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**Performing Gender in the ‘Theatre of War’: Embodying
the Invasion, Counterinsurgency and Exit Strategy in
Afghanistan**

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Submitted for the degree of PhD in International Relations

University of Sussex

April 2013

Declaration:

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

Material used in chapter four and five have appeared in:

Dyvik, S.L. (2013) 'Women as 'Practitioners' and 'Targets': Gender and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Forthcoming.

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**PERFORMING GENDER IN THE ‘THEATRE OF WAR’:
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EXIT STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN**

SUMMARY

This thesis offers a critical feminist reading of the war in Afghanistan, from invasion, through the practice of counterinsurgency, to the training of the Afghan National Army as a central part of NATO’s exit strategy. Empirically it focuses on the discourses, policies and practices of the US and Norwegian militaries in Afghanistan. It draws on a range of material including military doctrine and policy, parliamentary discussions, public policy documents, interviews, political statements and soldiers’ memoirs.

Deploying the theoretical framework of *performative gender* with an emphasis on embodiment, it shows how particular gendered bodies are called into being and how the distinct practices of war in Afghanistan produce and rely on a series of multiple, fluid and, at times, contradictory performances of masculinity and femininity. It demonstrates how gendered performances should not be considered superfluous, but rather integral to the practices of war. It illustrates this, first, by examining the production of the (in) visible ‘body in the burqa’ alongside the ‘protective masculinity’ of Western politicians in the legitimization of the invasion; second, through the ‘soldier-scholars’, ‘warriors’ and the Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in practices of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency, examining the ways in which counterinsurgency is a gendered and embodied practice; and third, through the remaking of the fledgling Afghan National Army (ANA) recruits in the NATO exit strategy.

The thesis furthers feminist studies on gender and war in International Relations by emphasising the multiplicity of gendered bodies and performances by problematizing singular notions of masculinity and femininity. It contributes to existing literature that reads the war in Afghanistan as a neocolonial and biopolitical practice, enhancing these readings by paying attention to the gendering of bodies and their performances, thereby expanding critical investigations into late modern ways of war and counterinsurgency.

Performing Gender in the ‘Theatre of War’: Embodying the Invasion, Counterinsurgency and Exit Strategy in Afghanistan	1
Acknowledgements	6
Abbreviations, Acronyms and Glossary:	8
 Chapter 1 - Introduction	 11
1.0 Situating the Project and the Empirical Focus	12
1.1 <i>US and Norway in Afghanistan</i>	15
2.0 Methodological and Epistemological Reflections	22
2.1 <i>Discourse, Productions and Performances</i>	22
2.2 <i>Memoirs, Experience and Embodiment</i>	28
3.0 The Argument and Structure of the Thesis	31
 Chapter 2 - Performing Gender in the ‘Theatre of War’	 38
1.0 Sex, Gender, Bodies and Performativity	39
1.1 <i>Intersections, Assemblages and Racialized bodies</i>	43
2.0 Military Masculinities and War Writing (on) Bodies	46
2.1 <i>The Military Writing (on) Bodies</i>	47
2.2 <i>Military Masculinities - Multiplicity, Fluidity and Change</i>	51
2.3 <i>Writing Women’s Martial Bodies</i>	58
3.0 Gender, Biopolitics and Counterinsurgency	60
Conclusion	63
 Chapter 3 -The Gendered Invasion of Afghanistan: The (In)Visible ‘Body in the Burqa’ and Performances of ‘Protective Masculinity’	 65
1.0 ‘A Fight for the Rights and Dignity of Women’	67
1.1 <i>Reinventing President Bush</i>	68
1.2 <i>Maternalism and Imperialism</i>	70
2.0 The (In)Visible ‘Body in the Burqa’	75
2.1 <i>Unveiling the Afghan Woman</i>	75
2.2 <i>Beauty without Borders</i>	79
3.0 Performances of Masculinities in Foreign Policy	81
3.1 <i>Performing ‘Protective Masculinity’</i>	82
3.2 <i>Playing with ‘the Big Boys’</i>	87
Conclusion	90
 Chapter 4 -The Practice of ‘Population-Centric’ Counterinsurgency: Reimagining the ‘Battlefield of War’ and the Multiplicity of Military Masculinities	 92
1.0 Reimagining and Governing the ‘Battlefield of War’	94
1.1 <i>The Dawn of the ‘Soldier-Scholars’</i>	99
1.2 <i>Culture and Counterinsurgency</i>	102

2.0 The Multiple Military Masculinities of Counterinsurgency	107
2.1 <i>The 'Killing and Caring' of Counterinsurgency</i>	111
2.2 <i>'War is Better than Sex'</i>	115
2.3 <i>Emotions, Sexuality and Heteronormativity</i>	119
2.4 <i>'Fobbits', 'Ducks' and 'Turtles'</i>	121
Conclusion	127
 Chapter 5 - The Practice of 'Population-Centric Counterinsurgency': Writing Women's Bodies in War	130
1.0 Female Engagement Teams (FETs) and the 'Gender Perspective'	133
2.0 Creating Potential Allies	140
2.1 <i>Women as Eyes and Ears</i>	142
2.2 <i>Armed Empowerment</i>	146
3.0 A Woman's Touch to Counterinsurgency	149
3.1 <i>A Feminine Labour of Care</i>	150
3.2 <i>The Politics of Martial Femininity</i>	154
Conclusion	158
 Chapter 6 - (Re)Producing Martial Bodies and Military Masculinities: The Training of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the 'Exit Strategy'	161
1.0 Enabling the 'Exit Strategy' and Handing over Security	163
2.0 Moulding the Afghan Soldier Body	166
2.1 <i>'Strong fighters don't always make good soldiers'</i>	168
2.2 <i>Holding Hands and Watching Porn</i>	171
2.3 <i>To help them become better Afghans</i>	177
3.0 Producing the Oriental Other in 'the Land that Time Forgot'	180
3.1 <i>The Politics of Cultural Incompatibility</i>	186
Conclusion	189
 Chapter 7 - Conclusions	192
1.0 Writing Martial Bodies of the War in Afghanistan	195
2.0 Counterinsurgency as 'Killing and Caring'	199
3.0 Towards a Feminist Reading of Late Modern Warfare	206
 Bibliography:	211

Acknowledgements

I enjoy reading acknowledgements. They remind me that academic work is always a collective process that draws on a number of people's kindness, generosity, knowledge, engagement, criticism and support. No less so with this work, and I am glad to have the opportunity to thank those whose company and time has engaged and sustained me through the ups and downs of the thesis writing process.

First and foremost, a huge amount of gratitude is owed to my wonderfully generous and intellectually stimulating supervisors Louiza Odysseos and Anna Stavrianakis. Your gracious combination of pushing me in new and exciting directions, giving me a break when I needed it, calming me down and challenging me with new ideas and perspectives has truly driven this research forward. I could not have completed this process without you and I thank you both so very much!

I am also grateful to the wider academic community at Sussex and my many friends and colleagues there. Thanks to Beate Jahn, Sam Knafo, Lara Montesinos Coleman, Kamran Matin, and Paul Kirby for academic advice and support. Also thanks to Claire Duncanson and Cynthia Weber for agreeing to examine me and for providing me with great advice on the road ahead.

Thanks also to Lisa Smirl, who was always supportive of this work. You lit up the Sussex IR corridor for too short a time.

Thanks to all round good people – Ana, Andrei, Can, Clemens, Ishan, Katie, Richard, Steffan, Tom, and Yuliya for discussions, laughs, drinks and good times. Thanks to my office crew – Neil, Darius, Tom and Sam – you've sustained me with ample supplies of tea, penguins and jokes of questionable standard. Thanks to Lauren for letting me pick your brain and discussing my thoughts with you. Thanks to Rehab for being there from the start and for your loving and generous spirit. A massive thanks also to my proofreading and copyediting crew for meticulous comments and suggestions. To my darling friends Maia and Cherine (aka the DLF) – thanks for all your love, comfort and interesting conversation. In the end, I did regulate!

I am also grateful to dear friends back home, Ane, Anne Kari, Anne Karin, Behnaz, Caroline, Christiane, Hildegunn and Sunniva for love and support. Thanks to Helene and Erlend for dinners, advice, kindness and road trips. Thanks to Emma, Jonathan, Stine, Silas, Ulrik, Jacob Emil and Jacob for games, laughter and play. My siblings, Ane, Lars Jacob and Jenny, and to my extended family, in particular Sigrid and Peter Emil – I am so grateful to you for hosting, visiting and being a joyful refuge from work. To my loving parents Reidun and

Odd, I am eternally thankful. You have sustained me with generosity, prayers, love and solace – I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Last, but hardly least, to my dearest Ole Johannes. You have been my constant source of intellectual and emotional support, always allowing me to discuss my thoughts and never faltering in your efforts to cheer me up when I was down. I am grateful for your compassion, endurance and patience in these last weeks and I can only hope to repay your kindness when your turn comes around.

There are many more that should have been thanked, not least the many inspiring feminists I have met at conferences, in particular the ISA Annual Conference in San Diego in 2012. You are too numerous to be mentioned, but know that these ‘random meets’ have been very meaningful.

This thesis is dedicated to my dearest grandmother Jenny Laastad, who since I started this PhD has asked me when I will become a professor. Thank you for believing in me!

Abbreviations, Acronyms and Glossary:

ABP – Afghan Border Police

ANA – Afghan National Army

ANA 3-24 – Afghan National Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual

ANP – Afghan National Police

ANSF – Afghan National Security Forces

AR 670-1 – US Army Regulation Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia

Arbakee – Local, neighbourhood, community police force in Afghanistan

CALL – Centre Army Lessons Learned

CIMIC – Civil-Military Cooperation

COIN – Counterinsurgency

COMISAF – Commander International Security Assistance Force

CWINF – Committee on Women in NATO Forces

EMSI - Equipes Medico-Sociales Itinérantes

ETT – Embedded Training Team

FET – Female Engagement Team

FM 3-24 – US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual

FMF – Feminist Majority Foundation

FOB – Forward Operating Base

Forsvaret – Norwegian Armed Forces

GIRoA – Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

HTS – Human Terrain System

HTT – Human Terrain Teams

IO – Information Operations

ISAF – International Security Assistance Force

Kandak – Pashto word for battalion

KMTC – Kabul Military Training Centre

Loya Jirga – Pashto word meaning ‘grand assembly’.

NAP – National Action Plan

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer

NCGP – National Committee on Gender Perspectives (NATO)

NMAA – National Military Academy of Afghanistan

NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council

NTM-A – NATO Training Mission Afghanistan

RAWA – Revolutionary Association Women of Afghanistan

OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom

OMLT – Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team

PRT – Provincial Reconstruction Team

Shura – Arabic word for ‘consultation’, commonly used for local negotiations in Afghanistan

Stortinget – Norwegian Parliament

T₃R – Tooth to Tail Ratio

UN – United Nations

UNAMA – United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan

UNIFIL – United Nations Interim Force Lebanon

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

UNSCR 1325 – United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000)

UNSCR 1386 – United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386 on the Situation in Afghanistan (2001)

US – United States of America

WPS – Women, Peace and Security

Figure 1: ‘The Grammar of Orientalization or Reverse Mirror-Imaging’. Page 236.
From: Baumann, G. 2004. ‘Grammars of Identity/Alterity. A Structural Approach’, in Baumann, G., Gingrich, A. (ed.) *Grammars of Identity/Alterity. A Structural Approach*. Berghahn Books.

- Chapter 1 -

Introduction

On October 7th 2001, the United States (US) together with a 'coalition of the willing', and backed by what President George W. Bush called 'the collective will of the world' launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) on Afghanistan (CNN 2001). Less than a month earlier, on September 11th, the iconic images of planes hitting the twin towers of the World Trade Centre were carved into the memory of people across the globe. Almost immediately, rallying cries for war began, and Afghanistan, a country many in the West had barely heard about, let alone could place on a map, became the centre of these attacks as part of a wider 'war on terror'. While the US and Great Britain were the greatest contributors to OEF, the 'coalition of the willing' was formed of members in NATO and beyond, including Norway.

The invasion of Afghanistan coincided with international media outlets filling up with images and stories of Afghan women's suffering under the misogyny of the Taliban regime and a proliferation of 'Blue Burqa Books' (Kolhatkar and Ingalls 2006: 180). This sudden concern for the lives of Afghan women served to justify the invasion, on the grounds that it was saving women's lives and securing their rights. Western politicians, performing a version of 'protective masculinity' were thereby able to cast themselves as saviours and liberators of the Afghan people, and Afghan women in particular.

Since the invasion, the war in Afghanistan has become the longest war fought by the US and the biggest NATO operation since its inception. It eventually developed into a fully-fledged counterinsurgency campaign, paired with numerous efforts towards democratisation, reconstruction, and a form of 'statebuilding craze' (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2007). Around 2000 Americans and 10 Norwegians have been killed, along with at least 20,000 civilians, though these latter figures might well be higher (BBC 2012). European and American

support for the war has since waned, and most international troops are set to withdraw in 2014 (CNN 2011, Tisdall 2012).

Feminists have for decades shown how gender is an integral part of what enables war and how it is central to understanding its practice. Working in the tradition of feminists who seek to study war and gender as concepts with a history of co-constitution, this thesis aims at tracing the production of gendered bodies and the multiplicity of gendered performances in the invasion, the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency and the NATO 'Exit Strategy' of training Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). It shows how in all three instances, gendered productions, performances and bodies are central.

While much has been written on the gendered discourse of the 'war on terror', which enabled Afghan women to become a pretext for the invasion, less attention has been placed on the role that gendered bodies and gendered performances have played in counterinsurgency and in the training of Afghan troops. This thesis seeks to rectify this by showing how counterinsurgency calls into being particular gendered bodies and relies on a multiplicity of gendered performances for its practice, including 'soldier-scholars', 'warriors' and Female Engagement Teams (FETs). This multiplicity is argued to be crucial for understanding the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, which is conceptualised as being situated within a gendered dynamic of 'killing and caring'. This dynamic manifests itself in the practice of war in different ways; as a tension, contradiction, balancing act and at times, with the one enabling or restricting the other. As a whole, this thesis aims at showing the complexity, multiplicity and fluidity of gendered performances in the 'theatre of war'.

1.0 Situating the Project and the Empirical Focus

As most academic projects, this thesis has gone through several iterations before reaching its current state. In the beginning, my focus was squarely on the

discourse of the war in Afghanistan and its policy implications for women in the different modes of the war. However, halfway through the project it became more and more apparent to me that this only got at half the story. What was missed was how masculinities and femininities become integral to enabling practices of war and how fluid and multiple gendered bodies are called into being at various times during the course of the war. My original research plan would not have got at the 'hard gendered work' that is involved in 'doing' invasion, counterinsurgency and the training of another nation's troops. It would have missed how particular performances of masculinity and femininity are crucial to the justification and practice of war in its various stages and how these 'travel' between foreign policy discourse, military doctrine and the gendered bodies of soldiers and civilians.

Through the course of writing the thesis, bodies kept popping up. The bodies of burqa clad Afghan women on the front of newspapers, the bodies of male soldiers posing on the top of tanks, the bodies of female counterinsurgents holding Afghan babies and the bodies of Afghan soldiers learning how to march and stand in a straight line. Increasingly it seemed that these bodies were worth taking notice of and studying *as* bodies. More accurately, to study how these bodies perform gender in a way that is both produced by and productive of war.

The thesis provides a feminist reading of this war and wishes to contribute to the growing field of critical feminist scholarship on war and security. While feminist approaches to International Relations (IR) remain at the margins and are very much an 'unfinished journey' (Sylvester 2002), it is fair to say that feminists in IR have made inroads in the last three decades, along with other approaches that seek to shift the epistemological and ontological basis of mainstream IR theory. *Millennium's* seminal conference 'Women and IR' in 1988 is often hailed as an important turning point, and despite great variations within the field, the starting point for many feminists at this time was asking the question of 'where are the women in international relations?' (see for instance Elshtain 1987, Enloe 1990, Tickner 1992, Enloe 1993). Feminists have since broadened this scope to include

questions about how IR and politics produce certain gendered subjects, particularly through dominant narratives of security and war (see among others Hooper 2001, Odysseos and Seckinelgin 2002, Hunt and Rygiel 2006, Parpart and Zalewski 2008, Sjoberg and Gentry 2008, Riley et al. 2008, Bhattacharyya 2008, Shepherd 2008, Sjoberg et al. 2010, Wibben 2011).

Feminism is understood here to be a social and political movement, a practice, a theoretical and analytical framework and a societal critique. Its theories resist the inconsistent division between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ (Mohanty 1988, hooks 2000, Wibben 2011) or, what is at times called, ‘theory’ and the ‘real world out there’ (Zalewski 1996). As such, it opens up new avenues for research that previously have not been seen to have anything to do with gender. That said, as will be discussed in chapter two, feminists have for decades disputed what gender actually constitutes, what shapes it, how it is visible and how to best study it ¹.

In addition to feminist theory, this thesis benefits from and contributes to a wide range of critical readings of war and security. Counterinsurgency is increasingly being interrogated from critical security studies’ and critical war studies’ perspectives. Scholars have studied its relationship to culture and colonialism (Gregory 2004, Gonzalez 2007, Gregory 2008b, Porter 2009); as a biopolitical and embodied practice (Reid 2006, Bell 2011, McSorley 2013b); and its relationship to liberal war and humanitarian intervention (Slim 2004, Bell 2011, Feichtinger et al. 2012). However, counterinsurgency studied as a gendered practice or from a

¹ There are many ways in which divisions within feminist theory and gendered analysis can be drawn up. Christine Sylvester argues for a threefold division of feminist epistemologies consisting of ‘empiricist’, ‘standpoint’ and ‘postmodern’ (1994: 9-14); Charlotte Hooper divides feminist theory around ‘three dimensions of analysis’, namely ‘physical embodiment’, ‘institutions and the gendered social processes they encompass’ and the ‘discursive dimension’ (2001: 20-34). Lene Hansen prefers a division between ‘rationalist’, ‘standpoint’ and ‘poststructuralist’ feminist perspectives in IR (2010: 17-28). While ‘rationalist’ approaches are mainly state centric and can be based in biological gender, the main difference between ‘standpoint’ and ‘poststructuralist’ lies in who the referent object is, where the former sees ‘women’ as the main referent object within a ‘real-world existence based on biological gender’ and the latter instead sees gender as mainly performative’ (Hansen 2010: 24). Annick T.H. Wibben, rather than dividing different feminist perspectives, argue that most of them stem from wanting to raise questions about what is considered ‘normal’ (2011: 12). She argues that many important and challenging questions have been raised by women within the movement, particularly though Black, Chicana, lesbian and postcolonial feminism which raises questions about the validity of and limitations of liberal feminism (Wibben 2011: 13-16).

feminist perspective has, with a few notable exceptions (Khalili 2010a, Christie 2012, McBride and Wibben 2012, Duncanson and Cornish 2012), received relatively little attention. This thesis draws on these works and wishes to contribute to further feminist interventions into counterinsurgency as a form of gendered late modern warfare.

While the general development in Western militaries in the last twenty years has been geared towards technological advancements, cyber warfare and drones (McSorley 2013a: 4-5 see also , Der Derian 2001), counterinsurgency is in many ways a war of neo-traditionalists. Steeped in colonial nostalgia, counterinsurgency warfare emphasises the personal qualities of soldiers, intimate relations with civilians, knowledge, understanding and above all, embodiment. Far removed from drones and over zealous technologically savvy engineers, this type of warfare situates the population as a malleable mass that needs to be won over and, ultimately, transformed. As the thesis shows, this calls into being distinct gendered bodies and relies on a range of gendered performances. It shows these to be crucial to understanding not only the development of counterinsurgency as a doctrine, but also its practice in Afghanistan.

1.1 US and Norway in Afghanistan

The thesis focuses on two countries' policies and practices in Afghanistan. While the US is in many ways an obvious choice of focus when studying the war in Afghanistan, there are good reasons for integrating Norwegian operations into the analysis as well. I will here account for this choice and show what is to be gained from this dual focus.

Firstly, the choice of cases is a particularly gendered one and the dynamic between the two can be conceptualised as one of 'big boys' and 'small boys'. Norway has long had a reputation for being a country associated with humanitarian aid and peace, and this has been nurtured and actively sought by

various Norwegian governments (Leira et al. 2007, Tvedt 2009). However, when the (rushed) decision to join the US led invasion of Afghanistan was taken in 2001, the need to reinforce its masculine and 'hard' credentials was, as I argue in more detail in chapter three, decisive. Secondly, studying two countries such as Norway and the US alongside each other troubles the notion of 'the West' acting in Afghanistan as a coherent and unitary entity. These are two Western powers, both founding and active members of NATO, with similar, albeit different, approaches and concerns when it comes to conducting warfare in Afghanistan. The dual emphasis points to how military cultures, histories and multiple military masculinities shape the policies pursued and influence outcomes. Furthermore, it enables a more nuanced understanding of what kinds of concerns are balanced in performances of foreign policy in this type of warfare. Thirdly, the choice is a personal one. Having lived for some time in the US and having grown up in Norway, the choice is driven by an urge to better understand the politics of a country I feel close to and the place I call home and their role in a war that has defined much of these countries foreign and domestic policies for more than a decade.

The US and Norway share a long and strong alliance. Norway has always nurtured strong security ties to the US and was a founding member of NATO. Gro Harlem Brundtland famously said that 'Norway is a country with her back to Europe and facing the Atlantic', a phrase that captures both a geographical description and a state of mind (Græger and Leira 2005: 47). NATO membership has had a defining role for the development of Norwegian security and defence policy. As Nina Græger argues, 'during the Cold War, the US always enjoyed primacy and it still does' (2005a: 97).

Even though its armed forces have historically been organised around 'territorial defence', since the end of the Second World War, Norway has supplied troops, material and funding for several peacekeeping forces under the auspices of the

UN². However, following the changes in NATO and the alliance taking on an increased international role (Ringsmose and Rynning 2009), particularly since the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995, political authorities argued that Norwegian contributions had to become ‘tougher’, and that the ‘image of a small nation playing a support role in military matters had to be replaced in order to maintain influence and prestige within the alliance’ (Haaland 2010: 545 see also, Edstrøm et al. 2009). This assumed need for Norwegian forces to become ‘tougher’, more ‘international’ and more ‘deployable’ guides much of Norwegian security and defence policy and is visible in several key strategy documents produced by successive governments³. They all indicate a shift in priorities, structures, funding and organisation from a ‘territorial defence’, to a military with a greater capacity to take on international operations, led increasingly by NATO. It is believed that the changes put in place have ‘granted Norway a great reputation and strengthened our trustworthiness as a serious contributor and alliance partner’ (Forsvarsdepartementet/MoD 2003-2004: 9), along with a capacity to meet ‘new threats’ through creating a force with ‘swift reaction capacity, availability, flexibility and deployability’ (Forsvarsdepartementet/MoD 2003-2004: 14 see also, Vigeland Rottem 2007). In a nutshell, the common sense in the Norwegian military and political elite is that because of Norway’s dependence on allied support, ‘Norway could best ensure its own security by supporting the common NATO structure and new NATO tasks’ (Græger 2005a: 89-90).

While these two countries share a strong alliance, particularly through NATO, there are some obvious differences between them in terms of sheer size, role on the international stage and influence. There are also some important differences in their Armed Forces. Norway still maintains conscription for all fit men over the age of 18. Since 2009, all female citizens are obligated to meet the conscription board, but national service is ultimately voluntary (Forsvaret 2012a). This policy is

² The longest deployment of Norwegian troops abroad was to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which lasted from 1978 to 1998 (for more examples see Haaland 2010).

³ There are multiple government documents that guide and highlight the necessity for change in defence spending and priorities (see for instance Forsvarsdepartementet/MoD 2000, Forsvarsdepartementet/MoD 2003-2004, Forsvarsdepartementet/MoD 2009a)

currently under review with politicians discussing if women should be drafted on the same grounds as males. Since 1984 women have had the same rights to work in all sectors of the military, including combat, but despite efforts to increase the number of women in the Norwegian Armed Services, the numbers have stood still at around 8% for the last ten years. This is lower than several other NATO countries like France (14%), Canada (17,3%), and Lithuania (12%) (Skjelsbæk and Tryggestad 2011: 59-60).

Conversely, the US armed forces are based on voluntary service. Out of the almost 1,5 million strong force (USDoD 2011) around 68,000 are serving in Afghanistan (NBCNEWS 2012), though numbers are currently decreasing in line with plans for withdrawal in 2014 . Around 15% of its forces are women and the US has long had a combat ban in place for women. However, following the combat intensive operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, where many women have actually been in combat, and the case of four servicewomen having recently filed a law suit against the US military on the grounds that the exclusion policy is unconstitutional (Guardian 2012b), this policy was changed in January 2013. US Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta announced that there would be increased openings for women in combat duty, though this is likely to take some time and not involve all sectors of the military (Barnes 2013). The experiences from Iraq and Afghanistan, and the roles that female soldiers have played here are frequently cited as a reason for the change. That said, the various services have until May 2013 to submit plans for carrying out the policy, and have until January 2016 to determine whether their service should be exempt (Bumiller and Shanker 2013).

