34 George Tenet, Bill Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, Kindle edition, (New York, Harper Collins 2007) location 2188.

35 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 58-62 and Federation of American Scientists, 'World Islamic Front statement, Jihad against Jews and Crusaders' <http://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/g80223-fatwa.htm> (last retrieved March 21, 2015).

36 They present themselves as: Shaykh Usamah Bin-Muhammad Bin-Ladin, Ayman al-Zawahiri, amir of the Jihad Group in Egypt, Abu-Yasir Rifa'i Ahmad Taha, Egyptian Islamic Group, Shaykh Mir Hamzah, secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan, Fazlur Rahman, amir of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh.

37 Federal Bureau of Investigation, 'Interview of Mohamed Sadiq Odeh'.

President Bill Clinton to respond with a series of statements that substantiated two significant securitization efforts as part of the US institutional terrorism narrative. The nature of both efforts differed because several aspects of the securitization varied in scale, such as shifting settings, the type of audiences, the referent object, and the proposed customized policy.

First, one securitization effort was a cluster of speeches in which Osama bin Laden's terrorist network was presented as a clear threat to the US. This included the weekly presidential radio address on August 8; the remarks President Clinton made in Martha's Vineyard on August 20, 1998; his nation-wide address later that day; formal writings to US Congress on August 20 and 21 that legitimized the US military response; and the radio address on August 22. Second, Clinton's address to the 53rd United Nations General Assembly on September 21, 1998 embodied an effort to securitize terrorism as a threat to the world and 'the world's problem'. Both efforts related to the Embassy bombings and contributed to a wider terrorism narrative in the United States.



Fig 4.2 President Clinton's initial remarks at the improvised press conference location in Edgartown on Martha's Vineyard, August 20, 1998.³⁸



Fig 4.3 Later address to the nation from the White House in Washington on August 20, 1998.³⁹ The camera zooms in as Clinton emphasizes 'we will persist, and we will prevail'.

38 Clinton Digital Library, 'Statement to Press on Military Strikes Against Sudan & Afghanistan (1998)', <http://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/15817> (last retrieved April 28, 2018).

39 Clinton Digital Library, 'Statement to Press on Military Strikes Against Sudan & Afghanistan (1998)', <http://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/15818> (last retrieved April 28, 2018).

Osama bin Laden's network as a threat to national security

Securitization and identification of Osama bin Laden's network as *referent subject* stretched over several texts. Initially, the perpetrators of the Embassy attacks on August 7, 1998 were unknown; presidential statements focused on the victims and the act itself. In Clinton's radio addresses to the American people on August 8, the attacks on the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were characterized as terrorism, using both the lexicon of crime and war. Clinton declared that he would bring the perpetrators of the 'criminal act' 'to justice', providing law enforcement 'the best counterterrorism tools available'. Moreover, he also underlined that he had intensified efforts on all fronts in 'the battle' against terrorism.⁴⁰

As US law enforcement and intelligence agencies acquired more information, suspects were identified. On August 20, Clinton determined the *referent subject* by stating US national security was imminently threatened by Bin Laden. It was the first time a US president mentioned Osama bin Laden by name. According to Clinton, associated terrorists 'were planning additional terrorist attacks against US citizens and others, and they were seeking new dangerous weapons'.⁴¹ The military action against the terrorist sites in Afghanistan and Sudan, two weeks after the terrorist attacks, were presented as the necessary response (*customized policy*) to counter the threat. Clinton was clear on this necessity as the 'national security was challenged, and the US government had to take extraordinary steps to protect the safety of its citizens.'⁴² According to Clinton, the military strikes destroyed terrorist infrastructure and sent a clear message to terrorists around the world. The president also amended an executive order that prohibited American citizens and businesses from having financial transactions with Osama bin Laden or his group.⁴³

All statements, whether they focused on the victims, perpetrators, or both, related to the general phenomenon of terrorism. As *securitizing actor*, President Clinton articulated to all Americans that the terrorist attacks in Africa in fact targeted the United States through its global interest. America became a vulnerable target (*referent object*) as it strived to openly engage in a dialogue to promote peace, freedom, and democracy around the world. By contrasting the terrorists and the attacks to peaceful US foreign policy aims, this built on a wider background context of US cultural presuppositions. The most *extensive text that comprised all elements of securitization was Clinton's address to the nation delivered from the White House on August 20. It functioned primarily to explain and justify the military strikes before Clinton's moral audience, the American people, as they were also the referent object.*⁴⁴

40 Bill Clinton, 'The President's Radio Address August 8, 1998', *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 1998 II (Washington, DC, Office of the Federal Register 2000), 1415.

41 Bill Clinton, 'Remarks in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan' August 20, 1998, *Public Papers*, 1998 II, 1460.

42 Bill Clinton, 'Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan' August 20, 1998, *Public Papers*, 1998 II, 1460-1462.

43 Bill Clinton, 'Letter to Congressional Leaders on Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process', August 20, 1998, *Public Papers*, 1998 II, 1463.

44 Clinton, 'Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan'.

Today I ordered our Armed Forces to strike at terrorist-related facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan because of the imminent threat they presented to our national security. I want to speak with you about the objective of this action and why it was necessary. Our target was terror; our mission was clear: to strike at the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Usama bin Ladin, perhaps the preeminent organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world today.⁴⁵

This first part clarified what actions were taken against what target and by what authorization. The perspective was that of Clinton, but he acted on behalf of the American people. He ordered 'our Armed Forces' to protect 'our national security'. Justification for the action was the 'imminent threat' posed by the network supported by Bin Laden. By executing his powers, President Clinton became more of a president. He then continued by depicting the motivations of the terrorists.

The groups associated with him come from diverse places but share a hatred for democracy, a fanatical glorification of violence, and a horrible distortion of their religion to justify the murder of innocents. They have made the United States their adversary precisely because of what we stand for and what we stand against. A few months ago, and again this week, bin Ladin publicly vowed to wage a terrorist war against America, saying, and I quote, "We do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians. They're all targets." Their mission is murder and their history is bloody.⁴⁶

Not only did the president name Bin Laden, but he also quoted him. In this way, President Clinton granted Bin Laden a high level of attention. Recognizing Bin Laden as a potent adversary improved the latter's leadership status among his followers. This negative effect was also recognized by the senior advisors who formed Clinton's Principals Committee on national security.⁴⁷ Although these members agreed to refrain from using Bin Laden's name as much as possible, they found it difficult to do so in practice. The unilateral statements of US Secretary of Defense William Perry, Bin Laden, and the US president became intertextually linked by reference and quotation. According to Clinton, the US was a target because of what Americans stood for. Later, he elaborated more extensively on the 'freedom-loving' and peaceful intentions of the US. In the last part of the selected text, Clinton reminded his audience that Bin Laden's words were not just words.

Two weeks ago, 12 Americans and nearly 300 Kenyans and Tanzanians lost their lives, and another 5,000 were wounded, when our Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were bombed. There is convincing information from our intelligence community [...] that these bom-

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45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 198.

bings were planned, financed, and carried out by the organization bin Laden leads. America has battled terrorism for many years. Where possible, we've used law enforcement and diplomatic tools to wage the fight. [...] But there have been and will be times when law enforcement and diplomatic tools are simply not enough, when our very national security is challenged, and when we must take extraordinary steps to protect the safety of our citizens. With compelling evidence that the bin Laden network of terrorist groups was planning to mount further attacks against Americans and other freedom-loving people, I decided America must act. And so this morning, based on the unanimous recommendation of my national security team, I ordered our Armed Forces to take action to counter an immediate threat from the bin Laden network.⁴⁸

Apart from the more generic goal of striking 'terror', as Clinton outlined in the introduction, the final part of his address emphasized the temporal aspect of urgency. There was 'compelling evidence' that new attacks were being planned. As the term 'evidence' referred to classified intelligence that the president was not allowed to share with the public, this phrase became a call for trust in Clinton fulfilling his duties as president in protecting national security by ordering the military strikes. Adding 'the unanimous recommendation of my national security team' worked to strengthen the institutional character of the decision. It made Clinton's order less of a personal choice. Further on, this chapter will discuss in more detail how at the time of this address, Clinton was politically and personally weakened by an investigation into his relationship with intern Monica Lewinsky.

Of note is that, depending on setting and audience, Bin Laden and his followers were characterized in slightly different ways in the various statements as referent subject. In the initial statement on the military strikes at Martha's Vineyard on August 20, 1998, Clinton indicated the military targeted 'one of the most active terrorist bases in the world' in Afghanistan, 'operated by *groups affiliated with Osama bin Laden, a network not sponsored by any state but as dangerous as we face*'. In Sudan, a 'chemical weapons-related facility' was targeted. After returning to Washington D.C. the same day, Clinton stated in a nation-wide address that the targets were 'terrorist-related facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan' as '*the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Osama bin Laden, perhaps the preeminent organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world today*,' posed 'an imminent threat to US national security'.⁴⁹ In the same address, Clinton stated there was 'convincing information from our intelligence community that *the bin Laden terrorist network was responsible* for these bombings'.⁵⁰ It now appeared that *the network* was the entity, not *several groups* affiliated with Bin Laden. Clinton made this nuance even more distinct when he claimed, 'we have high confidence that [the Embassy] bombings were planned, financed, and carried out by *the organization bin*

48 Clinton, 'Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan'.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

Laden leads.⁵¹ Further on in the nation-wide address, Clinton again referred several times to 'the Bin Laden *network of terrorist groups*'. The Afghan training camp 'contained *key elements of Bin Laden's network's infrastructure*' and 'served as training camp for thousands of terrorists from around the globe.' A gathering of key terrorist leaders was supposedly about to take place there. In Clinton's words, the actions were aimed at 'fanatics and killers who wrap murder in the cloak of righteousness and in so doing profane the great religion in whose name they claim to act.'⁵²

Clinton's letters to the US Congress on August 20 and 21 contained a similar message. Congress constituted his formal audience, as their support empowered presidential decision-making. Some interesting differences become clear when comparing the formal writings to the president's oral public statements. The first letter on August 20 amended Executive Order 12947 by adding Osama bin Laden, his organization, and his associates as a threat to national security and the Middle East peace process. Again, a key statement by Bin Laden was repeated in the letter: it was 'an individual duty for every Muslim to kill Americans and their allies'.⁵³ The second letter on August 21 elaborated on the military action in Afghanistan and Sudan. Targets struck in Afghanistan were 'a series of camps and installations used by *the Osama bin Laden organization* and facilities that are being used for terrorist training, and in Sudan 'where *the bin Laden organization has facilities and extensive ties to the government*'.⁵⁴ It was stated that *the Bin Laden organization* was responsible for the Embassy bombings. The word *network* or *group* was not used in either formal letter.

A day later, the weekly presidential radio address on August 22 elaborated on the recent 'strike against terrorism'.⁵⁵ Speaking directly to his moral audience, the American people, Clinton projected '*the bin Laden network of radical groups*' as the most dangerous non-state terrorist actor in the world. According to Clinton, the network targeted all Americans, not just those in uniform, and had been responsible in the past for attacks in Somalia and on US airliners, and for assassination plots against the Pope and the Egyptian President Mubarak. Clinton mentioned his order to block all American financial transactions with *the Bin Laden terrorist group* to decrease the potential of *Bin Laden's network*.⁵⁶

Distinctions between a network, a group, and an organization were subtle, but important to the securitization effort before Clinton's formal audience. Formal letters to Congress indicated that Bin Laden '*leads an organization*', and the words *network* or *group* were not used. In the formal written communiqués, the threat to US lives was addressed highly explicitly. Speaking in terms of an organization instead of a fuzzier network or social movement helped to legitimize the use of force and the financial measures against Bin Laden and his

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Clinton, 'Letter to Congressional Leaders on Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process'.

54 Bill Clinton, 'Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan August 21, 1998', *Public Papers*, 1998 II, 1464.

55 Bill Clinton, 'The President's Radio Address', August 22, 1998, *Public Papers*, 1998 II, 1464-1465.

56 Ibid.

followers.⁵⁷ It provided a clearly defined referent subject. Both letters served an informative purpose, as the president did not have to ask for permission from the US Congress to conduct the military strikes. Yet, the letters were also aimed at increasing bipartisan support since the Republicans had the majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate at that time.

In his public statements, Clinton emphasized several times how the military strikes ‘were not aimed against Islam, the faith of hundreds of millions of good, peace-loving people all around the world, including the United States’. The targets were ‘fanatics and killers’ and the ‘battle against terrorism’ had been and continued to be ongoing. He stated it was a long battle between ‘freedom and fanaticism’, and ‘the rule of law and terrorism’. The word *freedom* referred to a wider context of American values such as peace, democracy, human rights, and the entrepreneurial spirit.

America is and will remain a target of terrorists precisely because we are leaders; because we act to advance peace, democracy, and basic human values; because we’re the most open society on Earth; and because, as we have shown yet again, we take an uncompromising stand against terrorism. [...] I want to reiterate: The United States wants peace, not conflict. We want to lift lives around the world, not take them. We have worked for peace in Bosnia, in Northern Ireland, in Haiti, in the Middle East, and elsewhere. But in this day, no campaign for peace can succeed without a determination to fight terrorism. Let our actions today send this message loud and clear: There are no expendable American targets; there will be no sanctuary for terrorists; we will defend our people, our interests, and our values; we will help people of all faiths, in all parts of the world, who want to live free of fear and violence. We will persist, and we will prevail. Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless our country.⁵⁸

This and similar parts in other statements made by Clinton pointed to the ideological thought that formed a basis for, and was also enhanced by, the securitization efforts. A severe terrorist threat articulated by the president not only lifted the political narrative on terrorism to a new level, but also gave reason to highlight basic assumptions on national and institutional identities, norms, and values that underlay and supported US institutional power relations. American strategic goals were ‘good’ and US foreign policy aimed to further that cause; any threat to its execution was a threat to national security. The US foreign policy in the Middle East or the Arabian Peninsula at that time was not questioned in the US institutional narrative on terrorism and *Al Qaeda*.

A stronger narrative on terrorism and threat led to a stronger sense of the identity of the United States for its citizens and officials. It also strengthened the power base of institutions by maintaining institutional genres (established ways of communication) and styles (ways of being). The US military strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan were codenamed Operation

57 Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 29.

58 Clinton, ‘The President’s Radio Address’, August 22, 1998.

Infinite Reach, which underlined the global extent of US military presence in the world. They also demonstrated the ability of the American armed forces to conduct operations on short notice and strike targets over long distances. The strikes provided the US military with prestige, which had a wider effect on the country's execution of international politics. Terrorism also provided the opportunity for the presidency to strengthen the institution itself by adhering to genre conventions of US presidential orders, statements, and letters on the use of military force. The president became more of a president through the attacks and the securitization effort that followed.

Securitization of a new kind of international terrorism

Since its foundation, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) had gathered 53 times, many times discussing terrorism. During this 53rd session, Clinton pleaded that international terrorism had 'a new face in the 1990's'.⁵⁹ According to him, the world needed 'to think in new terms of terrorism', as terrorists misused greater openness and there was an 'explosion of information and weapons technology'.⁶⁰ The 'increasing mobility of terrorists' and the possibility of terrorists acquiring chemical, radiological, biological, or nuclear material made this new kind of terrorism a direct threat to all humankind.⁶¹ Attacks or the threat of attacks also had a devastating effect on the free and open institutions the UN was trying to build.

In general, Clinton was rather inclusive with regard to the events and actors he deemed part of this new terrorism. In his address to the UNGA, Clinton summarized how 'countless nations' had been affected by acts of terrorism over the last 15 years. He referred to the 1988 Pan Am flight bombing over Lockerbie, the 1995 Oklahoma bombing by Army Gulf War veteran Timothy McVeigh, the Omagh bombing by the Real IRA, Aum Shinrikyo's gas attack on the Tokyo subway, the bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, and violence in Kashmir and Sri Lanka. Terrorism was indiscriminate towards Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Jews, and Serbs and Albanians, he stated. In the speech, he underlined that this new terrorism was not the manifestation of a 'clash of civilizations', of Islam against the West; however, he noted that there were violent people who wanted the world to believe this. He defined terrorism instead in terms of a 'clash between the forces of the past and the forces of the future, between those who tear down and those who build up, between hope and fear, chaos and community'.⁶²

The scale of the elements of Clinton's securitization effort varied (i.e. securitizing actor, referent object, referent subject, customized policy). He was still a securitizing actor,

59 Bill Clinton, 'Remarks to the 53rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City', September 21, 1998, *Public Papers*, 1998 II, 1629-1633.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid, 1632.

although in the new setting his authority was based on moral leadership instead of a formal position as commander-in-chief. Textual analysis predominantly shows the repetitive use of the word 'people' and other references to human identity (that which unites all), along with 'nations' and 'tolerant and open societies'.⁶³ Clinton's address became more personal through substitution of 'the delegates of the 53rd session of the General Assembly' with phrases such as 'all of you in this body', 'every person in this room', and 'no one in this room, nor the people you represent'. This allowed for a more personal and emotional plea to stand up against a new kind of terrorism that threatened basic human values. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was contextualized in light of terrorist attacks against the US and other countries in the last 15 years. The context was expanded to appeal to the representatives of all UN member states, a global audience. Specifying the referent object for this effort, Clinton referred to over 14 countries and regions around the world where people were suffering from terror, without mentioning any of the perpetrators.

In his speech, Clinton tried to build a bridge by providing a framework to examine terrorism. In doing so, the notions of 'terror' and 'terrorism' became more abstract and general compared to the recent securitization efforts before the US audience, decreasing the power of the 'aura of unprecedented threatening complexion' and limiting options for a 'customized policy', to put it in terms of securitization.⁶⁴ However, he did propose 'concrete steps to protect our common destiny' in the UN address, such as depriving terrorists of support, sanctuary, and financial assistance, promoting stronger domestic laws on weapons export, and raising international standards for airport security.⁶⁵

Clinton received a standing ovation as he climbed onto the stage, not a common genre practice in this setting. White House aides viewed it as a sign of worldwide respect for him.⁶⁶ Others saw it as a personal vote of sympathy, as at that very moment many American citizens were watching a CNN broadcast of Clinton questioned by prosecutors on his intimate relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Moments later, Nelson Mandela received two louder standing ovations. This UNGA was his last as President of South Africa, making Clinton's reception more relative. As the standing ovation did not occur after but before Clinton delivered his message, the vote of sympathy or respect was more connected to the speaker than to his message or specifically the securitization effort regarding this new kind of international terrorism.

The global impact of Clinton's speech was limited, as the General Assembly served as a forum for member states to deliver messages on a wide range of topics. Apart from that, terrorism was not the only topic on Clinton's mind. His address started with the conclusion that the world 'had much to celebrate, as peace had come in Northern Ireland and Bosnia

63 Ibid, 1630.

64 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 3.

65 Clinton, 'Remarks to the 53d Session of the United Nations General Assembly', 1631-1633.

66 Mark Matthews, 'World leaders applaud Clinton U.N. standing ovation greets president as videotape rolls on TV', *The Baltimore Sun*, September 22, 1998.

held free elections'.⁶⁷ Clinton also held three bilateral meetings in the margin of the UNGA, discussing the situation in Kosovo and Albania with Italy, nuclear proliferation with Pakistan, and the necessity of economic reform and the North Koreans' missile capability with the Japanese Prime Minister.⁶⁸ Perhaps an important goal of the speech was to explain the recent US missile strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan as an act against terrorism, especially improving support and understanding among Muslim countries. After the strikes, several national leaders had criticized the legitimacy of the actions.

In his UN speech, Clinton was inclusive regarding the events and entities involved with the emerging 'new terrorism'. On other recent occasions, he had distinguished between state-sponsored and politically motivated terrorism. In the setting of a bilateral meeting with Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern a few weeks earlier, Clinton had made a distinction between terrorist organizations such as IRA and PLO, even in their darkest days, and the new type of terrorism.⁶⁹ He had remarked that the threat posed by Bin Laden was of a different 'non-national global' nature.⁷⁰ In the 1995 US National Intelligence Estimate, the term 'new breed' of terrorists was first used in relation to the young Arabs departing Afghanistan to seek new battlefields.⁷¹ But the Presidential Decision Directive on terrorism issued that same year concerned terrorist threats to the US in the broadest sense and emphasized the priority of detecting and preventing the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical material by terrorists, and of countering state sponsorship. Thus, texts emphasized the nature of the 'new terrorism' differently in different settings.

The wider scale of the threat image articulated before the UN in terms of this new kind of terrorism, as most recently represented by Osama bin Laden's threats, only added to the momentum of the US domestic securitization effort building against Bin Laden. In that sense Clinton made another effort to articulate the issue. Both national (US) and international (UN) securitization efforts reflected and contributed to the wider US institutional terrorism narrative. They strengthened the same understanding of good versus evil, or peace and security versus terror, and strengthened US identity.

Because we are blessed to be a wealthy nation with a powerful military and worldwide presence active in promoting peace and security, we are often a target. We love our country for its dedication to political and religious freedom, to economic opportunity, to respect for the rights of the individual. But we know many people see us as a symbol of a system and values they reject, and often they find it expedient to blame us for problems with deep roots elsewhere. But we are no threat to any peaceful nation, and we believe the best way to disprove

67 Clinton, 'Remarks to the 53d Session of the United Nations General Assembly'.

68 Wendy S. Ross, 'Fight Against Terrorism Focus Of Clinton Speech To UNGA', *United States Information Office*, September 18, 1998, http://fas.org/irp/news/1998/09/98091804_tlt.html (last retrieved August 29, 2016).

69 Bill Clinton, 'Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland in Dublin', September 4, 1998, *Public Papers*, 1998 II, 1528-1531.

70 Ibid.

71 Stout, 'The Evolution of Intelligence Assessments of al-Qaeda to 2011', 30.

these claims is to continue our work for peace and prosperity around the world. For us to pull back from the world's trouble spots, to turn our backs on those taking risks for peace, to weaken our own opposition to terrorism, would hand the enemies of peace a victory they must never have.⁷²

Similar to in Clinton's nation-wide addresses and formal writings, the extensive use of the words *we*, *us*, and *our* indicated the intent to contrast a US national identity against *the enemies of peace*. It identified the referent subject by what it opposed. The UN speech aimed to establish a cooperative international climate. However, besides the respectful treatment of Clinton by his audience, little effect of the speech was observable.

Reproduction and recontextualization in the media

News media perform a crucial function in American society. Despite all the powers vested in the US government, much depended on how media chose select, introduce, broadcast, and comment on the nation-wide addresses and other statements made by Clinton. However, there was a mutual dependency here, as the media also needed authoritative statements as content for their reports. With respect to the Embassy attacks in Africa and the military strikes that followed, news media reproduced official statements, for example by including citations of President Clinton in news reports or broadcasting his weekly radio address entirely. Clinton was physically at the White House as he gave his weekly radio address; the residence symbolized the office of the president, with all its domestic and international prestige. As president, Clinton had access to the privileged knowledge produced by the US intelligence community. This power was maintained by legislation and institutional rules that had to be respected by US media.

The wording in news media mostly varied in accordance with the president's statements as media continued to report on them. In the first days after the Embassy attacks, the media focused on the victims and the 'hunt for the international gang of mass murderers.'⁷³ The lexicon of crime used by Clinton was maintained in the media; the perpetrators needed to be 'brought to justice.'⁷⁴ In the initial wording, a law enforcement approach was emphasized, whereas the actions ordered by Clinton later reflected a military approach. In parallel, the media continued to report on Clinton's statements and the military strikes. On August 20, as 'America struck back' militarily, all news programs reproduced President Clinton's claim

72 Clinton, 'Remarks to the 53d Session of the United Nations General Assembly', 1630.

73 Wei Chen (Anchor), 'The hunt continues for an international gang of mass murderers following the East African bombings', television program, *CTV National News*, 11:00 pm ET, Toronto, CTV Television, Inc, August 8, 1998.

74 Jane Robelot (Anchor), 'Battle plans for US missile strike were in effect last week', television program, *CBS This Morning*, 7:00 am ET, New York, CBS News, August 21, 1998.

to success. Several of them broadcasted the presidential statement live.⁷⁵ The emerging threat that gave reason for the strikes was not debated or questioned in the media. The US government claimed to have ‘compelling evidence that the bin Laden network was poised to strike at us again soon.’⁷⁶ The media was simply not in a position to question the underlying classified information, such as a soil sample from near the *Al-Shifa* factory.⁷⁷

Characterizations of Bin Laden and his followers in the media again paralleled institutional statements. According to CNN, the targeted base in Afghanistan was home to ‘groups associated with exiled Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden.’⁷⁸ The same news item also referred to ‘the network led by Saudi millionaire, Osama bin Laden’ and quoted President Clinton saying, ‘the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Osama bin Laden, perhaps the preeminent organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world today’. CNN also quoted Clinton’s citation of Osama bin Laden’s threats against the US. In other reporting, CNN and CBS referred to ‘the Bin Laden organization’.⁷⁹

The reason presented in the media for acting militarily now was ‘clear evidence that Bin Laden’s followers were ready to strike again’.⁸⁰ National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright supported Clinton’s statement that this was but a successful operation in a long-term battle.⁸¹ It shifted attention from the Embassy attacks and the present threat to the wider ongoing fight against terrorism that had entered a ‘new age’. This also placed less emphasis on the level of success achieved by the military strikes. Terrorism experts in the media confirmed that terrorists were becoming increasingly mobile, had access to information, and intended to strike the US with chemical and biological weapons.⁸² This was not just speculation: a terrorist attack with chemical or biological agents had already occurred in the Tokyo subway in 1995 and caused a widespread ‘homeland protection’ program that involved policy exercises, training of rescue personnel, and creating vaccine stockpiles.⁸³ Furthermore, news reports paraphrased and quoted Clinton

75 Dan Rather, (Anchor), ‘President Clinton Addresses The Nation Regarding Today’s US Military Strikes On Terrorist Sites In Afghanistan And Sudan’, television program, *CBS News Special Report*, 1:44 pm ET, New York, CBS News, August 20, 1998.

76 Clinton, Bill, ‘President Clinton’s Weekly Radio Address’, radio broadcast, *White House Briefing*, Washington, DC, Federal News Service, August 22, 1998.

77 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 189.

78 Lou Dobbs (Host), ‘America Strikes Back, Markets Unmoved, Merger Mania Hits Insurance Industry, Union Pacific Announces Reorganization’, television program, *CNN Moneyline News Hour With Lou Dobbs*, 18:30 am ET, New York, CNN, August 20, 1998.

79 Dan Rather (Anchor), ‘The Decision, Decision to strike Osama bin Laden and his organization after it was learned they were trying to acquire chemical weapons and utilize them in future terrorist activities’, television program, *48 Hours*, 10:00 pm ET, New York, CBS News, August 20, 1998. and Daryn Kagan (Anchor), ‘America Strikes Back, Clinton Claims Retaliation for African Embassy Bombings’, television program, *CNN Early Edition*, 7:00 am ET, New York, CNN, August 21, 1998.

80 Dobbs (Host), ‘America Strikes Back, Markets Unmoved’.

81 Leon Harris (Anchor), ‘America Strikes Back, U.S. Citizens Abroad Urged to Exercise Greater Caution, Stray Missile Hits Pakistan’, television program, *CNN Early Edition*, 7:00 am ET, New York, CNN, August 21, 1998 and Dobbs (Host), ‘America Strikes Back, Markets Unmoved’.

82 Rather (Anchor), ‘The Decision’.

83 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 155-179.

stating that the military strike was not aimed at Islam, the 'faith of hundreds of millions of peace-loving people around the world'.⁸⁴ However, although his address to the UNGA on September 21, 1998 was distributed and commented on by the Federal News Service, the major news channels such as CNN, ABC, and CBS focused on Clinton's testimony on his relation to Monica Lewinsky before a grand jury, reflecting the interest of the American people.

Despite the high level of reproduction, all television broadcasts were in fact also recontextualizations of the presidential communicative events. Television networks selected, reflected, and commented on governmental statements. A clear example of media coming to their own conclusions was that most news media were ahead of the US government in identifying Bin Laden. As early as August 8, US investigators named 'exiled Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden' to reporters as a possible suspect of the Embassy attacks. Bin Laden had made no secret of waging a 'Holy War' against the US.⁸⁵ It was this Holy War that had provided media with a frame of reference that fit the narrative on a new age of terrorism. He was one of the few with the money and expertise to conduct the kind of terrorist attacks that had occurred. Another suspect named in television broadcasts was Ayman al-Zawahiri, 'an ally of Bin Laden, who recently also threatened the US'.⁸⁶ Military experts in news shows initially warned against 'leaping to the easiest label or the label of what we dislike' when assuming at that stage that it was an Islamic group.⁸⁷ However, as a man tied to the attacks was arrested in Pakistan while trying to flee to Afghanistan, the alleged hiding place of Osama bin Laden, speculations in the media on the involvement of Bin Laden intensified.⁸⁸

On a critical note, some news reports questioned the feasibility of the government's effort to find the perpetrators.⁸⁹ And days after the military strikes on August 20, some correspondents investigated the targets, putting the effectiveness of the strike in Afghanistan in perspective. ABC News interviewed a Pakistani journalist who had visited the six targeted camps.⁹⁰ Local villagers stated a gathering of (terrorist) leaders was not taking place, but some people related to Osama bin Laden had been killed. Some buildings were damaged or destroyed, but the camps were not 'wiped out'. Two little mosques were also hit, fueling anti-US sentiments in the area. As a qualifying remark, ABC's national security correspondent stated it was not the intention of the US government to destroy the entire

84 Cassandra Henderson (Co-Host), 'Newsroom worldview', television program, *CNN Worldview*, 4:30 am ET, New York: CNN, August 21, 1998.

85 Laurie Dhue (Anchor), 'Dual Objectives in U.S. Embassy Bombings, Treat the Injured, Find Who's Responsible', television program, *CNN Saturday*, 7:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 8, 1998, Chen (Anchor), 'The hunt continues for an international gang of mass murderers following the East African bombings'.

86 Elizabeth Vargas (Anchor), 'Global Search Underway Bombing Suspects', television program, *ABC World News Saturday*, 6:30 pm ET, New York, ABC News, August 8, 1998.

87 Ibid.

88 Marina Kolbe (Anchor), 'Man Arrested in Pakistan in Connection with Embassy Bombings', television program, *CNN Saturday*, 7:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 15, 1998.

89 Gene Randall (Anchor), 'Finding Culprits Responsible for Bombings May be Difficult', television program, *CNN Worldview*, 18:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 8, 1998.

90 Peter Jennings (Host), 'A closer look', television program, *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*, 6:30 pm ET, New York, ABC News, September 4, 1998.

terrorist organization.⁹¹ Instead, the administration was sending a message, forcing the people and their leaders in the camps to think twice about how they operated.

The legitimacy of the attack on a facility in Sudan was also subject to debate in the media. Bin Laden's ties to the Sudanese government and the activities at the targeted pharmaceutical factory were questioned. According to US officials 'Osama bin Laden was making base elements for VX nerve gas' in the facility.⁹² Secretary of Defense Cohen was quoted by CBS as confirming that Bin Laden and his organization were attempting to acquire chemical weapons. However, CNN questioned the evidence the CIA had provided and stated the pharmaceutical plant was producing a majority of the drugs for Sudan.⁹³ The Sudanese government was furious and called, to no avail, for UN experts to verify that no chemical weapons were produced there.⁹⁴ In Khartoum, protesters gathered in front of the American Embassy. Other reactions around the globe that were reported in US media varied. Russian President Yeltsin denounced the military strikes, but an aide to Yeltsin later stated the US and Russia were 'in the same boat' in the struggle against terrorism.⁹⁵ Leaders from the UK, France, Germany, and Israel were quoted as supporting the strikes, while Japan and China withheld their final judgement.⁹⁶ Taliban leaders and members of the Iraqi Revolution Command Council firmly condemned the US strikes.⁹⁷

Despite an agreement among the members of the National Security Principals Committee that they should refrain from referring publicly to Bin Laden and focus on the wider *Al Qaeda* network, few government officials did so.⁹⁸ This was also due to news media demand. After the Clinton administration publicly referred to Osama bin Laden as suspect on August 20, news media provided additional context on his background, personality, motives, and most importantly his capabilities. The media focused on Bin Laden as an individual; his photo was repetitively screened to quickly familiarize audiences with the topic. According to the media, there had been no doubt all along that Osama bin Laden was behind the attacks.

Friday, August 7, a pre-dawn wakeup call for the president. Deadly explosions in Kenya and Tanzania, America the target. Osama bin Laden is immediately the prime suspect.⁹⁹

91 Ibid.

92 Rather (Anchor), 'The Decision'.

93 Jeanne Meserve (Anchor), 'Just in Time, Combating International Terrorism, Quickly', television program, *CNN Newsday*, 12:00 am ET, New York, CNN, August 31, 1998.

94 Lisa McRee (Host), 'America Strikes Back', television program, *ABC Good Morning America*, 7:00 am ET, New York, ABC News, August 21, 1998.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

97 Henderson (Co-Host), 'Newsroom worldview'.

98 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 198.

99 Henderson (Co-Host), 'Newsroom worldview' and Joie Chen (Anchor), 'U.S. Air Strikes Catch Many by Surprise and Leaves Questions', television program, *CNN The World Today*, 20:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 20, 1998.

Bin Laden was characterized as a charismatic man with ‘an avowed hatred of the US’.¹⁰⁰ As a skilled *businessman* and *fundraiser*, he had the money ‘to bankroll an army of terrorists’; the Afghan war veteran had recruited ‘thousands of Arabs to the cause’ in the early 90s.¹⁰¹ Ironically, some stated, during the Afghan war the US had built and financed the very camps it had recently targeted.¹⁰² In 1994, the Saudi government had revoked Bin Laden’s citizenship for suspected terrorist activity. According to most news reports, he praised the 1995 and 1996 bombings of US facilities in Saudi Arabia and was driven out of Sudan under pressure from the US in 1996. CNN recalled an interview by Peter Arnett with Bin Laden in 1997, rebroadcasting fragments of it. Bin Laden stated:

The U.S. today has set a double standard, calling whoever goes against its injustice a terrorist. It wants to occupy our countries, steal our resources, impose agents on us to rule us and then wants us to agree to all this. If we refuse to do so, it says we are terrorists.¹⁰³

More and more, different experts provided perspective and commented on Bin Laden and his background. They included university professors, former US government officials, and, under the condition of anonymity, US officials in active duty. An overview of Bin Laden’s capabilities was provided by Larry Johnson, former deputy director of the Office of Counterterrorism at the State Department.

Osama has been the source of almost all major terrorist attacks against the United States in this decade. The good news is those have only numbered about 10 or 11. The bad news is he’s capable of some very dramatic, high-profile attacks. [...] [B]ut he doesn’t have the ability to launch attacks every week, every day, every month. He has some limited abilities. [...] I think he’s weakened. [...] Right now, tourists sitting in a cafe in some countries, say, Egypt or Pakistan, could be vulnerable for an attack by someone who sympathizes with bin Laden, in terms of someone walking along and shooting them. But in terms of bin Laden’s ability to ramp up and conduct another major attack, that’s at least, I think, six months down the road.¹⁰⁴

By referring to Bin Laden with his first name, Osama, Johnson personalized the argument and made him personally responsible for recent major attacks against the US. According to Johnson, Bin Laden was capable of conducting large-scale dramatic attacks, but was not able to do so frequently. He stated that perhaps only some ‘sympathizers’ would be able to conduct attacks on a smaller scale soon. Furthermore, Johnson recognized that the US military strikes were not ‘a knock-out blow’ but part of a series of military, diplomatic, and

100 Henderson (Co-Host), ‘Newsroom worldview’.

101 Ibid.

102 Harris (Anchor), ‘America Strikes Back, U.S. Citizens Abroad Urged to Exercise Greater Caution’.

103 Dobbs (Host), ‘America Strikes Back, Markets Unmoved’.

104 Gene Randall (Anchor), ‘America Strikes Back, What are the Capabilities of Osama bin Laden?’, television program, CNN Saturday, 7:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 22, 1998.

economic initiatives. As a part of this, he suggested that a financial reward would convince followers to hand Bin Laden over.

You also need to put at least a \$10 million price tag on Osama's head and have that figured out. Their people will bring him in. And at the same time, we need to keep up the political pressure with the other countries in the region. It can't be a one-shot option. It has to be a sustained policy on a variety of funds.¹⁰⁵

Johnson, a former US counterterrorism official, did not elaborate on cultural differences between Americans and radical Islamists with regard to the value of money. However, the religious sense of duty of Bin Laden's closest followers actually promoted an ascetic lifestyle in which money was not considered to have much value. In his 1996 declaration, Bin Laden had even called for an economic boycott of American goods. In a broader sense, it was possible that the large sum suggested by Johnson was so enormous for ordinary illiterate Afghans that they could not even imagine that such an amount even existed. In general, the emphasis in the selected news reports was on Bin Laden's *activities* and *capabilities*, and specifically his financial means, rather than his motivation. Indicative was the use of terms like 'exiled Saudi millionaire' as opposed to other possible formulations such as 'Muslim mujahideen'.

A highly significant recontextualization of Clinton's securitization, especially for his formal institutional audience, had little to do with the contextual mobilization of heuristic artefacts, nor with any aura of unprecedented threatening complexion, but with the securitizing actor himself. The *timing* of the customized policy to conduct the military strikes gave reason to major news channels to discuss Clinton's motives. As of January 1998, Clinton was confronted with major personal and therefore domestic political problems.¹⁰⁶ Some media referred to it as 'the major domestic story', a 'sex scandal', or 'the president's acknowledgement of a sexual relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky'.¹⁰⁷ In August 1998, speculations soared in the media about a connection between the legal investigation into the alleged intimate affair of Clinton with White House intern Monica Lewinsky and the missile strikes.

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105 Ibid.

106 Richard A. Posner, *An Affair of State, The Investigation, Impeachment, and Trial of President Clinton* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press 1999).

107 For example Kevin Newman (Host), 'Kenya Bombing Investigation', television program, *ABC Good Morning America*, 7:00 am ET, New York, ABC News, August 13, 1998, Laurie Dhue (Anchor), 'America Strikes Back, Clinton Blocks Financial Transactions', television program, *CNN Saturday*, 7:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 22, 1998, Kolbe, Marina (Anchor), 'America Strikes Back: Satellite Photos Show Substantial Damage', television program, *CNN Sunday Morning*, 8:00 am ET, New York, CNN, August 23, 1998, Thalia Assuras, (Anchor), 'White House Sex Scandal Affecting President Clinton's Ability To Govern The Country', television program, *CBS This Morning*, 7:00 am ET, New York, CBS News, September 15, 1998, Ted Koppel (Anchor), 'What in the world is going on?', television program, *ABC Nightline*, 11:35 pm ET, New York, ABC News, September 24, 1998.

Just days after President Clinton addresses the nation to diffuse a personal scandal, he's back on your TV sets defending an attack. A coincidence? Some say no.¹⁰⁸

The words 'just days' illustrate the importance of the temporal aspect. The timing of the military attacks became subject to debate: Was the correlation of domestic and foreign politics in fact causality? Was the president channeling public attention away from his domestic problems? Was the president still able to fully and effectively govern the American people and represent the US internationally? Even though CBS reported that any such allegation on Clinton's motives for the timing of the military strike was preposterous, it was by raising such questions and dedicating airtime to the topic that the 'Lewinsky matter' was increasingly pushed to the forefront.¹⁰⁹

Speculations gained more weight as the decision-making process and execution of the military attacks were debated in the media.¹¹⁰ Some of President Clinton's closest staff members had allegedly not been informed of the strikes in advance.¹¹¹ US personnel investigating the Embassy bombings were not briefed prior to the strikes, making them unable to take additional protective measures.¹¹² The government of Pakistan was also not informed, while all cruise missiles flew over Pakistani territory. To make matters worse, a cruise missile came down unexpectedly in Pakistan, killing six people.¹¹³ The decision not to inform several relevant parties gave some the impression that President Clinton was pressed for time, even though planning the strikes took over a week. It fueled speculation about what other (personal) motives the president might have had to order the strikes.

An element that implicitly influenced the public debate on the timing and motivation of the strikes was the release of a movie called *Wag the Dog* in December 1997. In it, a spin-doctor and a Hollywood producer worked to fabricate a war to divert attention from the president's personal problems concerning a sex scandal in the run-up to elections. Yet, according to Clinton's own account and some of his close associates at the time, there was never any doubt that this was a purely professional decision based on the intelligence that was available.¹¹⁴ It was emphasized that the planning process was done thoroughly, and with all relevant stakeholders involved.

108 Henderson (Co-Host), 'Newsroom worldview'.

109 Osgood, Charles (Reporter), 'Idea That Yesterday's US Missile Attacks Were A Ploy To Distract Nation From Lewinsky Matter Is Preposterous', television program, *The Osgood File*, various times, New York: CBS News, August 21, 1998.

110 Dan Rather (Anchor), 'Timing Of The Attack Against Terrorists In Afghanistan And Sudan', television program, *CBS Evening News*, 6:30 pm ET, New York, CBS News, August 20, 1998.

111 McRee (Host), 'America Strikes Back'.

112 Jane Robelot (Co-Host), 'Orlando family's reaction to US bombing in retaliation for embassies being bombed in Africa', television program, *CBS This Morning*, 7:00 am ET, New York, CBS News, August 21, 1998.

113 Chen (Anchor), 'U.S. Air Strikes Catch Many by Surprise and Leaves Questions'.

114 Clinton, *My Life*, location 16666, Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 186.

Public opinion polls indicated that many American citizens did not care about the Lewinsky affair.¹¹⁵ Support for the president among his moral audience remained between 59 and 67 percent four months before and after the terrorist attacks and US missile strikes, while disapproval rates remained between 28 and 36 percent during the same timeframe.¹¹⁶ Although polling indicated the affair had affected his moral stance, about two thirds of respondents still viewed Clinton as compassionate and a strong leader.¹¹⁷ The booming economy gave people reason to overlook his moral behavior.¹¹⁸ Eventually, news media criticized themselves for focusing so extensively on the Lewinsky affair.

If the polls are right, you the public have been telling us in the media that you're sick and tired of the Monica story and would like us to get on with what's really important in the world. Now, our experience, which is to say what the overnight ratings tell us, is somewhat at odds with that. There seems, in other words, to be a slight discrepancy between what some of you are telling the pollsters and what you're actually watching. Be that as it may, the point is well taken. There are a lot of terribly urgent and important things going on in the world which have been getting short shrift on this program. So periodically we're going to turn to a panel of distinguished wise people, men and women who have served in important foreign policy roles, to focus our attention in other directions.¹¹⁹

The United States saw itself as a world power, promoting peace and security in a post-Cold War world. Osama bin Laden was not the only foreign policy topic on the agenda of the Clinton administration in the months following the Embassy bombings. On August 31, North Korea performed a ballistic missile test, increasing regional tensions. Furthermore, the Middle East peace process required Clinton's absolute attention, and several NATO meetings were held to discuss the deteriorating situation in Kosovo. On October 13, diplomatic efforts were enforced as NATO issued an activation order. In addition, Iraq had ended its cooperation with UN arms inspectors, Russia was fighting to avert a financial collapse, and Japan was also in need of serious economic reform.

Still, support among US Congress, Clinton's formal audience, remained troublesome. The Republican Party had gained the majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate in 1995. In light of the recent developments, Republicans were keen to underline the

115 Jim Lehrer (Anchor), 'The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, Staying the Course, Swissair Crash, Cancer War, The President and the Press, Should He Resign?', television program, PBS News Hour, New York: PBS, September 3, 1998, Lehrer, Jim (Anchor), 'The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, Going Public?', Wall Street Wrap, Reporting on Race, Dialogue', television program, PBS News Hour, New York: PBS, September 18, 1998, Koppel (Anchor), 'What in the world is going on?'

116 The American Presidency Project, 'Presidential Job Approval Rates', <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=42&sort=time&direct=DESC&Submit=DISPLAY> (last retrieved February 7, 2018), Pew Research Center, 'Support for Clinton Unchanged By Judiciary Vote, Public's Good Mood and Optimism Undeterred by Latest Developments', <http://www.people-press.org/1998/12/14/support-for-clinton-unchanged-by-judiciary-vote/> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

117 Arthur H Miller, 'Sex, Politics, and Public Opinion, What Political Scientists Really Learned From the Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal', *Political Science & Politics* 32 (1999) 4: 721-729.

118 Ibid, 725.

119 Koppel (Anchor), 'What in the world is going on?'

symbolic status of the presidency and the need to preserve important American norms and values by attempting to impeach Clinton. The House of Representatives voted in favor of impeachment on December 19, 1998, for damaging the office of the president, committing perjury, and obstructing justice. Two months later, on February 13, 1999, a Senate tie vote on the matter was insufficient to support impeachment and Clinton was acquitted of the charges. Democrats had been able to persuade a handful of Republicans to vote against impeachment. Nevertheless, the whole process had sincerely damaged Clinton's authority and his relationship with Congress.

In sum, there was reproduction and recontextualization. The US mainstream media mostly paralleled the statements made by US officials, but some critical comments were also added during introductions and discussions. Right after the Embassy attacks, some questions were raised in the media about the ability of the US government to find those responsible. The military strikes against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan were overshadowed by discussions about their effectiveness and legitimacy. Most notably, the timing and motivation of the attacks was discussed in light of the Lewinsky matter hearings.

Hence, at a deeper theoretical level, the media reporting demonstrated various power relations. Although news media do not have a *power to do* things that compares to US government, they have some *power over* their audiences, both *in* and *behind* discourse. They are able to select and recontextualize information. The power in discourse, for example, lies in the way contributions from authorities and experts in panels are controlled. Some experts became frequent guests on news shows, while others were invited less often. The broadcast of the Lewinsky hearings during Clinton's UN General Assembly address was another example of media power in discourse. The power behind discourse was reflected in the standardization of guiding frames and language use, for example referring to Bin Laden as 'public enemy number one' or stating 'America strikes back', and in the selection of questions asked in the context of such frames. The space for expert opinions is limited by the introduction of the news anchor or reporter, but the media's power over their audiences is shared with US institutions. Ultimately, news media need the authority of US officials as content for their stories. The Lewinsky matter also demonstrated how media power in and behind discourse ultimately did not guarantee that the resonance among audiences would significantly influence public opinion on the president's performance in general. As illustrated in the text fragment above, this can be explained in part by the multitude of issues Clinton had to deal with, including the threat of terrorism.

Managing the threat of terrorism

President Clinton's securitization efforts before the American people and the United Nations in the months after the Embassy bombings reflected how he had put Bin Laden and the network *Al Qaeda* high on the US national security agenda. Besides the rapid military strikes

on Sudan and Afghanistan, a comprehensive politico-military plan codenamed Delenda (Latin for 'to be destroyed') was drafted to eliminate *Al Qaeda* as an organization. It involved an extensive array of intelligence, military, law enforcement, financial, and diplomatic instruments that were available to the US administration. The various intelligence and law enforcement agencies were tasked to deal with the threat in both covert and overt ways, such as identifying and arresting cells, finding financial resources and seizing funds, training and equipping adversary groups, and neutralizing or eliminating the leadership. On the other hand, Clinton and several senior US officials objected to conducting additional missile strikes on Afghanistan without reliable and verified intelligence, for fear of increasing negative sentiment in the world.¹²⁰ Accounts varied on the extent to which their combined efforts constituted an effective practice. FBI special agent Ali Soufan, CIA station chief Michael Scheuer, and Counterterrorism Security Group Chair Richard Clarke all recognized that there were institutional or bureaucratic problems in sharing and understanding available information, aligning efforts, and shifting momentum away from other intelligence problems to the threat of terrorism at hand.¹²¹

The ascribed priority was reflected in public government reports. In 1998, the annual State Department report 'Patterns of Global Terrorism' included '*Al Qaeda*' for the first time.¹²² It summarized its goal to 'reestablish the Muslim State throughout the world', referred to the 1998 *fatwa* issued by the WIF, and linked *Al Qaeda* to the 1998 bombing of the US Embassies and various plans to conduct high-profile assassinations and terrorist attacks. The report stated the organization 'claimed to have shot down US helicopters and killed US troops in Somalia in 1993, and conducted bombings against US troops in Yemen in 1992'.¹²³ According to the State Department, *Al Qaeda* resided in Afghanistan yet had a global reach.

Several measures taken centralized Bin Laden, despite the administration's intent to refrain from concentrating too much on him as a person and to focus on the wider network instead. Capturing or killing Bin Laden would not end the threat from *Al Qaeda* and would even grant Bin Laden a heroic martyr status, senior US officials at the time had recognized.¹²⁴ Still, it was decided that one of the first steps to tackle the problem and confront the threat was to go after the *Al Qaeda* leader. Bin Laden unquestionably performed an important unifying function among the diverse people who had joined him. One of the measures that targeted Bin Laden personally, as well as *Al Qaeda*, was the sanctions issued against him by Clinton on the same day as the military strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan.¹²⁵ In his nation-wide radio

120 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 200-202

121 Soufan, *The Black Banners: Inside the Hunt for Al Qaeda*, Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris*, Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War*.

122 US Department of State, 'Patterns of Global Terrorism', 1998, <http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1998Report/appb.html> (last retrieved April 4, 2015). Bin Laden was mentioned in the 1995 edition of Patterns of Global Terrorism.

123 Ibid.

124 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 198.

125 Clinton, 'Letter to Congressional Leaders on Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process', The American Presidency Project, 'Executive Order 13099', August 20, 1998, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=54808> (last retrieved April 27, 2018).

address, Clinton mentioned that this was part of his determined efforts to ‘use all the tools’ available against terrorism.¹²⁶

In addition, in November 1998, the Court of the Southern District of New York publicly indicted Osama bin Laden and 20 associated members of *Al Qaeda* on 238 counts.¹²⁷ Most prominent was the count of conspiring to kill United States nationals. This followed a secret indictment against Bin Laden for his role in Somalia that had been issued earlier that year.¹²⁸ Over the next two years, the public indictment was expanded to 319 counts, comprising over 150 pages. Parallel to the initial release in November 1998, the US Department of State offered a then-record 5 million US dollar reward for any actionable information on Bin Laden. Using the interdepartmental Rewards for Justice program was part of the administration’s efforts to do everything possible to counter the threat of terrorism and hold perpetrators accountable. Later, in June 1999, Bin Laden was added to the list of the FBI’s 10 most wanted fugitives.

Apart from the practical purpose of generating investigative leads, the reward and FBI list also had an important symbolic articulative effect to the American people. The FBI list was a publicity program originally founded in conjunction with the media. Its publication served to garner nation-wide attention to America’s most dangerous fugitives, to inform the public of the threat they posed, and to alert people to report relevant information. Apart from being included in this notorious selection, at the time the reward against Bin Laden was the highest ever issued by the State Department. It symbolized his significance. As part of law enforcement and intelligence strategies, the FBI list and reward were institutional publicity tools directed at Clinton’s moral audience, American citizens, and people friendly to the US worldwide.

In his own public statements in 1999, President Clinton widened the scope when referring to terrorism.¹²⁹ He frequently associated terrorist groups with criminals and narcotics traffickers; they had all become increasingly interdependent. Processes of globalization and the development of new technologies enabled international terrorists to conduct more sophisticated attacks, such as bioterrorism, chemical terrorism, nuclear terrorism, or cyberterrorism. In one of Clinton’s few references to Bin Laden’s network in the first months of 1999, he discussed with reporters *Al Qaeda*’s effort to acquire chemical weapons.¹³⁰ This fit the message Clinton had been consistently spreading before and since the 1998 Embassy attacks on new threats to US security in the 21st century. According to Clinton, the United States had to reduce vulnerabilities and be prepared to deal with these more sophisticated threats posed by the enemies of peace, democracy, and freedom.

126 Ibid.

127 US District Court New York, ‘Indictment 98 Cr.’, ‘Indictment S(9). 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS)’.

128 US District Court New York, ‘Indictment 98 Cr. 539’.

129 Bill Clinton, ‘Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union’, January 19, 1999, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1999 I* (Washington, DC, Office of the Federal Register 2000), 62-71, Bill Clinton, ‘Remarks at the National Academy of Sciences’, January 22, 1999, *Public Papers, 1999 I*, 85-88.

130 Bill Clinton, ‘Interview With Judith Miller and William J. Broad of the New York Times’, January 21, 1999, *Public Papers, 1999 I*, 90-96.

