

University of Ottawa

# **Postcolonialism, conflict and education in Afghanistan**

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## Summary

The field of development has known many subtle, yet important changes in terms of objectives. As Jo Beall (2011), a major break has been observed with practices observed in the 1990's; security objectives seem to have become more prevalent and have superseded development on the priority list of the international agenda.

The case of Afghanistan is outstanding and unique. Following the events of 9/11, the United States, and other “western” countries, led a “War on Terror” in Afghanistan (abroad) to eliminate the Taliban threat and secure the homeland. Under the Obama administration, a counterinsurgency strategy replaced the initial counter-terrorism approach; i.e., a “population-centric” approach aiming to provide much needed basic services in order to gain population’s support and increase government legitimacy. Much ink has been spilled to discuss the impact of such change; however, few have attempted to look at security-education nexus.

In this paper, I use a postcolonial viewpoint to explore how the Afghan education system can play a major role in maintaining relations of power between the “western” countries and Afghanistan. I argue that, as a response to the new fear of Islam and its discursive potential threat for the United State identity (especially in relation to the events of 9/11) and position of power, there is an attempt to secularize the Afghan subject through education. A critical discourse analysis of various official American documents (such as speeches offered by various leaders and policy documents) is conducted to appreciate the relationship between security and education. Furthermore, a look at the modifications in the Afghan curriculum and education system since the ousting of the Taliban shed light on the practices arising from the security discourse.

## Introduction

### *Subject and research objective*

The international fight for economic development in the Global South has been ongoing for many decades. On this matter, influence through education is undeniable and this link has increasingly been recognized since the 1980s (Tarabini, 2010; Maclure & al., 2009). With its capability to develop human capital, the utilitarian objectives of education gained credibility within development agencies' projects because it could "equi[p] young people with the skills they need to develop a secure livelihood and to participate in social, economic and political life" (UNESCO, 2011: 9). Education is therefore seen as a tool for social promotion as it allows for more and better employment opportunities and thus stimulates economic development. Education is also used as a mean for national development, namely for fostering national unity (Maclure & al, 2009: 367). In those terms, it is recognized that education must be thought in terms of investment in and for the society rather than as a product of consumption, for the ensuing results are expected in the medium/long term (Tarabini, 2010:205).

As expectations from educational investments increased, new institutional bodies were founded to oversee its development. First, the first World Declaration on education, *Education for All* (EFA), was elaborated in 1990 at the Jomtien Conference in Thailand. EFA had six established objectives; one of them was to attain universal access to primary education by 2000. These objectives were reasserted in 2000, as a part of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Some countries showed great progress towards the MDG while others, due to various factors, fear they will not be able to reach the target but 2015. In addition, studies revealed that the quality of education suffered in many instances. To guide the development process, international institutions such as the WB and the UN, but also international non-governmental organizations, established standardized curriculum which identify the content and specific pedagogy methods to be used. The imposition of a

“universal” curriculum reiterates national or international interests but constrains the teachers’ ability to deliver lessons that truly answer children needs in terms (Viruru, 2009: 101). The imposition of such curriculum shows the effect that globalization has on the current world order and has therefore been criticized for its hegemonic tendency and for limiting the space to discuss cultural affairs.

Even though educational matters were introduced in development policies, inequalities still permeates the world, with poorer countries as the main victims. As a result, the utilitarian objectives of education as a promotion for economic development had to be redirected to put forward its transformative virtues. The economic view of education presented in the above paragraph can therefore be contrasted with a second discourse of education, one that recognizes inequalities and ensuing/corresponding structural violence and which considers education as a change agent. Supporters of this view argue that education could provide the basis for more equal and egalitarian societies (Samoff, 2007). Jack Mezirow has been one of the prominent thinkers to lay the basis of *transformative education*. According to him, the manner in which one shapes meaning of his world and its social conditions is fundamental in the way people perceive, understand and take action in their lives. For him, education can play a key role in this process by favoring the emergence of “new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). In his more recent publication, *Transformative Learning as Discourse* (2003), he adds that to explore problematic frames of references (which he describes as “sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning, perspectives, mindsets (2003: 1)) allow the promotion of solutions that are more inclusive and less discriminatory. The ability to recognize unjust structures and strive for social change becomes indispensable in a context where neoliberal ideology and the power of global capital prevail: where leaders rely on unequal social structures to ensure domination.

Globalization is not the only hegemonic discourse that has been spread throughout the world. Since the events of September 11, 2001 in New York, the United States, followed by many other “western countries”, have declared a “War on Terror” and have deemed

Islam a dangerous religion. This discourse has also permeated the world and now presents signs of hegemonic effects; discourse and practices are held within structures that restrict other modes of thinking and thus limits the possibilities to consider other alternative discourses. According to postcolonial authors, discourse is a regime of truth that distinguishes what can be said than what can't, who can express thoughts and who can't, and what actions are possible and which aren't. Postcolonial writers also investigate how this production of knowledge translates into power structures and subjectification.

This major research paper will use a postcolonial lens to investigate and challenge the recent change that occurred in the development discourse towards a concern of security. As Paris (2004) indicates, enormous amount of funds were diverted from development programs to be invested in countries in conflict. Although this is defensible from a humanitarian point of view, this paper aims at investigating the effects of such changes on the development practices and effects on recipient countries. More specifically, this paper will describe the effects on the education policies in a post-conflict setting. Afghanistan was chosen as a case-study since it is still in a process of reconstruction and because the reform of its education system was and is still a highly debated topic around the world. This paper aims at unveiling the effects that such discourse has had on the development of educational policy in countries implicated in the *War on Terror*.

In the last two decades, the increase if intra-state violence as led to the development of a new area of study, which focuses on the link between education and conflicts. As a result, countries in crisis have been targeted as those needing even more support for their education system. On the basis that education can help reconstruct and liberate a war-torn country, many resources and investigations were deployed to promote peace.

In light of the previous discussion on globalizing forces, I hypothesize that, in the case of Afghanistan, the shift from a development perspective to a security perspective in the context of postconflict education limits the possibilities for a multiplicity of knowledge. The objective is not to critique all interventions conducted by donor countries, but to

expose how the way relations are constructed and understood can have potential important impacts on policy making and therefore direct impacts on the lives of millions. This paper is intended to raise awareness of these impacts and thus initiates a reflection/discussion on policies taken for granted or that are seen as “normal” or “evident”. These “interventions” have been written down once, and might have shown good results in terms of western objectives, but little attention has been devoted to the ways these might impact recipient population.

### ***Scientific Contribution and research justification***

This research attempts to fill several gaps in the present body of literature. Although the literature on postconflict education abounds, the link between security issues and postcolonial studies is one that hasn't been clearly defined and this is what this paper will investigate. To better understand the implication at the education level, a literature review of this new literature will pick up on the authors tackle the question in general and in relation to Islam. Furthermore, although the postcolonial literature contains many references to education, very few have looked at the particular effects of the discourse on the “War on terror” has had on the implementation. Postcolonialism is of particular relevance to investigate such an issue as it allows to detect the material effects that this discourse might produce on an education system being rebuilt as a common effort between the international community and a country in reconstruction.

# Chapter 1

## Postcolonialism

### 1.1 Postcolonial theories

Postcolonialism has been discredited many times and on many accounts. Here, I present two major critics which will serve as a starting point to better understand the wide focus of postcolonialism. First, postcolonial theories have been dismissed for their overemphasis on textual and discourse analysis, rather than truly interacting with real world problems. Adebayo Williams accuses the approach of being “aimless linguistic virtuosity” (1997: 830). According to Abrahamsen, although she admits that some work are overly concerned with textual interpretations, she claims that it is not relevant for the whole body of literature, and that to interpret these theories in such a way is to miss an important point: the task of postcolonialism to unveil “the relationship between power, discourse, and political institutions and practices” (2003: 195).

Young (2003) explains that postcolonialism’s objectives have always involved a wide political project, which is to “reconstruct Western knowledge formations, reorient ethical norms, turn power structures of the world upside down, and refashion the world from below” (*ibid*). In other words, postcolonialism is interested in uneven capitalist structures that continue to maintain new sovereign states (typically, nations in the three non-western continents, Asia, African and Latin America) in a dependant relationship with former colonial power, which is what Loomba understands as the historical representation of colonialism (2005). Postcolonialism is interested in unveiling histories of violence, domination, inequality, and injustice and asks questions about the fact that millions of people still live below a standard of quality of life taken for granted in the West. In this manner, postcolonial theories address various issues, from workers or class struggles, to questions of race, gender and culture.

Many have argued the relevance and the meaning of postcolonialism. Literally, the prefix “post-” is a temporal indicator of posterity, an event occurring after another. Then, one could easily conclude that postcolonialism is the period following colonialism. However, it would be a misconception, or rather, a misunderstanding to see postcolonialism in the simple terms of finite historical periods. Abrahamsen explains that postcolonialism “attempts to transcend strict chronological and dichotomous thinking where history is clearly delineated and the social world neatly categorized into separate boxes” (2003: 195). The term “post” is rather an indication of continuity to help recognize ongoing structures of power. Postcolonialism allows us to critic contemporary politics by taking what Antonio Gramsci calls a “subaltern” point of view (groups silenced by the hegemonic structure of the dominant culture). Such an opening has allowed for subalterns to recover a certain historical agency that had remained invisible while history was written, excluding struggles other than those of the dominant classes (Young, 2012: 23).

Postcolonialism cannot be regarded as one uniform set of ideas, nor as a precise theoretical prescription. It is rather heterogeneously complex, drawing from a multiplicity of postcolonial writers with various backgrounds, different visions and understandings. It is therefore more accurate to think of postcolonialism as an approach or a current of thoughts, which makes room for narratives “developed out of traditions of resistance to a global historical trajectory of imperialism and colonialism” (Young, 2012: 20). Several key thinkers have inspired the direction of the postcolonial approach. This analysis will be constructed around theoretical basis developed by authors such as, Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault (introduced in the next section of this chapter), Edward Saïd and Homi Bhabha (which work will be discussed in the *Identity* section of this chapter).

The writings of Frantz Fanon (1963; 1984) have been instrumental in exposing the ongoing violence in the legacy of colonialism, especially in his insistence on what he calls the “pitfalls of national consciousness”. According to him, independence from colonialism does not equate territorial liberation but liberation of the mind; that ‘national consciousness’ often fails to “achieve freedom because its aspirations are primarily those of the colonized bourgeoisie, who simply replace the colonial rule with their own form of

dominance, surveillance and coercion over the vast majority of the people, often using the same vocabulary of power” (Rizvi & al., 2006: 251). Therefore, Fanon challenges the simplistic dichotomous of fixed cultural identity of the colonizers and the colonized located within traditional western rationalities. He contends that even after independence, the colonial subjects remain colonized internally, psychologically. “Their ways of ‘reading’ the world and their desires are carried across into the desire for ‘whiteness’ through a kind of metempsychosis: their desires have been transposed, though they have never, of course, actually become white. They have a black skin, with a white mask” (Young, 2003, p. 144).

Fanon’s approach provides an alternative way to understand ongoing violent effects of colonialism: he refuses the creation of ‘a native’ as necessarily inferior. He attempts to understand the internal power imbalances between groups within the broader categories of colonizer and colonized and its impacts on the formation of a complex colonial subject.

### *1.1.1 Power*

Central to postcolonial literature is the question of power, and its imbrication within discourses. Michel Foucault, a celebrated French philosopher whose work still permeates the postcolonial field to this day, concluded that discourses are governed by certain rules which direct the formation of statements that are accepted as scientifically true. These “discursive regime” further dictates the knowledge that is acceptable and recognized as true. This intertwining has been named the power-knowledge nexus. Furthermore, what is acceptable is always equated with statements that are non-acceptable or rejected. In this sense, the postcolonial writer attempts to see “historically how effects of truth are produced within discourse which in themselves are neither true nor false” (Foucault, 1984: 60) In Foucault’s opinion, this knowledge or discourse’s effect is a productive power that constructs the empty individuals, which set their desires, their fears and their values, within the specific limits set by the discourse. It is not necessarily repressive or brutal, but a force normalizing the body in a specific manner, which he refers to as the “disciplined body”.

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And individuals [...] are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application (Foucault, 1980: 98).

Consequently, discourses are seen as political “practices that have material effects” (Foucault, cited in Abrahamsen, 2003: 198).

Postcolonialism's conceptualization of power allows us to critic current political structures, institutions and practice of power. According to Foucault, power is always accompanied by a form of resistance, a psychological response to the themes carried by a particular regime of truth (1980: 31). Similarly to Fanon, he argues that power cannot be seen as a “unilateral domination forcing the subjugated into silence and inaction. Quite the reverse – the colonized person is a living, talking, conscious and active individual whose identity arises from a three-pronged movement of violation, erasure and self-rewriting” (Eurozine, 2008). This is why authors such as Aimé Césaire, a Martiniquais involved in the “Negritude” movement, an anticolonial movement; and Memmi, a Tunisian jew, are considered postcolonial writers, as they share a common “colonized” past and a will to respond to colonial domination (Abrahamsen, 2003: 195-196). “Before postcolonialism, for example, there were plenty of histories of colonialism. But such stories rarely considered the ways in which colonialism was experienced, or analysed, by those who suffered its effects.” (Young, 2001: 64). In this sense, postcolonialism aims at giving a voice to multiple groups which methods of doing are culturally different and modify the limits of the acceptable. These discourses are in fact different versions of a truth, a different regime of knowledge silenced by the majority. They are what Foucault calls subjugated or alternative knowledges. They represent a different way of being or living, a different way of interpreting what is widely accepted as the normative truth.

### *1.1.2 Identities*

Power thus produces identities and subjectivities. Discourses produce representations based on what is observed and described. Edward Saïd's account of Orientalism is a key text to comprehend this concept and will be used extensively in this paper to analyze the

case of Afghanistan. Orientalism is ‘the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’ (Saïd, 1978: 3). Saïd use Foucault’s notion of discourse to explain how the West arrived to manage the East; because it could “produce it politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively” (*ibid*). This “othering” process establishes binary oppositions between the ‘Orient’ and the ‘West’, and creates the West as everything the ‘East’ is not. Thus, orientalist binaries referred to an irrational, backward, exotic, despotic and lazy ‘East’, while the ‘West’ became the pinnacle of civilization: rational, moral and Christian. The othering process allows for the maintenance of the West domination over the East. The ways in which both identities are produce help reinforce the identity of each other. “Thus the meaning of the [East] cannot be regarded as fixed, and has no essence. [Similarly, the meaning] of the West can only emerge from a recognition of its relationship to the ‘other’ ” (Abrahamsen, 2003: 196). Fanon adds that, in the context of colonization, “the native’s role is not only informatory, but also operative” (1963: 55). Without the East, the West cannot dominate.