Bearing in mind these differences is important with regards to the analysis and it is important to emphasise that the US and Norwegian armed forces operations in Afghanistan are quite different. One element here is the sheer size of the forces deployed to Afghanistan, another being location. Whereas US troops are stationed across the country, and also in the volatile Southern and Eastern Regions, Norwegian forces have been confined mainly to the north, in Meymaneh

and Ghowrmach in Faryab, Mazar e Sharif in Balkh and a few stationed in Kabul. Norway significantly cut down on its military presence in Faryab in October 2012 (Gahr Støre 2012) and the contingent that recently returned from Faryab, Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) 18 (denoting the number of contingents that have served in the PRT) was the last one of its kind (Forsvaret 2012b). While most of its combat intensive forces have withdrawn, Norway still maintains forces in Afghanistan in training and mentoring capacity.

Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan has gone through several changes and it is estimated that roughly 8000 Norwegian personnel have served in Afghanistan (Stensønes 2012: 8). While OEF may have been mainly a UK/US endeavour in Afghanistan, Norway was quick to offer assistance and became formally involved as early as 14th December 2001 (Lurås 2009). However, its main mission has been through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Contrary to US politicians, Norwegian politicians have never called the war in Afghanistan a war. Terms such as 'warlike actions' or 'military operations' are preferred, referencing legal requirements for what constitutes a war (Faremo 2012). While the choice of wording is justified with reference to technicalities and the law (which may or may not be correct), it has political consequences. Importantly, it creates a distance between the idea of 'Norway' and 'war', reinforcing a self-image of Norway as a 'peace nation'. While politicians may avoid using the term, as shown throughout the thesis, Norwegian soldiers have a different embodied sense of Norway's presence in Afghanistan and have no qualms about calling it a war (Stensønes 2012: 8). Overall, while the justifications for Norwegian presence in Afghanistan have been flexible and varied in emphasis since 2001, the government has maintained that Norway is 'doing good' and has mainly humanitarian aims (Leira et al. 2007, Haaland Matlary 2009, Dommersnes 2011).

While Norway has contributed significant funds in aid and development to Afghanistan, the US has been the main provider of funding, troops and equipment in Afghanistan. While the US originally advocated a 'light footprint'

approach to Afghanistan (Suhrke 2011), the situation quickly escalated along with ambitions and aims on behalf of Afghanistan. The ISAF was set up in December of 2001 along with the UN Special Political Mission for Afghanistan (Masadykov et al. 2010)⁴ under the United Nations Security council resolution 1386 (UNSC 2001), and it is under the NATO command that most US and Norwegian forces have been deployed. In the first instance ISAF was deployed for only 6 months, and its deployment was limited to Kabul where it was in charge of security for the interim government and government officials (Giustozzi 2007b). ISAF command originally rotated between governments, but NATO eventually took over the command in August 2003 (ISAF 2011b). While OEF and ISAF are two separate missions, since 2006 though, the ‘distinctions between these two military missions have blurred’ (Olson 2006: 4)⁵.

The US was strongly in support of NATO taking on a greater leadership role, and ISAF eventually expanded its forces outside of Kabul⁶. The expansion of ISAF happened in four different stages in the period between 2003-2006 and was coordinated in conjunction with the much-criticized (Stapleton 2007, Perito 2005, Dommersnes 2011) establishment of PRTs (ISAF 2011b)⁷. The Bonn Conference of December 2001 had the aim of setting up an interim government and uniting the country, which had not had a nationally recognized government since 1978. The agreement stated that a *Loya Jirga*⁸ should be set up by 2002 to decide on the future of the country, headed by Hamid Karzai. Elections were scheduled for 2004, and have been held in 2005, 2009 and 2010. Karzai is still the President of

⁴ The latter was later renamed as UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA)

⁵ The two structures have operated under the same command, but formally maintain their separate structure. Norway pulled out its forces from OEF in 2006, following the change from a Conservative/Centre coalition to the ‘Red/Green’ coalition (Lurås 2009).

⁶ Thomas Barfield argues that by the time the US eventually supported the ISAF expansion, support for this in NATO countries had partially waned. This he explains by the split of among NATO countries over the next target in the ‘war on terror’, namely Iraq. Barfield argues that ‘Afghanistan got the worst of both worlds: the United States and Britain argued that they could not send any more troops because of their commitments in Iraq, while France, Germany and Turkey expressed their displeasure with the United States’ Iraq policy by being less helpful in Afghanistan’ (Barfield 2010: 314).

⁷ The first PRT was established in November 2002.

⁸ *Loya Jirga* is a Pashto word meaning ‘grand assembly’ or ‘grand council’. It was considered as customarily prior to major decisions and involves representatives from throughout the country, though this is disputed by some (Barfield 2010).

Afghanistan, though has stated that he is stepping down in the next round of elections, scheduled for 2014.

There is no doubt that the US and Norway play different roles on the international stage and in Afghanistan. Likewise, their military forces have served quite different purposes in shaping their history and the histories of others. However, analysing the policies and practices of the US and Norway alongside each other is a fruitful way of not only showing similarity and differences between them, which in turn shows the importance of military culture and domestic politics on practices of war, but it also reveals interesting things about how 'population-centric' counterinsurgency is fought in Afghanistan and what gendered performances it produces. As will be discussed throughout this thesis, 'population-centric' counterinsurgency is conceptualised as encompassing a gendered dynamic of 'killing and caring' in its combination of kinetic (killing) and non-kinetic (caring) activities. While it might be expected that Norwegian soldiers, with their history of peacekeeping forces and emphasis on humanitarian aid would emphasize this element of counterinsurgency the most, this thesis shows that Norway's historic and politically important emphasis on caring is in part resisted by the soldiers themselves who feel that there is a discrepancy between what they see themselves doing (killing) and how they are represented (carers). Conversely, most of the 'soldier-scholars' that advocate a less 'kinetic style' counterinsurgency are US trained and working within the US military, and it is the US who have been at the forefront of developing concept of FETs, who remain firmly within the 'caring' of counterinsurgency. In other words, analyzing two such different forces with divergent histories, compositions and cultures, which are nevertheless strong allies, shows the complexity and the multiplicity of gendered performances in the war in Afghanistan.

2.0 Methodological and Epistemological Reflections

This research draws on a range of materials, most of which are publicly available documents, in both Norwegian and English⁹. The sources consist of press releases, speeches, parliamentary procedures, military doctrines and training manuals, along with blogs, interviews, and soldier memoirs. Using such a wide range of sources as ‘data’ emphasises that the specific texts are ‘not entities standing separately from wider societal discourses but as entities located within a larger textual web’ (Hansen 2006: 55). In addition to the aforementioned, a number of interviews in both Norway and the US were conducted in preparation for the research and as a means to gain information. While some of them are cited, they mainly form a part of the wider preparation for the study. This chapter will now outline some elements related to the methodological and conceptual framework of this thesis, however most of this will be expanded on in the next chapter. Particular attention will be given to the concept of discourse and the use of memoirs as a source.

2.1 *Discourse, Productions and Performances*

Since the end of the Cold War, questions of identity and ‘identity politics’ have become increasingly important in a range of academic fields such as linguistics, sociology, cultural studies and eventually also in IR. Several scholars (see among others Doty 1996, Campbell 1998), began analysing the state and its foreign policy as produced by and productive of particular identities. These authors sought to challenge the ways theories of IR for a long time assumed stable categories of actors and policies, which themselves were largely seen as having no identity (or of little meaning). This left the discipline poorly fit to deal with the complexities of identities, how these shape foreign policy and how we understand the state. Many worked from a poststructuralist framework, though not necessarily a

⁹ The author has personally translated all instances of Norwegian into English.

feminist perspective¹⁰. Regardless, their work has been hugely influential in terms of bringing identity explicitly into consideration and by expanding the possibilities of poststructuralist approaches in IR. In a nutshell, they share a common aim to move away from the *why* question to the *how* question and build an analysis that ‘examines not only how social identities get constructed, but also what practices and policies are thereby made possible’ (Doty 1996: 4). In other words, following Michel Foucault’s direction in studying ‘power’:

‘If, for the time being, I grant a certain privileged position to the question of “how”, it is not because I would wish to eliminate the questions of “what” and “why”. Rather, it is that I wish to present these questions in a different way – better still, to know if it is legitimate to imagine a power that unites in itself a what, a why and a how’ (Foucault 1994: 336)

David Campbell uses Judith Butler’s theory of gender as performative in order to show how national identities are produced and performed (Campbell 1998: 10). However, this does not necessarily imply that identity ‘works’ through a conscious or deliberative process. This would logically suggest that foreign policy agents and policy makers are outside the ‘domain of constitution’ (Bialasiewicz et al. 2007). Rather, such a theory suggests that given subjects within foreign policy, or any policy for that matter, are ‘performers’ of any given identity. In addition, the ‘continuities between groups of security officials and the arguments they propagate demonstrate the importance of performativity (especially recitation and reiteration as constraints on those performances) in the production of policy’ (Bialasiewicz et al. 2007: 408). In this sense ‘it is only through the discursive enactment of foreign policy, or in Butler’s terms “performances”, that identity comes into being, but this identity is at the same time constructed as the legitimization for the foreign policy proposed’ (Hansen 2006: 21). Therefore, performativity is not a ‘singular or deliberative “act”, but rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse *produces the effects that it names*’

¹⁰ The authors selected here are by no means alone in being central to rethinking identities in relation to foreign policy and the state. Others include R.B.J. Walker (1990), James Der Derian (1990), Cynthia Weber (1995), Iver B. Neumann (1996) and William E. Connolly (2002).

(Butler 1993: xii emphasis added).¹¹ This point is particularly relevant in chapter three where it is argued that the legitimization for the invasion in Afghanistan in 2001 was partially enabled by the claim of the West coming to the rescue of Afghan women from the oppressive Taliban regime. Here, the identity is not ‘invasion’ but it is enabled by a foreign policy identity that is ‘pro-women’, ‘just’ and has the capacity to save (Young 2003b see also, Shepherd 2006).

Discourse means different things to different scholars, but common to them all is recognition that language and terminology matters for the production of objects and subjects. The analysis of discourse therefore works from the ‘assumption that all objects and actions are meaningful’ (Howarth 2000: 8). This thesis does not offer a strict textual approach to discourse analysis (see for instance Fairclough 1992), but rather understands discourse as that which ‘delineates the terms of intelligibility whereby a particular “reality” can be known and acted upon’ (Doty 1996: 6). In this sense, it employs the language of discourse theorists, but not necessarily all of its methods.

Roxanne Lynn Doty (1996: 10-11) argues that discourses include certain strategies that seek to ‘naturalize’, ‘classify’, ‘survey’, ‘negate’, and ‘position’ subjects. *Naturalization* is the way in which a set of ‘facts’ become the context from which subjects are theorized and understood – ‘facts’ enables us to say it just ‘is’; this in turn enables a hierarchical *classification* of where people ‘naturally’ belong; *Surveillance* is that which ‘renders subjects knowable, visible objects of disciplinary power’; alongside this is a process of ‘denial of effective agency’ where particular subjectivities are *negated* prior to an imagined ‘coming of being’ by us in the West; finally, recognizing that subjects and objects acquire meaning when they are seen in relation to one another, and are therefore *positioned* vis-à-vis one another (see also Laclau and Mouffe 2001, Shepherd 2008). The latter strategy allows us to critically reflect not only on how ‘we’ represent the Other,

¹¹ Again, to say that gender, or indeed foreign policy is performative is not analogous to an actor *choosing* to perform a given script thereby being separate from the act itself. Butler has emphasized this throughout her work. It is therefore not a ‘theatrical’ notion of gender that she argues for, but rather one based on a ‘poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity’ (Gill 2008: 21).

but also implicitly, how ‘we’ represent ourselves. Through these strategies it is possible to identify the way in which particular representations become *hegemonic*, if they succeed.¹²

Taking discourses seriously requires acknowledgement of their relation to power. Foucault famously argued that ‘power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere’ (1998: 93). As alluded to above, Foucault is less concerned with locating *where* power can be found rather with *how* it functions. He argues that ‘what is questioned is the way in which knowledge circulates and functions, its relations to power. In short, the regime of power’ (Foucault 1994: 331). In this it is closely connected to the production of knowledge, though power and knowledge are not the same. Laura Jenkins explains that

‘the power to incite, to inspire, to govern, to make easier or more difficult, to control, to produce: all these relations of force also imply a power relation. In contrast, knowledge is a relation between forms: a way of ordering social reality in order to define, to judge or to understand’ (2005: 4).

However, it is important to emphasise that Foucault’s conception of discourse is not consistent throughout his work and is therefore not necessarily a coherent ‘theory’ as such. Oftentimes, a shift in Foucault’s approach is identified consisting of a development from an earlier ‘archaeological’ to a later ‘genealogical’ approach (Fairclough 1992: 49, Howarth 2000: 49). Broadly one can say that the archaeological approach is in search of rules and systems while a genealogical approach is more concerned with the historical emergence of discursive formations. A central element in both however, is Foucault’s conception that ‘objects of knowledge’ are constituted through discourse and that these ‘contribute to the production, transformation, and reproduction of objects of social life’ (Fairclough 1992: 41). In this sense any object is constructed through

¹² However, it is important to bear in mind that no representation or discourse is ever completely fixed. As Doty says, ‘[A]ny fixing of a discourse and the identities that are constructed by it...can only ever be of a partial nature. It is the overflowing and incomplete nature of the discourses that opens up spaces for change, discontinuity, and variation’ (Doty 1996: 6).

discourse and only enters into the domain of human comprehension through discourse. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argue similarly that

‘the fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought...what is denied is not that such objects exist externally of thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence’ (2001: 108).

Another central Foucauldian concern is outlined in *Discipline and Punish*. This work details how discourse manifests itself on, and is productive of bodies through a range of disciplinary techniques. This element is central to the understanding of discourse that this thesis is based on since it wants to highlight the intimate relation between discourse, performance and bodies. A central technique of power in this regard is ‘discipline’, and its manifestation on bodies is particularly visible in the military. Disciplinary power is the ‘exercise of power over and through the individual, the body and its forces and capacities, and the composition of aggregates of human individuals’ (Dean 2009: 29). Through repetitive drills and rigorous training regimes, discipline works to normalize forms of control over bodily dispositions, habits, movements, and desires (Fairclough 1992: 52, see also Myrntinen 2008). Foucault notes how soldiers bodies are ‘made; out of a formless clay’ (1991: 135 see also, Woodward 2000) and a primary symbol of the modern age’s ‘docile bodies’. A more in-depth analysis of the relationship between discourse, bodies and performativity follows in the next chapter.

Whether in the case of foreign policy or the military, all discourses aim to ‘fix meaning’ which construct the ‘Other’, and simultaneously construct the ‘Self’. The construction occurs through a process of linking and differentiation. For example, ‘woman’ may be *linked* to motherly, reliant, simple and emotional, and *differentiated* from the ‘male’, which is linked to intellectual, independent, complex and rational (Hansen 2006: 19-20). These linkages are discussed at length in chapter three where it is argued that ‘Afghan women’ were by George W. Bush linked to being ‘oppressed’, ‘illiterate’ and ‘victims’ (Bush 2001i).

Likewise, the US was in the narrative a 'great country' of 'patient justice' (Bush 2001a), and its military the restorer of rights and bringers of light (Powell 2001). However, these 'fixings' will always be open-ended, incomplete (Doty 1996: 10-12, Shepherd 2008: 20-22), and there is therefore scope for them to be *contradicted*.

A national identity, such as 'American' or 'Norwegian' is therefore not something that states have independently of discursive practices and performances, and poststructuralist approaches to understanding foreign policy enable us to see the use of language and rhetoric as 'relationally structured and ontologically productive' (Hansen 2006: 17). The relationality, or dependency, is crucial, because it highlights how meaning is constructed through a series of binaries, with a privileged sign on the one side and the devalued one on the other (Hansen 2006: 19), for example male/female, masculine/feminine, soldier/insurgent and modern/traditional. It is this dependency that is necessary in order to bring forth that which is defined (Reeser 2010: 37). This relationality is shaped by a series of identifications of the Other as opposed to the Self, and crucial to this relationship is that none can come forth without the other.

Lene Hansen's book *Security as Practice* argues that the Self/Other binary is often viewed in too absolute terms. She opens up the binary to allow for 'gradients' of Otherness from 'radical' to 'less than radical'. She argues that 'even if constructions of radical Otherness constitute a crucial component of foreign and security policy, it is only parts of foreign policy that appropriate such radical measures, and even the radical Other is often situated within a more complicated set of identities' (Hansen 2006: 37). This opening up of the Other enables one to identify degrees of Othering, avoiding generalisations and perhaps even recognizing moments of bridging and understanding between different subjects. This is particularly relevant with regards to the soldier memoirs discussed mainly in chapters four and six. The NATO strategy of training the ANSF to take over control of security in Afghanistan in 2014, relies on them being seen as 'less than radical others', more accurately as *temporal Others*. The notion of temporal others is influenced by Doty's work on North-South relations in *Imperial*

Encounters (1996). This shows that the Self-Other relationality/dependency is often *temporally* disjointed in the sense that the difference between the North and the South can be bridged if the latter develops under the tutelage of the North. This is an identity that is temporally in flux, and can be altered and perfected under the right conditions. In other words, the identity of the Other is redeemable. This means that while the Other may have started off as a 'radical Other', she/he does not necessarily remain there indefinitely, given the right conditions. This 'temporality' of the 'radical Other' is clearly present in many colonial discourses, and indeed in both US and Norwegian discourses about Afghanistan, and particularly visible in the building up of the ANSF.

The notion of temporality therefore requires a splitting of the Other. An example here is the role that Hamid Karzai gained through the Bonn process in 2001, as opposed to the leadership of the Taliban who were not included at the negotiating table. Both were Others, but not necessarily 'radical Others'. Likewise, the 'radical Other' remains the Taliban, whereas the population of Afghanistan (Afghan women and members of the Afghan National Army for instance), function as 'less than radical Others'. The notion of splitting and temporality allows the Other to become redeemable, through particular actions and under Western guidance (e.g. training of Afghan security forces). The opening up of the Other in this way helps us grasp the flexibility and dynamism of discourses.

2.2 Memoirs, Experience and Embodiment

A central source of data in this thesis is memoirs written by soldiers who have served in Afghanistan. The autobiographies and memoirs selected require some mention, and the usage of such material is neither straightforward, nor is it unproblematic. While memoirs, journals and autobiographies are central sources of data for historians (Scott 1992), they are not often used in IR. In this research, while soldier memoirs are used as a means to collect information about the day-to-day activities, their main role as a data source is to show how the identity of

the soldier is constructed, how they contribute to the production of military masculinities and how they call into being particular gendered bodies.

The autobiographies selected are all written by Norwegian or US soldiers serving in Afghanistan during one or more tours of duty. While there is a rich and long tradition of soldiers writing their memoirs in the British military (Duncanson 2009, Woodward and Jenkins 2012), there are comparatively far fewer in the Norwegian tradition. This is of course not necessarily surprising, recognizing that there are vast differences in the sizes of these forces. However, since 2010, four memoirs have been written by soldiers on their experiences in Afghanistan, in addition to others written by journalists about soldiers and by family members of soldiers deployed. This thesis makes use of all of the soldier memoirs. The increase in literature from soldiers' perspectives suggests that they themselves feel a need to explain and account for their experiences. As shown in chapter four, this is partly because they feel politicians do not accurately represent them in the media. All of the Norwegian memoirs are written by white males, deployed either as snipers or as part of the infantry battalion *Telemarksbataljonen*. In the case of the US, there has recently been a surge of memoirs written from both Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, several of which attract big audiences at book launches and are found on the best-seller lists (Bosman 2012). While the memoirs differ in terms of rank, roles, length of service and amount of tours, all of the authors are white and male.

Below is a list of memoirs analysed:

American memoirs:

- Jeff Courter (2008) - *Afghan Journal. A Soldier's Year in Afghanistan*.
- Benjamin Tupper (2010) – *Greetings from Afghanistan. Send More Ammo*.
- Sean Parnell (2012) – *Outlaw Platoon. Heroes, Renegades, Infidels and the Brotherhood of War in Afghanistan*
- Matt Zeller (2012) – *Watches Without Time. An American Soldier in Afghanistan*.

Norwegian Memoirs:

- Skarpskyttere (2010) – *Med Mandat til å drepe. Norske skarpskyttere forteller* (A Licence to Kill. Norwegian Snipers Recount)
- Emil Johansen (2011) – *Brødre i Blodet* (Blood Brothers)
- Erik Elden (2012) – *Krig og Kjærlighet* (Love and War)
- Henning Mella (2013) – *For Konge og Fedreland* (For King and Country)

Using memoirs as data sources has both benefits and limitations, though these are dependent upon the purposes for using them. Being written after the event, they are ultimately reliant on the ‘fragility of human memory’ (Woodward and Jenkins 2012: 120) so they cannot uncritically be relied upon in terms of establishing the correct order of events or factuality. Verifying particular stories or events would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. In addition, parts of the stories will likely have been left out, due to forgetfulness or for unwillingness to disrupt a particular narrative and one can expect there to be a high degree of self-censoring involved in the writing of these books. While none of the authors claim to have been directly censored by their respective militaries, military officials are likely to have been involved in some way or other, particularly if soldiers are still serving and in terms of restricting sensitive and confidential information.

Claire Duncanson argues that while interviews, surveys and documentaries no doubt add to knowledge about soldiers’ identities, ‘there is something about soldiers’ personal narratives, their story as they want to tell it, that is particularly revealing about identity’ (2013: 7). However, as she also points to, it is important not to rely solely on soldiers memoirs as representative for what all soldiers ‘are like’ (Duncanson 2013: 9). To account for this, the research triangulates the data gathered in memoirs with scholarly research based on interviews and ethnographies, journalistic accounts and blogs. While one can of course never be certain that the sources selected are thorough enough (and in a sense they can never be), remaining aware of such issues throughout minimises the dangers of overemphasising certain elements. Despite these limitations, I argue that memoirs remain a very rich data source, one that can be used to ‘inform accounts

of armed conflict both as reports of lived experience and as socially situated records which go on to shape wider public imaginations' (Woodward and Jenkins 2012: 120).

However, the challenges discussed above are not the only ones that arise here. Joan W. Scott raises some relevant methodological and epistemological concerns against using 'experience', less so because of the 'fragility of human memory' than about how we understand the individual and the subject in using materials like memoirs, letters or journals. She writes that studies that rely on experience as evidence are in danger of 'taking as self-evident the identity of those experiencing' and questions about 'how subjects are constituted in the first place' are not engaged with (Scott 1992: 25). Rather, the focus should lie on 'processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of "experience" and on the politics of its construction' (Scott 1992: 37).

The usage of memoirs as testaments of soldiers' 'experience' and performances of particular identities in this thesis aims to answer this call in the sense that it is not the 'experience' as such that is used as data, but rather how, and through what means, different soldier identities are claimed and performed. In other words, memoirs are seen to be a part of the writing of bodies in war, discussed at length in the next chapter. As Woodward and Jenkins argue, following Harari, soldier memoirs should be viewed as 'flesh-witnessing' (Harari 2008), and testaments to how the 'military experience is a totality of bodily engagements' (Woodward 2013: 153). When analysing the memoirs, attention will be paid to the ways in which the memoirs participate in writing the body in war and how soldiers make sense of their experiences of war as an embodied practice.

3.0 The Argument and Structure of the Thesis

From the invasion, through the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency and the training of ANSF, the war in Afghanistan has relied on

various productions, transformations and rearticulations of gender in order to function. It has called into being particular gendered bodies and a multiplicity of gendered performances.

This thesis draws on poststructuralist feminist approaches to analyse the way that this war is gendered and embodied. Central here is a conception of gender as performative; in other words, gender constitutes the *doing* rather than the *being* of an identity. Judith Butler is central to this framework, and she calls gender 'a kind of imitation for which there is no original' (1996: 378). Understanding gender as performative offers therefore a particularly embodied, active and dynamic approach to studying gender, one that remains open to the conflictual and unpredictable productions of gendered performances on and by bodies. This means that the categories like 'woman' and 'man' become deeply problematic to maintain, as this approach recognises not only that specifically gendered bodies are historical ideas but they are 'a set of possibilities to be continually realized' (Butler 1997b: 403). At the same time, this means that gender is a slippery, multiple and flexible concept that can therefore become difficult to 'handle'. However, rather than trying to 'fit' various gendered embodiments and performances into a rigorous binary, this approach and this research means to shed light on its various manifestations and inconsistencies.