In 1999, Clinton did not make direct additional discursive securitization efforts with respect to the Bin Laden network. But indirectly, two events were relevant in terms of securitization theory, as they represented ways of dealing with the threat. First, he made an effort to manage the Bin Laden threat by securitizing the Taliban for harboring Bin Laden. Essentially, the executive order was an extension of the sanctions Clinton had imposed earlier on Bin Laden. However, Clinton articulated and motivated the sanctions against the Taliban more explicitly, and there was more news reporting on it. Through this, he shifted focus and broadened the scope of his public securitization efforts on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*. Second, in late December 1999, he highlighted the efforts made by the US government to protect the American people from terrorist attacks. In assuring US citizens that the authorities were doing all they could, Clinton worked to establish positive securitization. In other words, the existence of the threat was not denied (and was even confirmed), but the emphasis was on the efforts to manage the threat of terrorist attacks occurring at the turn of the millennium. This was about self-determination and openness, rather than fear of threats and enmity, as Clinton did not intend to terrify US citizens.¹³¹

Securitizing the Taliban

In early 1999, efforts by the US government to convince the Taliban to expel Bin Laden from Afghanistan remained fruitless. From March to June 1999, US foreign policy focused on the Balkans as US warplanes flew missions over Serbia and Kosovo, participating in the NATO operation Allied Force. In July, the Clinton administration decided it was time to raise the pressure on the Afghan Taliban regime. By offering Bin Laden a safe haven, the Taliban had become an 'unusual and extraordinary threat' to the United States. A letter to the leaders of US Congress on July 4, 1999 embodied the securitization of the Taliban before Clinton's formal institutional audience. Its power stemmed from the strict rules of communication to which it adhered: the securitization followed the formal procedure of the National Emergencies Act (NEA). The NEA authorizes the president to declare a national emergency, which activates emergency powers that are described in other statutes. In this case, it related to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. After declaring a national emergency before the US Congress, the president was authorized to block or limit trading with related foreign entities and confiscate their property. A public statement summarized the motivation for the executive order and informed US citizens.

I have signed an Executive order imposing financial and other commercial sanctions on the Afghan Taliban for its support of Usama bin Ladin and his terrorist network. The Taliban has allowed the territory under its control to be used as a safe haven and base of preparations for Usama bin Ladin and the al-Qaida organization, who were responsible for the bombings of

131 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 177.

our Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, last year, murdering 12 Americans, nearly 300 Kenyans and Tanzanians, and wounding another 5,000. To this day, bin Laden and his network continue to plan new attacks against Americans, without regard for the innocence of their intended victims or for those non-Americans who might get in the way of his attack.¹³²

The first segment, 'I have signed an executive order', was expressive. Similar to Clinton's declaration following military strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan, it was written from the perspective or theme of the president. 'Signed' and 'Executive order' represented the president's formal action. The declaration was an expression of power, and by using this power and acting this way, US President Clinton publicly became more of a president. According to Clinton, the Taliban had allowed and enabled Bin Laden to pose a threat to the US. The current nature of the threat was emphasized by the temporal character of the phrase 'to this day'.

The United States has tried repeatedly, directly and working with other governments, to persuade the Taliban to expel bin Laden to the United States for trial or, if that is not possible, to a third country where he will face justice for his crimes, and to end the safe haven it gives to bin Laden's network, which lives and trains in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. These efforts have failed. The Executive order I have signed will deepen the international isolation of the Taliban, limit its ability to support terrorist networks, and demonstrate the need to conform to accepted norms of international behavior. The order does not affect humanitarian aid, food, and medical supplies for civilian use. It is not aimed at the people of Afghanistan but at the Taliban. Those who nurture terrorism must understand that we will not stand by while those whom they protect target Americans.¹³³

Clinton presented the executive order as a vigorous and precise instrument that targeted the Taliban, not the Afghan people. In demonstrating 'the need to conform to accepted norms of *international behavior*' and stressing the aim of deepening 'international isolation', the president highlighted the social practice that situated the US institutional narrative on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*. Clinton was dealing with the threat with the means he had at his disposal. These were situated in the social domain of the politics of nations.

The executive order by the US president came with some tough language. But it also sent a somewhat mixed message regarding the nature of Bin Laden's followers as a referent subject for securitization. In both his letter to Congress and his address to the nation, Clinton deemed 'Bin Laden and the *Al Qaeda organization*' as the main threat, but also referred to 'Bin Laden's *network*'. He intended to 'bring Bin Laden to justice for his *crimes*', while classifying

132 Bill Clinton, 'Statement on the National Emergency With Respect to the Taliban', July 6, 1999, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1999 II* (Washington, DC, Office of the Federal Register 2001), 1136.

133 Bill Clinton, 'Statement on the National Emergency With Respect to the Taliban', July 6, 1999, *Public Papers, 1999 II*, 1136.

Mohammed Atef in the letter to Congress as Bin Laden's '*military commander*'. The latter characterization underlined some sort of chain of command and placed *Al Qaeda*'s terrorist acts in the realm of military operations. In addition, the more Clinton emphasized the current threat posed by Bin Laden and the Taliban, the more he undermined the perceived success of previous US policies, such as the military strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan. Clinton concluded that Bin Laden and his network had been provided a safe haven, had been able to operate freely in Afghanistan since 1998, and were planning additional attacks against US targets.

The focus shifted from the terrorists to those who nurtured terrorism. By sanctioning Afghanistan, the Taliban became the link between the transnational movement of jihadi extremists and international politics. Regardless of the rhetorical thrust provided by the public address on the order, however, its practical effect was in fact rather limited because of the minor trading activities between the two countries. It was also a slight shift from (military) action to symbolism. According to some, Clinton's presidential stance among US military leaders also had its limits. Within the walls of the White House and the Pentagon, Clinton's lack of a military record and his earlier critique of the Vietnam war had decreased his status and power to convince US military commanders to become involved in (covert) military operations targeting Bin Laden, against which they had advised.¹³⁴

News reporters recontextualized the effect of the sanctions in a critical manner. The following fragment of a press briefing with spokesman Jim Foley of the Department of State is illustrative.

Q: 'Okay. And two -- I forgot what it was. Oh, right. The Taliban trade with the United States. This really doesn't have too much teeth in it, does it, because there is very little trade between --'

MR. FOLEY: 'Yeah. In terms of trade -- in terms of assets, rather, the effect is likely to be modest. The Treasury Department would have more information on that. In terms of trade, it's fairly modest but it's not insignificant. We had in 1998 about \$24 million in two-way trade, \$7 million in exports, and \$17 million in imports.'

Q: 'What year?'

MR. FOLEY: '1998. But I think that, you know, whatever the concrete impact, this sends an unambiguous message of the commitment of the United States to take action against those who shelter international terrorists like bin Laden and will help to further isolate the Taliban internationally. [...] They are not acting in a way that allows them to be treated legitimately [...] that allows them to be treated with respect internationally. And we believe that is important to them. And they can take steps to reverse this measure. I've been very clear on why we've done this. It has to do with harboring bin Laden. They can choose to stop harboring bin Laden, and these measures can be reversed.'¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 225.

¹³⁵ James Foley, 'State Department Regular Briefing by James Foley, Deputy Spokesman', *Federal News Service*, July 6, 1999.

In reply to the critical question, State Department spokesman Foley acknowledged the limited practical impact of the sanctions, but also underlined their symbolic meaning. Furthermore, the journalist forgot his question about the Taliban, which was another indication of the relateness of the executive order and the idea that the order did not 'have too much teeth in it'. The US spokesperson acknowledged the 'modest' character of the trade relation. In terms of genre, this fragment shows how informal ways of communication ('oh, right', 'yeah', 'you know') mixed with more formal language that reflected the tone of the executive order.

US diplomatic efforts at the level of the United Nations resulted in the Security Council unanimously adopting resolution 1267 in October 1999. It was an initiative to install economic sanctions against Afghanistan and the Taliban parallel to the unilateral US measures. The UN sanctions added some weight to the sanctions on the Afghan economy, but to no avail as the Taliban did not alter their position and Bin Laden remained able to operate freely.

While the focus on Bin Laden had increased in the US, a hostage crisis in December 1999 at Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan had put the securitization effort of the Taliban into a slightly different perspective. On December 24, an Indian Airlines plane was hijacked by Islamist extremists and forced to land in Afghanistan. For the next seven days, the Taliban put pressure on the hijackers to release hostages and give up on their demands. United Nations officials commended the Taliban regime for bringing the situation to an end without any casualties. Countering Clinton's Taliban securitization effort, US media affirmed this was an opportunity for the pariah state 'to show the world a different face' and gain a small amount of international credibility.¹³⁶

On the same day that Clinton imposed sanctions on the Taliban, there was also another international dimension at play. On July 4, 1999, Clinton had met with Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif at the latter's request to discuss the emerging crisis between India and Pakistan over skirmishes in India's Kargil district. The sanctions against the Taliban also demonstrated Clinton's determination to Sharif, as the latter had come to the US requesting help. Clinton was determined to discuss increasing Pakistan's efforts against the Taliban in the meeting. An agreement was reached that the US would train 60 Pakistani commandos to capture Bin Laden in Afghanistan. Despite being skeptical over working relations between the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI and the Taliban, Clinton wanted to explore every option.¹³⁷ His concerns were not unfounded: as described in the previous chapter, Bin Laden had endorsed the *jihad* in Kargil against India and had also mentioned in Pakistani newspapers how he knew of efforts by US commandos to capture him.

136 Jonathan Mann (Anchor), 'Millennium 2000, UN Officials Praise Taliban's Handling of Hostage Crisis', television program, CNN Live Event/Special, Friday 2:30 pm Eastern Time, December 31, 1999.

137 Clinton, *My Life*, location 17945, 17968.

Millennium plots and positive securitization

Days before the end of the millennium, media reports thrived on all that could go wrong. Would computers be able to handle the change of digits? Would vital information infrastructure systems crash? Amidst these speculations, the possibility of terrorists conducting attacks was not ruled out either. On December 14, 1999, US Customs had arrested Ahmed Ressam at the US-Canadian border. He was an Algerian living in Montreal and had intended to detonate bombs at Los Angeles Airport. Two days earlier, security services in Jordan had arrested dozens of suspects accused of preparing terrorist attacks on various touristic and religious sites in the country. In late December 1999, President Clinton answered some questions on this 'Year 2000 terrorism' in interviews, advising American citizens to go about their business and 'call the authorities if they see something suspicious'.¹³⁸ No link to Bin Laden was made at the time. There was no guarantee in advance that nothing would happen, but the law enforcement and intelligence agencies were doing all they could to 'maximize protection'.¹³⁹ In an interview with CNN anchor Larry King, President Clinton emphasized this.

Mr. King: 'And how about the terrorism threat, where people are asked to be careful, especially overseas, and we have these arrests occurring in Washington and Vermont?'

The President: 'Well, what I would say to the American people about that is that we know that at the millennium, a lot of people who may even be a little crazy by our standards or may have a political point to make, may try to take advantage of it. So we are on a heightened state of alert. We're working very hard on it. No one can guarantee that nothing will happen. But all I can say is we're working very hard. And my advice to the American people would be to go on about their business and do what they would intend to do at the holiday season but to be a little more aware of people and places where they find themselves. And if you see something suspicious, well, call us and let us know. Call the authorities. We're working very, very hard on this. And if it were me, I would not just refrain from activities. I'm going to go out and do my Christmas shopping. I'm going to do what I normally do.'¹⁴⁰

Clinton's calming words 'I'm going to do what I normally do' are not to be mistaken for desecuritization, since the threat of a terrorist attack remained. In this interview, emphasis lay on 'working very hard', 'make sure', 'everything we possibly can', and 'maximize our protection'. It was an act to convince US citizens the state was protecting them by stressing the effort made, a form of positive securitization. Apart from repeated references to this

138 Bill Clinton, 'Interview With Larry King of CNN's "Larry King Live"' and 'Interview With Charlie Rose of CBS' "60 Minutes II"', December 22, 1999, *Public Papers*, 1999 II, 2331-2339, 2343-2349.

139 Ibid.

140 Clinton, 'Interview With Larry King of CNN's "Larry King Live"', 2332-2333 (emphasis added).

effort, such as ‘we’re working very hard’, Clinton also empowered the American people by giving them responsibility to report suspicious activity and ‘call us’, ‘call the authorities’. Furthermore, by emphasizing that he would continue to ‘act normal’, Clinton showed his intention to lead by example and expressed self-determination.

In late 1999 and the first months of 2000, Clinton did not relate arrested suspects or foiled plots to Bin Laden. In January 2000, news media cited anonymous US officials as stating that following the arrest of Ahmed Ressam, a related suspect under investigation in Senegal had indirect ties to Bin Laden.¹⁴¹ However, at that time, media reported there was no proof that Bin Laden had directed the failed plot in Jordan. For law enforcement and intelligence agencies, Bin Laden had been among their top priorities since the 1998 Embassy bombings, and every possible link to Bin Laden remained subject to analysis. On May 17, 2000, Clinton gave more details about the millennium plots before US Coast Guard personnel at the Coast Guard Academy in New London. He now publicly linked both the arrests in Jordan and in Seattle to Bin Laden and the organization Bin Laden had created, and he emphasized the importance of international cooperation for the US.¹⁴²

At the turn of the millennium, Clinton’s intent was very much to inform and prepare, but not frighten the public.¹⁴³ In secret, the government effort to detect threats and prevent terrorist attacks at the time was all-encompassing.¹⁴⁴ Clinton’s cabinet was on high alert and meeting nearly daily after intelligence agencies saw an increase of reporting on terrorist threats to the US. Interagency exercises were held, coordination centers set up, warnings issued, and international partners of the US pressured to preemptively conduct raids on possible cells. As Ahmed Ressam was arrested at the Canadian border and a plot in Jordan was foiled, National Security Advisor Sandy Berger channeled Clinton’s words to the members of the US Principals Committee, saying, ‘this is it, nothing more important, all assets. We stop this fucker.’¹⁴⁵

In a general sense, the self-determination associated with positive securitization and foiling of the millennium plots increased the credibility and authority of the US government before the American people and their representatives in Congress. The Larry King interview also worked to strengthen US national identity. Remarks about ‘people who may be a bit crazy by our standards’ or people ‘who have a political point to make’ were subtle references to American norms and values. The United States saw itself as a leading nation promoting peace, prosperity, freedom, and human rights.¹⁴⁶

141 Donna Kelley (Anchor), ‘U.S. Investigators Uncover Ties Between bin Laden and Suspects Under Investigation for Smuggling Explosives into U.S.’, television program, *CNN Early Edition*, 07:00 am ET New York, CNN, January 27, 2000.

142 Bill Clinton, ‘Commencement Address at the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut’ May 17, 2000, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 2000 I (Washington, DC, Office of the Federal Register 2001), 950-951.

143 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 177.

144 *Ibid.*, 211-214.

145 *Ibid.*, 212.

146 Bill Clinton, ‘Remarks to the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City’, September 21, 1999, *Public Papers*, 1999 II, 1563.

For Clinton, the turn of the millennium was a public opportunity to reflect on the past decade of transformation and look ahead with a positive vision. The world had moved from the industrial age into the global information age.¹⁴⁷ In his address to the United Nations General Assembly, he had called upon the world's leaders to use their resources, knowledge, and institutions to make the millennium a 'true changing of times and gateway to greater peace and prosperity, not just a change of digits'.¹⁴⁸ This effort was threatened by 'primitive claims of racial, ethnic, or religious superiority, when married to advanced weaponry and terrorism', as they made 'a wasteland of the soul'.¹⁴⁹ It underlined the otherness and difference of radical elements, whose threats and actions contrasted with Clinton's personal belief and striving to bring people in the world together.¹⁵⁰ As the American president, Clinton worked to bring 'more hope for peace, freedom, security and prosperity all over the world', and tried to promote 'faith, hope and love'.¹⁵¹ In his memoir, also reflecting on the terrorist attacks on the US on September 11, 2001, he states it was important that fighting the threat of terrorism did 'not compromise the character of our country' and the belief in common humanity at the global level.¹⁵² Overall, the Clinton administration had sought to improve defensive measures and act on terrorist threats, but also to enhance international cooperation, share wealth, and improve living conditions with development aid as a means to combat terrorism.

The attack on the USS Cole

On October 12, 2000, a small boat loaded with explosives detonated against the USS Cole, a US Navy destroyer docked in the Yemeni port of Aden. The explosion killed 17 and injured 39 American sailors. In his initial response before the American press in the rose garden of the White House, President Clinton condemned the 'cowardly act' and affirmed that 'those responsible will be held accountable'.¹⁵³ Days later, in a direct radio address to the American people, his moral audience, the president elucidated that the US sailors in Yemen 'were doing their duty by standing guard for peace'.¹⁵⁴ He stated the US military not only represented military might, but also exemplified how men and women from very different backgrounds could stand united to promote peace and freedom around the world.

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147 Clinton, *My Life*, location 19791.

148 Clinton 'Remarks to the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly'.

149 Ibid.

150 Clinton, *My Life*, location 19791.

151 Ibid, location 19791, 19829.

152 Ibid, location 19829.

153 Bill Clinton, 'Remarks on the attack on the U.S.S. Cole and the Situation in the Middle East', October 12, 2000, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 2000 III (Washington, DC, Office of the Federal Register 2002), 2165.

154 Bill Clinton, 'The President's Radio Address', October 14, 2000, *Public Papers*, 2000 III, 2176-2177.

This tragic loss should remind us all that even when America is not at war, the men and women of our military risk their lives every day in places where comforts are few and dangers are many. No one should think for a moment that the strength of our military is less important in times of peace, because the strength of our military is a major reason we are at peace. History will record our triumphs on the battlefield, but no one can ever write a full account of the wars never fought, the losses never suffered, the tears never shed because the men and women of our military were risking their lives for peace. We should never, ever forget that.¹⁵⁵

In the first sentence of the fragment, Clinton mentioned in passing that ‘America is not at war’. This was a fundamental characterization of the context for the attack on the USS Cole. He mentioned ‘risk’ and ‘dangers’ in the world, but underlined how ‘our military’ was guarding for peace, preventing ‘wars’, ‘losses’, and ‘tears’.

Our military power is not all people see when ships of the United States enter a foreign port. When U.S. sailors head down the brow of the ship or our troops set foot on foreign soil, our hosts see in the uniform of the United States men and women of every race, creed, and color who trace their ancestry to every region on Earth, yet are bound together by a common commitment to freedom and a common pride in being Americans.¹⁵⁶

Clinton enhanced the symbolism of the US military even further as he intertwined the concepts of community, freedom, and being American.

That image of unity amidst diversity must confound the minds of the hate-filled cowards who killed our sailors. They can take innocent life, they can cause tears and anguish, but they can never heal or build harmony or bring people together. That is work only free, law-abiding people can do. And that is why we will do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to find those who killed our sailors and hold them accountable, and why we will never let the enemies of freedom and peace stop America from seeking peace, fighting terrorism, and promoting freedom. For only by defending our people, our interests, and our values will we redeem the lives of our sailors and ruin the schemes of their killers.¹⁵⁷

In the context of the lack of war and the American quest for peace, the attack on the USS Cole represented the action of a ‘hate-filled’ other. It was a demonstration of the divide between ‘we’ (or us) and ‘them’, although Clinton did not make the ‘other’ more specific here. According to Clinton, it required that the United States lead the world by sharing its

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155 Ibid.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid.

values, celebrating diversity, and affirming ‘our common humanity’.¹⁵⁸ The global security context, the symbolism of the US military, and the divide between self and other are themes reflected in several speeches that followed.

No securitization effort

Clinton did not make a securitization effort following the attack on the USS Cole; indeed, he took limited public actions in response to the USS Cole attack compared to the aftermath of the 1998 Embassy attacks. A formal letter to Congress on October 14 explained the deployment of approximately 100 troops and two US Navy vessels to provide security, disaster response, and medical assistance. US forces would ‘redeploy as soon as the additional security is deemed unnecessary’.¹⁵⁹ On the day of the attack, officials from the FBI, CIA, and Naval Criminal Investigative Service were dispatched to investigate. Initially, the authorities in Yemen were somewhat wary of letting these US officials act independently and carry rifles.¹⁶⁰ In an exchange with reporters on October 30, Clinton admitted that some difficulties between US and Yemeni officials had complicated the ongoing investigation to ‘find out who did it’, but emphasized that everyone was ‘working very hard’.¹⁶¹

Unlike the military response following the US Embassy bombings in 1998, Clinton did not discuss any customized policy response in public. Since the 1998 missile attacks, US senior government officials had become more hesitant to respond with military strikes. This was partly because of Clinton’s past personal problems and a lack of accurate and credible intelligence.¹⁶² With regard to Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, the indictment, reward, and position on the most wanted list remained in place. Moreover, in secret, Clinton had given the CIA, FBI, and military the authority to go after Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, a program that involved frequent use of Predator unmanned aerial vehicles scanning for any signs of Bin Laden in Afghanistan, and submarines armed with cruise missiles on stand-by.¹⁶³ However, it proved difficult to build enough confidence on the intelligence gathered to engage possible targets. Other plans for deploying US Special Forces to capture or kill Bin Laden and other *Al Qaeda* members in Afghanistan were met with resistance from the armed forces. Military leaders often thought the risks were too high, and the intelligence and legal base for action too weak. As stated, Clinton had no military record and received criticism from the military for

158 For example Bill Clinton, ‘Remarks at a Reception for Hillary Clinton in Flushing, New York’, October 23, 2000, *Public Papers*, 2000 III, 2292.

159 Bill Clinton, ‘Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Forces in Response to the attack on the U.S.S. Cole’, October 14, 2000, *Public Papers*, 2000 III, 2191.

160 9/11 Commission Report, 192.

161 Bill Clinton, ‘Remarks on the Budget and the Legislative Agenda and an Exchange With Reporters’, October 30, 2000, *Public Papers*, 2000 III, 2314-2315.

162 Richard Clarke, *Your Government Failed You, Breaking the Cycle of National Security Disasters* (New York, Harper Collins Publishers 2008) 161.

163 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 222-225.

having opposed the Vietnam War.¹⁶⁴ This negatively influenced his ability and willingness to order Special Forces to conduct counterterrorism operations against the advice of the military leadership.

Nevertheless, efforts to gather intelligence and target or arrest Bin Laden continued. Law enforcement and intelligence agencies thought from the beginning that the attack ‘smelled, looked and tasted like an *Al Qaeda* operation’, but they needed a link between the perpetrators and a known *Al Qaeda* member.¹⁶⁵ In November 2000, an FBI agent found one via Tawfiq bin Attash (also known as Khallad), but it was not until 2002 that the US had evidence connecting Bin Laden personally to the attack on the USS Cole.¹⁶⁶ President Clinton later testified before the 9/11 Commission that there were some ambiguous indicators of *Al Qaeda* directing the attack, but ‘not enough to go to war or threaten the Taliban to go to war, launching an invasion of another country’.¹⁶⁷ In October 2000, Clinton and other US government officials publicly stated it was not yet certain whether Bin Laden was behind the USS Cole attack. Speaking of terrorism more generally, Clinton recognized how difficult it was to combat terrorists.¹⁶⁸ Behind the scenes, he determinedly continued to explore the options available to capture Bin Laden, given the available intelligence reporting and covert intelligence and military capabilities.¹⁶⁹ The investigation on Bin Laden would continue under President George W. Bush.¹⁷⁰

The Middle East powder keg and US presidential elections

The context of other world events taking place, in addition to US domestic developments, is crucial to interpret the meaning of Clinton’s statements on the USS Cole attack for his formal and moral audiences. Days before the USS Cole was attacked, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resembled a powder keg exploding. The visit of Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount, or *al-Haram al-Sharif* complex with the *Al Aqsa* mosque, in Jerusalem led to a second Palestinian uprising (*intifada*). On October 12, 2000, Palestinians lynched Israeli reservists who had entered Ramallah. President Clinton had been personally committed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process right from his early days as president. He now saw the carefully reached Oslo accords signed in 1993 by Yitzchak Rabin and Yasser Arafat nullified in weeks. Right from his first response to the USS Cole attack on October 12, Clinton also

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164 Ibid.

165 9/11 Commission Report, 192.

166 Ibid.

167 Ibid, 195.

168 Bill Clinton, ‘Remarks at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Nebraska’, December 8, 2000, *Public Papers*, 2000 III, p2659.

169 Clinton, *My Life*, location 19193.

170 Bill Clinton, ‘Interview With Mark Knoller of CBS Radio in Dover, New Hampshire’, January 11, 2001, *Public Papers*, 2000 III, 2910.

mentioned the situation in the Middle East in his speeches. According to Clinton, like the visit of the USS Cole to Yemen, US involvement in the Middle East was necessary precisely to try to end violence and promote peace.

Another element influencing the content and settings of the president's public statements were upcoming elections and the consequential ending of Clinton's last term in office. Vice-President Al Gore was running against Governor George W. Bush. In late 2000 and early 2001, Clinton often publicly reflected on his past two terms, summing up his successes and emphasizing the prosperous state of the country.

And I can honestly say there has never been a time in my lifetime where we have had the longest economic expansion in history and lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, so we're moving in the right direction economically. But we also have declining crime, declining welfare rolls, declining teen pregnancy and drug abuse among young people, improving schools, improving health care coverage, and a cleaner environment. So you've got the economy getting better, the society getting stronger, with the absence of severe domestic crisis or external threat to our security. We all know it's still a dangerous world, as the people of Virginia felt most of all when our U.S.S. Cole was attacked and we lost those fine young men and women sailors several days ago. But we are as free from external threat to our security and internal paralyzing crisis as we have ever been. And all these things are going well.¹⁷¹

Optimism and hope overruled the fear of international terrorism. Although it was still 'a dangerous world', according to Clinton, there was an 'absence of severe external threat'. He stated American society was as 'free as we have ever been'. The address was made in a Baptist church before the smaller audience of a congregation, a week before the presidential elections. Terrorism was not the only issue outdueling optimism. The attack on the USS Cole was one among many other foreign policy priorities: the security situation in Israel and Palestine, Russia, the Balkans, Sudan, North Korea, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan were all on the US foreign policy agenda as declared national emergencies.

Despite Clinton's words, the threat posed by Bin Laden to the US had not diminished since the attacks on the US Embassies in Africa. At the end of 2000, the US State Department officials, and law enforcement and intelligence officers continued to focus on the threat still posed by Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*. The annual 'Patterns of Global Terrorism' for 2000 summarized *Al Qaeda's* intent, capabilities, and activities: its aim was to establish a pan-Islamic Caliphate by expelling Westerners and non-Islamic regimes from Muslim countries.¹⁷² The number of members or followers of the 'umbrella organization' for Sunni Islamic extremists was estimated between several hundreds and several thousands.¹⁷³ The organization was

171 Bill Clinton, 'Remarks to the Congregation of Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia', October 29, 2000, *Public Papers*, 2000 III, 2373.

172 US Department of State, 'Patterns of Global Terrorism', 2000, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/2450.htm>, (last retrieved April 4, 2015).

173 Ibid.

held responsible for the 1998 US Embassy bombings in Africa, claimed to have shot down US helicopters in Somalia in 1993, and conducted several bombings in Yemen in 1992 against US troops. Among other failed attempts or plans were operations against US and Israeli tourists in Jordan during millennial celebrations.

According to the annual report, *Al Qaeda* maintained close ties with several other terrorist groups, such as *Al-Jihad* (or EIJ) led by Ayman Al-Zawahiri. It was the first time the annual report classified *Al-Jihad* as a 'close partner of Bin Ladin's al-Qaida organization'.¹⁷⁴ The previous year, *Al-Jihad* had been described as an organization divided into two factions: those advocating a peaceful approach to reach their goal of establishing an Islamic State in Egypt, and those led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, supporting high-level and high-profile attacks. So, as of 2000, the peaceful front was no longer included in the State Department's description of *Al-Jihad*. The terrorist group now referred solely to the followers of Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of the five Islamist leaders who had signed Bin Laden's *fatwa* in 1998.

Reproduction and recontextualization in the media

American news media fully broadcasted President Clinton's initial reaction to the USS Cole attack, and reported details of the attack as the information came in. No one had claimed responsibility for the blast. The president's words were deemed 'a very strong statement', condemning the incident in Aden as 'a cowardly and despicable act' and promising 'to find those responsible'.¹⁷⁵ Apart from being a tragedy, some reporters concluded it was also 'something of an embarrassment that a high-tech warship in a dangerous part of the world proved so vulnerable to a small boat loaded with explosives'.¹⁷⁶ In the following weeks, the investigation was closely monitored by all major US news media and every aspect of the aftermath of the attack was reported, such as the ceremonial arrival in the US of the bodies of victims and the return of the USS Cole. US warships had been ordered to remain off shore in the region and all refueling in the Yemeni port of Aden was cancelled. However, the attack would 'not trigger a retreat from the area', according to a statement by the commander of US Central Command on CNN.¹⁷⁷

News reporters and invited experts speculated on who was responsible for the attack. Although various options were considered, such as the Lebanese Hezbollah or Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, most experts immediately named Osama bin Laden and the closely

174 Ibid.

175 Bob Schieffer (Anchor), 'President Clinton Comments on The Terrorist Attack on the USS Cole in Yemen', television program, *CBS News Special Report*, 1:50 pm ET, New York, CBS News, October 12, 2000, Julie Chen (Anchor), 'President Clinton Promises to Find Those Responsible for the USS Cole Attack', *The Early Show*, 7:00 am ET, New York, CBS News, October 13, 2000.

176 Dan Rather (Anchor), 'Investigation Continues into the Bombing of the USS Cole', television program, *CBS Evening News*, 6:30 pm ET, New York, CBS News, October 13, 2000.

177 Frank Sesno (Anchor), 'Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing on USS Cole Attack Moves Behind Closed Doors', television program, *CNN News Day*, 12:00 am ET, New York CNN, October 25, 2000.

affiliated EIJ led by Ayman Al-Zawahiri as most likely suspects.¹⁷⁸ Bin Laden was described repeatedly as ‘America’s number one terror suspect’.¹⁷⁹ In Yemen, preparations for the attack had apparently started over a year ago. The perpetrators had used false identities and took extra measures to secure the gate to their residence. According to some media, events preceding the attack on the USS Cole also gave reason to suspect Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri. This included a US intelligence report that had been released a month before the attack stating that ‘a group close to Bin Laden’, the EIJ, had mentioned attacking a US warship with a small boat. At the time, the report was deemed not specific enough to take precautionary measures.¹⁸⁰ Another event concerned a video of Bin Laden that had aired three weeks before the attack, in which ‘two of Bin Laden’s lieutenants’ had warned the US to pull their troops out of Yemen.¹⁸¹

Concerns were rising in news reports regarding ‘where Bin Laden might strike next’.¹⁸² This fueled speculation in the media on whether Clinton should order military strikes against targets in Afghanistan. Reports varied in the way they recontextualized the strikes and paralleled them to the military response following the 1998 US Embassy bombings. For example, CNN reporter Nic Robertson reported from Kandahar, Afghanistan, that new strikes on the country might increase the threat of terrorism. He highlighted that Afghan people and international diplomats in the country were ‘apprehensive’ that the country might be blamed for facilitating and enabling the organizers behind the attack.¹⁸³ According to Robertson, the general feeling was that another military attack on Afghanistan ‘would really compound the problem’ and ‘would just make more people who would want to go out and perpetrate terrorist acts against the United States’.¹⁸⁴

CBS News White House correspondent Bill Plante underlined that the administration was first and foremost trying to carefully verify who was behind the USS Cole attack, despite the ‘enormous amount of pressure’ on the government to respond, for example by ‘saber rattling’ from Senate Foreign Relations Chair Jesse Helms.¹⁸⁵ According to Plante, the lesson learned from the missile strikes in 1998 was that any military strike needed to be directed at

178 Carol Lin (Anchor), ‘Attack on the Cole, Former CIA Counterterrorism Official Points Finger at bin Laden’, television program, *CNN Early Edition*, 07:00 am ET, New York, CNN, October 20, 2000, Dan Rather (Anchor), ‘Investigation into the USS Cole Bombing is Leading Investigators to Osama Bin Laden’, television program, *CBS Evening News*, 6:30 pm ET, New York, CBS News, October 18, 2000, Peter Jennings (Anchor), ‘USS Cole Hit by Terrorist Bomb in Port of Yemen, Intelligence Sources Suspect Osama Bin Laden’s Group’, television program, *World News Tonight*, 6:30 pm ET, New York, ABC News, October 12, 2000.

179 Bill Hemmer (Anchor), ‘Osama bin Laden’s Organization No. 1 Suspect in USS Cole Bombing’, television program, *CNN Morning News*, 0900 am ET, New York, CNN, October 19, 2000.

180 Rather (Anchor), ‘Investigation into the USS Cole Bombing is Leading Investigators to Osama Bin Laden’.

181 Ibid.

182 Dan Rather (Anchor), ‘Concerns are Growing About How and Where Osama Bin Laden May Strike Next’, television program, *CBS Evening News*, 6:30 pm ET, New York, CBS News, October 20, 2000..

183 Judy Woodruff (Anchor), ‘Osama bin Laden Presence in Afghanistan Could Expose Country to U.S. Attack’, television program, *CNN Worldview*, 6:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 19, 2000.

184 Ibid.

185 Bryant Gumbel (Anchor), ‘Who May Have Caused The Attack On The USS Cole And Why’, television program, *The Early Show*, 7:00 am ET, New York, CBS News, October 13, 2000.

the right target. In the media, US government officials such as Richard Clarke acted similarly. Clarke reproduced President Clinton's 'tough' statements during a CBS interview that the perpetrators 'would not find a safe harbor'.¹⁸⁶ According to Clarke, the perpetrators of the USS Cole attack would be brought to justice, no matter how long it took. He emphasized the US's strong record of arresting terrorists, and noted that the Clinton administration had tripled the counterterrorism budget to \$12 billion a year. But what the CBS interview with Clarke mostly reflected was the combination of determination and carefulness observed by the US government. It was essential that the right targets were struck. As an illustration, Clarke described the US approach to Bin Laden after the 1998 Embassy attacks metaphorically in terms of slowly but steadily ripping apart his organization:

We have quietly gone after that organization, and we're picking it apart limb by limb. We're not done yet, but we will be.¹⁸⁷

No military response came following the USS Cole attack, although several media reports quoted anonymous US government sources that serious plans were made for a 'very heavy and severe retaliation'.¹⁸⁸ According to some of these sources, President Clinton wanted to end his final term in office as a strong leader.¹⁸⁹

What mostly surfaced in the media reporting on the USS Cole attack was the difference of character between law enforcement and intelligence. Criminal investigators emphasized the lack of evidence for the involvement of one of their prime suspects, Osama bin Laden, whereas from an intelligence perspective the potential threat posed by Bin Laden and his organization stood at the forefront. In the months after the attack on the USS Cole, the US government issued several threat warnings to US servicemen and civilians worldwide which news media connected to Bin Laden.

From the very first moment, reporters and terrorism experts recontextualized official statements on the USS Cole attack in news reports by speculating on the involvement of *Al Qaeda* and EIJ.¹⁹⁰ Compared to news reports following the 1998 Embassy attacks, questions of Bin Laden's background were less prominent; a general frame of reference had already been established among audiences. Bin Laden was described as the 'United States' number one terror suspect' and deemed among 'America's most wanted'.¹⁹¹ Reporting was more about what Bin Laden and his network or organization were responsible for, and what the current

186 Lesley Stahl (Co-host), 'Dick Clarke, US Counterterrorism Teams Working to Prevent Attacks, Overseas And Domestic, By Terrorists', television program, *60 Minutes*, 7:00 pm ET, New York, CBS News, October 22, 2000.

187 Ibid.

188 Richard Sale, 'Clinton Administration considers strike options', *United Press International*, November 28, 2000, Julian Borger, 'Middle East crisis, US ponders air strikes against Bin Laden', *The Guardian*, October 25, 2000.

189 Ibid.

190 Schieffer (Anchor), 'President Clinton Comments on The Terrorist Attack on the USS Cole in Yemen'.

191 Hemmer (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden's Organization No. 1 Suspect in USS Cole Bombing'.

potential threat was. Public discussions on the lack of a US military response highlighted difficulties in deterring and containing terrorists.

Other international and domestic events influenced reproduction and recontextualization of US government statements on terrorism mostly indirectly. Time and space available to news media on television and in print is always limited, and topics were prioritized. In 2000, the US was involved militarily in various regions across the globe, for example guarding no-fly zones over Iraq and participating in the NATO missions Stabilization Force (SFOR) and Kosovo Force (KFOR) in the Balkans. Furthermore, the violence between Israelis and Palestinians broke down the peaceful initiative to which President Clinton had personally committed himself.

Domestically, the run-up to the US presidential election in late 2000 was naturally a major topic in news reports. The campaign focused mostly on domestic issues such as social security and Medicare. News media did not relate the lack of a military response to the elections themselves. This was unlike what had occurred with the presidential decision to conduct missile strikes in 1998, when several news media had discussed whether there was any causality between domestic developments and US foreign policy – between the military strikes and the Lewinski matter.

With the coming elections and other international developments, Clinton did not publicly pursue military action like he had after the Embassy attacks. The US administration emphasized the doubts and need for ‘absolute certainty’ of who was behind the attack on the USS Cole before Clinton could order any military response. At the same time, Clinton emphasized that ‘those responsible will be found’. This pointed towards the criticality of both intelligence and criminal investigations. Secretly, the Clinton administration continued to pursue an active counterterrorism policy against Bin Laden, discussing plans of covertly attacking or apprehending him.

Overall, how did the narrative reflect elements of securitization, the use of discursive and non-discursive power, and the shaping of US identity? And what can be learned about the narrative itself from the analysis?

Power, securitization, and identity in the US institutional terrorism narrative

This section summarizes and analyzes key findings in the US institutional terrorism narrative on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*. The narrative begins in the mid-1990s, as Bin Laden (and later *Al Qaeda*) emerged on the US national security agenda, and is characterized by Clinton’s fluctuating initiative to engage in securitization efforts. The Embassy attacks in 1998 were followed by the clearest securitization effort and execution of extraordinary measures. In part, Clinton justified the legitimacy of military strikes *ex post* because presidential powers enabled him to do so. Overall, several consequential discursive and non-discursive events added to the developing narrative on *Al Qaeda*’s representation of a new kind of terrorism.

The United States' government, structure, roles, and social practices were highly institutionalized. US institutions were reflected in the settings in which texts were produced and consumed. As **securitizing actor**, the US President (directing his staff) had the power to do certain things by giving orders, but also had power over the American people which he exercised in or behind discourse. As a means of power in discourse, for example, he could influence the genre of press briefings. He controlled the timing, the character of attendees, and the extent of their contributions to the questions asked. When speaking, he selected the location and setting for these addresses. Different genres, such as a presidential nation-wide address, an interview on television, or a letter to US Congress, involved distinct (historic, institutionalized) rules of communication. The office of the US president granted an aura of authority and legitimacy to text production which enabled Clinton to influence these genres. As a form of power behind discourse, he was also able to set a standard for the language that was used with regard to security topics. However, declaring something an extraordinary threat by invoking the National Security Act was only partly of influence on the effect of securitization efforts. It was the wider configuration of circumstances of the power relations between speaker and listener, but also the nature of audiences and the context that influenced the subsequent development of culminating securitization efforts.

It was also through addressing various types of audiences that the presidential position was shaped and authority for securitization was generated. Support among Clinton's **formal audience**, US Congress, was reflected by votes in favor of legislation and policy. In 1995, Clinton's Democratic Party lost the majority position in Congress. Republicans had the majority vote in both the House of Representatives and Senate until 2000, limiting Clinton's options to formulate policy as Republican support was required. As commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the US president had the power to conduct foreign policy and declare threats to national security. This included ordering military strikes, blocking trade, and seeking various forms of cooperation with other nations such as Kenya and Tanzania. However, the power to declare war lay with Congress. Clinton's troubled relationship with Congress became even more strained after the Lewinsky affair: the impeachment attempt had caused sincere damage.

Besides the formal institutionalized relationship between the president and Congress, as organized in the US constitution, the president had an electoral and moral obligation to represent all American citizens: his **moral audience**. During President Clinton's time in office, technological developments caused a shift in the media landscape Clinton's audiences. The internet and the growing number of television stations reduced the influence of the US government on news media and hence its ability to shape public opinion.¹⁹² However, as the focus of these new media outlets was increasingly on presidential personage instead of the office of the presidency, the influence of the presidential rhetoric increased.¹⁹³ Developing a

192 Report of the National Task Force on Presidential Rhetoric in Times of Crisis as in James Aune, Martin J. Medhurst, (eds.) *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric* (Austin, Texas, A&M University Press 2008), 363.

193 Report of the National Task Force on Presidential Communication to Congress as in Aune, Medhurst, (eds.) *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*, 283.

good relationship with the American people became more important as a basis for authority than institutional rituals such as an inauguration.¹⁹⁴

Measuring the relationship between US government and its citizens is more complex than measuring that with Congress. Since the 1930s, news media have reported on presidential approval rates, yet researchers and journalists have debated the value contributed to the outcome of the polls.¹⁹⁵ Some journalists have tended to use the polls as a fever chart, linking outcomes to public opinion on recent developments, whereas other scientific research has identified more deeply rooted feelings such as party affiliation as important factors.¹⁹⁶ Clinton's presidential approval rates were rather stable, even during the turbulent years of 1998 and 1999, supporting the latter position.¹⁹⁷ Between 1995 and 2000, the overall trust in the US government increased.¹⁹⁸ Trust in the ability of the national government to deal with domestic problems rose relatively more than for international problems.¹⁹⁹ Among respondents, trust in various American institutions between 1995 and 2000 remained relatively stable (Congress 24%, Supreme Court 48%, the presidency 46%, the military 64%).²⁰⁰ Variations were less than 5 percent points from average, except for the presidency, which varied from 39% in 1996 to 53% in 1998.²⁰¹ An important reason for Clinton's popular support was the sound state of the American economy.²⁰²

With regard to the perceived threat of terrorism against family members, polling indicated a steady decrease in concern ('very or somewhat worried') among American citizens from 42% in April 1995, to 32% on August 20, 1998 (after the Embassy bombings), and 24% in April 2000.²⁰³ Other polling in 1994 and 1998 indicated that the 'international terrorist' threat against US vital national interests was increasingly perceived as 'critical' by respondents (from under 70% to 84%).²⁰⁴ Notably, only 38% of respondents perceived

194 John M. Murphy, 'Power and Authority in a Postmodern Presidency' as in Aune, Medhurst, (eds.) *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*, 33.

195 Aune, Medhurst, (eds.) *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*, 305.

196 George C. Edwards, *Presidential Approval, A Sourcebook* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press 1990), 134-152.

197 Gallup, 'Presidential Job Approval, Bill Clinton's High Ratings in the Midst of Crisis, 1998', <http://news.gallup.com/poll/4609/presidential-job-approval-bill-clintons-high-ratings-midst.aspx> (last retrieved February 7, 2018), Gallup, 'Presidential Approval Ratings, Bill Clinton', <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116584/presidential-approval-ratings-bill-clinton.aspx>, (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

198 Pew Research Center, 'Public Trust in Government: 1958-2017', May 3, 2017, <http://www.people-press.org/2017/05/03/public-trust-in-government-1958-2017/> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

199 Gallup, 'Trust in Government', <http://news.gallup.com/poll/5392/trust-government.aspx> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

200 Gallup, 'Confidence in Institutions', <http://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

201 Ibid.

202 Pew Research Center, 'Public Trust in Government: 1958-2017', Arthur H Miller, 'Sex, Politics, and Public Opinion', 725.

203 John Mueller and Mark Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts, The Policing of Terrorism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2016) 81, Gallup, 'Concern about being a victim of terrorism', <http://news.gallup.com/poll/4909/terrorism-united-states.aspx> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

204 Ibid, 88, Gallup, 'Americans Support Active Role for U.S. in World Affairs', April 1, 1999, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/3961/americans-support-active-role-us-world-affairs.aspx> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to US vital interests in October/November 1998.²⁰⁵ The percentage, comparable to polling between 2004 and 2014, was a basic indication of how the threats of both new international terrorism and Islamist motivations were perceived in different ways.

In a general sense, these trends correspond to Clinton's securitization efforts in 1998 and 2000. After the Embassy attacks, he emphasized the threat of Bin Laden's organization and network for US interests. At the turn of the millennium, Clinton's positive securitization effort served to decrease perceptions of the terrorist threat against the US public during the millennial festivities. In 2001, Clinton also refrained from making a securitization effort after the USS Cole bombing, emphasizing optimism about the state of the world. However, what these rudimentary numbers lack is a closer examination of respondents' perception on the worry and fear articulated in US news media in late 1999.

As an intermediate, US news media also had a certain power in and behind discourse over their audiences. Presidential statements were quoted literally or broadcasted live, but also introduced and commented on by news anchors and subject matter experts. Some experts were invited more frequently than others, depending on their expertise and the way they were able to contribute to the developing frames in a meaningful way. Because of the power invested in the American president to act and his power in and behind discourse, reproduction and recontextualization was extensive. US media closely followed Clinton's rhetoric. Differences in recontextualization had different potential effects on the already fluctuating development of securitization of *Al Qaeda* related terrorism. The size of network news audiences, the circulation of newspapers, and increasing numbers of views of news websites indicated substantial consumption of news topics among American citizens, although domestic topics garnered more interest than international politics did.²⁰⁶

But at the same time, what people viewed or read and what they thought or perceived were two different things. This was emphasized by reporting on the Lewinsky affair. Despite high television network viewing rates regarding Lewinsky, public polling indicated that viewers wanted to be informed more about domestic and foreign policy topics than about Clinton's personal affairs.²⁰⁷ Surveyed Americans found the US missile strikes on Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sudan to be more significant events than the Lewinsky affair.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, between 1995 and 2000, public trust in news media remained relatively stable, varying no more than 5 percent points from average (newspapers 33%, television news 35%).²⁰⁹ To some

205 Gallup, 'Americans Support Active Role for U.S. in World Affairs', Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 'Poll, Republicans Fear Islamic Fundamentalism Even More Than after 9/11', August 22, 2016, <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/press-release/poll-republicans-fear-islamic-fundamentalism-even-more-after-911> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

206 See for example Pew Research Center, 'Internet news takes off', June 8, 1998, <http://www.people-press.org/1998/06/08/internet-news-takes-off/> (last retrieved June 21, 2016).

207 Koppel (Anchor), 'What in the world is going on?', Stephen Earl Bennett, 'Another Lesson about Public Opinion during the Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 32 (2002) 2: 276-292.

208 Felicity Barringer, 'Impeachment, The Media, In Poll, Public Says Clinton Scandal Wasn't '98's Most Compelling Event', *The New York Times*, December 23, 1998.

209 Gallup, 'Confidence in Institutions'.

extent, public polling could validate whether securitization efforts and reproduction or recontextualization in news media had an effect on the opinion of moral audiences. It provided a voice to Clinton's primary moral audience, similar to the political voting behavior among his formal audience.

Does this render reproduction and recontextualization in news media obsolete as a sign of resonance of securitization efforts among the moral audience? Not completely. It can also be argued that the frame of reference of Clinton's moral audience and their readiness to be convinced were partially reflected by the tone in these media reports, as news media sought to maximize their audience by accommodating viewers. The self-reflection with regard to the Lewinsky affair could also be seen as a sign in that respect. In sum, there was a triangular relation between the securitizing actor, various types of audiences, and the media. The media partly reflected the efforts of the securitization actor, and to a certain extent the media were a generative force of their own. In some respects, however, they also reflected audience preferences.

Securitization efforts

At different times in the 1990s and early 2000, the threat posed by Osama bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* was encompassed by securitization efforts, as highlighted by Clinton in the narrative. The configuration of circumstances of these efforts varied case by case through their reproduction and recontextualization before formal and moral audiences. This illustrates the difficulty of speaking in terms of 'successful' securitization. Although the US military strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan could be viewed as a legitimate response to the attacks on the US Embassies in Africa, some also saw them as a possible diversion from the investigation into Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky. Conversely, recontextualization in the media of Clinton's response to the USS Cole bombing potentially improved audiences' threat perception of future terrorism organized by Bin Laden against Americans.

In the years preceding the 1998 Embassy bombings, the US institutional terrorism narrative on Osama bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* consisted of only a few incidental references, but it was not absent. Several public intelligence estimates reported on a new kind of terrorism as Arab fighters sought new fronts to conduct jihad in the early 1990s. Bin Laden was connected to attacks on US troops in Yemen in 1992 and Somalia in 1993, and to the New York WTC bombing in 1993. Moreover, he had lauded the attackers bombing US-related targets in Riyadh and al-Khobar in 1995 and 1996. In 1995, the US State Department portrayed Bin Laden as a major financier of terrorism. Following his declaration of war in 1996 and *fatwa* in 1998, several US law enforcement and intelligence agencies intensified efforts to monitor his activities and made plans to deal with him. The reproduction and recontextualization of the interviews created an initial public image of Bin Laden in the Western world that was

fundamental for the frames of reference of Clinton's audiences. They were shaped further by later reproduction and recontextualization of the reports in other media.

Following the 1998 Embassy attacks, Clinton characterized Osama bin Laden as **referent subject** and deemed him and his followers to be the most dangerous non-state terrorist threat to the US. Clinton's depiction of the referent subject's support base differed somewhat as the genre, setting, and audience of statements changed. In his remarks before his moral audience, Clinton referred to 'the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Bin Laden' and to 'the Bin Laden terrorist network', but also to how 'the organization' Bin Laden led had 'planned, financed, and carried out' the Embassy bombings. The strikes targeted 'Bin Laden's network infrastructure', according to Clinton. In contrast, the latter did not use the word 'network' or 'group' in the letters he sent to his formal audience. Only 'the Bin Laden organization' was mentioned and related to terrorist activities, facilities, and training. The characterization and demarcation of the referent subject was stricter for Clinton's formal audience, justifying (ex post) the legitimacy of the securitization effort and the customized policy.

Most early descriptions of Bin Laden between 1995 and 1998 did not characterize him as a typical referent subject. Before 1998, he was defined as a 'private financier' and an 'enabler' of attacks. He was an 'extremist' with radical 'Muslim followers'. In general, the emphasis was on his capabilities. Details on his motivation and the fact that he inspired people were less prominent in the selected texts. It was the non-discursive action of the attacks that triggered Clinton's response and provided the powerful setting. Similar attacks could happen again. According to Clinton, America promoted peace and security around the world and it was for this reason that Bin Laden targeted US citizens. Clinton characterized the **referent object** in general terms as 'the US' or 'America', and more specifically as 'US citizens' or 'those dressed in military uniforms and civilians'. All were targets, putting the national security of the country at stake. As noted, there was a difference in threat perception for Americans between US vital interests and the personal risk of family becoming a victim of terrorist attacks. For Clinton's formal audience, all variations of the referent object were encompassed by the umbrella term of 'national security'.

The administration had 'compelling evidence' that the terrorists were ready to strike again soon. According to them, a successful military strike and financial measures constituted the necessary **customized policy** to counter the immediate threat. The president informed both his formal and moral audience ex post of his decisions. Clinton held the authority to conduct these military strikes in response to a threat to national security under the War Powers Resolution Act. For the execution of the customized policy, the audiences were not formally required to accept the speeches and letters, yet in a wider moral sense they were asked to accept the threat image presented to them. The Clinton administration stated that the military strikes were but steps in a wider battle against terrorism. This battle also highlighted the national identity, norms, and values against which terrorism was aimed, and as such strengthened the power base of US institutions such as the presidency.

A second securitization effort was made before the UN General Assembly. In his speech, Clinton provided a new map of the world. He stated that the world needed to think about terrorism in new ways. Terrorists had become increasingly sophisticated, acquired more and more information, were increasingly mobile, and attempted to acquire chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, according to Clinton. Bin Laden was a clear representation of this new threat. Non-state terrorist actors of his kind threatened the very open institutions the UN member states were building. Clinton also contextualized the new terrorism in terms of violence in many other regions and areas in the world. The effect of his securitization effort on the summit's overall discourse was difficult to observe, as numerous other topics were addressed. In a general sense, the respectful way in which Clinton was treated by his audience aligned with the cooperative tone in his speech. At the US national level, the securitization effort added to the wider US institutional terrorism narrative, and strengthened US national identity and the genre of US presidential statements.