Other writers have challenged Saïd’s account of Orientalism. Homi Bhabha (1994) argues that colonial discourses are often ambivalent and not as definite as what Saïd expresses. Similarly to Fanon, Bhabha “refuses to interpret identity and difference in essentialist terms and conceptualizes them instead in terms of the overlapping, migratory movements of cultural formations across a global division of labor” (Rizvi & al, 2006: 253). Alternatively, he suggests that cultural identities are continuously negotiated through the continual interface and exchange of cultural performance, and thus produces a ‘hybrid’ identity. The importance of Bhabha’s contribution lies in his refusal to view colonial power in some absolute sense.

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs. The ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority enables a form of subversion, founded on the undecidability that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention (Bhabha, 1994:45).

Bhabha recognizes the colonial subject's agency, and thus, the potential of resistance to colonial power. For Abrahamsen, "the notion of hybridity marks both the continuities of colonialism and its failure to fully dominate the colonized" (2003: 204). Again, this domination has to be understood at the psychological level as a form of resistance against the dominating power, which shows the capacity of the colonized to think and to be in a different way than what the colonizers make them; slaves. The notion of hybridity also creates a fracture, a cut, an impossibility to go back to one's origin. Although the colonialism period lasted for a fraction of the humanity history, postcolonial thinkers seem to believe that a return to a "pristine, unspoilt" pre-colonial way of life is impossible, because of the structural domination that continues to link the peripheries to the center (Abrahamsen, 2003). In this matter, Abrahamsen suggests that identities must then be seen as constantly evolving, as a fluid character that can adapt and recreate itself.

## **1.2 Postcolonialism, Development and Globalization**

Before going further into this analysis, it is critical to situate issues of power within the contemporary concept of development. In his book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Arturo Escobar (1995) provides a comprehensive account of the conditions that led to the creation of the discourse that is now known as the *development enterprise*. This discourse rendered possible the management of the "underdeveloped" portions of the world. As the words colonizer and colonized were no longer appropriate after the independence period, a new dichotomy was established in order for the West to keep its dominant position; the "developed" versus the "underdeveloped" countries, the "Global North" versus the "Global South". The power of discourse became the power of development.

There are important connections between the demise of colonialism and the emergence of developmental views. According to Escobar, the emergence of the development ideology as it is known today occurred in the early post-World War II. In this period, an important restructuration of the world system of power occurred; the creation of international development institutions such as the League of Nation was in fact an attempt to

restructure the relationships between the colonies and their colonizers, especially on the African continent and supported newly independent states. However, Escobar believes that this reconstruction aimed at perpetuating colonial systems, because “the continued access by European powers to the raw materials of their colonies [was] seen as crucial to their recovery” (*ibid*: 31). Such assumptions seems supported by the fact that international politics were mostly concerned with the modernization of labour and agriculture to increase the food production for England, often “at the expense of Afrocentric views of food and community defended by women” (Page, 1991, cited in Escobar, 1995). Such system was extended to the post-WWII period (Murphy & Augelli, 1993, cited in Escobar, 1995). The United States strongly supported the reconstruction of Europe, but maintaining these relations mainly provided them with a control over the resources, “mainly perhaps in the case of Middle East Oil” (*ibid*).

The post-independence period coincided with a gradual discrediting of “race” as a meaningful category to explain difference and to legitimize inequalities. As Fanon explains, in colonial times, “you were rich because you were white, you were white because you were rich” (1963: 31). However, “‘race’ was superseded, although not entirely replace, by an emphasis on culture within Western societies as the category for explaining difference and conflict and for legitimizing inequalities” (Tikly, 2009: 26). According to Escobar, the need of interventions was justified based on the differences between lifestyle: “poor countries came to be similarly defined in relations to the standards of wealth of the more economically advantages nations” (1995: 23). Escobar talks about the globalization of poverty, meaning that, after 1945, about two-third of the planet was categorized as “poor”. What could render more than half of the world’s population ‘the minority’? Wealth, or rather, the lack of wealth. As Jeffrey Sachs claims, poverty was solely based upon a comparative statistical operation (1990, 9, cited in Escobar, 1995)<sup>1</sup>.

This is when poverty, on a global scale, was ‘discovered’ (Escobar, 1995: 22) (or I would say, produced in discourse). After the war, many countries throughout the world

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<sup>1</sup> Again, Jeffrey Sachs is referring to the annual per capita income standards set by the WB.

continued to experienced economic and political instability. Such volatility was perceived as a threat to developed countries, as stated by a panel of experts in 1948: “Genuine world prosperity is indivisible. It cannot last in one part of the world if the other parts live under conditions of poverty and ill health” (Milbank Memorial Fund, 1948 cited in Escobar, 1995: 22)<sup>2</sup>. It became obvious that, to allow themselves to further experience prosperity, underdeveloped countries had to grow out of poverty, in accordance with what appeared to be a functional model: capitalism.

Poverty was therefore viewed as a problem which required solutions. Accordingly, richer countries turned poverty (and also poor people) into objects of knowledge and management. Procacci adds that pauperism “was associated, rightly or wrongly, with features such as mobility, vagrancy, independence, frugality, promiscuity, ignorance, and the refusal to accept social duties, to work, and to submit to the logic of the expansion of “needs” ” (1991: 157, cited in Escobar, 1995: 23). Such differences needed to be manage if poor countries were ever to be escorted out of poverty. Suddenly, a new domain of study emerged as “the social”. This domain further created a new category of people, “the poor”, a separate class which needed to be studied and managed through modern, scientific procedures. Information and knowledge was collected in the form of reports and data bases which were kept by authoritative institutions such as the World Bank. Interventions took place in areas such as “education, health, hygiene, morality, and employment and the instilment of good habits of association, savings, child rearing and so on” (*ibid*). Tikly explains how this led to the “normalization” of poverty, which further “served as a mechanism to know and better control these populations through the application of governmental technologies (i.e., policies, technical assistance programs, projects, etc.)” (2009: 31).

Modernization was seen as the “only force capable of destroying archaic superstitions and relations, at whatever social, cultural and political cost” (Escobar, 1995: 39). Modernization and scientifism had the effect of depoliticizing any struggles encountered

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<sup>2</sup> In 1948, the World Bank has set a monetary standard to determine poverty. The World Bank described poor countries as with an annual per capita income below 100\$ (Escobar, 1995: 24).

throughout the world and reduced them to the mere “problem” of underdevelopment. To further regulate this new field, expert and authoritative institutions were created and given the task of direction the world’s development (i.e., the United Nations (UN), World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF)), which could focus and rely purely on the development model they believed promoted social progress: the development of market-oriented economies. This separation of the economic from other from other societal areas has profound effects in many cultural traditions. Sardar (1999) cites the examples of:

*tazkiyah* in Islamic economics, based on achieving a dynamic equilibrium between the infrastructure and the rest of the society, and *kongsi* in chinese philosophy that links the development of new enterprises and the quest for new resources to a notion of brotherhood and partnership, whose aim is to protect economic gains and resists outside aggressors.

Development is not merely the result of the combination, study or gradual elaboration of these elements (process of capital formation, cultural considerations, or creation of adequate institutions). ... It is rather the result of the establishment of a set of relations among these elements, institutions, and practices and of the systematization of these relations to form a whole (*ibid*, 40).

The development discourse was constituted not by the array of possible objects under its domain but by the way in which, thanks to this set of relations, it was able to form systematically the objects of which it spoke. In sum, these relations define the conditions under which objects, concepts, theories, and strategies can be incorporated into the discourse. In sum, this system of relation establishes discursive practices that set the rules of the game: who can speak, from what point of view, and with what authority.

### Globalization

Although the era of colonialism per se is over, relations of power between a dominant center and subjugated margins remain. The prescription for development in nearly two thirds of the global has proposed a westernized model, where new forms of control now extend across geographic national frontiers. Tikly (2009) further details his view of the

“reterritorialisation” of the way power operates. In his view, since the start of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century, a form of “new imperialism” has emerged, pulsed by the broader concept of contemporary globalization. This new imperialism is also understood by Harvey as the “political, diplomatic, and military strategies invoked and used by a state (or some collection of states) operating as a political power block as it struggles to assert its interests and to achieve its goal in the world at large” (2003: 26). “They emphasize the growing inequalities both with and between countries and the identification of clear “winners” and “losers” in the process (Tikly, 2009: 25). He identifies the winners as the United States (US) and its allies and the losers as the majority of low-income countries, most of them are ex-colonies<sup>3</sup>. He maintains that the new world order is therefore Western in nature. Robinson & Harris (2000, cited in Tikly, 2009: 26) also note that development (or dominant global economic interests) is less identified with individual national states (or elite in nation-states) and more identified with international institution, so therefore more *transnational* in their composition (2009: 27).

Many of the neo-liberal ideas that have become hegemonic in recent years now appear as a natural and inevitable response to the steering logics of economic globalization. The danger of globalization is the loss of the cultural difference and the implicit notion of universalism. To understand the phenomena in those terms results in a naturalized view of globalization, which revoke all historical and political traits from a context analysis (Rizvi, 2009: 48). In a period of increasing globalization, Simon During argues that “a more critical postcolonialism is needed if we are to understand how colonial assumptions remain embedded within the new discourses and practices of globalization, as expressed in the totalizing reach of increasingly flexible forms of capitalism that seek to intensify the convergence of local cultures and societies” (2000: 386, cited in Rizvi, 2009: 50). But this needs to be done without losing sight of the historical specificity of the ways in which particular groups engage with global relations of power that produce for them highly localized expressions of globalization (Rizvi & al, 2006: 256)

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<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this paper, the power of globalization will be understood as the international community (including the United States and OECD country members) trying to assert its interests in Afghanistan.

In contrast, conservative critics, such as Ferguson, see in postcolonialism “a commitment to a rampant relativism that has abandoned the western project of reason, truth and progress” (2003, cited in Rizvi, 2006: 251). More significantly, critics fear that postcolonialism attempts to undermine western culture itself, arguing that, instead of safeguarding the west, it has become one of its major enemies. They accuse postcolonialism of being no longer committed to western conceptions of social development and human progress (although it never was), and to disturb the order of the world.

Furthermore, since the events of September 11, this contention has become increasingly acute, as the US House of Representatives now cites postcolonialism as essentially ‘anti-American’, thus implicitly contributing to the support of terrorism (This link is discussed in Chapter 3). According to his testimony to the US Congress, Stanley Kurtz argued, for example, that under the influence of postcolonial theory, “area studies have become hotbeds of unpatriotic anti-Americanism because they teach students to regard as immoral any attempt to put their knowledge of foreign languages and cultures at the service of American power, which is in itself marked as an illegitimate expression of neo-colonialism” (2003, cited in Rizvi, 2006: 251). This paper will analyse the discourse and actions produced by the American State administration in Afghanistan since the onset of the “War on terror”. However, the objective is not to create any feeling of apathy towards the United States, but to explore the interactions between the two countries and analyse the ensuing outcomes.

### **1.3 Postcolonialism and securitization theory**

The discourse which allowed the global North to intervene in the global South has been circulating for a long time and postcolonial theories have help understand such dynamic. However, in order to retain its power over various historical periods as a discourse of truth, it had to adapt to remain intelligible through historical changes. The colonial era discourse was first characterized by the civilization of the barbaric; then, the development era (in Escobar terms) encouraged interventions within poor countries and stressed their social progress; finally, the post-9/11 period counters Islamist terrorism in “dangerous”

states. Perhaps, a second approach is needed to help understand recent developments: the Copenhagen School's theory of securitization.

Many authors have argued that, indeed, we are assisting to a shift from a development agenda to one that is dominated by a security discourse. Security has always been present in northern interventions as an instrument of development, under the rationale that a stable environment is conducive to better economic development, and thus, provides more opportunities to increase one's quality of life. However, Jo Beall affirms that in the last decade, development agencies seem to maintain a different outlook and now perceive security as the objective of development (2011). Indeed, security statements figure prominently in donor's development priorities. Again, Beall argues that security is now conceived as both the instrument AND the objective and that the "sudden [appearance] of security at the top of the agenda is quite clearly a response to the insecurity felt by the developed North in the post 9/11 environment" (2011: 54).

In the 1990s, a major share of aid budgets aimed at supporting poor and post-communist countries reorient their market and economic policies towards a liberal model. In this context, "local wars were left to fester" because "they did not directly threaten the welfare of electorates in rich countries" (Picciotto, 2004: 547). The example of the Rwandan conflict is quite indicative of the inaction of richer countries. Since the events of September 11, however, a major change in official development assistance (ODA) orientations and strategic military engagement suggests the motivating factors for engaging abroad have shift dramatically. Indeed, since the United States launched its *War on Terror*, important trends in ODA are worth noting. First, aid has shift from low and middle income stable countries to strategically significant countries, central to the security interests of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, and aligned with many donor countries' military endeavors, such as the US. For example, aid to Afghanistan and Iraq rose by at least USD 1,5 billion in 2004, while gross debt relief grants fell by USD 2.1 billion (OECD, 2005). At the same time, in 2003, Pakistan was the most aided country, with a total budget more than twice the combined ODA to all Latin American

countries that year (Beall, 2011: 57). Finally, major countries receive assistance with a heavy counter-terrorism focus (Tomlinson, 2003: 7). However, such observations do not only apply to the United States, the host country of the 9/11 events. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), organization which enjoyed a long reputation of neutrality, published in 2005 a policy statement which expressed the following: “Development has to be the first line of defense for a collective security system that takes prevention seriously [...] Development makes everyone more secure” (CIDA, 2005). Denmark, a country which always promoted development as way to tackle terrorism published in 2004 a guide called *Principles Governing Danish Development Assistance for the Fight against New Terrorism*. This title alone is explicit in how development now serves a security agenda. France significantly increased its development budget to Algeria; Australia dedicated its development budget to new counter-terrorism initiatives (Beall, 2011: 60). Finally, Japan modified its Overseas Development Aid (ODA) charter to promote Japanese interests and allows the remediation to military interventions if necessary (*ibid*). Also, Abrahamsen (2005) provides a detailed account of Britain’s significant role in the rerouting of the discourse. Finally, multilateral institutions are no different.