War is, like gender, a 'bodily' thing. As Victoria Basham suggests, 'we need to pay more attention to how people come to understand their bodies and those of others in order to appreciate how war and military violence occurs' (2012: 2). War can literally be the destroyer of bodies through killing and maiming, but practices of war also create gendered bodies. Think for instance of the toning and honing of soldiers bodies. The disciplining of bodies in the military and its various manifestations in practices of war are therefore crucial to what war is.

While this thesis concentrates mainly on the relationship between gender and war, it conceptualises gendered bodies as already imbued with a range of 'other' components, such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and culture. It therefore draws on postcolonial critiques, particularly in chapters two, three and

six, in order to show the centrality of and peculiarities of particular racial and gendered bodies to the justifications for the invasion in Afghanistan in 2001. Chapter three also emphasises the relations between these various gendered and racialized bodies, conceptualised through Spivak's famous critique against neocolonial and imperial practices – 'White men are saving brown women from brown men' (1999: 303). By emphasising the conflictual and dynamic productions and co-constitutions of femininities and masculinities during the course of the war in Afghanistan it argues that these *enable* particular practices of war.

The theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis is laid out in chapter two, which follows. It begins by accounting for the particular feminist approach that guides the analysis, emphasising its relationship with poststructuralism and postcolonialism. After discussing what is meant by performative gender and racialized bodies, it sets up the analytical framework for studying the production of gendered bodies in war. Building on Foucault's work on 'disciplined' or 'docile bodies' (1991), and Michel De Certeau's notion of 'writing on' bodies (1984), it argues that both gender and war are written on bodies. Said differently, the military and the practice of war writes gendered bodies. It contends that performances of masculinity within the military should always be viewed in the plural, as masculinities (see among others Connell 1995, Woodward 2000, Higate 2003b, Hockey 2003, Higate and Henry 2004, Duncanson 2009, Duncanson and Cornish 2012). Drawing on Judith Halberstam (1998), this chapter argues that the male-masculine/female-feminine binary is flawed when dealing with martial bodies. Troubling this binary allows us to better analyse and examine the development of FETs in chapter five. With reference both to the memoirs and to numerous military documents such as training manuals and guidebooks, chapter two shows how gendered, and particularly women's bodies are called into being through detailed disciplining and regulation. It also situates the present analysis in relation to biopolitical explanations of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and argues that these types of explanations for war are aided by gendering counterinsurgency's biopolitical endeavours. More specifically, it argues that the

gendered dynamic of 'killing and caring' reveals a biopolitical logic within 'population-centric' counterinsurgency.

Following the theoretical framework, chapter three analyses the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, through the foreign policy discourses of the US and Norway and shows that repeated and consistent references to the invasion being for the benefit of Afghan women were decisive in terms of harnessing public support and glazing the invasion in a 'feminist veneer' (Kolhatkar and Ingalls 2006). The gendered and racialized discourse was enabled through appropriating the (in)visible body in the burqa and through performances of 'protective masculinity'. The burqa worked to cement the links between Afghan women and victimhood in the Western discourses of invasion, a move that has a long colonial history. By paying attention to how Afghan women's bodies became sites whereby 'progress' could be made and measured, chapter three shows how bodies themselves are imbued with political contention. The US and Norway are shown to have performed a kind of 'protective masculinity', a combination of violence and military power, softened by appeals to humanitarian ideals which further legitimated the invasion. In this vein, the performance of protective masculinity by politicians during the course of the invasion has a lot in common with the production of 'soldier-scholar' masculinity, and 'population-centric' counterinsurgency discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter four argues that the chosen military strategy of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency in Afghanistan is, like the invasion, enabled by a range of gendered performances and cannot be understood fully without taking these into account. The chapter begins by outlining the key tenets of this doctrine, which is seen as a particular form of asymmetric warfare, where greater emphasis is placed on 'winning hearts and minds' rather than on annihilating the enemy, and counterinsurgency as a policy is situated within a dynamic of 'killing and caring'. As such, it has much in common with previous colonial versions of the same doctrine. In this vein, 'knowing' the Other and 'understanding' the culture of the region are hailed as particularly important, something which arguably has as as

much to do with this type of warfare's links with colonialism as it has to do with a pragmatic adjustment to 'operational environments'. The practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency relies on the production of contradictory, albeit complementary forms of military masculinity, such as 'soldier-scholars', 'warriors' and 'Fobbits'. The memoirs analysed show that, while elements of 'soldier-scholar' and 'protective masculinity' surface as important in the experiences of soldiers in Afghanistan, the experience of fighting and being in combat emerges as particularly valued. 'Population-centric' counterinsurgency, therefore, does not produce a singular gentle, intelligent, protective, cooperative, communicative and culturally-savvy military masculinity. On the contrary, as chapter four shows, this type of warfare requires a plurality of embodied military masculinities that do not necessarily 'sit easily' with one another.

Chapter five argues that 'population-centric' counterinsurgency produces a particularly striking example of the intimate relationship between gender and war in the shape of the female counterinsurgent and soldier deployed in FETs. These all-female teams are considered a progressive addition to 'winning hearts and minds', necessitated by the cultural realities on the ground in Afghanistan, and with an aim to collect intelligence from and to influence Afghan women in various ways. The inclusion of women as 'practitioners' and 'targets' of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, and the detail by which their roles are laid out, illuminates not only the complexities of military masculinity, but also how war is 'written on bodies' in particular ways. However, the practice of using 'women to reach women' is shown to be a chosen strategy of American 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, and also the most frequently cited example of NATO's particular interpretation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325) and its implementation of a 'gender perspective' in its operations. In both instances, there is a repositioning of the role of Afghan women, from the passive, burqa-clad and silent victims of the invasion, to knowledgeable and influential persons in their families and communities. This, in turn, makes them valuable allies for the US and NATO missions. While the previous chapter conceptualised counterinsurgency through the dynamic of

‘killing and caring’, with male soldiers operating in both spheres, FETs, despite being trained as soldiers are conceptualised solely as ‘carers’. In other words, they are set to carry out a feminine labour of care for the practice of counterinsurgency, something that raises questions about what this type of practice does for gender equality within the US military.

The final chapter analyses the efforts to forge a new military in Afghanistan through the training, mentoring and advising role that US and Norwegian forces have in relation to the ANSF, with particular attention paid to the training of the Afghan National Army (ANA). It argues that while this is often seen as a part of state building, counterinsurgency, and as a means to enable a withdrawal of NATO troops by 2014, this relies on individual bodies being disciplined and remade. Despite Afghan soldiers being recognized as brave and capable of fighting, in order for them to become ‘proper’ soldiers, their bravery needs to be sanitised and controlled. The rebuilding of the ANA therefore requires particular versions of the martial body to be called into being, one that mirrors Western military forces in terms of discipline and heterosexuality. In addition, these bodies need to adhere to a standardised notion of hierarchy and be instilled with a sense of national unity. As such, the rebuilding of the ANA is not only about disciplining individual soldier bodies but also a collective process whereby the entire ‘body politic’ is remade to transcend the ‘traditional’ in order to mirror the ‘modern’. However, this chapter shows that this rebuilding and ISAF soldiers’ conceptions of it reveals a reiteration of complex orientalist tropes. The orientalised of Afghanistan involves both fascination/exotification and condemnation, and Afghan men are perceived as simultaneously hypermasculine and effeminate. This chapter therefore shows, as do its predecessors, that the ‘Exit Strategy’ is gendered and embodied through calling into being a range of complex, contradictory and fluid gendered bodies.

The concluding chapter draws together the central themes and arguments of the thesis. It shows the connection between the production of particular types of gendered martial bodies in war and the practice of ‘population-centric’

counterinsurgency, emphasising the relationship between embodiment and performativity. This chapter also includes reflections on feminist readings of late modern warfare and points to some areas for future research.

- Chapter 2 -

Performing Gender in the ‘Theatre of War’

‘All the world’s a stage’

William Shakespeare, As You Like It

‘If it’s natural to kill, how come men have to go into training to learn how?’

Joan Baez

As outlined in the introduction, this thesis has as its aim to show how the invasion, counterinsurgency and ‘Exit Strategy’ of the war in Afghanistan is gendered and embodied. Before showing this empirically, it is necessary to account for the theoretical orientations that enable the subsequent analysis and to clarify the theoretical contributions this thesis hopes to make. This thesis sees war as an embodied and gendered practice. It calls into being a multiplicity of gendered bodies and gendered performances that operate together in the ‘theatre of war’. These performances of femininity and masculinity are relational, fluid, complementary and contradictory – and they feed off each other and manifest themselves differently at different stages of the war.

Central to this claim is conceptualising gender as performative, drawing in particular on the work of Judith Butler. While gender is produced discursively, this does not imply that it is not performed or experienced as an embodied practice. Quite the contrary, as there is a necessary and intimate relation between discourse, performativity and bodies. The first part of this chapter emphasises this and outlines the main tenets of performative gender and poststructuralist

approaches to gender. It also accounts for the relationship between gender, race and other 'identity markers'.

Section two discusses how military masculinities need to be understood in the plural rather than the singular. Drawing on Foucault and De Certeau, it shows how the military disciplines and calls into being particular bodies through detailed technologies of power, and how women's bodies in particular pose intricate problems for the military. Following this, the last section expands this Foucauldian frame to not only include disciplinary techniques of power, but also biopolitical ones, which are particularly important when understanding the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. This practice, as the subsequent chapters show, is driven by a gendered dynamic of 'killing and caring', where both parts signify particular performances of sovereignty.

As a while, this chapter emphasises the intimate connection between discourse, bodies and performances and how these connections manifest themselves in a multiplicity of military masculinities. This, in turn, is produced and productive of the 'killing and caring' dynamic of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency.

1.0 Sex, Gender, Bodies and Performativity

Poststructuralist¹³ feminist approaches to IR seek to shake the core of its ontological and epistemological categories. Categories like 'women', 'men', 'soldiers' and 'war' all need to be interrogated and deconstructed, through emphasising their 'artificiality and fluidity' (Duncanson 2013: 16). When gender is studied from a poststructuralist perspective, it is simultaneously a noun, a verb and a logic that is both a product of and productive of particular practices (Shepherd 2008: 3). In other words, gender is studied analytically, meaning that it

¹³ The term 'poststructuralist' is preferred rather than 'post-structuralist'. The same goes for the term 'postcolonial' and 'neocolonial' throughout the thesis to indicate a closer connection with 'structure' and 'colonial' than the hyphen may indicate. Thus it wishes to emphasise that there is not a definitive 'post' in either of the 'posts', but rather a trajectory that involves a change, but not a radical detachment.

is treated as ‘more than an ‘added value’ or a ‘perspective’ (Cockburn 2010, Peterson 2010). Instead of studying gendered effects or consequences of a particular policy, gender is seen as constitutive of that policy to begin with. Crucially it also maintains that gender is ‘systemic’ so that ‘manifestations of gender are less individual “choices” than effects of institutionalized codes, norms and rules’ (Peterson 2010: 18)

Building on Michel Foucault’s conception of power, Laura J. Shepherd argues that ‘power produces conditions of meaning, instances of meaning, webs of meaning that are both locally specific and “run through the whole social body” – or, rather, are productive of the “social body”’ (2008: 23). Studying how gender is produced through particular discourses or ‘webs of meaning’ - such as foreign policy discourse or military discourses, and through practices such as war, we can begin to understand not necessarily what gender ‘is’ but, more importantly, what it ‘does’. As noted in the introduction of this thesis, discourse is not seen here to be the opposite of, or detached from practice. While gender is seen to be constituted in discourse, it is a performance constantly being acted and reacted *on* and *by* bodies through, a series of ‘identifiable linguistic and non-linguistic practices that constitute our understanding of gender’ (Shepherd 2010: 13). Poststructuralist feminist approaches therefore pay close attention to how power is embedded into the ‘conceptual apparatus’ as this is considered ‘the very precondition of a politically engaged critique’ (Butler 1992: 6-7). Butler draws on Foucault’s conception of discourse and power, discussed in the introduction, in order to examine not only how power disciplines bodies, but also how it is productive of those bodies. Since Foucault emphasised how power works through technologies that are not necessarily immediately visible, the common sense ‘truth’ about sex, gender and bodies needs to be questioned and picked apart (Jegerstedt 2008: 75).

The *doing* rather than the *having* of gender is central to understanding gender as performative. In Butler’s framework, identities are ‘fictional’ in the sense that they do not exist prior to the power/knowledge nexus, and that they ‘produce the identity they are deemed to be simply representing’ (Gill 2008: 17). Therefore the

gendered body has no ‘ontological status’ beyond the various acts that bring it into reality (Butler 1999: 185). To study the production of subjects in discourse, therefore, requires one to view subjects as being continuously subject *to* and participants *of* those productions, in other words, they are both produced and productive, both discursively constituted and embodied¹⁴. Butler writes,

‘To claim that the subject is itself produced in and as a gendered matrix of relations is not to do away with the subject, but only to ask after the conditions of its emergence and operation. The “activity” of this gendering cannot, strictly speaking, be a human act or expression, a wilful appropriation, and is certainly *not* a question of taking on a mask; it is the matrix through which all willing first becomes possible, its enabling cultural condition. In this sense, the matrix of gender relations is prior to the emergence of the “human”’ (Butler 1993: xvi-xvii)¹⁵.

In this framework it makes little sense to speak about a biologically grounded ‘sex’ and a socially constructed ‘gender’, since the former neither exists independently, nor neutrally of the latter. In the words of Elizabeth Grosz, it is ‘not clear how one can eliminate the effects of (social) gender to see the contributions of (biological) sex. The body cannot be understood as a neutral screen, a biological *tabula rasa* onto which masculine or feminine could be indifferently projected’ (1994: 18). Rather, people *perform* their gender in accordance with recognizable cultural and historical boundaries, and the possibilities are not, as in the logical extension of the sex/gender binary would suggest, infinite. An example frequently referred to by Butler to illustrate and trouble this binary is that of a drag performance. However, the use of this example has arguably fostered a great

¹⁴ Butler argues that many of the critiques against postmodernism/poststructuralist feminist approaches are centred on this question of the subject. She writes, ‘Against this postmodernism, there is an effort to shore up the primary premises, to establish in advance that any theory of politics requires a subject, need from the start to presume its subject, the referentiality of language, the integrity of the institutional descriptions it provides. For politics is unthinkable without a foundation, without these premises. But do these claims seek to secure a contingent formation of politics that require that these notions remain unproblematic features of its own definition? Is it the case that all politics, and feminist politics in particular, is unthinkable without these prized premises? Or is it rather that a specific version of politics is shown in its contingency one those premises are problematically thematized?’ (Butler 1992: 3-4).

¹⁵ A related debate about the relationship between the subject and object in discourse is discussed in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s seminal book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. They argue that ‘the fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought...what is denied is not that such objects exist externally of thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence’ (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 108).

deal of misunderstandings in terms of the radical availability of gender performances, and to what extent one can *choose* one's gender. As Kari Jegerstedt clarifies, the example of 'drag' does not primarily show how people can choose subversive gender performances, but rather that the difference between the inner and the outer, between the essence and the replica, is deconstructed once we start to question which gender is the primary one in drag performances (2008: 78). As Butler argues the 'cultural matrix' that enables gender identities to become intelligible, particularly in the West, are limited and requires that 'certain kinds of "identities" cannot "exist" – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not "follow" from either sex or gender' (1999 :24).

In Butler's work, performativity is related both to gender identity, as in *Gender Trouble*, but also to the repetitive act of how bodies become constituted as matter, as illustrated in *Bodies that Matter*¹⁶. In the latter the emphasis is on understanding the body less as a construction and more as a materialisation 'that stabilises over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter' (Butler 1993: xviii). While this chapter will not examine in depth the difference between construction and materialisation, it is worth noting that in *Bodies that Matter*, increased emphasis is placed on the importance of repetition and continuation. Because the 'ideal is never accomplished, it must always be attempted again' such that we end up with nothing but a series of repetitive performances (Loxley 2007: 124). In this sense, performativity can be understood as a 'reformulation of Foucault's concept of discourse', where the performative aspects of discourse work through repetitions and citations which in turn produce, regulate and destabilise the subject (Jegerstedt 2008: 83). This illustrates the intimate relationship between performative bodies and discourse, which will be analysed in the following chapters of this thesis.

¹⁶ Performativity is also a central category in *Excitable Speech*. Here the emphasis is on the performativity of speech acts, particularly in relation to hate speech and pornography (Butler 1997a)

1.1 *Intersections, Assemblages and Racialized bodies*

Feminism has in many respects successfully changed the perception of ‘women’ and their role in society, particularly from the 1960s and onward. However, in doing so, it has also produced its own limiting view of what a woman ‘is’ and ‘should become’ (hooks 2000, Mohanty 1988, Spivak 1993). ‘Third wave feminists’, transnational, black and postcolonial feminists have raised critiques against white feminism’s own implication in justifying imperial and colonial projects and for excluding ‘other’ and ‘different’ bodies. For instance, bell hooks argues that ‘second wave’ feminism in the US excluded the histories of non-white women and that ‘racism abounds in the writings of white feminists, reinforcing white supremacy and negating the possibility that women will bond politically across ethnic and racial boundaries’ (hooks 2000: 3, see also hooks 1982)¹⁷.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that the simplified and universalising notion of a global patriarchy, particularly common in the 1980s, produces a ‘third world difference’ – ‘that stable ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries’ which enables Western feminists to ‘appropriate and “colonize” the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women’ (Mohanty 1988: 335). Colonialism, understood not only as the appropriation of land, wealth and people, but also as the appropriation of knowledge production and representation, emphasises that the production of knowledge is by no means objective – ‘it is a directly political and discursive practice in that it is purposeful and ideological’ (Mohanty 2003: 19). In a similar vein, Antoinette M. Burton argues that British feminists were engaging in feminism in conjunction with actively supporting the British Empire, and thereby remaining uncritical towards the nature of imperialism and racial inequality. Therefore, feminists ‘reproduced the moral discourse of imperialism’

¹⁷ It is worth noting here that hooks’ title *Ain’t I a Woman* is taken from Sojourner Truth’s famous speech in 1851, thereby establishing a link between herself and Truth. She also suggests that the question is still relevant, as Black women are still not seen as ‘women’ in the limited white feminist understanding of it.

and ‘they embedded modern Western feminism deeply within it’ (Burton 1990: 295). This recognition becomes particularly important in chapter three.

Increasingly through the 1980s and 1990s, feminism in the West was confronted with its, at times, unequivocal collaboration with empire and its invisibility to race and class. These critiques along with poststructuralism challenged the ways that the category ‘woman’ can act as an exclusionary category. As Butler also notes, the ‘political assumption’ that there is a universal category of ‘woman’ is often aligned with a ‘notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernable in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination’ (1999: 5). In order to respond to this critique, the language of ‘intersectionality’ is increasingly being employed in order to account for the various vectors of identity that work alongside and together with gender, such as race, class, nationality and religion (Lutz et al. 2011). Leslie McCall argues that intersectionality came out of the critique of gender-based and race-based research that failed to ‘account for lived experience and neglected points of intersection’ which meant that it was impossible to study black women’s experiences since gender studies focused on white women and race studies focused on black men (McCall 2005: 1780).

While I share the fundamental aim of scholars deploying this framework, namely the ‘need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed’ (Crenshaw 1991: 1245), my concern is mainly with the language of intersectionality and what it seems to imply¹⁸. Oftentimes the image of an intersection, or a criss-cross of roads, is used to describe intersectionality, where at any given point an individual is situated in the intersection of these roads (Lykke 2011). Problematically, this metaphor suggests that these roads (gender, class, race, sexuality) exist *independently* of each other and that they, at

¹⁸ Jasbir Puar presents a strong critique against the notion of intersectionality in her broader critique of identity politics. Preferring the Deleuzian concept of ‘assemblages’ instead, she argues that ‘intersectionality’ assumes that the different sections are separable analytically and can therefore be picked apart, an assemblage on the other hand is more ‘attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency’ (Puar 2005: 128).

times, converge, but presumably, at other times do not. Is it ever possible, however, that any of these roads exist independently of each other? A member of the working class will always be embodied as gendered and racialized. Likewise, a man will always be of a colour and class. While it is emphasised that there are 'different kinds of differences' and that these manifest themselves as important at different times and in different localities (Yuval-Davis 2006: 199), such assertions do not illustrate how and whether any of them can exist independently of each other.

This research does not deploy the language of intersectionality. However, I would like to emphasise that while this research mainly utilises the term 'gender' analytically, this should not be read as a term deemed to be neutral of class, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, culture and religion. Rather, since bodies are central to the conception of gender that guides this research, multiple 'identity markers' are already embedded into bodies. When challenged to 'think of a body', I would argue that it is virtually impossible to picture a body that is not already inscribed as gendered and racialized. In other words, bodies are always gendered and gendered bodies will always already be racialized. As Grosz argues,

'There is no body as such: there are only *bodies* – male or female, black, brown, white, large or small – and the gradations in between. Bodies can be represented or understood not as entities in themselves or simply on a linear continuum with its polar extremes occupied by male and female bodies (with the various gradations of "intersexed" individuals in between) but as a field, a two-dimensional continuum in which race (and possibly even class, caste or religion) form body specifications' (1994: 19).

As argued throughout this thesis, the war in Afghanistan relies on familiar dichotomies like modern/traditional, civilized/barbaric, warrior/terrorist, liberated Western women/subjugated Muslim women, masculine Western men/hypermasculine Afghan men – none of which can be understood outside simultaneously racialized and gendered terms. These are all part and parcel of how particular gendered bodies are called into being in discourses, to which we now turn.

2.0 Military Masculinities and War Writing (on) Bodies

Much like ‘third wave feminists’ with regards to feminism, R.W. Connell has argued that there is no such thing as masculinity, only masculinities (1995). However, within any given historical context and locality, there will be particular forms of masculinity that are organized hierarchically above others. ‘Hegemonic masculinity’, understood as the ‘culturally exalted’ form, relies on subordination, complicity and marginalization in order to maintain its position as the most valued form of masculinity, and it therefore positions alternative masculinities accordingly (Connell 1995: 76-81).

While the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ emphasises multiple masculinities and the unequal relationship between them, it is not without its critiques (Demetriou 2001, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Invariably it is largely maintained within the male-masculine and female-feminine binary, and is not necessarily useful in order to study the fluidity of masculinities and femininities between different bodies. While Connell is open to masculinity being a fluid concept that moves between bodies (2000: 16-17), the main attention is nevertheless on men and ‘their’ masculinities. Judith Halberstam argues in her ground-breaking book that female masculinity is not taken seriously enough by scholars¹⁹ and is often framed as the ‘rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing’ (1998: 1). Through a wealth of examples from film and fiction which show masculinities on ‘other bodies’, she argues that masculinity is only made visible ‘where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body’ (Halberstam 1998: 2). Halberstam’s radical release of the concept of masculinity from solely ‘white male middle-class’ bodies shows how masculinity can only be understood alongside class and race, or as an ‘assemblage’, and that it is fluid so far as bodies are concerned²⁰. Even though Halberstam draws her examples from film and fiction, her insistence on

¹⁹ Interestingly, as early as 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* sees masculinity as not contained within only male bodies. She makes becoming more masculine a feminist agenda and wishes that women ‘may every day grow more and more masculine’ (quoted in Reeser 2010: 135)

²⁰ For problems with the concept of ‘fluidity’ see Todd W. Reeser (2010: 39-40)

breaking up the male-masculine binary has potential also for research on the military and war. Since ‘military prowess’, ‘courage’, and ‘strength’ function on male *and* female bodies, though not necessarily in the same way, this does not mean that a version of military masculinity, or ‘being martial’ is unattainable for female soldiers, as discussed in chapter five. Studying military masculinities as not necessarily ‘male bounded’, allows us to push the notion of fluidity and multiplicity of performances of masculinity and femininity on both male and female bodies alike (Reeser 2010: 132). However, it is important here to emphasise that performances of femininity and masculinity are neither the same, nor equally accessible to male and female bodies.

2.1 *The Military Writing (on) Bodies*

Before this chapter examines the development of military masculinities in greater depth, and analyses its relationship to male and female bodies, it is necessary to outline the military’s role in *producing* and calling into being particular bodies. Here there is a great deal to take from two central thinkers of ‘the body’, namely Michel de Certeau and Michel Foucault. Speaking of the body as produced means rejecting the body as something ‘given’ and ‘natural’. Instead the body is seen to be ‘directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs’ (Foucault 1991: 25). One of the places this happens is in the military and in practices of war.