Of significant influence on both securitization efforts, in terms of meaning, was the reproduction and recontextualization in US news media. The latter reproduced the primary securitization elements (securitizing actor, referent subject, referent object, and customized policy). When referring to US identity in terms of promoting peace and security in particular, President Clinton's statements were quoted literally in most cases. This was also the case when the victims of the terrorist attacks in Kenya and Tanzania were commemorated. Three forms of **recontextualization** stand out in US news media following the 1998 Embassy attacks. First, the *capabilities and personality* of the referent subject were emphasized. More than in Clinton's own statements, news reports focused on the money and expertise that Osama bin Laden possessed. He was characterized as an 'exiled Saudi millionaire', and some suggested that the best way to deal with the threat was to 'go after his money, cut his money off'. These 'new terrorists' were seeking 'new technologies', possibly 'acquiring weapons of mass destruction', using 'greater openness' and 'mobility' of people around the world. Information was also provided on Bin Laden's background and personality. Although occasionally described as 'charismatic' and as 'instigating', he was mostly referred to in functional terms such as a 'skilled businessman', 'fundraiser', or 'organizer'. Experts and (former) US officials held him responsible for major terrorist attacks against US targets in the last decade. Bin Laden's motivations were mentioned to a lesser extent. Furthermore, the media focused more on 'the man' Bin Laden was than on the people who surrounded him. Bin Laden's picture was shown repetitively on television sets across the US and the rest of the world. The 5 million dollar reward and Bin Laden's inclusion on the list of most wanted American fugitives aligned with such a focus. This context provided by the media enforced Clinton's securitization effort. In broader terms, Bin Laden and his followers represented the 'enemies of peace' to whom Clinton referred before the United Nations General Assembly.

Second, news reports emphasized the *limited effects of the military strikes* in Sudan and Afghanistan. Even though 75 cruise missiles were used, the targets were not totally destroyed. It was also doubtful whether any high-value targets had been killed. The public

damage assessment nuanced the American people's thinking on the success of the strike, and by doing so questioned the value and accuracy of classified intelligence. This related to both the intelligence that had helped to identify the targets, and the sources that provided information on damage done after the strikes. Partly related, there was also a discussion on the *legitimacy* of striking the targets, especially the pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. In a general sense, when classified intelligence is questioned by public media reporting, it is an uneven challenge. Nothing can be made public about the intelligence without endangering sources and methods, and hampering future intelligence work. To some extent, the discussion on the effectiveness of the strikes weakened the authority of the Clinton administration. The media nevertheless reproduced the threat of new terrorist attacks without much question, as they did not have access to the government's 'compelling evidence' on this matter. Putting the strikes in a broader perspective rather than a win-or-lose assessment, most media reports stated that the strikes were but the beginning of an effort to counter this new kind of non-state terrorism.

Third, other domestic and foreign political developments tended to shift public attention away from terrorism. Speculations on *Clinton's motives* for ordering the military strikes reduced the strength of both securitization efforts that followed the Embassy attacks, especially before his formal audience. A conflict between Clinton's personal identity and the social identity of the presidency emerged and weakened his position. Some news channels stated that any causality between the Lewinsky matter and the military strikes was preposterous, yet reports on both topics still related to the same man. Republicans underlined that the office of the president had been damaged by the Lewinsky affair as it had altered the president's personal identity in a way that did not match national norms and values. The Republicans had the majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the affair even resulted in an unsuccessful impeachment procedure being initiated by a vote in the House of Representatives. Public polls indicated that Americans did not care that much about the Lewinsky affair, but television broadcasts on the subject were well viewed nonetheless. Partly because of the Lewinsky matter, Clinton's address to the UN General Assembly was not the most important topic on television. Furthermore, at the global level, other issues dominated international relations at the time, such as developments in Kosovo. Internationally, this reduced the attention paid to the securitization of a new kind of international terrorism. Still, Bin Laden and the threats he made to the United States became a framework for terrorism in news reports, and hence among formal and moral US audiences (to some extent). Bin Laden was projected as the most dangerous man in the world.

In an effort to manage the threat of terrorism and limit Bin Laden's freedom of action, Clinton identified the Taliban, who facilitated and harbored Bin Laden in Afghanistan, as part of the referent subject. Declaring the Afghan Taliban a threat to US national security in July 1999 only had a limited effect in financial terms. In media reports, the economic sanctions ordered by Clinton against the Taliban were characterized as mostly symbolic. The lexicon used sent a mixed signal on whether the Taliban's policy to harbor Bin Laden

was a criminal or hostile military act, and called into question the level of success of the US military strikes conducted in August 1998. The securitization of the Taliban represented an additional focus on *supporters* of terrorism, and a move away from a military reaction towards a more symbolic diplomatic and economic public response. In diplomatic terms, this effort became more relative as well, as several months later the Taliban even gained some international credibility by successfully mediating with hijackers who had landed an Indian Airlines plane in Afghanistan. Hidden from the public eye, intelligence operations and criminal investigations against Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* were ongoing.

Another way in which the Clinton administration dealt with terrorism was *positive securitization* of its preventive actions at the turn of the millennium. Days before the festivities, the media reported extensively on all that could go wrong, including the possibility of terrorist attacks. This caused Clinton to respond in a reassuring manner that stressed self-determination. He stated that the US government was doing all it could to offer Americans maximum protection from harm. This practice confirmed and strengthened the authority of the US government and the presidency; offering protection is part of the very essence of the state. As Clinton emphasized protection, he implicitly also highlighted the threat posed by individuals, but he did not publicly relate the threat to Bin Laden or *Al Qaeda*. It was only months later, in an address at the US Coast Guard Academy, that Clinton revealed that the uncovered millennium plots were linked to Afghan training camps, *Al Qaeda*, and Bin Laden. As stated at the beginning of the section, rudimentary polling between 1995 and 2000 indicated a global downward trend with regard to a minority of respondents fearing family members could become victims of terrorism.²¹⁰

Following the USS Cole attack in 2000, Clinton did not make an explicit securitization effort. The context he provided for the attacks was that 'America was not at war', and in general 'it was a time of peace'. According to Clinton, the threat of terrorism was among the many dangers US servicemen faced. No specific military response was proposed in public as customized policy, like the strikes that had followed the Embassy bombings in 1998. In general Clinton, stated that containing and deterring terrorists was difficult, although the US would hold those responsible accountable. The initial official US response mostly underlined the need to gather evidence and refrained from accusing Osama bin Laden or *Al Qaeda* of the attack. In media reports, however, experts and anonymous US officials involved with the investigation instantly linked the USS Cole attack to Osama bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, emphasizing what Bin Laden was responsible for, and with what capabilities and where the organization could strike next. On the other hand, the news reports also reproduced the government's intent to conduct a highly thorough investigation instead of retaliating without solid evidence.

In the background, however, covert operations continued to be planned against Bin Laden. Administration officials such as Richard Clarke made a public effort to explain that since the 1998 Embassy bombings, the government had been doing all it could to 'take Bin

210 John Mueller and Mark Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts*, 81, Gallup, 'Concern about being a victim of terrorism'.

Laden's organization apart' with intelligence operations.²¹¹ This brought to the forefront the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary customized policy and operations. Without publicly articulating threats in terms of securitization, the US president had the ability to act against threatening referent subjects within the domain of intelligence and special operations. But a parallel remained between the extent of public securitization efforts and the execution of covert operations, as also illustrated by the record high reward issued for actionable information on Bin Laden under the Rewards for Justice program. This was an institutional practice to gather actionable information which aligned with the securitization efforts, but also had symbolic aspects. Similarly, the FBI's most wanted list was a publicity tool used in conjunction with law enforcement investigations.

What became apparent from analyzing the selected texts was that Clinton also sought to emphasize feelings of *optimism*. In 1999 and 2000, the US national identity, norms, and values that defined the referent object became increasingly prominent in the narrative. Reflecting on the past decade of transformation, Clinton noted that the turn of the millennium marked an opportunity to establish a true changing of times and realize greater peace, prosperity, freedom, and human rights. In the context of the run-up to the presidential elections in November 2000, Clinton repeatedly elaborated on these values as a driving force for his foreign policy. In light of the attack on the USS Cole, Clinton emphasized that the killed US sailors were 'standing guard for peace', exemplifying how people with widely different backgrounds could unite. He stated that their goal was to 'build harmony' and 'bring people together', 'celebrating diversity while recognizing universal human rights' to show the world that the US led 'to share its values'.

In the late 1990s, public opinion polling broadly indicated that the American people shared Clinton's views. Satisfaction among respondents about the general state of affairs in the US gradually increased from 30% in November 1994 to 58% in November 2000, peaking at 71% in February 1999.²¹² Active US involvement in the world was also supported. In both 1999 and 2000, 97% of US respondents viewed the US as a leading military power in the world, and of these respondents over half deemed the US *the* leading military power.²¹³ With regard to the US's economic position in the world, 96% and 99% of respondents viewed the US as a leading nation in 1999 and 2000.²¹⁴ Respondents viewed military might as more important than economic power. Overall, during the 1990s, two thirds of American respondents supported an active role of the US in the world, especially with regard to critical threats such

211 Stahl (Co-host), 'Dick Clarke, US Counterterrorism Teams Working to Prevent Attacks'.

212 Gallup, 'Satisfaction With the United States', <http://news.gallup.com/poll/1669/general-mood-country.aspx> (last retrieved January 10, 2018).

213 Gallup, 'US Position in the World', <http://news.gallup.com/poll/116350/position-world.aspx> (last retrieved February 7, 2018).

214 Ibid.

as international terrorism.²¹⁵ Support for an active approach to world affairs also related to US military involvement with NATO in the Balkans.

As Clinton had almost completed his second term by the end of 2000, he reflected on the state of the country in several statements and addresses. His main message was that although it was still a dangerous world, the US was as free from external threat to security and internal crisis as ever before. By advocating that prosperity also brought the responsibility to spread American social and democratic values internationally, Clinton placed himself in the Wilsonian US foreign policy tradition, striving for a democratic and peaceful international community.²¹⁶ This reflected a wider background context of how American Democrats advocated their role in the unilateral post-Cold War era from a more idealist perspective. In contrast, neoconservative Republicans such as presidential candidate George W. Bush opposed the US becoming too much engaged in nation building activities, and argued that the US government should prioritize domestic wellbeing and the physical security of its citizens.²¹⁷ As the letter that Defense Secretary William Perry wrote to President Clinton following the Khobar bombing in 1995 illustrates, however, physical security and pursuing national (economic) interests were also very much part of the Clinton administration's foreign policy.

The character of the narrative

In the early and mid-1990s, the US government identified a new kind of sophisticated international terrorism. After the 1998 Embassy attacks, the framework of religiously motivated terrorism as embodied by Bin Laden became prominent at the forefront of the national security order of discourse. In 1998 and 1999, Clinton made clear efforts to securitize Osama bin Laden, *Al Qaeda*, and the Taliban as threats to US national security and US citizens. The situational context of the attacks on US Embassies in Africa and the powers invested in Clinton as President of the United States made the efforts themselves undisputed. The domestic and international contexts and the recontextualization in news reports both reduced and enhanced the meaning of these efforts to some extent.

In general, the frame of reference offered to Clinton's formal and moral audiences on the threat of terrorism shifted significantly, also due to institutional practices such as the criminal investigation and indictment of Bin Laden: he represented the nation's number one non-state threat. In 1999 and 2000, some of the prominence of the securitization efforts in the broader US national security order of discourse was lost. US economic growth, diverse foreign policy issues, a world in transformation, and Clinton's term coming to its end were all

215 Saad, 'Americans Support Active Role for U.S. in World Affairs', Barbara A. Bardes, Robert W. Oldendick, *Public Opinion Measuring the American Mind*, fifth edition (London, Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 247.

216 Mead, *Special Providence*.

217 Commission on Presidential Debates, 'Transcript of the Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate', October 11, 2000, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050403122916/http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2000b.html> (last retrieved April 20, 2015).

factors of influence. In the new millennium, the articulation of the threat posed to national security by *Al Qaeda* decreased.

Most visible in the US institutional terrorism narrative was the way the violent non-discursive action of the Embassy attacks *reactively* triggered discursive events, and how justification for the legitimacy of extraordinary responsive measures were offered *ex post*. The production and consumption of texts related to non-discursive action, such as the use of the United States' diplomatic, economic, and military power against the capabilities of Osama bin Laden and his followers. Furthermore, this narrative also highlighted several strands of identification, most prominently *self-identification*. Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* embodied the antithesis of American identity. The use of US military means across the world expressed commitment to a US foreign policy aimed at establishing peace and stability. According to Clinton, Americans were targets of terrorism because of their peaceful intentions. Enemies of freedom, filled with hatred, threatened US identity itself.

Lastly, it appeared from media reporting and public opinion polling that US citizens found Bin Laden's motivations and grievances vague and difficult to grasp. Bin Laden's 1996 declaration of jihad, the 1998 declaration by the WIF, and several interviews, along with developments in Afghanistan, Africa, and the Middle East, were incidentally referenced in the US institutional terrorism narrative on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*. However, they were discussed within the wider background context of US culture and national security. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, English translations often excluded 'fringes' such as Quranic verses, poetry, and Islamic legal jurisprudence, and emphasized the threats made to the US in Bin Laden texts. *How* and *why* things were said were less of a concern than *what* was said about the US.

Reflection

As a prelude to the last chapter, the following reflects on the US institutional terrorism narrative on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the narrative? What are limitations or caveats of the sources used? How useful is the narrative for identifying securitization? What can be learned about the narrative analysis framework from applying it?

The narrative that emerged is a descriptive representation of the selected texts. Compared to the *Al Qaeda narrative*, there was much more information available for the *US institutional terrorism narrative* and no issues with translating. The availability of all public presidential statements and the accessibility of a large body of media reporting (primarily through LexisNexis) enabled the thorough selection of adequate data for the narrative. Several US polling institutions, such as Gallup, Pew Research Center, and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, were able to provide (rudimentary) polling information on perceptions among Clinton's moral audience. However, although institutions such as Gallup have a lengthy

scientific track record of polling Americans, it was only after the attacks on September 11, 2001 that detailed questions with regard to Bin Laden, *Al Qaeda*, Islamic fundamentalism, and international terrorism were asked on a frequent basis.

Memoirs and other literature were used in addition to the primary data of selected texts to provide context and fill in some of the gaps on covert action that were not described in public statements. The ex post use of memoirs does not imply that narrative analysis as part of ex durante intelligence analysis is impossible. In a collaborative environment, intelligence analysis should involve dialogue with working-level policymakers on the strategic narrative and implemented security measures and policies. Furthermore, detailed knowledge of secret policies and covert actions or other security practices could enable even better contrastive analysis of how these actions would be reflected in other narratives, such as those of adversaries, and to what effect.

On the other hand, it is possible that ex post findings on *Al Qaeda* and Bin Laden that have influenced accounts on events and circumstances enabled a more comprehensive composition of the *US institutional terrorism narrative*. These findings include, for instance, those reflected in the 9/11 Commission report, and those in some of the literature by Jason Burke, Ali Soufan, Michael Scheuer, Lawrence Wright, and others. In practice, ACN will always be an imperfect striving to provide the most optimal basic analytic narratives. In case of ex durante intelligence analysis or research, this imperfect nature will become even more apparent. However, the reality of information gaps or distortions does not render the use of the ACN methodology impossible. It offers a way to process, position, and analyze public texts on discursive and non-discursive action and the raw intelligence reporting collected from human and technical sources. Most ex durante secret intelligence reporting is not made available ex post for academic research, and certainly not on short notice. Thus, in that respect, intelligence practitioners would have an advantage.

The *US institutional terrorism narrative* was constructed from segments of texts that often elaborated on many other (foreign policy) topics or were produced in a setting also influenced by other issues. The main challenge for the US narrative was to decide to what extent these topics had to be taken into account to properly contextualize and situate Clinton's statements. While this narrative concentrated on *Al Qaeda*, an overly narrow focus on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* would have led to the disregard of the extent to which other entities were also deemed part of the 'new terrorism' as formulated in 1998 before the UN. Furthermore, were the sanctions against the Taliban partly imposed to send a signal to the Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif? If Clinton recognized Bin Laden as a significant threat to US national security, why was it also important to state after the USS Cole bombing that the US was in a time of peace and not at war?

In contrast to *the Al Qaeda narrative*, identifying the moral and formal audiences was less of a challenge for the US narrative. The domestic and international position, formal powers, and responsibilities of the US president were structured to a large extent by laws and related genre conventions. This provided a natural fit with the role of the securitizing actor within

the securitization framework as described in chapter 2. There is a certain inverse logic to the two challenges of determining the (contextual) relevance of issues, and identifying audiences in the narrative analysis. The formal and moral audiences for Clinton's securitization efforts were more clearly distinguishable than in the case of the *Al Qaeda* narrative because of the institutionalization of the United States. In and through the various practices of the state and its citizens with regard to a multitude of domestic and international issues, social roles had been defined and confirmed. In contrast, the *Al Qaeda* narrative was more centered around the single issue of *jihād* against the far enemy, trying to expand the reach of the idea and establish and confirm social roles in the process. For both challenges, the second-generation securitization theory was most adequate as it approaches resonance among audiences from a contextual perspective and problematizes the identification and status of various types of audiences. This topic is addressed more fully in the last chapter.

Another potential issue of concern was the distinction between the institutional and the personal when analyzing narratives. By speaking, President Clinton brought institutional authority to the topics discussed. However, the president is also human. Making a distinction between more personal idiosyncratic rhetorical elements and the institutional discursive practice of the administration and US government institutions was difficult as the timeframe of this narrative limited analysis to the Clinton administration only. With additional research on other cases or timeframes, this potential weakness in the analysis should be addressed more fully. To what extent were Bill Clinton's statements informed by his own ideals more so than US institutional traditions? Based on this research, no conclusions can be drawn on the continuity of the US institutional terrorism narrative on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* across different presidencies.

Working with the data showed how the identification of securitization elements from texts was not primarily dependent on detailed word-for-word discourse analysis of texts. Focusing on cohesion of and among text fragments, especially the lexicon used, did however provide additional analytical value to determine the workings of securitization elements in more detail. In general, by concentrating on drawing the center line of a narrative based on a selection of texts, this chapter succeeded in providing a basic analytic narrative that allows for the comparative analysis that is the overall aim of the case studies on *Al Qaeda*.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Critical terrorism narrative

Introduction

The rationale behind the *critical terrorism narrative* must be explained and emphasized. This third narrative is not some ‘verdict’ from an ‘independent’ third party, nor is the perspective outlined in this chapter necessarily a highly influential narrative. On the contrary. The *Al Qaeda narrative* and the *US institutional terrorism narrative* can be viewed as discourses at the macro level. They involved people who were in the social position to produce texts with explicit performative power: President Clinton could sign laws and decrees that were binding for US citizens, and Bin Laden’s directives carried meaning for those who had pledged loyalty (*bayat*) to him. In contrast, this *critical terrorism narrative* manifested more at a micro (individual or personal) level, due to the actors and the nature of their relationship with audiences involved. To a certain extent, journalists are free to report what they want, but so are audiences to read or view what they desire. The performative power of these texts is limited. In the intelligence practice (and among securitization scholars), studying such critical micro narratives is unconventional.

Within the broader framework of ACN, the narrative described in this chapter is therefore of a different value and performs a different function. The focus lies on reflections and critique (tensions and inconsistencies) with respect to securitization efforts described in the two macro narratives. The narrative points from outside both the dominant social practices of the politics of nations and Salafi-jihadism to how notions of difference feature in the way these social spaces are organized. Rather than the researcher (or intelligence analyst) advocating for alternative views in a normative way, this function could in principle be performed by an unlimited number of critical narratives. The narrative presented in this chapter could be characterized as one of many commentators on discursive and non-discursive displays of the macro narratives. To what extent did the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives respond to or even need each other? To use a metaphor, was some sort of tennis match going on between them? Capturing the nature and potential of the critique generates additional questions and could inform further research (or intelligence activity) on *Al Qaeda*. It could also provide insights on broader US security practices and policies, but the ultimate focus in all narratives lies on *Al Qaeda* as the intelligence problem.

More than the two previous chapters, the selection of this narrative was the researcher’s choice, though it was an informed decision based on argumentation and theoretical considerations. The narrative is situated in a distinctly different social structure and practice compared to the previous chapters: the social space of the network society and the information society. Principal discursive practices are investigative journalism and mass media reporting, but also writing books and memoirs. These are distinct in terms of genres and settings from primary discursive practices in the *US institutional terrorism narrative* (e.g.

Clinton statements) and the *Al Qaeda narrative* (e.g. Bin Laden statements). Especially the *US institutional terrorism narrative* was influenced by reproduction and recontextualization of official statements in news media, mostly mass media. However, it is possible and valuable to separate this from the reporting part of this narrative. Thus, this chapter analyzes specific journalists' news media reporting as part of a distinct narrative. The open information society allows investigative journalists and news correspondents to report and comment on social events and circumstances in their own way, surpassing 'official' narratives. This opens up possibilities to critically highlight the use of power by others: to perform actions, to control the availability and selection of discursive resources, to maintain genre conventions, and to standardize language use. By itself, the *critical terrorism narrative* described in this chapter lacks the large and adequate audience and hence the weight to be of significant influence on the macro narratives. Nevertheless, as stated, it has the potential to provide an ideology critique of the naturalization of meaning through processes of securitization, thereby broadening the understanding of social or intelligence problems.

ACN on *al Qaeda* is not finished with this third narrative. In fact, comparing narratives of complex, dynamic, and ambiguous (intelligence) problems is never finished. Already within the social practice of the information society, a vast number of (critical terrorism) narratives can be identified. These can be related to either other journalists or other entities that are active in the social space of the information society, such as think tanks or non-governmental organizations. Compared to the latter two, the work of journalists offers a more detailed discourse that is more responsive to the various social events in the macro narratives. The general impression that journalists are also more independent and objective in their work than (political) think tanks is in fact more nuanced.¹ The next sections elaborate on the information society and explicate how the critical terrorism narrative has been further narrowed down.

The social practice of the information society

The social practice of the information society and the network society as the corresponding social structure are not 'new'.² Throughout history, exchanging information has been a precondition for any society to exist, and human relations can be viewed as organized in terms of networks.³ It was the technological developments in the last decades that increasingly enabled processes of globalization and the information revolution. These brought the significance of networks as social structures and processes of information exchange as social

1 Steve Weinberg, *The Reporter's Handbook, An Investigator's Guide To Documents and Techniques*, third edition (Boston, St. Martin's Press 1996), Els Witte, *Media & Politiek, Een inleiding tot de literatuur* (Brussel, VUBPRESS 2002).

2 This research mainly draws on Castells, *The Information Age*, Castells, Cardoso, *The Network Society*, Jan van Dijk, *The Network Society, Social Aspects of New Media*, second edition (London, Sage 2006), Robin Mansell (ed.) *The information society, Critical concepts in sociology* (London, Routledge 2009).

3 Castells, *The Information Age*, 21, as in Van Dijk, *The Network Society*, 20.

practice so clearly to the forefront. A core principle of the network society is the centrality of relations between social units, both horizontally and across different levels. Often, the various levels have been defined as groups, organizations (or institutions), societies, world systems of societies and, especially in Western society, individuals.⁴ Media networks have become an increasingly significant component of social networks, as digital exchange of information has increasingly replaced personal communication. The extreme levels of information generation, processing, and exchange, and the use of supporting technology characterize an information society.

In the present study, the process of exchanging information can be viewed as a social practice within the social structure of 'the network society'. From this perspective, individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions are organized around streams of information. Not all societies have developed network structures to the same degree. High-tech societies are more advanced in this sense. From the mid-1990s, the internet started to develop on a global scale, in terms of both people who had access to it and the ability to communicate. However, penetration rates were increasing mostly in the developed 'Western' continents of Europe, North America, and Oceania. Furthermore, cultural, institutional, and historical differences among societies cause the global network society to manifest itself regionally or locally in various ways, while still having similar fundamental features.⁵ In the last decades, new technologies, the information revolution, and processes of globalization have increasingly enabled information to surpass traditional institutional boundaries and evade the genre conventions and power disposition that shape national or organizational strategic narratives.

Media such as the internet, newspapers, magazines, television, and radio fulfill a crucial function in the communication to various audiences of the constituent texts that make up critical journalistic narratives. However, although journalists have a certain degree of freedom to produce texts, they are subject to professional and ethical standards, and power relations in the information society as well. The Western media landscape, which is relevant for this narrative, is composed of various conglomerates, news agencies, and organizations that report on a plethora of social events and phenomena, including Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. For most organizations, making a profit is a central concern. To some degree, managers and editors impose corporate identity and standards, reflected in topics and writing styles. Employees' operating space varies with the type of discursive practice.

Two 'distinct' discursive practices in news media

Analytically, the discursive practices of investigative journalism and mass media news reporting are distinct ideal types. They can also be seen as situated along a spectrum along

4 Van Dijk, *The Network Society*, 26.

5 Castells, *The Network Society*, 4.

which journalistic activities can be positioned. Traditionally, mass media are institutionalized commercial means to communicate messages (via radio, television or internet) to large audiences; this is something of an industry. To be effective within the limited time and space available for topics, as costs need to be kept to a minimum, mass media reporting aims to frame news in superficial, simplistic, and short-term expressions.⁶ Reporters and news desks work under the constant pressure of competition, commercial advertisers, audience demands, and rating points to quickly converge events into easy-to-grasp frames.⁷ Because of the constant need for news media to produce reports and to be omnipresent, the agendas and content offered by states, institutions, and major press agencies often offer a baseline routine for reproduction by mass media broadcasters.⁸ Furthermore, once certain frames of reference or routines have been established, it becomes more difficult to present issues that do not easily align with these recognized frames. Observations and opinions of research journalists and experts who are invited as commentators are constrained by the limited time available, the setting and genre conventions of news shows, and the framing of topics by the questions that are asked.

In contrast, less ‘mass produced’ investigative reports in newspapers are closer to the journalistic ideal of independent research. Reporters do not follow someone else’s agenda: they themselves decide what is worthy of coverage, while maintaining professional standards such as the adversarial principle.⁹ Some investigations take years to complete and involve extensive global cooperation. Journalists are able to distance themselves more from the occupational reality of following and reproducing the statements and agendas offered by others. Often, some party involved in the story does not want to disclose information. In theoretical terms, research journalists are critical interpreters seeking to go beyond dominant explanations. Investigative reporting aims to provide more in-depth meanings to events and circumstances by researching topics over longer periods of time, and consulting an array of knowledgeable personal contacts, experts, and confidential sources. Consumers of investigative reports are required to understand issues in somewhat more complex, contradicting, multi-level, and ambiguous terms, compared to the accessible frames circulating in mass media.

In practice, the distinction between investigative journalism and mass media reporting is much less clear. Much journalistic work falls in between both types as it mixes elements, and intermediate forms can be defined. In depth research includes highly extensive information gathering, and mass media news reporting generally relies more extensively

6 Jeffrey Scheuer, *The Sound Bite Society, Television and the American Mind* (New York, Four Walls Eight Windows 1999), Witte, *Media & Politiek*.

7 Scheuer, *The Sound Bite Society*.

8 Witte, *Media & Politiek*, 180, Herman, E.S., Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent, The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London, Vintage Books 1988).

9 Weinberg, *The Reporter's Handbook*.

on readily available official (government) sources.¹⁰ Yet another form of journalistic work is essayistic commentaries or op-eds, which are published in smaller ‘quality’ newspapers. They often challenge the dominant media frames. Still, most journalists only have a certain bandwidth to operate freely as many are directed by their employers to operate from specific areas or cover certain issues. There is a relationship between the stories a journalist chooses to write, what his employer asks him to write about, and what stories audiences want to read, hear, or view. Stories on *Al Qaeda* by a journalist stationed in Yemen, Israel, or Pakistan will automatically also reflect some of the local dynamics and relevance for the local area.

Instead of precisely classifying journalists, it is more helpful to analyze their work in all its variety against the backdrop of the two ideal types of journalism presented. Reporting has many forms or genres (for example current news reports, interviews, documentaries, commentaries, or columns). Depending on the media platform, and the task and setting of journalists and news correspondents, their work can reflect either more of the ‘transmission belt’ type of journalism (which conveys the agendas of others) or self-initiated independent research.¹¹ The more journalists initiate research themselves, operate relatively freely, collect from a range of private and public sources, and are able to write and publish their stories unhindered, the less these perspectives are reproductions of the messages and agendas of others.

Demarcating and narrowing down the narrative

Journalists offer their perspective on the securitization efforts, statements, and activities of others. For example, when journalists reported on their Bin Laden interview, they described it from their own views and insights and recontextualized these reports with additional documentary-type articles on circumstantial topics. This brings a methodological difference to the forefront compared to the previous two chapters. For the *Al Qaeda narrative* and the *US institutional terrorism narrative*, the elements of the theoretical concept of securitization (e.g. securitizing actor, referent subject, referent object, audiences, and heuristic artefacts) were identified in the texts. In contrast, to analyze and interpret the selected texts for the *critical terrorism narrative*, these elements served as a point of departure for critical reflections in this micro narrative. The binding logic of the narrative lies in the way journalists highlighted (either enforced or critiqued) the elements of securitization and the use of power as identified in the previous two case studies. Consequently, tensions, contradictions, and gaps in the other narratives could be indicated. In what way were securitization efforts contested?

In the 1990s, many journalists investigated Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*. Central to the *critical terrorism narrative* in this thesis is Robert Fisk, the British foreign correspondent in the

10 Jane D. Brown, Carlo R. Bybee, Stanley T. Wearden, Dulcie M. Straughan, ‘Invisible Power: Newspaper News Sources and the Limits of Diversity’, *Journalism Quarterly*, 64(1987) 1: 45–54.

11 Weinberg, *The Reporter’s Handbook*.

Middle East working for the British newspaper *The Independent*. He has stated that he opposed 'obedient, safe journalism' that conformed too much to those in power and saw it as his aim to 'monitor and challenge authority all the time', especially when violence was used.¹² Fisk has also declared that he opposes any form of violence in any case.¹³ His explicit critical attitude potentially places him more towards the investigative journalism than the mass media reporting paradigm, although still somewhere in between.

But why Fisk? The decision was mainly based on three arguments. First, of all journalists who actually interviewed Bin Laden, Fisk did so the most (three times), and in two countries (Sudan and Afghanistan). In contrast to several other Western journalists who interviewed Bin Laden, Fisk spoke Arabic. Second, comparative research into the texts of both Fisk and American correspondents, such as CNN expert and terrorism scholar Peter Bergen, highlighted how the latter often cited US government officials (both on and off the record) as sources for contributions to news media. Unlike Bergen and other American news correspondents, Fisk worked from the Middle East.

He was stationed in Beirut since 1979 for British newspapers *The Times* and *The Independent*. As a result, Fisk more extensively described his experience in the region. Besides interviewing and reporting on Bin Laden in the 1990s, he covered a number of conflicts in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans, including the Lebanese conflict, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Algerian civil war, the Iran-Iraq war, the Bosnian war, and the Kosovo war. After 2000, he also reported from Pakistan and Baghdad for longer periods of time. He has received several British and international journalism awards, and has been granted more than 10 honorary university degrees over the past decades. Fisk is a self-proclaimed pacifist and has stated that he challenges any authority, especially 'when they take people to war'.¹⁴ He was explicitly critical of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Finally, third, despite this criticism, Michael Scheuer, the former head of the CIA's Bin Laden unit in the 1990s, described Fisk as one of the 'reputable journalists with reliable access to Bin Laden'.¹⁵ Although Scheuer also characterized Fisk as a 'consistently harsh critic of US foreign policy in the Islamic world', he nonetheless deemed the journalist 'fair-minded' in explaining his views on the issues fueling anger among Muslims towards the US.¹⁶ According to Scheuer, despite Fisk's anti-American bias, he was 'a veteran, an internationally honored Middle East correspondent and his analysis rings true'.¹⁷

12 University of California Television (YouTube publisher), 'Conversations with History, Robert Fisk', December 14, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjoGLA4mVxU> (last retrieved April 27, 2018).

13 Ibid.

14 Wolfitos Sullivan (YouTube publisher), 'Robert Fisk, War, Geopolitics and the Middle East', November 2, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qu8R8CQpYBE> (last retrieved April 27, 2018), Center for International and Regional Studies (YouTube publisher), 'State of Denial, Western Journalism and the Middle East | Robert Fisk', November 15, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6ASJA7fbcE> (last retrieved March 27, 2017).

15 Scheuer, *Osama Bin Laden*, 225, Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris*.

16 Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, 301, 316-317

17 Ibid, 34.

To assess the uniqueness of Fisk's interviews with Bin Laden, his reports were compared with reporting from others who conducted such interviews. Peter Bergen and New Zealand-born war correspondent Peter Arnett interviewed Bin Laden for American satellite news channel CNN. Later, Peter Bergen would continue to contribute extensively as a correspondent and expert to CNN news broadcasts on Bin Laden. American journalist and later New York Police Commissioner John Miller did so for the American channel ABC News. American Middle East correspondent Scott MacLeod held an interview for *TIME Magazine*. Lastly, British film maker Gwynne Roberts' documentary on Bin Laden is included in the analysis. It was broadcasted as part of British television program *Dispatches* on Channel 4. MacLeod and Roberts provided more fragmentary and incidental reporting on Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, whereas Fisk's and Bergen's reporting is most central to the analysis. Fisk's (sometimes highly provocative) critique on the US is not discarded, but analyzed in light of the CNN reporting with Peter Bergen for comparison. To what extent did American reporter Peter Bergen have a more constructive attitude towards the US? Did Fisk and Bergen advocate similar viewpoints? What were the main differences in terms of meaning?

There were distinct differences in genre and setting between the newspaper articles produced by Robert Fisk and contributions made by Peter Bergen to CNN television news reports. During the 1990s, Fisk was located in various Arabic countries as a dedicated Middle Eastern correspondent. He produced texts that were published in print and allowed him to make more complex arguments in an essayistic fashion. *The Independent* has been advertised as a newspaper 'free from party political bias and free from proprietorial influence', enabling its correspondents to write in a critical way.¹⁸

Peter Bergen functioned as a (senior) CNN producer and CNN panel member (as counterterrorism analyst, writer, and scholar), mostly from Washington. He traveled on occasion, for example to Afghanistan and Pakistan for the March 1997 Bin Laden interview and the Indian Airline hijacking at Kandahar airport in January 2000. In the CNN studio, he was often bound by his role as part of expert panels, the questions asked, the time available for him to answer, and the other topics that were discussed. As a consequence of the bricolage nature of CNN news reports, the comments provided by Peter Bergen reflected a mixture of his own assessments, those communicated by others to Bergen (such as US officials), and reproduction and recontextualization of statements by others in the news broadcast. However, Peter Bergen also produced several articles that allowed for a more comprehensive description of his assessments.

With circulation rates in the United Kingdom limited between 50,000 and 100,000 in the 1990s and dissemination via internet only starting to develop, *The Independent* was a relatively small British newspaper. Incidentally, other Commonwealth newspapers, such as the Canadian *Hamilton Spectator* or *Ottawa Citizen*, also published copies of Fisk's articles. However, this stands in stark contrast to the millions of US and international viewers reached by CNN

18 The Independent, 'Home page', www.independent.co.uk (last retrieved July 7, 2016).

television broadcasts in the 1990s. This raises the question of the extent to which Peter Bergen's contributions to the CNN broadcasts correspond to the mass media ideal type.

Text selection was based on several criteria. Almost all texts were gathered from the LexisNexis database, as this was the most comprehensive and systematically available collection of media reporting. There was a minor possibility that some articles or transcripts had been inadvertently left out of the database or remained undetected by the search queries used, due to inconsistencies in the unitization of metadata. However, the vast number of articles available and the ability to perform 'full text' search minimized the chance that fundamental contributions remained unselected for narrative analysis.¹⁹ In addition, a special volume published by *The Independent* covered all of Fisk's articles for the newspaper, and included some graphical elements such as the original article lay out. Still, a concern that had to be considered was the 'impoverished' presentation of the lay out of the available articles in the LexisNexis database. Original formats that would enable analysis of visual aspects of an article or televised news report were not readily available and only incidentally included. It was also impossible to incorporate in the analysis how reports were situated spatially (in print) or chronologically (when broadcasted) with respect to other media reporting.

The LexisNexis database allowed for relatively straightforward search queries to be used, which combined the names of Robert Fisk and Peter Bergen with Bin Laden. In the resulting collection, key parts of texts were identified based on either a chronological clustering in the number of reports around certain events, or the extent to which the content of a text was relevant. Focal points for the analysis of the data were the events and securitization efforts identified in the previous two chapters. They included the 1996 Ladenese memorandum, the 1998 WIF declaration, the 1998 Embassy attacks, the US missile strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan, Clinton's formulation of the threat of 'a new kind of terrorism' before the United Nations General Assembly, Operation Desert Fox over Iraq, the Taliban as threat to US national security, and the attack on the USS Cole in 2000. The extent to which the reporting of Fisk and others was reproduced and recontextualized by other media was also brought into the analysis, although in a limited way.

■
19 David Deacon, 'Yesterday's Papers and Today's Technology, Digital Newspaper Archives and 'Push Button' Content Analysis', *European Journal of Communication*, 22 (2007) 5: 5-25, K. Neil Jenkins, Daniel Bos, 'Analyzing Newspapers, Considering the Use of Print Media Sources in Military Research', in Alison J. Williams, et al (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods* (Oxon, Routledge 2016), 64-65.

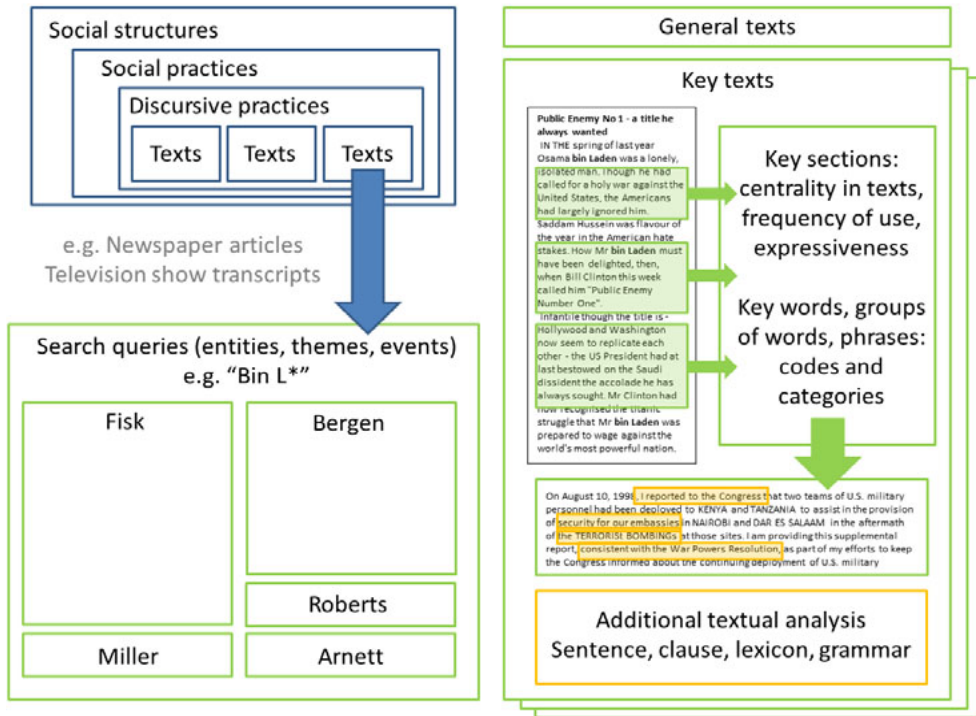


Fig 5.1 Schematic overview of text selection and analysis

All in all, based on the argumentation presented above, two choices were made for this narrative. First, a social space, the social practice of the information society, was identified that had the potential to cultivate a relevant narrative. Second, Fisk was chosen as a central figure for the narrative described in this chapter. The value of the *critical terrorism narrative* lies in its potential to highlight the use of power to act, and the power in and behind discourse associated with the securitization efforts in the *US institutional narrative* and *Al Qaeda narrative* described in the previous chapters. Its function is not per se to offer 'Fisk's truth' to the reader, but to provide a viewpoint to review the macro narratives. As noted, other critical narratives (situated within the same or a different social practice) could perform the same function.

The following section of the chapter offers an interpretation and analysis of the selected texts produced by Robert Fisk. Thereafter, an additional selection of texts comprising the work of various other journalists is analyzed. In the third section, Scott MacLeod's Bin Laden interview in Sudan and several televised interviews with Western journalists in Afghanistan enable more extensive (comparative) research and offer additional insights with regard to the analysis of non-verbal discursive aspects. The contributions of Peter Bergen feature

most prominently in this third section, reflecting text selection. The chapter concludes by discussing the extent to which the *critical terrorism narrative* offered critique on US and *Al Qaeda* securitization efforts, processes of identification, and power relations.

Interviews and articles by Robert Fisk

The businessman in Sudan

In 1993, Robert Fisk interviewed Bin Laden in the setting of his construction work in the Sudanese village of Almatig. The article provided an initial portrait on Bin Laden for a relatively small British audience. It was the first time Bin Laden had accepted such a request from a Western journalist. The result was an article on Bin Laden that underlined a certain eminence among Muslim fighters.²⁰ Fisk consequently referred to him as ‘Mr. Bin Laden’ and named him a man who ‘looked every inch the mountain warrior of mujahedin legend’ who had fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan.²¹ According to Fisk, ‘Bin Laden’s own contribution to the mujahedin, and the indirect result of his training and assistance, may turn out to be a turning-point in the recent history of militant fundamentalism’.²² Fisk included an anecdote told by Bin Laden on how he had faced a heavy Soviet attack but ‘never was afraid of death’.²³ However, Fisk also characterized Bin Laden as ‘a shy man’ who was ‘wary of the press’, and who at least initially ‘refused to talk about Afghanistan’, minimizing his own role in the fight against the Soviets in the 1980s.²⁴

In the article, Bin Laden was portrayed prominently as a ‘businessman’ and ‘entrepreneur’ who was working on the ‘large and ambitious project’ of constructing a new 800 km highway from Khartoum to Port Sudan. As Fisk reported, Bin Laden had come to Sudan after the Soviets were defeated and ‘differences started between the guerrilla movements’.²⁵ The aim of the construction project, according to Bin Laden, was not to make money, but to ‘help Muslims and improve their lives’.²⁶ Payments were used to buy Sudanese products for export and improve the local economy. Fisk reported that the Sudanese population regarded Bin Laden as a hero who had improved their lives, and that Sudanese preachers also acknowledged his wisdom. The road building project also offered perspective for the Arab mujahedeen who had fought with Bin Laden against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Emphasizing the difference between Bin Laden’s current activities and those in Afghanistan, Fisk asked Bin Laden

20 Fisk, ‘Anti-Soviet warrior puts his army on the road to peace’.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

whether ‘it was not a little bit anti-climactic for them, to fight the Russians and then end up road building in Sudan’.²⁷

But rather than simply acknowledging both his jihadi past and current business activities, the question could also be interpreted as reflecting a slightly critical tone: Was this really all Bin Laden had been up to? Based on ‘the Western embassy circuit in Khartoum’, Fisk noted that outside of Sudan, Bin Laden was not respected to the same degree. Some of the fighters who had followed Bin Laden to Sudan were now allegedly training for further *jihad* in Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt. Bin Laden dismissed the accusations of training as ‘rubbish of the media and the embassies’.²⁸ At the end, when Fisk spoke of Algeria again and asked how Bin Laden felt about the situation in the country, he was interrupted by one of Bin Laden’s associates and told that the interview was over.

Phrased as a question earlier in the interview, Fisk specifically brought the United States into the conversation as he posited that the fighters had been part of ‘a guerilla army encouraged and armed by the United States and who had been forgotten when the war was over’.²⁹ In response, Bin Laden denied seeing any evidence of American help in Afghanistan. A second reference by Fisk to the US related to Bin Laden’s host, the government of Sudan. Fisk stated that Sudan was ‘condemned’ by the US and ‘despised’ by Saudi Arabia over its support for Saddam Hussain during the Gulf war in the early 1990s. The article made no specific mention of how Bin Laden and the US related to each other.



Fig 5.2 Fisk 1993 article in *The Independent*.³⁰

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Fisk, ‘Anti-Soviet warrior puts his army on the road to peace’, Image via <http://www.businessinsider.com/1993-independent-article-about-osama-bin-laden-2013-12?international=true&ir=US&IR=T> (last retrieved April 20, 2018).

In general, descriptions of Bin Laden as a ‘businessman’ and ‘entrepreneur’ recognized his wealth and entrepreneurship, while ‘hero’, ‘warrior’, and ‘mujahedin legend’ underlined his leadership status. Contrary to allegations of supporting armed struggle elsewhere from Sudan, the first phrase of the title ‘*Anti-Soviet warrior puts his army on the road to peace*’ advanced a non-violent characterization of Bin Laden that was supported by the large picture. The title aligned with Bin Laden’s own statement on the matter. The only reference to Bin Laden’s reasons for moving to Sudan with his family was disagreement among fighting groups in Afghanistan. There was no mention of any pressure from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, or other countries. Other media reporting only reproduced the photo of Bin Laden taken by Fisk, not the story. Robert Fisk would continue to refer to his first interview with Bin Laden in later newspaper articles.

An extremist dissident in Afghanistan: Saudi’s most wanted man

In mid-July 1996, *The Independent* printed four articles following the second interview conducted by Fisk with Bin Laden, who by that time had moved to Afghanistan.³¹ Due to the citing of Bin Laden’s words in the interview articles, there was a relatively high level of reproduction in Fisk’s writings. However, in these articles Fisk also questioned Bin Laden’s capabilities and colorfully highlighted inconvenient aspects of Bin Laden’s circumstances. Two of the articles were reflections of the interview, while the other two were more documentary-type articles, describing Fisk’s journey through Afghanistan and reporting on covert weapons shipments by Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan. Canada’s *The Ottawa Citizen* also published a redacted version of Fisk’s leading interview article.³² The American *Associated Press* published a brief report on Fisk’s interview, reproducing Bin Laden’s threat to French and British forces in the Gulf that they would be attacked like US troops in Dhahran as Bin Laden aimed to ‘set up a true Islamic state under traditional Islamic sharia law in Saudi Arabia’.³³ All in all, however, the international reach of Fisk’s writings in the English-speaking Western world remained limited.

Fisk observed that ‘Bin Laden’s return to Afghanistan after five and a half years in Sudan marked a new stage of the Organization of Advice and Reform’, whose leading scholarship

31 Robert Fisk, ‘A Muslim extremist financier now in Afghanistan says British and French forces in Saudi Arabia will be bombed like the Americans unless they quit’, *Associated Press International*, July 9, 1996, Robert Fisk, ‘Why we reject the West – By the Saudis’ fiercest Arab critic, At home in his Afghanistan fastness, Osama Bin Laden tells Robert Fisk why he wants to drive the Americans and British out of the Gulf’, *The Independent*, July 10, 1996, 14, Robert Fisk, ‘The mined land of the mujahidin, Robert Fisk is taken on a perilous journey through blitzed towns and dead fields’, *The Independent*, July 10, 1996, 14, Fisk, ‘Arab rebel leader warns the British’, Robert Fisk, ‘Small comfort in Saudi rebel’s dangerous exile, Agents mix with gun runners and drug dealers in the hunt for Gulf state’s most wanted man, reports Robert Fisk in Afghanistan’, *The Independent*, July 11, 1996, 11, Robert Fisk, ‘Circling over a broken, ruined state, Robert Fisk reports from Afghanistan on the shipments of guns and drugs which are fueling a new round of the Great Game’, *The Independent*, July 14, 1996, 12.

32 Robert Fisk, ‘Saudi dissident warns West to withdraw troops, Bombing start of war with Muslims, U.S. guerilla leader says’, *The Ottawa Citizen*, July 10, 1996, A11.

33 Associated Press, ‘Tuesday R’, 22:17 Eastern Time, July 9, 1996.

had been arrested in Saudi Arabia.³⁴ Fisk re-cited Bin Laden stating that the central campaign was ‘to set up a “true” Islamic state under sharia law in Saudi Arabia which had been turned into an “American colony”’.³⁵ According to Bin Laden, the country was in a socio-economic crisis. Saudi merchants had lost their contract with the government and prices had gone up, while social services and education were deteriorating. In the meantime, the government elite were profiting from US oil investments. According to Bin Laden, despite the poor socio-economic conditions, the Saudi regime had spent tens of billions on first supporting Saddam Hussein against Iran, and then supporting Western armies against Iraq. The regime had also bought unnecessary US military hardware. Fisk stated that a ‘pivotal date’ that made US influence explicit was 1990, as US troops were allowed into the country under fierce protest from Saudi Islamic scholars.³⁶ It is remarkable that this essential event was not articulated in Fisk’s 1993 interview in Sudan.

Bin Laden was quoted saying that the Khobar attack marked the ‘beginning of war between Muslims and the US’.³⁷ This wider view of the conflict was also briefly reflected in Bin Laden’s references to US support for Israel. Mostly, however, the articles situated Bin Laden’s grievances in the regional context of the Gulf. Bin Laden was quoted stating that the Western influence in the Gulf was a core concern, rather than ‘the West and Western people’.³⁸ As a variation to anti-US statements, the articles expressed how Bin Laden also addressed the British and the French to withdraw their troops from Saudi Arabia if they did not want them to be bombed like the US troops at Khobar had been.³⁹ Fisk described how Bin Laden was angry with the British Embassy in Khartoum for receiving a letter just before he left the city that he would not be admitted into the UK. According to Bin Laden, he had made no such request.

Rather than a businessman, in his articles Fisk now characterized Bin Laden as ‘Saudi Arabia’s angriest dissident’ and ‘the fiercest opponent of the Saudi regime and of America’s presence in the Gulf’.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Fisk used indirect descriptions that situated Bin Laden as an extremist, instead of characterizing him as such literally. For example, Fisk stated Bin Laden could ‘never’ be characterized as ‘moderate’ and that there was ‘a dark quality’ to his calculations on the Khobar explosions.⁴¹ Furthermore, Fisk acknowledged that both the Saudi regime and the American troops and officials in the Gulf should ‘probably regard him as the most formidable enemy’.⁴² Yet, he also questioned whether Bin Laden’s options to ‘campaign against the Saudi government’ were not in fact limited and whether Afghanistan had been

34 Fisk, ‘Saudi dissident warns West to withdraw troops’.

35 Ibid.

36 Fisk, ‘Why we reject the West’.

37 Fisk, ‘Arab rebel leader warns the British’.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Fisk, ‘Why we reject the West’.

42 Fisk, ‘Saudi dissident warns West to withdraw troops’.

the only place for him to go.⁴³ Also referenced in the article were accusations by Western and Arab governments that Bin Laden was training fighters to oppose the governments of Algeria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

As a result, Bin Laden had the status of being the Saudi's 'most wanted man', Fisk stated.⁴⁴ Thus, while Bin Laden had warned the British and others to leave the Gulf, Fisk also sketched how 'no one was more of a target than Bin Laden himself'.⁴⁵ According to an unnamed Arab in Bin Laden's camp, the American, French, British, Saudi, and Egyptian governments had pressed the Sudanese government to extradite Bin Laden. He also reported that a Saudi-paid Arab group had unsuccessfully tried to kill Bin Laden and 'claimed there was no other country left for Bin Laden' to go to than Afghanistan.⁴⁶ In a wider sense, the Afghan Arabs following Bin Laden were denounced by 'the presidents and kings of half the Arab world'.⁴⁷ According to an Egyptian in the camp, a group of Egyptian security personnel had recently been traveling in the area looking for Bin Laden, while Americans were blocking access for Arabs to Afghanistan.

Fisk's reports also expressed a notion of isolation and risk. Bin Laden had 'chosen a dangerous exile', according to Fisk, in a country with a collapsed economy and 'tribal societies run by Afghan mafia', gun runners, and drug dealers.⁴⁸ Fisk observed how the camp, set up primarily for Bin Laden's three wives and children, was encircled only by 'a few strands of barbed wire'.⁴⁹ The documentary-type article on Fisk's 'perilous journey' through Afghanistan colorfully described the remoteness of the Afghan Arab camp. He observed large stretches of mined and dust-covered 'dead land', and how 'wild naked children played in ruins' near a 'phantom town'.⁵⁰

Overall, a new image emerged from the reporting on this second interview: that of Bin Laden as an extremist dissident to the Saudi regime who was a significant enemy for the latter and the British, French, and US military presence in the Gulf. However, Fisk recognized that Bin Laden had limited options. Fisk placed his characterization of Bin Laden in the context of Saudi socio-economic problems and the restricting of Saudi political and religious opposition. According to Fisk, it was Bin Laden's move to Afghanistan that marked a new stage in this opposition, stirred increased enmity, and caused a toughening of Bin Laden's views.