How can the worldwide new trends in ODA be explained? What justified such a sudden shift in ODA? As Abrahamsen explains, according to the Copenhagen School’s theory of securitization, an object comes to be seen as a security issue as a result of a specific social process. In other words, an object does not inherently need securitization, but it is made to require security measures. This social construction of security issues can be “analyzed by examining the “securitizing speech acts” through which threats become represented and recognized” (Abrahamsen, 2005: 58). Therefore, an issue becomes a security one when it is positioned as such by a discourse accepted by the majority. According to the Copenhagen School, not every object can become a security issue; only speech acts that position an object as an “existential threat” can call for “extraordinary measures” beyond the routine and norms of everyday politics. Securitization therefore allows placing an “issue above the normal rules of liberal democratic politics, and hence justify emergency action to do whatever is necessary to remedy the situation” (*ibid*: 59). The securitization

theory shows that politics and security are separate entities. Politics is concerned with democratic debates and decisions that take place within the rule of law. Security, on the contrary, takes place outside these boundaries. As Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap the Wilde argue, “Security is about survival,” and as such it is characterized by ‘an inner logic’ that is ontologically different from that of the ‘merely political.’ As Ole Wæver puts it:

[W]e can regard ‘security’ as a speech act. In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act. By saying it, something is done (as in betting, giving a promise, naming a ship). By uttering ‘security’ a state representative moves particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it (1998: 55).

In addition to the social process proposed by the Copenhagen school, Holger Stritzel (2011) proposes a ‘processual refinement’ of securitization theory by adding the notion of *translation*. Two important aspects of translation demand explanations. First, as opposed to transfer, translation involves the reconstruction, rewriting or rearticulation of something in new terms. Accordingly, the original sense is lost and a “perfect equivalency” is impossible. Second, translation shifts necessarily ‘encounter’ a new context:

It is through translations that ‘alien’ texts become productively appropriated and incorporated into a new ‘locale’, which I define as a relatively consolidated discursive realm with a relatively autonomous identity/patterns of identification. This encounter may reaffirm or harden a dominant discourse and power structure (Stritzel, 2011: 345).

In the third chapter of this research paper, the theory of securitization will help explain how Islam came to be associated with terrorism and how this served the wider security discourse discussed above. Although postcolonialism and the Copenhagen School’s theory of securitization share similar features, they allow the analysis of different relations. The latter helps explain the dynamic at play, in this case, between the Afghanistan and the international community (or more precisely, the United States) whereas the former underlines the extreme position associated with securitization. To analyze the case of Afghanistan, both theories will be studied side-by-side to allow for a more complete depiction of the current situation.

To view security issues within a postcolonial approach helps unravelling the violence made when security discourses and its material effects are directed at a whole society. It offers a different point of view from official claims made about the element of threat, which in this case encompasses Islam, terrorism and fundamental Islamic groups. The next chapter will focus on the issue of education. The dominant discourse on the place of education within a globalizing world will first be explored. Second, I will discuss education in terms of postcolonialism and present the work of Michel Foucault's on education, which helps understand how education became a central element, or as Foucault names it, a disciplinary technology, in society. Finally, literature on postconflict education will be discussed. Finally, the third chapter will explore the case of Afghanistan. I will attempt to analyse the ways in which the postconflict education system was instrumental in maintaining unequal power between the United States and Afghanistan. More precisely, I will discuss how the securitization of Islam in education is part of a wider struggle for power which includes discourse of security and secularism, and how people of Afghanistan cope with diverging and opposite influences.

## Chapter 2

### Education and Postcolonialism

One might ask, how does postcolonialism relate to education? At the most basic and obvious level, the vast majority of the education systems that are study have their origins in the colonial era. In this respect, it would be hard to conceive what education would resemble worldwide if colonial education had not been so successful in spreading its particular (western) form along with the accompanying disciplinary framework.

Tikly (1999), Mayo *et al.* (2002) and Hickling-Hudson *et al.* (2003) have all provided an overview of the implication of postcolonialism for in education studies. Specifically, postcolonial approaches draw attention to previously under-researched areas within the education literature and allow the emergence of silenced voices to challenge existing theoretical frameworks and perspectives. For example, several authors use postcolonial forms of discourse analysis to provide an account of the construction of racialized and stereotyped identities through the colonial curriculum and how these were implicated in the maintenance of a colonial world view and ultimately of colonial power itself (see for example, Mangan, 1993; McCarthy *et al.*, 1993; Hickling-Hudson, 2001). “These analysis have tended to highlight the complexities and ambiguities of colonial schooling at the level of identity and the vastly differing responses that they have evoked from subservience on the one hand and resistance on the other” (Crossley & Tikly, 2004: 150). Such an approach is especially interesting within a security framework as it allows to study the negotiation of identity that occurs when discourses of secularism are promoted within a highly religious society.

What is Foucault’s relevance in education studies? Foucault’s discussion on power and knowledge intersect with the practice of education and schooling, both with regards to the institution where people are molded into a specific structure of reasoning and as a site where resistance to dominant discursive practices can occur. Accordingly, education has an ambivalent relation to postcolonialism. On the one hand, it serves as an object of

postcolonial critique with regards to complicity with Westernized discourses and practices. On the other hand, it simultaneously provides a terrain where it is possible to reveal and resist dominant discourses' supremacy. The case of Afghanistan is interesting in this regard. The latest education reform (2003-on going) lend itself well to this exercise since the international community contributed greatly and its influence is palpable. As we will see in Chapter 3, education is also a site where legacies of colonialism and the contemporary processes of globalization intersect.

### 2.1 Education, culture, and different views of knowledge

Many aspects of Michel Foucault's work have been extensively studied, i.e., his work on madness, punishment, sexuality and power/knowledge. However, his interpretation of educational themes has not informed the academic field as much. As part of a wider examination on the effects of outcome-based education in South Africa, Roger Deacon led a thorough process of extraction of all references to the field of education across Foucault's entire oeuvre. He concluded that Foucault's work on education can be summarized in three themes: its development, its functions and its prospects. The first two themes are those which are the most relevant in the postconflict Afghan education context.

Europe, 17<sup>th</sup> century. Foucault acknowledges how education, and its tool, schooling, were first used as a disciplining mechanism of strict surveillance in confinement institutions to threat insubordination, prevent (what was perceived as) ignorance and manage disorder within society. In the middle of the century, the form of punishment, which included corporal punishment, was replaced with a positive form, schooling, as it was believed to render the "free man" more productive and more malleable. In Foucault's words, it was not a question of the inhumanity or the violence *per se* that was questioned, rather what degree of violence (or pedagogy) might best mould particular kinds of subjects through the power/knowledge nexus. Primary education started to be seen as an institution developing children's bodies and mind, and improving moral attitudes. In this sense, violence is best understood as a psychological one, rewarding expected behaviour and

banning the others. The eighteenth century was the first time where educational discourse implied the possibility of directing and calculating children's future potential and behaviours. This shift marked the moment where the establishment of schooling became a society-wide disciplinary technique (Deacon, 2006).

Along with positive view of discipline came several education procedures, through which "individuals could be managed, their contexts regulated, their capacities augmented, and their effects channelled" (Deacon, 2006: 181). These procedures included, but were not limited to, the development of new teaching methods; in response to the increasing number of pupil, the simultaneous method (group instructed by one single teacher) supplanted the traditional one-on-one teacher-pupil relationship. Foucault argues that such method led to a 'micro-disciplinarization', which imply that the simple transfer of knowledge to one person to another cannot be separated from authoritative processes seeking to inculcate discipline within its inmates and at the same time "differentiating between them, their nature, their potentialities, levels and values" (*ibid*: 182). Furthermore, the new allotment of disciplinary time was an important defining feature of the modern school, using every single second for specific tasks. Such principle was further expanded to time spent outside the school, such as in pre-, post-, and home-schooling, vocational training and Sunday schools, extra-mural activities and managed recess. Deacon extrapolates and affirms that this concept has now extended to the concept of lifelong learning. Schools also developed functionally differentiated spaces, and later, separate classrooms, separated pupils by age, progress, level of achievement, but also character, cleanliness and morality. Not only did schools teach punctuation and grammar, but they also taught punctuality and hygiene. Schooling therefore started to have important lateral control. By controlling all aspects of children lives in the school, it simultaneously allowed for the indirect supervision of parents and families, and ultimately, the society as a whole. These procedures, which Deacon refers as moral orthopedics, allowed for the subjectification of students and to an extent their families, molding and shaping society in a ways that answered to higher institutions plans and interests. Foucault explains how schools exercised "epistemological power", which works in two ways. First, students adapt to school mechanisms, record, and accumulate

them, which in turn subject students to new ways of behaving. Second, this power generates a “clinical knowledge”, which underpins the current discourse of teacher’s evaluation and the whole school evaluation. Foucault argues that this gave rise to the idea of education as a science. As a response, this “scientification” caused the school to slowly differentiate from local and popular knowledge. As it guaranteed the population to attain higher standards of education (subjectivity), it succeeded in securing its place in the curriculum. It is those specific procedures which renders this education “European”, by its underlying rationales and political choices, by the specific forms it took and the divisions the produced. The whole system is European by its historical roots and rationalities.

At this point, it is important to draw distinctions between knowledge, education and schooling. As discussed in the first chapter, knowledge is highly cultural and political as it is produced out of historical context and events. However, to examine knowledge in a context of education and development is a must with regards to postcolonial theories. Such theories help unveil how “educational knowledge, particularly knowledge produced in Euro- and American contexts and by the intellectual elite of both First and Third World contexts, is complicit in reinforcing colonial notions of culture, power, and difference” (Subedi & Daza, 2008: 4). Education, therefore, as explained by Foucault, is a disciplinary or socializing mechanism, working with the limits of a particular regime of knowledge that shapes subject-students. Finally, schooling is the tool, the channel through which education takes place. Indeed, this approach brings up issues of curriculum, pedagogies and research with regards to their Euro-centric and US-centric knowledge biases, especially in a development context.

## 2.2 Education and Conflict

In 2011, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) dedicated its yearly report to the link between armed conflicts and education. The report devoted a large section to describe the current education situation in the ‘underdeveloped’ world, and the effects of conflict on its quality and efficiency. Other

authors have recognized those effects and have thoroughly detailed them (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Tidwell, 2004; Kirk, 2007). In summary, many education institutions have been dismantled; school building destroyed or used as a base for militias; school has been targeted as a pull to recruit child-soldiers or to instill hatred among various factions.

The postconflict period<sup>4</sup>, although different in each conflict, is mainly characterized by weakened governmental institutions, low government legitimacy and low or no presence of social services (e.g. health, education) (Davies, 2011). Moreover, food is sometimes scarce, resources are limited, and the formal productive sector, if not entirely ruined by the black market, cannot promise employment opportunities for everyone. On the one hand, national governments are under humongous pressure from, among others, 1) the local population to restore access to basic social services (durable shelter, safe drinking water, health, nutrition, and of course, education) and 2) international community to hold elections and assure political leadership at the local and the international level.

Chapter 5 of the UNESCO report is titled: “Reconstructing Education: seizing the premium”. However harsh these situations can be, postconflict contexts also provide new opportunities for making a new start and modifying structures and unequal relations that (most of the time) might have sparked the conflict initially. Although education alone cannot promote such transformation throughout a society, it certainly has an important role to play in this matter. The period following a conflict is one of reconstruction, reconciliation and hope to build better future. However, because of limited resources, educational reforms are rarely seen as priorities for post-conflict governments (Kirk, 2007: 186). Donors often intervene to relieve and assist the national government in the process, usually bringing along an international perspective (Weinstein & al., 2007: 51). Indeed, Weinstein & al. highlight “the danger of [outside agencies] approaching their tasks along their own ideological lines without regard to local sensitivities” (2007: 44). Development agencies tend to implement educational reforms strictly based on western

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<sup>4</sup> The meaning of the term ‘postconflict’ has been highly debated since the 1990’s. The blurred limits between the conflict phase, early recovery and postconflict are difficult to defined, hence the difficulty to produce policies accordingly. For the purpose of this paper, I use term postconflict to define the period after the ousting of the Taliban from Afghanistan by American and NATO troops on December 7, 2001.

models and knowledge, which tend to promote hegemonic interests, namely, the deregulation of markets, free flowing of capital and the disengagement of the state. As educational efforts strive to rebuild a society, it risks doing so at the expense of national priorities.

Education is believed to support state-building through capacity development (Davies, 2011). But above all, education has been assigned the task of reconciliation, which demands to address the legacies of conflict, to heal psychological wounds and prevent relapses in violence. Just to name a few, these include the impact on the dispossessed and injured; remembrance and commemoration; debates about forgiveness, expressions of regret, apology and symbolic events (Smith, 2005: 387). Postconflict education is concerned with the development of a common national identity and social cohesion (Tawil and Harley, 2004), citizenship education and peace education (Davies, 2004), and the understanding of human rights (Davies, 2010).

I am interested in the first two categories, namely the promotion citizenship education and peace education. Citizenship education intended to prepare youngsters to become legally and socially accepted is “a ‘discursive space’ in which meanings are produced and reproduced, identities are shaped and social positions in relation to citizenship are negotiated” (Pinson 2004, cited in Davies 2004: 239). The links between citizenship and nationhood are problematic, with a tension between the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of citizenship (if based, for example on race or religious affiliation). Furthermore, in a context where development agencies are in charge of education, the concept of citizenship, what it entails and demands might be viewed quite differently. On the other end, peace education extends into the value system at a larger social level, and contributes to the ‘demilitarization of the mind’ (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, p. 28). In Somalia, a peace education program challenged the cultural valorization of the gun as a symbol of courage and machismo, by use of a travelling play called Drop the Gun, Rebuild the Nation (Retamal & Devadoss, 1998). This helps to change reference points for the construction of identity—particularly male identity—in a society.

I am even more interested in examining these themes under a general discourse of security, and the effects that such a discourse might have, especially in a reconstruction process. Indeed, Novelli argues that aid to education in conflict countries have raised, especially in countries with large Islamic population. Other authors also agree that education is used as a mean to socialized target population (Islamic) towards accepting Western and 'capitalist hegemony' (Watson, 1982; King, 1991, cited in Novelli, 2010: 453). These relationships have not been thoroughly discussed in the scientific literature, with respect to the War on Terror. Chapter 3 of this essay will attempt to dig out these relationships.

## Chapter 3

### Education in Afghanistan: conflicting trends

This chapter will examine the postconflict education system now in place in Afghanistan. It explores how education has played a role in sustaining power relations between the United States and Afghanistan since 2001. The analysis is based on a discourse of *Securitization of Islam*, which will be described in this chapter.