For Foucault, ‘war is the problem of political modernity par excellence’ (Reid 2006: 127). In his genealogical study of the prison system in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argued that in the modern age, technologies of power take hold of the body to shape it in different ways than before. The modern age saw the birth of ‘meticulous military and political tactics by which the control of bodies and individual forces was exercised within states’ (Foucault 1991: 168). The example of a soldier’s body is central to this:

‘The soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit’ (Foucault 1991: 135)

Attention in the modern age is therefore placed on the body – ‘it is the body susceptible to specific operations’ that becomes ‘the target for new mechanisms of power’ (Foucault 1991: 155). The disciplining of the body through breaking it down and subsequently rearranging it produces what he calls ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault 1991: 138). The ways in which this is done are often meticulous, minute, trivial and seemingly unimportant, and generally work through enclosures, partitions, functional sites and rank. Within the military, drills and repetitive training is central to the production of bodies fit for fighting to the extent that in combat, when it counts, ‘you do not rise to the occasion, you sink to the level of training’ (Grossman 2000). As Julian Reid explains,

‘War is fought for political order not among states, or on the territorial battlefields where military forces clash, but on the terrain of the human body. It is the order that life assumes within the human body that is at stake, Foucault argues, in the struggles to discipline the body that define the remits of modern military sciences’ (2006: 130)

Ben Wadham, building on Erving Goffman and Foucault, argues that the process through which military recruits are trained, represents a combination of physical and psychological death and rebirth – ‘a process of the mortification of the self, where the civilian is destroyed and remade as soldier’ (2004: 7). As Emil Johansen, a soldier in the Norwegian army puts it,

‘from 2nd September 2006 I was no longer the civilian individual Emil Johansen. I was a battle soldier, a warrior and enlisted in the Mechanized Infantry Company 4, TMBN [Telemark Battalion]. I no longer decided what clothes to wear, how my hair would look, or how I would shape my beard. Now I represented something more than myself.’ (2011: 34).

As Foucault notes, discipline employs the technique of enclosure, a place of ‘disciplinary monotony’ (Foucault 1991: 141) of which the Forward Operating Base (FOB) is a good example. In Afghanistan, the FOB acts as the ‘inside’, the private,

and the 'home' of soldiers. Crucial to this, as shown in chapter four, is how the division between the inside/private of the FOB and the outside/public is a gendered construction and the disciplining of bodies that happens internally within the FOB bears witness to this.

For De Certeau, the structuring of bodies in the everyday is intimately related to law. He argues that 'every law has a hold on the body ... from birth to mourning after death, law "takes hold of" bodies in order to make them its text' (De Certeau 1984: 139). 'Law' can here be understood as working on two levels, broadly as a norm or a discourse, but also in a more narrow sense, such as a particular legislation, treaty or regulation. For example, the laws and regulations produced by the military are important examples of the production of gender in war. The subsequent chapters analyse military field manuals (such as US Army and Marines Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM 3-24), and military guides (Commanders Guide to Female Engagement Teams) in order to detail *how* war is an embodied and gendered practice and how particular gendered bodies are called into being through war. Likewise, the soldiers memoirs analysed throughout this thesis contribute to illuminating the writing of the body in war. In this sense, these books, as all books do, become 'metaphors for the body' (De Certeau 1984: 140), something that can be written and read, but also noted on, scribbled in, underlined, cut from, added to. We can remove from the body what is deemed to be in excess (hair, fat, nails, bodily fluids) and to add to the body what it lacks (muscle, make up, paint, clothes). Indeed, 'clothes themselves can be regarded as instruments through which a social law maintains its hold on bodies and its members, regulates them and exercises them though changes in fashion as well as through military manoeuvres' (De Certeau 1984: 147).

Wadham argues that the military should be considered a 'total institution', as this is a place where a subject's every movement, choice, body and mind is regulated and disciplined (2004: 6-7). The US Army for instance, regulates bodily weight and percentages of body fat (in the age group 21-27 males are allowed 22 % and women 32%) (USArmy 2006). Similarly, while uniform and grooming are crucial

ways to ‘reduce the individual to a mere member of a group’, there has been a certain degree of flexibility that allows the ‘individual’ to sneak itself back in, such as the use of shades or bandanas (Myrntinen 2008: 143). However, the US Army recently revised its grooming regulations and tightened its restrictions on ‘individual’ expressions. This included a cut down on allowed lengths for sideburns and regulations on women’s fingernails which cannot be longer than a quarter of an inch (ArmyTimes 2012). In total, the revised edition of the US Army’s *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia Regulation* (AR 670-1) is a 357 page long document, complete with detailed sketches and figures. In explaining the importance of regulating ‘personal appearance’ it states,

‘The Army is a uniformed service where discipline is judged, in part, by the manner in which a soldier wears a prescribed uniform, as well as by the individual’s personal appearance. Therefore, a neat and well-groomed appearance by all soldiers is fundamental to the Army and contributes to building the pride and esprit essential to an effective military force. A vital ingredient of the Army’s strength and military effectiveness is the pride and self discipline that American soldiers bring to their Service through a conservative military image’ (USArmy 2012: 2).

In responding to criticism from soldiers, particularly in relation to new regulations on tattoos (should not to be visible above the neck line or below the wrist line in the new regulations), Sergeant Major Raymond Chandler who is in charge of the review stated that

‘... we all generally look the same. Now, if you have a tattoo that draws attention to yourself, you have to ask the question, are you a person who is committed to the Army? Because the Army says you are part of the same organization. We all generally look the same. And we do not want you to stand out from the rest of the Army. Yes, we want you to set yourself apart and do great things and so on, but that does not mean tattooing yourself or doing other extreme things that draw attention to you, the individual. You are part of something larger’ (ArmyTimes 2012).

For de Certeau, the adding or taking away from the body, ‘*making the body tell the code*’ or “‘machining” bodies’ (1984: 148 emphasis in original), is what produces bodies *as* bodies. He writes that ‘to tell the truth, they become bodies only by conforming to these codes’ (De Certeau 1984: 147). In other words, it is the ‘machining’ of bodies that materialises them, something that enables them to

perform as martial bodies. In the military, this is done in ways that regulate soldier's masculinity and femininity, in addition to signalling their role as representatives and protectors of the state and nation.

2.2 *Military Masculinities - Multiplicity, Fluidity and Change*

A central element to understanding gender productions is the discursively and politically constituted binary relationship between masculinity/femininity, which works to enable and limit possible gender performances. In its simplest form, speaking about this relationality means that what is considered to be masculine stands in opposition to what is deemed feminine, in the sense that something is masculine *because* it is not feminine. However, inherent to gender relations are also regimes of power, which means that masculinity and femininity are not organized as a binary that works horizontally, but rather hierarchically. Therefore determining who or what is considered masculine or masculinized is 'inextricable from devaluing who and what is feminized' (Peterson 2010: 18).

Feminists have long been concerned with the relationship between gender and war (Enloe 1990, Elshtain 1987) and have shown how women and men are constructed as playing radically different roles in the practice of war. More recently however, several scholars have focused in greater detail on the production of military masculinities and the relationship between the military and gender (see among others Woodward 2000, Higate 2003b, Whitworth 2004, Woodward and Winter 2007, Haaland 2008, Basham 2008, Duncanson 2009, Belkin 2012), emphasising that gender 'invariably involves masculinity as much as femininity' (Peterson 2010: 18). Arguably the most expected and commonly envisaged type of military masculinity, the 'warrior masculinity', can be found in the infantry and combat divisions - the only section that normally kills the enemy at close range, and where 'failure to perform is often linked with being feminine and thus deemed to be the antithesis of infantry behaviour' (Hockey 2003: 17). While 'warrior masculinity' is still a crucial part of wars, this literature

argues that the production of military masculinities is complex, nuanced and often contradictory. What is often seen to characterise military masculinity – ‘violence, aggression, rationality, and a sense of invulnerability’ (Higate 2003c: 29) – is only part of the story, and dependent not only on segment, rank and unit, but also on strategy and type of warfare. Military masculinities are shown to be in a process of change, following restructuring policies in the military arising from the introduction of more women, gays and ethnic minorities. Moreover, changes in the types of wars fought have produced a range of new masculinities from the ‘heroic peacekeeper’ during the 1990s, to the ‘humanitarian soldier-scholar’ of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Duncanson 2013: 12). The multiplicity of masculinities in counterinsurgency warfare is discussed at length in chapters four and six and shows how counterinsurgency relies on this multiplicity and the gendered dynamic of ‘killing and caring’.

As shown above, laws (gender norms, systems and ideologies) are ‘written on the body’ and the production of military masculinities often becomes internalised through repetition and drill (Myrntinen 2008: 135). Through repetitive drills and tasks, often aided by particular chants²¹, military masculinities are scripted on bodies. In the production of ‘warrior masculinity’, being caricatured as ‘woman’, ‘girl’, ‘fag’, or any other ‘demeaning’ name, is frequently used to ‘separate the boys from the men’ and instil the qualities deemed necessary to survive both basic training and, later, combat. As shown in chapters four and six, despite increased diversity in militaries, heteronormativity remains strong.

However, as discussed in chapter four, the production of ‘warrior masculinity’ is not entirely straightforward. Some show of emotion and vulnerability is sanctioned that would ‘on other occasions [be] viewed as feminine and therefore weak’ (Hockey 2003: 23). Instances where displays of emotions are ‘accepted’ are often connected to seeing ones ‘mates’ being killed or injured, where evidence

²¹ An example of such a chant from the US Marines is quoted in (Myrntinen 2008: 138):
 ‘This is my rifle [holding up gun]
 This is my gun [pointing at penis]
 One’s for killing
 The other’s for fun’

reveals 'soldiers showing emotion, crying and handling others' grief with compassion and empathy' (Duncanson 2009: 65). This shows the complexity of the production of military masculinities according to rank or regiment, as well as illustrates that what is deemed feminine permeates these. As Erik Elden, another of the memoir authors explains when recalling a debrief after a fallen comrade, 'professional soldiers are not afraid of showing emotions' (2012: 186).

'Warrior masculinity' may therefore stand in opposition to the more 'civilian' notions of masculinity (Basham 2008) and what are considered to be more traditionally 'feminised' roles within the armed forces, - such as clerks, cooks or stewards, all of which rarely involve direct experiences with combat (Higate 2003c). In the rich slang vocabulary of the US military, the derogatory term 'Fobbit' is used for those who rarely see combat. The word is derived from FOB and the Tolkien creation of Hobbits. 'Fobbits,' like Hobbits, rarely venture outside the shire/wire. This, as discussed in chapter four, is a central term in the memoirs, and is frequently used to marginalise and subordinate those working in administrative and logistical positions inside the FOB. As such the term reiterates the familiar division of domestic/public - situating 'real' work and soldiering within the latter.

As is illustrated throughout this thesis, with the transformation of Western militaries, and their taking on of different roles and missions, the multiplicity of masculinities increases, expanding far beyond clerks, cooks or stewards. Today's modern military employs engineers, computer experts, mechanics, medics and logistical experts. It is argued by Moskos and others (Elliott and Cheeseman 2004), that Western militaries show a general trend away from a traditional defence of the homeland, with close connections with the idea of the nation state, 'towards a volunteer force, more multipurpose in mission, increasingly androgynous in make up and ethos, and with greater permeability with civilian life' (2000: 1). While this observation is in many instances true with regards to volunteerism, multipurpose and civilian permeability, to equate that with androgyny is an analytical mistake. While there is no doubt that there is

increasingly a greater diversity in terms of gender and race in Western militaries, this does not imply androgyny. Rather, as shown in chapters four and five in particular, performances of multiple and diverse femininities and masculinities are crucial in the practice of war, as is the managing and disciplining of gendered bodies. So, if anything, the increased diversity leads to a greater emphasis on gender differentiations, rather than to an erasure of these.

As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, the Norwegian and US military cultures are not identical, nor is their 'operational environment' in Afghanistan. One can therefore expect there to be different productions of military masculinity relevant to these two forces during the war in Afghanistan. Norwegian armed forces have in the last fifteen years developed away from its Cold War composition and towards a more 'flexible' force that is capable of contributing to international operations (Haaland 2010, see also Forsvarsdepartementet/MoD 2003-2004). Similar trends can be noted in the case of the US, where one can observe a 'fundamental shift in the emphasis of armed forces from defence of the homeland to multinational peacekeeping and humanitarian missions' (Moskos 2000: 17). These structural changes influence how soldiers are supposed to behave and what is expected of them. As Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked, the US needs 'forces who are as comfortable drinking tea with tribal leaders as raiding a terrorist compound' (Turse 2012).

Changing practices of warfare therefore have implications on the kinds of masculinities produced. But this also works the other way. The revitalisation of the colonial warfare of counterinsurgency, rebranded as 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, requires multiple performances of military masculinity operating at once. As shown in chapter four, this is not least driven by a notable recent addition to military masculinity, namely the 'soldier-scholar' (Khalili 2010a). 'Soldier-scholars' have had a great influence on thinking and operationalizing 'population-centric' counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, through the writing and advocacy of its doctrine. This is seen internally as being 'radical'

as their message ‘countermands decades of conventional U.S. military practice’ (USArmy et al. 2007: xxvii). Largely white, academic, and high-ranking officers advocate for a military practice that seeks to adapt the use of force, maintain good relations with the ‘locals’, and making the security for the population a key strategy. Alternatively, in the words of David Kilcullen, fighting a ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency war requires ‘good governance, backed by solid population security and economic development measures, resting on a firm foundation of energetic IO [information operations], which unifies and drives all other activity’ (2009 : 60). However, and crucially, this does not mean that ‘warrior masculinity’ is no longer relevant for ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency operations. As shown in chapter four, while counterinsurgency may be about more than ‘kinetic’ operations, ‘there is no known way of doing counterinsurgency without inflicting casualties on the enemy: there is always a lot of killing, one way or another’ (Kilcullen 2006a: 3). This dynamic between ‘killing and caring’ is analysed throughout this thesis and shown to manifest itself in various ways through the course of the war. As noted above, De Certeau argues that bodies are ways of ‘*making the body tell the code*’ (1984: 148 emphasis in original) and the empirical chapters examine how counterinsurgency in its dynamic between ‘killing and caring’ produces its own codes and its own multiplicity of gendered bodies.

These multiple masculinities do not necessarily stand on an equal footing in relation to one another. As Duncanson points out, the ‘hegemonic masculinity’, even in peacekeeping operations remains the ‘warrior model’ (2009: 65). This implies that the other types, more concerned with stabilisation and providing security to the civilian population can become subordinated and marginalised (Connell 1995: 76-86). However, this is not to say that ‘soldier-scholars’ or soldiers who are concerned with the wellbeing of local Afghans are always subordinate, and that ‘warrior masculinity’ is always superior. Rather, as

discussed briefly below, and in later chapters, these multiple military masculinities are continuously negotiated ²².

Recent public discussions in Norway about the ‘warrior culture’ in *Telemarksbataljonen* (*Telemark Battalion*) represent an informative example of how military masculinities can involve contestation, and how this in turn relates to the gendered dynamic of ‘killing and caring’ in counterinsurgency. While this example is discussed in more depth in chapter four, it is worth underlying here that the defining characteristic of a Norwegian soldier in the national imaginary is like that of the ‘wholesome boy living next door, who dons the uniform for a limited time before returning to civilian life’ (Haaland 2008: 175). What makes Norwegians ‘good soldiers’ in this imaginary is their ‘largely civilian values’, which enable them to ‘handle difficult situations with flexibility and common sense, not because of their toughness or bravery in combat’ (ibid.). In other words, the public perception of Norwegian soldiers is not marked by ‘violence, aggression, rationality, and a sense of invulnerability’ (Higate 2003c: 29). Rather, they are viewed largely as embodying a peacekeeper masculinity (Higate and Henry 2004, Duncanson 2009) and as ‘carers’.

However, this image was sharply countered in the fall of 2010 when the ‘men’s magazine’ *Alfa* did an interview with members of the infantry unit *Telemarkbataljonen*. Here, soldiers expressed a rather different image, and stated that, ‘It may sound stupid, but to be in battle is better than sex’ and, ‘you don’t sign up to go to Afghanistan to save the world, but to join a real war’ (Hompland 2010). In the immediate aftermath, Norwegian news outlets were flooded with articles, opinion pieces and debates expressing both dismay and sympathy for the soldiers - sparking a broader debate about ‘soldier culture’ (Bisgaard 2011). Representatives from the military that expressed their views during this debate were from different ranks within the army, which affected where they stood on

²² Another way in which military masculinities are ‘multiple’ is according to nationality since ‘military masculinities are embedded into discourses of nationalism’ (Higate 2003a: 209). This is not necessarily surprising given the symbolically important role gender plays in constructions of nationalism and the nation state (Yuval-Davis 1997, Nagel 1998).

the matter. Generally, those of high rank and with a ‘soldier-scholar’ masculinity distanced themselves from these actions and statements as not being indicative of the values of the Norwegian military, whereas those belonging to lower ranks or combat forces, seemed relieved that these kinds of expressions came to the fore and were critical of the way it was represented in the media (VGNett 2010, Elden 2012, Johansen 2011)²³. This event and the ensuing debates show that there is a particular national identity assumed embodied in the Norwegian soldier, and also that this identity is partly contested from within. Furthermore it shows that there is no necessary continuity between foreign policy discourse and internal military identities.

To conclude this section, it is worth noting that within the productions of different kinds of military masculinities, femininity is always a factor. It may appear to be entirely invisible, but it is very much an ‘absent presence’. This works in two ways. On the one hand, femininity plays a central part in the production of multiple forms of military masculinity more broadly because of its function in the binary involving the devalorisation of femininity (Peterson 2010). In this sense, femininity is *built into* masculinity as that which masculinity overcomes. And while masculinity is not seen as only accessible to male bodies, male bodies become the ‘site and measure of military effectiveness *only in relation to* the weakness and unsuitability of women’s bodies which are thus themselves productive in their perceived docility’ (Basham 2012: 13 emphasis added). On the other hand, femininity works as an ‘absent present’ in that it is the performance of invisible or silenced elements which allow the performance of masculine elements to be highlighted. Hence, hierarchies and dichotomies privilege particular performances of military masculinity, and exclude others. This flexibility in military masculinity enables it to ‘take up’ characteristics that are traditionally assumed to be feminine and subsume them under the dynamic

²³ Largely, it was felt by several soldiers who had served in Afghanistan that it was about time Norway had an honest debate about the role and actions of its armed forces serving there. This is expressed in the autobiographical book *Brødre i Blodet (Blood Brothers)* by Officer Emil Johansen in the Telemark Battalion, who calls himself a ‘professional warrior’ (Johansen 2011). This book gained much attention when it came out and it is one of the memoirs that are used in this thesis to make sense of contestations within the production of Norwegian military masculinities.

and unpredictability of military masculinity, thus producing yet another form of military masculinity (Duncanson 2009). This is captured nicely when Kilcullen argues for a ‘soldier-scholar’ military masculinity fit for ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency – ‘if this sounds unmilitary, get over it’ (Kilcullen 2006b: 135).

2.3 *Writing Women’s Martial Bodies*

Women’s bodies have always proved difficult to manage in Western militaries. For example, deciding what kinds of uniforms women can and cannot wear has historically been a cause of great concern. As Enloe details, whether or not female soldiers should wear high heels and have breast pockets on their shirts was deemed crucial in order to ensure that they remained respectable, but did not look like men (2000: 261-273). Enloe urges us to pay close attention to women within the military, and identifies five major reasons why women are increasingly being included in military ranks: a means to make up for loss in conscription regulations in many countries (not Norway), as compensation for a loss in birth rates (less male soldiers available), to enable less recruitment from ethnic and racial groups that are viewed with suspicion, to add personnel with high levels of formal education, and lastly, that having more women in the armed forces make the military look ‘modern’ (Enloe 2007: 65). This latter point is central in the case of the Norwegian military. Former defence minister Anne Grethe Strøm-Erichsen made the point that ‘both at home and abroad our Armed Forces should be a showcase for our democratic political system based on human rights, ethnic diversity and equality between the genders’ (2007a, see also Skjelsbæk and Tryggestad 2011).

As argued above, masculinity and femininity are seen as fluid and dynamic concepts that can be attributed to, and appropriated by, male and female bodies alike. Men can perform femininity and women can perform masculinity. However, this does not imply that femininity and masculinity exist as equals, nor that men and women can pick and choose at will. That said, it does imply paying

attention to the notion of female masculinity, and the challenges this poses to the military.

As continuously highlighted in this chapter, and throughout the thesis, the way in which gender is embodied is key to understanding the production and performativity of gender in war. Grooming, physique, and clothes matter a great deal in the production of soldiers. For female service members there is the added balancing act of maintaining them as feminine, but not too feminine, and masculine enough, but not 'like men'. Everyday bodily practices such as perfume and make up need to be disciplined in order to contain feminine expressions. With regards to the British Military, Basham found that being in close proximity to a servicewoman wearing perfume was argued to have a 'big psychological effect' on the men, and that women were seen to disrupt and distract from the work of real soldiers (Basham 2008). Similar sentiments are also expressed by male Norwegian soldiers who would prefer the smell of sweat to perfume – 'this is a military unit goddammit' (Totland 2009: 69). A total of thirty six objects are listed under 'additional authorized items' of the packing list for FETs - including sunscreen and curling irons, and notably excluding cosmetics or perfumes (CALL 2011: 87-89).

These examples show the extent of the detailed gendered and racialized coding that is involved in producing effective female soldiers in Afghanistan, and the ways in which war writes itself on bodies. Seemingly trivial details (ponytails, perfume, and cosmetics) tell us a great deal about how gender and race are scripted on bodies to ensure that female soldiers remain appropriately, but not excessively, feminine. Crucially, as demonstrated in chapter five, these small gestures also signify to the local population that they are not dealing with a dangerous, violent and culturally insensitive male - but rather an unthreatening, kind and gentle female.

At the same time, while women's bodies in the military need to be disciplined to ensure that they remain appropriately female, they also need to perform according to traditional masculine characteristics - such as physical strength and

endurance. FETs in Afghanistan report that male soldiers frequently doubt their ability to do the physically demanding work of soldiering (Bumiller 2010b) and female soldiers are often viewed sceptically on these grounds. Similar sentiments are expressed by members of *Telemarksbataljonen*, a company that has traditionally recruited very few women - 'I think I speak for 99 per cent of the boys in the troop when I say that girls can't do our job. We have so much heavy gear, and work really hard and at the end of the day, girls are made weaker than boys' (Totland 2009: 62-63). Likewise, out of all of the memoirs analysed for this thesis, only two stories of female service personnel are included, and both appear in Parnell's book²⁴. Both of these portray women in negative and/or derogatory terms, further cementing the discursive link between men as soldiers/fighters and women as peacemakers.

These examples illustrate the various ways in which the female body represents a problem for the armed forces. In this sense, it is not always clear what laws are 'written on the body' of servicewomen at any given point in time - since they are expected to be feminine enough so as to not be mistaken for men, while masculine enough so as to not upset 'the boys'. Indeed, there is a great deal of hard work involved in the production of military bodies in war. Even more so in the case of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency to which we now turn.

3.0 Gender, Biopolitics and Counterinsurgency

While this thesis is not primarily about exploring the biopolitical rationalities of counterinsurgency and late modern warfare it does demonstrate how understanding counterinsurgency as biopolitical requires recognising its various gendered and embodied manifestations. Several scholars have recognized counterinsurgency's biopolitical dimensions (Gregory 2008a, Gregory 2008b,

²⁴ One is the 'scowling Asian American physician's assistant' and the other is the 'rude and officious Mail Bitch' who was eventually dismissed for having an affair with a fellow soldier (Parnell 2012: 208, 219).

Anderson 2011, Kienscherf 2011), all of which constitute important interventions in a critical examination of counterinsurgency.

Biopolitics represents a development from what Foucault describes as classical conceptions of sovereignty, which entail the 'right of life and death'. Foucault writes,

'The very essence of the right of life and death is actually the right to kill: it is the moment when the sovereign can kill that he exercises his right over life. It is essentially the right of the sword. So there is no real symmetry in the right over life and death. It is not the right to put people to death or to grant them life. Nor is it the right to allow people to live or to leave them to die. It is the right to take life or let it live' (Foucault 1997: 240-241).

This type of sovereignty is contrasted to biopolitical governmentality, as power does not only concern itself with the 'right to *take* life or *let* live (Foucault 1998: 138) but is expanded to also include a concern for the quality and wellbeing of life itself at the level of the governed, the population.

So far in this chapter, the productive work of power on bodies has been discussed in terms of its disciplinary function. However, in Foucault's later work on governmentality, he began noting how power also works through these different technologies of biopower or biopolitics²⁵. While disciplinary power works on bodies, 'the new nondisciplinary power is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being' or to 'man-as-species' (Foucault 2004: 242). In other words, this type of power is concerned with the management and administration of life itself, on the level of populations (Dean 2009: 118). Foucault writes that 'biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem' (1997: 245).