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43 Ibid.

44 Fisk, 'Small comfort in Saudi rebel's dangerous exile'.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Fisk, 'The mined land of the mujahidin'.

48 Ibid.

49 Fisk, 'Small comfort in Saudi rebel's dangerous exile'.

50 Fisk, 'The mined land of the mujahidin'.

A complex and hidden international web of relations

One of the documentary-type articles provided a wider context for what Fisk called ‘a new round of the Great Game’ between the greater international powers for influence in Afghanistan.⁵¹ This ‘game’ referenced the Anglo-Russian commercial and military power struggle over influence in Central Asia during most of the 19th century. Fisk offered a mix of observations, quotations, and speculative interpretation that highlighted a secretive complex international web of relations. These connections complicated matters beyond the overt and simplistic public framing adopted by the US government. While Russia offered the Afghan President Rabbani logistical support, according to Fisk, the ‘Saudi-American-backed Taliban’ received weapons shipped on board unregistered flights from Saudi Arabia.⁵²

The Taliban militia – raised in the Islamic schools of Pakistan and now holding most of southern and western Afghanistan – are receiving regular flights from Saudi Arabia: anonymous, white-painted C-130s whose letter-codes betray their Saudi origin, and whose cargoes of green and white wooden boxes are received by squads of commandos who load them onto military trucks. ‘When you know that the Saudis are supplying people with arms, you know the Americans have given their approval,’ a mujahidin commander in Nangahar province remarked nonchalantly. ‘And you can guess why the Americans have taken a liking to the Taliban fundamentalists.’ In theory, of course, this is impossible. In the simplistic, public world of Washington politics, Islamic ‘fundamentalism’ equals ‘terrorism’, and most parties in Afghanistan – save for General Abdul Rashid Dostam’s Tajik-backed forces in the north – officially fall into this category. But the Taliban are useful because – as Wahhabi devotees of the harshest form of Sunni Muslim orthodoxy – they loathe the supposedly apostate Shias of America’s old nemesis, Iran.⁵³

This part of the documentary article added new layers to the reports on the Bin Laden interview: the speculation that the (US government secretly approved of how the) Saudi government covertly supported the Taliban. Fisk stated that ‘in theory, of course, this was impossible’ in the ‘simplistic, public world of Washington politics’, as almost all Islamic fundamentalist groups were ‘officially’ deemed ‘terrorists’. By emphasizing the limitations of the public US foreign policies, the contrast was enhanced with the practice of anonymous flights and the way the Taliban was in fact potentially useful to the US. This way, Fisk suggestively referred to the possibility of the US sanctioning the secret or concealed Saudi practices. Another sign of the speculative character of the argumentation in the text fragment was the cited segment ‘you can *guess* why’.⁵⁴ Asking the reader to fill in the blank

■
51 Fisk, ‘Circling over a broken, ruined state’.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

space and suggesting evidentiary causality was also an attempt to have the reader accept the suggestion.

Further on in the article, the web of relationships grew even more complex. Fisk went into detail about how various opponents of the Taliban, including General Dostam, Afghan President Rabbani, Prime Minister Hekmatyar, and international drug traders fused with the arms dealers 'who work, indirectly, for the major powers'.⁵⁵ They were part of the 'Great Game' between these powers.⁵⁶ The Russian government had traditionally supported President Rabbani. Fisk wrote that various secret flights between Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan 'raised intriguing questions', specifically Rabbani's national airline flights between Jeddah and Jalalabad. He did not elaborate any further on the meaning of these flights, which added to the speculative character of the article.

Nevertheless, by writing the article and emphasizing a complex web of international relations, Fisk diffused any perception of the bipolarity between US-Saudi and Bin Laden-Taliban camps.⁵⁷ This situated Bin Laden's remarks more as a wedge between alleged (US-) Saudi-Taliban relations that had been born out of necessity to counter Russian and Iranian influence in the region. Thus, in addition to the statements in the interview articles, Fisk also highlighted the division between Bin Laden and his host, the Taliban. Speculation and the raising of unanswered questions increased doubt and ambiguity, which ran contrary to the bipolarity of securitization efforts.

The 'shock' of the 1996 memorandum

Another shift or new phase identified by Fisk started in August 1996. It was marked by the publication of the Ladenese memorandum article in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, in which Bin Laden called for guerilla war to expel 'the American occupiers' from Saudi Arabia.⁵⁸ In *The Independent*, Fisk 'confirmed' from his own sources that it was Bin Laden who had written the statement. He mostly emphasized two contextual aspects of Bin Laden's 'most extreme remarks': the release came as a 'profound surprise' to many of his followers, and the timing was possibly related to an upcoming Islamist conference in London.

To the shock of many of his supporters, the Saudi dissident Osama Bin Laden has called for a 'holy war' against the US inside Saudi Arabia and for 'swift and light forces working in complete secrecy' to strike against what he calls the 'crusader' army in the Gulf states. [...] For Mr. Bin

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 In later articles the complex US-Saudi-Taliban-Bin Laden-Iran relations were emphasized further, Robert Fisk, 'Saudi's secretly funding Taliban', *The Independent*, September 2, 1998, 9, Robert Fisk, 'Thousands massacred by Taliban', *The Independent*, September 4, 1998, 11.

58 English translations of Bin Laden's text published in the London based newspaper *Al-Quds al-Arabi* are often titled 'declaration of jihad', or 'declaration of war' see for example Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, Kepel, *Milelli Al Qaeda in its Own Words*.

Laden's supporters among the dissident Saudi 'Advice and Reformation Committee' outside Afghanistan, his call was a profound surprise.⁵⁹

In contrast to the articles on Fisk's second Bin Laden interview, in which the latter's words were cited, Fisk now underlined dissent and disagreement among his followers. One of them was quoted:

'We do not think it is the right moment to start a conflict with the (Saudi) regime,' one told *The Independent* yesterday. 'Osama has made a detailed, 12-page statement, a major plan to explain the declaration of jihad, a whole project. But we thought we were all agreed that we should try to keep the situation under control in the country, to control the people and not let things get out of hand. I was expecting the concept of jihad in Saudi Arabia to come up a long time ago – but not from us. Saying we have an enemy is one thing but declaring war is something else.'⁶⁰

The plural 'we' emphasized that this follower spoke on behalf of others at the Saudi dissident ARC. The remarks that now was not 'the right moment' served as a somewhat innocuous characterization to underline dialogue among Bin Laden and his followers. There was agreement on feelings of enmity towards the Saudi regime, but not on the act of declaring war. The person cited accentuated that the comprehensive Bin Laden statement was a 'major' shift in that respect, opposite to agreed efforts to maintain a certain status quo.

Fisk's usage of the terms 'shock' and 'profound surprise' in the article was a direct critique of any notion of gradual and consensual processes of normalization among followers. The characterizations created distance between Bin Laden and some of his followers outside Afghanistan. Fisk's wording regarding the ARC also implied that not all members were Bin Laden followers. Yet those who were related were apparently close enough at a personal level to refer to Bin Laden as 'Osama' and speak of a 'we' and 'us'. In this respect, Fisk refrained from mentioning how the memorandum was delivered to the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* newspaper via people at the London-based ARC.

The second aspect expressed by Fisk concerned the timing of the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article and the upcoming 'Rally for Islamic Revival' conference in London in mid-September. In the article, his followers dismissed reports that a videotaped statement by Bin Laden would be shown during the conference. Fisk described how Arab leaders were concerned and angry that allowing such a conference in the United Kingdom would encourage terrorism, and depicted how Islamist attacks had killed thousands in Algeria and Egypt. However, Fisk held back from explicitly connecting the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* publication to the upcoming conference.

59 Robert Fisk, 'Saudi calls for jihad against US 'crusader', Iraq is not the only source of concern for America in the Gulf, reports Robert Fisk', *The Independent*, September 2, 1996, 8.

60 *Ibid.*

Pragmatism: another warning for the US, but no longer for the UK

In March 1997, Robert Fisk published two articles following his third and last interview with Bin Laden. They outlined Bin Laden's warning of 'new assaults on US forces' and how Bin Laden had stated 'we are still at the beginning of our military action against the American forces'.⁶¹ Fisk described how Bin Laden had added the 'usual conditional clause' that he was 'not against the American people, only their government' as it was responsible for conducting economic and foreign policies.⁶² In addition to earlier threats, Bin Laden now claimed that he had recently gained Pakistani scholarly support for his cause and had shown Fisk an Urdu wall poster and colored photographs of supporting graffiti in Pakistan.⁶³ According to Fisk, Bin Laden further stated that the Taliban's support for him remained unchanged as well. Lastly, Bin Laden even claimed that 'some members of the Saudi royal family agreed with his demand to expel the Americans from the Gulf'.⁶⁴ Fisk added that this might only increase American suspicion that 'the dissident movement' was covertly supported from within Saudi Arabia.

In terms of meaning, several shifts occurred in the articles with regard to what was deemed usual. In the introduction of the interview article, Fisk mentioned that Bin Laden 'acknowledged for the first time that his guerillas had fought street battles against US forces during the ill-fated UN mission to Somalia'.⁶⁵ This signified a focus on the US that expanded in Fisk's later articles. A change of position deemed remarkable by Fisk was Bin Laden's distinction between US troops and the historic British and French military presence in Saudi Arabia. While the former equaled Israel's army, the latter did not.⁶⁶

Astonishingly – in view of his previous threats against British and French troops in the Gulf – Mr. Bin Laden claimed that the armies of both countries now provided only a 'symbolic presence' in Saudi Arabia, at one point praising Britain for not occupying the Arabian peninsula during the First World War. He claimed that European nations were now distancing themselves from US policy towards Israel, singling out the European vote against Israel in the UN Security Council debate on the new Jewish settlement on occupied Arab land outside Jerusalem.⁶⁷

The text fragment, especially the 'singling out' or selection of the issue of the European UN Security Council vote, highlighted two 'astonishing' pragmatic shifts of Bin Laden's position

61 Fisk, 'Muslim leader warns of a new assault on US forces', Fisk, 'The man who wants to wage holy war against the Americans'.

62 Ibid.

63 Fisk, 'Muslim leader warns of a new assault on US forces'.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Fisk, 'The man who wants to wage holy war against the Americans'.

67 Fisk, 'Muslim leader warns of a new assault on US forces'.

on international relations. It expressed a pragmatic decreased negative focus on, and even praising of, the British and the French as enemies, and his implicit acceptance of the United Nations Security Council as a meaningful international forum.

Fisk still referred to 'Mr. Bin Laden' in the same manner as he had done after the Sudan interview. However, by now, Bin Laden had transformed in Fisk's eyes from a Muslim businessman and a Saudi dissident to an Islamic extremist who had surprised some of his own followers by venting hostility and declaring war against the US and Israel.

The Pakistani support mentioned by Bin Laden would later be symbolically emphasized by the signature of Sheikh Mir Hamza, of the Pakistani JUP political party, under the declaration of the WIF. No Fisk article was published on the WIF declaration.⁶⁸ It is unclear whether Fisk wrote one that editors opted against, or whether he was too involved in reporting on other issues. These included the Middle East peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the situation in Lebanon, the aftermath of Western military interventions in Iraq in the 1990s, and developments in Kosovo.⁶⁹

The dust of the attacks on US Embassies in Africa and Arab fury

On August 9, 1998, the day after the attacks in Kenya and Tanzania, Robert Fisk had some reservations about media speculations on the perpetrators. He rejected the usefulness of the immediacy and urgency felt and expressed by media commentators. Fisk critiqued their status as experts and argued metaphorically in *The Independent* that they should 'let the dust settle first' before judging who was behind the attacks.⁷⁰ According to Fisk, 'rash speculation about culpability' of Arab or African Islamic groups was 'part of the problem rather than the solution'.⁷¹ He drew a parallel with the Oklahoma bombing in 1995, in which experts had been quick to falsely link the attack to 'Islamic terrorists'.⁷² Fisk observed how media sources had now named 'Islamic Jihad' as responsible.⁷³ This was a name used by various groups, he noted. In some broadcasts, polls were even held to ask their audiences who they thought was responsible. It was a search for certainty, according to Fisk, in an 'otherwise inexplicable

68 Because the LexisNexis database might have a gap at this point, additional searches were conducted, including on the website of *The Independent* for an article on the WIF declaration.

69 Robert Fisk, 'The door to peace is opened in vain', *The Independent*, May 4, 1998. Fisk, Robert, 'Lebanon's new beginning held back by history, Robert Fisk in Beirut charts the crazy voting patterns of tomorrow's elections', *The Independent*, May 22, 1998, Robert Fisk, 'Macabre auction of soldiers' corpses, A dead sergeant's remains are at the centre of a gruesome wrangle between Israel and Hizbollah, reports Robert Fisk in Beirut', *The Independent*, June 6, 1998, Robert Fisk, 'The West's poisonous legacy, In Britain, depleted uranium is treated as a hazard. In Iraq, it still lies in the soil. By Robert Fisk', *The Independent*, May 27, 1998, Robert Fisk, 'Pristina's reporters in a no-chance saloon, Robert Fisk, who last night won top prize at the Amnesty International press awards, concludes his series on Kosovo at the offices of the 'Koha Ditore' newspaper', *The Independent*, June 26, 1998.

70 Robert Fisk, 'Leading Article, Let the dust settle first', *The Independent*, August 9, 1998, 4.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

world' where, as a metaphor, 'black and white have an uncomfortable habit of merging into grey'.⁷⁴

In a second, more contextual article in the same edition of *The Independent*, Fisk highlighted the probability of a wider 'Saudi connection' to the attack.⁷⁵ According to Fisk, to understand who was behind the bombings and why they did it, one needed to look at the 'growing fury' among Saudi citizens and possibly some members of the Saudi royal family at US military presence and political involvement in the country.⁷⁶ Fisk pointed out that the bombs had exploded on the eighth anniversary of the arrival of US troops in Saudi Arabia, and that the US had broken its promise of withdrawing its forces after liberating Kuwait from Iraqi troops. He noted that thousands of troops were still stationed in Saudi Arabia 'with key operatives inside the Saudi ministries of defense and interior', adding 'just as they were in Iran before the fall of the Shah'.⁷⁷ The latter parallel had an ominous tone to it, suggesting the possibility of the Arab anger turning into a popular uprising against the US-supported Saudi regime.

For Fisk, what most commentators in the West missed was the dual policy pursued by the Saudi government, and the complex connections between some of the Saudi royals, including Crown Prince Abdullah, and the anti-US social movement. Parallel to admitting US troops, the Mutaween (or strict Saudi religious police) gained more authority in the country. Furthermore, the Saudi support flights for the Taliban continued. In the US, people had 'underestimated, overlooked or misunderstood' the strength of the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia, according to Fisk.⁷⁸ In a wider sense, Fisk stated, the 'so-called experts' failed to address the *reasons* for Muslim frustration: American domination. Fisk aligned himself with the negative characterization of American power projection in the Arab world.

Palestinian dispossession, American domination of the Arab world, Washington's blind support for Israel, the US stranglehold on the Gulf oil market – and the vicious intelligence conflict played out between America and Muslim groups in the Middle East.⁷⁹

Against the background of the possible 'Saudi connection' to the Embassy attacks, Fisk depicted Bin Laden as a 'remote but intriguing figure'.⁸⁰ He was a 'Saudi dissident' who was 'far from being an outcast' and had even been contacted by the Saudi authorities to have his citizenship returned if he was to 'abandon his public jihad'.⁸¹ However, Fisk stated Bin Laden had told him in earlier interviews that this was not on his mind.

74 Ibid.

75 Robert Fisk, 'The Saudi connection, Robert Fisk believes America's broken promises and its blind support for Israel created the conditions for Friday's atrocities', *The Independent*, August 9, 1998, 19.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Fisk, 'Saudi's secretly funding Taliban'.

79 Fisk, 'The Saudi connection'.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

The Saudi connection was something the ‘routine terrorist-watchers’ and ‘so-called intelligence experts’ had failed to address, according to Fisk, as instead they made quick references to Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, or, ‘to use their exotic phrase, “international Islamic terror”’.⁸² To Western eyes, Fisk noted, Bin Laden was only one of many outcasts or ‘hate figures upon whom the West liked to vent its anger’.⁸³ Here Fisk criticized the use of an international terror frame and implicitly described a wider practice of securitizing various other ‘incumbents’ (such as Abu Nidal, Colonel Gadhafi, Ayatollah Khomeini, Carlos the Jackal, and recently Saddam Hussein).⁸⁴ According to Fisk, the US government and news media emphasized the *who* over the *why*.

Bin Laden: no outcast, but not a terrorist mastermind either

On August 10, 1998, Fisk continued his discussion of Bin Laden’s involvement with terrorism and the attacks. First, Fisk elaborated on how Bin Laden had been ‘one of the Good Guys’ when he fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets,⁸⁵ whereas now ‘the Americans have told us he is one of the Bad Guys who planned the bombing’.⁸⁶ Fisk did not doubt that Bin Laden would ‘not have condemned’ the attacks and acknowledged that his family was immensely wealthy. However, based on his personal experience with Bin Laden in Afghanistan, Fisk questioned the thrust with which he was deemed a global terrorist mastermind:

[W]hen he discovered I had just come from Beirut and had the local Lebanese newspapers in my bag, he sat in the corner of his tent reading the reports of Iran’s new demarche towards Saudi Arabia, of Israel’s increased settlement activity on the occupied West Bank and of Turkey’s treaty with Israel. If this was a ‘mastermind of world terrorism’ - according to the predictably anonymous sources of western journalists - then he was woefully out of touch with the world he was supposed to be terrorizing.⁸⁷

Emphasizing that Bin Laden was anxious to read Fisk’s local Lebanese newspapers ‘*in the corner of his tent*’ figuratively and literally decentralized Bin Laden. It contrasted the notion of a central global terrorist mastermind. After the US missile strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan later in August, Fisk was able to repeat this image before the American audience via *National*

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Robert Fisk, ‘Wealthy Arab who hates the US - is he the man behind the bombs?’, *The Independent*, August 10, 1998, 1.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid, a point also raised by Fisk in Bob Edwards, (Host), ‘Osama bin Laden’, radio program, *NPR Morning Edition*, 10:15 am ET, Washington, DC, NPR, August 21, 1998.

Public Radio, a national syndicator for hundreds of American public radio stations.⁸⁸ It was one of the rare occasions for Fisk to state his views on Bin Laden before a wider US audience. Writing for the Australian *Sydney Morning Herald* on August 22, 1998, Fisk similarly emphasized decentralism: Bin Laden was not a ‘terror chief’ but ‘just a small cog in the raw fury machine’.⁸⁹ There were complex relations among anti-US oppositionists inside and outside Saudi Arabia. According to Fisk, there was no ‘exotic network’ of terrorists but ‘raw fury’ and anger over US Middle East policies behind the attacks.⁹⁰

US sanctions matching the Bin Laden boycott

Another critique by Fisk on the US government related to the economic sanctions Clinton had imposed on Bin Laden: no US company was to have dealings with Bin Laden. Fisk noted that there only was one Bin Laden-related agricultural company in Sudan, *Wadi al-Aqiq*, that might have had some indirect contacts in the US. But regardless of the limited practical impact of the US sanctions, Fisk wrote, it was the symbolic meaning of the measure that raised the most questions in the Arab world. For it was Bin Laden himself who had refused to buy any American goods, years ago.

Arabs greeted President Bill Clinton’s ban on financial transactions with the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, with astonishment and mirth yesterday. One Saudi I called shortly after the presidential announcement laughed for more than 30 seconds on the telephone before he could control himself sufficiently to explain that Mr. bin Laden, who demands a United States military withdrawal from Saudi Arabia, has for 10 years been campaigning for a boycott of all American companies. ‘He even refuses to drink Pepsi-Cola,’ the man said. Americans may take it seriously. If they can accept labels such as ‘public enemy number one’ – Mr. Clinton’s infantile honour for a man who has been seeking such an accolade for years – at face value, the latest presidential decree in America’s ‘war against terror’ will seem to make sense. In the Middle East, it is meaningless.⁹¹

The main point Fisk made in the article in *The Independent* was that Arabs were ‘astonished’ over the ‘meaningless’ American ban. As a supporting argument, Fisk stated that Bin Laden and his followers did not need much money to maintain their simple way of life in Afghanistan and operate some construction equipment.⁹² Especially the loyalty of Bin Laden’s followers was not determined by material goods or financial rewards. The contrasting Arab and

88 Edwards, (Host), ‘Osama bin Laden’, August 21, 1998, the illustration was also used in Robert Fisk, ‘Terror chief is just a small cog in the raw fury machine, Analysis – US strikes back’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 22, 1998, 23.

89 Fisk, ‘Terror chief is just a small cog in the raw fury machine’.

90 Ibid.

91 Robert Fisk, ‘So just how wealthy is America’s new public enemy No 1?’, *The Independent*, August 24, 1998, 9.

92 Ibid.

American views presented by Fisk, and demonstrated by ‘mirth’, implied that the ban could only be perceived as a sensible measure from the perspective of the American people and their Congress, perhaps as part of the wider palette of actions taken by President Clinton after the Embassy attacks.

Missile strikes against public enemy number one

The central question for Fisk was whether the US missile strikes in late August 1998 on a factory in Khartoum and training camps in Afghanistan hurt or helped Bin Laden and his followers. He was asked this very question during an *NPR Morning Edition* interview the day after the strikes.⁹³ In response, Fisk noted that Bin Laden probably regarded the attack as an honor and recognition of his enmity against the US. Repeating the anecdote with the Beirut paper, Fisk characterized Bin Laden as ‘a rather lonely and isolated figure’.⁹⁴ Furthermore, referring again to the ‘enormous feeling of frustration in the Middle East’ at the American regional presence, Fisk stated that Bin Laden had probably only benefited from the strikes and the acknowledgement as the American ‘public enemy number one’.⁹⁵ It had improved his chance to inspire more people among the divided Muslims and ‘strike back’.⁹⁶ Fisk would continue to advocate these points over several articles.⁹⁷

I think that to be called the public enemy number one in the last few hours will meet with Bin Laden’s approval. He would love to be America’s enemy number one. I don’t think he is, but I think he would like to be called that; and I would imagine that among his supporters his stock would have risen considerably given the fact that America is launching \$60 million attacks on him. I would say that he would rather like to be in the position. He’s called for a holy war against America, to have America declare on him he’d probably regard as an honor. I think his stock probably gone up.⁹⁸

Similarly, Fisk wrote the following in an article in *The Independent* the next day:

Infantile though the title is – Hollywood and Washington now seem to replicate each other

93 Edwards, (Host), ‘Osama bin Laden’, August 21, 1998.

94 Ibid.

95 Robert Fisk, ‘US Air Strikes, Bin Laden will take his revenge, Robert Fisk, the first Western journalist to meet Osama bin Laden, says the Saudi dissident will strike back against Bill Clinton’, *The Independent*, August 21, 1998, 1-2.

96 Ibid.

97 Robert Fisk, ‘Public Enemy No 1, a title he always wanted’, *The Independent*, August 22, 1998, 3. Robert Fisk, ‘As my grocer said, Thank you Mr Clinton for the kind words, Talk of an “international terrorist conspiracy” is as exotic as the Arab belief in the “Zionist conspiracy”’, *The Independent*, August 22, 1998, 3. Robert Fisk, ‘America’s No 1 enemy, Profile, Osama Bin Laden, Robert Fisk says that President Bill Clinton has taken on a dangerous foe, a fire-breathing preacher who damns secular governments and won’t do deals’, *The Independent*, August 23, 1998, 26. Fisk, ‘So just how wealthy is America’s new public enemy No 1?’.

98 Edwards, (Host), ‘Osama bin Laden’, August 21, 1998.

– the US President had at last bestowed on the Saudi dissident the accolade he has always sought. Mr. Clinton had now recognized the titanic struggle that Mr. Bin Laden was prepared to wage against the world's most powerful nation.⁹⁹

Fisk's references to 'Hollywood' were an evocative metaphor for the simplistic framing of a struggle between protagonist and antagonist, or securitizing actor and referent subject. As 'violence was answered with violence', Fisk noted, Bin Laden and Clinton had declared war on each other and oddly used very much the same type of ferocious language.¹⁰⁰ However, Fisk also used the metaphor with a negative connotation regarding the US film industry and media landscape. He argued that in US movies, cartoons, and texts, Arab Muslims had for decades been portrayed as extremists, fundamentalists, and terrorists.¹⁰¹ Fisk acknowledged that violent deeds committed by Palestinians, Lebanese Hezbollah, or Muslims on the Balkans were 'murderous' and 'terrorist' acts, but he questioned why it was an Israeli 'fanatic' who had killed his Prime Minister and why the term 'IRA terrorists' was preferred over 'Catholic terrorists'. Referring to a scientific study, Fisk noted that Arabs had been portrayed predominantly with derogatory terms in Hollywood movies.¹⁰² In a wider sense, according to Fisk, the very use of the word 'terrorist' by Clinton and 'declaring a war on terrorism' fueled anger among Muslims over the perceived 'double standards in US foreign policies'.¹⁰³ Moreover, it silenced the question of 'why' the Embassy attacks had occurred and why Bin Laden was to 'loathe America'.¹⁰⁴ As Fisk put it,

[t]alk of an 'international terrorist conspiracy' is as exotic as the Arab belief in the 'Zionist conspiracy'.¹⁰⁵

Again, Fisk used evocative framing, critiquing identification processes as part of securitization efforts by exaggerating two contrasting images of 'conspiracies'. However, he also suggested that these frames served other purposes for both the US and Bin Laden, as the reality was more nuanced. Many Arabs would have 'cynically concluded' that these frames and the US missile strikes were a diversion for President Clinton's legal problems over the Lewinsky affair.¹⁰⁶ According to Fisk, Sudan had ordered Bin Laden out of Khartoum at the very request of the US. He questioned whether the country had actually been producing chemical weapons. Fisk also reminded his readers that some of the training camps in Afghanistan had

99 Fisk, 'Public Enemy No 1, a title he always wanted'.

100 Fisk, 'As my grocer said'.

101 For example Robert Fisk, 'The West's Fear of Islam is no Excuse for Racism', *The Independent*, November 3, 1999, 5.

102 Ibid, the research was later published as Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs, How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Northampton, MA, Olive Branch Press 2009).

103 Robert Fisk, 'US Air Strikes, Bin Laden will take his revenge'.

104 Ibid.

105 Robert Fisk, 'As my grocer said'.

106 Fisk, 'Terror chief is just a small cog in the raw fury machine', Robert Fisk, 'US Air Strikes, Bin Laden will take his revenge'.

been constructed with help from the CIA in the 1980s, pointing to the days when Bin Laden was still one of the ‘Good Guys’. Further, he asked what Bin Laden’s position would be among the immensely divided extremists and dissidents without the US terror frames and attacks.

Bill Clinton might have wished Mr. bin Laden was among Russia’s victims. Or would he really wish that? In America’s search for ‘public enemies’, Mr. bin Laden looks the part; dark-skinned, sharp-eyed, dressed in robes. Cleaning his teeth with a piece of stick during conversations, constantly threatening the US and Israel. Who would the Americans strike at if Mr. bin Laden did not exist? And who would Mr. bin Laden hate if the Americans packed up and went home?¹⁰⁷

Against the backdrop of this discussion on mutual framing, Fisk profiled Bin Laden in *The Independent* as ‘ascetic, cautious, intelligent’, but also ‘very ruthless’.¹⁰⁸ Fisk did not deem Bin Laden a global terrorist mastermind, or America’s number one enemy, but he did state that Bin Laden’s status in the Arab and Muslim world, his determination and opposition to the US, and his diverse group of followers made Bin Laden a dangerous enemy.

Guilty or not of the embassy bombings in Africa – and US still has to tell us about its ‘compelling evidence’ – President Clinton has taken on a very dangerous enemy.¹⁰⁹

As a side remark, the quotation marks around ‘compelling evidence’ suggest a critical connotation with regard to American intelligence that is also reflected in other writings by Fisk. He also articulated his personal doubt regarding the accuracy of US intelligence reporting in the NPR interview, stating, ‘almost all the intelligence information about the Middle East’ had turned out ‘to be pretty well wrong’.¹¹⁰ In addition to his critique on American domination, this reflected Fisk’s own critical posture towards the US.

Rather than commenting on the actual involvement of Bin Laden, Fisk reflected on the ongoing process of polarization or securitization. He highlighted how polarization was beneficial for Bin Laden and observed Arab opinions on US domestic goals that were served with the measures taken by Clinton, such as the economic ban and missile strikes. Reality, Fisk seemed to state, was in fact more nuanced. Then what should the US do, according to Fisk? The perpetrators of the Embassy attacks in Africa had to be brought to justice. Cruise missiles targeting Bin Laden and ‘tough language’ did not represent any such ‘due process’, Fisk stated.¹¹¹

107 Fisk, ‘Public Enemy No 1, a title he always wanted’.

108 Fisk, ‘America’s No 1 enemy’.

109 Ibid.

110 Edwards, (Host), ‘Osama bin Laden’, August 21, 1998.

111 Fisk, ‘As my grocer said’.

US missile diplomacy and Iraq

In a broader sense, Fisk was critical of American missile strikes and aerial bombings as an instrument of politics in the Middle East. In a 1996 article titled 'Missile Diplomacy', he described the American missile strikes on Iraq that came in response to Iraqi violations of a no-fly zone over northern Iraq.¹¹² He contrasted the lightness with which Clinton justified and spoke about the strikes with some of the collateral damage that had been done in the past, and emphasized how earlier strikes in 1993 had been ineffective or perhaps counterproductive.

From the White House, Clinton has told the world he 'feels good' about the missile bombardment. When he ordered cruise missiles to be fired at Baghdad in June 1993 (in response to an alleged Iraqi plot to kill ex-President Bush) Clinton said much the same thing on his way to church that Sunday. He said Americans could 'feel good' about the attack. On that occasion, US missiles killed one of Iraq's leading artists, a woman who had exhibited her paintings in the US. [...] But what has shocked the White House, and the gullible American press corps, which has performed its usual task of parroting every remark and opinion of the State Department and the Pentagon, is the reaction of the Arab world. Arab newspapers have accused Washington of trying to destroy Iraq as a sovereign state.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt has expressed 'concern'. The Saudis have remained silent, sullenly telling their American allies that no US jets can use their air bases as they did against Saddam in the 1991 Gulf War. The secretary-general of the 22-member Arab League has talked of 'aggression against the sovereignty of an Arab state'. Even Syria, with an obsessive hatred of Saddam's Ba'athist regime which almost equals America's, has condemned the missile attacks as 'intervention in the internal affairs of another country'. Rarely could Washington have so misjudged Arab opinion. [...] Few Arabs will give Saddam a clean bill of health. But Iraq as a nation, as history, as an integral part of the Islamic world, is different.¹¹³

This context resurfaced in mid-December 1998 as Fisk criticized Operation Desert Fox, the four-day US-UK bombing campaign over Iraq in response to Iraq refusing to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors. Fisk deemed it an ineffective and misplaced initiative to 'degrade' the suspected Iraqi weapons of mass destruction stockpile and production capability.¹¹⁴ Fisk questioned the appropriateness and effectiveness of the attacks, as UN weapons inspectors had not been able to find any proof of such a stockpile and part of the target package was

112 Robert Fisk, 'Missile diplomacy, How the US fired first and asked questions later', *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 7, 1996, 29.

113 Ibid.

114 Robert Fisk, 'Why Desert Fox 'degrades' us all, The operation to take out Iraqi 'weapons of mass destruction' has also twisted truth, judgment – and even language, *The War Game*', *The Independent*, December 20, 1998, 17.

Iraqi oil infrastructure. According to Fisk, the plan had been to strike only military targets, and he questioned the military nature of this type of target.

Most relevant for the *critical terrorism narrative* here was how Fisk critically reviewed the US government statement that Osama bin Laden ‘had been on the telephone to Saddam’.¹¹⁵ Fisk added that Bin Laden had been Washington’s ‘most wanted man’. After the US and UK started bombing Iraq, this ‘connection’ had become part of the legitimization for the new missile strikes on Iraq in 1998. Based on Fisk’s own conversation with Bin Laden on Saddam Hussein, he suspected that ‘Bin Laden would be as revolted at the idea of talking to Saddam as he would by the idea of talking to Clinton’.¹¹⁶ Fisk deemed the 1998 Operation Desert Fox part of the ‘weird phenomenon’ of a ‘war game’ in which ‘the fantasy’ of Bin Laden and Saddam talking together ‘had become reality’.¹¹⁷

Over time, Fisk’s writings became increasingly critical of the US foreign policy in the Middle East and its support for Israel’s security policy against the Palestinians. Illustrative was a fragment of the title of another article by Fisk in *The Independent*: ‘How long will Europeans, let alone Arabs, go on accepting America’s astonishing theatricals?’¹¹⁸ However, despite Fisk’s own critique of simplistic framing by the US government and Bin Laden, several of his articles between 1998 and 2000 posited general labels such as ‘the West’s fear of Islam’ or ‘the 1,000-year-old struggle between Arabs and the West’.¹¹⁹ In 1999, Fisk reported on another ‘foolish war’ in which ‘the West’ was involved: he had traveled to the Balkans to write about NATO, Serbia, and the Kosovo crisis.¹²⁰ As a side remark in one of the reports, Fisk added that the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic had joined the ‘list of “beasts”’, whereas Osama bin Laden had ‘oddly dropped off our Satanic radar screens for the present’.¹²¹ The terms ‘beast’ and ‘satanic’ demonstrated Fisk’s expressive choice of words, and also underlined the polarization over ‘hate figures’ Fisk was criticizing.

Middle East violence and the attack on the USS Cole

In late 2000, just after the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen, Fisk wrote the last three articles that can be considered part of this narrative. By then, he was working from the Palestinian Gaza strip and did not write specifically on the bombing of the American Navy destroyer. Instead, he situated the attack within the broader ‘Middle East crisis’ centered on Palestinian-

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 Robert Fisk, ‘Once again, it’s the world’s most serious confrontation, How long will Europeans, let alone Arabs, go on accepting America’s astonishing theatricals?’, *The Independent*, November 6, 1998, 4.

119 Fisk, ‘The West’s Fear of Islam’, Robert Fisk, ‘No end in sight to the 1,000-year-old struggle between Arabs and the West’, *The Independent*, January 3, 2000, 4.

120 Robert Fisk, ‘We have lost this foolish war, instead of admitting the truth about this conflict, our leaders have consistently lied to us’, *The Independent*, April 9, 1999, 5.

121 Ibid.

Israeli violence.¹²² According to Fisk, the perpetrators of the USS Cole attack were enraged over Palestinian victims. He described how Palestinians in a photocopy shop had expressed their joy to him over the American casualties, while a television screened an Israeli Apache attacking the headquarters of Yasser Arafat.¹²³ Fisk did mention Bin Laden in relation to the USS Cole bombing, but also connected Yemen to the Palestinians.

It is of course possible that Osama bin Laden, one of the more recent American hate figures, could have inspired the attack on the Cole. His family came from Yemen. And Yemen demanded the right earlier this week to fly arms direct to the Palestinians of the occupied territories - provoked, it seems, by slow-motion footage of yet another boy, a 12-year-old, dying on top of his father in Gaza after being shot by the Israelis. Yet many of the attacks on Israeli forces in Lebanon were carried out by young men, unconnected with the corrupt Arab political elite but enraged by the injustice of their lot. Maybe it was the same in Yemen.¹²⁴

The article was also highly expressive of how Fisk himself was critical of US and Israeli policies in the Middle East.

A Pentagon official was saying last night the United States government was trying to find out if the attack on the USS Cole was 'related' to 'violence' in the Middle East. Come again? Related? Violence? Who can doubt that the attempt to sink the Cole and all her 360 crew was directed at a nation now held responsible for Israel's killing of scores of Palestinian civilians? The US - despite all the claptrap from Madeleine Albright about 'honest brokers' - is Israel's ally.¹²⁵

The quotation marks around 'related' and 'violence' and the phrases 'come again?' and 'who can doubt' expressed incomprehension, and underlined the extensive contrast between Fisk's and the US government's perspectives on US Middle East policies and Palestinian-Israeli violence.

In late December 2000, Fisk reflected on the year that had passed and projected a prospect for the year to come. It was another critique of the framing of Bin Laden and international terrorism as a threat to the Western world.

And in 2001, we will no doubt be enjoined to support a new Israeli-American-Western-struggle against 'international Islamic terror'; the first blow - a double whammy from Washington and Moscow to further impoverish the penniless Afghan population for hiding Osama bin Laden - came with increased sanctions this month. Bin Laden has already been turned into a Super-Beast, although his demand for an American withdrawal from the Gulf makes incre-

122 Robert Fisk, 'Middle East Crisis, Arab World - Lies, hatred and the language of force', *The Independent*, October 13, 2000, 2.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

asing sense to a disenfranchised, humiliated Arab public. The attempted sinking of the USS Cole in Aden harbour - presented, of course, as another act of 'terror' against American democracy - falls into this category. And we shall surely see more such murderous acts in 2001.¹²⁶

Similar to the Embassy attacks in Africa, he acknowledged that the USS Cole bombing was 'murderous', but remained critical of naming it an attack on American democracy as a whole. The US had been 'quick to link Bin Laden with the USS Cole attack', but according to Fisk failed to grasp 'the driving force behind anti-Western acts' in the region.¹²⁷

Subconclusion

Fisk was a Middle East correspondent and war reporter, stationed in Beirut for *The Independent* but also sent to conflict areas such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. Over the years, Fisk had received an extensive array of international awards and honors for his work. This contributed to his status, degree of autonomy while working, and his ability to publish independent reporting. With respect to the texts selected for the *critical terrorism narrative*, he had power in discourse, although he was still tied to the power behind discourse of newspaper editors. Outside the narrative, his discursive and non-discursive power was highly limited.

The analysis has shown that Fisk refrained from extensive use of US official sources that were more easily available to him compared to reaching Bin Laden and his followers. He traveled to Sudan and Afghanistan to create a journalistic portrait and documentary-type articles. Fisk introduced Bin Laden and the topic of his activities at a time when Bin Laden had not yet been connected to terrorism in the dominant Western discourse. Later, the British correspondent did not reproduce the American or wider Western agenda on terrorism. In a sense, Fisk followed his own. Yet, Fisk also refrained from performing the type of long-term deep research that equates to investigative journalism. For example, his statements on a complex web of relations were rooted in the occurrence of anonymous cargo flights into Afghanistan.

The three interviews Fisk held with Bin Laden featured clearly in the greater part of the selected texts in some form or another. Following the Sudan interview, Bin Laden was characterized primarily as a businessman. Fisk noted that his relocation (or return) to Afghanistan had marked a new stage of the Saudi dissident ARC, of which Bin Laden was a part. Fisk's reporting reflected how after the move, Bin Laden's statements became increasingly more hostile against the US and Israel. Two 'unexpected developments' occurred in the narrative with regard to Bin Laden. First, according to Fisk, the publication of the 1996 memorandum came as an unpleasant surprise to some of his followers within the

126 'Review of the year, Foreign - The Middle East: Forget the peace process, This is a murderous civil war', *The Independent*, December 29, 2000, 9.

127 Robert Fisk, 'Intelligence that barely deserves the name', *The Independent*, November 24, 2000, 2.

ARC in London, who felt uneasy about declaring a war against the US. Another development deemed notable by Fisk was Bin Laden's shift in position at the time of the third interview on European countries such as the UK and France. According to Bin Laden, these countries were distancing themselves from the US and Israel. Their presence in Saudi Arabia was more symbolic and less of a real threat to Muslims compared to the US troops, Bin Laden stated.

Fisk's travel experience and changing working environment in Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the Balkans influenced the contextualization of his articles. Parallel to his report on his second interview with Bin Laden, *The Independent* printed his article on covert transport aircraft landing at Afghan airports. It provided the case to infer and speculate on complex relations between the government and its opposition in Saudi Arabia, the US, the Taliban, and Bin Laden. As he reported on the USS Cole bombing, Fisk placed emphasis on Palestinian-Israeli violence. The setting of Fisk's text production from Beirut and Gaza corresponded to this. In contrast to what Fisk had written after the US Embassy attacks, any follow-up articles on Bin Laden in the wake of the USS Cole bombing were lacking. Possibly, the location or region from which Fisk worked, such as the Balkans, occasionally diverted his attention away from Bin Laden. Most clearly absent were any reports by Fisk on the WIF declaration in May 1998, even more as he had signified the 1996 memorandum as a remarkable development. Another event that did not surface from the selected texts was the millennium terrorist threat that featured prominently in the *US institutional terrorism narrative*.

To what extent did Fisk focus on securitization efforts and its constituent elements as defined in the other two narratives? Fisk critiqued how both Bin Laden and the US government used general frames that were beyond the complex reality of the Middle East, such as 'terrorist mastermind' or 'Zionist conspiracy'. He described Bin Laden as an ascetic and cautious leader of loyal followers who was ruthless in his determination to oust the US from the Arabian Peninsula and counter US-Israeli 'aggression' in the region. However, Fisk also articulated that many of Bin Laden's Muslim supporters, or sympathizers, were 'shocked' by the unexpected fierce rhetoric in the 1996 declaration. According to Fisk, Bin Laden was no global terrorist mastermind, but he was not a Muslim outcast either. Fisk stated that the 'murderous' attacks on the US Embassies in Africa and the bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen illustrated how Bin Laden's views had resonated with wider feelings of anger among Arabs.

Thus, Fisk used the attacks as vehicles to tell a wider story of growing Arab and Muslim fury over US regional policies, the related poor socio-economic conditions in Saudi Arabia, and the perceived imbalance between international (mostly US) support for Israel and the Palestinians. This pointed to complexity and countered or resisted some of the frames underlying US securitization efforts (but also those of *Al Qaeda*). Over the years, Fisk became increasingly expressive in his critique of US foreign policy in the Middle East by using simplistic superordinates (e.g. 'hate figure', 'super-beast') and metaphors (e.g. 'Hollywood'). His personal repulsion by 'any form' of violence increasingly resulted in resentment against the use of military force by the US and Israel and its legitimization in ideological terms.

Hence, overall Fisk can be positioned as more critical of the *US institutional terrorism narrative* than of the *Al Qaeda narrative*.

Additional research was expedient to evaluate the extent to which Fisk's perspectives were highly idiosyncratic or in a certain degree shared among other journalists and actors operating in the information society. The aim was not to evaluate whether Fisk's writings were 'true', but to qualify the significance of the points raised in the *critical terrorism narrative* when comparing and contrasting all three narratives in this thesis. The purpose of the next sections is to provide additional context by analyzing the other Bin Laden interviews by Western journalists in the mid-1990s in Sudan and Afghanistan. To what extent were Fisk's observations supported by these other written and televised media reports? What additional frames emerged? As described in the introduction, Peter Bergen's media contributions were selected to be analyzed in more detail and to evaluate discursive differences between Fisk's articles and Bergen's contributions to CNN news broadcasts. As Fisk did not write about the WIF statement and the millennium terrorist threat, to what degree and in what way did these emerge in the selected texts of Peter Bergen?

Other journalists

Scott MacLeod interview in Sudan: businessman or Islamic extremist?

In early 1996, the American journalist Scott MacLeod interviewed Bin Laden in a Khartoum office and at a farm on the banks of the Blue Nile River. He published his article in *TIME Magazine*, addressing an American and European audience. The 1993 picture taken by Fisk was printed with the MacLeod article. To what extent was Fisk's initial interview in Sudan mirrored by the MacLeod interview? More than in Fisk's reporting, this article focused on Bin Laden's grievances against the Saudi ruling family and the US military presence in the Saudi kingdom that had accumulated over the last years. Also more central in the MacLeod article were the claims and suspicions of US, British, Saudi, and Egyptian government officials that Bin Laden was actively funding terrorist activities (of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group, EIJ, and EIG). In the article, an unnamed scholar in London deemed 'the Bin Laden phenomenon' illustrative of the shift from strictly state-sponsored terrorism to 'the privatization of the support of terrorism'.¹²⁸

Bin Laden acknowledged his 'political opposition' to the Saudi regime in the article. He compared the charges of supporting terrorism through his facilitation of training camps in Afghanistan to 'blaming a university for students who graduate and go perform bad deeds'.¹²⁹

128 Scott Macleod, 'The Paladin of Jihad, fearless and super-rich, Osama bin Laden finances Islamic extremism. A TIME exclusive', May 6, 1996, *TIME Magazine*.

129 Ibid

MacLeod gave the reader some choice and to a certain extent allowed for two perspectives on Bin Laden to coexist in the article.

Depending on who is to be believed, this gracious hospitality came from either a devout Muslim businessman, as bin Laden would claim, or 'one of the most significant financial sponsors of Islamic extremist activities in the world today,' as the U.S. State Department describes him.¹³⁰

However, the title of the MacLeod article, *'The Paladin of Jihad'*, and the extensive number of references to Saudi and US 'security officials' in the text mostly adhered to the latter perspective.¹³¹ MacLeod described Bin Laden as a 'towering figure' in 'the embryonic Islamic movement' that aimed to 'topple the pro-western monarchy in Saudi Arabia'. American and Saudi security officials suspected him of being a central participant and fundraiser in a loose network that provided funds for Islamic terrorists'. But it was not only financial support that Bin Laden had been providing, according to MacLeod: the four who confessed to a bombing on a National Guard training center in Riyadh in November 1995 stated they 'had been influenced by faxes sent from Bin Laden's Advice and Reform Committee'.¹³² Seven people had been killed, including five Americans.

Another sign that the preferred perspective in MacLeod's article leaned towards a US viewpoint, and differed from Fisk's approach, was provided by the silential dimension to a remark. MacLeod observed that the status of 'celebrity' and the 'star appeal' that Bin Laden had gained in Saudi Arabia in fighting the Soviets 'swiftly faded when he began denouncing the Saudi regime', showing that the journalist leaned more towards a (pro-Western) Saudi government perspective.¹³³ Namely, among Muslim activists and the Saudi political opposition, Bin Laden's appeal had not faded at all.¹³⁴

In addition to Robert Fisk's initial Bin Laden interview in Sudan, Scott MacLeod's article mostly brought to the forefront the duality of Bin Laden's identity as a businessman and Islamic extremist financier (also stated in the introduction of the *Al Qaeda narrative*). To some in Sudan and the Arab world, Bin Laden was predominantly a businessman with dissident political ideas about Saudi Arabia. For others in the West (as described in the *US institutional terrorism narrative*), he was mostly a sponsor of Islamic extremism.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 9/11 Commission Report, 59.

Television interviews in Afghanistan by Roberts, Arnett, and Miller

While Fisk was able to interview Bin Laden three times, other Western journalists were allowed to take extensive pictures and film their interview. How did their message compare to Fisk's, and what did the medium of television add? Most clearly, it made Bin Laden's soft tone and polite manners more visible, and as such enlarged the contrast between his appearance and the harsh character of his words.

In February 1997, British Channel 4 TV reporter Gwynne Roberts made a video documentary on socio-economic problems in Saudi Arabia and put Bin Laden's critique of the Saudi royal family in this context.¹³⁵ The central question was how long the Saudi regime could last. By projecting the Saudi opposition as a widespread movement, Bin Laden was not the only leader ousting critique. The United States had close ties with the Saudi royal family and Saudi oil production, hence the US was contributing to the socio-economic problems in the country. According to Roberts, there was growing resistance among the Saudi population against the presence of US troops and citizens who failed to respect Islamic norms and values while conducting economic activities, doing business.

Fragments shown of Bin Laden's earlier speeches reflected a mixture of religious arguments and policy grievances. The 'American unbelievers' had to be expelled from Saudi Arabia. The documentary emphasized that Bin Laden's motives were not unique, but his methods were. He was described as 'perhaps the most wanted man in the world', as he allegedly indirectly claimed responsibility for the Riyadh and al-Khobar explosions.¹³⁶ It was also stated that Bin Laden had supported the tribes that fought US forces in Somalia in 1993. As a final remark, Bin Laden was screened stating that Muslim youths should 'concentrate their efforts on the Americans and the Zionists'.¹³⁷ To 'kill an American soldier' was better than wasting one's energy on other matters.¹³⁸

Peter Arnett was the first Western journalist to actually film and interview Osama bin Laden, whereas Roberts had been only allowed to take pictures.¹³⁹ Peter Bergen and photographer Peter Jovenal were the other two members of the CNN team. Bin Laden was described as 'a shadowy multimillionaire who has declared a Holy War against the United States'.¹⁴⁰ For the US government, he was a terrorist threatening US troops. Bin Laden was linked to the attempted bombing of US troops in 1992 in Yemen, and the 1993 WTC bombing in New York. His 'call for jihad against US troops' came after two bombings in Riyadh and al-Khobar in 1995 and 1996.¹⁴¹ According to the report, Bin Laden had half a billion dollars to support his Holy War, training camps in Sudan and Afghanistan, and thousands of followers

¹³⁵ Roberts, 'The Saudi Tapes'.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Shaw, 'Impact, Holy Terror?'.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

inside Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden explained to Arnett that his 1996 statement (translated in English as 'declaration of jihad') was aimed against US troops in Arabia. However, he stated, US citizens should leave too, as he could not guarantee their safety. He did not hide his disgust for US President Clinton in the interview, but refrained from addressing him directly on camera (like he had addressed US Secretary of Defense William Perry in the 1996 *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* article). Instead, Bin Laden had a direct message for the mothers of US troops in Saudi Arabia: these mothers and the US troops should object to US foreign policy in the Middle East.

By introducing Bin Laden as a 'shadowy multimillionaire' ready to fight a Holy War instead of, for example, a former mujahedeen, jihadi, or Muslim extremist, the documentary emphasized his (economic) means and capabilities, such as half a billion dollars, training camps, and thousands of followers, over his motivation and Islamic legal justifications. The setting was determined by the bilingual interview. Questions were asked in English and as Bin Laden answered in Arabic, subtitles appeared on screen. Arnett was not able to comprehend and (non-verbally) respond to Bin Laden's utterances immediately. Despite the lexicon of war, non-verbal communication such as gestures underlined the polite character of the exchange and the willingness of both parties to engage in conversation. As such, Bin Laden was presented as a well-educated human being.

Both television reporters provided their audiences with a general introduction on Bin Laden and his recent statements. The genre and settings of the documentaries were quite similar. Both also included statements from others. Roberts and Arnett sought similar subject matter experts: *Al Quds al-Arabi* editor Abdel Bari Atwan, Saudi opposition leader Dr. Saad al-Fagih, and former deputy chairman of the US National Intelligence Council Graham Fuller appeared in both televised reports, although Fuller was asked different questions. Roberts asked Fuller about the likelihood of the Saudi regime surviving the unrest and the threat posed by Bin Laden, while in Arnett's documentary Fuller emphasized the 'very explicit Islamic terms' and legal justifications that underlay Bin Laden's statements and threat to the US.

The two documentaries showed similar images of Bin Laden in Afghanistan, wearing either a traditional local dress (*perahan tunban*) or a camouflage jacket and head scarf (*keffiyeh*). A Kalashnikov rifle was always by his side. In the setting of the interviews and the meaning of the statements made by Bin Laden, the rifle and camouflage jacket could be understood as a visual signal that confirmed Bin Laden's willingness to use arms, and symbolized war and victory. While in Afghanistan, Bin Laden was among the Mujahedeen fighters who had captured these rifles from Soviet troops. The bookshelves that appeared behind Bin Laden in some of the images, including the picture printed with the 1996 declaration in *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, underlined Islamic scholarship and pointed to the jurisprudence and literature on which Bin Laden's arguments were based. In the documentaries, this was not explicitly highlighted before the English-speaking audience. A map shown behind Bin Laden in Roberts' documentary accentuated Bin Laden's call for action to the people in Saudi Arabia.

As noted, Bin Laden made an effort to present himself as calm, polite, educated, experienced, and determined while he repeated fragments from his 1996 memorandum. Roberts and Arnett did not specifically interpret the meaning of visual cues in the Bin Laden footage. Similarly, while Fisk described Bin Laden's posture and appearance briefly in his interview articles, he did not elaborate on any symbolic meaning either.