The following analysis has multiple objectives. First, it will attempt to highlight the effects that a security discourse has on this donor-funded education system and its inconsistencies with a development discourse. Although many organizations and donor countries have supported the reform and growth of the new Afghan education system, this analysis will focus on the part played by the United States (US). Three reasons motivate this choice. First, the US is highly influential in the decisional processes international institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations. For example, United Nations members obtain a percentage of votes according to their yearly financial contribution of the organization. With 17% of all votes, the US enjoys the highest percentage of decision power (Beaudet & al., 2009). As a result, it has the power to influence the outcome of amendments proposed by the General Assembly. Furthermore, in its 1998 National Security Strategy, the US is not shy to demonstrate its power:

The United States has a range of tools at its disposal with which to shape the international environment in ways favorable to U.S. interests and global security. Shaping activities enhance U.S. security by promoting regional security and preventing or reducing the wide range of diverse threats outlined above. These measures adapt and strengthen alliances and friendships, maintain U.S. influence in key regions and encourage adherence to international norms. When signs of potential conflict emerge, or potential threats appear, we undertake initiatives to prevent or reduce these threats (US Department of State, 1998: 8).

Second, the United States has a long story of involvement with Afghanistan and thus has influenced country's history. When analyzed through a Foucauldian genealogy, many discontinuities in the mode of engagement within Afghanistan, especially in terms of education, can be noted. This analysis will form the core of this chapter.

Finally, in response to the events of September 11, 2001, the United States is the main author of the current political discourse of the “War on Terror.” Therefore, it is worth looking at how such discourse might have changed the modes of engagement within Afghanistan and produce different effects on the production of policies.

The second objective is to discuss the power dynamics between the United States and Afghanistan. Finally, the question of a new Afghan identity will be discussed.

### **3.1 Genealogy of education and the involvement of the international community**

This section aims to establish the genealogy of the Afghan education system, from the beginning of the Cold War and Soviet invasion to this day, which is marked by the presence of American military troops. Genealogy is an interesting and special mode of inquiry. Foucault introduced it as the constitution of the subject across history, which has led us to the modern concept of the self. However, one must be careful when studying genealogies, as it does not merely describe meta-narratives of historical events or viewing human history as a unified process. On the other hand, Foucault is suspicious of such “universals” and is more interested in the complex processes and “genealogies of modern subjectivities,” with their specificity and locality. In other words, it is concerned with diagnosing or understanding the present. Therefore, Foucault’s first objective is to write “the history of the present” (Foucault 1980: 31). A second objective is to transform the present reality by opening up new possibilities for thoughts and actions. This section will attempt to establish a Foucauldian genealogy of the Afghan subject as seen from the US perspective with respect to the education system, greatly influenced by American policies and discontinuous discourse. However, to address Afghan education is to address Islamic education, which is what formed the base of Afghanistan for centuries.

#### *3.1.1 Before 1978*

For centuries, Islamic education has been the main form of knowledge transmission from generation to generation within the Afghan population. Although Islamic education was

productive and highly intricate within Afghan social realities, madrasas and other Islamic schools' prominence wavered throughout contemporary history. The changes in madrasas' popularity can be revealed through the political history of Afghanistan.

The colonial powers (Britain and Russia) involved in Afghanistan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed a state-run centralized system of school with the aim to prepare students for military, social, political, economic, scientific and cultural reform projects. The promise for modernity and government employment attracted a large part of the population. On the other hand, the teaching offered in the madrasas became discredited as it did not correspond to Western standards in terms of preparation of future young capitalists. Although madrasas lost many students to the colonial state-run education system, many were skeptical and continued to send their children to traditional schools. However, for the majority of the Afghan population living in rural areas, religious education has remained the only education available (Borchgrevink, 2013: 72).

The Afghans first established diplomatic relations with the Americans in 1921, when a mission from Kabul was received by the American president. In 1935, the Americans agreed to maintain diplomatic relations and supported the country in "raising their standards of living." After WWII, Afghanistan tied diplomatic relations with the Soviets. As a result, the Americans started considering Afghanistan as central to their country strategy during the Cold War. Embassies were established in both countries; the Americans increased their contacts with the Afghans and changed their aid focus from infrastructure projects to technical assistance to form a workforce possessing the necessary skills to build a modern economy (read liberal). In this way, the Americans felt that Afghanistan was safe from communism influence. As such, the United States strategically continued to extend development assistance to Afghanistan until 1978 to counter any communist influence (Shirazi, 2008: 212).

In his study of the involvement of the United States in the Afghanistan education program, Roozbeh Shirazi (2008) argues that US support for Afghan education has historically been used as a tool to extend US foreign policies, and that "shifts [in policies]

over time have led to diverse American conceptualizations of the social role of Islam in Afghanistan and varying types of support for Islamic education in Afghanistan” (2008: 213). Shirazi identifies three distinct shifts in policy and thus three different periods of support for Islamic education. In the period following WWII, Islam was seen as a social force compatible with the goals of economic progress and modernity. During this period, the Teachers College of Columbia University (TCCU) was selected as the primary educational advisor to reform the Afghan education system. A TCCU report from 1959 indicated that their efforts aimed to “challenge traditional Islamic values which are associated with the underdeveloped past” (15, cited in Shirazi, 2008: 216). In a modernization effort, an approach incorporating both Western and Islamic principles was developed; the United States capitalized on the “flexibility of Islamic faith” and sought to harmonize it with Western thoughts to promote economic development. In other words, TCCU’s report concluded that the long and delicate task was not to “demolish the religion and cultural beliefs of young people, but rather to assist in ‘opening up society’ so that intelligent discussion and searching are possible” (1959: 35). In the context of the Cold War, manipulation of the underlying discourse forming society is demonstrative of the education system’s role in extending both superpowers’ influence. US research, knowledge production about Afghanistan and scientifically based interventions were important tools to prevent communism (Escobar, 1995). Reforms fashioned the curriculum in order to prepare graduates for state jobs, and nearly no other alternate career paths were available (Rubin, 2002). Although the bureaucratic apparatus expanded to absorb its graduates, it ultimately attained its limit, and unemployment and discontent rose among young people. In addition, jobs were mostly allocated through family and friend connections rather than on merit and education. People lost confidence in the education system and social tensions were increasingly tangible among political factions.

### *3.1.2 Soviet Invasion*

In April 1978, the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overthrew the centrally administered government of Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud. It then requested the deployment of Soviet troops to provide the PDPA with security against the

mujahedeen rebels. The Americans perceived the Soviet invasion as a great threat as it endangered US strategies of containing communism and maintaining suzerainty over the world's major oil supplies. As President Carter declared,

There is no doubt that the Soviet's move into Afghanistan, if done without adverse consequences, would have resulted in the temptation to move again until they reached warm water ports or until they acquired control over a major portion of the world's oil supplies (Emadi 1999: 58, in Shirazi, 2008).

As a response, the president pledged to make “the costs of the Afghan operation high enough so that Soviet leaders would be deterred from thoughts of similar adventures in the future” (Coulson, 2004: 16 in Shirazi, 2008). The Americans provided a massive amount of weaponry, humanitarian aid and educational assistance to Afghanistan to support the Mujahedeen resistance. According to Rubin, “this influx of aid, coupled with the Soviet aid to its proxy, made Afghanistan the world's largest recipient of personal weapons” (2002). What is important to note from this period is that the rationale of the United States' interventions had nothing to do with Islam or Afghanistan in itself. Indeed, Shirazi has identified three major reasons justifying the increase of US aid to Afghanistan: first, the US wished to transform Afghanistan into a “Soviet Vietnam” (2008: 221); second, to reduce Iran's influence in Afghanistan (which was presenting animosity toward the Americans); and third, to re-establish American domination in a region that was torn apart by the US hostage crisis in Iran. In fact, US assistance grew from \$30 million yearly in 1980 to \$600 million per year from 1986–1989, and the amount was matched by Saudi contributions.

The war in Afghanistan forced the Mujahedeen and its supporters to flee to neighbouring Pakistan, which was responsible for distributing American funds and directing military operations. The funds allowed the Islamist leaders in Pakistan to build madrasas in refugee camps situated along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. The University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO) was contracted by USAID to oversee the \$50-million agreement with the mujahedeen-supported Education Center for Afghanistan (ECA). The ECA produced textbooks that were ultimately distributed in the madrasas. Spink (2005a) thoroughly demonstrates how the US used this contract to spread anti-Soviet ideas and promote its own political agenda. In parallel, the Russians established a secular

curriculum in Afghanistan and were perceived as anti-Islam and anti-Afghan. A report from the Afghanistan Education Committee (AEC) stated some of the refugee groups' views of the Soviet curriculum.

The Russians coordinate all their efforts to educate and train... who are void of having any Islamic studies and Afghani culture and be faithful to them... This purpose is to pave the way for Russians colonization and exploitation. For this purpose they injected the null and void philosophy into the pure minds of the students attending the schools (AEC, 1985:1, cited in Jones, 2007: 30).

Many refugees explained they were opposed to sending their kids to secular schools. They also expressed their preference to move to Pakistan to get their children a religious education. The importance of modelling education for US interests is even more evident as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was highly involved in the development of the textbooks' content. This marks the second period of US support. At this point, as Shirazi points out, the American strategy was far from harmonizing Western thoughts with narratives of Islam. Islam was used as a pedagogical vehicle to inspire and mobilize resistance during the Soviet War (Shirazi, 2008: 213). The books explicitly promoted symbols and texts of Islam (from the Qu'ran) through violent images, language and war (Jones, 2007: 31). For example, a first-grade text instructed children that "*alef* is for Allah, *jim* is for *jihad*, and *shin* is for Shakir, who conducts *jihad* with his sword. God becomes happy with the defeat of the Russians" (Coulson, 2004: 17 cited in Shirazi, 2008). Moreover, a fourth-grade math textbook states that the speed of a round fired from a Kalashnikov rifle is 800 metres per second, and then asks "if a Russian is at a distance of 3200 meters for a *mujahid*, and that *mujahid* aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian's forehead?" (*ibid*). Although the textbooks did not directly encourage US culture, the message clearly promoted American political objectives. The content of the textbooks was clearly in contradiction with the modernization rationale that first drove the US intervention before WWII. Economic development was no longer the main objective. The madrasas got caught in the conflict and the radicalization of education must be seen in light of local, regional and international political development. The fact that certain madrasas teach their students to see the world in largely dualistic terms — "Islam against the West" or "believers against unbelievers" — is hardly surprising in view of the political discourse

of that time. Noor et al. (2008) point out that even the radical madrasas must be understood in relation to the specific context in which they are located, and that the militancy they advocate may have less to do with the madrasa system than with the specific political factors at the local or international level. The rhetoric of “Islam against the West,” “holy war against imperialist occupiers” or “believers against non-believers” is pronounced by actors belonging to very different Islamic traditions and ideological positions. As this was the case for many madrasas situated in the Pakistani Baluchistan province, it would be wrong to see radical madrasas as representative of all madrasas. In their study of political activism and transnational linkages among madrasas in Asia, Noor et al. (2008, p. 11) found that the majority of madrasas are “concerned mainly with the transmission of the Islamic scholarly tradition, and remaining aloof from political involvement” (Borchgrevink, 2013: 78).

In 1989, the Mujahedeen drove the Soviet out of Afghanistan. However, the radicalization of education in some madrasas had already produced a group of Islamist students and former Mujahedeen, which later became known as the Taliban. In fact, *talib* means “student” in Arabic. The group studied and was trained in the madrasas, read US-produced textbooks, and advocated a strict form of Islam (Blanchard, 2008: 2). In this regard, some authors have argued that the Americans have produced the Taliban. The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 marked the end of the Cold War and the defeat of communism. Although a civil war was still raging between the Taliban, the Soviet-supported government and other factions, the Americans ceased to fund the mujahedeen and rather concentrated on expanding liberal capitalism and its politics in the international arena.

### *3.1.3 The Taliban regime*

After several years of civil conflicts and many civilian casualties, the Taliban took control of Kabul in September 1996. The Taliban imposed a strict vision of radicalized Islam (taught during the Soviet war and supported by the Americans) over Afghanistan. The Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) issued a report in 1998, depicting the rules imposed by the Taliban regime over women of Afghanistan. The regime was

forbidding women to work outside the home, attend school, or to leave their homes unless accompanied by a husband, father, brother, or son. In public, women must be covered from head to toe in a *burqa*, a body-length covering with only a mesh opening to see and breathe through. Women are not permitted to wear white (the color of the Taliban flag) socks or white shoes, or shoes that make noise while they are walking. Also, houses and buildings in public view must have their windows painted over if females are present in these places (1998: 2).

Furthermore, PHR reported an increase in detention events for reasons such as having a short beard or being a member of a minority ethnic group (mainly Tajik and Hazara). Other behaviours considered worthy of imprisonment included flying a kite, playing music at a wedding and laughing in public (PHR, 1998: 12). In this period, the Americans were almost totally disengaged from Afghanistan, even though they would later justify their invasion of October 2001 in the name of human rights and democracy. Despite the extremist tendencies in the Taliban policies, the United States remain inactive, apart from trying to repatriate the arms they provided during the Soviet war.

The Taliban recognized the madrasas' education as the only form of education possible. Schools built by the Soviet were transformed into madrasas, eliminating all traces of Soviet education. They even refrained from referring to grades and preferred to use the term 'class' in school. In 2000, certain subjects were banished such as social studies because certain elements (such as the earth rotation) were against the teaching of Islam. Similarly, physical education was removed to provide more time for religious education.

#### *3.1.4 Post 9/11*

The third shift in American support for Islamic education, which is the focus of this paper, happened as a result of the new security narrative introduced by President Bush after the events of September 11, 2001. Shirazi characterized this period of Islamic education support as "threat mitigation." Before pursuing this analysis, it is important to observe how the United States viewed the Afghan subject, and how they manipulated Afghan subjectivities through education.

### 3.2 Current struggles over education in Afghanistan

Although this introduction is quite lengthy, it is nevertheless essential to situate the following analysis, as I intend to look beyond rates of enrolment and literacy percentages and look more closely at the design of the education system in post-conflict Afghanistan.

On October 7, 2001, after the Taliban refused to extradite Osama Bin Laden, the Americans launched Operation *Enduring Freedom* and invaded Afghanistan with the aim to find Osama Bin Laden and disintegrate Al-Qaeda (Indurthy, 2011:7). By December 9, Kandahar, the spiritual centre of the Taliban regime, had been invaded and was under American control. These actions were supported by the international community as the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1368 in December 2001, urging “a 5,000-strong International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to deploy to the region in and immediately around Kabul, in order to provide security and to assist in the reconstruction of the country under Chapter VII of the UN Charter” (Smith, 2010: 5). In Germany, at the same time, the Bonn Agreement was signed and required the investment of an interim government, until the Loya Jirga (the equivalent of the General Assembly of Afghanistan), was convened to discuss a new constitution for Afghanistan. In January 2002, following the institution of the Afghan Interim Authority, the Bush administration convened the G-8 nations to a meeting in Tokyo to help establish a new Afghan security force, and again in Geneva in April to share responsibilities of the Security Sector Reform’s various aspects. As such, the United States inherited the responsibility to form and train a new Afghan National Army (ANA).