²⁵ While these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, it is worth noting a distinction between them. Biopower is a broad term, one that inhabits both anatomo-politics ('man-as-body') and biopolitics ('man-as-species') (Elbe 2005: 405-406). Biopolitics therefore signifies the governmental logic on the level of the population.

Biopolitical logics work internationally, not just domestically, and are visible in the way that security is conceptualised as being closely connected with levels of development. The accepted ‘truth’ guiding both the US and Norway in Afghanistan is that ‘because development reduces poverty and hence the risk of future instability, *it also improves our own security*’ (Duffield 2007: 2 emphasis in original). As Mark Duffield points out, while this logic seems novel and ‘likely to revolutionize the 21st century’ - the fusing of development and security has a much longer genealogy. He argues that, since modernity, the liberal problem with security has been concerned ‘with people and all the multiform processes, conditions and contingencies that either promote or retard life and well-being’ (Duffield 2007: 4). In this way, ‘biopolitics is a security mechanism that works through regulatory interventions that seek to establish equilibrium, maintain an average or compensate for variations at the level of the populace’ and that ‘security in this context relates to improving the collective resilience of a given population against the contingent and uncertain nature of its existence’ (Duffield 2006: 16). Biopolitical logics working in this way enable governments to not only become ‘promoters of the wellbeing of humanity’, but also to ‘command and control’ the understanding of that well being to begin with (Reid 2007: 5).

A similar kind of biopolitical logic and dynamic between classic sovereignty (killing) and biopolitical governmentality (caring) is visible in the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency. It simultaneously casts itself as ‘armed social work’ (Kilcullen 2006b: 138, USArmy et al. 2007: 299), while at the same time acknowledging that there is ‘always a lot of killing one way or the other’ (Kilcullen 2006a: 3). This type of logic therefore requires something different from its soldiers as ‘modern liberal citizens’ who no longer only serve in the register of death, performing classical sovereignty - but who ‘care for the body politic as a way of caring for themselves’ (Weber 2008a: 134). However, as shown in chapters four and five particularly, this dynamic between ‘killing’ and ‘caring’ in the practice of counterinsurgency works through, and is reliant upon, its various gendered and embodied manifestations. The dynamic can at times function as a tension; at times a contradiction; while at other times the one is

enabled through the other. This thesis contributes to the existing biopolitical studies of counterinsurgency by showing how the dynamic between 'killing' and 'caring' requires a gendered manifestation. In other words, it argues that only by recognising biopolitics gendered manifestation can it fully be acknowledged.

Conclusion

As this chapter has argued, gender should be understood as a performative act. The disciplining of bodies is a crucial part of the production of militaries. Speaking of the body as produced in this sense means rejecting the body as something 'given' and 'natural'. Bodies are formed in the military through a series of meticulous and detailed technologies that ultimately produce the martial body.

The first part of this chapter outlined the theory of gender and feminist approach that guides this research. It argued that gender is a series of performances that rely on repetition in order to come into being. By analysing how gender is produced through particular discourses, be that in foreign policy or military discourses, and through practices such as war, we can begin to understand not necessarily what gender 'is' but, more importantly, what it 'does'. However, this does not mean that gender trumps other 'identity markers' such as race, class, sexuality or religion. Rather, gendered bodies are already embedded into racialized, classed, sexualised bodies. Hence, rather than seeing gender and race as potentially existing outside of each other, this approach recognises that these elements are inseparable interlinked.

Drawing on the work of Foucault, De Certeau, and numerous gender scholars working on military masculinities, this chapter has shown how the development of a modern military relies on the disciplining of bodies. Taking bodies as its main component, and moulding them through meticulous and detailed arrangements produce particular kinds of military masculinities. With reference

to both the memoirs and numerous military documents (such as training manuals and guides), it was argued that the military is 'writing (on) bodies'. And since gender is produced in discourse, the writing of bodies is what brings them into being - in this case as differentiated martial bodies. Recognizing military masculinities as a multiple and plural concept is particularly relevant in chapter four, where it is demonstrated that practices of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency rely on the multiplicity of military masculinities. The management of women's martial bodies is particularly difficult for militaries. As shown above, and in chapter five of this thesis, women's bodies are 'odd bodies' in the military - required to perform a complex fusion of femininity and masculinity at the same time. This is crucial in the deployment of FETs, discussed in chapter five. Analysing the detail by which women's bodies are managed in the military to enable FETs to access the female population, tells us a great deal about the militarised production of gender and what it requires.

Before exploring the multiple gendered performances in the 'theatre of war', this thesis now turns to analysing the gendered invasion of Afghanistan- showing how gendered bodies and gendered performances were crucial to enabling that 'theatre of war' to begin with.

- Chapter 3 -

The Gendered Invasion of Afghanistan: The (In)Visible 'Body in the Burqa' and Performances of 'Protective Masculinity'

'Every man I meet wants to protect me. I can't figure out what from'

Mae West

'It is precisely in this realm of escalated rhetoric and assured contrasts that women are more
absent than ever... Women are invoked, but are not present'

Mary Anne Franks

The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was the first of the two major invasions in the name of the 'war on terror' (the second was Iraq) ²⁶ and was partly justified as an exercise in women's liberation. Undoubtedly this was a time of heightened public rhetoric that came to define so much of international relations in the first decade of the 21st century. While the previous chapter outlined the theoretical framework for studying productions and performances of gender in war, this chapter considers how gender became integral to justifying the invasion. What kinds of gendered bodies were called into being in practicing invasion? What gendered performances did it enable?

²⁶ This was not the first time in recent years that the US launched airstrikes on Afghanistan. Bombs were also dropped in 1998, following the attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar e Salaam. These were also justified with reference to the Taliban and Osama bin Laden, who had sought refuge in Afghanistan in 1998 after having been expelled from Sudan (Marsden 2009: 94-95).

The chapter shows how particular productions of masculinity and femininity in the foreign policy discourse of the US and Norway enabled the legitimization of the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 through a framework of victimised femininity and protective masculinity. It argues that gendered and racialized identities constructed in foreign policy discourse 'make various courses of actions possible' (Doty 1996: 5), in this case, the invasion of Afghanistan, and that the invasion cannot be fully understood without taking seriously the gendered and racial discourse it relied on.

The dominant narrative told to the American public and the world about the invasion in Afghanistan followed a particular gendered logic. Simplified, it held that the US (and by extension the West) was attacked by the international terrorist network Al Qaeda on September 11th 2001, and that this in turn required some kind of retaliation. Since the Taliban was found to be harbouring and training Al Qaeda, Afghanistan became a target early on. Hence, the US and its allies would harm Al Qaeda by ridding them of supporters such as the Taliban, destroying their training camps, killing Osama bin Laden and through this, make the world a safer place. The discursive slippage between Al Qaeda and Afghanistan, the frequent references to Afghan women as victims represented by the (in)visible 'body in the burqa', performances of 'protective masculinity' through a discourse that equated support for the war as believing in peace, were only enabled through particular gendered and racial constructions (Shepherd 2006: 20).

The chapter analyses American and Norwegian governmental discourses of invasion and finds that there are both similarities and differences between the two. The US narrative was one of 'assured contrasts' (Franks 2003: 137) between good and evil, just and unjust, heroes and cowards, light and dark. While the dominant Norwegian narrative was no less self-assured in the righteousness of invading Afghanistan, it was at times framed slightly differently. While the US government made frequent references to the invasion being an unequivocally 'just' course of action in response to terror, Norway's government legitimated its

role also through references to maintaining strong alliances with the US and NATO. The relationship between the two countries should therefore be understood as a particularly gendered one that, in the words of then Defence Minister Kristin Krohn Devold enabled Norway to ‘play with the big boys even though they are small’.

The chapter offers a feminist analysis of the gendered and racialized discourse of the ‘war on terror’ and the invasion of Afghanistan. As noted in the introduction of this thesis, discourse is constructed through a process of linking and differentiation (Hansen 2006: 19-20), which seeks to ‘naturalize’, ‘classify’, ‘negate’, and ‘position’ subjects (Doty 1996: 10-11 , Laclau and Mouffe 2001, Shepherd 2008). These are strategies used to ‘fix’ discourses so they become common sense and it is through the performance of these discourses that national identities are called into being. As Campbell argues, states are ‘inherently paradoxical’ entities, that are ‘devoid of a prediscursive, stable identity’ (Campbell 1998: 197). In a similar way to how gender is performative, national identity is also performative and therefore only comes into being through a series of repetitive and citational practices. In this sense, it is not the intent of this chapter to suggest that either the ‘American state identity’ nor the ‘Norwegian state identity’ is inherently anything, but that that state identity is called into being through the repetitive performances of particular gendered and racialized narratives.

1.0 ‘A Fight for the Rights and Dignity of Women’

Almost immediately after 9/11, the Bush administration, together with American and international media, successfully constructed a narrative of ‘moral outrage’ against the Taliban. By focusing in particular on the Taliban edicts against women in the period between 1996-2001 and through casting itself as the saviours and liberators of Afghan women’s rights, the US attempted to legitimate the invasion (see among others Abu-Lughod 2002, Hirschkind and Mahmood

2002, Weber 2005, Russo 2006, Shepherd 2006, Hunt and Rygiel 2006). This has meant that one aspect of the ‘war on terror’ overall has been a battle over the meaning and ownership of women’s rights (Bhattacharyya 2008: 19). For while the West claimed to be protecting women, the Taliban claimed to do the same, leaving women’s rights and any meaningful public discussion about of feminism and women’s rights between a rock and a hard place.

1.1 Reinventing President Bush

This message of saving women only strengthened through the course of the autumn of 2001. Roughly a month after the invasion, Bush addressed the UN General Assembly and defended the legitimacy of the invasion. He reiterated his previous message that ‘either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists’ (Bush 2001a) characterising terrorists as ‘parasites’ and warning that ‘for every regime that sponsors terror, there is a price to be paid’ (Bush 2001g). Part of his pitch to the international community consisted of showing how Afghan women had suffered, and how their suffering was now coming to an end. He made a promise to the ‘victims of that [Taliban] regime’ that their days of ‘harbouring terrorists, dealing in drugs and brutalizing women’ are soon coming to an end. And when the US military has successfully ousted the regime ‘the people of Afghanistan will say with the rest of the world – good riddance’ (Bush 2001g).

A similar, but even stronger message came in December 2001 in a speech to Congress after the signing of the Afghan Women and Children’s Relief Act. He emphasised how the signing of the bill by ‘this great nation’ brings ‘hope and help’ to Afghanistan’s women and children, a sign of the ‘true compassion of this great land’ (Bush 2001e). Bush stated that,

‘the central goal of the terrorists is the brutal oppression of women – and not only the women of Afghanistan. The terrorists who help rule Afghanistan are found in dozens and dozens of countries around the world – And that is the reason this great nation, with our friends and allies, will not rest until we bring them all to justice’ (2001e emphasis added).

Three things are particularly important about this statement. First of all, it is claimed that the 'brutal oppression' of women is *the* main goal of terrorists everywhere. In other words, terrorists are particularly interested in brutalizing women, above and beyond any other aims they may have. Secondly, this is identified as '*the* reason' for the 'war on terror' and for the American efforts to 'bring them all to justice'. Thirdly, and perhaps most exceptionally, Bush here casts himself (and his military) not only as the saviour of Afghan women, but of all women living 'brutalized' lives in the 'dozens and dozens of countries around the world'. Bush's metamorphosis into a saviour of women everywhere is particularly extraordinary taking into account that prior to 9/11 he rarely spoke about women's rights, and that his first act as President was to reinstate the 'Global Gag Rule' (Blackman 2001)²⁷. It is therefore perhaps tempting to interpret this as a pure instrumentalisation of women. However, as this chapter shows towards the end, there is a more sophisticated explanation to be had of the sudden mobilisation of women's rights in the Bush administration.

While Bush promised to 'bring them all to justice', Former US Secretary of State Colin Powell²⁸ described the US as bringers of light to the dark²⁹ corners of the world. Afghan women, we are told, have been waiting for years for the US to come and rescue them –

²⁷ The 'Global Gag Rule' prevents funds being directed to development organizations or family planning groups that counsel or offer abortions across the world. It was first initiated by Ronald Reagan in 1984, it was revoked by Bill Clinton, reinstated by Bush and revoked by Obama as one of his first acts as President (Seager 2012). For other examples of Bush's pre 9/11 stance on women's rights see Nayak (2006: 53-54).

²⁸ Colin Powell was Secretary of State from 2001-2005, followed by Condoleezza Rice (2005-2006), Hillary Rodham Clinton (2009-2013) and John Kerry (2013-). Prior to Rice's appointment at State, she was the National Security Advisor and an influential player in Bush's war cabinet. When Bush gave his first speech to the US public after the attacks, on the evening of 9/11, Powell, Cheney, and Rumsfeld was not consulted, only Rice. She emphasised how 'first words matter more than almost anything else' (Woodward 2002: 30-31). In this speech a central element of the 'Bush doctrine' emerged when he stated that 'we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them' (Bush 2001f).

²⁹ The image of bringing light to darkness is was also a prominent part of *Time Magazine's* coverage of the events of 2001-2002, which was compiled in a photo essay entitled 'From Shadow to Dark' and set to sombre music. Dana L. Cloud, paying attention to the relationship between the visual and the written argues that this acted to show what the ideograph 'clash of civilization' looks like (2004).

‘They have helped one another and their children to keep hope alive for the moment when their rights could be restored, for the moment when they could emerge into the sunlight and help their country onto freedom’s path. That day is near, very near. In fact, the dawn has broken. And when the light is fully shed throughout all of Afghanistan, the United States is committed to working to ensure not only that the women of Afghanistan regain their place in the sun, but they have a place in the future government as well’ (Powell 2001)

In the first State of the Union address after the invasion, Bush emphasised again how the invasion had saved the women of Afghanistan – ‘The last time we met in this chamber, the mothers and daughters of Afghanistan were captives in their own homes, forbidden from working or going to school. Today women are free’ (2002).

1.2 Maternalism and Imperialism

Like her husband, Laura Bush reinvented herself during the autumn of 2001. While President Bush took on the role of ‘Commander in Chief’ for women’s rights everywhere, Laura Bush became the ‘Carer in Chief’ and a fervent supporter of her husband. 9/11 had, she argued, made the US ‘a kinder nation’, one of ‘courage and hope’, ‘love and sacrifice’ and she emphasised how ‘one of the major differences between our country and the people we fight against’ is that ‘we believe that every person matters’. She encouraged American parents to reassure children that ‘many people love them and care for them’ and that ‘while there are some bad people in the world, there are many more good people’ (Bush 2001h). She is thankful that the ‘cynicism and distrust with which people viewed government is replaced with a spirit of appreciation and respect for public servants, and that is healthy for our democracy’ (Bush 2001h). Through sharing her experience as a mother and a teacher and emphasising how ‘helping others does make us feel good’, she performs a maternal femininity that acts to soften the war rhetoric of the Bush administration and assures the American people that they are in safe hands. In the State of the Union in 2002, her husband thanked her especially for ‘the strength and calm and comfort she brings to our

nation in crisis' (Bush 2002).

By Mid-November 2001 Mrs Bush not only cared for Americans, but spread her message of 'love and sacrifice' (Bush 2001h) also to Afghan women. In what has been called the 'women's week in American politics' Mrs Bush became the first 'First Lady' to ever hold a presidential address in its entirety, which aired on November 17th, 2001 (Cohn 2003: 1201). She spoke in sincere tones about the situation of Afghan women and stated that,

'Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror - not only because our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us' (Bush 2001i).

She highlighted how the advances that the US military had made in Afghanistan benefited Afghan women and pointed out that they could now 'listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment' and claimed that this war was a 'fight for the rights and dignity of women' (Bush 2001i). As Shepherd notes, the usage of the phrase 'women and children', reiterated a familiar trope which denies Afghan women 'both adulthood and agency, affording them only pity and a certain voyeuristic attraction' (2006: 20). This infantilisation signals that 'their lives depend on being saved from the vagaries and horrors of their cultures and religions by rational, enlightened, civilized and strong political actors' (Nayak 2006: 48).

Her radio address came the week before the first Thanksgiving holiday after 9/11. Thanksgiving, associated with consumption, abundance and families coming together (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), will she argues, be special 'this year' given the 'events of the last months' as 'we'll be holding our families ever closer' (Bush 2001i). This is the time to be 'especially thankful for all the blessings of American life' and she hopes that all of America will 'join our family in working to insure that dignity and opportunity will be secured for all the women and children of Afghanistan' (Bush 2001i). Here again we see her performing her role as a maternal mother for America's heterosexual families and for the 'women and children of Afghanistan'. For Zillah Eisenstein, this is a clear example of 'imperial

feminism' –

'And it should be no surprise that Bush's cowgirls...who regularly dismiss and criticize feminism of any sort were responsible for articulating this *imperial* women's rights justification for war. Imperial feminism utilizes a masculinist militarism in drag. Imperial(ist) feminism obfuscates the use of gender decoys: women are both victims and perpetrators; constrained and yet free; neither exactly commander nor victim' (2007: 40).

The characteristic division of 'civilized' and 'barbarian' in Mrs. Bush's address, justified the invasion on the grounds that the women there needed saving from their 'barbaric' men. In doing so, while praising the US military's efforts as the saving grace of Afghan women, she reiterates what Spivak said defined neo-colonial practices of the West - that of 'white men, seeking to save brown women from brown men' (1999: 303).

Also in Norway the narrative of the war being waged for Afghan women's rights gained prominence. However, this played itself out differently in Norway and should be viewed in light of Norwegian histories of feminism, its position vis-à-vis the US, and trying to construct its foreign policy identity as humanitarian and peace loving (Ottosen 2004, Leira et al. 2007). At the time of intervention, two women held key positions of power in terms of foreign policy more broadly and defence policy specifically³⁰. While Mrs Bush appealed to an 'all embracing maternal "we"' in her balancing act between neoconservative and liberal feminism, Norwegian female representatives of the power elite have other concerns to balance (von der Lippe and Vrynen 2011: 23). Maternal feminism, of the kind that Mrs Bush espouses (Shepherd 2006: 24, Dubriwny 2005), has little resonance in the Norwegian context, where feminism can broadly be characterised as 'equity feminism' (von der Lippe and Vrynen 2011) or as 'state feminism' (Hernes 2004). That said, references to the invasion being for the benefit of Afghan women have been made specifically in the context of the

³⁰ The Minister of Defence was Kristin Krohn Devold (Conservative Party, 2001-2005), and the President of the Parliamentary Defence Committee was Marit Nybakk (Labour Party). Since the change of government from the Conservative/Centre coalition in 2005 to the Red/Green coalition, two out of a total of three Ministers of Defence (all Labour) have been women: Anne Grete Strøm-Erichsen (2005-2009), Grete Faremo (2009-2011), Espen Barth Eide (2011-2012), and Strøm-Erichsen again in 2012.

Norwegian narrative as well. Marit Nybakk, a well known Labour parliamentarian who identifies herself as an 'old school feminist' (2010), called the invasion 'women's liberation' and stated that 'al Qaeda is one of the greatest threats to women's rights in our time (Ellingsen 2002)³¹. She emphasised that 'the issue of women in Afghanistan is a strong contributing factor for the Norwegian public to support us being there' (Nybakk 2010). A year after 9/11, then Defence Minister Kristin Krohn-Devold emphasised how the invasion had rid Afghanistan of the 'terrorist, brutal and women hating Taliban' (2002).

Another aspect that is argued to be formative in Norway at the time is the increased attention that the burqa and Afghanistan gained in popular culture. Important here is the publication of the novel *The Bookseller of Kabul* by Åsne Seierstad, which contributed a great deal to Norwegian interpretations of Afghan culture. The book became immensely popular, was later translated into 41 languages (Hill 2010) and was based on Seierstad's stay with the bookseller Shah Mohammad Rais (aka 'Sultan Khan') and his family in Kabul for six months in the spring of 2002. In the forward to the book, Seierstad recounts what inspired her to write the book - 'One day he ['Sultan Khan'] invited me home for an evening meal...the atmosphere was unrestrained...but I soon noticed that the women said little...when I left I said to myself: 'This is Afghanistan. How interesting it would be to write a book about this family' (2008).

While the book is still widely read, it is also steeped in controversy. The bookseller eventually sued Seierstad for the way she had portrayed him and his family in her book and for breach of privacy³². While Seierstad has received ample criticism from academics and other journalists for the way her novel claims to speak the truth, privacy issues for interview objects and around issues of representing the Other, she has largely received great praise for her book.

³¹ Nybakk later modified her statements to me, but stood by her claim that 'Afghan women needed liberation' and the fact that the Northern alliance and OEF 'threw out' the Taliban was a 'condition' for 'women's liberation in Afghanistan' (Nybakk 2010).

³² In the case, the Rais family won in the district court (Tingrett), and Seierstad appealed to the 'Court of Appeal' (Lagmannsretten) where she won. Reis then appealed to the High Court (Høyesterett) which denied his appeal.

Myhre argues that this was because her representation of the Other and the Self confirmed Norwegian imaginaries,

‘The representation of Afghan men as an abusive “other” conversely constituted Norwegian “selves” as enlightened and liberated. Extolling the book meant furthering female liberation, even if it entailed the imposition of a neo-colonial vision on Afghan women and men alike’ (2004: 22)

Beyond this, the wider narrative of the invasion cast it as being for humanitarian reasons, and that the aim of Norwegian military presence there was bring peace, development and gender equality (Ottosen 2004). This was reiterated later by Defence Minister Strøm-Erichsen who explained that the invasion was ‘simply put’ to ‘help people in need’, emphasising how ‘this resonates with the Norwegian people’. Since ‘we’ can ‘benefit from material wealth in a peaceful part of the world, we have a moral obligation to stand up for those who are in need’ (Strøm-Erichsen 2007b). While this is ideally done through development and humanitarian aid, Strøm-Erichsen contends that sometimes it is ‘unfortunately necessary to deploy military forces’ (2007b). In other words, it is not that the Norwegian government necessarily *wants* to deploy military forces; it is rather that it is necessary in order to ‘build security’, ensure ‘our own security’, and increase Norway’s commitment to having ‘strong international organisations’ such as the UN and NATO. The latter is described as an organisation to ‘preserve peace and security and to strengthen our common freedom, culture and civilization’ (Strøm-Erichsen 2007b). In other words, NATO is much more than simply a military organisation set to defend a specific territory, it the defender of a particular way of life. As one of the Norwegian soldiers puts it

‘the argument for Norwegian presence in Afghanistan was shaped in such a way that development, democracy, children’s education and women’s rights were the focus. To say that Norway was in Afghanistan of pure security political causes determined by the US perhaps didn’t go down well with the population?’ (Mella 2013: 89)

Both in the case of the American and Norwegian narratives therefore, claims are made as to the legitimacy of the invasion with reference to the oppression of Afghan women and claiming humanitarian intent. As shown in the next section,

this was enabled through an equation with the category of ‘Afghan women’ with the (in) visible ‘body in the burqa’, and, as discussed in section three, performances of ‘protective masculinity’.

2.0 The (In)Visible ‘Body in the Burqa’

Words do not stand alone in the production of powerful narratives, but are aided by the visual and audio accompaniments that help to emphasise, focus and draw our attention to the cause (Weber 2008b). As argued in the previous chapter, discourses are not just words, but they write the body (De Certeau 1984) in numerous ways, among which are clothing. Before, during and immediately after the invasion of Afghanistan, one piece of clothing became particularly significant as a symbol of Afghan women’s victimhood – the burqa. While attention to pieces of clothing may seem insignificant, clothes can be seen as ‘instruments’ through which the law ‘maintains its hold on bodies’ (De Certeau 1984: 147). This was no doubt the case during the Taliban regime’s rule in Afghanistan between 1996-2001 where the burqa was imposed on women’s bodies and harsh penalties were administered if women failed to wear it. However, as argued here, the burqa also came to have significant meaning in the ways Afghan women were understood in the West. The burqa as a form of clothing that signifies and symbolises oppression in the Western public, disciplined Afghan women’s bodies in Western imaginaries, and after 9/11 it became a powerful visual symbol of the dichotomy between civilised/barbarian and modern/traditional.

2.1 Unveiling the Afghan Woman

During the weeks and months after 9/11, ‘burqa-clad figures, potent political symbols of the “evil” of the Taliban were suddenly everywhere’ (Ayotte and Husain 2005: 117). This garment, which is uniquely able to render women both

invisible and visible at the same time became increasingly prevalent. In the US State Department's report, *The Taliban's War Against Women*, published on the same day as Laura Bush's radio address discussed above, significant attention is placed on the burqa. It is described as a garment that 'restricts movement', is an 'economic burden', a 'cloth prison', and a 'physical and psychological burden' and importantly, in violation of the 'basic principles of human rights' (USDoS 2001). It is noted that it features merely as one of many restrictions on women's bodies, and is 'matched by other limitations on personal adornment' as 'make up and lipstick were also prohibited' (USDoS 2001). Mavis Leno, along with the King of Morocco and Vladimir Putin are quoted condemning the garment, and perhaps to signify broad international denouncement of it, from Christians and Muslims alike.