Fig 5-3 Gwynne Roberts with Bin Laden and other images screened in the documentary, February 1997.¹⁴²

142 Roberts, 'The Saudi Tapes'.



Fig 5.4 Peter Arnett with Bin Laden and other images screened in the documentary, March 1997.¹⁴³

The meanings attributed to Bin Laden's statements diverged to some extent, because of their reference to different wider background contexts in the reports. Gwynne Roberts offered an extensive account of widespread socio-economic unrest in Saudi Arabia and increasing widespread Islamic opposition, whereas Roberts emphasized the underprivileged position of the Shia minority in Saudi Arabia and the regime efforts to mute opposition. In Roberts' documentary, Bin Laden, a Sunni Muslim, stated that the Saudi government was incorrectly blaming internal problems on the Shia and Iran. In contrast, Arnett focused primarily on the threat of a jihad or 'Holy War' against US troops. Arnett's extensive use of the term *jihad* in his news report, compared to Roberts's very limited use of this or similar terms, was expressive.

The documentaries were broadcasted only a month apart in February and March 1997. By then, Fisk had published his third interview with Bin Laden. At that time, all three reporters portrayed Osama bin Laden's Holy War as a credible threat to US troops in Saudi Arabia. Arnett's emphasis on Bin Laden's financial and logistical capabilities, but also Bin Laden's declaration and the attacks in Riyadh and Khobar, gave most substance to this.

■
143 Shaw, 'Impact, Holy Terror?'

The World Islamic Front statement, May 1998

Something Fisk made no specific mention of in his writings was the declaration of the WIF. In May 1998, American reporter John Miller interviewed Bin Laden in Afghanistan, just days before he organized a wider press conference to introduce the WIF and publish its first statement. Parts of the Miller interview were broadcasted in ABC's *Nightline* and ABC News specials on Bin Laden on June 10, 1998.¹⁴⁴ As the focus of the profile was on Bin Laden, the collaborative effort behind the WIF statement was not a specific topic in the reporting. ABC News reporter Ted Koppel's introduction to the *Nightline* show characterized Bin Laden as 'rich, well-educated and threatening new attacks on US targets'.¹⁴⁵ Koppel emphasized that Bin Laden had possibly 'backed the World Trade Center bombers' in 1993 and 'supplied the weapons that shot down US helicopters in Somalia'.¹⁴⁶

The ABC reports marked the attack on the Khobar towers in Dhahran in June 1995 as a pivotal event. Bin Laden was quoted declaring that it had marked the beginning of a 'war between Muslims and the United States'. He stated that earlier, in Somalia, US troops had demonstrated that they were 'a paper tiger' that would 'run in defeat after a few blows'.¹⁴⁷ US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hugh Shelton was screened stating that the Khobar attacks also marked a shift in US security policy in the region. All American troops in Saudi Arabia were moved and stationed at the remote Prince Sultan Air Base. Shelton emphasized that this move also symbolized to allies and enemies that 'just because some individual or group' attacked, America would not 'run off' and 'the US was there to stay'.¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Miller commented on how Bin Laden's 'hatred for America' represented the 'feelings of many Muslims' rather than a small group.¹⁴⁹ The impact of a wider shared perception among Muslims on American cultural insensitivity was also recognized in the news broadcasts. ABC reporters Tony Cordesman and John McWerthy discussed how the FBI investigation that followed the Khobar attack had resembled 'a forensic bull in an Arab china shop' that was culturally insensitive and 'didn't speak the language'.¹⁵⁰ In a wider sense, McWerthy acknowledged that the US military created its own problems in the region:

Of course, the U.S. military creates its own problems. Few service people speak Arabic. Even commanders rarely stay in the region longer than a year or two, scarcely enough time to cul-

144 Peter Jennings (Host), 'A Closer Look, A very dangerous man targets Americans', television program, *World News Tonight With Peter Jennings*, 6:30 pm ET, New York, ABC News, June 10, 1998, Ted Koppel (Anchor), 'ABC Nightline, One of America's Most Dangerous Enemies', television program, *ABC Nightline*, 11:35 pm ET, New York, ABC News, June 10, 1998, Apalach32 (YouTube publisher), 'ABC reporter John Miller asks Shaykh OBL 1998', video file, April 9, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GW8_Zbsirdw (last retrieved April 27, 2018).

145 Koppel (Anchor), 'ABC Nightline, One of America's Most Dangerous Enemies'.

146 Ibid.

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

tivate relationships with their counterparts. And the U.S. presence is huge, more than 31,000 in the Gulf today.¹⁵¹

The lack of language training among troops and the personnel management of the US military were identified as important factors for the negative sentiments among the Saudi population. For Shelton, the large number of troops meant they provided for an eminent target. He emphasized the need for adequate protective measures and the unavoidability of the risks that come with operating worldwide.

Rather than an interactive discussion, this part of the show presented diametrically opposed views. Was the issue at hand a matter of arranging for the right force protection against incalculable extremists, while at the same time executing a carefully crafted and sophisticated foreign policy that aimed to develop partnerships with legitimate governments in the Middle East? Or were American economic interests and culturally insensitive business activities allowing befriended and domestically contested governments to maintain policies and positions of power illegitimately? Crucially, it was a matter of perspective.

According to Miller, the WIF declaration had now given matters a current character. He emphasized the temporal aspect as Bin Laden had ‘put a time cap on it’ of a few weeks, in contrast to earlier similar threats made.¹⁵² From Bin Laden’s quoted statements in the ABC broadcasts, it became clear that those threatened now also included American civilians and soldiers worldwide. Koppel presented the declaration as Bin Laden’s personal statement, rather than that of a collective.

In the rest of the ABC broadcast, significant emphasis was placed on Bin Laden’s financial, logistical, and operational capabilities, as well as his future intent. With resources adding up to 200 million US dollars and an army of thousands, according to Miller, Bin Laden could be able to carry out the terrorist threats he made from ‘a hilltop backed by a few hundred fighters’.¹⁵³ US National Security Advisor Sandy Berger was also screened classifying Bin Laden as perhaps ‘the most dangerous non-state terrorist in the world’ and confirming that the US took Bin Laden’s capacity and will to organize terrorist attacks very seriously.¹⁵⁴

The images of Bin Laden shown on screen resembled those broadcasted by Roberts and Arnett a year before. He was wearing a white turban and camouflage jacket, and sitting in front of a map of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Followers who were gathered in the Afghan camp were armed with Kalashnikov rifles. At the same time, Bin Laden spoke softly and gently while making harsh statements. Fragments from these different interviews were reproduced and recontextualized in Western media for years to come.

■
151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.



Fig 5.5 John Miller interviewing Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, May 1998.¹⁵⁵

The polarization between Bin Laden's views and US institutional perceptions that emerged from the ABC reporting aligned with what Fisk had been stating. What the ABC reporting offered in addition to Fisk's reporting was the comments of senior US officials, an aspect that also featured prominently in the CNN broadcasts in which Peter Bergen had taken part, as discussed in the next section.

Although Roberts, Arnett, and Miller all interviewed Bin Laden, their final reporting differed. Roberts contextualized the interview in light of the Saudi socio-economic problems and political opposition. Arnett and Miller predominately focused on how Bin Laden posed a threat to the US. Arnett's contribution to CNN Impact was an uninterrupted documentary item, whereas Miller provided multiple smaller comments as part of a panel of ABC's security and military experts and US officials. This made the US institutional perspective of a terrorist threat and the importance of US foreign policy more dominant in the ABC broadcast than in Arnett's report. The ABC news reporting following the WIF declaration illustrated how US officials such as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a diametrically different reading of events and circumstances.

Articles by Peter Bergen

The capabilities, organization, and motive of a spiritual godfather

Peter Bergen entered public discussions on Bin Laden on August 20, 1998. He was a guest on *NPR Morning Edition*, and discussed the articles on Bin Laden he was about to publish in the American political magazine *The New Republic*. Bergen drew on his experience of meeting Bin Laden in 1997 as part of the film crew that had traveled to Afghanistan for the CNN interview. More and more American news media had started to focus on Bin Laden as a possible suspect and organizer behind the US Embassy bombings, and Bergen's reporting reflected this trend.

¹⁵⁵ Apalach32 (YouTube publisher), 'ABC reporter John Miller asks Shaykh OBL 1998'.

Reoccurring themes in Bergen's contributions were Bin Laden's 'capabilities, organization and motive'.¹⁵⁶ The sequence of the themes in this phrase was illustrative of the emphasis placed on each in his news media reporting. Key elements of capabilities that featured prominently in the reports were money and manpower. In various contributions, Bergen discussed Bin Laden's financial resources: the millions of US dollars he possessed, the money to which he had access, and the wealth of his family. In 1999, Bergen nuanced this image to some extent as he deemed 'the money a little bit of a red herring', as in the 'medieval economy' of Afghanistan 'a little money went a long way'.¹⁵⁷ But still, Bin Laden and his followers were 'fairly sophisticated' and 'able to function fairly well' in a 'barely functioning country', as Bin Laden for example possessed a satellite phone.¹⁵⁸ In terms of followers, according to Bergen, he had 'thousands of followers who would act on his message'.¹⁵⁹ Bergen described this elsewhere as '10,000 foot soldiers around the globe'.¹⁶⁰

As for organizational structure, Bergen's language use was slightly more versatile. In the months after the Embassy attacks in 1998, Bin Laden was said to have 'a core of hundreds at his command', and Bergen described Mohammed Atef (in accordance with the US indictment) as the 'trusted military commander' of the organization.¹⁶¹ On another occasion, Bergen stated how the US government accused Iraqi Bin Laden supporter Mamdouh Mahmud Salim of attempting to acquire nuclear weapons technology for 'the Bin Laden organization'.¹⁶² Following the attack on the USS Cole in 2000, Bergen incidentally referred to *Al Qaeda* as the name of Bin Laden's organization.¹⁶³ However, in other assessments and comments made by Bergen in 1998 and 1999, the network-type character and religious like-mindedness of Bin Laden, his followers, and Islamist groups or organizations around the world, such as the Taliban, EIJ, or Hezbollah, were more central.¹⁶⁴

Following the US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan, Bergen generalized that the Taliban 'basically endorsed Bin Laden's message', which was a 'purist', 'very radical

156 Lou Waters (Anchor), 'Terrorism Analyst Peter Bergen Discusses Possible Suspects in USS Cole Attack', television program, *CNN Today*, 1:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 13, 2000.

157 Catherine Callaway (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden Remains at Large One Year After African Embassy Bombings', television program, *CNN Saturday Morning News*, 8:07 am ET, New York, CNN, August 7, 1999.

158 Lou Waters (Anchor), 'U.S. Strikes 'Terrorist' Targets in Afghanistan, Sudan', television program, *CNN Breaking News*, 13:45 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 20, 1998.

159 Greta van Susteren (Co-Host), 'Additions to the FBI '10 most wanted' list, James Kopp and Osama bin Laden', television program, *CNN Burden of Proof*, 12:30 am ET, New York, CNN, June 7, 1999.

160 Jeff Greenfield (Co-Host), 'Holy Warriors, The Body Politic, The Dalai Lama, A Visit', television program, *Newsstand CNN & TIME*, 22:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, November 8, 1998.

161 Peter Bergen, Frank Smyth, 'Holy Warrior', *The New Republic*, August 31, 1998, 20, Greenfield (Co-Host), 'Holy Warriors'.

162 Judy Woodruff (Anchor), 'Terrorism Remains a Sore Spot for Pakistani-U.S. Relations', television program, *CNN Worldview*, 18:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, December 2, 1998.

163 Brian Nelson (Anchor), 'Osama Bin Laden No. 1 Suspect in U.S.S. Cole Bombing', television program, *CNN Saturday*, 4:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 14, 2000.

164 Callaway (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden Remains at Large', Greta van Susteren (Co-Host), 'Threats Against U.S. Forces Elevate Military to Highest State of Alert', television program, *CNN Burden of Proof*, 12:30 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 25, 2000.

version of Islam'.¹⁶⁵ Discussing possible suspects of the attack on the USS Cole shortly after the incident, Bergen noted that there were 'many groups with different somewhat fungible names' that had in common that many of their members had trained in Afghanistan with Bin Laden during the 1980s or later.¹⁶⁶ Rather than a chain of command, there were various types of associations among people and groups. As an illustration, Bergen used the metaphor that Bin Laden was not 'some sort of Mafia boss who ordered a hit directly', and stated that there was evidence of his direct involvement with terrorist attacks.¹⁶⁷ However, discussing the US indictment, Bergen underlined that Bin Laden's network comprised thousands of followers across 20 countries and covered 'every continent'.¹⁶⁸

With regard to motivation, Bergen mostly described Bin Laden as a 'religious inspirer' who also had some 'political motives': to establish a withdrawal of American troops from the Arabian Peninsula, to end sanctions against Iraq, and to change the imbalance of US support for Israel against the Palestinians.¹⁶⁹ Bergen noted that Bin Laden's message had been 'reverberating' throughout the Arab world, especially among younger generations.¹⁷⁰ The 'several thousand followers' were implementing actions based on the 'general direction' pointed out by Bin Laden in the statements Bergen had classified as *fatwas*.¹⁷¹ These followers were motivated by 'Islamist fever', according to Bergen.¹⁷² On various occasions, Bergen characterized Bin Laden as a 'spiritual godfather', a 'sort of spiritual leader', and as a 'quasi-religious leader' with 'a kind of charisma', being 'very sophisticated' and having 'a very gentle manner'.¹⁷³

Instead of Bin Laden being a terrorist mastermind who had personally orchestrated the attacks on the US Embassies in Africa and on the USS Cole in detail, Bergen stated that there was a larger social movement. There were associated people that identified with Bin Laden's message and were willing to act upon it. The notion of more widespread anger among larger groups of Arabs and Muslims was less articulated in Bergen's writings than in Fisk and Roberts' work. According to him, the Taliban and Bin Laden shared the same purist views of Islam, views 'not shared by 99 percent of Muslims'.¹⁷⁴ Thus, unlike Fisk, Bergen articulated that Islamic extremism was a movement of fanatics (larger than Bin Laden) that had

165 Edwards, Bob (Host), 'Osama bin Laden', radio program, *NPR Morning Edition*, 10:13 am ET, Washington, DC, NPR, August 20, 1998, Waters (Anchor), 'U.S. Strikes 'Terrorist' Targets in Afghanistan, Sudan', Van Susteren (Co-Host), 'Additions to the FBI '10 most wanted' list'.

166 Waters (Anchor), 'Peter Bergen Discusses Possible Suspects in USS Cole Attack'.

167 Van Susteren (Co-Host), 'Additions to the FBI '10 most wanted' list'.

168 Callaway (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden Remains at Large'.

169 Edwards, (Host), 'Osama bin Laden', August 20, 1998.

170 Bergen, Smyth, 'Holy Warrior'.

171 Edwards, (Host), 'Osama bin Laden', August 20, 1998.

172 Callaway (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden Remains at Large'.

173 For example Waters (Anchor), 'U.S. Strikes 'Terrorist' Targets in Afghanistan, Sudan', Peter Bergen, 'Face to Face With vengeful terrorist, American missile strikes, British TV News Producer talks about his meeting with Osama bin Laden', *The Mirror*, August 22, 1998, 9, Greta van Susteren (Co-Host), 'USS Cole Investigation, New Clues Discovered in Deadly Bombing', television program, *CNN Burden of Proof*, 12:30 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 18, 2000.

174 Edwards, (Host), 'Osama bin Laden', August 20, 1998.

sympathizers throughout the Muslim world. However, he separated this from widespread popular anger in Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Arab world.

Overall, Bergen's reports described Bin Laden's capabilities, organization, and motivation in somewhat different ways. This related to the genre and settings of the news broadcasts, and did not reflect a specific development of Bergen's insights over time. The variations corresponded to questions asked to Bergen as a guest on news shows, to Bergen's additional comments on the statements of others, and to recent events and circumstances. For example, Bergen mentioned Bin Laden's transnational networked connections in response to the question of whether Bin Laden was able to 'operate across boundaries'.¹⁷⁵ Introducing Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir's comments on a Bin Laden associate, Bergen noted that Mohammed Atef had been mentioned in a US indictment on hostilities in Somalia as Bin Laden's 'military commander'.¹⁷⁶ Some of the variations in Bergen's characterizing of Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* could thus be explained through shifts in the situational context.

Bin Laden: a terrorist, or a convenient shorthand?

At times, Bergen reflected critically on how Bin Laden had been portrayed as a terrorist by the US government and news media. A year after the Embassy bombings, Bergen questioned whether

[t]he United States and perhaps the media have demonized him to such a degree that we've made the focus on one person rather than the actual network and organization he represents. My view is that bin Laden is sort of a convenient shorthand for a much larger movement that consists of thousands of people that support his views.¹⁷⁷

To a certain extent, these reservations were also reflected in Bergen's use of the terms 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' with respect to Bin Laden. On the morning of August 20, 1998, before the US missile strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan had been executed, Bergen was asked to talk about the 1997 CNN interview with Bin Laden. Bergen articulated that he was refraining from using the word 'terrorist' to describe Bin Laden as the latter was probably not directly involved in the attacks.¹⁷⁸ He stated that Bin Laden was only inspiring and directing others in a broad sense to 'do things we would regard as terrorism'.¹⁷⁹ A week later, in an article in *The New Republic*, Bergen mentioned that the US CIA and State Department was taking Bin Laden's latest *fatwa* (the WIF declaration) very seriously. He now deemed this US response 'a measure of his unique status in the world of terrorism'.¹⁸⁰

175 Callaway (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden Remains at Large'.

176 Bergen, Smyth, 'Holy Warrior', Greenfeld (Co-Host), 'Holy Warriors'.

177 Callaway (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden Remains at Large'.

178 Edwards, (Host), 'Osama bin Laden', August 20, 1998.

179 Ibid.

180 Bergen, Smyth, 'Holy Warrior'.

Compared to other reporters and guests transcribed in the selected texts, Bergen used the terms ‘terrorist’ and ‘terrorism’ very little. This was not an illustration of a silential dimension.¹⁸¹ Following the missile strikes, Bergen stated somewhat reservedly that the targets in Afghanistan were ‘what the U.S. government called “terrorist training camps”’.¹⁸² Speaking about the developing legal case against ‘Islamic militant’ Osama bin Laden, Bergen mentioned the ‘alleged terrorist network’.¹⁸³ When reporting without provisos like ‘alleged’ or ‘accused’, Bergen did so in relation to the statements of others, like with a former Sudanese intelligence agent, as Bergen stated that ‘Bin Laden’s Sudanese camps had become important centers for international terrorists’.¹⁸⁴ Bergen reported that US officials had ‘circumstantial evidence’ linking Bin Laden and his ‘terrorist network’ or ‘terrorist group’ to attacks against the US in Somalia, New York, and Africa.¹⁸⁵

Once the attacks on the US Embassies and the USS Cole had occurred, the use of the terms ‘terrorist’ and ‘terrorism’ became more frequent in the selected news reporting on Bin Laden. Furthermore, as Bergen voiced the terms, it was not always clear whether the characterization of ‘terrorist’ came solely from US officials or was chosen and supported by Bergen himself. For example:

U.S. officials say the Islamic center, whose members Ali Muhammed trained, had close ties to what became Osama bin-Laden’s terrorist network.¹⁸⁶

The government says El Hage admits that he did work for Osama bin-Laden as a secretary until 1994. But, it alleges, El Hage secretarial duties extended further, involving him in bin-Laden’s terrorist group.¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, recalling the CNN Bin Laden interview in *The New Republic*, Bergen wrote:

At first glance, Bin Ladin does not look like a master terrorist with a core of several thousand committed followers at his command and up to \$250 million in his bank account.¹⁸⁸

The phrase ‘at first glance’ implied that there was room for debate on what followed. In the remainder of the article, Bergen referenced several US officials who linked Bin Laden

181 In that case the frame would be so obvious for both Bergen and the audience, that he would enforced the very idea by refraining from using the description of ‘terrorist’ for Bin Laden.

182 Ibid.

183 Greenfeld (Co-Host), ‘Holy Warriors’, Woodruff (Anchor), ‘Terrorism Remains a Sore Spot’.

184 Bergen, Smyth, ‘Holy Warrior’.

185 Ibid. Jeff Greenfeld (Co-Host), ‘Split Screen, The Week That Was, Down With Crime, Osama bin Laden, American Ties, television program, *Newsstand CNN & TIME*, 22:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, December 20, 1998, Woodruff (Anchor), ‘Terrorism Remains a Sore Spot’.

186 Greenfeld, (Co-Host), ‘Split Screen, The Week That Was’.

187 Woodruff (Anchor), ‘Terrorism Remains a Sore Spot’.

188 Bergen, Smyth, ‘Holy Warrior’.

to international terrorism. Noteworthy in this respect was how after the USS Cole attack, Bergen was repeatedly characterized in news broadcasts as ‘CNN terrorism expert’ in addition to (previous) introductions as scholar, reporter, and writer of a book on Bin Laden.¹⁸⁹ Later, for Bergen, the USS Cole bombing was an act of terrorism, and given Bin Laden’s capability, organization, and motive, he was the prime suspect behind it.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, he characterized Bin Laden mostly as ‘a spiritual guide for a lot of people who operated in the Gulf in terrorist groups’, rather than a ‘terrorist mastermind’ or a ‘mafia boss’.¹⁹¹

The attacks, US investigations, and responses

In contrast to Fisk, Bergen worked for an American news channel and hence had a large American audience. A corresponding assumption with this different situational context of text production and consumption was that compared to Fisk, the meaning of Bergen’s statements leaned somewhat more towards the *US institutional terrorism narrative*. This would mean that for Bergen, there was a certain bandwidth within which to operate, set by frames produced in other CNN (or American) news reporting – for example, reporting that reproduced and recontextualized US presidential statements. To what extent was this assumption substantiated in the selected texts?

Bergen’s reporting on the aftermath, US investigation, and indictment that followed the US Embassy attacks and the USS Cole bombings was more voluminous and substantive than Fisk’s. It reflected more on events and developments in line with the US institutional terrorism narrative. An illustration of this was that Bergen explicitly used ‘US officials’ and ‘spokespersons’ as sources for his reporting.¹⁹² Especially during the investigation in Yemen that followed the USS Cole attack, Bergen maintained frequent contact with US officials and counterterrorism experts in Yemen, and was able to provide updates and comments on developments to CNN viewers. Initially, Bergen was pessimistic about ever finding out who was behind the attack on short notice. However, this changed after US Ambassador in Yemen Barbara Bodine and other Americans involved with the investigation stated that things had ‘made a quantum leap forward’.¹⁹³ Yemeni authorities had interviewed hundreds of people and found several clues. Regarding the investigation, Bergen at one point articulated this

189 Bobbie Battista (Host), ‘America Searches for Answers After Attack on USS Cole’, television program, *CNN Talkback Live*, 3:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 13, 2000, Miles O’Brien (Anchor), ‘USS Cole Attacked, Peter Bergen Discusses Who Might Be Responsible for the Attack on the Cole’, television program, *CNN Saturday Morning News*, 7:00 am ET, New York, CNN, October 14, 2000, Joie Chen (Anchor), ‘Crisis in the Middle East’, television program, *CNN Live Event/Special*, 8:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 16, 2000, Gene Randall (Anchor), ‘Is the FBI Any Closer to Finding a Suspect in the USS Cole Attack?’, television program, *CNN Saturday*, 1:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 28, 2000.

190 Waters, (Anchor), ‘Peter Bergen Discusses Possible Suspects in USS Cole Attack’.

191 Van Susteren (Co-Host), ‘USS Cole Investigation’.

192 For example Bergen, Smyth, ‘Holy Warrior’, Greenfeld, (Co-Host), ‘Split Screen, The Week That Was’, Perri Peltz (Anchor), ‘Investigating the Attack on the USS Cole, Examining the Crisis in the Middle East’, television program, *CNN Live Event/Special*, 8:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, October 12, 2000, Battista (Host), ‘America Searches for Answers After Attack on USS Cole’, Nelson (Anchor), ‘Osama Bin Laden No. 1 Suspect’, Chen (Anchor), ‘Crisis in the Middle East’.

193 Van Susteren (Co-Host), ‘USS Cole Investigation’.

dependency, indicating that he was ‘just taking the US counter-terrorism officials at their word’.¹⁹⁴

Another source used explicitly by Bergen over the years was the information released by the US government in the expanding indictment of Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*.¹⁹⁵ The initial indictment was drafted in the spring of 1998 in response to the WIF declaration. New suspects and counts were added in November 1998 and November 2000 to fit the new circumstances after the Embassy attacks in Kenya and Tanzania and the USS Cole bombing. Relatively, Bergen noted, the indictment gave more details about individuals associated with Bin Laden – such as accused perpetrators of the Embassy bombing in Nairobi Mohammed al-Owhali (or Khalid Salim) and Mohammed Sadiq Odeh – than about Bin Laden himself and his direct connection to the events. The indictment also provided information on the status of other leadership within the Bin Laden organization, such as Mohammed Atef and Ayman al-Zawahiri. In contrast to Fisk, Bergen’s reporting varied more in terms of levels of abstraction, focusing on these individuals and their relation to Bin Laden, and on the more general movement behind Bin Laden.

With regard to the prosecution of suspects, Bergen’s reporting was nonaligned as it echoed both US government statements and those of the defense of the accused. For example, according to the complaint filed by the US government against Mohammed al-Owhali, Bergen noted, al-Owhali had met with Bin Laden several times and had been inspired by Bin Laden’s most recent *fatwa*, the WIF declaration.¹⁹⁶ Reflecting on these counts, Bergen doubted whether the US had enough evidence or perhaps had been restricted from publishing classified information. In the case of Odeh, despite the fact that upon his arrest he had allegedly admitted to Pakistani intelligence officials that he was associated with Bin Laden, Bergen remarked that the actual closeness of the connection remained to be seen. Following the extradition of Mahmud Salim (or Abu Hajer al Iraqi) from Germany to the US in December 1998, Bergen discussed the US government charges that Salim had attempted to acquire conventional weapons and nuclear components for Bin Laden’s organization. However, Bergen also reported on the defense of Salim’s attorney that Salim had parted ways with Bin Laden in 1994 after the latter had become too political and activist.¹⁹⁷ Bergen also applied a similar approach when he discussed the alleged connection between Bin Laden and the American Bin Laden sympathizers Ali Mohammed and Wadith el-Hage.¹⁹⁸ Thus, despite the US setting of text production and consumption, when describing individual court cases

194 Carol Lin (Anchor), ‘USS Cole Attack, Osama Bin Laden Considered ‘Very High’ on Suspect List’, television program, *CNN Sunday Morning*, 8:00 am ET, New York, CNN, October 15, 2000.

195 Natalie Allen (Anchor), ‘Jury Convicts Four on All Charges in Embassy Bombings’, television program, *CNN Breaking News*, 1:23 pm ET, New York, CNN, May 29, 2001.

196 Bobbie Battista (Host), ‘US Embassy Bombing Suspects Face Justice in New York, Iraq Continues to Stonewall UN Weapons Inspectors’, television program, *CNN Talkback Live*, 15:00 pm ET, New York, CNN, August 27, 1998.

197 Joie Chen (Anchor), ‘Bin Laden Associate Turned Over to U.S. Custody’, television program, *CNN Sunday*, 07: pm ET, New York, CNN, December 21, 1998.

198 Greenfeld, (Co-Host), ‘Split Screen, The Week That Was’.

Bergen also reviewed US government statements somewhat critically by respecting the adversarial principle.

What about Bergen's reporting on the US missile strikes and other actions to counter the threat posed by Bin Laden? Did these reports reflect a US perspective? In June 1999, Bin Laden was added to the FBI list of the 10 most wanted suspects. However, Bergen noted that 'in practice it didn't mean a huge difference' for actually catching him.¹⁹⁹ A year earlier, the US government had already issued a reward of five million US dollars for information leading to Bin Laden. According to Bergen, in the past these large rewards had 'worked fairly well' in cases that concerned 'lone persons' at large.²⁰⁰ But this had not been the case for someone who was part of an organization, with his own financial means, and surrounded by 'fanatically dedicated followers' who were not 'motivated by material matters'.²⁰¹ Still, Bergen maintained the reward 'might prove effective'.²⁰² In 1999, however, the large reward on Bin Laden had not paid off for the US government, and Bergen expected that adding him to the 10 most wanted list would not influence matters greatly. For Bergen, this latest measure generated some publicity for someone who had been 'on the back burner' or 'out of the news for a while' and served to 'remind people that he was still wanted'.²⁰³ On this point, Fisk was more outspoken: whereas the publicity on the FBI list for the US audience perhaps signaled how the US government worked to provide security for its people, Fisk held that it only added to Bin Laden's status among Muslims and Arabs.

Bergen remained somewhat reserved about the achievements of the US government. According to his reporting in mid-1999, the latter had a 'mixed record of success in disrupting the Bin Laden organization since the embassy bombings'.²⁰⁴ He repeatedly noted that the gathering of reliable intelligence on Bin Laden and his followers was problematic.²⁰⁵ Although no attack had occurred against US targets and 'several plots against embassies around the world' had been foiled, the leadership of the Bin Laden organization was still at large, Bergen stated.²⁰⁶ In a videotape report produced by Bergen, RAND terrorism analyst Bruce Hoffman stated that although the US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan had resulted in some casualties and perhaps a disruption of Bin Laden's organization's terrorist plans at the tactical or operational level, at the strategic level Bin Laden had become 'lionized' after

199 Williams, Brian (Anchor), 'FBI to Add Osama bin Laden to 10 Most Wanted List', television program, *CNN The World Today*, 8:06 pm ET, New York, CNN, June 5, 1999.

200 Ibid.

201 Ibid.

202 Van Susteren (Co-Host), 'Additions to the FBI '10 most wanted' list'.

203 Ibid, Williams, 'FBI to Add Osama bin Laden to 10 Most Wanted List'.

204 Callaway (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden Remains at Large'.

205 Van Susteren (Co-Host), 'Threats Against U.S. Forces Elevate Military to Highest State of Alert'.

206 Callaway (Anchor), 'Osama bin Laden Remains at Large'.

the strikes.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, according to Bergen, the strikes had strengthened the declining support among the Taliban for Bin Laden.

Despite discursive differences between Bergen's and Fisk's reporting, Bergen at times displayed a similar critical attitude towards the use of general frames, such as 'terrorist'. In line with Fisk, Bergen's reporting indicated that as an inspirational figure, maintaining and expanding power over people through discourse was manifestly important for Bin Laden. This was most visible with respect to Bin Laden's status as a religious inspirer rather than a military commander or mafia boss. Adding Bin Laden to the US's 10 most wanted list and the US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan substantiated Bin Laden's narrative. At times, Fisk was more expressive than Bergen, for example in emphasizing that the US had provided Bin Laden with the accolade of 'public enemy number one' that he had always wanted. It was mostly after the USS Cole attack that Bergen increasingly reproduced statements of US officials relatively frequently, allowing some of the power in discourse within the *US institutional terrorism narrative* to be extended by reproduction. Overall, Bergen's reports reflected the US perspective substantially more than Fisk's did.

Power and (de)securitization in a critical terrorism narrative

The aim of this chapter was to extract from the selected texts additional or alternative perspectives on the securitization efforts identified in the previous two chapters. The themes and frames provided by Robert Fisk, Peter Bergen, and others were related to the social structures, securitization efforts, and actions identified in the previous two chapters. Fisk, and to a lesser extent Bergen, reflected on and criticized ideological processes of naturalization for both the US and Bin Laden (or *Al Qaeda*). They reviewed and questioned the perception and framing of securitization elements such as the referent subject, but they also reflected on the practices of security or the actions taken. Furthermore, especially Fisk evaluated how discursive and non-discursive action, as part of the US social practice of the politics of nations, echoed among Muslim Arabs, including Salafi-jihadis. Conversely, he also examined the extent to which the social practice of Salafi-jihadism resonated in the US.

For analyzing critique, and unpacking power use and processes of naturalization, the concept of securitization offered a suitable point of departure. More than in the previous two macro narratives, the *critical terrorism narrative* highlighted how language, events, and circumstances were framed and functioned as heuristic artefacts. In a philosophical sense, heuristic artefacts as defined here are (strategic) 'devices' that create the circumstances that enable and facilitate understanding of situations in terms of securitization. They are essential building blocks for the ideological process of naturalization that follows from several securitization efforts. The extent of their impact depends on their nature, the way

²⁰⁷ Bill Hemmer (Anchor), 'One Year After U.S. Strikes, bin Laden and his Followers Remain Active and At-Large', television program, *CNN Morning News*, 9:20 am ET, New York, CNN, August 20, 1999.

they are organized or become contextually situated, and how they are combined with other heuristic artefacts. What the analysis of the critical narrative in this chapter has indicated is that both the actions and securitization efforts of one entity (considered as referent subject by the other) served as heuristic artefacts for the securitization efforts of the other securitizing actor. But also vice versa as one switches the perspective of securitization again. What was considered as an adequate measure or customized policy for one was proof, a symptom, or symbol of the threat for the other.

The following sections approach critique by analyzing how various elements of the securitization efforts as set out in the previous two narratives were characterized by Fisk, and to a lesser extent by the other journalists discussed in this chapter.

Bin Laden and Al Qaeda: referent subject and securitizing actor

Fisk portrayed Bin Laden in various ways. Apart from an Islamic extremist and inspirational facilitator of terrorist acts, Bin Laden was initially characterized as a Muslim businessman in Sudan. Over the years, Fisk recognized both how Bin Laden attempted to function as securitizing actor, and how the US deemed Bin Laden a dangerous referent subject. On several occasions, Fisk criticized US institutional frames by adopting superordinates and metaphors that charged these American frames with an even stronger meaning. He chose words that increased the contrast with his own characterizations.

Fisk placed Bin Laden as a figure in an American or Western 'tradition' of venting anger against 'hate figures' and 'beasts'. This perspective emphasized the role of the US, rather than that of Bin Laden. A metaphor repeatedly used by Fisk in this respect was that of 'Hollywood', which represented a process of simplistic fictional framing and the search for someone to fill in the predefined role of 'bad guy', instead of representing Bin Laden's character based on complex reality. Peter Bergen's remark that perhaps Bin Laden had been 'demonized' in US media reporting aligned with the critical direction of Fisk's statements.

In contrast to the metaphor of a 'beast', from his own early interview experience Fisk portrayed 'Mr.' Bin Laden as a polite and well-educated man who was nevertheless ruthless in his angry statements against the US and posed a dangerous threat. This image was especially supported by the televised interviews by Roberts, Arnett, and Miller. As an inspirational figure, Bin Laden's narrative was the domain where he was most powerful. More than the power to do things and organize attacks, according to Fisk, Bin Laden had and sought power over people through discourse. To this end, he used his network, including the ARC in London, to disseminate faxes and audio- and videocassettes to followers and readers of Arab newspapers. His status as an Afghan veteran and his wealthy background increased his discursive power.

Still, rather than a global 'terrorist mastermind' (unlike Bergen, Fisk refrained from using the term *Al Qaeda* altogether), Bin Laden was depicted as a man who was keen to be

informed by local Lebanese newspapers brought by Fisk to his remote and isolated Afghan tent. Also making matters more relative was Fisk's report that the 1996 memorandum had caused a 'shock' among many of his supporters. This revealed the difference between sympathizers and people with shared anger, and their willingness to escalate and 'declare war'. Following their last interview in 1997, Fisk also emphasized a degree of pragmatism in Bin Laden's statements. Whereas Bin Laden had previously made threats against the UK for their presence in Saudi Arabia, he now dismissed the issue as minor and symbolic, while acknowledging partial European opposition against US foreign policies in the Middle East. Lastly, Fisk's speculative reports on the complex web of relations among Americans, Saudis, the Taliban, and Bin Laden also worked to undermine the binary logic of an 'us' versus 'them'. Miller's interview filled a lacuna in Fisk's and Bergen's reporting because he discussed the WIF declaration as it was published. In the setting of the statements of US officials discussing protective measures against the threat of terrorism, Miller observed how Bin Laden at that moment had 'put a time cap' on things of only a few weeks. In this light, the bombings of the US Embassies were a manifestation of the customized policy sharpened in the WIF declaration.

In summary, Fisk questioned both the global reach of Bin Laden's power to act as an orchestrator of terrorism and his ability to mobilize some of his followers. This was supported by Bergen's statements. As articulated in the *critical terrorism narrative*, it seemed that characterizations of Bin Laden in the *US institutional terrorism narrative* and the *Al Qaeda narrative* were both in their own way more robust than justified by reality. Fisk thereby toned down notions of Bin Laden as both referent subject and securitizing actor.

US embassies and USS Cole bombings: customized policy and heuristic artefact

While breaking down the image of Bin Laden as a global terrorist mastermind, the existence of conflict and violence in the Middle East was not ignored. For Bin Laden and his followers, the attacks on the US Embassies could be perceived both as the execution of the articulated customized policy, and as a heuristic artefact (the proof of anger and a willingness to act) in the ongoing process that the various securitization efforts comprised. Fisk and Bergen questioned whether Bin Laden was directly responsible for coordinating the attacks in Africa, but they recognized that he was an inspirational facilitator, especially in light of the 1996 memorandum and 1998 WIF declaration. In terms of securitization, Bin Laden fulfilled the role of securitizing actor and set the tone for the Embassy attacks to be executed. Fisk emphasized that it was no coincidence that the attacks in Africa happened on the eighth anniversary of the arrival of US troops in Saudi Arabia, a pivotal moment in the development of Bin Laden's thinking.

According to Fisk, the Embassy attacks proved to have some limitations for use as a heuristic artefact for Bin Laden's securitization efforts. Bin Laden's feelings and language

resonated with wider anger among Saudis and other Arabs over American involvement in the region. Hence, as a symbolic attack on US institutions, the Embassy bombings should perhaps have been met with broad agreement among Bin Laden's followers, other Salafi-jihadis, and possibly even the wider Arab world. However, moderating the 'success' of the attacks for Bin Laden was the high number of civilian casualties, especially in Kenya, that were broadcasted all over the world. Furthermore, Bin Laden initially denied his own involvement.

From a US perspective, the functioning of the Embassy attacks as symbolic proof and heuristic artefact was evident. For the US, they were a warning of a new kind of terrorist threat that was developing. However, Fisk still criticized the notion of an 'international terrorist conspiracy' and rejected the apparent sense of immediacy to respond. Instead, he underlined what the main problem was for him: the American government never asked the 'why' question. Instead of discussing capabilities and scenarios as a response to the threat of terrorism, Fisk argued that the US should consider what had caused the attacks and how widespread these feelings of anger and frustration were among Muslims. In numerous articles, Fisk elaborated on the socio-economic problems in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, and on how the US had a role in this. In essence, Fisk asked to what extent the threat posed to the US by Bin Laden and his followers was self-induced. Some reporting by ABC on overcoming cultural and language barriers between American troops and the Saudi population at the working level aligned with this questioning. Fisk persistently related the attacks to a broader context in the Middle East and refrained somewhat from discussing who the perpetrators were.

According to Fisk, the assault on the USS Cole was of a different nature than the Embassy bombings, and was less a demonstration of an attack on US values and freedom. He deemed the 'attempted sinking' of the US Navy destroyer a 'murderous' act, but not an 'act of terror against American democracy'. As such, he critiqued the symbolism of the attack on the USS Cole attributed by the US government. In a broader sense, Fisk and Bergen briefly mentioned the asymmetry of a small boat being able to reach the American cruiser, but not to the extent that it was emphasized in the *Al Qaeda narrative* as a heroic asymmetrical success, or as a somewhat embarrassing asymmetrical failure as recontextualized in the *US institutional terrorism narrative*.

Again, for Fisk there was no doubt that this attack in Yemen was related to the broader Arab fury against American involvement in the Middle East, and especially their support for Israel against the Palestinians. He speculated that the USS Cole bombing could have also been committed by frustrated young men unrelated to larger organizations. It was possible that Bin Laden had generally inspired the attack, as his family came from Yemen and he had various relations with the country. All casualties were US servicemen, and as such the attack corresponded to Bin Laden's threats and demand for a US withdrawal from the region. As an expression of Arab frustration and anger, as Fisk put it, the USS Cole bombing served as a strong heuristic artefact for Bin Laden and his followers. In terms of the ongoing process

of Bin Laden's developing securitization efforts, the US Embassies and USS Cole bombings represented both a heuristic artefact and customized policy. The perspective of the *critical terrorism narrative* highlighted the attacks mostly in terms of their symbolic meaning and heuristic value (or lack thereof) for the securitization efforts of both the US and *Al Qaeda*.

US action: effective customized policies or securitization blowback?

In response to the US Embassy bombings and to counter the threat posed by Bin Laden, various measures were taken by the US. How effective were these measures and how did they affect US securitization efforts, according to Fisk and Bergen? Most prominent were the missile strikes against targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. For Fisk, what counted was not the tactical advantage of disrupting training and planning activities among Bin Laden's network, or the extent to which the attacks strengthened the position of US President Clinton. Instead, the missile strikes mostly provided Bin Laden with the recognition he sought as America's number one public enemy. According to both Fisk and Bergen, placing Bin Laden on the list of Americas' 10 most wanted and offering a large reward for information leading to his capture added to this. These measures generated various metaphorical frames that served as heuristic artefacts in Bin Laden's securitization efforts. There was significant division among Salafi-jihadi groups and a rift between Bin Laden and the Taliban, but the missile strikes silenced these disagreements for an important part. They buried concerns over the large number of civilian casualties in Africa and increased tolerance or acceptance for Bin Laden to continue his discursive and non-discursive activities.

Furthermore, Fisk and Bergen observed that the military action following Clinton's securitization effort in 1998 increased negative sentiments in the Arab world against the US, hence improving how Bin Laden's narrative resonated among his audiences. This effect was enhanced further, Fisk reported, by the execution of Operation Desert Fox several months later – an aspect that did not become clear as a significant element in the *US institutional terrorism narrative* in chapter 4.²⁰⁸ Fisk noted that in light of Desert Fox, US government officials had connected Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and Bin Laden. Based on Fisk's own experience, he contested any such suggestion. In contrast, relation Fisk did identify was US foreign policy in the Middle East and wider feelings of frustration and anger among Arabs: the US supported Israel against the Palestinians, pushed the Saudi regime to pursue an economic oil agenda, imposed sanctions on Iraq, and conducted military operations that had hurt the population of the Arab country.

The economic sanctions imposed by Clinton on Bin Laden had only served American domestic interests, according to Fisk. He reported that Saudi Arabs were astonished by

²⁰⁸ This can be explained because the link was made by government officials, not the President, and in the context of Operation Desert Fox. The selected texts for chapter 4 hence did not include any references. In chapter 3 the significance of Desert Fox was identified.

the measure as Bin Laden had already refused to buy any American goods for many years. The sanctions matched what Bin Laden had advocated himself as customized policy and emphasized the US materialism that Bin Laden had rejected years before. Fisk deemed the measure 'meaningless' in the Middle East, but the very conversation that occurred over it among Bin Laden's followers and the wider Arab world also contributed to the sense of estrangement and feelings of anger towards the US. Similar to adding Bin Laden to the US's 10 most wanted list, the sanctions had a symbolic value for Bin Laden.

In sum, for Fisk, several of the actions taken by the US government had proven ineffective or even counterproductive. Viewing the missile strikes and economic ban as customized policy, the term 'securitization blowback' came to mind, as from a US perspective the measures even had negative consequences for the development of the identified threat. Fisk also discussed alternative motives for the missile strikes and securitization efforts: perhaps they had served to draw away attention from the personal relational problems of the Lewinsky matter faced by the US commander-in-chief, who had ordered the strikes. Introducing that issue further undermined and critiqued perceptions of appropriateness and adequacy.

Another implicit question in Fisk's reporting was, to put it in terms of securitization, 'who was the referent object?' In other words, who was actually threatened? Over the years, Fisk observed a transformation of those against whom Bin Laden had aimed to act. This appeared to be somewhat pragmatic. The emphasis shifted from the Saudi regime in the early 1990s, to its Western allies and their military presence in the Arab country in the second half of the 1990s. Later, the UK and French troops were deemed less important and the focus became more exclusively on the ZCA, centralizing the US and Israel. As noted, Fisk contested viewing the USS Cole bombing as an attack on US democracy as a whole, but in general terms he acknowledged that American troops and civilians were under threat from the dangerous enemy that Bin Laden and his followers represented.

In contrast to Bergen, Fisk did not focus concretely on specific individual Bin Laden followers, or on the wider network of groups and their material capabilities. Instead, for Fisk, there was primarily a wider story of 'Arab anger' to tell. Rather than binary security situations of protagonists and antagonists, there were also other sufferers involved. Ultimately, he stated, both the belief in an 'international terrorist conspiracy' and a 'Zionist crusader conspiracy' were 'exotic'. Failing to recognize how the situation was complex and involved other deprived groups negated opportunities to evaluate the negative effects or blowback of American policies.

The character of the narrative: desecuritization?

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this narrative is not an objective judgement but a *critical* micro perspective related to the two macro narratives outlined in the previous two chapters. The narrative is critical in the sense that it criticized simplistic framing of entities,

and disputed the effectiveness of customized policies as identified in both the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives.

Tensions and inconsistencies identified included Bin Laden's shifting definition of the referent subject and the relevance of the US military operation over Iraq. The stereotyping of Bin Laden as a 'hate figure' and 'global terrorist mastermind' was questioned as a framing practice that compared to that of the American film industry in Hollywood. According to Fisk, even among some of Bin Laden's closest followers and a wider group of Muslims supporting him, there were doubts about the course set by the 1996 and 1998 declarations. Overall, the complexity of the 'web of relations' involving the US and Saudi Arabian governments, the Afghan Taliban, and Bin Laden was emphasized. This fragmentation or deconstruction of the image of Bin Laden as either ultimate threatening referent subject or authoritative securitizing actor was followed by his simultaneous presentation as both an educated but also ruthless man, capable of instigating attacks to a certain extent against American targets. While Fisk and to some degree Bergen recognized grievances among Arabs, they obviously contested the logic of securitization and violent customized policies voiced by Bin Laden.

In critiquing and deconstructing the lexicon and metaphorical frames that served as building blocks for securitization efforts to both the US and *Al Qaeda*, the essential value of heuristic artefacts for those securitization efforts became evident. To a large extent, the execution of customized policies or responsive actions contained significant symbolic value and hence served as new semiotic capital or heuristic artefacts for securitization efforts. In dealing with the threat, the threat itself was articulated further. However, 'hostile' security practices, whether terrorist attacks or military strikes, functioned as even stronger symbols for the opponent. For the US, the attacks on the US embassies in Africa and the USS Cole in Yemen impelled the *US institutional terrorism narrative*. On the other hand, the symbolic value of these attacks as heuristic artefacts for the *Al Qaeda narrative* could be relativized due to the deaths of many African civilians. For Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda*, it was the US missile strikes on Sudan, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and the economic sanctions against Bin Laden that generated useful semiotic capital for his securitization efforts. According to the *critical terrorism narrative*, the effectiveness of the missile strikes and sanctions was questioned in the US, but before divided Salafi-jihadis and wider Arab audiences they demonstrated the enmity and cultural insensitivity Bin Laden was struggling to express.

Apart from extensive critique on simplistic framing and the effectiveness of customized policies, the critical narrative also questioned the American goals or driving factors. Fisk indirectly related the missile strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998 to the Lewinsky affair as a possible motivation. Furthermore, by reminding his readers of how the American CIA had helped to construct the camps in Afghanistan that had now been bombed, Fisk suggested a degree of arbitrariness with regard to framing Bin Laden as an antagonist. Was the US perhaps simply in need of an enemy, just as Bin Laden needed the US to act against him to gain authority?

More than the *Al Qaeda narrative* and the *US institutional terrorism narrative*, the selected body of reporting for this narrative was fragmentary in its description of the social events that served as overall selectors for this research. Reproduction and recontextualization of the selected texts for this narrative was limited. To moderate idiosyncratic effects and complement gaps in Fisk's reporting, additional texts from other journalists were incorporated in the narrative. This also allowed for the analysis of representations of Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* in genres besides newspaper articles, such as television interviews, documentaries, and news broadcasts, and for the inclusion of some audiovisual aspects. There were differences between these discursive practices, as the setting of Bergen's contributions at times demonstrated a power in and behind discourse that framed his statements more in terms of a US institutional terrorism perspective. However, Bergen's reporting did not equate to the mass media 'transmission belt' type of reporting that conformed starkly to a US institutional agenda. The analysis has shown that both Fisk and Bergen presented various critical perspectives, such as the discussion on the 'demonization' of Bin Laden. The *critical terrorism narrative* reflected the securitization efforts of others and hence did not explicitly contribute to forms of self-identification for Fisk or Bergen in relation to *Al Qaeda*. In terms of the tennis match metaphor presented at the beginning of the chapter, the *critical terrorism narrative* has shown that these securitization efforts built on and required other efforts to develop.

The critique expressed in the narrative did not represent desecuritization efforts. Reporting that substantiated the *critical terrorism narrative* was mostly evaluative; the narrative cannot be viewed as a comprehensive, influential, or successful effort to change the macro narratives. Apart from its fragmentary nature, the power distribution in and behind discourse in the two macro narratives limited the spread and influence of any of the critiques on securitization efforts within the social order of the US or *Al Qaeda* narratives. In general, there was a shortage of reproduction or recontextualization of the texts that encompassed the *critical terrorism narrative*. However, with regard to desecuritization, one must also recognize that using the concept itself (in terms of efforts or effects) has been problematic. There has been solid discussion on its definition, the reasons for its occurrence, and how it functions.²⁰⁹

What did emerge from the *critical terrorism narrative* was substantive critique of framing practices and contestation of the effectiveness of customized policies. Evocative frames were used to articulate and contrast simplistic processes of identification in the US and *Al Qaeda narratives*. In terms of ACN, any critique could be valuable to inform the narrative tracing performed in the last chapter, and as a general resource to widen understanding of social phenomena.

■
209 For example Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*.

Reflection

As noted, this is not a perfectly balanced or complete narrative. Frankly, such narratives do not exist as intertextual links are limitless. Therefore, it is important to specify principal gaps, identify what was beyond the scope of the narrative, and highlight the limitations of the analysis. A notable gap was that Robert Fisk wrote extensively on Bin Laden, but refrained from reporting on several social events that were identified in the previous two narratives, such as the publication of the WIF declaration. Moreover, while he reported on US economic sanctions against Bin Laden in 1998, he did not mention the US securitization of the Taliban and economic sanctions against Afghanistan a year later. Similar to Peter Bergen, Fisk did not report on the millennium threats and uncovered plots either. While Bergen refrained from making CNN contributions on any link between Operation Desert Fox, Saddam Hussein, and Bin Laden, other journalists did report on these events and circumstances. John Miller's interview with Bin Laden is an example included in this chapter. However, beyond the scope of the selected texts (due to the sheer volume of texts already accumulating) were CBS and ABC reports, and some potentially relevant TIME Magazine articles. Including one in which Ayman al-Zawahiri contacted the local ABC/TIME representative in Pakistan after the US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan to inform Americans that Bin Laden was still alive.²¹⁰ The reason for centralizing Fisk over other journalists in the narrative was presented in the introduction of the chapter.

A potential minor or even trivial gap is that using the extensive LexisNexis database for text selection brought the risk of relevant texts being excluded from analysis due to inconsistencies in the LexisNexis metadata, or omissions in collection efforts. Fisk's newspaper articles in the special volume published by *The Independent* provided a double check in this regard. Furthermore, a limitation that restricted analysis to some extent was that news broadcast transcripts were retrieved from LexisNexis in plain text. These transcripts lacked information on verbal tone and non-verbal interaction, for example between Peter Bergen and other CNN panel members. Furthermore, the extent to which potentially relevant topics were raised by others than Bergen on news shows was beyond the scope of the analysis. Bergen might not have addressed issues because these had already been mentioned by others on the show, or because the news anchor gave him no opportunity to do so. However, due to the extensive time bracket of the selected texts and the extent to which Bergen repeated his views on multiple occasions, the effect of these limitations was moderated.