In the same conference, the education system was designated as a key area for support given the post-conflict situation (Spink, 2005a: 200). USAID took a particular interest in the five “Back to school” campaigns conducted between 2002 and 2007, and the curriculum reform (which started in 2003 and is still ongoing). Finally, military groups were highly involved in the construction of new school buildings, cooperating with humanitarian organizations.

### *3.2.1 Education and culture: the struggle over “hearts and minds”*

There has been growing concern within the development community about what kind of effects the intertwining of security and education agendas might produce. The Afghanistan situation provides an excellent case study to explore the validity of these concerns.

In his endeavour to eliminate Al-Qaeda and the threat of terror, General McChrystal suggested a counterinsurgency tactic. The strategy of “winning hearts and minds” is twofold. First, it aims to win the population’s support and increase the Afghan government’s legitimacy (which was first appointed by the US government). Second, it attempts to mould the population into Western subjects and, as Anderson puts it, to “make an unstable collective of potential friends or enemies into the partners rather than potential insurgents” (2011). As such, the education system becomes a powerful tool within the counterinsurgency approach for several reasons. First, the reopening of school signifies a return to normality and stability. It is also a sign that the government in place is taking reins of the country, which increases its legitimacy toward its citizens. Afghan parents, especially parents of girls, were impatient to see their children go back to school, to ensure a bright future for their family. For the international community to respond to such a pressing need helped gain the population’s support. Second, counterinsurgency is a military strategy that ultimately aims to destroy elements jeopardizing the population’s security. Deflecting the population’s loyalty from the insurgent’s cause avoids the recruitment of new members, and hopefully leads to the total destruction of the insurgent network. Focusing on education provides access to a large amount of Afghan children that can follow a particular curriculum.

This strategy is illustrated by the prevalence of references to the role of education in the US’s counter-terrorism strategies elaborated in the Patterns of Global Terrorism Annual Reports (since 2004 renamed Country Reports on Terrorism). As an example, the 2007 Terrorist Safe Havens report, chapter 5, focuses on Basic Education in Muslim Countries. This section notes:

The Department of State, USAID, and other U.S. agencies continued to support an increased focus on education in predominantly Muslim countries and those with significant Muslim populations. The United States 'approach stresses mobilizing public and private resources as partners to improve access, quality, and the relevance of education, with a specific emphasis on developing civic-mindedness in young people.'

As described in the first chapter of this paper, education has special and central functions within a society. As Foucault described, education is a disciplinary technique that has the potential to shape individuals' thinking processes and eventually produces subjects that think and act in a predictable fashion. In a security context, this equates to producing subjects that are free of any 'element of threat,' i.e., securitization of Islam. In order to do so, the Americans use education to reach two goals: 1) to enhance domestic security in Afghanistan, and by implication, homeland security and international stability and; 2) to promote moderation among Muslims (Shirazi, 2008). A closer look allows one to see how goal #2 really is a mean to goal #1: by promoting a moderated Islam among Muslim Afghans, there is a hope to enhance domestic security in Afghanistan (and thus eliminate the threat to American security).

The securitization of Islamic discourse translated into the push for secular education. The Americans are not the first to push for secular education in Afghanistan. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both the Russians and the British implemented a state-run education system, which attracted many families given the promise that the graduates would find employment with the state apparatus. However, it is important to note in this instance the abrupt change in American discourse between the Cold War (the fight against the Soviet) and the post-9/11 period (the fight against the Taliban).

During the Cold War, many students withdrew from state schools as they promoted "modern" ideals such as secularism, but also Soviet ideologies and Marxist philosophy (Barez, 1988, cited in Shirazi, 2008: 221) and returned to traditional madrasas. The Americans used this opportunity: they provided massive funds for the construction of madrasas, in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, and produced a series of explicitly violent Islamist textbooks. In that period, the expectation was to create Afghan subjects that were not inclined toward communism. Any strategy was and any other identities were

acceptable. The American used Islam, an aspect of Afghan culture deeply rooted in each individual, to promote resistance toward the Soviets.

Such actions are in stark contrast with the securitization of Islam ) developed after the events of 9/11. Islam was no longer an appropriate way to vehicle US interests. Islam was now evil and threatening the US political project. Islam now had to be eliminated at all costs. Accordingly, much attention has been given to the madrasas, the traditional Islamic schools. It is also believed that madrasas became the recruiting ground for what later became the Taliban. Many actors asserted that “since such schools have promoted Islamic militancy as well as served as recruiting grounds for terrorism in the past, they can be used to promote democratic values and spur economic growth” (Blanchard, 2008; Sachs, 2001; Singer, 2001, cited in Shirazi, 2008: 225).

#### A) Madrasas and knowledge

For centuries, madrasas have been considered the top Islamic education institutions in the Muslim world. Afghanistan’s madrasas were no exception and have survived many secularization attempts across centuries. Today, its position is mixed and is subject to many debates.

Religious education has been taught in Afghanistan for centuries. Islamic education in local maktab (mosque-based schools), dar ul hifaz (Qu’ran schools), madrasas (religious seminaries) and Islamic universities was the main local mode of education before King Amanullah’s educational reform introduced secular education in the 1920s (Olesen, 1995, cited in Borchgrevink, 2013: 69). The organization of knowledge is quite unique and differs significantly from Western knowledge. Although there is a notion of progression to attain higher knowledge, there was initially no concept of class division. More importantly, there is no categorization of knowledge such as what is seen in Western curricula (biology, chemistry or history). With the objective of forming future religious leaders, all the knowledge transferred is understood as an indivisible whole. This knowledge includes, for example, the interpretation of the Qu’ran, the sayings (*hadith*) of

the Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic jurisprudence and law (Borchgrevink, 2013: 72). Furthermore, Islamic education is qualitatively different from other forms of education: although the main focus is on the study of religious texts, it also teaches an Islamic value system, as well as other worldviews, and codes of conduct reflecting ideals that are highly respected in Afghan society (Borchgrevink, 2013: 73).

The main means of communication of these cultural treasures were father-to-son telling old tales. Many old philosophers have their roots in Afghanistan and what riches an Afghan does not have in his pocket, he carries in his mind – traditions form a culture far older as a civilization than most of the occident civilization... when schools started to teach normal subjects around the country, this became a new facet of an old cultural tradition (Safi, 1984: 4, cited in Jones, 2007: 29).

This citation is indicative of the different modes of transmission of Islamic knowledge, but moreover, that the relation to knowledge also differs than what is known in Western culture. In fact, Afghans have a very long tradition of oral knowledge transmission. Islamic knowledge is very much embedded in religious beliefs (interpretation of Islam). Sacred texts, which were originally orally composed, take their meanings when they are recited in very specific ways. Therefore, it becomes clear why memory learning is an important component of Islamic relation to knowledge and how this structures their Western experience (Seth, 2007: 35).

The history of the Islamic faith is a history of differentiation of interpretation, leading to the formation of various schools of thought (e.g., Shi'a, Sunni, Sufism). Today, important transnational flow of ideas, people and practices characterize the Muslim world. Afghan madrasas are integral parts of a transnational network involving the flow of students, teachers, thoughts and finances. This is based on a common knowledge system, values and religious authority. These informal networks are predominantly based on the student-teacher relationship, which is more important than institutional affiliations (Borchgrevink, 2013: 75). When preparing one's education, madrasas represent "nodes in extensive networks of communication" (Noor, & al, 2008: 17) through which students seek out a master (Hefner, 2007: 9, cited in Borchgrevink, 2013). Accordingly, madrasas do not follow a specific program, and a "curriculum" in the Western sense is nonexistent. The institution's instruction and success reflect the master's teachings. Although they all

provide a religious-based education in Arabic to prepare lower-level clergy (mullahs), qualified religious scholars (ulema) and legal experts, each school follows its own line of study with slight variations in interpretation (Blanchard, 2008).

In opposition, Western knowledge is organized in well-defined categories, which in a way allows its institutionalization. For example, the division of education in different levels (primary, secondary and tertiary), or the possibility of studying mathematics, biology or literature is possible because of the structuration of knowledge in various categories. Modern knowledge “position and construct knowers in different ways” (Seth, 2007: 4). According to Weber, modern knowledge increases a man’s capacity of mastery over nature, because the world becomes increasingly governed by “laws and regularities, rather than purposes and meanings” (cited in Seth, 2007: 4). Therefore, the resultant regime of truth infusing the Western world no longer positions “western knowledge [as] [...] one mode of knowing but as knowledge itself, compared to which all other traditions of reasoning are only Unreason, or earlier stages in the march toward Reason” (Seth, 2007: 3).

Furthermore, for lack of conceptual language, the plurality and type of knowledge taught in madrasas is inaccessible for Westerners to grasp, and the dominant discourse immediately dismisses Islamic knowledge (and madrasas) for being: 1) primitive and backward; for being rooted in religious beliefs; 2) opposite to the project of economic development; development is “viewed as an incidental and by-product of a philosophy of life that was in harmony with superior forms of political and economic organization” (Nandy, 1983: 10) and; 3) dangerous; as some madrasas have been accused of promoting anti-US views.

Since 9/11, Afghan and Pakistani madrasas have been of increasing interest to the US. USAID sponsored the construction of madrasas and distributed violent Islamic books, but it did not attract any criticism. However, as these same books continued to be used in Afghanistan after 9/11, the Americans were suddenly concerned with the Afghan

madrastas promoting extreme interpretations of Islam and fear they might continue to produce radical groups.

The Bonn agreement (2001) stipulates that the reconstruction of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan would be conducted in agreement with Islamic principles. Later, the Afghanistan Constitution signed in 2004 stated that “Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic, independent, unitary and indivisible state” (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s Constitution, Article 1). With regards to education, the Constitution stipulates that “[t]he state shall adopt necessary measures for promotion of education in all levels, development of religious education, organizing and improving the conditions of mosques, madrasas and religious centers” (*ibid*, Article 17). In 2011, the number of government madrasas was estimated at 700, whereas the number of private madrasas is unknown and believed to be much superior (Tariq: 2011, cited in Borchgrevink, 2013: 73). However, one can easily question the Western commitment in respecting those promises.

Although USAID has been highly involved in the new curriculum development (discussed in the next section), no amount of aid was intended for the improvement of madrasas or Islamic education, and no US policy document discusses the Islamic education issue. On the USAID website, it is proudly stated that, as of January 2013, the Americans have “built or refurbished more than 680 schools” (USAID, 2013), (read state schools). The choice of USAID to focus on state education is twofold: 1) madrasas are mostly private or independent from the state, and the Americans have no control over the curriculum or teaching methods; 2) the promotion of a free education conducive to state employment or the private sector might attract many families, thus reducing the attractiveness of madrasas.

The conscious decision to ignore the network of madrasas is indicative of many underlying meanings. It represents a blatant rejection of the Islamic knowledge that has been transmitted for centuries in Afghanistan. Madrasas have been rejected on the basis that they use an archaic “static curricula, dated pedagogical techniques, such as rote memorization [which] also produce individuals who are neither skilled nor prepared for

the modern workforce” (Blanchard, 2008: 3). Islamic knowledge taught in the madrasas is portrayed as backward and inappropriate for the Western democratic and economic growth project in addition to promoting terror. Such a narrative only reinforces the American position as dominant and voids the madrasas of any kind of authority, power or authoritative knowledge. They remain the “outdated” institutions, never legitimate participants to the state-building project. This rejection of Islamic knowledge is what has been termed the securitization of Islam, the approach chosen to eliminate terrorism. The application of these practices to education is just one more step toward achieving security objectives.

## B) Secular education and Curriculum

In 2002, USAID and UNICEF funded the ‘Back to School’ (BTS) campaign. Millions of textbooks were printed and about 3 million children were allowed to attend school (compared with just over 800,000 children in 1990, UNESCO, 2001: 20). Moreover, about 30% of those children were girls and about a third of the returning teachers were women. This campaign was a symbol of US victory over the Taliban, which had banned girls’ education since 1996. It also represented a return to peace and stability after over 20 years of conflict — or so it was thought.

The BTS campaign focused on getting children back to school. However, not much attention was given to what these children would be taught. In the haste of getting ready for the academic year starting in March 2002, USAID immediately started printing millions of UNO books, the same that were distributed in the 1980s in Mujahedeen camps. The US government stated that it would not allow the printing of books with religious symbols. Although USAID revised all subject-based (non-religious) textbooks and eliminated all direct references to violence, messages of hate, such as the mistrust of the descendants of Ali, were not removed. Also, religious books were still full of violent symbols and “instructed ‘true believers’ to kill all non-Muslims” (Spink, 2005a: 201). Although these books did not seem to pose any problem in the 1980s, in 2002, the world was outraged by their distribution.

Following those events, a strong need for an education reform was recognized. In 2002, a USAID-funded national workshop took place in Islamabad in order to draft the new 'Curriculum framework Afghanistan.' Present were 120 Afghan and international education experts, UN agencies, other NGOs and the host, a US-based for-profit company (subcontracting for USAID). Although the process was described as consultative, critics have stated that the final content was strongly influenced by international NGOs (Jones, 2007: 33). Finally, the *Curriculum Framework Afghanistan* was adopted by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2003. The following observations are based on the official curriculum document, which was published by the Department of Compilation and Translation (DCT).

The preface of the document emphasizes over and over again that the new curriculum is based on the Afghan cultural context. It notes that "all spiritual, moral, cultural and historical values of the Afghan people and Afghan society" were taken into account. However, nowhere in the preface of this document can the word 'Islam' or any of its precepts be found, except to mention the government name: Islamic Transitional Government of Afghanistan. On page 11, the objective of the new curriculum is stated as follows:

By the completion of schooling cycles, when young people enter the world of work, as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum, they will be good Muslims, civilized human beings and true, self-reliant Afghans (Department of Compilation and Translation, 2003: 11).

Furthermore, the need for a unified curriculum to "foster national unity and social cohesion" was mentioned several times, as well as the emphasis on fostering an Afghan identity, although this time "in compliance with moderate Islamic values and spiritual beliefs, as opposed to extremist and fundamentalist attitudes" (*ibid*, 20). In addition to indicating the expected skills and competencies to be acquired, the document states that "education will help children and youngsters to find their ways on the journey to wellfair [*sic*] and to living in a moral and cultivated society" (*ibid*). The new curriculum proposes six areas of study:

- 1- Spiritual and moral objectives

- 2- Intellectual development
- 3- Cultural and artistic education
- 4- Social and civic education
- 5- Economic education
- 6- Health education

Only 3 of the 6 objectives specifically mentioned Islamic values: objectives 1, 3 and 4.