The ease with which burqas become synonymous with Afghan women needs to be placed in historical context. The use of veils has long served as a symbol of Muslim women's oppression for the west. As Leila Ahmed explains, veiling remains the 'most visible marker of the differentness and inferiority of Islamic societies' and 'the backwardness of Islam' (1992: 152). The veil in its various shapes and forms has historically been important as a garment to rally against for Western neocolonial and imperial feminism, something that has 'ever since imparted to feminism in non-Western societies the taint of having served as an instrument of colonial domination' (Ahmed 1992: 167). For Frantz Fanon, the obsession with unveiling the veiled women for French colonizers in Algeria is driven in part by an obsession with the visual and is symbolic of conquering as

'Unveiling this woman is revealing her beauty, it is baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure. Hiding the face is also disguising a secret...this woman who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizers. There is no reciprocity.' (1980: 43-44)³³.

³³ Fanon argues in *Algeria Unveiled* that the veil was worn partly also as a symbol of national resistance to colonization. While this can hardly be said for the spread of burqas in Afghanistan during the 1990s when it was harshly enforced on Afghan women by the Taliban regime, it is worth noting that Afghan women found uses of it that were hardly intended by the Taliban. It 'provided an effective cover for smuggling books and supplies to a network of underground

For both Ahmed and Fanon, the outcry against the veil speaks not only to a misunderstanding of its multiple purpose and role in numerous very different Muslim societies, but unveiling the veiled is also a significant symbol of colonial feminism and the imperial conquering.

The burqa served as a part of the Feminist Majority Foundation's (FMF)³⁴ campaign that began in the mid 1990s called 'Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan' (Russo 2006). Parts of this campaign included a fundraising drive shortly after 9/11, where pieces of burqa-like cloth with the message 'Wear a symbol of remembrance for Afghan women' were sold on the FMF website (Hunt 2006: 61). This followed a special performance of the *Vagina Monologues* where Oprah Winfrey read a monologue entitled 'Under the Burqa'. According to the FMF, the performance was a 'heart-wrenching, spine-tingling story' and at the end 'an Afghan woman wearing the all-inhibiting burqa appeared as vocal sounds of pain and agony filled Madison Square Garden' (FMF 2001). The session culminated with the Afghan woman being unveiled by Oprah Winfrey (Lerner 2001). The visual and politically important gesture of unveiling carried with it the 'implicit assumption that the US embodies gender equality and women's human rights' and that 'Western women and feminism become the Afghans' hope for democracy' (Russo 2006: 559).

The burqa also became the focus of several documentaries and articles across the US and more broadly in the West. The documentary 'Beneath the Veil'³⁵, was broadcast at least ten times on CNN, including the night before the invasion of

schools, cameras for documenting Taliban abuses, and women fleeing persecution' (Ayotte and Husain 2005: 117, see also Brodsky 2003, Kolhatkar and Ingalls 2006).

³⁴ This campaign and the Feminist Majority Foundations alignment with the Bush regime has attracted significant criticism from several feminists who accuse them of allowing themselves to be co-opted by the Bush regime (see among others Ayotte and Husain 2005, Russo 2006, Fluri 2008). Much criticism has centred on their relationship to RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan) – an Afghan feminist and humanitarian organisation in existence since 1979 – where they have been accused of opting for feminist rescue over feminist solidarity. While RAWA originally worked with FMF, they eventually 'gave little or no credit' to them and RAWA in turn criticised them for being imperial feminists (Farrell: 35).

³⁵ The documentary was produced by Saira Shah for Channel 4 in the UK and originally aired in June of 2001 and later in August of 2001. After 9/11 when it first appeared on the CNN, it became its most watched documentary ever (McLarney 2009: 3)

Afghanistan and the evening of Laura Bush's radio address (McLarney 2009: 3). Also in Norway, documentaries about Afghanistan were made, among others one for TV2 entitled 'East of War-Invited by the Taliban'³⁶. This was filmed in Peshawar, and gained additional attention since it featured author, TV-personality and soon to be husband of the Norwegian Princess Märtha Louise, Ari Behn. With the stated purpose to 'find Afghan culture', a large part of the focus is on the burqa, the Taliban and the challenges for Western journalists in reporting in and understanding 'Afghan culture'. A female journalist involved in the project was interviewed about her experiences, mainly related to wearing the burqa. She explained how she wore a burqa for parts of the trip as a means to protect her against unwanted attention from men and described that in the burqa 'you become invisible not just from the men, but invisible for yourself...a shadow without identity, place or function' (Kreutz-Hansen 2001).

For Butler, the symbolic importance of the veil is connected with making people accessible through the visual. Through Emmanuel Levinas' focus on the 'face of the Other' she argues that while seeing faces is commonly thought of as a way of humanising the Other, it can also be dehumanising. Violence can occur 'precisely *through* the production of the face' (Butler 2004: 141). She writes that 'the media's evacuation of the human through the image has to be understood, though, in terms of the broader problem that normative schemes of intelligibility establish what will and will not be human' (Butler 2004: 146). When Afghan women showed their faces, it became understood in the US as an 'act of liberation, an act of gratitude to the US military, and an expression of a pleasure that had become suddenly and ecstatically permissible' (Butler 2004: 142). It is therefore not only the veil that is 'pregnant with meaning' (Ahmed 1992: 166), but also the act of unveiling itself. As former Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen emphasised, seeing 'whole faces, strong faces and not just the eyes that we've grown accustomed to seeing' remind us of the 'possibilities that now exist' in Afghanistan (Stortinget 2001a: 292)

³⁶ The documentary was aired in January 2002 on TV 2, and was the most watched show on that channel the week it was broadcast (VG 2001).

2.2 *Beauty without Borders*

In 2002 Mary McMakin along with a number of American hairstylists set up the temporarily successful *Kabul Beauty Academy*. It received donations from a number of fashion magazines and the project was spearheaded by *Vogue*'s infamous editor Anne Wintour and an NGO called 'Beauty without Borders' (Fluri 2009). The venture was widely reported in Western media, a documentary film was made along with a bestselling novel written by Deborah Rodriguez. Rodriguez claims to be the founder of the school, though her role and the some of the stories in the book are disputed by many involved in the project (Ellin 2007). Articles were published on the venture in numerous fashion magazines with explicit references to this being about more than simply exporting beauty, but rather as a means of empowerment for women with titles like 'Lipstick Power' and 'Life, Liberty and a Touch up'³⁷.

The set up of the school largely displays the white woman as a modern saviour of brown women, and as an image of true beauty. The story of the *Kabul Beauty Academy* has several examples of 'white US women's disappointment when the Afghan women do not properly perform modern liberation' (Fluri 2009: 249). Deborah Rodriguez, illustrated this perfectly,

'When I first came to Kabul, I was shocked at what these women did to their hair and faces...They used henna, which is horrible for your hair. The scissors looked like hedge trimmers. They used buckets from nearby wells to rinse hair. I asked one of the girls to do my make-up once and I looked like a drag-queen' (Ghafour 2004)

Only through the removal of the veil and through sanctioned grooming regimes brought to Afghan women by white Western women can they become known and visible to a Western public. As McLarney observes,

'these signs of personhood – lipstick, dyed hair, eyeliner, miniskirt and heels – make Afghan

³⁷ The project was later placed under the direction of the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs and was eventually turned into a beauty parlour which 'catered to the international worker community and wealthy Afghans due to the high price the service offered' (Fluri 2009: 247).

women intelligible to a Western audience. If fashion is a language, as some have argued, then the burqa is incomprehensible. It also becomes a dividing line between the human and the inhuman, the person and the non-person, the normal and the abnormal' (McLarney 2009: 5-6).

This venture and the excessive focus on the burqa shows how 'Afghan women's bodies act as a spatial and social metaphor for deliverance by way of their manufactured transformation into a modern, Western and hegemonic mode of the global feminine subject' (Fluri 2009: 242). Initiatives like the *Kabul Beauty Academy* and the unveiling of Afghan women in public by American celebrities shows how orientalist and colonial discourses are reinvigorated in the 'war on terror'. The burqa operates in the West as 'anticivilizational, a life-negating deindividuation that renders the Afghan woman passive and unwhole, while beauty acts as a life-affirming pathway to modern, even liberated, personhood' (Nguyen 2011: 368). Therefore, the burqa, and its subsequent unveiling, along with *Kabul Beauty Academy* aided a neocolonial discourse of civilian/barbarian, modern/traditional and good/evil that took on a particular racial and aesthetic logic. Both of these examples show how Afghan women's bodies became sites whereby the progress in Afghanistan could be measured through women's corporeal modernity. In the words of Foucault, Afghan women's bodies became a 'political field' (1991: 25).

As discussed in the previous chapter, biopolitics is a set of governmental problematization in which the life of the population becomes the focus and object of government, in the Foucauldian sense of ensuring the 'right disposition of things' (Foucault 2007: 96). Conversely, disciplinary power works on the level of the individual, rather than on the level of population. The obsession with unveiling the body on the one hand and the lessons taught in the *Kabul Beauty Academy* show us how disciplinary and biopolitical dimensions of the war come together. As Foucault makes clear, the one 'technology of power' does not exclude the other, but it exists on a 'different level' (1997: 242). Unveiling the woman to liberate and educate at the level of the population works here together with disciplining the individual body in accordance with a set Western beauty regimes of what a liberated and educated woman looks like. As Mimi Thi Nguyen

explains, the export of particular forms of beauty serves here as a part of this logic, where beauty becomes a means whereby the 'vitality of the body' is made visible and as a site of 'signification, power and knowledge about how to live' is made and beauty itself 'a form of right living' (2011: 364).

As discussed in the next chapter, the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency can be understood as a biopolitical practice, claiming the population as its central concern. However, already in the invasion, through the ways in which Afghan women's body, health, well-being and beauty became important to manage on the level of both the individual and the population this is also evident.

3.0 Performances of Masculinities in Foreign Policy

So far, this chapter has focused on the way that saving Afghan women became a central component of the justifications for the invasion in Afghanistan. In the discourse of the invasion and in the 'war on terror' more broadly, this is enabled by dual productions of masculinities, as dangerous/benign, barbaric/civilized, and threatening/protective, something that can be understood as the 'logic of masculinist protection' (Young 2003a, Young 2003b, see also Stiehm 1982). This section focuses in particular on how protective masculinity is performed by central politicians in the US and Norway around the time of the invasion. The aim here is not to focus purely on embodiment in the sense that it is not the gendered bodies of the politicians that are of concern. Rather, it shows how these politicians' performance of protective masculinity requires particular embodiments in the launching of the invasion. Therefore it is not the embodiments of President Bush or Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik that are of concern here, but what kinds of bodies are called into being by their political and performative acts.

This logic is founded on the masculine state being the supreme protector of home and hearth, a form of power that Young relates to Foucault's concept of *pastoral power*. A form of power that is 'salvation-oriented' (Foucault 1994: 333) and a 'power of care' (Foucault 2007:127). For Young, this logic relies on an internal duality between 'good' and 'bad' men,

'The role of this courageous, responsible, virtuous and "good" man is that of a protector. Good men can only appear in their goodness if we assume that lurking outside the warm familial walls are aggressors, the "bad" men who wish to attack them' (Young 2003a: 224).

In the context of the 'war on terror' and the invasion, the 'terrorists', and by extension all Afghan and Muslim men could therefore not be seen to be 'cut from the same masculine cloth' as their Western counterparts (Lorber 2002: 383). This section will proceed to discuss the notion of 'protective masculinity' focusing on three central aspects – its reiteration of particular colonial narratives, its claim as the protector and proponent of particular liberal values, and its dualism as a gendered performance that encompasses both violence and peace, or what is later, in the context of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency called 'killing and caring'.

3.1 Performing 'Protective Masculinity'

When Bush presented himself and his military as having the capacity to save he was invoking and performing particular notions of masculinity. Immediately after the events of 9/11 he assured the American people that while they looked in disbelief on to the rubble of the World Trade Centre, 'our country is strong' and while steel has been shattered, 'they cannot dent the steel of American resolve' (Bush 2001f). Bush spoke about the 'daring of rescue workers', the 'powerful and prepared' military, and how he had done everything in his power to 'protect our citizens at home and around the world'. Bush was here simultaneously acknowledging the devastating effects of the attack, but at the same time assuring the American people and the rest of the world that he was in control.

The 'logic of masculinist protection' therefore executes a different kind of power, which might on the surface seem less problematic for feminists. This power 'appears gentle and benevolent both to its wielders and to those under its sway', but Young warns, 'it is no less powerful for that reason' (2003b: 6). It only functions insofar as the protector can claim not only what needs protection (women and children as victims), but also the 'bad men' they need protection from. In this sense, while protective masculinity may be a welcome development from more straightforwardly dominant masculinities, it also creates its own oppressive characters as 'ostensibly progressive masculinities can have a deeply regressive effects' (Duncanson 2013: 12).

One of these regressive effects is seen in the ways in which the post 9/11 discourse nurtured and strengthened complex colonial notions of backward and inferior masculinities of non-Western or 'dangerous brown men' (Bhattacharyya 2008), something that had been felt and negotiated by Muslim men in Western localities as well (Dwyer et al. 2008). The relationship between colonialism and gender is, however, a complex and incoherent one. The British Empire in India for instance, operated with a range of 'inferior masculinities', some of which were granted a level of admiration, as in the case of those determined to be 'martial races' and others were deemed to be 'effeminate', such as Bengali men (Sinha 1995, Streets 2005, Rand and Wagner 2012). As shown in chapter six of this thesis, this history feeds into the ways in which ISAF soldiers relate to Afghan men, through a complex mix of admiration and contempt.

The multiplicity of masculinities that the performance of 'protective masculinity' requires is therefore not inherently new, but it has a long colonial history. As Edward Said argues in *Orientalism*, the production of a coherent 'West' and an 'East' has long relied on an 'absolute and systematic difference between the West which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, underdeveloped, inferior' (1994: 300). The identification of the Other as a representative of all that 'we' are not is clear in Bush's second state of the Union,

'Our cause is just and it continues. Our discoveries in Afghanistan confirmed our worst fears, and showed us the true scope of the task ahead. We have seen the depth of our enemies' hatred in videos, where they laugh at the loss of innocent lives. And the depth of their hatred is equalled by the madness of the destruction they design...I've been humbled and privileged to see the true character of this country in a time of testing. Our enemies believed America was weak and materialistic, that we would splinter in fear and selfishness. They were as wrong as they are evil' (Bush 2002)

The narrative of the invasion is therefore 'not only told in terms of American manliness, but in terms of the victory of American manliness over the mistaken and inferior masculinity' of their opponents (Sjoberg 2007: 95)³⁸.

The second important feature of performances of protective masculinity is how it appears as distinctly liberal. It seeks to be in defence of particular liberal values, which are seen to be under threat by oppressive, dangerous, albeit inferior Others. Bush explains that the reason for 9/11 was that America was the world's 'brightest beacon of freedom and opportunity', in stark contrast to those who attacked who represent 'the worst of human nature' (2001f). America and its allies are constructed as the defenders of 'the civilized world' – 'courageous', 'enduring', 'loving', 'giving', 'strong', 'the defenders of freedom', 'democratic', 'progressive', 'tolerant' and 'just'. Conversely, the 'terrorists', a category that historically has not been open to women (Sjoberg and Gentry 2008), are 'murderers' with the goal to 'remake the world and impose its radical beliefs on people everywhere'. They want to 'kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans' and they 'hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction'. In Afghanistan their vision of the world is realised, a place where people are

³⁸ Makau Mutua argues that a similar logic to 'protective masculinity' is at work in human rights discourses through a tripartite metaphor of savages, victims and saviours. While Mutua does not explicitly gender this logic, it feeds into pre-existing constructions of masculine as rational/strong and feminine as irrational/weak. The savage often manifests itself as the state or another powerful entity, but this is really an 'empty vessel' that 'conveys savagery by implementing the project of the savage culture' (Mutua 2001: 203). In other words, when a state or regime is found to be in violation of human rights, this is explained as stemming from culture. The slippage between the Taliban and 'Afghan culture' is an example of how this happens. The second metaphor is that of the victim, powerless and innocent, whom the savage has violated. As shown above, the role of the victim in the narrative of the invasion was largely attributed to Afghan women and children. The last part of this arrangement is the 'saviour or redeemer, the good angel who protects, vindicates, civilizes, restraints and safeguards' by granting 'culturally based norms and practices that inhere in liberal thought and philosophy' (Mutua 2001: 204).

‘brutalized’, ‘starving’, ‘women are not allowed to attend school’ and ‘you can be jailed for owning a television’ (Bush 2001a).

The protection of liberal values was also central to then Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik³⁹. Like Bush⁴⁰, he saw the 9/11 attacks as a ‘declaration of war...against international law, international cooperation, free and open societies, tolerance and human dignity’ (Bondevik 2001). While Bondevik conceded that deploying military forces always sparks ‘ethical dilemmas’ he argued that it is justified when it can ‘limit evil – in this case the effects of terror’ (2001). While he is concerned for the loss of civilian life ‘he is certain that everyone involved will do what they can to avoid harming innocent people’ (Bondevik 2001). Several politicians emphasised how the invasion must be aimed at securing the civilian population. Torbjørn Jagland argued that ‘never before has the concept “humanitarian intervention” meant more than just now, and never before has it been more required’ (Torbjørn Jagland in Stortinget 2001a: 272). These kinds of statements speak to how the invasion of Afghanistan came to represent so much more than revenge or seeking out a particular enemy that needed to be captured and/or killed. It was cast as being about the protection of particular forms of liberal life, from the threat of illiberal forces.

On the whole, masculinist protection relies on a combination of violence and military power, softened by appeals to humanitarian ideals and the saving of civilians. Bush is determined to use the whole of the American military arsenal to ‘smoke out’ the enemy (2001b) and show how the US is ‘fierce when stirred to anger’ (2001d) while at the same time constructing an image of the US as ‘good, kind-hearted, decent people’ who are intent on ‘showing the world just that in its compassion and resolve’ (2001c). In this sense, it contains messages of

³⁹ Kjell Magne Bondevik (Christian Democratic Party) was the Norwegian Prime Minister between 2001-2005, followed by Jens Stoltenberg (Labour) from 2005-.

⁴⁰ Bondevik and Bush got on well personally, something that is partly explained by them sharing a religiously grounded view of politics where there are clear divisions between good and evil, right and wrong. That said, Bush’s Christianity was far more conservative than Bondevik’s (Lundestad 2006: 194). Bondevik is in addition to being a politician an ordained priest in the Church of Norway.

compassion and peace, alongside violence and superior military might, something that Christine Sylvester calls the 'kill-to-be-kind' logics (2012: 488)

However, this duality is not necessarily something new. As Anne Orford shows, the 'heroic narratives' that were told during the NATO interventions Kosovo in the late 1990s, fostered identification with the 'white male hero' who in turn is defined against 'characters who lack his potency and authority' in what she calls 'muscular humanitarianism' (1999: 688). Like Young she sees this form of masculinity as different from the outright oppressive masculinity, but notes that while this version might cast itself as something radically different 'militarism, dominance, nationalism, individualism and violence' continue to be at its heart (Orford 1999: 692). Similarly Maria O'Reilly argues that the Kosovo intervention produced an 'interventionist model of masculinity' which 'equates manliness with a responsibility to protect the vulnerable/backward/Balkanized/feminized "other" from violence and harm' (2012: 536). As shown in the next chapter, this combination and tension is continued in the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency in Afghanistan through its dynamic of 'killing and caring'.

In this sense the interventions of Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the invasion of Afghanistan share common features in the way that powerful white men construct themselves as being defenders of freedom and civility against the brutality and barbarism of other men. In the discourse of the 'war on terror' and the invasion of Afghanistan the Other becomes a representative for deviant masculinity through particular racialized and gendered coding. As one Norwegian parliamentarian claimed 'around sixty years ago evil showed its true face. Then, evil had a moustache. Today it has a full beard' (Stortinget 2001a: 299).

3.2 *Playing with ‘the Big Boys’*

As shown above, performing protective masculinity is central to understanding the legitimisation of the invasion, particularly in the case of American foreign policy identity. While performances of protective masculinity were also central to Norwegian governmental narratives of the invasion, another element should be included in relation to this. Appreciating Norway’s strategically important relationship with NATO and the US is key here, in order to understand how smaller states like Norway navigated additional gendered waters in terms of their foreign policy, conceptualised here as one between ‘big boys’ and ‘small boys’.

When the invasion of Afghanistan and Norway’s potential contributions were discussed in Parliament (Stortinget), the argument that Norway should adhere to its responsibilities under Article 5 of the NATO charter was central⁴¹. Then Foreign Minister Jan Petersen⁴² emphasised in his advocacy for Norwegian troop deployments that ‘our own security is only ensured by standing side by side with our allies’ (Stortinget 2001b: 599). Pledging troops would ensure that Norway was not left out in the cold and it was made clear that this was in the country’s ‘self-interest’, and that it is ‘central for Norway to demonstrate that we have capacity and willingness to fulfil our collective defence obligations’. Defence Minister Krohn Devold emphasised how ‘smaller nations must prove their capacity and willingness to be active participants in the fight against terror’ (Stortinget 2001b). It was pointed out that countries like Denmark had already pledged troops and that Norway was the ‘only allied country’ with troops stationed in the American headquarters that had ‘yet to concretise potential troop pledges’ (Krohn Devold in Stortinget 2001b: 600). It was decided that the Norwegian military would contribute to OEF with Special Forces, mine clearing and transportation assistance in the first instance, but this was soon expanded to also include F-16s

⁴¹ The decision to contribute with troops was supported by 60 per cent of the population, with around 70 per cent of men supporting it, and less than half of women. It was only opposed by the Socialist Left party, who have historically been opposed to Norway’s membership in NATO (Larssen 2001).

⁴² Jan Petersen (Conservatives) was Foreign Minister from 2001-2005, followed by Jonas Gahr Støre (2005-2012) and Espen Barth Eide (2012-), both from Labour.

(Forsvarsdepartementet/MOD 2002). Norway's 'compliance' and eagerness to serve was appreciated in the US, particularly by then Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld⁴³ who praised the 'very strong and healthy relationship' between the US and Norway, and the 'wonderful contribution that Norway has been giving to Operation Enduring Freedom' (USDoD 2002). At the time, maintaining the institutionalised 'bilateral security partnership' with the USA seemed 'more important than how US foreign policy under Bush translates into Norway's foreign policy tradition and image' (Græger 2005b: 414).

The need to be seen as 'competent' and 'able', two words frequently used to explain the reasoning behind changes within the armed forces and Norway's contributions to OEF and the 'war on terror', are deeply gendered concepts. Such terms are traditionally associated with masculine characteristics and stand in opposition to being seen as 'incapable' or 'incompetent', which, particularly in the context of defence and security discourse, become particularly feminised concepts. This eagerness to be seen as 'capable' is therefore akin to a fear of becoming feminised or being characterised as 'impotent', as etymologically speaking, 'impotent' in Latin means 'not powerful' (Reeser 2010: 30).

The argument made here is therefore that it was important for Norway to be seen to perform according to particular masculine ideals as a part of its foreign policy identity. This performance comes out clearly in an article from the New York Times entitled *Who's Afraid of Norway* where the author follows then Defence Minister Kristin Krohn-Devold⁴⁴ on a tour of a Norwegian military base (Brezinski 2003), an article that is brimming with explicit and implicit gendered and sexual references. Interestingly, it is a female defence minister who is performing a masculinised foreign policy identity in this example.

⁴³ Rumsfeld was Secretary of Defence between 2001-2006, followed by Republican Robert Gates (2006-2011), Democrat Leon Panetta (2011-2013) and Republican Chuck Hagel (2013-).

⁴⁴ At the time, 'the Bergmanesque' Devold was one of the top picks for becoming the next General Secretary of NATO, though the job eventually went to Jaap de Hoop Scheffer from the Netherlands (Black 2003). Brezinski claims that she was Rumsfeld's preferred choice (Brezinski 2003).

Sat in a 'helicopter plummeting backwards', Brezinski grants Krohn-Devold her masculine credentials up front, stating that 'anyone who says America's European allies have no stomach for action has never flown with Norway's defence minister'. In deeply gendered language, he explains how 'size doesn't matter as much today' given the major technological developments available to the armed forces and rather it is 'speed and ability' that are essential in the current security climate. This enables countries like Norway to 'come into the geopolitical picture', or, if you like, 'Davids' to fight alongside Goliaths', provided that they 'bring the right slingshot' (Brezinski 2003). He praises Krohn Devold's efforts to 'make Norway as attractive a Pentagon partner as possible' through her strategy to 'spend heavily and cut radically'. Krohn Devold for her part explains that 'we want to be relevant' and that you need to 'identify what you are good at, and concentrate on it', a discourse that is replicated in various restructuring strategies for the Norwegian armed forces (Forsvarsdepartementet/MoD 2000, 2003-2004). She adds that this means 'you can play with the big boys even if you are small' (Brezinski 2003).