Lastly, what can be learned from working with the narrative analysis framework? The framework adequately supported the research for this narrative, although not all elements were equally applicable. The *critical terrorism narrative* originated from a different methodological approach than the previous two narratives. The concept of securitization

210 For example Yusufzai, 'Osama bin Laden, Conversation With Terror', Miller, 'Greetings, America. My name is Usama Bin Ladin. Now that I have your attention...', Assuras, 'Accused terrorist leader Usama bin Ladin declares War on all Americans', Juju Chang (Anchor), 'Osama Bin Laden Speaks Out', television program, *ABC World News This Morning*, 6:30 am ET, New York, ABC News, December 25, 1998.

was used as a starting point to investigate critique of the securitization efforts of others. Analysis of the audiences of the selected texts was not applied, and processes of self-identification were also deemed immaterial for the function of the narrative as part of this ACN study. Textual analysis mostly focused on lexical cohesion for its value in identifying heuristic artefacts, and was also limited to key parts of texts. The titles of news shows and articles, the use of expressive adjectives or metaphors, the frequency with which themes were mentioned, and the extent to which discursive elements related to (opposed) either the *US institutional terrorism narrative* or the *Al Qaeda narrative* primarily informed further selection and interpretation of texts.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Introduction

The dominant paradigm in both the study and practice of intelligence is positivist and empiricist. Central is the idea of intelligence as being objective, timely, and relevant for consumers. A certain tension between the scientific ideal of searching for the comprehensive ground truth and delivering useful ‘packages’ of objective knowledge has informed some normative debates in intelligence studies over the unavoidability of ‘distortion’ of information due to factors or phenomena such as cognitive bias, politicization, or deception operations. Rather than inferring a theory of intelligence from the practice (an approach common in the intelligence literature), the research in this thesis was conducted based on critical philosophical reasoning. The aim was to contribute to critical theoretical debate in intelligence studies by articulating the philosophical stance deemed most adequate by the researcher, and using appropriate theoretical components to develop a methodology to analyze complex intelligence problems. The narrative analysis framework (NAF) and narrative tracing (NT) method derived from the ACN methodology were applied to analyze *Al Qaeda*. The three narratives described in the previous chapters generated insights on securitization efforts by the US and *Al Qaeda* between 1994 and early 2001.

This chapter addresses three issues that together correspond to the objective of the research and its research questions. First, it provides an overview of the ACN logic and the methodology of identifying and analyzing the narratives. CDA enabled to differentiate social orders and situate the texts that combined into distinct narratives. The concept of securitization brought focus in analyzing key parts of texts in context. However, the chapter also addresses some problems or limitations of the research, such as the extent to which the effects of narratives on audiences, or the ‘public mind’, could be measured.

Second, the chapter combines the findings of the case studies. The two macro narratives are linked together by focusing on the multi-consequentiality of statements and actions. This focus is less a result of conclusive findings on the *impact* of (singular) causal relations on the narratives, and more about the interdiscursive *nature* of causal relations: did securitization efforts in one narrative contribute to securitization in the other narrative? Tensions and inconsistencies highlighted in the micro narrative are instrumental to comprehensively tackle the issue. The chapter also addresses the nature and status of audiences with regard to the multi-consequentiality (within the same social domain) of securitization efforts. In addition, the effects of the *Al Qaeda* narrative on various types of audiences is discussed in more detail. In contrast to the institutionalized social order that situated the US narrative, the *Al Qaeda* narrative served to *establish* the identity of Bin Laden and develop his organization. The narrative not only increased support among followers, but also influenced levels of understanding and sympathy in the Arab and Muslim world. In the current academic debate

on securitization, the nature and status of audiences is a central issue of concern.¹ Research often focuses on institutionalized social orders. Therefore, a focus on *Al Qaeda* audiences brings a new perspective to that academic discussion.

Third, the chapter evaluates this thesis in terms of its academic contribution to intelligence studies. Contrary to some of the critique, this thesis has shown that a critical approach can contribute to intelligence as practice as well. The object of research and the case studies have oriented the applied ACN methodology in such a way that, from an intelligence perspective, this research could reflect a joint analytical endeavor performed by US professionals. The various narratives would then correspond to the foci of intelligence analysts, working-level policymakers, and possibly additional trusted outside experts. Finally, the chapter briefly discusses some organizational considerations with respect to implementing ACN.

Analysis by Contrasting Narratives

Identifying narratives

This section reflects on the theoretical foundation or logic of identifying distinct narratives. The critical realist approach underlying ACN implies a dialectical relation between structure and agency, and a redefinition of the positivist empiricist concept of causality. Aristotle's four-fold concept of cause, as described in chapter 1, illustrates how both the material and ideational context can be understood as facilitating conditions that enable or constrain efficient causes such as actions, and final teleological causes such as intentions. Rather than tracing and adding singular cause-and-effect relations, multi-causality needs to be considered in terms of a causal complex to explain processes in the social world. This remark serves not to dismiss social mechanism-based process-tracing, but to distinguish the approach in this thesis from it. It also clarifies how the ACN methodology is of value for intelligence. In the predominantly positivist empiricist field of intelligence studies, this research fills an intellectual gap. The 'intentions, capabilities, activities' (ICA) framework that is extensively used in intelligence to assess threats demonstrates this.² Namely, the ICA framework leaves the Aristotelian category of formal cause (ideas, conventions, norms, etc.), or the social order, underexposed as a distinct constitutive element. Thereby, the inquiry into resonance among various types of audiences involved is neglected. Another shortcoming of traditional approaches to intelligence is that the situatedness of the analysis remains underspecified.

■
1 For example Balzacq, Léonard, Ruzicka, "Securitization' revisited', Côté, 'Agents without agency', Senia Febrica, 'Refining the Role of Audience in Securitization, Southeast Asia's Fight Against Terrorism', in Scott Nicholas Romaniuk, Francis Grice, Daniela Irrera, Stewart Webb (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism Policy* (London, Palgrave Macmillan 2017) 703-731.

2 Singer, 'Threat-perception and the armament-tension dilemma', 94.

ACN involves the process of redescription, or abductive reasoning. Causal explanation follows from the construction of models that strive to best capture social reality. The existential claims about the constitutive structures and causal powers of 'real' objects, such as social structures, allow one to explain actual and empirical processes. The particular way through which the social order is defined allows attribution of certain causal powers and relations. These powers are manifested in how the social order enables and constrains narratives through conventions, norms, etcetera. However, this is also a dialectical relation, as over time narratives that articulate issues from a particular perspective can also (incrementally) influence and change the social order. In essence, it was Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional theoretical discourse model that provided the underpinnings necessary to define the distinct nature of the three cases. Selected texts and non-discursive social events were part of narratives that existed in wider orders of discourse, social practices, and social structures.³ As such, it was possible to analyze how each of the narratives was subject to and of influence on a distinct logic within a social domain. Defining the constitutive social order that situated narratives and events made it possible to analyze how the causal complex as a whole explained the development of social phenomena.

However, as new connections were found and knowledge was gained during the research, it remained necessary to reflect on the initially constructed relations. Were the social orders adequately defined? Was the most relevant level of analysis addressed in light of the research objectives? As illustrated in chapter 2, it was possible to view American texts and events as part of several subnational narratives or a national narrative on *Al Qaeda*. As for Bin Laden's statements, they could possibly be viewed in terms of an internal organizational dynamic among his Salafi-jihadi followers. So, is the primary focus in this research on *Al Qaeda*'s development as a whole adequate, or should it focus more on its priorities for the future, or how it could fall apart? Does the research aim to uncover the extent to which US subnational differences on terrorism constrain the narrative at the national level? Although these questions are related, choosing the level of narrative analysis was about applying focus and making a certain approach central to the research effort.

Norman Fairclough's theory on discourse was instrumental in positioning Thierry Balzacq's sociological securitization theory within narratives and social orders. Securitization works to mobilize heuristic artefacts in context and articulate an existential threat, which allows to engage in extraordinary security practices. Rather than finding ideal type instances of 'successful' securitization, this thesis has demonstrated that securitization efforts (or moves, attempts) could provide an adequate starting point to analyze the identified narratives. Although securitization moves were performed with various types of audiences in mind, explicit *in casu* assent was not necessarily required for consequential actions. The US president, for example, was given a certain institutionalized mandate by his electorate. Policies and actions were rooted in securitization efforts. Nevertheless, the mandate represented a certain bandwidth within which to operate, obliging the securitizing actor

3 As depicted in chapter 2, figure 2.1.

to strive for resonance (and maintain general support). This discursive and non-discursive striving to establish resonance was reflected in narratives.

In essence, the macro narratives provided the primary semiotic mode of entry to research the interplay between material, formal, efficient, and final causes in causal complexes that became activated in and through securitization efforts. Such an idea of efforts acknowledges how facilitating conditions and drivers affect each other and together cause effects. Aspects that are indirectly of influence, such as broad popular support for a securitizing actor among a global audience, must be taken into account even though in a strict sense they might not be considered an element of securitization. Securitizing actors have the power to articulate reasons for action that can produce semiotic and non-semiotic change (causation) through 'resonance of the reasons offered to the partners in a social interaction'.⁴ This resonance not only depends on the content of the reasoning and involves other aspects such as tone or imagery. But in a wider sense also requires a degree of congruence between intratextual aspects of texts, the discursive and socio-cultural context, and non-semiotic aspects of actions, persons, and the material world.

Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach to discourse reflects Aristotle's four types of causes, but it also highlights how over time, these types of causes can affect each other, making distinctions less clear. As multiple securitization efforts follow and build on each other, they contribute to a process of naturalization. With time, attributed meaning (articulation of difference, threat) could become more ideological, more permanent. The teleological final cause (e.g. motivation, vision, intention, or reason) could become a naturalized part of the formal cause (the ideational context). In a broader sense, actors are able to influence the causal powers and relations that enable and constrain their actions. As part and parcel, for Fairclough, these are also constant and ongoing struggles over identification. Processes of identification relate to defining the self as much as the 'other'. The social roles and distribution of power among the securitizing actor and his audiences are articulated and shaped by the power to act, and the power over people that is expressed in and behind discourse (the production of texts, genre conventions, standardization of language use). Overall, the theoretical components of CDA and securitization efforts are compatible and reinforce the explanatory potential of research on causal relations manifesting in and through narratives.

With respect to securitization theory, the notion of resonance in this research included but also decentralized the role of audiences in securitization efforts. Second-generation securitization theorists differ from the Copenhagen School regarding the premise of audience acceptance. They hold that it is restricted as merely one of the elements that contributes to the emergence of security issues, and also relates to 'practices, bureaucratic routines and policy instruments such as technologies'.⁵ In centralizing the idea of 'efforts'

4 Fairclough, Jessop, Sayer, 'Critical Realism and Semiosis', 206.

5 Thierry Balzacq, 'The 'Essence' of securitization, Theory, ideal type, and a sociological science of security', *International Relations*, 29 (2015) 1: 108.

and decentralizing the role of audiences and their assent, this study distances itself further from first-generation theorists. For many securitization theorists, defining audiences and evaluating acceptance or resonance of securitization efforts among them has been an important methodological concern.⁶ It was difficult to collect information on what was in the minds of the American public, and even more so for the various audiences of the *Al Qaeda* narrative. However, by making these limitations explicit and pointing to areas that could be studied further, the study still produced valid, reliable knowledge.

This 'feedback problem' persists with all social research, as social science cannot be performed in a 'laboratory', and not all required 'variables' can be measured with the rigor and depth researchers would desire. For both the US and *Al Qaeda*, this research was able to address how efforts and actions aligned with (or did not align with) the respective wider social order, how efforts were directed at various audiences within that context, and what authority or power was associated with the securitizing actors. As will be addressed in the next paragraphs, to some extent the research was also able to incorporate data on responses among various types of audiences. In particular, the strength of this study was in pointing out how securitization efforts situated in one social order translated into other social contexts.

As outlined in chapter 2, the NAF comprises the four main analytical categories of meanings, texts, settings, and background. These enable one to identify, analyze, and interpret the constitutive elements of securitization efforts (in discursive and non-discursive actions) within their socio-political contexts. Although the theoretical model set forth by Fairclough proved valuable, the method of precise and exhaustive textual analysis that he advances (based on functional linguistics) proved to be an overly detailed and unnecessary approach for the purpose of this research.⁷ This study has shown that by focusing on the concept of securitization, the identification of specific lexicon (such as metaphors and synonyms), forms of grammar (such as reference and substitution), and non-textual aspects could be limited to specific key parts of texts.

Some linguists might consider this to be a selective or even arbitrary practice that stretches the idea of what science entails. However, it is through this study's holistic approach of abductively considering the concept of securitization and the settings of text production and consumption against the backdrop of ideational and material context, that certain text fragments, descriptions, and characterizations gained prominence over others. The case studies were transparent in describing relevant and illustrative key parts of texts. The utility of this 'more selective' textual approach lay in its strength of specifying the linguistic characteristics of heuristic artefacts that proved central to securitization efforts, while avoiding becoming entrenched in a deep absolute (functional linguistic) analysis of only a limited number of texts. Securitization processes stretch over multiple efforts, reflected in multiple statements and actions that share longitudinal ideational and teleological

6 Balzacq, Léonard, Ruzicka, "Securitization' revisited', 499-501, Côté, 'Agents without agency', Febrica 'Refining the Role of Audience in Securitization'.

7 For example see Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*.

connections and as such constitute a narrative. Studying settings of text production and consumption among audiences against the backdrop of the wider socio-cultural context allowed for a comprehensive sociological approach to securitization efforts. The three narratives did not equally draw on all elements of the framework. For example, as a micro perspective, analysis of the case study in chapter 5 focused more on the content than on the settings and aspects of self-identification or resonance among audiences.

The ACN methodology was applied to study the evolution of meanings associated with *Al Qaeda*. The term *Al Qaeda* related to the group of people and social network associated with Osama bin Laden, conforming to Salafi beliefs and values, and supporting a jihad against a far (Western) enemy; the term further encompassed these people's public representations and discursive and non-discursive (violent) actions. It was a genuine complex intelligence problem of interacting themes, entities, and activities within a dynamic social context. The critical nature of the ACN approach implies that the analysis itself is also directed at 'one's own' socio-political context. For intelligence, this means that the strategic narrative of the intelligence consumer and the respective causal complex that it reflects and in which it is situated need to be an integral part of the research. Critical researchers recognize that one is subject to this socio-political context and bound by frames, concepts, and 'truths'. The research must be transparent in this respect and illustrate a reflexive attitude. The reflections at the end of each case study, along with the overall evaluation of the methodology in this chapter, contribute to this. As has already been acknowledged, the researcher's lack of knowledge of the Arabic language was a factor that limited the research. First, it prevented me from fully engaging in researching reproduction and recontextualization of the texts that constitute the *Al Qaeda narrative*. Second, the research was limited in determining the extent to which various types of Arab and Muslim audiences resonated with Bin Laden's messages and the violent actions associated with *Al Qaeda*. The following paragraphs discuss the topic of *Al Qaeda* audiences more extensively. To account for these two shortcomings to some extent, the research was able to draw on relevant literature and translations published in the last two decades.

For intelligence professionals analyzing emerging phenomena and entities, such an extensive body of research literature is seldom available. It is a constant challenge for them to acquire relevant specific and background knowledge, within a maneuvering space that is limited by practical and time constraints, to cope with complex intelligence problems. Ultimately, each case study is best performed by a situated researcher who epistemically 'sits on the fence' between the community of researchers and those under study.⁸ Therefore, the ACN methodology requires the knowledge, skills, and experience of different types of officials to analyze different particular narratives as part of a broader cooperative effort at the working level. It is not unthinkable that, in addition to efforts by intelligence analysts,

8 Vincent Pouliot, 'Practice Tracing', in Andrew Bennet, Jeffrey T. Checkel, (eds.) *Process Tracing, From Metaphor to Analytic Tool, Strategies for Social Inquiry*, Kindle edition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2015), location 5596, see also Vincent Pouliot, 'Subjectivism', *Toward a Constructivist Methodology*, *International Studies Quarterly* 51 (2007) 2: 257–288, Wilkinson, 'The limits of spoken words', 100.

better positioned trusted expertise from outside the analysts' intelligence organization could become part of the cooperative ACN process. For example, experts on certain non-governmental organizations, local humanitarian networks, or political opposition movements could become involved by analyzing critical micro narratives of related 'commentators'. Such commentators do not have the power to influence or act with respect to the intelligence problem. In addition, whereas intelligence analysts (and other experts) could focus on the narratives of foreign entities, relevant policy officers⁹ could account for analyzing the intelligence consumer's dominant strategic narrative. This 'narrative net assessment' of appraising meaning-making by the self and other might not come naturally to every national intelligence community, but it is of great value.¹⁰ ACN draws on different bodies of knowledge and requires the cooperative involvement of different types of officials, especially when information is scarce.

In macro narratives, securitization efforts are and reflect the causal complex in action, the activation of potential powers. In contrast, the critical narrative in this research metaphorically functioned as commentator on a discursive and non-discursive 'tennis match' possibly reflected in the *US institutional narrative* and the *Al Qaeda narrative*. Its aim was to bring some of the points that followed from analyzing the macro narratives further to the forefront. In the use of image-reinforcing stereotypes, metaphors, and superordinates as a form of critique, the critical narrative in this thesis further emphasized how language, events, and circumstances were framed in the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives and served as the strategic logical devices that positioned the various entities (securitizing actor, referent subject, referent object). Analysis of the critical narrative focused more on content than aspects of self-identification or resonance among audiences. To prevent researchers from adopting a certain tunnel vision on one of the 'tennis players', 'commentator' perspectives are valuable. Naturally, as any commentator from the sideline also has a particular perspective, it is recommendable to analyze additional narratives from different 'observing commentators' to further widen understanding.

In academia, historiographic accounts can also profit from this approach. When studying historic phenomena, attitudes developed and meanings attributed over time are to be distinguished and analyzed for their historic effects. Using ACN, dominant narratives of a colonizer presented in school books and public discourse can be contrasted with that of an antagonist independence movement and local native accounts that are situated in a different social reality. Other scientific historical approaches aim to achieve this too. Yet, the ACN methodology requires at least *three* narratives to be contrasted. Macro narratives are to be confirmed or critiqued in micro narratives. The meanings articulated in these micro narratives are potentially relevant for understanding the complex intelligence problem,

9 Both those involved in making and communicating policy.

10 Referring to the comparative logic of net assessment, as performed by the US Department of Defense Office of Net Assessment. Although used for a different purpose (forecasting), the approach seeks to compare and contrast multiple competitors in relation to US military policies, strategy and capabilities. See for example Paul Bracken, 'Net Assessment, A Practical Guide', *Parameters*, Spring 2006, pp. 90-100.

especially when they are situated relatively outside the social orders of the macro narratives. The originality of the ACN methodology is that in comparing and contrasting various narratives (at least three), it offers a more comprehensive contextual discursive approach.

As noted, a defining aspect of outlining the narratives was to abductively distinguish between various social orders (social practices and orders of discourse) that situated the statements and events. These were considered and studied in available literature at the same time as information was gathered from the relevant actors. The *Al Qaeda* narrative featured in a wider Salafi-jihadi order of discourse, as part of a social practice of Salafi-jihad. The *US institutional* narrative was part of a national security order of discourse within the international politics of nations. As assumed, the cases reflected the norms and conventions of the ideational context that was identified. Power relations of these social orders had an enabling and constraining effect on the narratives. However, in relation to these assumed social orders, the development of the narratives could be tracked over time. Especially the *Al Qaeda* narrative shifted and partly altered the dominant Salafi-jihadi social order by increasingly challenging it.

During the initial stage of the research which involved selecting texts and background information, it became clear that some journalists interacted with both Bin Laden and US government officials while producing texts within a distinct social domain. The *critical terrorism* narrative was situated in the social space of the network and information society and involved an order of discourse of news correspondent reporting. This critical micro narrative focused on Western journalists. However, another relevant micro narrative might have been found in the works of Egyptian Muslim scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a highly influential *Al Jazeera* talk show host and Arab media personality. Or perhaps in the account of leading Jordanian-Palestinian writer and Muslim scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. Although they were supportive of Salafism or even jihad against local enemies, at times they were still critical of Bin Laden's actions. All in all, the *critical terrorism* narrative in chapter 5 functioned as an adequate third narrative for this thesis.

The selection or 'construction' of the content of the cases resulted from a focus on relevant actors (primarily Osama bin Laden and US President Clinton) and social events in the 1990s and early 2000s. A timeline of events was constructed based on generally available information, such as overviews of significant statements, *Al Qaeda*-related attacks, and US military strikes. This was collected from databases, news media, and literature. An initial selection of texts was then made that had been produced by these actors or their associates in relation to these social events. Furthermore, key texts and key parts of texts were selected that related specifically to *Al Qaeda*, terrorism/jihad, and Clinton/Bin Laden, and were significant for their extensive reproduction and recontextualization. Additional identification of relevant events emerged from data in the selected texts. Intertextual links and settings, for example, provided clues to explore in this respect. Why was President Clinton making a statement on US missile strikes in a hastily set up press room in a school at Martha's Vineyard? Because he was spending time with his family at the presidential retreat

to deal with his personal crisis over the Lewinsky matter. What made Bin Laden relocate from Jalalabad to Kandahar? It was at the Taliban's request, to better prevent Bin Laden from making provocative statements in news media.

As information became available, it was possible to determine more precisely what range of the abovementioned parameters would provide an adequate and manageable amount of data. The timeframe was set between 1994 and early 2001, a period in which *Al Qaeda* emerged and took more shape in the three narratives. The attacks that occurred in the US on September 11, 2001 were not part of the research as the focus was on the preceding formative period. The analysis considered key parts of texts and events that were extensively reproduced and recontextualized in other texts. A relatively large number of texts were reviewed over an extensive period of time. For that timeframe, all available US presidential statements, public Bin Laden statements, and reporting by Fisk and Bergen were subject to filtering and selection. American and other international news reporting served as supplementary resources. The majority consisted of written transcripts. As a result, visual, auditive, and situational aspects were lost for analysis, such as which articles were printed next to each other in newspapers or in what tone questions were asked or answered. However, fragments of several key parts of televised interviews, some key original newspaper articles, and other images were included in the analysis to deepen the research with respect to non-verbal aspects of text production and consumption. For example, how during a televised interview with Bin Laden on *Al Jazeera*, images were shown on screen of American weapons impacting on targets in Iraq. A limitation was that only publicly available data was collected. Classified information might improve contextualization of texts in the narratives, although securitization efforts require an extensive public account as well. It is always possible for the *basic analytic narratives* to be further adapted and expanded, as only a selection of texts was studied.

In each of the case studies, transparency was provided through presentation of text fragments and their interpretation, as well as through the reflection at the end. When evaluating the neutrality of the research, the approach might prompt the question of what exactly basic analytic narratives consist of and how they can be distinguished from interpretation and analysis. However, a narrative does not exist as a pile of texts separate from its contextualization through interpretation. All is relevant to the research. It is an analytic concept and the chapters reflected what was defined as the basic core of the narratives in context. Therefore, the three case studies contain the narratives, much like one can only observe a living fish in water. Transparency and reflection demonstrate thoroughness and reliability, hence the overall trustworthiness of the research. Overall, the NAF as articulated in chapter 2 provided a practical and adequate scheme for studying securitization efforts in the two identified macro narratives. The following two sections present an overview of the case study findings.

Tracing multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts

Each in their own way, the case studies revealed a unique story and highlighted aspects of the complex intelligence problem articulated as *Al Qaeda*. The aim of this chapter is not to fuse all three narratives together in some sort of ‘higher truth’, nor is it possible to bring all the particularities of the narratives expressed in the case studies together into one comprehensive whole. In this respect, the cases are meant to serve as distinct and separate resources to situate and analyze ‘future’ developments (in this case after mid-2001).

However, as there is multi-causality, there is also multi-consequentiality. Statements and actions of an entity can influence multiple audiences within a social order, but also have effects in other social domains. Between social orders, the way actions and statements are understood can vary fundamentally. Tracing the multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts across social domains provides additional insights. To what extent did statements and actions reflected in one macro narrative influence the development of the other? Did securitization efforts contribute to those of the adversary? The basic principle of multi-consequentiality of securitization efforts across social orders can be graphically summarized as follows.

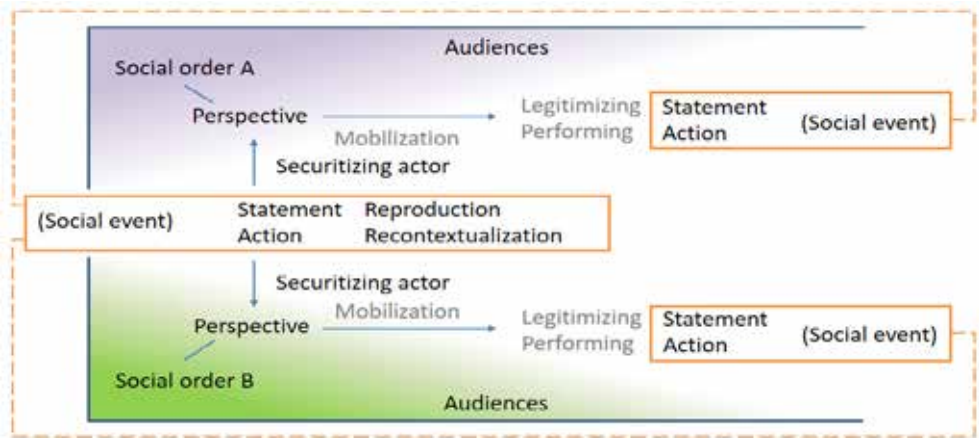


Fig 6.1 Securitization efforts in context: aspects of social events serve, within a certain context, as heuristic artefacts to mobilize particular perspectives that enable new social events to occur. Any (new) event is itself potentially multi-consequential.

As outlined in chapter 2, NT (contrasting narratives and mapping multi-consequentiality) follows from several steps. After defining the analytical beginning and end of a narrative, facilitating conditions and drivers (or factors and events) that account for the transformative

trajectory in between are identified. Then, the extent to which one narrative reflects securitization efforts in other (adversarial) narratives and resonates among its various audiences is considered.

The analytical starting point for the *Al Qaeda* narrative was the 1996 Ladenese memorandum. The comprehensive audio recorded speech and printed article summarized many of the open letters and statements made by Bin Laden in the mid-1990s. Initially, Bin Laden focused on criticizing and resenting the Saudi regime for its 'un-Islamic' practice of governance. Contrary to Western characterizations, the 1996 comprehensive memorandum did not meet the religious criteria for a specific religious decree, or *fatwa*. Among the resources Bin Laden had to produce the text was a highly developed ability to express himself in classical Arabic, some Islamic religious education, an international network, and a mythical reputation for his actions against the Soviets in Afghanistan, business experience, and financial resources. The popularity of audiocassettes in the Arab world enabled Bin Laden to emphasize his eloquent pronunciation and to reach an illiterate audience. The mid-1990s was also a period in which Bin Laden set up the London-based ARC and improved his opportunities to address a pan-Arabic audience via newspapers and satellite television. In Arab and Urdu news media, he was characterized as a political oppositionist, but also as a Muslim scholar. It highlighted different aspects of his message in terms of socio-economic, political, and Islamic religious meaning. In the memorandum, Bin Laden named himself a 'concerned element' within the community of Muslim scholars and avoided discussion of his precise religious credentials. Compared to the end of the *Al Qaeda* narrative, his position, power relations, and responsibilities were less structured.

Over the years, Bin Laden articulated the specific agenda of targeting the US and its allies. Such a focus on the 'far enemy' was unique to other Salafi-jihadi approaches. An intention behind innovating and reforming Salafi-jihadi thinking was for him to mobilize support among Muslims to boycott this far enemy, and incite young followers to conduct attacks. Marking the end of the *Al Qaeda* narrative for this thesis is the 2001 *As Sahab* media video on the USS Cole bombing. The video presented the bombing as an asymmetrical attack by a small boat on a symbol of American global military power in a time of continuous American occupation and aggression in the Middle East. It marked a time in which Bin Laden's closest followers had institutionalized into various religious, media, security, and military committees. These committees functioned as a structure to several hundred followers who had pledged allegiance to Bin Laden.¹¹ For them, Bin Laden had grown into the social role and leadership position that became defined in various securitization efforts throughout the narrative. These efforts had encompassed a process of self-identification, and partly also transformed into a particular strand of the Salafi-jihadi social practice. The organization's informational capability had also grown further. Publishing articles in Arab newspapers such as *Al Quds Al Arabi* or videos for *Al Jazeera* gave Bin Laden more power in and through discourse. The visibility of Bin Laden and *Al Qaeda* in the Arab and Western world had

11 Bergen, *Al Qaeda*, 407.

significantly increased. In a broader sense, Bin Laden had sympathizers across the Arab and Muslim world.

The analytical beginning of the *US institutional terrorism narrative* is formed by Clinton's speeches after the 1998 Embassy attacks. The attacks demanded an adequate response from the US government to fulfill its primary institutional role of finding those responsible and protecting its people by countering future threats. The US government dealt with the threat overtly and covertly, and as comprehensively as possible by means of diplomacy, economic sanctions, law enforcement, intelligence, and the military. President Clinton acted within the bandwidth of the political power, laws, regulations, genre conventions, and expectations associated with his institutional role. The US government, and specifically the president, confirmed and strengthened their institutional roles in responding to threats and using the discursive and non-discursive power to act. In a time of geopolitical transition, new forms of terrorism were emerging, such as that represented by Bin Laden. The terrorist threat was increasingly focused directly against US servicemen and citizens around the world. Within the US national security order of discourse, the *US institutional terrorism narrative* became a prominent element. As described in chapter 4, polls among Americans indicated that a large majority perceived international terrorism as a critical threat to US vital interests, but only a minority thought their families could become a victim of terrorism.

The US narrative ends with Clinton's statements between the USS Cole bombing and the end of his term in office. By that time, the articulation of the terrorist threat in the narrative had decreased. Clinton accentuated feelings of security and optimism about the state of the world. Threats and risks were not neglected, but according to the US government the US was able to respond adequately and handle them. Clinton emphasized a greater goal of furthering peace, prosperity, freedom, and human rights in the world. Remarks that America was 'not at war' with terrorism and emerging other foreign policy priorities also tinted the national security order of discourse in that timeframe. This made securitization efforts regarding terrorism less prominent. As described in chapter 4, public polls indicated that the perceived threat of terrorism to family members decreased further in that timeframe; however, there is a lack of data on perception regarding international terrorism as a threat to national security. In general, the *US institutional terrorism narrative* conformed to and confirmed the US social order. The threat to the state's citizens had emphasized the state's essence and the institutional role of its leadership. The narrative contributed to self-identification in that respect.

The development of the two macro narratives was related through the multi-consequentiality of some of the discursive and non-discursive actions. This was also partly highlighted in the critical micro narrative. Events in one social domain, such as the statements and actions constituting or following securitization efforts, became issues that added momentum, or intensity, to the securitization efforts in the other social order. Actions to control or defeat a perceived threat by the US contributed to the contextual mobilization of heuristic artefacts by that threatening actor. There were also events and circumstances

that removed momentum from the securitization efforts that were gradually building on each other. For *Al Qaeda*, this involved internal differences among Bin Laden's followers, while for the US it was the prioritization of other foreign policy issues over terrorism. Also of influence for both macro narratives were the position and personal circumstances of the securitizing actor and audiences' critique on the effectiveness of measures taken.

For both the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives, timelines can be used to project key statements and actions that constituted securitization efforts, and events and circumstances adding or removing momentum. It is important to note that it can be misleading to view the schematic timelines in terms of a presentation of the primary (or singular) efficient causal relations. The research analyzed discursive and non-discursive action beyond the concept of efficient cause in terms of network of causality or causal complex.

In the mid-1990s, the *Al Qaeda narrative* took shape over a series of Bin Laden statements. Several events and circumstances reduced some of the securitizing momentum of these statements. The critical narrative highlighted how the publication of the Ladenese memorandum in *Al Quds Al-Arabi* was questioned by some of the followers at the London-based ARC. Later, followers who had sworn loyalty (*bayat*) to Bin Laden had doubts about his pledge of allegiance to the Taliban. The status of the WIF was questioned by Arab media, as was the representativeness of the founding declaration's signatories. The groups for which they had signed were internally divided over the issue, or even clearly declined their support.

These doubts and critiques were related to the aggressive nature and shifting focus of Bin Laden's statements over the years. In the early 1990s, Bin Laden emphasized that he deemed the Saudi regime corrupt and illegitimate. Later, he began to more prominently promote his view that in fact the United States and its Western allies were the primary source or driving factor behind the religious and socio-economic conditions in Saudi Arabia.¹² He then classified all Americans all over the world as targets. Bin Laden had realized that Saudi Arabia was 'under the control' of the US. On a personal level, the US had a significant role in Bin Laden's forced migration from Saudi Arabia and later Sudan, along with pressuring the Afghan Taliban to stop harboring him. In the *Al Qaeda* narrative, there were also some minor variations depending on where Bin Laden localized his message: for example, he did not blame Pakistani UN soldiers for their role in Somalia in a Pakistani newspaper, he stated that UK troops in Saudi Arabia constituted only a minor symbolic presence, and during an interview with Robert Fisk he praised British and French voting in the UN on Israel.

For the Salafi-jihadi movement, a focus on the 'Zionist Crusader alliance of Western forces' or 'far enemy' articulated so explicitly in the 1998 WIF declaration reflected an ideological transformation away from the traditional way of thinking about the religious duty to defend Islam. However, Bin Laden sought to expand and activate his (formal and

¹² The pragmatic redefinition that the United Kingdom did not provide a real threat as they only had a small presence in Saudi Arabia was identified through the critical terrorism narrative. This was a consequence of the text selection for each case. As the statement was made by Bin Laden (although for a Western audience) it is included in the overview of the *Al Qaeda* narrative.

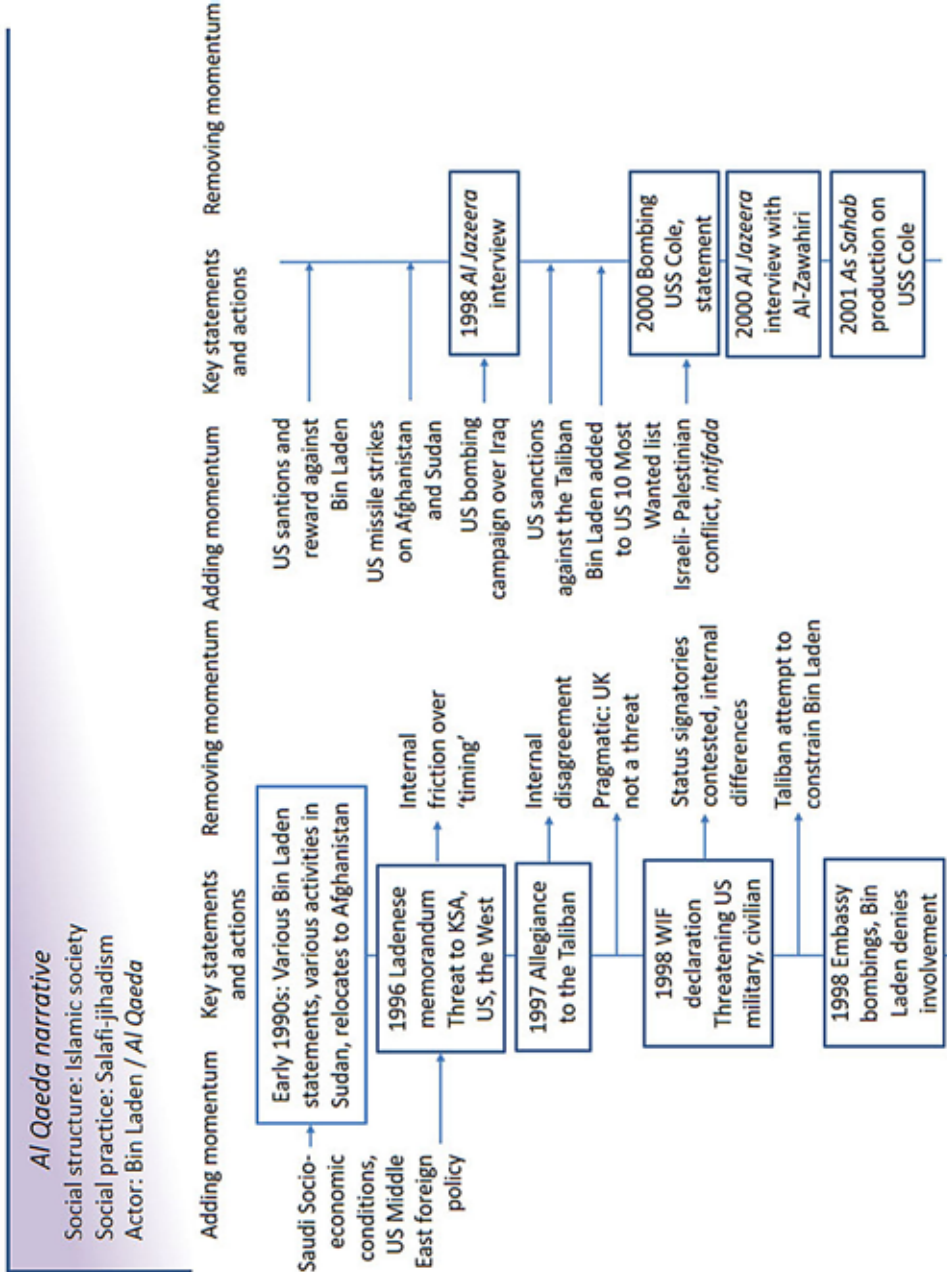


Fig 6.2 Al Qaeda narrative key events and circumstances affecting securitization efforts.

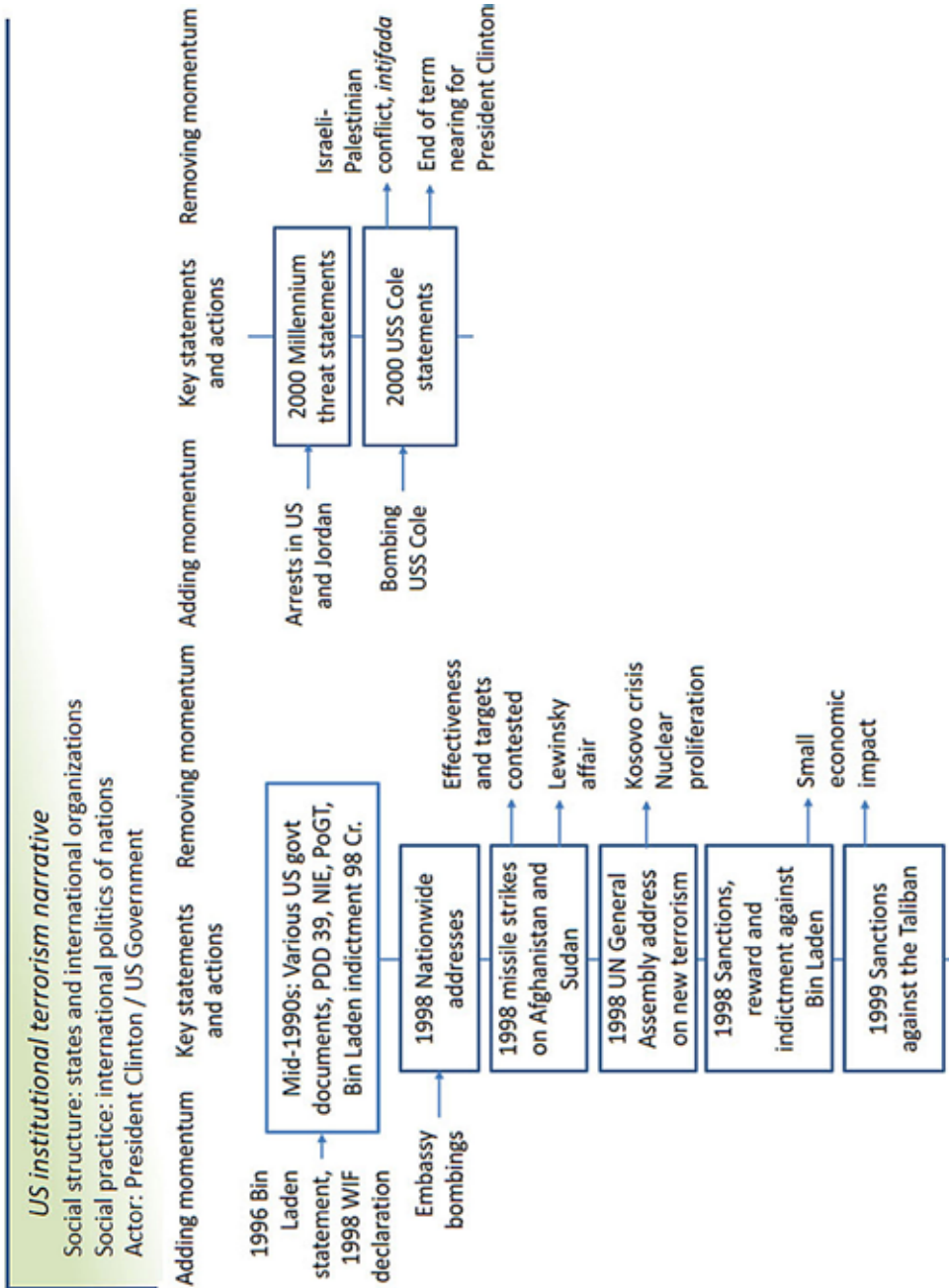


Fig 6.3 US institutional terrorism narrative key events and circumstances affecting securitization efforts.

moral) audiences against the dominant Salafi-jihadi current. He advertised his views before the whole Arab and Muslim world and specifically aimed to inspire young Muslims to conduct attacks. The attacks on the US embassies in Africa and against the USS Cole in Yemen demonstrated how his securitization efforts were followed by violent actions. The perpetrators were loyal followers who were part of his formal audience. In the wider context of unequal socio-economic conditions in Saudi Arabia and American economic policies and military interventions in the Middle East, some of Bin Laden's ideas were popular among Arabs and Muslims across the world. They were part of his moral audience by framing his picture in shops, playing his speeches on audiocassettes in public places, writing supportive graffiti, or holding signs and his picture at anti-US demonstrations. In a more general sense, they increased the social status of Bin Laden's persona and organization. However, as also described in the critical narrative, the large number of casualties among ordinary Africans caused by the Embassy bombings resulted in feelings of dismay among Muslims and Arabs.¹³ This also negatively affected feelings of support among (potential) moral audiences for Bin Laden's ideas, persona and organization.

A few weeks later, these concerns over innocent victims were backgrounded by widespread resentment among Arabs and Muslims following the US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan. The *Al Qaeda* narrative showed how after those strikes, Bin Laden more fully used the US Embassy attacks in Africa as an illustration of the rising battle of Muslims against the ZCA. There was also critique from national leaders across the world over the legitimacy of the attack and choice of targets, especially the Sudanese medical factory. In that context, Bin Laden's personal status as enemy of the US increased support among his moral audience. It also improved the then-waning hospitality of the Taliban. Bin Laden made efforts to increase this effect by stating that the CIA had conducted several unsuccessful operations against him. Being hunted by the CIA or the target of missile strikes was a story that served to drown out confrontation regarding the inconvenience of the massive number of civilian casualties during the US Embassy bombings in Africa. In addition, the US military Operation Desert Fox brought Bin Laden's rhetoric further to life. Recontextualization in Arab media contributed to this. For example, during an interview with Bin Laden broadcasted on *Al Jazeera*, images were shown on screen of the US military strikes against Iraq. In the broadcast, wider Arab anger over these strikes was aligned with Bin Laden's broader message before a large media audience.

For Bin Laden, some of the measures taken by US institutional bodies against his network proved instrumental as symbolic articulations of difference. For instance, the US State Department had issued a reward of 5 million US dollars for actionable information leading to his capture. This further personalized the issue of Bin Laden's propagated ascetic lifestyle versus the ego-centric materialism of those he called 'hypocrites', a religious term for Muslims. He presented it as a natural 'test of faith' for those who had pledged allegiance to him. For large illiterate segments of the ordinary population in the Middle East, it was

13 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 309.

possibly even highly difficult to relate to the size of the reward and imagine that such a sum of money actually existed. Furthermore, as a consequence of the American law enforcement and judicial processes, Bin Laden was publicly indicted and added to the notorious selection of the FBI's 10 most wanted fugitives. Especially the latter action, also reproduced by English, Arab, and Urdu news media, granted Bin Laden with the adversarial status he had been trying to acquire, as described in the *Al Qaeda* narrative. The sanctions ordered by Clinton against Bin Laden in 1998, and later the Taliban in 1999, diametrically related to the boycott of American goods Bin Laden had propagated years earlier. The functional economic effect of the sanctions was minimal, but it proved useful for Bin Laden as another heuristic artefact in his securitization effort and construction of otherness.

In the US socio-political context, the bombings of the US Embassies in Africa triggered a comprehensive counterterrorism approach. The discursive and non-discursive actions described in the US institutional terrorism narrative fitted government roles within the bandwidth of the US institutional social order. However, there was also critique among US formal and moral audiences that removed some of the momentum for defining the threat and mobilizing assets to deal with it. For Clinton, the support among his formal audience, US Congress, was limited as a result of his personal involvement with the Lewinsky affair. For most of his presidency, the opposing Republican Party had the majority in US Congress, restraining Clinton's political power. The Lewinsky matter further challenged some of the public expectations of his institutional role, such as maintaining integrity and credibility. Yet, as described in chapter 4, in public polls Clinton was still perceived as a strong leader, despite the decreased appreciation of his moral stance. The missile strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan had the opposite effect and expressed strength and leadership. Partly because of this effect, Clinton's motivations for ordering the strikes became subject to debate, most prominently in the news media. Another reason the strikes became debated was domestic controversy in the media, possibly reflecting doubts among his moral audience, regarding the effectiveness of the strikes. American journalists also questioned the impact of economic sanctions against Bin Laden and the Taliban.

Before the UN General Assembly, Clinton made an effort to securitize a new kind of terrorism that had emerged globally in the 1990s. The Bin Laden organization's threat to the US was representational for this 'new terrorism', but Clinton also included examples of violence in other parts of the world directed at others. His address aimed to improve the diplomatic climate and cooperation among UN member states by establishing an inclusive agreement on the new threat. Internationally, the US military response with missile strikes, especially on the Sudanese *Al-Shifa* factory, had led to some protest. The relation of the targets to terrorism was questioned by several heads of state who were critical of the US. In his UN address, Clinton also worked to legitimize the attacks. It was difficult to observe the effects of the UN speech for this research: other foreign policy issues on the agenda drew attention away from the threat of this new terrorism, such as the emerging Kosovo crisis or North Korea's nuclear program.

At the turn of the millennium, the arrest of Ahmed Ressam at the US-Canadian border articulated the terrorist threat in the US. The positive securitization effort at the time confirmed Clinton's position as president and worked to reassure US citizens. US government statements served to increase social resilience against attacks and express self-determination. As described in chapter 4, rudimentary public polling indicated that concerns among US respondents of family members becoming a target of terrorism had decreased. Possibly, emphasizing the US institutional effort to provide security also deterred terrorists from executing plans. Initially, Clinton refrained from using Bin Laden's name explicitly in relation to the 'millennium threat', yet US officials were anonymously stating in news media that there were indirect links between Ressam and Bin Laden. Furthermore, months after the millennial festivities, Clinton also publicly made such connections before US Coast Guard personnel. In the *Al Qaeda* narrative, in contrast, the millennium celebrations were not emphasized as a distinct episode in Bin Laden's securitization efforts. There were no attacks about which to make statements.

In the late 1990s, there had been agreement among senior US officials and political leaders to refrain from using Bin Laden's name too much in public to avoid contributing to his status.¹⁴ In public statements, Clinton mostly spoke more generally about the threat of terrorism, although still mentioning Bin Laden specifically in several public addresses. However, the more comprehensive the counterterrorism policies became, for example in terms of diplomacy, law enforcement, and intelligence, the more complex the task became of managing the overall coherence of discursive and non-discursive actions. Especially as reproduction and recontextualization by news media had an amplifying effect on statements about terrorists. This was illustrated by the divergence between the political intent to refrain from using Bin Laden's name and to conduct secret intelligence operations, and the concurrent public indictment by prosecutors and his inclusion in the iconic FBI list of America's 10 most wanted fugitives. Emphasized by the media, the bureaucratic legal and law enforcement practices had an effect on the *Al Qaeda* narrative that was contradictory to the US political leadership's intent.

The meanings of events differed in the various narratives, as they related to different social contexts. For example, to US policymakers, the attack on the USS Cole in the Yemeni port of Aden on October 12, 2000 was a sign of instability and a regional terrorist threat that necessitated a shift in foreign and counterterrorism policies. Clinton noted that America was 'not at war'. He stated that the US intent behind the USS Cole visit to Aden was to demonstrate trust and to strengthen international relations between Yemen and the US. The military was used as a symbolic representation of unity and the values articulated as central to US democracy and freedom; Clinton framed the sailors more as diplomats than as soldiers. As such, American national identity had been attacked. To a Salafi-jihadi segment of the Yemeni population, on the other hand, the USS Cole visit was a materialization of

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14 Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 198.

American expansionism. The attack was celebrated by Islamic fundamentalists as a necessary response.

For the *Al Qaeda* narrative, the USS Cole bombing was an event that illustrated the expansive drift of a far enemy invading and occupying Muslim lands and demonstrated the willingness and 'success' of Salafi-jihadis to resist it. The *As Sahab* video of the bombing provided heuristic artefacts for *Al Qaeda*'s persisting and progressing securitization efforts. That Clinton did not make a clear securitization effort with regard to the USS Cole bombing did not affect the *Al Qaeda* narrative. In the *critical terrorism narrative*, both the meaning of the USS Cole visit and the attack as articulated by either the US government or *Al Qaeda* were questioned.

A significant circumstance of influence on both the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives was the eruption of Israeli-Palestinian violence, which started on the same day the USS Cole was attacked. In his speeches, Clinton connected these subjects from the beginning. For him, international cooperation, diplomacy, and military deployments, such as the visit of the American Navy destroyer to Yemen, illustrated how US involvement in the Middle East was and remained necessary precisely to end eruptions of violence and promote peace. For Bin Laden, the Palestinian *intifada* provided a context that related to the core of his securitization efforts to end the Zionist Crusader involvement in Palestine, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the wider region.

Overall, the case studies showed how processes of securitization were dynamic, aggregating, and involved a constant effort to relate to unfolding events and developing circumstances. The comparative approach in this chapter has demonstrated how certain circumstances were shaped by discursive and non-discursive action generated in different social domains, as described in other narratives. There was reactivity (or interaction) with regard to the development of securitization efforts in the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives. Most visibly, the American rationale behind the sanctions and missile strikes against Sudan, Afghanistan, and Iraq did not translate in the context of Salafi-jihadism and the wider Muslim or Arab world. In the US narrative, there was little emphasis on internal differences among Bin Laden's followers and supporters. Hence, although various events and circumstances were at play, in the effort to comprehensively use all available means to counter terrorism, some of the actions performed by the US were useful for Bin Laden to emphasize estrangement and difference, and articulate his moral religious and functional authoritative status in terms of securitization. However, a lack of such measures and statements, such as after the USS Cole bombing, did not cause *Al Qaeda*'s securitization efforts to decrease.

Securitization efforts contributed to identification. The *Al Qaeda* narrative reflected the institutionalization of *Al Qaeda* into an organization, but also played a fundamental part in shaping the process and providing identity. Articulations of self were as important as defining the 'other'. Bin Laden's use of his discursive power also reflected and influenced the Salafi-jihadi social order. A new approach to *jihad* and the duty of Muslims against the Western far enemy became consistently articulated. In essence, Salafi-jihadism was perceived as being at

odds with American values of liberalism, freedom, and capitalism, and the norms regarding the separation of religion and the institutionalized state.

Rather than defeating the US, in defying the country Bin Laden provided the context for Clinton to emphasize peace and humanity as core American values, to articulate the protective essence of the state, and to confirm his institutional role through the use of his discursive and non-discursive power. In the *critical terrorism narrative*, these processes of identification were explicitly critiqued as simplifications and framing by articulating two evocative labels: the idea of both an ‘international terrorist conspiracy’ and a ‘Zionist Crusader conspiracy’ were characterized as bizarre images that did not reflect the true complexity of the situation in the Middle East. Reporting in the critical narrative illustrated confusion and disagreement among some of Bin Laden’s supporters over the statements he had made. Moreover, ‘simplistic connections’ made by the US government between Saddam Hussein and Bin Laden were deemed questionable. Overall, violence and murderous attacks were condemned in the critical narrative.

All in all, the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives related to two extremely different, asymmetrical entities. They were part of and involved with fundamentally different social orders of social structures, social practices, discursive practices, and non-discursive action. The essentiality of the disparity between the US and *Al Qaeda* social orders was an abductive analytic distinction that lay at the basis of this research. However, it was also in the construction of self and other in the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives, and the way the narratives developed and affected their social orders, that a certain immanence to the difference articulated in securitization efforts was revealed. As such, the validity of the abductive construction process in this research regarding the US and *Al Qaeda* social orders has not been contested.