Objective 1, *Spiritual and moral objectives*, states that religious education will be “based on Qu’ranic and the Prophet’s teaching (peace be upon him)” and through this “students will reinforce and broaden the Islamic vision and religious principle in a non-extremist way” (p. 21). The importance of that last precision “in a non-extremist way” certainly represents the input of international participants in the writing process. According to Jones, “the language highlights new directions for Afghan officials and ministers who were part of this consultative process, so much that the document could be said to be part of the re-education and awareness raising of the senior government officers” (2007: 34). Objective 3, *Cultural and artistic education*, also contains semantic construction that appears to originate from a Western curriculum rather than an Islamic context, such as “developing the capacity of self-expression through artistic knowledge and skills” (p. 22). However, the most striking section of this document is the description of objective 4: *Social and civic education*. Objective 4 is of great interest to the present analysis in terms of relation of power and formation of identity. The document states that “students will be supported in their development as members of a family, and of a local, regional, national and international community” (p. 22). The document then lists 10 sub-objectives, and most of them are devoid of any reference to cultural and historical links to the immediate circumstance of location: Afghanistan. Although the first point emphasizes “honouring their country and defending its sovereignty and strengthening family and social relationships based on Islamic values, principles and rules” (p.20), it reads differently from the remaining points that emphasize “solidarity, peace, brotherhood” (the last two words are common in Islamic discourse/writing), and “co-operation at national and international level,” followed closely by encouragements to “respect human rights,” “fighting against *terrorism*” [reflecting Western involvement in the document writing],

“applying *critical thinking*, effective *communication techniques*,” “handling *diversity*, settling *conflicts* peacefully and constructively, and developing capacity to *handle Mass Media messages critically*” [italics added]. These particular segments have been highlighted as they clearly clash with Islamic writing style and do not reflect traditional Afghan culture, but rather a modern Westernized environment.

The new curriculum also includes a Life Skills section, for grades 1 through 3 of primary school. The social sciences are taught from grades 4 to 6. Given that many students drop out after 2 or 3 years of schooling, the MoE ensures that most children get the basics of this subject. Adele Jones conducted an evaluation of the Life Skill textbooks prepared for grades 1 and 2 students. She suggests that although the curriculum document states that it “fosters the development of students’ personalities as human beings, good Muslims and true Afghans,” she concludes that as a whole this course “could be valid for any community, any society, or any country” (2007, 36). As an example, these textbooks are completely empty of any religious reference. However, what is even more striking is that, in an effort to include Western conceptions of post-conflict reconciliation, problem-solving and peace education, “there is a convergence of Muslim and Western values [...] though the fit is not comfortable. The concept of community in Islam and in Western discourse can mean different things — recent history has shown that” (Jones, 2007: 39). She provides more examples. For one, when it comes to conflict resolution, she notices that the language reflects *individualism* rather than *communitarianism* or “that the individual rather than community is more significant to life” (*ibid*, 38). Such an approach is without question “Western.” According to Saïd, Funk and Kadayifci (2002, cited in Lee-Koo), the West places more emphasis on competition and not enough on broad social cooperation, whereas “Islamic precepts include a view of peace based on communal solidarity, social justice, faith and cultural pluralism. This perspective of peace has deep roots in Islamic traditions” (Saïd & al., 2002: 26, cited in Jones, 2007: 38).

A second example is taken from the grade 2 Life Skills textbook. It is taught that one of the possible causes of unhappiness and anger is poverty and, as a solution, it proposes listening to music or remembering good memories. Given that Afghanistan had suffered

from over 30 years of civil war and was (and is still to this day) considered a *Failed State* by the World Bank, such a choice of scenario is highly questionable.

In the following years, the implementation of the new *Curriculum framework Afghanistan* and the production of new textbooks has been a hazardous affair. Different ministers have taken the reins of the MoE, each modifying certain aspects of the education policy. Funding has been unstable and poorly coordinated, and as a result, the process has been slower than expected. The attempt to secularize Afghan education is also exemplified by USAID choices, such as choosing a for-profit company as implementing agencies: Creative Associates International Inc. (CAII) and Halliburton. According to Shirazi, this choice suggests these for-profit firms have a closer alignment with donor agency goals than the non-profit recipient. In restructuring the curriculum, the US desire to combat Islamic extremism is evident as it defines education in a deeply religious society as a “predominantly secular activity” (Stephens and Ottaway, 2002, cited in Shirazi, 2008: 225) Furthermore, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) elected the Teacher’s College Columbia University (TCCU), a US-based education contractor, to partner with the Afghan MoE and write 11 early primary textbooks in Dari, Pashto, Uzbek and Pashai. According to Janiene Spink (2005b), a researcher at the Afghanistan Research Evaluation Unit (AREU) in Kabul, “UNICEF did not want to include religious studies in the TCCU contract, but the Afghan MoE forced the hand of UNICEF on the issue of religious studies to have Islamic textbooks developed.” Although it is not clear to what extent the Islamic studies textbooks have received an ideological facelift, Abdul Nabi Wahidi, head of the Translation and Compilation department in the MoE, and Muhammad Baqir Jaff Ari, an author of the Islamic studies textbooks, respectively stated that the new textbooks are “free of ideology” and utilize “new methods of teaching to make it easy and interesting for the students” to learn (Gall 2004, cited in Shirazi, 2008: 228).

At that time, USAID was the main donor and technical advisor for re-writing, printing and distributing the textbooks for primary grades. As of 2005, out of the 21 million books distributed, USAID had provided the funding for 17 million, while the remaining was

funded by DANIDA. In the context of a threat mitigation counterinsurgency, Shirazi contends that, as part of the wider attempt of the American to instil secular democratic principles in Afghanistan, similar principles are applied in public schools (2008: 213).

Finally, high school students have had to wait until the spring of 2012 to receive revised textbooks (they had to rely on the old textbooks until then). However, the new textbooks were not received with much enthusiasm. The main problem is the social sciences and history textbooks are basically silent about the last four decades of Afghan history. Afghan children learn about history up to 1973, but are left with two pages of mostly description-free lists of names and dates up to 2012 (H. A., 2012). Otherwise, the bloody coups of the 1970s, the 1979 Soviet invasion and ensuing regime, the civil war between Mujahedeen factions and the government are barely mentioned, leaving the teachers responsible for the interpretation of these events. The Taliban government is resumed in the following lines: “In 1996 freedom fighter Mullah Mohammed Omar, leader of the Taliban came to power and announced the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; he was removed from power in 2001” (*ibid*). The textbook remains silent on the role of the United States or the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) although, in reality, American helicopters are heard every day in Kabul, and streets have been turned into tunnels thanks to concertina-wired sandbags. BBC News reports an Afghan journalist, who wished to remain anonymous for security reasons:

There is no mention of the misery [the war] brought. No mention of Kabul being the killing zone. The books say Mullah Omar was removed in 2001, without saying who Mullah Omar was. There is no mention of the US and NATO presence. It is as if someone is trying to hide the sun with two fingers (Sarwary, 2012, BBC News).

The Afghan MoE has replied to critics that the textbooks are part of a new non-political curriculum. *The Washington Post* reports that in the Ministry efforts to promote a single national identity, Afghan leaders have deemed their own history too controversial. Again, critics accuse the government of attempts to hide the crimes of warlords and militia leaders who are actually active in the country’s civil war and some of whom today hold government positions (Bezhan, F., RFERL, 2012). Others again have accused that the high school textbooks were funded by the US military’s foreign aid arm, the

Commander's Emergency Response Program. Afghan officials reported that, upon reviewing the material, "foreign donors" ensured there was no religious content, but did not mention the omission of recent history. David Lakin, spokesperson for the US military in Afghanistan, defended the US government and claimed that US military cultural advisers were responsible for having "reviewed the social studies textbooks, grades 10-12, for 'inappropriate' material, such as inciting violence or religious discrimination. Content of these textbooks, such as events or dates, are [sic] the responsibility of the Ministry of Education." He continues and claims "there were no discussions between [US military] officials and the Ministry of Education on the teaching of Afghan history" (Sieff, *Washington Post*, 2012).

### 3.2.2 *Education and Security*

#### A) American intervention: Orientalism and the "Saving of the Self"

Saïd argued that discourses have less to do with the regions and people they essentialize, exoticize and objectify than with the conditions under which the discourses were produced (1978). Similarly, Spivak (1988) warns us that, in representing the "Other," we deny our own role, as though we were transparent and neutral relays. It is against this background that postcolonial scholars favour the application of an analytical gaze upon ourselves before investigating the "Other." Along these lines, I begin this investigation by interrogating the historical contexts and reasons that allowed the Americans to produce a particular Afghan Other, which allowed for the intervention in Afghanistan after the events of September 2001: to fight the war on terror (McBride & Wibben, 2013, 201)

As expressed in the 2002 National Security Strategy (US Department of State, 2002: prologue), the United States' identity now needs to remain intact in the face of the "networks of individuals [that] can bring great chaos and suffering to [US] shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank." Many events led to such declaration: the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 (9/11), the difficulty of finding Osama bin Laden, the growing anti-US Iraqi insurgency, and the refusal by Afghanis and Iraqis to view the USA as liberators. Also, the increasing costs to and deaths in the US military seriously threaten US state identity as "sturdy, mighty,

unwavering and inherently right” (Nayak, 2006: 43). Accordingly, Bush attempted to save the Self, and “he has very successfully mobilized a domestic base that firmly invests in and consents to the attempt to save the Self, and in his supporters’ minds, to literally save Bush’s worldview, themselves and their values” (*ibid*: 45).

Several postcolonial authors have eloquently used Saïd’s concept of orientalism as a point of departure for analyzing both US history and the Bush administration’s foreign policy. Saïd’s account of Orientalism (1978) introduced earlier helps explain the rationale for M. Bush’s attempt to resuscitate a strong, powerful, impenetrable United States, which Nayak terms as an attempt to “save the self”. She raises two elements of Orientalism that further explicate the crucial role of this ideology in state-making and international hierarchy. First,

Orientalism in effect reflects insecurity about the Other becoming an actor rather than object in the international hierarchy, particularly since the oriental actor is coded as a terrorist, or an enemy of civilization. Thus, the very agency of others challenges US conceptions of itself and its modes of internal/international domination, particularly since US state rhetoric interprets the events of 9/11 as evidence of the disastrous consequences” (Nayak, 2006: 45).

For the West to remain inherently superior, it needs to produce the ‘Orient’ with equal force, persistence, consistency, urgency and domestic consent. “The ongoing production of state identities requires the construction of the very differences [whether marked by religion, geography, ethnicity] that allegedly threaten their existence in order to ensure that the state must exist to defend people and boundaries” (Campbell, 1992, cited in Nayak, 2006). Second, and with regards to the following analysis on Afghanistan,

[O]rientalism in US state identity involves coding particular acts and actors as Islamic fundamentalist. The US state reduces the diversities of Islamic fundamentalist and secular ideologies to a metonymic relationship between Religion and Ideology in order to define a variety of actors and acts as Islamic fundamentalist, the primary source of conflict and danger in the world (Nayak, 2006: 46).

The attacks on the World Trade Center of New York, an iconic symbol of the United States, were a major trigger in the launch of the *War on terror* as it introduced an important element: the concept of locality. All of a sudden, what appeared to be faraway wars and *other people’s* conflicts *over there* spill over national boundaries and affect *us*

*over here*. The issue of locality has a major impact in the interpretation of an event: *we*<sup>5</sup> are now implicated in the conflict, *we* have been targeted and the logic of threat leads to the development of a discourse of binaries ‘*them* against *us*’. As globalization and modernization bring the world closer and more interconnected, foreign events become closer, the logic unfolds and leads us to think that “we cannot rest secure that such conflict will be easily contained within national boundaries” (US Department of State, 2006). Even though foreign military interventions might be justified in terms of poor population security, such statements allow us to be sceptical about proclaimed justifications and question whose security is truly being defended.

Orientalism allows for a simplistic binary division of the world into the Orient (or the hotbed of terrorism, ignorance, poverty, oppression, racism and misogyny) and the US-led West (or the saviour, beacon of light and teacher of democracy and equality par excellence). Nayak reveals that “the creation of US state identity needs to intertwine religion, ideology and conflict so as to permanently etch within the American psyche a fear, loathing and paternalism regarding the ‘Orient’ abroad and within” (Nayak, 2006: 43) As a result, any actions undertaken against Islamic fundamentalist threats are justified. “The Orient is coded as Islamic fundamentalist; the West, although laden with Christian fundamentalist rhetoric and assumptions, is coded as naturally and universally right and good” (Nayak, 2006: 46). In the context of the War on Terror, there is a desperate need for Islamic fundamentalism to exist as the threat to ensure the US can “become the powerful Self” it was ‘meant’ to be. As M. Bush notes, the US must truly be ‘delivered’:

I’ve been humbled and privileged to see the true character of this country in a time of testing... After America was attacked, it was as if our entire country looked into a mirror and saw our better selves. We were reminded that we are citizens, with obligations to each other, to our country, and to history... We’ve come to know truths that we will never question: evil is real, and it must be opposed... And many have discovered again that even in tragedy – especially in tragedy – God is near. In a single instant, we realized that this will be a decisive decade in the history of liberty, that we’ve been called to a unique role in human events (US Department of State, 2002).

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term *we* in recognition of my own background and membership of the western population/culture.

It is evident that the demonization and dehumanization discourses presented above are used by the United States in an effort to save the Self. Discourses of disgust and apathy appear regularly in media and even in presidential addresses to the nation.

For the ‘West’ (read: US) to retain positional superiority, it must be able to decide what happens in the ‘Orient,’ and consequently, impeding the Other from crossing the line from ‘them’ to ‘us.’ Demonization and dehumanization are forms of racialized violence because these practices remove agency based on race. To invoke hatred and/or extreme apathy toward the Islamic communities is to emphasize that they do not matter, and consequently, promotes the targeted violence and killings of Others and reduces the loss of human life to collateral damage. In fact, demonization and dehumanization are critical to the US hegemonic project, as the assertion of the US Self is about disciplining the Others.