Kristin Krohn-Devold, the second of a series of Norwegian defence ministers since 1999, is keen to emphasise in the interview how she happily joins in with army training and drills as her 'ground rule' is 'whatever they do, I should be able to do' (Brezinski 2003). As Shepherd argues, our understanding of gender is constituted through 'identifiable linguistic and non-linguistic practices' (2010: 13). Here, masculinity is performed *linguistically* ('playing with the big boys'), but also *non-linguistically* and *embodied* (being able to do what the soldiers do). Together, these challenge male-masculine and female-feminine binary (Halberstam 1998) and shows that masculinity can be performed and attributed to women and men alike. This performance of gendered foreign policy, made visible in this interview, is in accordance with declared foreign policy aims and shows that central to Norway's invasion in Afghanistan was this fear of being seen as 'incapable' and 'incompetent', in other words, to be feminized.

Conclusion

As shown above, both US and Norwegian narratives of the invasion followed particular gendered and racialized logics. Such narratives relied on a representation of Afghan women as victims and in need of rescue, by those, such as the US and Norway, with the capacity to save. The combination of maternal and imperial feminism, along with performances of masculinist protection made this a powerful narrative that reiterated familiar colonial tropes of ‘white men, seeking to save brown women from brown men’ (Spivak 1999: 303).

As argued in the previous chapter, and shown above, masculinities and femininities are not stable identities but should rather be thought of as being continuously created and recreated through a series of repetitive linguistic and non-linguistic practices. This is also the case in the production of particular gendered foreign policy identities. These are in turn always connected to range of other gendered and racialized binaries such as rational/emotional, civilized/barbarian, and modern/traditional, which all feed into how masculinities and femininities are created in relation to one another. The emphasis on the (in)visible ‘body in the burqa’ as a means to write women’s bodies in war (De Certeau 1984), relied on reiterations of particular colonial imaginations of Muslim femininity particularly on unveiling as the visual symbolic of conquering (Fanon 1980).

Recognising the co-constitution of masculinity and femininity is important because it leaves us better prepared to tackle the question of instrumentalisation by illuminating how gendered national identities are inherently unstable and therefore continuously *in production*. Moreover, it helps reveal the nature of that production itself and how it feeds into the practice of war in Afghanistan. While this chapter has discussed the centrality of particular gendered and racialized narratives of the invasion, this is not to suggest that individual Afghan women’s lives were Bush’s primary reason for invasion. Quoting Bush in stating that preventing the ‘brutal oppression of women’ everywhere is ‘*the* reason’ the ‘war on terror’ and the invasion of Afghanistan (Bush 2001e), this is not to claim that

he mobilised the entirety of the US military arsenal, and a fair bit of NATO's too, for the sake of women. This realisation, coupled with Bush's sudden concern for women, shows how Afghan women were clearly instrumentalised in order to highlight the righteousness and altruism of the invading forces.

However, this chapter aimed to go beyond the rather obvious point of instrumentalisation by analysing *how* this discourse was constructed and performed and what embodied practices it enables. The West sought to cast itself as having the capacity to save both Afghan women and the liberal West from oppressive and inferior masculinities by itself performing 'protective masculinity'. This, in turn, was only made possible by a combination of violence and military power, softened by appeals to humanitarian ideals. Put differently, the discourse of victim-saviour involves both 'killing and caring'.

While it is important from a feminist perspective to identify when women's bodies are being instrumentalised, the deeper, more interesting and complex story of the invasion requires what we recognise what the narrative of the invasion left in its wake and how, as discussed in the following chapters, it influence on practices of warfare once the invasion became a reality. The performance of 'protective masculinity' discussed here feeds into the construction of particular types of military masculinity, namely 'soldier-scholars'. As the next chapter shows, these advocates of 'population-centric' principles of counterinsurgency similarly fluctuate between 'killing and caring'.

The way that Afghan women's bodies became political sites, where progress can be measured corporally, is continued in the practice of counterinsurgency, as shown in chapter five. Here, a reconfiguration of Afghan women's bodies occurs, which partly runs counter to and troubles the passive, silent (in)visible victim whose suffering justified the invasion. Read this way, the centrality of gendered bodies in the narrative of the invasion continues in the practice of war because it is fought 'on the terrain of the human body' (Reid 2006: 130).

- Chapter 4 -

The Practice of 'Population-Centric' Counterinsurgency: Reimagining the 'Battlefield of War' and the Multiplicity of Military Masculinities

‘The whole point of the war is to take care of people, not just to kill them’

Stanley McChrystal

‘If this sounds unmilitary – get over it’

David Kilcullen

The previous chapter provided a feminist analysis of the narrative that legitimated the invasion and argued that both in the American and the Norwegian case, this followed particular gendered and racialized logics. Following the swift defeat of the Taliban in 2001, many, including the US administration, expected the dawn of a period of stability and reconstruction. Donald Rumsfeld announced the end of major combat operations in May 2003 and predicted a period of stability and reconstruction (CNN 2003). But, the summer of 2006 in particular proved to significantly dent this expectation with sharp increases in attacks on ISAF, members of the NGO community and civilians, and the security situation has deteriorated since (Giustozzi 2007b, NATO/ISAF 2009). Hence, the US army and ISAF found themselves in a different kind of war altogether, a war that much more resembled the Iraq war. It was also from Iraq that many of the ‘lessons learned’ would be transferred to Afghanistan, becoming the second major counterinsurgency war the US army was engaged in.

The following two chapters provide an empirical and theoretical analysis of the ways in which counterinsurgency should be considered an embodied and gendered type of warfare. Both chapters emphasise different elements that in totality show the complexity of this gendering and the multiplicity of how war writes gendered bodies, conceptualised through 'population-centric' counterinsurgency's dualism of 'killing and caring'. This chapter focuses on the production of multiple military masculinities and gendered performances in counterinsurgency and the various ways in which these are seen to be in contention with one another. Drawing on military literature and soldier's memoirs in particular, it finds that not only is there contention within what has become known as 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, but that this contention and multiplicity is built into its very doctrine. Said differently, counterinsurgency relies on a multiplicity of gendered bodies and performances in order to function and succeed.

The first part of the chapter accounts for the concept of counterinsurgency and the development of its 21st century version in 'population-centric' counterinsurgency. It argues that central aspects of this involve a reconceptualization of the role that civilians and the population play, along with an increased emphasis on culture as an explanatory factor in understanding conflict and war. This revamped version of colonial warfare is both a product and productive of a particular kind of military masculinity, expressed by the vanguard of counterinsurgency theory – the 'soldier-scholars'. This re-configuration of counterinsurgency with culture-savvy soldiers and a focus on non-kinetic, or 'caring' activities constitutes the war in Afghanistan as a softer and more humanitarian way to wage war. This section shows how this type of counterinsurgency reimagines the battlefield of war to now become the population. This is important because it not only troubles classical interpretations of war, but also uncovers the gendered biopolitical logics underlying the practice of war in Afghanistan and enables the 'killing and caring' dynamic.

Having outlined the particular military masculinity of ‘soldier-scholars’ as central to performances of gender in counterinsurgency, this is then complicated and troubled by an analysis of the multiplicity of masculinities that surface in soldier memoirs. As argued in the introduction of this thesis, the narrative style and quality of soldiers memoirs make them ‘particularly suited for studying gender identities’ (Duncanson 2009: 67).

R. W. Connell’s work on masculinities emphasises that masculinities are always multiple and that they exist in hierarchical relations to one another (1995). Rather than identifying a hegemonic masculinity of counterinsurgency, this chapter emphasises how what is often deemed as the hegemonic military masculinity, namely the ‘warrior masculinity’, is continuously under threat, both internally and externally, in part by the doctrine of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency itself. This does not dispute the hierarchical ordering between different types of military masculinity, as this is very much evident, but rather wishes to identify *how* the subjugation of some forms of masculinity occurs, and what it represents. ‘Population-centric’ counterinsurgency is therefore not only a ‘battle for hearts and minds’ of the insurgent population, but also a competition between competing notions of military masculinities among the counterinsurgents themselves. While these competing ideals may not co-exist harmoniously, all are required for the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, conceptualised here as a combination of ‘killing and caring’.

1.0 Reimagining and Governing the ‘Battlefield of War’

Commonly, counterinsurgency is defined as a response from ‘conventional’ armies to deal with the threat of ‘unconventional’ armies. These groups of unconventional forces all signify an armed segment of a population unwilling to submit themselves to a state authority, a regime or an ideology. Insurgency as a concept therefore refers to the armed group *and* its strategy and tactic, and

counterinsurgency mirrors this dual definition of both agent and act. It has 'long been an essential aspect of colonization' (McBride and Wibben 2012: 203) and examples include decolonial wars like the British war in Malaya (1948-1960) and the French war in Algeria (1954-1962). It is also often referred to as 'irregular warfare', 'guerrilla warfare' or simply 'small wars'. Tarak Barkawi reminds us that historically, 'small wars' were only small because few Europeans participated in them, rather than an accurate assessment of the consequences they had on societies in which they were fought. With decolonization these became 'revolutionary guerrilla wars' and since 1989, 'complex humanitarian emergencies' (Barkawi 2004: 21). In relation to US military doctrine, counterinsurgency first became official policy during the 1960s (Kienscherf 2011), and today, experts and proponents of the strategy argue that since the end of the Cold War, the US military had 'forgot' important lessons that would have proved beneficial during the first years of the 'war on terror' (US Army et al. 2007: xiii).

While 'population-centric' counterinsurgency in Afghanistan is first and foremost associated with the US, various NATO members pursue identical or similar civilian-military strategies across Afghanistan. However, there have been numerous critiques against the lack of effectiveness of NATO's counterinsurgency strategies in Afghanistan (Lamb 2009, Nagl and Weitz 2010, Shapiro and Witney 2009). For instance, it is argued that European nations and NATO as an organisation show a 'marked reluctance to use lethal force' (Lamb 2009: 9). While counterinsurgency may be about more than 'kinetic' operations, it is distinctly different from peacekeeping, as 'fighting will be necessary and cannot be avoided' (Kilcullen 2009 : 60)⁴⁵. This critique speaks to one of the key elements of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, namely the dynamic

⁴⁵ This critique comes out strongly by counterinsurgency expert and US army veteran John Nagl, author of a famous book on counterinsurgency entitled *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Nagl 2009). The European part of NATO are characterised as being too 'soft' and its decision-making structure is too 'consensual'. A key problem for NATO has been the lack of strong leadership and he likened it to a (feminine) 'potluck' dinner where everyone is free to bring what suits. The way NATO makes decisions is also found wanting in (masculine) decisiveness as 'consensus-based decision making cannot keep pace with the immediacy of battlefield events that require real time responses' (Nagl and Weitz 2010: 5).

between 'killing and caring'. Not only does this illustrate the biopolitical rationality at play in counterinsurgency (Anderson 2011, Kienscherf 2011), but also illuminates how it produces and requires a multiplicity of gendered bodies and performances.

2006 saw a renewed commitment to counterinsurgency doctrine through the publication of the U.S Army and Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (FM 3-24) spearheaded by 'soldier-scholar' David Petraeus. In Iraq, he was the key proponent for this approach, and is said to have 'inspired' his command with the question - 'What have you done for the people of Iraq today?' (USArmy et al. 2007: xv). FM 3-24 outlines counterinsurgency as operationalized through three key stages: 'clear, hold and build'. These operations have three primary aims - 'create a secure physical and psychological environment, establish firm government control of the populace and area, gain populace's support' (USArmy et al. 2007: 174). 'Clear' operations are ones with the aim of 'destroying, capturing or forcing the withdrawal of insurgent combatants', in other words, mainly operations associated with combat and killing. The 'hold' stage might still include offensive operations against the insurgents, but have the following aims: 'secure the people and separate them from the insurgents; establish firm government control; recruit, organize, equip and train local security forces; establish government political apparatus; develop dependable networks of sources by authorized intelligence agents' (USArmy et al. 2007: 178). The last stage, the 'build' stage is envisaged to cement the new relationship between the populace and the government by making sure the population feels secure and that they can trust the government to provide for them, ideally through seeing their own forces do most of the work. Examples of 'build' operations include 'collecting and clearing trash from the streets, removing or painting over insurgent symbols or colours, building and improving roads, digging wells and building and improving schools and similar facilities' (USArmy et al. 2007: 179-180).

In relation to the dynamic between ‘killing and caring’, discussed in chapter two and five, in addition to later in this chapter, the ‘clear, hold, build’ strategy functions here as an ideal type of linear development. While it is conceded that the stages are blurred and flexible, the dynamic between them still implies a linear development from one to the other. While the dynamic of ‘killing and caring’ is argued to manifest itself in different ways at different times, here it surfaces as the one enabling the other. ‘Killing’ here, through the ‘clearing’ stage of counterinsurgency is required in order to enable the ‘caring’ stage of ‘holding and building’.

FM 3-24 directs the military ‘to make securing the civilian, rather than destroying the enemy, their top priority’ and holds that ‘the civilian population is the centre of gravity – the deciding factor in the struggle’ (USArmy et al. 2007: xxv). This followed a slow realisation within the US military that ‘killing the civilian is no longer just collateral damage’ (USArmy et al. 2007: ixv). It therefore ‘signals a movement away from exclusive reliance on the extermination of “enemies” towards the targeting of whole populations for political support and a treatment of those populations as the decisive variables that determine mission success or failure’ (Bell 2011: 310). This dual emphasis on ‘killing’ and ‘caring’ was highlighted in a 2013 interview with General Stanley McChrystal where he stated that ‘the whole point of the war is to care for people, not just to kill them’ (McChrystal 2013). The 21st century version of counterinsurgency⁴⁶ is therefore a ‘programme of *both* rule *and* warfare that seeks to assemble humans, technologies, tactics and modes of knowledge’ (Kienscherf 2011: 520). By making the population its battlefield and shifting the emphasis from ‘killing’ to ‘caring’, counterinsurgency expresses a biopolitical aspiration, seeking to manage and organise the life of the population, best captured in Kilcullen’s assertion that counterinsurgency is ‘armed social work’ (2006b: 138).

⁴⁶ Ben Anderson uses the example of the US Army playing cards to illustrate the shift of emphasis between ‘killing’ and ‘caring’. Whereas the 2003 edition was a ‘most wanted’ deck, complete with names of wanted targets (Saddam Hussein was the Ace of Spades), the 2006 edition was a ‘Preserving Heritage’ card deck, produced with the help of archaeologists. The Queen of Hearts for instance declared that ‘Showing respect wins hearts and minds’ (Anderson 2011: 205-206)

Part of this ‘armed social work’ and the ‘caring’ of counterinsurgency is enabled through the deployment FETs, discussed in the next chapter. However, the structure of PRTs have also been important in this regard, as an institutionalisation of this dynamic. PRTs were introduced to Afghanistan in 2002, and their structure varies according to which country has command over it – some are led militarily, others headed by civilians, and others again have a joint command of both civilian and military leadership. They have three primary aims: to extend the authority of the Afghan Government to the provinces, to improve security and to facilitate, coordinate and execute reconstruction (Perito 2005). Even though they include development and humanitarian assistance, ‘PRTs do not conduct development for development’s sake. For the PRTs, development is a means of turning Afghans away from the insurgency’ (Malkasian and Meyerle 2009: 6). Because ‘humanitarian assistance to win “hearts and minds” is provided directly by military forces’ in a much more institutionalized way than previously (Olson 2006: 4), the once strict division between the military on the one hand, and humanitarian and development NGOs on the other are increasingly blurred. According to ISAF’s PRT handbook, it is set up in order to assist the country from ‘stability’ towards ‘transformational development’ and is aimed at ‘addressing the causes that enable insurgency’ (ISAF 2009: 7).

PRTs act as particularly good examples of the biopolitical logic that the security-development nexus is grounded in. The belief that ‘because development reduces poverty and hence the risk of future instability, *it also improves our own security*’ (Duffield 2007: 2 emphasis in original) is in turn complemented by a belief that military forces play a role in promoting development (Christie 2012: 54). It is therefore part of a ‘deepening nexus between security and development which merges the social reconstruction and reform of societies and peoples to the strategies of war and intervention’ (Bell 2011: 310-311). As shown below, this biopolitical impetus is closely related to productions and performances of masculinity, ones particularly suited for this kind of 21st century warfare.

1.1 The Dawn of the 'Soldier-Scholars'

The vanguard of counterinsurgency theory, which bears much responsibility for its re-emergence, is a group of intellectual (ex)soldiers that combine a certain 'humanitarian softness' with traditional masculine ideals of rationality, rigour and authority, namely the 'soldier-scholars' (Khalili 2010a)⁴⁷. Through their 'cultivated demeanor, careful diction and civil habitus' these present 'population-centric' counterinsurgency as 'military superiority with a human face' (Feichtinger et al. 2012: 46-47). As noted, they share many of the characteristics of 'protective masculinity' discussed in chapter three and therefore constitute a reiteration of a particular discourse of warfare.

Success in war has historically required several qualities, all of which are considered the 'exclusive province of men' – 'superior physical strength, incomparable male bonding, heroic risk taking, extremes of violence, and readiness to sacrifice one's life for the cause' (Peterson 2010: 23). Militarised masculinity has long been a 'central component of manhood' (Goldstein 2003: 266), defined against and organized hierarchically above those cast as feminine (Higate 2003b, Duncanson 2009, Via 2010). This speaks not just to women, but also to numerous state subjects characterised as 'effeminate' and subordinate, such as gay men or various ethnic minorities. As discussed below, this feminisation also occurs within army ranks, and as chapter six shows, similar strategies of subordination are visible in the relationships between ISAF and the ANSF.

Despite the 'rediscovery' of counterinsurgency in the 21st century, and its shift towards 'population centric' counterinsurgency, elements of the classical

⁴⁷ Of the most prominent are David Patraeus (PhD in International History), John Nagl (PhD in History) and David Kilcullen (PhD in Political Anthropology). Kilcullen serves as a particularly good example of the merging between the military, academic and political world. He previously served with the Australian Military, was Special Advisor to former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and a senior advisor to General Patraeus. He was a notable opponent to the invasion in Iraq, arguing that the US was ill-prepared for what awaited them there (Giovanni 2009). While 'soldier-scholars' are particularly important for the current re-emergence of counterinsurgency, it is worth noting that a kind of 'intellectual masculinity' was prominent also during the Kennedy years (Dean 1998).

sovereignty ethos remain, as shown below in the analysis of the soldier memoirs. Classical sovereignty, understood as ‘the right of life and death’ and ‘the right to kill’ (Foucault 1997: 240) is not dissolved here, but it is accompanied by a governmental rationality of care (Weber 2008a). Accordingly, there is far less emphasis on kinetic force, or killing capacity, and an increased emphasis on ‘winning hearts and minds’ through building ‘population-centred’ capacity (Khalili 2010a). This therefore, argues Khalili, calls into being a ‘a new form of masculinity’ in which “manliness” is softened, and the sensitive masculinity of the humanitarian soldier-scholar (white, literate, articulate and doctorate-festooned) overshadows the hyper-masculinity of warrior kings’ (2010a: 5). Importantly, ‘this new brand of soldier-scholar is directly contrasted with images of the misogynist warriors of the Taliban and Al Qaeda and more broadly with the gender-segregated society of Afghanistan’ (McBride and Wibben 2012: 204). In other words, there are strong resonances between this performance of gender and protective masculinity discussed in the previous chapter.

As argued in chapter two, it is crucial to understand military masculinities as a plural concept (Higate 2003b, Higate 2007, Duncanson 2013) rather than equating them solely with physical violence. As Ryerson Christie argues, in the context of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency, ‘militaries are now deliberately pursuing alternative masculinities, at least for some of its soldiers, that appear to be at odds with nominal hegemonic military masculinities’ (Christie 2012: 58). Similarly, Terrell Carver argues that we are witnessing a merging of the ‘rational-bureaucratic modern man’ and the warrior (2008: 78). That said, it is not the case that ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency only produces a singular gentle, intelligent, protective, cooperative, communicative and culturally-savvy military masculinity. On the contrary, as this chapter shows, this type of warfare requires a plurality of embodied military masculinities, which do not necessarily ‘sit easy’ with one another. Rather, this duality, and at times tension, is written into the very doctrine of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency. This is evident in how ‘soldier-scholar’ David Kilcullen summarizes effective counterinsurgency – ‘a matter of good governance, backed

by solid population security and economic development measures, resting on a firm foundation of energetic IO [information operations], which unifies and drives all other activity' (2009 : 60). He encourages company level commanders to 'discuss ideas' and 'seek consensus' rather than opt for violence, and states that 'if this sounds unmilitary, get over it' (Kilcullen 2006b: 135). The aim is to 'provide protection, identify needs, facilitate civil affairs and use improvements in social conditions as leverage to build networks and mobilise the population' (Kilcullen 2006b: 138). However, as Kilcullen also reminds us, 'if this sounds soft, non-lethal and non-confrontational it is not: this is a life-and-death competition in which the loser is marginalized, starved of support and ultimately destroyed. The actors mount a lethal struggle to control the population' (2006a: 11). There is 'always a lot of killing one way or the other' (Kilcullen 2006a: 3). In other words, the 'winning hearts and minds' and governing of populations requires both 'killing' and 'caring'.

As a whole, this reframing of counterinsurgency as 'population-centric' 'helps reinforce the idea that the end goal of the U.S.-led intervention is humanitarian and that the efforts in Afghanistan are geared mainly at saving the civilian population' (McBride and Wibben 2012: 203). As shown in the next chapter, this framing is not only reliant on a 'softened' conception of male soldiers, but also on the appropriation of women's bodies into counterinsurgency, as both 'practitioners' (FETs) and 'targets' (Afghan women). In fact, much of the 'caring' of counterinsurgency is provided by female counterinsurgents.

As noted above, this type of counterinsurgency constitutes a re-imagining of the population as the battlefield of war. The increased emphasis on winning the civilian population over, rests on the belief that if insurgents lack the support of the civilian population they will be easier to defeat. Historically, in war, the category of the civilian is feminine. The culturally important term 'women and children' serves to signify those who do not fight, granting women and children, but not adult men a civilian status associated with 'material innocence and vulnerability' (Carpenter 2006: 26, see also Kinsella 2005). Cynthia Enloe has

famously argued that what the phrase represents infantilises women, leading her to coin the term ‘womenandchildren’ (1993, see also Shepherd 2006). In ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency however, ‘the civilian populations are seen as malleable and calculating masses, subject to manipulation by the “terrorists” and the counterinsurgents alike’ (Khalili 2010b: 9). Through its engagement with civilians, ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency aims to change attitudes, reinforce what is considered a legitimate government and ‘liberate’ minds to change sides – from passive or active support of the insurgent, to backing the government and the counterinsurgency effort. In other words, it needs to manage and govern the population.

This type of warfare also blurs the lines between traditionally accepted categories of ‘civilian’ and ‘combatant’. In counterinsurgency, the formerly ‘innocent’ civilian is perhaps not so straightforwardly innocent after all, because the enemy one is seeking to combat dwells within and is often indistinguishable from the civilian community. As FM 3-24 warns, while ‘civilian protection is more central in COIN [counterinsurgency] than in conventional warfare’, achieving the social and economic opportunities necessary for it to be deemed ‘successful’ is very difficult because ‘the insurgent exploits the civilian...[they] dress in civilian clothes, hide behind women, use children as spotters’ and so on (2007: xxvii). In other words, the civilian population constitutes not only an aim for counterinsurgency, but also a challenge and is an entity that can never really be trusted.

1.2 Culture and Counterinsurgency

In order to manoeuvre this difficult terrain, cultural knowledge is deemed essential for success and pre-defined cultural divisions need to be interpreted, understood and ultimately mastered if the enemy is to be defeated (Kilcullen 2006b). According to former ISAF Commander Stanley McChrystal, ‘success’ requires personnel to be ‘seen as guests of the Afghan people and their

government' and they must 'spend as much time as possible with the people and as little time as possible in armoured vehicles or behind walls' (McChrystal quoted in Caldwell 2011a: 241). This is of course nothing new, as cultural knowledge has been an integral part of many previous counterinsurgency operations as well (Feichtinger et al. 2012) and militaries fighting in counterinsurgency operations have long aligned themselves with 'cultural advisors' and anthropologists (Duyvesteyn 2011). That said, the centrality of 'cultural knowledge' should not be seen as simply a pragmatic solution to finding oneself fighting in a different and 'complex' culture or a different kind of fighting environment. As noted in the previous chapter, particular racialized and gendered assumptions have been embedded into the discourse and narrative of this war from the outset. It relied on there being a fundamental difference between 'us' and 'them' in order to function discursively and enable a legitimization of the invasion of Afghanistan. In other words, the 'cultural turn' in the way that Western militaries approach war, is much more than something that functions as a pragmatic pre-deployment strategy.