The US and *Al Qaeda* were dependent on and capable of using very different forms of power. But for both, their macro narratives were highly important in expressing and affecting their respective power positions. Eventually, the attacks on the US Embassies in Africa and the USS Cole demonstrated Bin Laden’s ability to instigate and, to some degree, even facilitate or organize assaults. These events gained meaning as they were connected and situated in and through the texts and discursive practices that constituted the *Al Qaeda narrative*. The United States had the largest military presence worldwide and extensive global economic, diplomatic, and cultural influence. For Clinton, these were not straightforward foreign policy tools that could be used exclusively, effectively, and immediately against Bin Laden; other foreign policy priorities were also involved. Moreover, the lack of bipartisanship in Congress made it more difficult for Clinton to operate freely with regard to foreign policy issues. So, for Clinton as well, the *US institutional terrorism narrative* was an important way of expressing and maintaining the power to act. As stated above, the statements and actions of ‘the other’ also strengthened and facilitated the use of this power. In this sense, there was discursive and non-discursive interaction or reactivity between securitization efforts. Securitization provided a binding logic to comprehend both the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives.

A closer look: audiences and effects

Irrespective of the conclusion that some statements and actions in the US narrative contributed to opposing securitization efforts in the *Al Qaeda* narrative, the case studies also generated the insight that for the *Al Qaeda* narrative, Bin Laden continued to make such efforts regardless of US actions and statements. Furthermore, the research showed that Bin Laden's efforts were at times deemed controversial or were even disputed by individuals and groups associated with him and *Al Qaeda*. Similarly, some of the decisions Clinton made to counter terrorism were contested as well.

These findings lead to an important aspect of the research: the nature and status of audiences for securitization.¹⁵ The sociological approach adopted in this thesis emphasizes audiences, context, and dispositif as the three central facets of securitization processes.¹⁶ Securitization is not a sudden speech act that transforms into a social fact when accepted: it is part of a social context and related to power struggles. Audiences are essential to provide securitization its intersubjective status, but their essence must be viewed in terms of causal adequacy, not causal determinacy. In other words, securitization efforts involve audiences, but are not necessarily determined by them.

What became apparent in the research was that (self-)identification of audiences could both precede and follow from securitization efforts. Audiences became audiences to securitizing actors either in and through securitization efforts or as the result of a preceding process of identification and institutionalization. Whereas for *Al Qaeda* the narrative had a more formative function, the US narrative conversely served more to confirm and strengthen an established (institutionalized) American identity. Especially in case of institutionalized power relations, it is possible for some audiences to grant deontological powers or a formal mandate to the securitizing actor in specific instances. However, such a mandate is not necessary for securitization efforts to occur before (or to resonate with) various audiences, and also have certain effects. Such a theoretical stance invites the exploration of the essence and role of audiences more in terms of congruity. It 'enables us to determine the relative status of its (enabling or constraining) force within the network of causality' or causal complex.¹⁷ This causal complex is activated at the actual level¹⁸ in and through the securitization efforts.

The understanding of securitization in terms of efforts rests on the integrative notion of causal complexes outlined in the first chapter. The statements and actions of actors can only be perceived as a form of securitization when they follow the defined logic of threat definition and when there is alignment with a social context and the related differential power relations, and some resonance with audiences' frames of reference. In general,

15 Williams, 'The Continuing Evolution of Securitization Theory', in Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 212.

16 Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization'.

17 Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 49.

18 Referring to the philosophical theoretical levels of real, actual and empirical as described in chapter 1, Fairclough, Jessop, Sayer, 'Critical Realism and Semiosis', 204.

securitization is about the politics of establishing a security character of public problems, fixing social commitments that follow from collective acceptance of a threat, and creating the possibilities of certain policies.¹⁹ Instead of focusing on the end state and creating the problem of what counts as an *instance* of securitization, research on securitization can contribute to the study of the *processes* described.²⁰ More central than assent itself are the *efforts* of inducing or increasing ‘the public mind’s adherence to the thesis presented to its assent’.²¹ This conceives securitization as part of wider political struggles over power and ideology.

The characterization in terms of efforts circumvents the difficult debate on what counts as an instance of successful securitization, and on whether an issue is considered securitized when various audiences differ in terms of ‘assent’. Do formal and moral audiences have to agree on both the problem definition and the proposed solution for that?²² Rather than trying to identify ‘instances of acceptance’, research should concentrate on the degree of *resonance* among various types of parallel audiences. Especially first-generation securitization theorists would argue that this stance deconstructs the nature of securitization as a practice distinct from politics. It also makes the notion described in chapter 1, that audiences (must) have ‘the ability to grant or deny a formal mandate’, more relative.²³ However, as the case studies showed, in practice securitization can be viewed as a dynamic, aggregating, and gradual process consisting of efforts that are part of, or an extension of, wider political struggles over power and ideology within a social context. Albeit not the only feasible conceptual framework one could think of, in this way the concept of securitization was an adequate approach for this research.²⁴

The US narrative demonstrated the *maintaining* and confirming of existing power relations between securitizing actor and audiences through threat articulation and security practices. In the US, power relations have institutionalized due to historic conditions and practices. As a result, the US president could act with extraordinary measures against threats to national security by declaring them formally to US Congress. The latter’s assent was not required to conduct missile strikes or conduct covert counterterrorism operations, but only to declare

19 Balzacq, Léonard, Ruzicka, ‘Securitization’ revisited’, 494.

20 For example Thierry Balzacq, Stefano Guzzini, ‘Introduction, ‘What kind of theory – if any – is securitization?’’, *International Relations*, 29 (2015) 1: 97-102, Balzacq, ‘The ‘Essence’ of securitization’, Michael Williams, ‘Securitization as political theory, The politics of the extraordinary’, *International Relations*, 29 (2015) 1: 114-120, Ole Wæver, ‘The theory act, Responsibility and exactitude as seen from securitization’, *International Relations*, 29 (2015) 1: 121-127, Heikki Patomäki, ‘Absenting the absence of future dangers and structural transformations in securitization theory’, *International Relations*, 29 (2015) 1: 128-136, Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security*, Balzacq, Léonard, Ruzicka, ‘Securitization’ revisited’.

21 Chaim Perelman, Lucie Olbrechts-Tytecka, *The New Rhetoric, A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame, IN, The University of Notre Dame Press 1969), 4, as in Balzacq, ‘The Three Faces of Securitization’, 172.

22 Balzacq, Léonard, Ruzicka, ‘Securitization’ revisited’, 520.

23 Balzacq, ‘The Three Faces of Securitization’, 192.

24 Although a thorough review lies beyond the scope of this research, another possible approach (although less specifically related to threats) might be social movement theory. This entails the study of collective mobilization processes. Its conceptual framework distinguishes a ‘state of crisis’, inequality or relative deprivation, and the attempted mobilization of material, moral and cultural ‘resources’ in light of ‘solutions’ articulated by ‘activists’. See for example Nanninga, *Jihadism and Suicide Attacks*.

war. Required was (ex post) articulation before the president's formal and moral audience. Clinton's administration had to answer questions in Congress and the media, particularly as other personal, domestic, and foreign policy issues combined into turbulent times. The American electorate functioned as moral audience, indirectly affecting (enabling or constraining) the stance of politicians and decision-makers. The president's access to secret intelligence, or 'evidence', served to strengthen public and political trust in his decisions. In essence, the securitization dynamic identified in the US narrative with respect to *Al Qaeda* demonstrated the nature and workings of the state.

In theory, to identify and analyze securitization efforts, audiences are not to be thought of as the necessary singular efficient cause that explains the 'success' of securitization. Instead, audiences are a necessary element for intersubjective securitization efforts to manifest as such. It is not always possible to empirically identify responses among audiences in a conclusive manner. For critical realists, this does not cause an epistemological problem as it would for positivists. The absence or shortage of empirical evidence of audience responses to securitization efforts does not prevent conclusions from being drawn on the existence of audiences and their function at the actual level. Empirical findings can be positioned as anecdotal evidence to support inferences on the nature and status of audiences. Although not the central efficient cause, audiences are an essential part of the activated causal complex that encompasses securitization efforts. In varying degrees, various types of parallel audiences are an enabling and constraining element. Disagreement among members of a certain audience, for example, does not necessarily stop, but can potentially reduce effects of securitization efforts on self-identification or security practices.

In the institutionalized social environment of the US narrative, the essence and role of audiences was more clearly defined than for the *Al Qaeda* narrative. The two categories of moral and formal audiences proved adequate to comprehend the securitization dynamic among American institutions. In and through the *Al Qaeda* narrative, on the other hand, power relations between securitizing actor and audiences needed to be *established* with regard to a specific issue. Bin Laden worked to create and expand his status and relation to various audiences over the American-led invasion of Muslim lands. However, the actual execution of the individual bombings was not dependent on the consent of a certain audience, beyond some of his closest followers and those willing to conduct the attacks. Thus, for the *Al Qaeda* narrative, defining formal and moral audiences with respect to the less institutionalized entity was more complex, but therefore also more interesting for reflecting on securitization theory. Within the social practice of Salafi-jihadism, power relations were less hierarchical or institutionalized, and more related to dynamics of personal reputation. To comprehensively understand the causal complex activated in and through *Al Qaeda* securitization efforts, it is necessary to differentiate audiences beyond Balzacq's notion of formal and moral audiences, and thereby contribute to the debate on securitization as outlined in chapter 1.²⁵ The

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25 Ibid.

following section focuses more closely on *Al Qaeda*'s audiences and the effect the narrative had on them.

Arabs, Muslims, Salafists, Jihadis, and *Al Qaeda* members, cadre, and executioners

For the two macro narratives, audiences were identified along several lines of inquiry. First, (intended) audiences were articulated in and through the identification of referent objects that were subject to a threat. Second, partly overlapping were the intended consumers of texts that constituted the discursive action associated with the securitization effort. Was there a difference between those threatened and those addressed by the securitizing actor? Third, what could be learned about the responses to efforts through empirical data (the observation of demonstrations, expressions of trust) or literature? What audiences were drawn to the narrative? Fourth, partly related, what wider social conditions or aspects of the situational context strengthened or weakened alignment of audiences' frames of reference with the securitization efforts? Did external events (such as US missile strikes on Iraq, or the Palestinian intifada) create a context that made securitization statements more topical (for new audiences)?

For the *Al Qaeda* narrative, these questions generated an array of entities that in some form or other could be (partly) considered as audiences: Muslims around the world; readers of pan-Arabic or Urdu newspapers; *Al Jazeera* viewers; demonstrators in the streets of Pakistan, Yemen, Sudan, and Palestine; Islamists or members of other Salafist groups (particularly youths); *jihadi* recruits in Afghan training camps; and *Al Qaeda* members, cadre, and executioners of attacks. Rather than two distinct categories, these entities together represent a spectrum that can be ordered in terms of ideas and action, or ideology and power. Of course, since the attacks on September 11, 2001, an enormous body of literature has emerged on *Al Qaeda* and its supporters.²⁶ Drawing on terrorism studies literature, the spectrum of audiences identified in and through the narrative has been matched to a tripartite conceptualization of support for terrorist organizations: an empathetic but neutral *understanding* of motives and grievances, a positive attitude or *sympathy* for the motives and terrorist actions, and various forms of behavioral *support* and assistance.²⁷ Other overlapping or more specific conceptualizations also exist. The notion of support can be divided into a range of activities, such as propaganda, finances, logistics, information gathering, weapons production, training, planning, and execution of attacks.

In a broader sense, a complex 'ecosystem' enabled *Al Qaeda* to develop as an organization. It involved financial donors in the Arab and Muslim world, newspapers willing to publish open

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26 For example see Judith Tinnes, 'Bibliography, Al-Qaeda and its Affiliated Organizations' July 2017, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/668/html> (last retrieved February 10, 2018).

27 Alex P. Schmid, 'Public Opinion Survey Data to Measure Sympathy and Support for Islamist Terrorism, A Look at Muslim Opinions on Al Qaeda and IS', February 2017, *ICCT Research Paper*, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ICCT-Schmid-Muslim-Opinion-Polls-Jan2017-1.pdf> (last retrieved February 8, 2018).

letters and statements, Islamist scholars and members of jihadi groups giving credence, but also sympathetic governments such as in Sudan and Yemen, or the Afghan Taliban. Among Muslims in general, but also among Salafists, there was ignorance. Many Afghans, Pakistanis, and other Muslims and Arabs had never heard of Bin Laden. Among those Salafists who had learned about Bin Laden's ideas, there was disagreement and opposition to the proposed strategic innovation of focusing on the far enemy. To some extent, the *Al Qaeda* narrative changed this over time. That is why it functioned as such an essential element, or the oxygen vitalizing the ecosystem, by reaching various contributing entities in various ways.

At the level of social structure, the *Al Qaeda* narrative was situated in Islamic society. Bin Laden made extensive references to generic religious values, cultural traditions, and historic myths. This enabled a wide understanding and provided a fundamental condition necessary for acceptance of the ideas articulated in the *Al Qaeda* narrative. Bin Laden was photographed riding horses, for Muslims a sign of heroism, while emphasizing self-abnegation and asceticism (*zuhd*) through his posture and living conditions.²⁸ The 1996 memorandum (*mudhakkira*) reflected an Islamic genre in which advice (*nasiha*) is given to rulers in the most eloquent and dignified way.²⁹ Poetry (*qasidah*) and religious references in the memorandum were familiar to Muslims and Arabs and strengthened the expression of passion and the appeal of the texts.³⁰ For example, the poem of Amru Ibn Kulthum Al-Taghlibi, who killed a regent who had capitulated to the Persians, emphasized for educated Muslims a need to resist illegitimate governments under the control of others.³¹ Characterizations of the ZCA referenced the Quranic verse on hypocrites (*Surah Al-Munafiqun*).³² In addition, Bin Laden's pronunciation of classical Arabic (*Fusha*) expressed eminence to those listening to the numerous audiocassettes distributed throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Initially, in the early 1990s, the Saudi government and press even assisted Bin Laden in speaking about his fighting in Afghanistan against the Soviets, contributing to his standing in Saudi Arabia in particular.³³

There were also world events and circumstances that increased sensitivity to the *Al Qaeda* narrative among wider Muslim and Arab audiences. During the Israeli-Palestinian violence in 2000, anti-American sentiments increased among Palestinians. The US was perceived as a supporter of Israel. In the narrative, Bin Laden was and had been keen to foster an ideological link with the Palestinian cause. His mentor Abdullah Azzam had Palestinian roots. Over time, several Palestinians joined Bin Laden, such as Mohammed Sadiq Odeh,

28 Lo, *Understanding Muslim discourse*, 86, Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 631.

29 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 5213.

30 Ibid, Thomas Bauer, 'Die Poesie des Terrorismus,' in Andreas K. W. Meayer (ed.) *Siebenjahrbuch Deutsche Oper Berlin MMIV–MMXI* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2011), 125. Also see Saskia Lutzinger, *Die Sicht des Anderen. Eine qualitative Studie zu Biographien von Extremisten und Terroristen* (Köln: Luchterhand, 2010), as in Behnam Said, 'Hymns (Nasheeds), A Contribution to the Study of the Jihadist Culture', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35 (2012) 12: 863-879.

31 Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic*, location 4953.

32 Sahih International, 'Surah Al-Munafiqun'.

33 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 165-184.

who was arrested after the 1998 Embassy bombings. In the context of the intifada, the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen caused some cheerful responses among (non-Salafi) Palestinians.³⁴ However, the extent to which the USS Cole bombing increased understanding or sympathy among Palestinians is difficult to quantify. In August 2000, Israeli and Palestinian security services arrested 23 Palestinian Islamic radicals, some of whom they claimed had links to Bin Laden.³⁵ However, Hamas leader Yassin publicly denounced Israeli accusations that his organization had operational links with Bin Laden.³⁶ Jason Burke notes that Palestinian militants consistently resisted Bin Laden's attempts to 'hijack their campaign', but he acknowledges that there was popular support for Bin Laden nonetheless.³⁷

Another example increasing sensitivity was Operation Desert Fox. During the US strikes on Iraq, *Al Jazeera* satellite television reached tens of millions of viewers across the Arab world with images of the weaponry impacting on the ground. Satellite technology had revolutionized the Arab media landscape, spearheaded by *Al Jazeera*.³⁸ The continuous exclusive footage contributed to anti-American demonstrations in the Middle East.³⁹ In this context, Bin Laden, who had gained notoriety as target of the earlier US missile strikes on Afghanistan, was able to highlight the *Al Qaeda* narrative before a large pan-Arabic audience. As Bruce Lawrence has even stated, he became an 'instant international attraction'.⁴⁰ Quantifying Bin Laden's increasing popularity is difficult, but what it did demonstrate was a discursive effect beyond the Salafist movement. He increased understanding and perhaps sympathy for the *Al Qaeda* narrative among parts of the global Muslim community. In part, a similar effect was also established by publications in regional and pan-Arabic newspapers, such as *Al Quds Al-Arabi*, *Al-Islah*.⁴¹ Setting up the ARC to assist in the dissemination of statements proved a fruitful decision by Bin Laden in facilitating the exposure of the *Al Qaeda* narrative in the Arab and Muslim world.

The social practice of Salafi-jihadism, a particular approach to Salafism, further characterized the social space of the *Al Qaeda* narrative. Putting discussions aside regarding the nature of Salafism as social movement or ideology and practice (*manhaj*), it is clear that various Islamist groups agreed in their call to respect particular ancient Muslim traditions in response to the spread of Western rationalist ideas since the late 19th century.⁴² Religious pluralism and cultural influences on faith were viewed as dangerous deviations. The works

34 Fisk, 'Middle East Crisis, Arab World'.

35 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 242.

36 Ibrahim Barzak, 'Hamas leader denies bin Laden link', *Associated Press*, August 23, 2000.

37 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 12, 296.

38 Silvia Feraboli, *Arab Regionalism, A Post-Structural Perspective* (London, Routledge 2015) 167-170.

39 Marc Lynch, 'Watching al-Jazeera', *The Wilson Quarterly*, 29 (2005) 3: 36-45.

40 Bruce B. Lawrence, 'Muslim Engagement with Injustice and Violence', in Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, Michael Jerryson (eds.) *Violence and the World's Religious Traditions, An Introduction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2017) 168.

41 Ibid.

42 See for example Kepel, *Jihad*, 219.

of Ibn Taymiyya, Sayyid Qutb, and others, which were extensively referenced in the *Al Qaeda* narrative, were central to Salafist thinkers.

Among Muslims, Salafists were a minority. Their network was fluid, decentralized, and segmented.⁴³ Rather than any hierarchy, reputation and recognition signaled importance and influence. It was the reputation of Grand Mufti Bin Baz that Bin Laden attacked in his statements. While among Salafists, Bin Laden was recognized as 'sheikh', an informal sign of respect.⁴⁴ Face-to-face engagements between students and teachers provided the strongest link in the network of overlapping clusters. Centered around prominent Salafi scholars and thinkers, these clusters were fairly local or regional in their orientation. To some extent, audiocassettes and later the internet increased the exchange of views and lectures across the network, but new Salafists were mostly Muslims who had decided to convert after lengthy discussions, lessons, and gatherings in mosques, religious schools, or guest houses. *Al Qaeda* sought to recruit followers from the Salafi minority for the practice of *jihad*, as did other Salafi-jihadi groups who trained recruits in Afghan training camps. The increasing focus on attacking the far enemy in the *Al Qaeda* narrative went against traditional Salafi-jihadi thinking, leading to doubts among jihadis training in Afghan camps and internal division over the course of *Al Qaeda* as a developing organization.⁴⁵ This became especially clear when some of the 1998 WIF statement signatories were forced to withdraw their support.

The practice of *jihad* in Afghanistan against the Soviets had already created a network of Salafi-jihadis that spread to various conflict zones in the world. Some of them functioned as recruiters to facilitate the travel of Salafists to Afghan training camps.⁴⁶ Bin Laden's relocation from Sudan to Afghanistan was presented as a forced migration (*hijrah*), because he was unable to practice faith. For jihadis, characterizing his new environment as Khorasan referred to an Islamic call to arms. Although the legitimacy of the hadith about 'an army with Black Banners from Khorasan' is not undisputed among Muslims, for jihadis it had a strong appeal.⁴⁷ *Hijra* expresses that Muslim unity is stronger than family and social ties, encouraging jihadis to leave home and join the jihad.⁴⁸ The *Al Qaeda* narrative attracted small groups and individual followers.

Some Muslims were sympathetic to *Al Qaeda*; some made financial contributions to Bin Laden's efforts, and others were willing to spread his ideas and statements. The Salafists who chose to come to Afghanistan, train for jihad, and pledge *bayat* to Bin Laden were of a distinct nature. They can be considered the formal members of *Al Qaeda*. However, the clarity of such a distinction is deceptive. In the late 1980s there was confusion and discussion regarding the status of the pledge made by the dozen or so followers at the time with regard to older

43 Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 136.

44 Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 31-32, Atwan, 'Bin Ladin interviewed on jihad against US'.

45 For example Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 56-74.

46 Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 85-86, Hegghammer, 'Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia'.

47 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, xvii-xix

48 Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda*, location 1056.

pledges made to local groups.⁴⁹ There is a lack of clarity concerning the precise number of people who pledged *bayat*, as Bin Laden also employed people for his business endeavors in Sudan. In the mid-1990s, some jihadis chose to make a temporary or conditional pledge. Especially Saudi recruits participated in training and fighting for several months and then returned home.⁵⁰ In 1996, a small group agreed 'to join *Al Qaeda* and fight America with the proviso that if a jihad effort with a clearer justification existed on another front, they would be free to join that instead'.⁵¹ In the late 1990s, followers had the possibility to make a 'little' or 'big' oath of allegiance.⁵² The former was declared before Bin Laden, the latter before Taliban leader Mullah Omar. This was after Bin Laden had pledged allegiance to the Taliban leader.

Accounts on the number of followers who pledged allegiance varied, but in general their number increased during the 1990s, from a dozen to several hundred in 2001.⁵³ These *Al Qaeda* members had gone through various stages of training. Basic military skills were taught in Afghan camps such as *Al-Farouq* near Kandahar. The jihadi recruits were tied to various Salafi-jihadi groups, as the camps were run jointly. Class and group sizes varied from 10 to 40 students. *Al Qaeda* trainers taught them about *Al Qaeda's* views. On occasion, Bin Laden paid visits to *Al Farouq* to have discussions with recruits about their faith. After completing basic training, some spent time in guest houses in Kandahar city, while others directly continued with advanced training. At the Arab guest house financed by Bin Laden, a van as always ready to take jihadis to Bin Laden's home if they wanted to pledge *bayat*.⁵⁴ Although this was voluntary, *Al Qaeda* recruiters tried to persuade recruits, also by using peer pressure from other students.⁵⁵

Of those receiving advanced training in explosives, intelligence collection, and other fighting skills, some were selected for secret *Al Qaeda* operations. Among them were Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Mohammed Atta, Ziad Jarrah, and Marwan al-Shehhi, who came from Germany and in 1999 started preparations for the attacks on September 11, 2001. The personal stories of *Al Qaeda* members, as also described in chapter 3, such as the Palestinian Sadiq Odeh, the Saudi Mohammed al-Owhali, and the Sudanese Jamal al-Fadl, reflected a staged trajectory of joining the organization. World events and the propagation of the *Al Qaeda* narrative, such as in Saudi, Yemeni, and Sudanese guest houses, were instrumental in convincing jihadis

49 Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 85.

50 Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 151.

51 Ibid, 65.

52 Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 263.

53 For example see Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 102, 263-264, 402-407, 411, Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 65, 151, 359, Burke, *Al Qaeda*, 85, Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 473. In contrast, Rohan Gunaratna made rather crude calculations, concluding there were at least several thousand *Al Qaeda* members, Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*.

54 Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 411.

55 Ibid, 424.

to travel to Afghanistan and eventually become members of *Al Qaeda*. After the USS Cole bombing in Yemen by *Al Qaeda* members, many new recruits started to arrive in Kandahar.⁵⁶

In sum, the narrative related to various Muslim, Salafi-jihadi, and *Al Qaeda* audiences in different ways. Sometimes it fostered understanding among a wider Arab audience, and sometimes it shifted people's ideas and perceptions, increasing sympathy or forms of support. The narrative analysis performed in the case study did not focus on the types and levels of functional support received by Bin Laden, such as weapons transactions or financial dealings. However, in a more general sense, the spectrum of audiences related to the ecosystem in which *Al Qaeda* could grow and form into an organization (by understanding, sympathizing, or supporting). To understand the effects of securitization efforts in the *Al Qaeda* narrative, it is clearly necessary to keep these differentiated audiences in mind. The more congruence there is regarding social structure, practices, and events between the securitizing actor and various audiences, as they drive or enable securitization efforts, the more actively the causal complex works to affect a social reality in a particular way.

For those who became members of *Al Qaeda*, and even more for the executioners of particular attacks, the definition of securitization as outlined in chapter 2 was clearly applicable. With respect to groups of Arabs and Muslims, in contrast, one could challenge whether they constituted a moral audience in terms of this same securitization concept. To what extent were some of the protesters merely in need of an anti-American hero figure, which was handed to them via pan-Arabic media? The US security practices that influenced the *Al Qaeda* narrative, as discussed in the previous paragraph, were only some of the many causal or driving factors at play. For Muslims and Arabs who felt more distant to the Salafi-jihadism voiced by Bin Laden, such as some of the Palestinians protesting and fighting against Israel, US security practices targeting Bin Laden created effects that *Al Qaeda* had difficulty achieving on its own. However, despite expressions of understanding and sympathy in Palestine, Pakistan, and elsewhere, and perhaps some additional financial donations, it seems a long trajectory from voicing sympathy to becoming an *Al Qaeda* member. Among Salafi-jihadi groups or those already training in Afghanistan, American Middle East policies and particularly the military strikes on Afghanistan, Sudan, and Iraq are more likely to have been a driving factor in the increase of *Al Qaeda* members. However, as the bombing of the USS Cole demonstrated, *Al Qaeda's* own actions were similarly important for the narrative.

Despite the 'international fame' Bin Laden had gained in the late 1990s and the increase of jihadis in the training camps, the recruitment of members, the organization of attacks, and the preparation of fighters came down to the intensive personal interaction, influencing, and peer pressure between cadre and individual executioners. It was a small number of fanatics who were willing to conduct attacks regardless of wider Muslim audience assent. Rather than confirming institutionalized power relations (as with the US), the reputation of Bin Laden and the identity of his emerging organization was being *established* as a distinct variation within, or better against, the dominant current of the Salafi-jihadi social order. The

56 Ibid, 263.

Al Qaeda narrative served to favor conditions for this with regard to a spectrum of audiences: among some, securitization efforts increased support, while for others it resulted more in an enlargement of understanding or sympathy. In this respect, the *Al Qaeda* narrative can be perceived as multi-consequential as well.

ACN: a contribution to intelligence studies

To answer all three research objectives before summarizing the overall conclusions of the thesis, this section relates the research to relevant debates in intelligence studies. As outlined in the first chapter, there are different views on the nature of intelligence and the types of processes and activities that are involved. This section considers ACN in terms of both the *study of* and the *study for* intelligence. The former refers to intelligence as phenomenon, while the latter focuses on intelligence as practice. What does this research contribute to intelligence studies? And what is the value of ACN to intelligence professionals?

Intelligence studies is a relatively young and very much developing academic discipline in its own right. It has been called the missing dimension of international relations, and for good reason.⁵⁷ Throughout history, states have wrapped intelligence reporting and activities in veils of secrecy. It was only after scandals and through the work of review and oversight committees, such as the US Rockefeller, Pike, and Church committees in the 1970s, that historians and other academics gained access to large amounts of data in the US. Similar developments took place in other countries.⁵⁸ It was mostly in the 1980s and onwards that academic contributions to intelligence studies significantly increased in the US, UK, Canada, and some European countries.⁵⁹ To this day, historians continue to form an important part of the intelligence studies forefront, discovering new information as archives are opened to the public. Besides the study of intelligence history, intelligence organizations (their collection, analysis, dissemination, and counterintelligence and covert activities) have received increasing scholarly interest, particularly from former practitioners who became scholars to provide intelligence education for new generations. Their approaches have been based on the dominant positivist empiricist paradigm.

Among the topics receiving less attention in intelligence studies is theory.⁶⁰ Some descriptive and normative theorizing efforts have been made recently, but they still echo some of the early work of Sherman Kent and Willmoore Kendall in the 1950s.⁶¹ Overall, fundamental or philosophical theorizing in intelligence studies remains scarce. Intelligence studies has remained underdeveloped, or relatively unaffected by the 'great debates' on

57 For example Andrew, Dilks, *The Missing Dimension*.

58 Farson, 'Schools of Thought'.

59 Johnson, 'The development of intelligence studies'.

60 Ibid, p 10.

61 For example in Gill, Marrin, Pythian, (eds.) *Intelligence Theory*, Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence*, Kendall, 'The Function of Intelligence Analysis'.

constitution and causation that have characterized international relations in general, and intelligence-related subfields such as security studies in particular.⁶² Rather than reliving those debates, intelligence studies can learn from the contemporary debate in international relations. In challenging dominant positivist thinking, critical approaches in intelligence studies provide valuable additions to the study of intelligence as phenomenon and as practice. For one thing, this research has shown that a methodology can be scientific, logically sound, and practical, without directly delivering ‘objective’ proof of improved accuracy.⁶³ It has shed more light on the abductive nature of intelligence analysis.

Chapter 1 discussed some other critical contributions to the intelligence literature. Peter Gill and Mark Phythian advocate the value of critical realism to study intelligence and propose a ‘map’ for theorizing and researching in the field. They reject the domination of the positivist empiricist paradigm in intelligence, while not ‘switching wholesale to an interpretist approach’.⁶⁴ The map situates different theoretical strands with varying levels of abstraction, from international political theory, risk minimization, and organizational culture to social and cognitive psychology. The study of narratives, as demonstrated in this thesis, offers a semiotic mode of entry that relates to all these intertwined levels in a coherent manner. In line with earlier work by James Der Derian, Hamilton Bean, and others, the present study recognizes the value of narratives or discourse as an ‘intelligence currency’.⁶⁵ Perhaps this thesis will also further the underdeveloped ‘linguistic turn’ in intelligence studies, one grounded in critical realism.⁶⁶

In contrast to this thesis, most critical approaches to intelligence described in the first chapter focus on the deconstruction of intelligence institutions and discourses, studying intelligence as phenomenon. However, the approach of the present work corresponds to a multitude of Gill and Phythian’s ‘maps’, each relating to a different narrative. The causal complexes that become activated in and through securitization efforts in each narrative relate to elements on all levels of social structures, practices, and events, or what Gill and Phythian refer to as trans-societal and societal context, settings, situated activity, and individual experience.⁶⁷ ACN enables the study of self (intelligence consumers) and others (adversaries, ‘commentators’, other entities) in context to make sense of an intelligence problem.

This thesis has substantiated that the processes of policymaking and intelligence analysis of complex intelligence problems are inextricably intertwined through multi-causality and -consequentiality of statements and actions. On theoretical grounds, the plural and

62 Sims, ‘Theory and Philosophy of Intelligence’, 48, on these debates, for example see Alexander Wendt, ‘On Constitution and Causation in International Relations’, *Review of International Studies*, 24 (1998) 5: 101–118, Christian Reus-Smit, Duncan Snidal (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2010).

63 Marrin, *Improving Intelligence Analysis*, 33.

64 Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 49–52.

65 Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy*, Bean, ‘Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies’, 499–500, Bean, *No More Secrets*, Woodard, ‘Tasting the Forbidden Fruit’, 91–108, Gunilla Eriksson, *Swedish Military Intelligence*.

66 Iver Neumann, ‘Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn, The Case of Diplomacy’, *Millennium* 35 (2002) 3: 677–701, Carlsnaes, Risse, Simmons (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations*.

67 Gill, Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 51.

integrative analytical approach of ACN contests the proximity hypothesis in intelligence studies, which holds that ‘greater distance between intelligence and policy produces more accurate but less influential products’.⁶⁸ Due to increased uncertainty and the complexity of both the intelligence process and its environment, the notional red line that has often so explicitly been drawn in the US between the intelligence community and policymakers has in fact proven to be a *fata morgana*. If it ever existed, it was permanently erased after the end of the Cold War. Or was it? Depending on the frame adopted for intelligence problems, as either a solvable puzzle or a complex intelligence problem, this remains to be seen. Intelligence organizations will continue to be tasked with solving specific questions. For example, in support of US policymaking, this might involve the assessment of Chinese business activities in Africa. Strategic warning can be provided by monitoring the development of an adversary’s new type of military capability. National security can be protected by countering espionage. However, it must be noted that eventually, all puzzles are embedded in wider complex intelligence problems. Does relevant business in Africa also include cultural influence through restaurant chains? What is military capability in light of the adversaries’ powers and policies? Or when does information gathering at universities or essential businesses become espionage?

The critical theoretical considerations that underlie this thesis do not imply that there is no place for puzzle solving in intelligence organizations, but the idea is advanced that cooperative sensemaking needs attention.⁶⁹ Problem framing and analysis cannot be separated; intelligence requirements, the definition of intelligence problems, and consumer action perspectives all influence each other. Also related to making distinctions between clearly defined puzzles and complex mysteries is how one conceives the task of intelligence organizations and what the politicization or manipulation of information entails.⁷⁰ A continuous dialogue is required between producers and consumers of intelligence at the working level as part of an ongoing organization process of flexible planning and integrated policy-intelligence analysis, precisely to produce intelligence that is useful and weighs action perspectives. Proximity and dialogue do not necessarily equate to politicized intelligence in the sense that knowledge is actively distorted to achieve specific political goals. Both intelligence analysis and policymaking involve forms of interpretivism. Interaction and dialogue increase intersubjectivity and widen mutual understanding.

Furthermore, the interwovenness of intelligence and policy is also clearly manifest as policymakers use narratives for strategic communication, and to conduct policies and direct actions that affect external threats and complex intelligence problems. By following the securitization logic and defining an enemy, statements and actions against a threat can have counterproductive consequences – for example, as shown in the case studies,

68 Marrin, ‘Revisiting Intelligence and Policy’, 2.

69 Similar to Moore, *Sensemaking* and Fishbein, Treverton, ‘Making Sense of Transnational Threats’ but on different, theoretical grounds.

70 Hastedt, ‘The Politics of Intelligence’, Marrin, ‘Rethinking Analytic Politicization’, Eric Dahl, ‘Why Won’t They Listen?’, Woodard, ‘Tasting the Forbidden Fruit’.

by strengthening the narrative of the adversary. Developments in one's own political context, processes of self-identification, and strategic narratives cannot be separated from intelligence requirements and analysis. Another presumption of ACN is that intelligence analysis partly generates its own 'basic analytic reality' as well, all as a means of making sense of complex intelligence problems. The position of the analyst needs to be explicitly problematized regarding whether he can serve as a situated critical interpreter. Critical peer-reviewing remains of essence, as does openness to dialogue with others, such as outside experts. It is an overall team effort of intelligence and policy professionals and other trusted outside subject matter experts that is required for a comprehensive comparative analysis of narratives. As such, the ACN methodology answers the call to explain why and how intelligence analysis should be better incorporated in decision-making.⁷¹ It is a way to discuss assumptions, data, interpretation, logic, argumentation, and assessments more explicitly at the working level. The approach also favors institutionalization of cooperation in networks and joint organizational bodies.

What is foreseeable is that ACN could flourish particularly well in environments that adhere to a more joint approach to intelligence, such as with the British doctrine on understanding.⁷² To an extent, there is some truth to the critique addressed in the first chapter that incorporating a critical approach such as ACN in (stove-piped US) intelligence organizations might encounter difficulties with respect to accommodation. Are intelligence consumers willing to expose their strategic narratives to integrated analysis, and for example consider critique on them from micro narratives? Would the intelligence (and policy) leadership allow networking between policy and intelligence professionals, and other trusted experts outside the intelligence community, to enable ACN? And are intelligence professionals willing and able to adopt the NAF and its theoretical underpinnings? These are relevant questions, and some points are addressed further on in this chapter. However, such concerns do not render the methodology itself irrelevant. That would be putting the cart before the horse.

Much has been said on the fundamental complexity and uncertainty characterizing the intelligence process and its environment. Apart from organizing and producing intelligence, some agencies also engage in covert activities. The production of secret propaganda (and countering such efforts of adversaries) is also part of the intelligence domain.⁷³ In a broader sense, overt, discrete, and covert influence operations are part of a government's foreign and domestic policies.⁷⁴ The armed forces, diplomatic corps, think tanks, and others conduct

71 Marrin, 'Why strategic intelligence analysis has limited influence'.

72 UK Ministry of Defence, 'Joint Doctrine Publication o4'.

73 Propaganda is commonly differentiated between disseminating biased information (white), pressuring, bribing or influencing entities to adapt their story (grey), and strategically inserting false information to change perceptions and elicit a particular response (black). As in Michael A. Turner, 'An Appraisal of the Effects of Secret Propaganda', in Loch K. Johnson (ed.) *Strategic Intelligence Volume 3, Covert Action, Behind the veils of secret foreign policy* (London, Praeger Security International 2007) 107-117.

74 Ibid, Douglas C. Lovelace Jr., *Terrorism, Commentary on Security Documents, Hybrid Warfare and the Gray Zone Threat*, Volume 141 (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2016), Michael John-Hopkins, *The Rule of Law in Crisis and Conflict Grey Zones: Regulating the*

a range of operations, for example through public diplomacy, civil-military ‘hearts and minds’ operations in mission areas, psychological operations, and deception operations. Throughout history, intelligence has been a significant part of such practices.⁷⁵ As a result of the information revolution and processes of globalization, corporations and other non-governmental entities are also increasingly involved with these types of activities.⁷⁶

How does the ACN relate to this? Intelligence is not about speaking or finding the ultimate truth, but about identifying and understanding (effects of) various meanings in context, attributed by relevant entities to events. It is about recognizing the fundamental idea that ‘if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences’.⁷⁷ What are the most relevant or influential ‘truths’ and how do they relate to the wider social and material world? This puts discussions on ‘fake news’ or propaganda in a different light. In some intelligence literature on information operations, propaganda is regarded as ‘poisonous narratives’ that work to ‘subvert’ reality and ‘call into question the foundation of knowledge’.⁷⁸ But in essence, propaganda is an effort to *shape* reality, bring about change in power relations, and influence social orders through the articulation of a narrative.⁷⁹ ACN is a way of charting intersecting narratives and evaluating tensions and inconsistencies with regard to the content and context of these narratives. Can sudden changes of storylines be explained or understood? What entities influence narratives the most, for example through reproduction and recontextualization? ACN feeds discussion on what truths, actors, and audiences are most relevant to complex intelligence problems. The increasing volume and complexity of the information environment, driven exponentially by technological developments, makes selecting texts and identifying narratives more challenging. Enlarging the number of micro narratives helps to evaluate the significance of identified macro narratives and analyze the workings and consistency of securitization efforts in those narratives. By charting the narratives most relevant to complex intelligence problems, ACN has the potential to support planning and evaluation of some covert intelligence operations such as secret propaganda.

Use of Violence in a Global Information Environment (Oxon, Routledge 2017).

- 75 For example see Richard James Aldrich, Gary D. Rawnsley, Ming-Yeh T. Rawnsley (eds.) *The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945-65, Western Intelligence, Propaganda and Special Operations* (London, Frank Cass 2000), Robert Dover, Michael S. Goodman, *Spinning Intelligence, Why Intelligence Needs the Media, why the Media Needs Intelligence* (London, Hurst & Company 2009).
- 76 William Dinan, David Miller (eds.) *Thinker, Faker, Sinner, Spy, Corporate PR and the Assault on Democracy* (London, Pluto Press 2007).
- 77 William Isaac Thomas, Dorothy Swaine Thomas, *The child in America, Behavior problems and programs* (New York, Knopf 1928) 571-572.
- 78 For example Fitzgerald, Brantly, ‘Subverting Reality’.
- 79 Anne Morelli, *Elementaire principes van oorlogspropaganda, bruikbaar in geval van koude, warme of lauwe oorlog...*, (Antwerp, EPO 2003).

Methods for analyzing intelligence problems

Another aim of this thesis was to demonstrate the usefulness of ACN to intelligence analysis as a practice of sensemaking, hopefully also encouraging wider acceptance of critical theory in the study *for* intelligence. Three issues with regard to methodologies and methods for intelligence analysis continue to surface in the intelligence studies literature. First, various scholars argue that while social science approaches have their value for intelligence analysis, it remains problematic to translate academic insights to the practice of intelligence.⁸⁰ They hold that established scientific methodologies and methods do not receive the attention they deserve in intelligence analysis literature. This thesis has demonstrated the opposite. Second, while structured analytic techniques (SATs) have been regarded with high esteem ‘by lore and assertion’ in the intelligence community, it has remained challenging to assess the efficacy of these methods.⁸¹ However, renewed interest has generated some valuable insights and considerations with respect to the use of SATs that will be discussed in this section.⁸² Finally, the systematic and effective adoption of methods in intelligence organizations is regarded as difficult. How does ACN, as developed in this thesis, relate to the issue of efficacy?

The first chapter in this thesis discussed how ACN differs from several SATs. This section reflects on efficacy and considers where and how ACN relates and could *contribute* to established SATs. Like other SATs, the method derived from ACN externalizes, organizes, and evaluates analytic thinking.⁸³ There are two approaches to evaluating the benefits for intelligence analysis: logical reasoning and empirical research. In the SATs literature, logical reasoning is tied to psychological research into the limitations of human perception, memory, and thought.⁸⁴ These insights correspond to Richards Heuer’s highly influential book *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*.⁸⁵ This thesis was based on fundamental philosophical and theoretical reasoning as a validation for its claims of appropriateness. The method outlined in this work allows for the identification of fundamentally different narratives. It also relates threat articulation in narratives to power relations and social or institutional roles, and factors in processes of self-identification. After exposing ACN to the practice of intelligence analysis, it will become possible to further evaluate how ACN performs (and profits from classified information) with regard to various types of complex intelligence problems. Much remains to research: How does the methodology suit analysis with global strategic, transnational, regional, domestic, or local problems? Does ACN also work with ad hoc crisis support or only

80 For example Michael Landon-Murray, ‘Putting a Little More “Time” into Strategic Intelligence Analysis’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 30 (2017) 4: 785–809, Stephen Marrin, ‘Intelligence Studies Centers, Making Scholarship on Intelligence Analysis Useful’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 27 (2012) 3: 398–422,

81 Marrin, *Improving Intelligence Analysis*, 33.

82 Chang, e.a., ‘Restructuring structured analytic techniques’, Jones, ‘Critical epistemology for Analysis of Competing Hypotheses’, Coulthart, ‘An Evidence-Based Evaluation of 12 Core Structured Analytic Techniques’, Artner, e.a., *Assessing the Value of Structured Analytic Techniques*.

83 Heuer, Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques*, Beebe, Pherson, *Cases in Intelligence Analysis*.

84 Ibid, Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London, Alan Lane 2011).

85 Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*.

with long-term strategic decision-making? And could other intelligence consumers besides policymakers, such as domestic law enforcement agencies or deployed military task forces, benefit from ACN? In theory, the methodology can be applied in all cases. Defining the basic analytic narratives is a matter of abductively outlining the most relevant contextual level and focus.

It is fruitful to clarify how ACN would fit with established SATs. Similar to red hat analysis, ACN can be viewed as a methodology for imaginative alternative analysis that aims to widen cultural empathy and understanding of a problem. Its goal is also to counter mirror-imaging (projecting one's mental models on the other), attribution error (overestimating traits while underestimating situations), and confirmation bias (confirming preexisting beliefs on outcome). A particularization of red hat analysis is the technique 'four ways of seeing'.⁸⁶ This 'tool' distinguishes in four quadrants how X views X, X views Y, Y views Y, and Y views X (here X represents 'self' while Y represents an 'other'). It is noted that 'there are seldom only two actors in a system' and 'all the actors' perceptions and inter-relationships with the system are required to provide context for analysis' as 'all actors hold values, beliefs and perceptions they view as right or rational', including external audiences.⁸⁷ However, beyond the notion that 'thorough research should be conducted to complete the analysis of perspectives', the theoretical guidance is missing on how to accomplish this.⁸⁸ The ACN methodology provides theoretical depth in this regard.

ACN focuses on narratives at various analytical levels (macro and micro) to complement the overall analysis. In this thesis, the critical perspective in the micro narrative, the last case study, most explicitly revealed tensions and inconsistencies. This revealed the potential to add multiple so-called 'commentators on discursive tennis matches', also as a corrective measure against tunnel vision based on one's own strategic narrative. More research into ACN is required to assess what number of narratives (at what level) is optimal for what type of intelligence problem – with a minimum requirement of three, of course. Another difference compared to red hat analysis is that ACN is not primarily aimed at estimating the future development of narratives, but at describing and evaluating them as multiple perspectives. A valuable insight from red teaming practices concerns the lack of representativeness encountered with respect to the intended target entity.⁸⁹ This illustrates how the 'situatedness' of analysts and experts will also be a central concern to ACN practice.

Contrary to the design of this study, in which a single researcher drew on a variety of available historiographic literature *ex post*, *ex durante* ACN is best performed by several professionals and experts in diverse teams. As they group themselves and concentrate on the narratives within the social orders that relate to their skills and expertise, in its process

86 UFMS, *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook* 7.0, 77.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*

89 Johnston, *Analytic Culture in US Intelligence*, 81–82, Chang, e.a., 'Restructuring structured analytic techniques', 347, Micah Zenko, *Red Team, How to Succeed by Thinking Like the Enemy* (New York, Basic Books 2015).

there are similarities with team A/B analysis. For both, groups of people seek to interpret the same events and data from a different angle. However, in case of ACN, one of those is one's own strategic narrative. A certain degree of competition between professionals and experts clustered around different narratives can perhaps stimulate alternative analysis. But ACN is eventually also about integration, identifying dynamics between narratives, and discussion and dialogue among ACN participants. There are also parallels with joint scenario-building, as policy officers and intelligence analysts work together to identify the most important elements and entities that shape social reality. Like scenarios with regard to the future, the identification of various narratives provides a chart or handle for analysts and decision-makers to conceptualize and discuss how (past and current) events and circumstances can be situated and reflected upon. Scenario analysis entered the analysis toolkit as a supportive technique in the analytical process. As a result of the joint effort, in practice some decision-makers request that the results of the scenario analysis be disseminated as a product.⁹⁰ Incorporating policy advice in the analysis, something unheard of for traditional intelligence agencies, might not even be such a bridge too far. Whereas scenarios are used to consider multiple plausible futures, ACN reflects on the past and present, thereby extending Peter Schwartz's observation that 'the future is plural' with 'so is the present'.⁹¹

Analysis of competing hypothesis (ACH) is one of the techniques most highly advertised in intelligence and praised for its unbiased methodology.⁹² Through structured brainstorming and other techniques, various hypothetical explanations are identified with regard to the development of an intelligence problem. Consequently, data on events, entities and circumstances is considered in terms of its inconsistency with each of these hypotheses. This ranks the hypotheses in terms of which are most likely. ACH's popularity and structured step-by-step procedure have stimulated numerous efforts to develop software and automate the technique. However, these efforts have also received structural (epistemological) critique, and for good reason. There is an inherent instability to the unstructured nature of individuating and interpreting the meaning of the evidence that serves as input, which in turn results in differences in output.⁹³

Based on an extensive number of exercises, it has been concluded that participants disagree on how to rate evidence (input) in about 20 to 30 percent of cases, usually related to differences in interpretation.⁹⁴ However, discussion with colleagues moderates the overall effect of this factor on the output of the ACH analysis. A focus on the development of software enhances a false sense of objectivity when the evidential basis for the methodology is not considered more extensively. This argument is applicable to all SATs. As several scholars have recently stated, they 'ultimately rely on subjective interpretation of analytic inputs'

90 This has been the case in the Netherlands.

91 Peter Schwartz, *The Art of the Long View, Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World* (New York, Doubleday 1991).

92 Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, 95-110.

93 For example Jones, 'Critical epistemology for Analysis of Competing Hypotheses'.

94 Heuer, Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques*, 311-312.

and hence inherit the danger of becoming ‘vehicles transporting subjectivity’ that ‘dress up subjective judgements in a cloak of objectivity’.⁹⁵

In modeling SATs, simplification and automation are never meant to become goals in themselves. The discussion of SATs above indicates that methods derived from ACN could be a useful addition for intelligence analysts as it substantiates interpretations of various meanings attributed to events and circumstances. This can serve as input for other SATs, such as ACH. In general, the value and position of ACN in intelligence has to be further established through the multimethod daily practice of intelligence analysis. What is clear is that no SAT is unequivocal. The challenges identified for ACN in this chapter do not stand in the way of further developing the ACN methodology and derived method to become part of the practice of intelligence.

Of course, with respect to organizational culture, institutional networks, and technical infrastructure, there will be many issues to deal with. It has frequently been noted that intelligence analysts meet new methodologies with skepticism. There is often a lack of time to familiarize oneself extensively and systematically incorporate them in the intelligence system.⁹⁶ Analysts need to comprehend the philosophical and theoretical foundation of ACN to understand the strength and limitations of the methodology. Different from the case studies conducted in this thesis, intelligence agencies have less literature at their disposal, but instead have various types of classified information and intelligence available.

Another organizational problem often identified in the intelligence literature is how overconfidence is promoted and stimulated over more rigorous consideration of alternatives. Diversification of meanings is not preferred, but it is cultural empathy for strategic entities and imagination that helps to understand complex intelligence problems better.⁹⁷ In light of a broader discussion on the necessity of a (r)evolution of intelligence, suggestions to increase liaison positions and build trusted networks to tap into expertise, such as at universities, non-governmental organizations, or other agencies, would probably stimulate putting the ACN methodology into practice. Not only in terms of cultural knowledge and understanding but also with respect to social science methodologies, as ACN-derived methods can work in different forms and have different foci. Sharing classified intelligence with certain ‘situated interpreters’ from outside the intelligence organization will likely cause some problems that have to be overcome. However, the ACN framework can help to strengthen a practice of dialogue and cooperation between policy officers, intelligence analysts, and trusted partners.

There is no unbridgeable theoretical divide that separates a method derived from ACN from established SATs. From a critical realist perspective, positivist truth claims substantiated through the use of SATs only become more relative. Naturally, there are various aspects that need to be addressed to practically develop the ACN methodology into an established

95 Chang, e.a., ‘Restructuring structured analytic techniques’, 345.

96 Marrin, *Improving Intelligence Analysis*, 32.

97 As discussed in Marrin, *Improving Intelligence Analysis*, 49-52.

method for intelligence analysis, but this goal is worth of pursuing. So far, the research effort and case studies have certainly been promising. Whatever doubts and criticisms might come from conservatives in intelligence, the ACN methodology is grounded in philosophical reasoning that aligns with Aristotle's thinking on constitution and causation. ACN rests on deeper theoretical ground than some of the practical approaches in intelligence that aim to externalize analytic thinking to separate facts from intuitive assumptions, and that have been declared the 'gold standard' for intelligence.⁹⁸

Final conclusion

This thesis responds to the dominant positivist paradigm in intelligence studies by outlining and advocating the usefulness of a critical approach. It challenges the so-called invalidity of other critical approaches for both the study of intelligence *and* its practice. In general, as described in the first chapter, critical or interpretivist approaches that reject total empiricist objectivism are highly diverse; they form more of a spectrum. Although critical contributions to the intelligence literature each have their own focus several advance the significance of discourse for intelligence, either to make sense of the complex world or to study intelligence production as a rhetorical form of persuasion. Postmodernism has been 'operationalized' for intelligence in terms of uncertainty and the need for reflexive security and complex adaptive sensemaking systems, proclaiming the end of modern intelligence factories and all-encompassing grand narratives. Drawing on social constructivism, critical policy analysis or cultural studies, some have emphasized the ideational or sociopolitical situatedness of either the subjects of intelligence or discourses on intelligence as phenomenon among practitioners and scholars. Furthermore, various calls for a 'revolution' of the intelligence paradigm have been made, driven by perceptions of a crisis of the practice, rather than philosophical theorizing. The information revolution, globalization, and revolution in military affairs all seemed to challenge the 'ways of intelligence' after the Cold War. Overall, both the theory- and practice-driven 'critical accounts' raise interesting and valid points.