The source of fear is located on Islamism as a whole. Discourses have been crafted to point specifically at Muslim Afghan and remain silent on the history of collaboration between the US and extremist Islamic regimes (discussed earlier). Despite official rhetoric that ‘Islam is peaceful,’ such manipulations ensure that Muslims are demonized and are automatically made suspicious. Indeed, in an address to a Joint Session of Congress and Americans, Bush (2001) explicitly noted that the US is not at war with Islam but with a “fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam.” He quickly moved to state that the fight is not just for US freedom but also for civilization, or “all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom” (Bush, 2001). Under what conditions, then, is this abstracted Islam peaceful? Muslims who are ‘peaceful’ cannot also fundamentally oppose US hegemonic politics and foreign policy. Rather, they fall out of civilization’s purview and accordingly become terrorists. According to Bush, then, while Islam may be peaceful in theory, Muslims themselves simply may not be able to translate their faith in ways that fit with the US’ understanding of ‘progress’ and ‘freedom.’ In a speech on January 22, 2004, Bush (2004) remarked, “[f]reedom in the heart of the Middle East, freedom in the place that has bred [sic] resentment and terror, is in our national interests.” Thus, at the same time as he marks the Middle East as

already dangerous, he makes it clear that the practice of peaceful Islam is impossible without US intervention.

In light of this discourse, an essentialist association between modernity and secularism excludes any other possibilities of constitution of a modern state. The case of Afghanistan demonstrates that “these initiatives treat local demands for Islamic education as though they do not exist, and are accompanied by a broader premise that Islam in education acts as a blindfold to democratic values and human rights ideals” (Rizvi, 2009). Indeed, in USAID education documents (and other development agencies and NGOs) intended for Afghans’ education, references to Islamic education, constructive or not, are blatantly absent.

### *B) Securitization process*

The first rationale for intervention was described above: fear of Islam. On September 12, 2001, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1368, which condemns the attacks perpetrated on September 11, and stated that it “regards such acts, like any act of international terrorism, as a threat to international peace and security” and expresses “its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations” (UN, 2001, cited in Smith 2010). Also, Article 3 of the Resolution clearly gives a general authorization for action to bring the perpetrators to justice:

Article 3. Calls on all States to work together urgently to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these terrorist attacks and stresses that those responsible for aiding, supporting or harbouring the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these acts will be held accountable.

That the UN Security Council considers the matter *urgent* is indicative of nervousness and fear; that the highest levels of the government declare a state of urgency reveals the perception that national security is compromised and that special measures are required and allowed to ensure the survival of the nation. In the present case, a specific process allowed the construction of Islam in Western societies as a threat, which discourse rendered acceptable to resort to ‘exceptional’ measures. Indeed, the UN resolution does

not exactly describe what action(s) is (are) required, nor by whom. A second resolution was adopted on September 28, 2001, which urged the states to “take the necessary steps to prevent the commission of terrorist acts” and to “cooperate, particularly through bilateral and multilateral arrangements and agreements, to prevent and suppress terrorist attacks and take action against perpetrators of such acts.” Although the resolution reiterates the right to self-defence, it does not allow or suggest any idea of invasion and overthrow of governments. However, on October 7, US and UK troops invaded Kabul, Afghanistan, without the official consent of the UN Security Council; yet, no government in the Western world expressed any opposition. The US and UK claimed these actions were justified under the provisions of Article 51 of the UN Charter, which recognizes “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense” if an armed attack occurs, and requires states to report such actions immediately (Smith, 2010: 3). Although this paper does not aim to examine such justification, it is debatable whether leading a nine-week operation on the other side of the globe can truly be considered self-defence. However, if self-defence entails defending US identity as the world leader (militarily, economically, politically, etc.), then these “extraordinary measures” support Nayak’s argument that to attack the evil Islamic Other is to defend or “save US Self” and reiterate paternalistic power relations and its value system as the only one possible and acceptable. However, the UN resolution or declaration never targeted Islam *per se*. Thus, how did Islam become associated with acts of “terrorism” and “evil”? In the present case, the indiscriminate targeting of Muslims was made possible by a process whereby ‘Terror’ became translated into ‘Islam,’ thus suggesting the presence of an already-existing ‘consolidated discursive realm’ that rendered this association meaningful. Bush addressed the American nation a few days after the 9/11 events. He framed terrorism as an attempt to destroy the US way of life and its freedom (a ‘speech act’ that constructed terrorism as an ‘existential threat’ that menaced the ‘survival’ of the United States). However, Bush did not name ‘Islam’ as a threat *per se*, but ‘Terror.’ However, he described it as a modern form of ‘evil’ committed in the name of Allah. In his joint address, Bush remarked that “those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself” (2001). However, while this speech seemingly distinguished between ‘terrorist’ and

‘peaceful’ Muslims, it also locates the source of fear and threat on ‘Islamism as a whole’ (Nayak, 2006: 52). Suggesting a direct connection between ‘Islam’ and ‘Terrorism’ is to rewrite terrorism within a known entity to the Western public, Islam, thus feeding into a broader discourse that deems radical fundamentalists ‘part of the Islamic mainstream’ (Mavelli, 2013: 165). As said earlier, by drawing a line between ‘good Muslims’ and ‘bad Muslims,’ Bush implicitly proposed that ‘Muslims who are “peaceful” cannot also fundamentally oppose US hegemonic politics and foreign policy,’ as this would automatically make them terrorists (Nayak, 2006: 52).

Therefore, for the translation of ‘Islam’ into ‘evil’ or ‘terror’ to gain reconnaissance (mainly among the American public, for American intervention justification; and among the international community, for UN support), it had to be formulated by very specific actors in powerful positions, and it had to be represented in forms that can be recognized and accepted by the targeted audience (Abrahamsen, 2005: 58). Stritzel adds that for the translation process to be completed, it had to be rearticulated in a fashion that resonates within an already “consolidated discursive realm” (2013: 165). Consequently, Mavelli argues that the securitization of Muslim minorities in Western societies is a process of construction and reproduction of secular modes of subjectivity. Such discourses resonated with Western-European audiences because it corresponds to the Western assumption that faith should not be interlinked with politics and should be confined to the private sphere. Therefore, Islam threatens the American value system and thus requires exceptional measures as “it evokes the (problematic) image [of] an all-encompassing system of belief that conflates religion (private) and politics (public)” (Mavelli, 2013: 161). The public character of Islam is problematic within a Western framework for two reasons: “on the one hand, the idea that the privatization of religion/Christianity and the emergence of the modern secular state were made necessary by the Wars of Religion; on the other hand, the argument that this privatization was an outcome of the nation-state claim for absolute sovereignty.” In other words, this securitization process serves a dual function: the downgrading of religion from a source of knowledge to the private system of belief; and, its functional subordination to sovereign power. “In this regime, the construction of secular forms of subjectivity based on the privatization of religion and its

subordination to state power cannot be disentangled from the simultaneous construction of Islam as a system that lacks these very features” (Mavelli, 2013: 171). Accordingly, Islam represents a threat for Western notions of secular subjectivity. However, Mavelli adds that, possibly more importantly, it “represents one of their conditions of possibility – or, more precisely, the condition of possibility of an idealized secular notion of subjectivity which projects its tensions, contradictions and limits onto the Islamic Other” (2013: 171). As William Connolly suggested, to a certain extent, “Western secular identity requires Islamic difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self certainty” (2002).

As an effort to run their “threat mitigation” agenda and securitize Islam, it was important for the US to create a division between Islam and public institutions. The curriculum described above is intended to create this separation and avoid an Islamization of knowledge. The Islamization of knowledge has been discussed by many authors, but I use the Muslim Education Foundation’s description (MEF), as it can be very useful to understand the difference of discourse in the Afghan education context. According to them, Islamization begins within an Islamic framework embodied by two essential aspects: 1) to understand the cosmos and a human being’s place in it, and 2) the nature and purpose of education, learning and knowledge (Henzell-Thomas, 2004, cited in Niyozov & Memon). Niyozov & Memon (2011) abound in the same direction and state that “[Islamization of knowledge] insists that integration ought to be more holistic and grounded in the tradition as opposed to appended [to a] framework” (p. 24). In the present curriculum, Islamic studies are one subject among others rather than acting as an umbrella context under which education is conducted.

With all this of the above in mind, the aim of this discussion it not to determine if religion and politics are truly intertwined or separated in Islam, but rather to explore how the social process of securitization of Islam (where Islam is seen as a deviation from the Western standard) cannot be fully understood by “a focus only on the discursive interventions of those voices deemed institutionally legitimate to speak on behalf of a particular collective, usually a state” (McDonald, 2008: 564).

The examination of the material effects issued in such discourse allows the illustration of the power of discursive practices. The Afghan education system has been the topic of great debates, both outside and within Afghanistan, and continues to be critiqued. The new curriculum has been developed with the aim to address security issues and calm Western anxieties rather than attempt to truly attend to Afghan children's needs (which are multiple). This highly politicized process is especially evident as the Bush administration has issued a whole-of-government approach, linking development of national security objectives: the 3D approach: Defence, Diplomacy and Development. The US has made the "War on Terrorism" a priority and has attempted to integrate all other aspects of government policy (such as development) under this overarching objective. Indeed, in a USAID document issued in 2008, it is stated that "Development is also recognized as a key element of any successful whole-of-government counterterrorism and counterinsurgency effort" (2008: 1). As a result, the objectives for both national security and international development have become increasingly intertwined. Indeed, the actions of USAID are more reflective of a military counterinsurgency approach, employed by the Obama administration, than a development approach. The precipitate implementation of the *Back to School* campaigns, with a lack of appropriate scholarly material, reflects the importance of "winning the hearts and minds" of the population over the concern of developing suitable material that is tailored to the population's needs. Most children were attending schools for the first time and were "learning the principles of intolerance, hatred and division" (Spink, 2005a: 203–204), principles that are diametrically opposite to what postconflict education stands for.

### *C) Victimization of Afghan children: a political tool*

The demonization discourse further fuels the politicization of Afghan children, which constructs the latter as mere victims. The experience of children in conflict has been documented for over a decade. In 1996, Graça Machel published the UN-commissioned *Impact of Armed Conflict on children*. This report was the first to investigate the issue, and since then, many research, reporting and advocacy measures have been put in place

to protect children: e.g., many UN Security Council Resolutions, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, the 2000 Optional Protocol. After 2001, the UN agenda was explicitly geared toward investigating the specific experience of children in Afghanistan. The research confirmed the immediate needs for children's protection policies and provided evidence of the violations against children. Six major violations were identified: the killing and maiming of children, the recruitment or use of child soldiers, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, the abduction of children, attacks against schools or hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children. These violations have great impacts on children and have all been addressed in child protection documents. However, the focus of research on these six issues is not exclusive to all suffering experienced by children, but more importantly, it reinforces a conception of children in conflicts as vulnerable victims only. It is important to recognize that these reports offer mostly a one-dimensional and extreme view of the experience of children. Although the picture presented above accurately lists crimes against children, it represents "a skewed account that recognizes and seeks to address victimhood only [...] and limits the capacity to both conceptualize and analyze the nuances of children's agency in conflict" (Lee-Koo, 2013: 481).

In her account of the politicization of children in Afghanistan, Katrina Lee-Koo explains how incorrect it would be to pretend that these children, although limited by conflicts, cannot act independently. She contends that the capacity for children to demonstrate agency is often determined by a combination of the child's own subjectivities (such as age, familial position, gender, life experience, geographic location and personal qualities) and the relationship the child has with those people and events around him or her. Lee-Koo explains how that agency can be demonstrated in various fashions, either through super-empowered actions, such as belligerency, or through de Certeau's (1984) notion of 'the practice of everyday life,' where children assume agency through simple actions: staying alive, playing, learning to hide or going to school within a conflict zone (cited in Lee-Koo, 2013). Although these examples appear to be mundane for most children, in a conflict zone, "they may constitute an impressive demonstration of individual agency" (Lee-Koo, 2013: 482). To support this argument, Boyden and de Berry have examined

children's capacity for decision-making in conflict situations. They concluded that their state of intellectual, physical and emotional development does not make them innately and inherently incapable in making rational determinations in ways that affect their own and others' survival (2004: xvii–xix, cited in Lee-Koo, 2013).

The agency gap in Western research offers the Western reader a dominant and persuasive account of children's victimhood. Since children are supposed to be protected by adults (and this has been made official through various official documents), it is difficult to conceptualize that children could have any role to play in conflicts, and therefore, few have taken the time to argue this position. The passive victim child discourse has significant political consequences. In the context of Afghanistan, it has "transform[ed] the Afghan child into a powerful moral currency that can be traded for political legitimacy in this conflict" (Lee-Koo, 2013: 482).

Furthermore, to attribute such subjectivity to children reinforces the demonization discourse of the Afghan adult, usually the Afghan man. The reports addressing rape, recruiting of child soldiers and suicide bombers, and attacks against schools detail children victims of the abusive acts of adults and are in need of responsible caregivers (read: Americans). This image easily justifies the morality of an intervention for children and validates the use of military means against evil terrorists and children abusers.

#### D) Civic education and Islam

At this point, I would like to comment on an aspect of the curriculum I raised earlier. The new *Curriculum framework Afghanistan* states many times the need to "foster national unity and social cohesion," and it focus on fostering an Afghan identity "in compliance with moderate Islamic values and spiritual beliefs, as opposed to extremist and fundamentalist attitudes" (Department of Compilation and Translation, 2003: 20).

Such an endeavour is highly politicized by Western influence in the curriculum, which will affect the type of subjectivity that will result. Two major elements must be analyzed: 1) the role that interpretation of history plays in creating a national identity in a

postconflict Afghanistan and; 2) the meaning and practices of civic and moral education within Western and Islamic knowledge, their contradiction and possible bridging ideas that could reconcile them.

In recent years, citizenship education has been focused on the teaching of human rights, tolerance and respect for diversity, and global dimensions to citizenship such as interdependence, development and sustainability (Clemitshaw, 2008: 136). Furthermore, it has sought to prepare future citizens by teaching skills and dispositions that promote social participation, including a citizen's 'rights' and 'responsibilities.' In the Afghan young democracy, these subjects have been part of civic education. Finally, there have also been demands for citizenship education to "embrace global issues even more strongly, and contribute to the development of global citizens, better equipped to live and participate in a globalised world" (Davies et al., 2005). However, questions such as "what is Afghan identity?" or "What does it mean to be Afghan?" will inevitably surface in an attempt to foster a national unity. While the international oriented curriculum proposes globally pertinent academic subjects, there is an unavoidable national dimension that distinguishes one country's conception of citizenship from another (Clemitshaw, 2008: 136).

The last 30 years of war and foreign presence have brought chaos and uncertainty in Afghanistan. Many have fled to Pakistan and lived in refugee camps for more than 10 years, while others preferred to find refuge in Iran. Others were even able to move to other continents, such as Europe, North America and Australia (Monsutti, 2013: 274). In 2001, many Afghans returned to Afghanistan, bringing with them various and different experiences, along with new ways of doing things and different interpretations of the political upheaval of their country. All those experiences added together result in a sea of various experiences, of different knowledge and conception of the self, which will present a challenge in fostering a national identity.

There is an understanding that "Civic Education is deeply embedded in a political and historic context unique to each country" (Torney-Purta et al., 1999, cited in Clemitshaw).

In the case of Afghanistan, the choice to eliminate all history from high school textbooks has been received with indignation. The deliberate failure to include the last four decades of Afghan history can have disastrous repercussions. Especially in a postconflict context, the importance of “making sense” of traumatic events cannot be emphasized enough for the process of reconstruction. Social and civic education, which encompasses the study of a country’s history, plays an important role in fostering national unity among a country’s population. Some have argued that the terrible events are so recent that the country is not ready to face it yet while others have accused the government of not fulfilling its educational responsibility. Also, many accuse the Americans of trying to hide the role they had to play in the rising of the Taliban as to preserve the support of the Afghan population. When interviewed on the issue, Education Minister Farooq Wardak replied that “[his] responsibility is to bring unity not disunity in the country. [He is] not going to encourage a divisive education agenda” (Sarwary, 2012). Although the motives are unclear, it is reasonable to think that the absence of history will prevent the population from truly understanding what conditions led to the devastation of their country. Abdul Qodoas, a history teacher at Mirwais High School, commented that “one of the primary objectives of studying history is not to repeat past mistakes. If students will not learn about past violence, how will they avoid it in [the] future?” Other teachers have raised the issue that “younger generations [have] the right to make their own evaluations of the country’s recent history” (Behzan, 2012)

In these circumstances, Parekh (quoted in Smith 2005) writes that: “citizenship is a unitary, unmediated and homogeneous relationship between the individual and the state...abstracting away cultural, ethnic and other identities.” What is identified here is a limitation in the modern conception of citizenship in a community divided and affected by traumatic experience, which does not sufficiently acknowledge these deeply controversial issues.

The case of Cyprus exemplifies the benefits of teaching history, including the “not so good” parts. Following a Cypriot *coup d’état*, Turkey invaded Cyprus. Over 25% of the population was expelled from the island, and many others suffered the loss of family

members and friends. There is a popular principle of ‘I am aware, I do not forget and I struggle,’ which refers to the memory of the villages, schools, churches and properties lost to the Turkish occupation. This principle finds its representation in state-prescribed textbooks to support civic education. The school textbook for Form 6 of the primary school (Ministry of Education 1993, 11th edition, quoted in Papanastasiou and Koutselini-Ioannidou, 1999, cited in Clemitshaw, 2013: 138) begins with a map of Cyprus and the military boot of the Turkish invader stepping on the northern part. The text accompanying the picture is “The territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus were flagrantly violated by the Turkish invasion of 1974.” In the civic education syllabus for primary school, under the sub-title “I have not forgotten,” there is special mention of the refugees: “They realise that our refugees have never forgotten our occupied villages and towns and they live daily with the longing and the hope for their return” (Ministry of Education 1993, 11th edition, quoted in Papanastasiou and Koutselini- Ioannidou, 1999).

Here we witness an expression of civic identity through a response to a perceived outrage, which brought with it the traumatic experiences of armed conflict, population displacement and loss of community and personal property. This is raw, it is a collective experience, and it provides, in Cyprus, the basis for a discussion of rights, and defines a collective identity. It also illustrates how the link between citizenship and history is important in that process.

It is not my intention here to reject the modern global dimensions for citizenship education, or against the importance of universal human rights, but to argue that the issue of national identity cannot be sidestepped, as it brings with it implications for the acknowledgements that need to be made by the citizen to the plurality of experiences and identities that make up the nation, especially in a postconflict context. “Identity, at the national level, the nation as a locus of being-together, constitutes a problematic that cannot be wished away. Historical dimensions are essential ingredients in exploring a national identity that is complex, diverse, tense and even conflicting” (Clemitshaw, 2008: 137).

The second idea I would like to explore is the meaning and practice of civic and moral education within Western and Islamic knowledge, their contradiction and possible bridging ideas that could reconcile them.

As discussed earlier, Jones' examination of grade 1 and 2 civic education textbooks points out that, in the context of reconstruction and reconciliation, the important focus is placed on the individual, and argues that certain language reflects "that the individual rather than the community is more significant in life" (2007: 38). First, such an approach is almost opposite to an Islamic conception of peace for which peace is based on "communal solidarity, social justice, faith and cultural pluralism. This perspective of peace has deep roots in Islamic traditions and Muslims are struggling to implement it in their own societies" (Saïd et al., 2002: 26).

Also, in the context of the construction of a national identity, the importance of the individualistic view presented in textbooks requires that the concept of individuality be investigated both from a Western and Islamic point of view. Khuram Hussain, a specialist of the cultural foundations of education, provides an interesting account of this subject. He contends that Western moral education attempts to answer the question of "What does it mean to be a good person?", but must first have a good understanding of what it means to be a person. Hussain explains how in Western academia, morality is inseparable from social life, as without the latter, there is no moral world. Moral truths are socially constructed and formed through "immersion in the social body and has meaning as it relates to society... There is no distinction between individual and social morality as the former is meaningless without the latter" (2007: 299). In other words, a specific morality emanates from the discourse in vogue at a particular moment, and that it is bound to specific circumstances of time and location. In contrast, from an Islamic viewpoint, "the quintessential goal of moral education is the awakening and proper situating of the inner being in a person" (*ibid*, 300). The awakening of the inner self can only occur through the purification of the self; when the physical, spiritual and psychological elements are stimulated and guided toward good and right actions. A "good person" is thus understood

as “possessing integrated and order internal unity, wherein the soul governs the body, just as God governs the universe” (*ibid*). Therefore, moral education does not rely on parents, communities or state, but on the person and the soul within the person. “Self (*nafs*) in this verse denotes the human personality as a whole, including both the physical body and soul” (Asad, 1980: 954). The Qu’ran defines various levels of *nafs*, such as a negatively inclined state (Qu’ran, 12-53), a self-reproaching state (Qu’ran, 75-2) or a state of inner peace (Qu’ran, 89-27). Moral education’s goal is to purify the *naf* of any negative states through practices, intentions and beliefs, and grow in purity. Qu’ranic teachings help Muslims through this spiritual development. This explains how the fidelity to moral teachings of the Qu’ran and its criteria for knowledge and virtue are such a central feature of the development of Muslim societies.

“Ideal social morality in an Islamic sense aims to develop an Islamic character in each Muslim, manifested in a harmonious community of inwardly guided individuals who will interact in just and noble ways” (Hussain, 2007: 303). Therefore, although the personal and individual quest for purification is central, the final goal is to pose actions that are noble and oriented toward the well-being of the general community. Western focus on individuals favours a person’s desires, competition and personal success, although all of these are also subject to the general discourse. Therefore, the Islamic moral education allows space for a variety of understandings of what it means to find the inner self, and by extension, of what the Self is. Although they are guided by the same principles, students possess a great liberty in the formation of their own identity. Such an explanation also helps in understanding how the history of Islam and Islamic teaching can be so diverse, and also for a variety of knowledge. In contrast, the Western perception of what is a “good person” is bound to social experience at a specific time and location, and is bound by the particular discourse, which thus restricts the possibilities for agency.

Islam is much more than politics; religion is part of everyday life and Islam is what 99% of all Afghans have in common (Borchgrevink, 2013: 70). “In reality, the history of Islam is fundamentally a history of different interpretations.” (Noor, 2002: 25, cited in Jones,

2007: 28). However, although differences in interpretation were subject to debate, all traditions entertained relatively peaceful relationships with each other. This is especially significant in the case of Afghanistan, since a multiplicity of ethnic groups have been living together for centuries. Although the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) counts 7 major groups (Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, other 4%), the national Afghan anthem names 14 different ethnic groups. The CIA also counts a minimum of 35 different languages (Afghan Persian or Dari (official) 50%; Pashto (official) 35%; Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%; 30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai) 4%). In such a diverse environment, Islam served as a powerful uniting force. Although it now consists of many traditions (Hanafi, Jafari and Ismaeli, as well as different Sufi orders) (Shirazi, 2008: 212), Islam has served as a strong basis for Afghan cultural identity, and still serves as the basis of Afghan social mores, rights and obligation, regardless of ethnicity (Karlsson and Mansoury, 2004, cited in Shirazi, 2008).

To foster a new national identity in Afghanistan necessarily imposes the intervention of Islamic knowledge. For Al-Zeera, Islamic education is about holism, ethos, cultural change, about creating oases where ideal Islam is lived, practiced and spread from. To her, a true Islamic education is essentially holistic, where: (i) learning takes place through various human faculties (e.g., mind, heart and soul); (ii) knowledge domains are interconnected and united, serving non-contradictory human and divine purposes (Niyozov & Memon, 2007: 24). The de-Islamization of knowledge served by the Americans attempts to secularize the Afghan, which is the type of experience described by Al-Zeera and denied in school. However, the provision of education which guarantees a comfortable future in a society that was shook by 30 years of conflict is quite attractive and certainly works toward fulfilling the objective of a counterinsurgency intervention of winning hearts and minds.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion – Postcolonialism and education in Afghanistan

The case of Afghanistan is interesting as it is representative of a new current restructuring the world dominant discourse: security and terrorism. In addition to the modernization and economic growth ethos, issues of security now lead the practices and policies of the international community. To analysis the effects of this new discourse, I used two different theories which, analyzed side-by-side, help grasp different aspects of the situation in Afghanistan. The Copenhagen School's theory of securitization helps us understand how the "War on Terror" launched in 2001 resonated with such force within western audiences. The United States and other western countries' hegemonic position was threatened by groups that had so far only occupied a secondary role in world affairs, but that were now menacing the physical safety, but more importantly the political, military, economic, social position of superiority of the United States. Immediately after the events of 9/11, a politic of securitization was initiated and socially constructed Islam as a driving force for terrorism. To position Islam as a "threat" allowed resorting to "extraordinary measures", thus, the invasion of Afghanistan.

Postcolonial theories allow us to understand how the education system in Afghanistan became a fighting ground within the War on Terror. Education is perceived as a social promotion tool which helps children prepare for a better future (employment, good quality of life). However, education can also be used as a tool of 'indoctrination', or in Foucault's words, as a disciplinary tool that shapes the body. In promoting a secular education, the international community had a clear goal in mind; to inculcate western thinking on young Afghan children, with the hope to divert them from a fundamentalist view of Islam (and therefore fundamentalist groups), and hopefully, make them embrace the Western values (competition, individualism, performance, capitalism, etc.). The focus on the education is part of a wider strategy of "winning hearts and minds" or counterinsurgency. Anderson (2011) argued that this strategy's intention is to make a pull of potential future enemies into friends, before they can be made into enemies (affiliation with fundamentalist Islamic groups). In this manner, education was a perfect tool. In a

postconflict situation, children's return to school is a clear sign of hope, a sign of a possibility to build a brighter future, of peace and safety and a sign of the end of brutalities. This presented the United States as the savior of the Afghan people and the friend of the children. Therefore, as millions of children were going back to school in 2002, the opportunity to enforce a new curriculum which served western (and American) interests could not be missed.

In such a case, postcolonial theories are helpful in defining the power relations at play. A postcolonial approach allows detecting, questioning and critiquing the effect of global power over the social, economic, political and cultural lives for 'developing' countries. As Rizvi states,

[...] postcolonial theories can perform a valuable role, not least because they draw attention to the false universalism of globalisation, and show how contemporary social, political, economic and cultural practices continue to be located within the processes of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structure of power (Rizvi, 2005: 1).

The power struggle in Afghanistan must be grounded in a historical understanding, which allows viewing the effects of a western dominant discourse and its conflicting aspects with the local culture. Since 9/11, a hegemonic western discourse has positioned the Islamic faith within a security dilemma and made it its primary opponent. In Afghanistan, the population stands on the frontiers where two major forces confront each other; on one side, a western hegemonic discourse encompassing the promotion of human rights, secularism, capitalism and neoliberalism confronts the other side, an Islamic imperialism that has been the prevalent socializing mode in Afghanistan and the surrounding regions for centuries. In terms of education,

Postcolonialism's contentions, surrounding the relationship between knowledge and power, are linked directly to education, both as an institution where people are inculcated into hegemonic systems of reasoning and as a site where it is possible to resist dominant discursive practices. In this way, education has a systematically ambivalent relation to postcolonialism. On the one hand, it is an object of postcolonial critique regarding its complicity with Eurocentric discourses and practices. On the other hand, it is only through education that it is possible to reveal and resist colonialism's continuing hold on our imagination. Education is also a site where legacies of colonialism and the contemporary processes of globalization intersect (Rizvi & al., 2006: 257).

Postcolonialism can act both as a critic of the dominant practices and as a decolonizing project or liberation from globalization as simply a neo-liberal economics. In terms of

education, to posit postcolonialism as an venture requires the elaboration of “a politics of the subaltern’ where there is, as Young suggests, ‘a conceptual reorientation towards the perspectives of knowledges, as well as needs, developed outside the west” (2003, p. 6). In this perspective, it is possible to see how the imposition of a more western curriculum in Afghanistan shapes a population within a different regime of truth. In other words, Afghan children are instructed with different values, which shape different desires and aspirations within them. As a result, they become detached from Islamic thinking and uprooted from a cultural basis that has been present in this specific location for centuries. To illustrate such a process, it could be said that, through education, the international community is building an army of little western Afghans, ready to adhere to western value and accepting other cultural beliefs as their own. Indeed, the discussion on civic education and the concept of the individual and its relation with its community in each culture serves a good example. It exemplifies how western and Islamic values can contradict themselves, and lead to the production of a western subjectivity. However, such a project was doomed from the start. Afghans could never be western or never totally accepted as a European or an American; there will always be a little variation or a defect that will set them apart. And this is where the Western project of “education” Afghan children fails. To explain this, Bhabha’s concept of hybridity is useful. Afghan children must negotiate what they learn in school (western oriented curriculum) with the Islamic discourse circulating in the Afghan society. This negotiation leads to a hybrid identity, that is neither Afghan nor Western, but that borrows traits from both. I believe that the concept of hybridity is an appropriate tool to understand the dynamic at play. Other authors have commented that hybridity also represent a form of resistance. By not completely becoming ‘Western’ and maintaining Islamic traits, the Afghan agency is expressed by the refusal to be completely ‘assimilated’. However, because the new education is so recent (implemented in 2013, and is still being modified), it will be difficult to assess the complete modifications and effects that the encounters of these to cultural trends will produce. Furthermore, as the access to Afghanistan is still difficult, limited data are available to dress an accurate portrait of the experience of Afghan children. Only time will tell...

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