What distinguishes the present research in intelligence studies, apart from drawing on different (critical) theory, is its effort to develop a methodology of use for the practice of intelligence that *integrally* analyzes narratives of intelligence consumers, adversaries, and other relevant entities. The theoretical components of CDA and securitization theory have proven useful for theorizing such a 'hybrid' practice of intelligence analysis. More than any of the other considered critical approaches, the ACN methodology is explicit about the necessity of a cooperative working-level effort that brings together different types of officials, also from outside the intelligence organization. It is also distinct from approaches in academia and the intelligence practice in its comparative and parallel analysis of threat articulations (or critique) in at least *three* distinct narratives: two macro and one micro.

98 US CIA, *A Tradecraft Primer*, UFMS, *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook*, 77.

The case studies on *Al Qaeda* between 1994 and early 2001 provided adequate insights on the security dynamics in causal complexes, and their effects within different social contexts. By productively focusing on securitization efforts, the research was able to track the development and interaction of statements and events over time in narratives, and trace multi-consequentiality across social domains. Securitization efforts in macro narratives were interactive. The critical micro narrative pointed towards tensions and inconsistencies in and between narratives. Situating and underlying the dynamics in both macro narratives were fundamentally different social orders and diametrically opposing policies, actions, and agendas. These policies and actions continued to (re)generate grievances, resentment, and threat perceptions for the 'other'. Framing practices by the US and *Al Qaeda* aimed to mobilize support in response to the perceived threat, but also shaped opinions among various wider audiences and (re)affirmed self-identification of social roles.

For *ex durante* analysis of complex intelligence problems, ACN requires cooperation at the working level of policymakers, intelligence analysts, and trusted outside experts. They all bring different knowledge and skills to the table, making them the situated interpreters required to analyze a particular narrative. The dialogue in which narratives are contrasted reflects both the necessity to analyze the multi-consequentiality of policy statements and actions, and the need to be self-reflexive about the performativity of the modeling that intelligence analysis encompasses. In the contemporary information environment, comprehensively mapping narratives in parallel over time has great value as a primary semiotic mode of entry to complex intelligence problems.

The notion of causal complexes enabled this research to circumvent the obstacles of classifying securitization as 'successful' and dealing with audiences in terms of causal determinacy. Instead, securitizing actors and audiences were situated as causally adequate elements, thus including but also decentralizing the role of audiences for securitization. The study of securitization *efforts* became the fundamental element of the US and *Al Qaeda* narratives. This also widened the scope on what regular policy practices could be considered to be more indirectly of influence, and hence a relevant part of the narratives. The use of the securitization concept in such a way not only made it possible to analyze resonance of efforts among audiences, but for the *Al Qaeda* narrative it also provided ways to discuss and grasp the nature, status, and role of various types of (potential) audiences. Apart from Bin Laden's followers, the broader ecosystem came into view that was vitalized by the narrative and provided the environment for *Al Qaeda* to grow and institutionalize as an organization. However, the fruitful use of securitization in this manner does not rule out that other conceptual frameworks could potentially be useful for ACN too.

This study also has its limitations. Further research is necessary to explore whether and how other theoretical concepts could be compatible with the ACN methodology. More cases could be studied to further reflect on the adequacy of the three narratives identified in this thesis. For example, what could be learned from an additional micro narrative about the value and status of the *critical terrorism narrative*? Other limitations of this research include

its dependency on scholarly literature to more fully grasp the meaning of translated Arab texts. Moreover, the limited availability of video recordings and the extensive use of written transcripts reduced the possibilities of interpreting texts. Nevertheless, overall the research has credibly shown that the critical ACN methodology can potentially contribute to intelligence practice and inform the study of intelligence with new insights. An effort has also been made to contribute to the ongoing academic debate on securitization in security studies. What more can be learned from other related subfields of international relations? It would be unproductive to overly separate intelligence studies from them.

This and other critical contributions to the intelligence literature also prompt the question of what broader academic status these approaches have in intelligence studies. Is it viable to argue for articulating a critical strand or subfield? What benefits would this have? As with critical strands in other related fields in international relations, such as critical security studies, critical terrorism studies, or critical military studies, critical approaches to intelligence hardly represent a single 'school of thought' and are quite diverse. However, as stated in the first chapter, a critical intelligence studies (CIS) project could further clarify and improve theoretical debate in intelligence studies. For all the different foci, a shared interest in the workings of socio-political contexts and discourses indicates there is plenty that connects. Discussing the theoretical links between weak social constructivist and critical realist approaches, for example, would be an interesting future conversation in intelligence studies.

More broadly, many intelligence scholars have refrained from articulating their theoretical roots or 'skin' in philosophical terms. Strictly defining a community of scholars and classifying others as positivists should not be a primary concern in itself. Instead of introducing fault lines between positivists and post-positivists, and among post-positivists themselves, the articulation of CIS can lead to renewed discussion on what *connects* various approaches and how they complement each other's perspectives. As this thesis has outlined, critical realism acknowledges but also relativizes both empiricism and interpretivism.

The critical research agenda presupposes another form of cooperation: among scholars engaged in the study *of* and/or *for* intelligence. Focal issues on the agenda would be well informed by the postmodern themes introduced by Andrew Rathmell (deconstructing grand narratives, ending the search for absolute truths, decentralization of knowledge in networks, and deconstructing identities and other boundaries) or the reflexive security approach and adaptive intelligence called for by Myriam Dunn Cavelty and Victor Mauer. Critical approaches could explicitly inquire into the boundaries of intelligence as a form of information, organization, and activity. The democratization of technology enables privatization and individualization of intelligence activities among companies, non-governmental organizations, and (collectives of) citizens. Is it possible for national intelligence to cease to exist? And what justifies or necessitates the definition of new 'INTs' such as social media intelligence as a distinct discipline? What responsibility do intelligence

organizations have in filtering fake news or foreign propaganda efforts in society? Critical approaches can provide interesting perspectives on the future of intelligence.

With regard to methodology, critical approaches are perhaps less divided in recognizing the essential abductive nature of intelligence. Analytical puzzle solving with deductive or inductive reasoning insufficiently takes into account either the dynamic socio-political contexts of self and other, or the significance of unobservable facilitating conditions and drivers (the real beyond the empirical). Rather than a separate critical intelligence project, CIS could contribute to various present definitional, methodological, or public policy efforts in intelligence studies. A CIS project would be more than an academic exercise among scholars if critical theory became more explicitly inserted in the intelligence education of practitioner-scholars. By developing useful and valid critical methodologies and comprehensively informing education, the critical debate in intelligence studies could further improve both the study *of* intelligence and *for* intelligence. This thesis has directed attention to a possibility for the growth of intelligence studies as an academic subfield of international relations. It is promising that several European and American intelligence scholars have been and are engaged in critical research. A comprehensive publication that outlines a broader research agenda for a CIS project might be in the offing.

Appendix

Appendix – Selection of texts

Chapter 3

In chronological order, key texts underlined.

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Chapter 4

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In chronological order, key texts underlined.

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Forces in Response to the Embassy Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania
August 10, 1998

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Memorandum on Assistance for Federal Employees Affected by the Embassy Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania August 12, 1998

Remarks at a Memorial Service at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, for the Victims of the Embassy Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania August 13, 1998

Videotaped Address to the People of Kenya and Tanzania August 14, 1998

The President's Radio Address August 15, 1998

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Forces To Protect the United States Embassy in Albania August 18, 1998

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Letter to Congressional Leaders on Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process August 20, 1998

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Statement on the Bombings in South Africa and Uganda August 26, 1998

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Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland in Dublin September 4, 1998

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Statement on United Nations Sanctions Against the Taliban, November 15, 1999

Statement on House Action on Proposed Legislation To Provide Assistance to African Nations, July 16, 1999

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process, July 29, 1999

Statement on the Anniversary of the United States Embassy Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, August 6, 1999

Remarks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States 100th National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, August 16, 1999

Message to the Senate Transmitting the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, September 8, 1999

Statement on the Terrorist Attacks in Russia, September 17, 1999

Remarks to the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, September 21, 1999

Remarks on the Nuclear Accident in Japan and Social Security and an Exchange With Reporters, October 1, 1999

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Luncheon in Las Vegas, Nevada, October 1, 1999

Remarks on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, October 5, 1999

Remarks on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, October 6, 1999

The President’s Radio Address, October 9, 1999

Joint Statement on Norway-United States Cooperation, October 15, 1999

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Foreign Operations Appropriations Legislation, October 18, 1999

Remarks at a New Jersey Democratic Assembly Dinner in Elizabeth, New Jersey, October 18, 1999

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- Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect
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Columbia and Labor, Health, and Education Programs, November 2, 1999
- Remarks at Georgetown University, November 8, 1999
- Remarks in an On-Line Townhall Meeting, November 8, 1999
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- Message to the Senate Transmitting the Ukraine-United States Treaty on Mutual
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- Remarks to the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara, November 15, 1999
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Summit in Istanbul, November 18, 1999
- Remarks on the Budget Agreement and an Exchange With Reporters in Istanbul,
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- Remarks to Business and Community Leaders in Athens, November 20, 1999
- Remarks at a Dinner for the Conference on Progressive Governance for the 21st
Century in Florence, Italy, November 20, 1999
- Remarks at a "Stop the Violence" Benefit in Beverly Hills, California, November 30,
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- United States-European Union Summit Statement on Chechnya, December 17, 1999
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- Interview With Larry King of CNN's "Larry King Live", December 22, 1999
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- Interview With Jim Lehrer of PBS’ “NewsHour”, January 26, 2000
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- Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process, February 7, 2000
- Remarks on the Employment Report and an Exchange With Reporters, May 5, 2000
- Interview With Wolf Blitzer on CNN.com, February 14, 2000
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- Interview With Peter Jennings of ABC’s “World News Tonight” in New Delhi, March 21, 2000
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- Statement on Terrorist Attacks in Spain, August 9, 2000

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Remarks at the Memorial Service for Crewmembers of the U.S.S. Cole in Norfolk, Virginia, October 18, 2000

Remarks at the Opening Ceremonies of the 2000 President’s Cup in Lake Manassas, Virginia, October 18, 2000

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Remarks at a Reception for Representative Maurice D. Hinchey in Kingston, New York, October 23, 2000

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Statement on Congressional Action on the Foreign Operations Appropriations Legislation, October 25, 2000

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Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One, December 14, 2000

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2000

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Nederlandse samenvatting (Dutch summary)

Het doel van dit proefschrift is om een bijdrage te leveren aan de verdere erkenning en ontwikkeling van kritisch theoretisch debat binnen intelligence studies. Hiertoe wordt een nieuwe methodologie ontwikkeld voor het analyseren van complexe intelligence problemen, of veiligheidsvraagstukken. In de methodologie, genaamd *Analysis by Contrasting Narratives* (ACN), staat het identificeren, analyseren en contrasteren van narratieven centraal. De narratieven zijn ofwel gerelateerd aan entiteiten met een bepaald handelingsperspectief, en die in staat zijn het veiligheidsvraagstuk te beïnvloeden (macronarratieven). Of narratieven zijn reflecties van entiteiten zonder dergelijke invloed maar met een perspectief dat fundamenteel anders is, waardoor er kritiek kan bestaan op de uitlatingen en handelingen zoals gevat in macronarratieven. In het tweede geval wordt gesproken over micronarratieven, of 'commentatornarratieven'.

De ACN-benadering vergroot de diversiteit van perspectieven op gebeurtenissen en omstandigheden, en benadrukt het belang van narratieven in het weergeven *en* beïnvloeden van complexe veiligheidsvraagstukken. Om afnemers van intelligence werkelijk van dienst te zijn, zo is het argument in deze thesis in essentie, moet intelligence niet 'de waarheid aandragen' maar zich richten op de meest relevante *waarheden*. Eén van die waarheden is het strategisch narratief van de intelligence-consument zelf, dat evengoed is gesitueerd in een socio-politieke context (of bredere sociale orde). Dit vraagt om een integrale, coöperatieve aanpak op werkniveau tussen inlichtingenprofessionals, beleidsmakers en mogelijk enkele betrouwbare externe experts, die ieder over verschillende ervaring, kennis en kunde beschikken.

Dit proefschrift is daarom niet alleen een bijdrage aan de academische studie *van* intelligence, als sociaal-maatschappelijk fenomeen, maar ook relevant voor de studie *voor* intelligence, ofwel de intelligencepraktijk. Het accepteren van kritisch theoretische uitgangspunten, zoals omschreven in deze thesis, heeft diepgaande implicaties. Het leidt tot een fundamenteel andere opvatting over intelligence dan traditioneel in de westerse wereld wordt aanvaard. In deze traditie overheerst positivistisch denken over waarheid, en is sprake van een strikte scheiding tussen de taakvelden van intelligence en afnemers. Bij het traditionele streven naar objectiviteit moet vooringenomenheid en selectief gebruik van informatie en intelligence door professionals en afnemers worden 'uitgebannen', in plaats van dat het onderdeel wordt van het analytische proces. Overigens sluit de ACN-benadering het additioneel gebruik van zuiver positivistische benaderingen niet uit, maar relativiseert deze. Daarmee bevindt ACN zich in het theoretische middengebied, tussen totaal empirisch objectivisme en poststructureel interpretivisme. Voor wat betreft de relatie tussen intelligence en afnemers, is overlap tussen de functie van intelligence en beleidsanalyse een gegeven, terwijl traditioneel juist een strikte scheiding tussen intelligence en afnemers wordt bepleit om objectiviteit te waarborgen.

Kritisch realisme (critical realism) geldt als filosofische grondslag voor dit onderzoek. Dit gaat uit van het bestaan van een werkelijke wereld buiten onszelf (ontologisch realisme), maar erkent ook de invloed van interpretatie als manier om deze werkelijkheid te kennen (epistemologisch interpretivisme). Naast een 'werkelijke' werkelijkheid, zijn het verhalen (of constructen) die de sociale werkelijkheid van mensen verder vormgeven. Sociale structuren en handelingen zijn beide op een wederkerige manier bepalend. Causaliteit kan daarom niet gezien worden in termen van enkelvoudige oorzaak-gevolg-relaties, maar betreft het samenspel tussen verschillende soorten omstandigheden en factoren. In navolging van Aristoteles wordt in dit onderzoek een onderscheid gemaakt tussen materiële, formele (ideële), bewegende (actie) en finale (teleologische) oorzaken, die samen causale complexen of netwerken vormen. Narratieven geven deze 'oorzaken' voor een deel weer, en zijn voor een deel zelf (als vorm van actie) onderdeel van (causale) complexen.

Voor het identificeren van onderscheidende narratieven wordt gebruikgemaakt van een narratief-analytisch raamwerk (NAF). Dit is gebaseerd op theoretische componenten van kritische discoursanalyse (CDA) en *securitization*-theorie. Het binnen CDA gemaakte onderscheid tussen sociale structuren, sociale praktijken, discursieve praktijken en gebeurtenissen, maakt het mogelijk om fundamenteel verschillende narratieven te identificeren. Het concept *securitization* behelst het articuleren van een substantiële dreiging, ten overstaan van (verschillende soorten) publiek, waardoor het nemen van buitengewone maatregelen noodzakelijk wordt geacht. Pogingen hiertoe, zowel middels uitspraken als handelingen, gelden als focus voor het analyseren van de teksten die samen narratieven vormen. Als basis voor de narratieven is gebruikgemaakt van teksten (geschreven, gesproken en beeldende communicatievormen). In tegenstelling tot gedetailleerde tekstuele analyse zoals bij CDA gebruikelijk is, maakte de focus op *securitization* het mogelijk de analyse van teksten te beperken tot belangrijke passages en fragmenten. Onder de noemer van *narrative tracing* (NT) worden daarnaast de gevolgen van *securitization*-inspanningen bezien. In hoeverre hebben deze inspanningen (een verschillend) effect op diverse publieken binnen de sociale orde van het narratief? En in welke mate is sprake van effecten buiten de sociale orde van het narratief? Leiden eigen pogingen tot *securitization* bijvoorbeeld bij de gedefinieerde 'vijand' tot *securitization*-inspanningen?

Om op basis van de ACN-methodologie een afgeleide methode te ontwikkelen en te demonstreren, is een onderzoeksobject gedefinieerd: *Al Qaeda*. Dit omvatte de organisatie, het netwerk en de ideologie, in zijn verschillende vormen, op verschillende momenten in de tijd en zoals opgevat door verschillende entiteiten (individuen, groepen, organisaties en instituties) binnen het gekozen tijdvak 1994-2001. Drie casestudy's zijn uitgevoerd naar relevante narratieven. Allereerst het macronarratief van *Al Qaeda*, zoals hoofdzakelijk vormgegeven door Bin Laden. Dit was gesitueerd binnen de sociale structuur van de wereldwijde islamitische samenleving en de smallere sociale en discursieve praktijk van jihadistisch salafisme. Daarnaast is het Amerikaanse institutionele macronarratief over terrorisme bestudeerd, gerelateerd aan de sociale structuur van staten en internationale

organisaties, de sociale praktijk van statelijke politiek en discursieve orde van nationale veiligheid. Uitspraken van president Clinton speelden in het narratief een belangrijke rol. Tot slot is een micronarratief geanalyseerd dat met name bestond uit het werk van de Britse journalist Robert Fisk, aangevuld met dat van anderen, zoals de Amerikaan Peter Bergen. Fisk sprak Arabisch, interviewde Bin Laden drie keer en reisde veel door het Midden-Oosten. Dit narratief kon worden geplaatst in de sociale structuur van de wereldwijde netwerksamenleving, de sociale praktijk van de informatiesamenleving en gerelateerd aan de discursieve praktijk van onafhankelijke journalistiek. In theorie is het aantal micronarratieven onbeperkt.

De centrale vragen voor dit onderzoek zijn:

1. Hoe kan op basis van de theorieën van securitization en kritische discoursanalyse een kritische methodologie voor het analyseren en contrasteren van narratieven worden vormgegeven, alsmede een afgeleide methode die van nut is voor de praktijk van inlichtingenanalyse?
2. Hoe kan deze methode worden toegepast om causale complexen te analyseren die van invloed zijn geweest op de ontwikkeling van het intelligencevraagstuk 'Al Qaeda' tussen 1994 en begin 2001?

De gekozen tijdsperiode verschilt van die van ander onderzoek, zowel naar narratieven in de Verenigde Staten (VS) als van *Al Qaeda*. Met name na de aanslagen van 11 september 2001 is er veel onderzoek verricht naar *Al Qaeda*, inclusief enkele discursieve benaderingen. Dit onderzoek daarentegen richt zich meer op de vormende periode waarin *Al Qaeda* als organisatie zijn beslag kreeg. Een ander onderscheid is dat in dit onderzoek niet een of twee, maar drie narratieven, parallel, worden bestudeerd.

Het eerste hoofdstuk introduceert het begrip intelligence, en beschrijft verschillende opvattingen over theorievorming in de studie van en voor intelligence. Hiermee wordt de benadering van dit proefschrift binnen intelligence studies gepositioneerd. Het gebruik van de term 'kritisch' wordt gedefinieerd als noemer voor benaderingen die interpretivisme erkennen in termen van ontologie of epistemologie. Meer dan een bepaalde theoretische benadering, staat de term 'kritisch' voor een zelfreflexief onderzoeksethos, waarbij de invloed van een eigen socio-politieke context wordt erkend. Op basis van deze definitie wordt onderzocht welke bijdragen aan de intelligenceliteratuur als kritisch kunnen worden beschouwd, en welke generieke inzichten deze bijdragen hebben opgeleverd. Dit wordt gevolgd door een bespreking van kritisch realisme, causaliteit en de functie van taal en narratieven voor intelligence. De keuze voor de CDA-benadering van de Britse taalwetenschapper Norman Fairclough wordt verantwoord. Zijn theoretisch onderscheid tussen sociale structuren, praktijken en gebeurtenissen is van grote waarde voor het onderscheiden van de narratieven (als analytische modellen). Ook wordt toegelicht waarom is gekozen voor de *securitization*-theorie van Thierry Balzacq, een Belgische wetenschapper op

het gebied van internationale betrekkingen. Hij vertegenwoordigt het ‘tweede-generatiedenken’, dat inhoudt dat securitization niet enkel wordt bepaald door taalhandelingen (*speech acts*), maar ook door de bredere context, setting en materiële aspecten. Tot slot wordt toegelicht waar ACN zich onderscheidt van gevestigde analytische benaderingen in de intelligencepraktijk, zoals Team A/B-analyse en *devil’s advocacy*. Centraal bij ACN is het onderkennen en contrasteren van de verschillende betekenissen die aan gebeurtenissen en omstandigheden worden toegekend.

Hoofdstuk twee schetst de gebruikte theorie van CDA in meer detail, integreert de *securitization*-theorie, omschrijft de ACN-methodologie nader, en introduceert het narratieve analysekader (NAF) dat wordt gebruikt voor de casestudy’s. In het NAF staan de volgende elementen centraal:

- A) de betekenis die uit de teksten naar voren komt in termen van *securitization* (de aandrijvende *securitizing actor*, gebruikte *heuristic artefacts* (beeldrepertoire, metaforen, etc.), de dreigende *referent subject*, bedreigde *referent object*, en voorgestelde maatregelen of *customized policy*),
 - B) tekstuele analyse van grammaticale en lexicale cohesie (de eenduidigheid en kracht van de boodschap),
 - C) de setting of situationele omstandigheid van tekstproductie en -consumptie (zoals beperkende of stimulerende genreconventies, of gebruik van bepaalde macht),
 - D) de bredere sociale en ideële achtergrond of *Zeitgeist* waarbinnen het narratief is gesitueerd.
- Als uitbreiding van de NAF-methode, wordt *narrative tracing* (NT) geïntroduceerd. Hiermee worden de eventuele meervoudige gevolgen van *securitization*-inspanningen binnen en buiten de sociale orde van een narratief gezien.

Ten slotte wordt *Al Qaeda* geïntroduceerd als onderzoeksobject, en worden de drie casestudy’s op hoofdlijnen van elkaar onderscheiden. Als overeenkomende elementen tussen de narratieven gelden vooraf geselecteerde grote gebeurtenissen: de aanslagen op de Amerikaanse ambassades in Kenia en Tanzania in 1998, en op de USS Cole in 2000.

Het derde hoofdstuk beschrijft het *Al Qaeda* narratief, zoals verwoord door Osama bin Laden voor zijn volgelingen. Voor inlichtingenprofessionals vertegenwoordigt dit narratief het meest traditionele perspectief, zij het nu met een specifiek narratieve analytische focus. *Al Qaeda* transformeerde (of institutionaliseerde) van een sociaal netwerk tot een genetwerkte organisatie naarmate het narratief zich ontwikkelde. Bin Laden probeerde met zijn boodschap een wereldwijde moslimgemeenschap te bereiken, en een voorhoede van moslimjongeren te motiveren en rond zich te verzamelen. Het *Al Qaeda*-narratief functioneerde daartoe ter zelfidentificatie. Institutionalisering werd bevorderd door het uitdrukken en vormgeven van Bin Laden’s leiderschap, maar door ook het activeren en aansporen van nieuwe (jonge) volgers in het *Al Qaeda*-narratief. Meer dan in het geval van de VS zou zwijgen of ‘stilte’ de betekenis en positie van Bin Laden in de Arabische en moslimwereld hebben verkleind, met name onder salafisten. In termen van *securitization* toonde het *Al Qaeda*-narratief een

transformatie van vroege, complexe en onvolledige inspanningen naar meer gerichte *securitization*-inspanningen. Deze waren specifiek gericht op Amerikaanse militairen en burgers over de hele wereld. Dit was een fundamenteel verschil, en daarmee ook mettertijd gedeeltelijke transformatie, van de jihadistisch salafistische sociale orde. Het ging in tegen de dominante ideologische stromingen. Belangrijke teksten waren Bin Ladens toespraak en memorandum in 1996 en de verklaring van het *World Islamic Front* in 1998. Verder gaven een interview van Bin Laden met *Al Jazeera* in 1998, en een propagandavideo over de aanslag op de USS Cole in Yemen in 2000 een belangrijke impuls aan de verdere manifestatie van het *Al Qaeda*-narratief. Maar het waren zeker ook de Amerikaanse raketaanvallen op Afghanistan en Soedan, als reactie op de aanslagen op de Amerikaanse ambassades, en de Amerikaanse operatie Desert Fox boven Irak, waardoor Bin Ladens boodschap resoneerde bij grote groepen Arabieren en moslims. De door Amerika afgekondigde economische sancties, het strafrechtelijk onderzoek en de aanklacht tegen Bin Laden onderstreepten juist de status die hij zelf verwoed probeerde te benadrukken. De acties brachten de sociale identiteit van Bin Laden, en zijn kritiek op het buitenlands beleid van de VS, meer op de voorgrond in de reguliere Arabische nieuwsmedia.

Het Amerikaanse institutionele terrorismenarratief over Bin Laden en *Al Qaeda*, zoals ondermeer vormgegeven door de rede van president Clinton, word weerspiegeld in hoofdstuk vier. Dit is een perspectief dat traditioneel niet wordt geduid of zelfs niet in beschouwing wordt genomen door inlichtingenanalisten. Het heeft duidelijk een ander karakter dan het vorige verhaal. De positie, de rol en de macht van de Amerikaanse president is sterk geïnstitutionaliseerd door historische (staats)praktijken aangaande een breed scala aan onderwerpen. Maar het narratief diende ook om deze bestaande machtsverhoudingen in het sociale domein van de VS te consolideren. Het weerspiegelde evengoed een dynamiek van zelfidentificatie, als de definitie en omgang met een externe bedreiging. In reacties op bedreigingen en aanvallen werden de Amerikaanse kernwaarden en de essentie van de institutionele en beschermende rol van de overheid steeds bevestigd. Meer dan bij het *Al Qaeda*-narratief waren voor het onderzoek van het Amerikaanse narratief geselecteerde teksten ook vaak gerelateerd aan andere nationale en internationale beleidskwesties. Deze stonden niet zozeer in verband met terrorisme, er was meer sprake van een samenloop van ontwikkelingen waar de Amerikaanse president tegelijk op moest of wilde reageren.

Na de aanslagen op de ambassades in Afrika verwoordde Clinton de specifieke dreiging van terrorisme voor zijn formele (politiek institutionele) publiek. Amerikaanse burgers hadden de status van een moreel publiek. Uitspraken van de president creëerden de juridische, politieke en morele ruimte voor Clinton om raketaanvallen uit te laten voeren op trainingskampen in Afghanistan en een fabriek in Soedan. Ten overstaan van de 53e algemene vergadering van de Verenigde Naties in 1998 veranderde Clinton zijn omschrijving van de aard en omvang van het terrorismevraagstuk. Hij benadrukte dat sprake was van een 'nieuw type terrorisme' en verwees naar veel verschillende voorbeelden wereldwijd. Een

belangrijke factor van invloed met een beperkende werking op de *securitization*-inspanningen was de Lewinsky-affaire waar Clinton op dat moment persoonlijk in verwickeld was. De affaire leidde bijna tot zijn aftreden, perkte de macht van Clinton substantieel in, en zorgde ervoor dat in de Amerikaanse media de noodzaak voor de raketaanvallen in twijfel werd getrokken. Clinton betrok in 1999 ook de Afghaanse Taliban bij zijn *securitization*-inspanningen, maar de ingestelde economische sancties hadden minimaal (of zelfs een tegengesteld) effect. De angst voor aanslagen in Amerika rond de millenniumwisseling werd door Clinton gebruikt om zelfbeschikking en de beschermende rol van de overheid te benadrukken.

Het benadrukken van de Amerikaanse nationale identiteit, normen en waarden werd een steeds prominenter aspect van het institutionele terrorismenarratief. Na de aanslag op de USS Cole in Yemen deed Clinton geen specifieke *securitization*-inspanningen meer. Hij beklemtoonde juist dat er voor Amerika, en ook internationaal, sprake was van vrede en vooruitgang. Het succes van de vredesbesprekingen tussen de Palestijnen en Israëli's waar Clinton intensief bij betrokken was geweest, werd op dat moment echter tenietgedaan. Maar Clinton was aan het einde van zijn laatste termijn als president en koos ervoor om vooral het positieve te onderstrepen. In het algemeen werd in het Amerikaanse terrorismenarratief de eigen identiteit sterk benadrukt. De motieven en grieven van Bin Laden, alsmede de historische en religieuze context van zijn uitspraken bleven onderbelicht.

Hoofdstuk vijf identificeert en analyseert het kritische micronarratief. De functie ervan was om contrast te verhogen en een additioneel perspectief te verkrijgen over de *securitization*-inspanningen die zijn geïdentificeerd in de macronarratieven. Voor traditionele inlichtingenanalisten is het zeer ongebruikelijk om een dergelijk derde (micro) narratief afzonderlijk en parallel te analyseren. In dit micronarratief lag de focus op de beschouwing van framingpraktijken, processen van (zelf)identificatie, machtsverhoudingen en sociale rollen. Verschillende tegenstrijdigheden, paradoxen en onlogische aspecten werden belicht. Het ging om interne verdeeldheid onder de volgers van Bin Laden over de gevolgde koers, maar ook verschuivingen in Bin Ladens definitie van de vijand (*referent subject*). Eveneens werden de accuraatheid van het door de Amerikanen gebruikte frame 'publieksvijand nummer 1' voor Bin Laden en het effect hiervan op de achterban van Bin Laden besproken. Er werd gewezen op de beperkingen en mogelijkheden van het symbolisch gebruik van de aanslagen en vergeldingsmaatregelen voor *securitization*-inspanningen. Een aantal tegenmaatregelen van Amerikaanse zijde had juist een tegengesteld effect. De kritiek was van dien aard dat het de term '*securitization blowback*' voor de geest brengt.

Het laatste hoofdstuk, hoofdstuk zes, dient drie doelen. Ten eerste vat het de ACN-methodologie samen en worden problemen en beperkingen van het onderzoek beschouwd. ACN is gebaseerd op het abductief maken van onderscheid tussen narratieven, die deel uitmaken van afzonderlijke sociale orden. Een kritisch besef is dat alle narratieven slechts onvolmaakte analytische modellen of interpretaties zijn. Reflectie blijft dus voortdurend

noodzakelijk. De narratieven bestaan uit teksten en hun interpretatie. Deze teksten worden geselecteerd op basis van hun relatie met entiteiten die centraal staan in het onderzoeksobject. Een andere uitwerking van de kritische uitgangspositie van dit onderzoek was dat het strategisch narratief van de (in dit geval fictieve Amerikaanse) intelligence-afnemer integraal is betrokken in de analyse. In de intelligencepraktijk vraagt dit om geïntegreerde samenwerking op werkniveau. De benadering maakt het mogelijk om *securitization*-processen te analyseren en contrasteren, binnen en tussen narratieven. Het *securitization*-concept zoals gedefinieerd door Balzacq werd in dit onderzoek ruim opgevat. De rol van (verschillende typen) publiek was onderdeel van de analyse, maar werd ook gedecentraliseerd. Instemming van het publiek was niet een primaire focus. Wat centraal stond waren de ‘*securitization*-inspanningen’, niet succesvolle cases. De betekenis van uitspraken of handelingen werd gezien in samenhang met materiële, formele en finale oorzaken, ofwel als onderdeel van causale complexen.

Het narratief-analytisch raamwerk is praktisch en adequaat gebleken. Een punt van aandacht was de beschikbaarheid van literatuur en vertaalde teksten om analyse van narratieven mogelijk te maken. In de laatste decennia zijn deze in voldoende aantallen beschikbaar gekomen, waardoor het onderzoek goed kon worden uitgevoerd. Vooral in het geval van ex durante onderzoek en inlichtingenanalyse kan het, wegens het alsdan nog ontbreken van zulke informatie, noodzakelijk zijn dat betrouwbare externe experts (op het gebied van taal, cultuur, religie etc.) bij de analyse worden betrokken.

Ten tweede wordt het onderzoek naar de casestudy's afgerond, door middels *narrative tracing* onderling verbanden te leggen tussen de macronarratieven. De bevindingen rond het micronarratief worden daarin meegenomen. De dynamiek tussen het analytische begin en einde van de macronarratieven wordt verklaard door het in kaart brengen van significante uitspraken en handelingen die *securitization*-inspanningen hebben vormgegeven, en de gebeurtenissen en omstandigheden die van invloed zijn geweest op die inspanningen. Een bijzondere focus ligt op het identificeren van de meervoudige gevolgen van *securitization*-inspanningen binnen én tussen sociale domeinen. Dit laatste brengt de ontwikkeling van de twee macronarratieven met elkaar in verbinding. Niet als een weerspiegeling van dominante of enkelvoudige oorzakelijke verbanden, of in termen van impact op zich, maar om belangrijke gebeurtenissen en omstandigheden te identificeren op basis van hun interdiscussieve aard. Er was interactie tussen de narratieven van de VS en *Al Qaeda*.

Het onderzoek toonde hoe Bin Laden de focus van zijn *securitization*-inspanningen in de loop van de jaren verlegde. En hoe zijn opvattingen afweken van andere jihadistisch salafistische benaderingen. Er was sprake van een duidelijke variatie binnen, en uiteindelijk indirect deels ook van de sociale orde. Dit proces veroorzaakte ook twijfel en onenigheid onder volgelingen en sympathisanten van Bin Laden. Aan de andere kant hadden de inspanningen van de VS om de dreiging van *Al Qaeda* zo volledig mogelijk aan te pakken enkele contraproductieve effecten. De militaire vergeldingsacties, sancties en uitgevaardigde beloning versterkten

zowel het inhoudelijke narratief van *Al Qaeda*, als breder begrip of sympathie ervoor onder groepen Arabieren en moslims. Het versterken van het narratief droeg ook bij aan een proces van institutionalisering van *Al Qaeda*. Waar bij het VS narratief meer sprake was van het (her) bevestigen van de Amerikaanse identiteit en geïnstitutionaliseerde rollen, was bij *Al Qaeda* juist sprake van een meer formatieve werking in dit opzicht.

Dat Clinton gaandeweg het Amerikaanse narratief de dreiging van Bin Laden en *Al Qaeda* steeds minder benoemde, en na de aanlag op de USS Cole stelde dat er geen sprake was van 'oorlog', had geen merkbare invloed op de ontwikkeling van het *Al Qaeda*-narratief. Bin Laden en *Al Qaeda* bleven voor Amerikaanse inlichtingen- en opsporingsdiensten overigens onverminderd een prioriteit. Bin Laden bleef *Al Qaeda's* groeiende vermogen gebruiken om via contactpersonen, fax en internet te communiceren over de Amerikaanse dreiging. Voor zowel de VS als *Al Qaeda*, primair vertegenwoordigd door Bill Clinton en Osama bin Laden, vervulden de narratieven een belangrijke rol. Ze waren bron en reflectie van invloed (ofwel macht) door het vermogen sociale rollen en identiteit te vestigen of te herbevestigen. Pogingen tot articuleren van een substantiële dreiging waren daarbij tegelijk een uitdrukking van zelfidentificatie. De aan handelingen of uitdrukkingen toegekende betekenis maakte aangepast veiligheidsbeleid en 'maatregelen' in formele of morele zin mogelijk of geaccepteerd.

De aard, status en rol van publiek bij *securitization* is onder theoretici een centraal gespreksonderwerp. Er zijn verschillende opvattingen en definiëring blijkt in de praktijk lastig. De bevindingen in dit onderzoek op dit vlak vormen ook een bijdrage aan dat debat binnen security studies. Binnen de relatief geïnstitutionaliseerde Amerikaanse sociale orde konden reacties van een formeel en moreel publiek worden geïdentificeerd door stemmingen en opinieonderzoek. Het *Al Qaeda*-publiek was daarentegen ambigu. Er was meer sprake van een spectrum van verschillende doelgroepen in verschillende situationele contexten. Er kon worden gedifferentieerd tussen loyale volgers, jihadististen die gebruikmaakten van trainingskampen en faciliteiten van Bin Laden, salafisten die Bin Ladens gedachtegoed wilden bediscussiëren, maar ook mensen met een meer algemeen begrip van of met sympathie voor het narratief in de bredere islamitische en Arabische wereld. Door nadrukkelijker te focussen op de verscheidenheid van het *Al Qaeda*-publiek, werd in dit onderzoek de multi-consequentialiteit van discursieve en niet-discursieve acties binnen hetzelfde sociale domein benadrukt. De betekenis van *securitization* werd zodoende verruimd. Voor sommige Palestijnse moslims, die woedend waren over Amerikaans buitenlands beleid in het Midden-Oosten, bood het *Al Qaeda*-narratief iets om tijdens demonstraties aan te relateren bij het uiten van meer algemene gevoelens van frustratie. In en door het narratief werd *Al Qaeda's* identiteit gevestigd, en werd de organisatie geïnstitutionaliseerd. Maar door het bereiken en beïnvloeden van een groot aantal doelgroepen werkte het narratief aan het opzetten en onderhouden van een breder 'ecosysteem'. De bekendheid en populariteit van Bin Laden onder groepen moslims en Arabieren breidde zich uit en bereikte nieuwe potentiële donoren. Het narratief van *Al Qaeda* werd besproken onder salafisten op religieuze

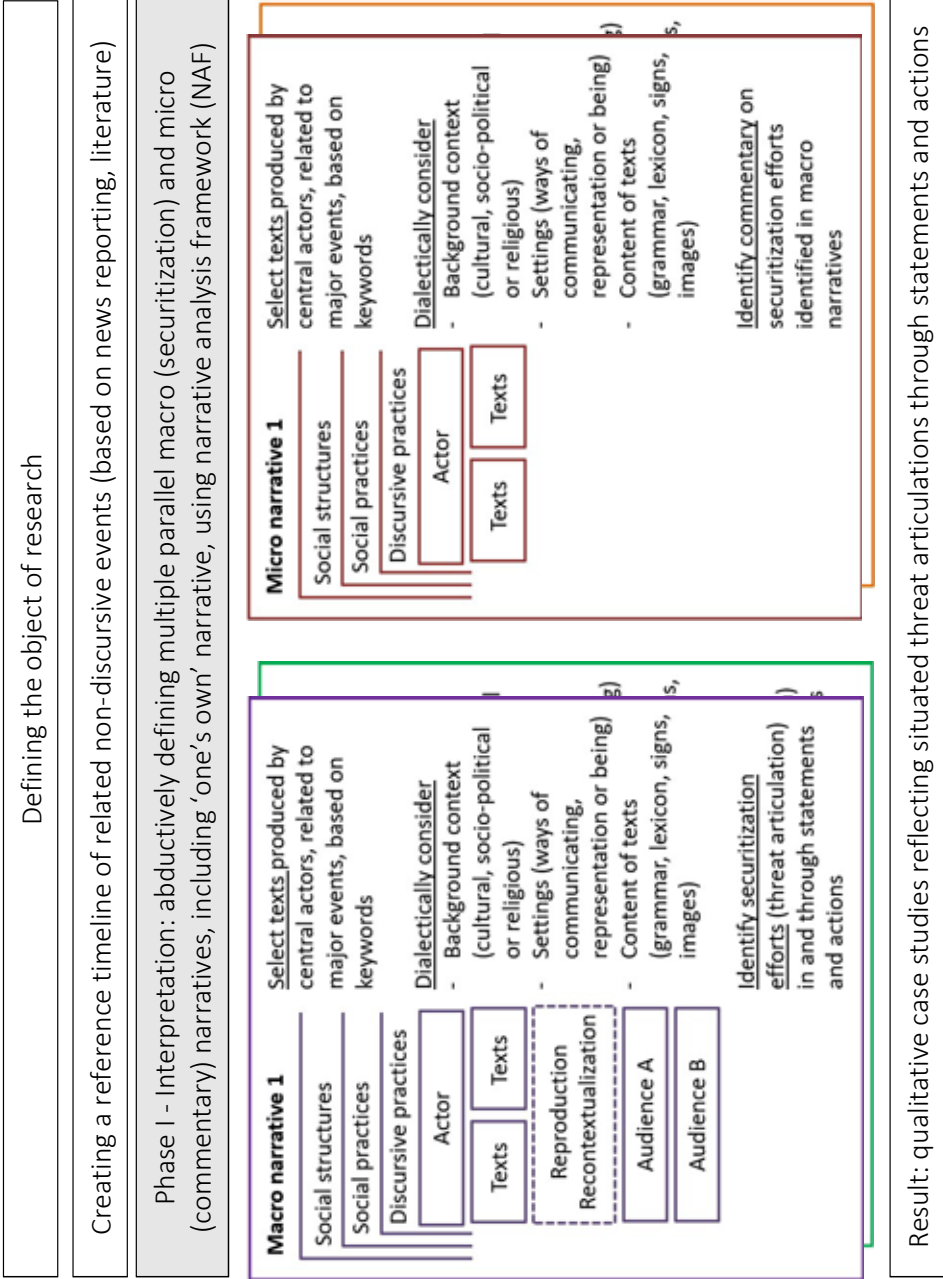
scholen. En jihadisten werden gerekruteerd door *Al Qaeda* in trainingskampen. Het bredere ecosysteem dat werd gevoed door het narratief stelde *Al Qaeda* (als organisatie bestaande uit formele volgers) in staat om te groeien.

Ten derde wordt de bijdrage van dit proefschrift aan het opkomende kritische debat in intelligence studies besproken. Het dominante positivistische empiristische paradigma in de studie *van* en *voor* intelligence studies wordt ter discussie gesteld als fundamenteel onvolledig. De aard en organisatie van inlichtingenprocessen worden bekeken vanuit een kritisch perspectief. En er wordt aangetoond hoe een kritische benadering van waarde kan zijn voor de praktijk van inlichtingenanalyse. Terwijl in het eerste hoofdstuk werd ingegaan op de verschillen tussen de ACN-methodologie en de logica achter gevestigde gestructureerde analytische technieken (SATs), beschrijft dit hoofdstuk hoe ACN kan bijdragen aan verschillende gevestigde SATs. In de loop der jaren zijn SATs bekritiseerd vanwege het gebrek aan wetenschappelijk onderzoek dat de werkzaamheid aantoont. Er is verder een tendens om analytische processen te automatiseren, zoals met *analysis of competing hypotheses* (ACH). Daarin schuilt echter het risico dat onvoldoende rekening wordt gehouden met wat het (subjectieve) 'bewijs' of de input voor deze methoden vormt. Dit onderzoek heeft aangetoond hoe ACN wetenschappelijk en logisch adequaat is, zonder op een strikte manier 'objectief' bewijs van precisie te leveren. De kritisch-realistische benadering van abductie, weerspiegeld in het concept van causale complexen, erkent en relativeert zowel empirisme als interpretivisme. Door transparantie van het op ACN gebaseerde onderzoeksproces, kan theoretische diepgang ook worden vertaald naar de studie *voor* intelligence. De interpretatie van verschillende betekenissen van gebeurtenissen en omstandigheden wordt onderbouwd, en kan zodoende dienen als invoer voor andere SATs.

Bij het verder ontwikkelen en integreren van een van ACN afgeleide methode in de intelligencepraktijk kan sprake zijn van organisatorische uitdagingen. Implementatie kan stuiten op scepsis ten opzichte van nieuwe methoden of afwijkende benaderingen. De waarde van narratieven, als reflectie en vormend element voor het handelen van actoren, kan worden onderschat. Of het streven van een integratieve en coöperatieve analytische inspanning kan als onwenselijk worden gezien. Maar het doel van het beter bedienen van afnemers is de moeite waard om na te streven. In tegenstelling tot dit *ex post* onderzoek naar *Al Qaeda*, zijn vertalingen en achtergrondliteratuur bij *ex durante* onderzoek en inlichtingenanalyse veel minder beschikbaar. De ACN-methodologie vraagt om contextuele interpretaties van verschillende narratieven die zowel kritische distantie bewaren als goed geïnformeerd zijn. In essentie is het een oproep tot samenwerking tussen inlichtingenanalisten, beleidsmakers op werkniveau en relevante vertrouwde externe deskundigen, om de inhoud en werking van narratieven te bestuderen. Deze narratieven vormen de semiotische toegang tot complexe inlichtingenproblemen. In meer abstracte zin heeft dit onderzoek de validiteit en waarde van een kritische benadering in de studie *van* en *voor* intelligence aangetoond, waarmee het doel van dit onderzoek is bereikt.

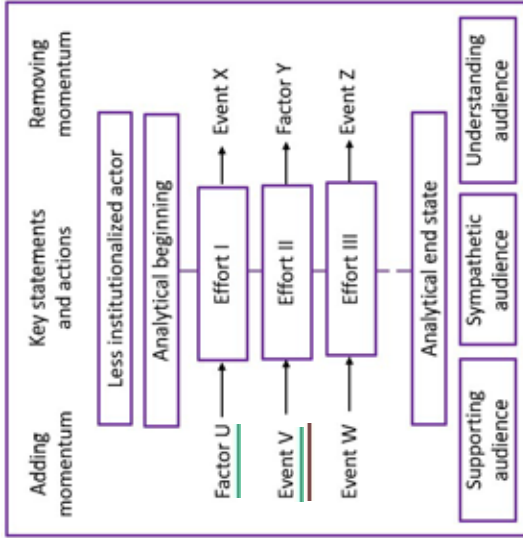
Ten slotte wordt de waarde van het verder afbakenen van een kritische stroming, traditie of 'denkschool' in intelligence studies besproken. Dit vergt eveneens coöperatie maar dan tussen wetenschappers die intelligence als maatschappelijk fenomeen bestuderen en/of de intelligence praktijk trachten te versterken. Op reeds in de literatuur onderkende onderzoeksthema's kan een kritische onderzoeksagenda nieuw licht werpen en het veld van intelligence studies verder ontwikkelen. Het is hoopvol dat verschillende wetenschappers uit Europa en de VS onderzoek doen naar kritische benaderingen. Een breedvoerige publicatie waarin een agenda voor een dergelijk kritisch (*critical intelligence studies*) project wordt geschetst lijkt in het verschiet te liggen.

Schematic overview ACN methodology

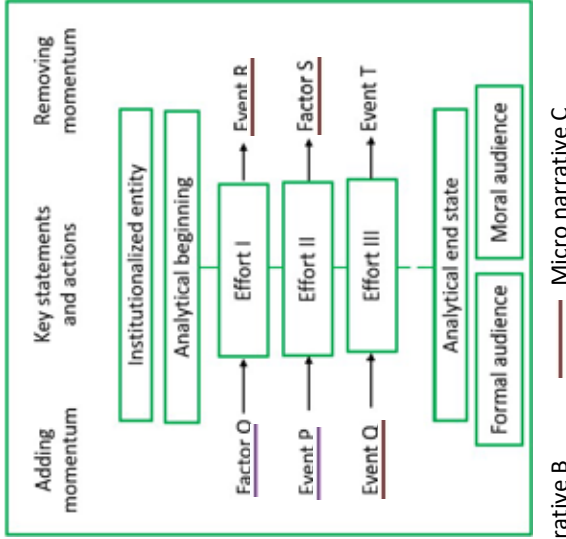


Phase II – Analysis: narrative tracing (NT) by linking statements and actions between macro narratives, with micro narratives enhancing contrast or identifying additional events and factors

Macro narrative 1

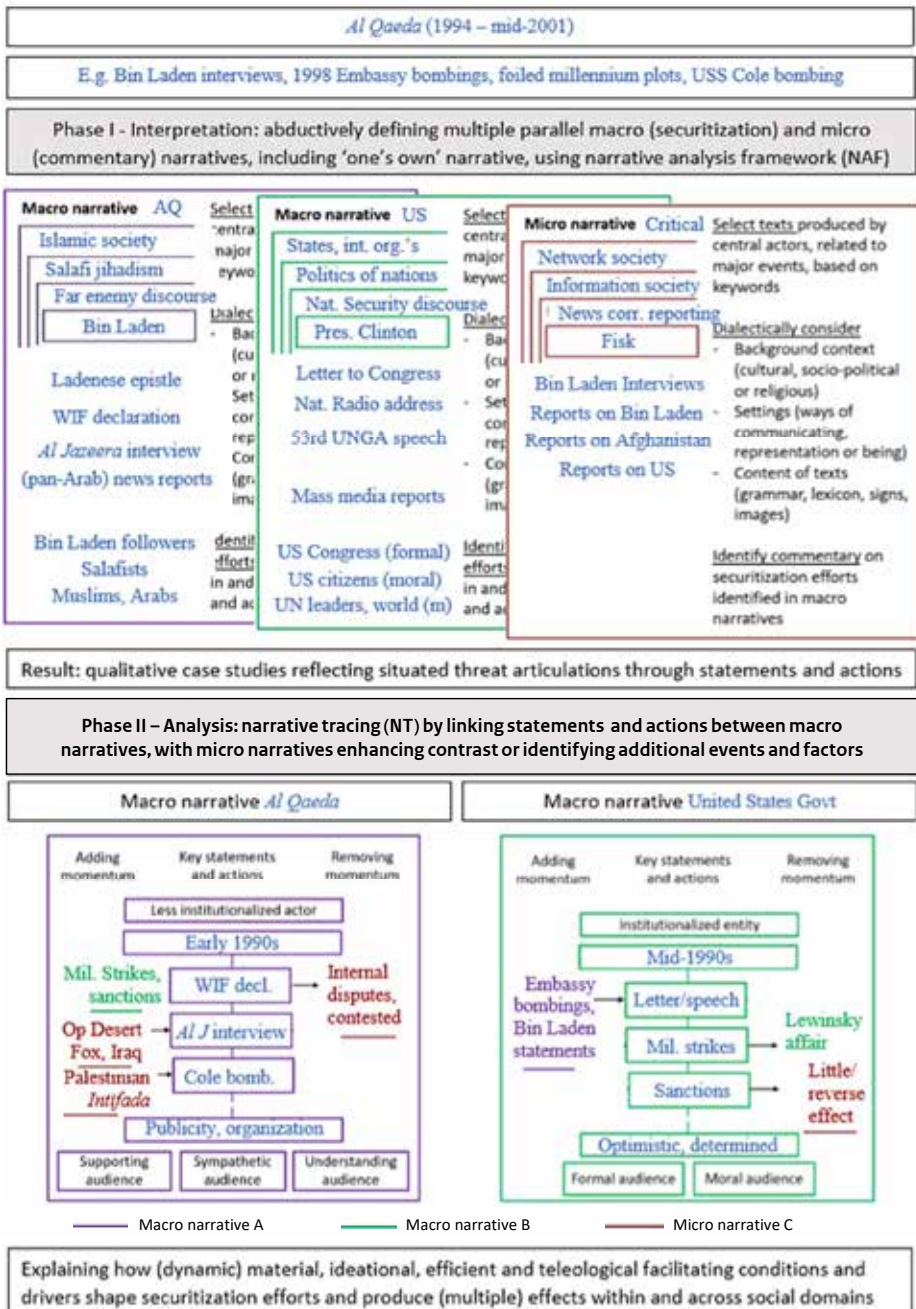


Macro narrative 2



Explaining how (dynamic) material, ideational, efficient and teleological facilitating conditions and drivers shape securitization efforts and produce (multiple) effects within and across social domains

Illustrated example (in blue)



Acknowledgements

There are many people I owe a dept of gratitude to. This research would not have been possible without support from the leadership of the Netherlands Defence Intelligence and Security Service.

Conversations during the early stage of the research I had with scholars such as Maarten, Giliam, Nicolien and Pieter were inspirational.

Naturally, it is difficult to express the extent of my appreciation to my supervisor and co-supervisor, Bob de Graaff and Berma Klein Goldewijk. You have both encouraged, guided and thoroughly challenged me, but also allowed me the freedom to explore.

Also, I would like to thank professors Paul Abels, Thierry Balzacq, Georg Frerks, Beatrice de Graaf and Frans Osinga. I am honored to engage in debate over my thesis with scholars I hold in such high regard.

On a personal level, the support I received from family and friends was crucial. Various events, such as several military deployments, have made the research trajectory quite challenging. And I look forward to a time when my family gets to know me more without a laptop constantly nearby. On the up side, my youngest has learned to appreciate Vivaldi's Four Seasons at an early age. Because, of the millions of views on Youtube, I claim a good portion.

Thank you Jeannette, Feline, Thijmen, Nic and Marianne for your endless support. And also my friends, for putting things in perspective and making sure there was time to relax. Lastly, Ali and Rob, it is great to have you by my side during the defense ceremony.

Curriculum vitae

Peter G. de Werd (1981) has worked for the Netherlands Government since 2000 when he enlisted in the Royal Netherlands Air Force as an intelligence officer. He has served in various positions within the Department of Defence and was deployed four times, including to Afghanistan and the Balkans. In 2016 he got an honorable discharge from military service and became assistant professor in intelligence and security at the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) in Breda.

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Peter de Werd is married and has two children.