The rediscovery of culture and its role in counterinsurgency operations has led to great changes within the US Department of Defence, who have been hiring social scientists, anthropologists, linguists, area specialists and political advisors en masse in the last decade (SfAA 2007). While Western powers, and particularly the US, were 'immensely capable of blowing the doors off of opposing regimes with "shock and awe"' they were less capable of "forging the targeted societies anew" (Feichtinger et al. 2012: 45). The attempt to become a 'world expert' in the practices, values and histories of a particular people acts as an example of what Patrick Porter argues has been a marked change in the way that Western militaries approach war – 'the cultural turn' (2009). He argues that strategists within the Pentagon and elsewhere viewed the 'global war on terrorism as a clash of profoundly different cultures, between American-led forces on one side, and jihadist warriors or tribal warlords on the other' (Porter 2007:45). This view, and the continuous reference to the 'culture' of the enemy, allows the military to explain successes and failures as the result of long-standing historical and

cultural traits. While FM 3-24 acknowledges that culture is learned, it emphasises that it is 'logically consistent, bounded, highly integrated, internally coherent, and animated' (Porter 2009: 61). The obsessive focus on British and French colonial experiences of warfare, exemplified with frequent references to 'The Great Game' and T.E. Lawrence also speaks to a kind of 'colonial nostalgia' where 'modern soldier-intellectuals looked to a mythologised history of Empire as a guide' (Porter 2009: 58).

One example of how this 'cultural turn' happens in practice is the Human Terrain System (HTS) that has been employed in order to increase knowledge of a given area's 'culture' and society in both Iraq and Afghanistan (Lucas Jr 2009)⁴⁸, and as means to 'triage between different levels of risk so that modes of both lethal and non-lethal targeting might be adapted accordingly' (Kienscherf 2011: 527). Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) have recruited a number of anthropologists, political scientists and area specialists in its service in order to conduct ethnographies, teach soldiers 'best practice' in a specific 'cultural terrain' and assist the military in their efforts to 'secure the population'. These are 'structurally very close to older traditions of the application of knowledge for the organization of imperial rule' (Feichtinger et al. 2012: 48).

There have been several contentious debates within and outside the academic community regarding the turn to 'culture' and academia's role within it (see for instance Gonzalez 2007, Kilcullen 2007, McFate 2007, Zehfuss 2012). A key anthropologist that has aided the 'cultural turn' for the US army is Montgomery McFate who attributes the renewed interest in cultural knowledge as stemming 'directly from the challenges posed by the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan' (2010: 190). Arguing that 'the centre of gravity in any counterinsurgency is the

⁴⁸ HTS is organised in teams known as Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) and vary in scope and organization. Proponents of HTTs argue that 'the Army, our Nation, and the people of Iraq and Afghanistan will benefit from the fielding of this powerful new instrument for conducting stability operations and reconstruction' (Kipp et al. 2006: 15). The budget of HTT is approximately \$ 60 million, it has been called 'the most expensive social science project in history' (Gonzalez 2008: 22). In his critique of the human terrain agenda and system, Gonzalez draws the history of this military practice back to the perceived threat in the US of the 'Black Panthers' and other militant groups. As such, the term is already embedded in a racial and colonial history.

civilian population' and the goal being to 'shift the population from passive or active support of the insurgents to support the legitimate host nation government' (McFate 2010: 190), she cites knowledge and understanding of culture as the key component of making this happen. In this quest, anthropology can truly realise its potential,

'Once called "the handmaiden of colonialism", anthropology has had a long, fruitful relationship with various elements of national power, which ended suddenly following the Vietnam War. The strange story of anthropology's birth as a warfighting discipline, and its sudden plunge into the abyss of postmodernism, is intertwined with the U.S. failure in Vietnam' (McFate 2005: 2).

Beatrice Heuser, another strong advocate of increasing the 'cultural knowledge' of militaries suggests that anthropologists 'must be happy to get out of their ivory tower of theory and get stuck into the practical application of their skills' (2007: 170). Kilcullen writes that the introduction of anthropological knowledge into counterinsurgency makes 'counterinsurgency more, not less humane'. The ethical questions about such research that several anthropologists have raised are largely dismissed since ethics, understood by Kilcullen in utilitarian terms as 'the greatest good for the greatest number', should encourage, not discourage anthropologists and other social scientists to get involved (2007: 20).

Anthropologist Roberto J. Gonzalez warns against the 'facile "unbiased" notions of culture preferred by soldier-scholars' as they seem to provide 'ideological justifications for military occupation through appeals to orientalist stereotypes' (Gonzalez 2007:18, see also Porter 2009, Owens 2010). Likewise, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) has heavily criticized the practice of HTTs and called it an 'unacceptable application of anthropological expertise' (Quoted in Lucas Jr 2009: 171). While Porter contends that much of the focus on culture may be well-intended, as Kilcullen argues, and aimed at fostering 'greater cultural awareness and sophistication among militaries and governments' (2007: 45-46), and that it may well be a 'healthy corrective to the overconfidence and technological determinism that marked aspects of recent strategic thinking' (2007: 49), its downside is that it 'risks replacing strategy with stereotypes' (2007:

26). He points to the vast range of military literature written in the last decades that argue that there is a specific kind of war fought by ‘men of the east’ which is seen as both ancient and unchangeable. However, ironically, ‘against a historical model of continuity in which strategy is rooted in timeless traditions, it assumes that its own institutions and doctrines are open to transformation’ (Porter 2007: 50). Similarly, Derek Gregory argues that the ‘mastering’ of these ‘cultural differences’ may imply more than simply an obvious ‘practical’ problem for counterinsurgents; it may also imply a radically dichotomous relationship between insurgents and counterinsurgents,

‘the emphasis on cultural difference – the attempt to hold the Other at a distance while claiming to cross the interpretative divide – produces a diagram in which violence has its origins in “their” space, which the cultural turn endlessly partitions through its obsessive preoccupation with ethno-sectarian division, while the impulse to understand is confined to “our” space, which is constructed as open, unitary and generous: the source of a hermeneutic invitation that can never be reciprocated’ (2008b: 18).

While it may be commonsensical to argue that in order to ‘win’ a counterinsurgency one needs to understand the society that one is stationed in, to say that concerns with culture only arose as a result of the experience of ‘doing war’ is something else. As argued in the previous chapter and shown in the next chapter in relation to the deployment of FETs, how ‘women’ and ‘men’ are understood and believed to interact with their surroundings is not something that arose only after the invasion took place. On the contrary, conceptions of the Other’s culture has been of immense importance in the construction of the West’s own sense of Self, and is therefore not something that has surfaced as relevant only after deployment of boots on the ground. ‘Knowledge’ of the Other is never neutral and as Edward Said argues in *Orientalism*, it ‘has much less to do with the Orient than it does with “our” world’ (1994: 12). As shown in chapter six of this thesis, soldiers themselves contribute to the production of knowledge about Afghan society and its men, which in part replicate the belief that there is an ‘absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, underdeveloped,

inferior' (Said 1994: 300).

2.0 The Multiple Military Masculinities of Counterinsurgency

As the above section shows, a central part of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency has been its emphasis on cultural knowledge, the gendered performances of 'soldier-scholars' and a reimagining of the population as the battlefield of war. However, military masculinity is not one kind of performance, but always exists in multiplicity and 'soldier-scholar' masculinity is not the only, nor even the most common, performance of military masculinity in counterinsurgency. 'Soldier-scholars' are often a select elite that the lower echelons frequently have difficulty identifying with. Military masculinities are produced in complex gendered ways through military doctrine, recruitment adverts, films, games and literature forming a complex web of meaning which link the ideas of manhood and soldiering (Steans 2006). Soldiers themselves are therefore simultaneously products, and productive of these masculinities by appropriating and adapting hegemonic ideals of masculinity in the military. How soldiers themselves represent their experiences in Afghanistan is therefore a part of this production and the gendering of how they make sense of their deployment provides a rich source of insights.

As Connell argues, the production of hegemonic masculinity requires a strategy of subordination of alternative expressions of masculinity (1995), which is partly achieved through *feminisation*. With *feminisation* I am referring to discursive links that are drawn between particular actions or traits and what is considered feminine. Following Peterson, and emphasising that gender is produced as relational, 'privileging who and what is masculinized is inextricable from *devaluing* who and what is feminized' (2010: 18). This means that the production of military masculinities relies on devaluing what is considered feminine, and that neither can exist without the other, recognizing that the soldier exists in a 'gendered matrix of relations' (Butler 1993: xvi). The 'weeding out' of particular

practices or characteristics deemed feminine, internally within a military force and later in relation to training 'host forces' as discussed in chapter six, is therefore a significant part of the creation of military masculinities.

As the introduction to this thesis notes, soldiers writing about their wartime experiences is a growing phenomenon. There are endless reasons why young men and women become soldiers, and Norway and the US have different traditions when it comes to recruitment to the military forces which no doubt influences these. The analysis here makes use of four American memoirs and four Norwegian ones, and for the benefit of context and background, a brief introduction to them is provided here.

Three of the Norwegian memoirs come from members of the same battalion (Telemark Batallion) (Johansen 2011, Elden 2012, Mella 2013), and they have all been stationed in Meymaneh in Faryab, in the north of Afghanistan. For all three of these authors, they explain their reasoning for writing memoirs as being about giving the Norwegian public an insight into life as a soldier - 'how conscripted soldiers are turned into professional warriors' (Johansen 2011: 11), and to 'increase the understanding and acceptance for what it means to be a professional soldier' (Mella 2013: 12). In some respects these memoirs are quite similar, in terms of everyday experiences and reflections around how the Norwegian public and Norwegian politicians do not have enough understanding or recognition for what soldier's abroad do, particularly in the wake of the *Alfa* scandal, discussed in chapter two and below. In others they differ, with for instance Elden's book focusing not only on relationships in the field, but also follows the strains he and his wife felt because of his deployment. The fourth of the Norwegian memoirs is written by a selection of anonymous snipers and was the first of its kind to come out in Norway (Skarpskyttere 2010). Because this book has a collection of authors, it presents less of a chronological description of events but is rather a selection of 'momentary pictures'.

The Norwegian soldiers express different reasons for signing up for service overseas. In *Skarpskyttere* for instance, when answering this question, the author

is conscious not to sound like a 'blood thirsty Rambo, but also not like a cute puppy who thinks he is going to a peace keeping mission' (2010: 21). But really, the answer is clear – 'For extremists who support terror, howl Allah's name and burn flags, there is one cure, the vermin needs to be annihilated from the surface of the earth, clear and simple' (Skarpskyttere 2010: 22). In *Love and War*, Emil Elden states that going to Afghanistan was a part of achieving his three life ambitions (become a platoon commander, experience combat and find a good woman). He writes that achieving the second goal was the most difficult since it would demand being stationed in a war zone and he hoped Norway would deploy soldiers to the south of the country, like the Danes had done (Elden 2012: 10). As it turns out, the situation in Faryab would afford him several opportunities for combat experience. For Emil Johansen, going to Afghanistan was simply a case of 'doing his job' and he 'goes where Stortinget asks him to go, if that is Afghanistan or another conflict or war'. But he adds, 'if that means I can help other people in a difficult situation that is a major bonus'. But fundamentally, he considers himself a 'tool for Norwegian foreign policy' (Johansen 2011: 45). Mella writes that for him it was part 'excitement', 'putting into practice what he had learned', 'making a difference', well aware that as a 'professional soldier I am a small piece in a political power game' (2013: 34).

The American memoirs have a greater diversity in terms of type of deployment, location, battalion, and reasons for signing up. Jeff Courter, author of *Afghan Journal* writes that there is a deep, religious motivation in serving by seeking to 'help those who cannot help themselves' (2008: 10)⁴⁹. Both him, Benjamin Tupper and Matt Zeller were a part of an Embedded Training Team (ETT) to train the ANA and the Afghan National Police (ANP). Tupper calls this the 'tip

⁴⁹ He is far more outspoken about his religious views than many of the others, he is significantly older (43) than the rest of the soldiers and his book has less descriptions of combat situations than in the other books. Throughout his memoir, he is critical of other soldiers who nourish an urge to kill, rather than more 'humanitarian' aims – 'Serving the poor Afghans is not a big part of their vocabulary; killing the Taliban is' (Courter 2008: 352). He was previously a cook in the Marines, 'which was still better in my opinion at the time to being a "grunt" or Infantry' (Courter 2008: 2). He considers the infantry units to be of 'a different breed' who 'see the world from only one point of view – Army Green. They do things their own way. There may be better ways, but if it's not the Infantry way (i.e. their way), it cannot possibly be a better way' (Courter 2008: 218).

of the counterinsurgency spear'. Courter's motivation of 'serving the poor Afghans' is partly echoed in Tupper's *Greetings from Afghanistan*. Having previously been employed in an NGO in Afghanistan, Tupper 'felt that Americans had a moral and historical obligation to help stabilize Afghanistan, after we had abruptly disengaged from the country at the conclusion of the Afghan-Russian war' (2010: ii). He wanted to 'work to undo this error, and to ensure that the next generation of Afghan girls could attend school, and that artists could paint, and musicians sing' (ibid.)⁵⁰.

Sean Parnell's book *Outlaw Platoon* is based on the experiences of the 'legendary' U.S. army 10th Mountain division (aka Outlaw platoon or 'Green Skulls') during their 16-month stay in Bermel Valley, along the border of Pakistan. Parnell considers himself both 'blessed and cursed to have led one of the most valorously decorated conventional combat units in the history of Operation Enduring Freedom' (2012: vii)⁵¹. Matt Zeller book, *Watches Without Time*, is made up by a selection of emails and letters sent home and is, according to Zeller, 'as naked as I can get'. Zeller was trained to be an Army advisor but ended up being an operations mentor for the ANP and he felt '100 percent unqualified to serve in this role' (Zeller: 62). Zeller distinguishes himself from many of the other soldiers in that he is on several occasions explicitly concerned with US counterinsurgency strategy, and emphasizes how important winning 'hearts and minds' is. After his

⁵⁰ We learn later that one of Tupper's nick names during his time in Afghanistan was 'Care Bear', due to his project aimed at getting people back home to send teddy bears, stuffed animals, clothes and shoes to Afghan children (2010: 102-104). In one of the pictures, he poses in a military vehicle surrounded with toys and stuffed animals. Tupper's book is based on a series of blog entries and he writes that none of these were at any point censored by the military, which, in Tupper's view reflects his obscure position in the army as an ETT, rather than the army not wanting to. One entry about a suicide attack, which also featured on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), caught the Army's attention though. Its description was deemed 'too violent' and 'contradicted the themes of "construction" and "rebuilding" that the Army wanted to focus on' (Tupper 2010: 251-253).

⁵¹ Parnell wants the book to 'tell the world of their amazing accomplishments' and he argues that 'this book displays no political agenda nor is it a review of U.S. foreign policy'. It is also worth noting that details about the personal lives and full names are given about various members of the platoon, which indicates that Parnell has cleared the publication of the book with them beforehand. The book is written together with John R. Bruning, a military historian. Bruning writes that Sean was a 'man of great character, a human with compassion, unique insight and determination' (Parnell 2012: 366-367). Out of all the books, this is the one that is the most action packed and reads a bit like a movie script.

deployment he ran for Congress as a Democratic nominee from New York State in 2010.

2.1 The ‘Killing and Caring’ of Counterinsurgency

As is clear, there are a great variety of reasons why soldiers agree to deploy to Afghanistan, there is also a world of difference in what they hope to achieve once they arrive. While some emphasise the importance of ‘winning hearts and minds’, aided by stories of helping Afghan civilians, others place greater emphasis on the experience of fighting and detailed explanations of positions, strategies and weaponry. In other words, these memoirs are all quite different in character, but they share many similarities. In large part they confirm what Woodrow and Jenkins’ study of British soldier’s memoirs showed, namely that it is not uncommon that the ‘enthusiasm for reconstruction work’ is ‘tempered with a parallel enthusiasm for direct combat’ (Woodward and Jenkins 2012: 122). However, what does this mean for the practice of counterinsurgency?

While this thesis emphasises the various performances of military masculinity for the practice of counterinsurgency, this does not mean that these necessarily exist harmoniously together, or that the different soldier types are always consistent. In the memoirs, soldiers are continuously defining themselves against various Others, be they civilians back home, other sections of the military, and as discussed in chapter six, Afghan society and security forces. Soldier’s performances of particular identities can also be understood through the dynamic between ‘killing and caring’.

‘Population-centric’ counterinsurgency is conceptualised here as encompassing this dynamic, which is deemed crucial to its practice. As noted in chapter two, the dynamic is complex and is not always played out in the same way. Different aspects of counterinsurgency show the dynamic between ‘killing and caring’ as at times being in contention, at time the one prevents or enables the other, and at

times the one is placed above the other. *How* this dynamic is seen to work also depends on *who* is speaking.

For instance, ‘soldier-scholars’ tend to emphasise the importance of the ‘caring’ side of counterinsurgency, pointing to efforts to win ‘hearts and minds’ through conducting ‘armed social work’ and increased cultural knowledge can reduce levels of violence and prevent killing (Kilcullen 2007). Increased intelligence and surveillance is also said to reduce violence, and the FM 3-24 urges commanders to ‘Put the smartest Soldiers and Marines in the intelligence section and the reconnaissance and surveillance element. This placement results in one less rifle squad, but an intelligence section pays for itself in lives and effort saved’ (USArmy et al. 2007: 290). Here, the levels of intelligence and capacity for comprehension and reasoning are qualities that are valued and lead to less killing.

At times these performances of ‘protective masculinity’ are mirrored in the memoirs. Elden for instance notes that ‘to win the war we need a full backing from the locals and thereby taking the enemy’s [support], and to get their support we have to create security and contribute with humanitarian aid’ (2012: 126-127). Similarly, Courter explains that in their mission they eventually earned the ‘trust and confidence of the local people’ through ‘bringing medical care, giving them food and clothing and encouraging them to start schools’ (2008: 292).

Likewise, Tupper mentions several times how ‘this war cannot be won militarily’ (2010: 58, 108), and that ‘while we are badass Taliban hunters, and we have the power to destroy the enemy that we find, medical clinics remain our most powerful weapon in winning this war’ (2010: 60). Another powerful weapon in the battle for hearts and minds is gaining the population’s support through gifts,

such as Pop-Tarts.⁵² Tupper writes how they can be exchanged for information, particularly from children who are

‘simpler, and don't fully understand the complex pressures being exerted by the Taliban. They reveal things that elders will hide. So the lesson learned is simple: Don't ignore the kids. Always ask them what's going on. And always pack loads of Pop-Tarts!’ (2010: 101).

While these statements emphasise the importance of the ‘caring’ side of counterinsurgency, at other times the aims of it are unclear. Mella reflects on how the strategy of winning hearts and minds, with its emphasis on combining civilian and military efforts is both difficult and has ambiguous aims. He asks, ‘what kind of nation are we aiming to build? Are Western interests and thoughts about Afghanistan compatible with their own wishes? And are Afghans themselves in agreement about what kind of nation they want? I tend to doubt it’ (Mella 2013: 85).

Whatever the aims are, they are made more difficult, argues Mella, since the Norwegian government's decision pull out the civilian efforts from the Norwegian PRT and instigate a clearer division between the civilian and military missions (MFA/MOD/DOJ 2009)⁵³. This runs counter to FM 3-24, which encourages a close integration of civilian and military operations (USArmy et al. 2007: 299). Several Norwegian soldiers have reported that they find this division problematic on a day-to-day basis, and express an urge to help Afghan civilians. The Norwegian Ombudsman for the Forces report that there is a ‘tense relationship between military and civilian organisations’ and that the soldiers see themselves as ‘soldiers with a human face’ and that they consider themselves

⁵² Pop-tarts are pre-packaged and pre-baked toasties made by the Kellogg Company. They come in various flavours such as chocolate and strawberry. Tupper is pictured in his book holding up a box of ‘Disney Princess Pop-Tarts’ with the caption: ‘The secret weapon for getting information from Afghans: Pop-Tarts!’ (Tupper 2010: 100)

⁵³ This decision was made after long discussion in the Norwegian public and pressures from various NGOs that the military were encroaching on the humanitarian space of development NGOs. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), for example, has on several occasions highlighted the problems associated with militaries taking on development work, such as building schools. In 2008, Elisabeth Rasmussen, then General Secretary in NRC, stated that ‘NRC encourage the military leadership to let it sink in at all levels that the blending between military and humanitarian missions are very problematic and can be extremely dangerous’ (2008).

‘fellow humans’ to the Afghans. Consequently, they ‘would like to do more to end suffering and help the population more directly’ (Ombudsmannen 2010). In other words, Norwegian soldiers report back that they would like to contribute more to the ‘caring’ side of counterinsurgency, but find that this is inhibited by military and political strategy. That said, this does not imply a negation or a devaluation of combat and ‘kinetic’ operations, as the next section shows.

Zeller reflects on how the doctrine of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency splits the soldiers,

‘The U.S. Army seems to be split in two camps: those who buy into COIN and those who ignore it at all costs. More simply, post 9/11 soldiers and pre 9/11 soldiers, trained to fight the soviets or some other grand nation vs. nation war. Everything about COIN flies in the face of what pre 9/11 soldiers learned in their army careers. To them, COIN tastes too much like nation building...body counts and enemy damage won’t win this war; if anything, it’ll hasten our defeat, as the population will rapidly turn against us. No, to win here in Afghanistan, we must practice COIN; we have to effectively build this nation. We win when the population determines it’s in their best interest to reject the Taliban and its ideology in favour of something that benefits our interests’ (2012: 220)⁵⁴.

Zeller draws up a distinction between people like himself, who ‘get’ counterinsurgency and the ‘regular soldiers who have only been trained to kill, kill, kill’. He does not consider himself up there with the best of them in terms of combat, but is much more suitable for counterinsurgency which he considers ‘a thinking man’s fight’ (Zeller 2012: 221). As it is expressed here, Zeller places the ‘caring’ side of counterinsurgency (intelligent and modern) hierarchically above the killing, which is considered both out-dated and short-sighted. In other words, a less valued military masculinity.

Therefore, while there are multiple military masculinities coexisting within the same force, these are continuously re-negotiated and contested. Contrary to

⁵⁴ Zeller suggests that the US military should be split in two between a ‘conventional state-vs-state fighting force and a counterinsurgency/stabilisation force’. The former he argues is the kind advocated by General Colin Powell, whereas the latter would focus on ‘cultural development, societal progression, language training, community relations, civil affairs etc., currently advocated by Colonel Nagl’ (Zeller 2012: 221).

what was discussed above with regards to the developing of ‘soldier-scholar’ masculinity within Army leadership and amongst proponents of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency, like Zeller, the emphasis on the ‘caring’ of counterinsurgency does not exclude recognizing the importance of ‘killing’. That said, you cannot only have ‘caring’ and not ‘killing’ in the production of military masculinities, as the remainder of this chapter shows. Having experienced combat and being good at killing remains crucial. In other words, ‘warrior masculinity’ still remains a powerful force and gendered performances of classical notions of sovereignty, associated with killing and dying for one’s country (Weber 2008a) are still important. Being ‘in the action’ is central, something that is ‘reinforced during military training, and results in a culture where inaction is seen as feminine’ (Duncanson and Cornish 2012: 155).

2.2 ‘War is Better than Sex’

As noted in chapter two of this thesis, in 2010 the Telemark battalion was hit by a scandal. To recap briefly, this unit came under scrutiny after the ‘men’s magazine’ *Alfa*⁵⁵ did a feature on a group of them fighting in Afghanistan which included quotes like ‘war is better than sex’ and ‘you don’t sign up to go to Afghanistan to save the world, but to join a real war’ (Hompland 2010). In addition to the statements, the use of battle cries like ‘To Valhalla’ was criticised, as was the commander, Major Rune Wenneberg who was seen by large parts of the Norwegian media as being the one responsible for the nurturing of this ‘warrior culture’ (VG Nett 2010). At the time, the Minister of Defence, Grete Faremo stated that she had read ‘expressions by soldiers in Afghanistan that we cannot accept. It expresses attitudes that the armed forces cannot support’ (VGTV 2010).

⁵⁵ The article ‘Norway at War’ was a 17-page long report in the first edition of ‘Norway’s newest men’s magazine’, which aimed at being ‘serious’ and with ‘balls’. Fredrik Langeland argues that the kind of masculinity it promotes is one of the ‘traditional Norwegian heterosexual man’, something it establishes through a contrasting itself to notions of ‘metrosexuality’ (2012: 319).

This example illustrates three important things. Firstly, it demonstrates the tension of counterinsurgency between ‘killing and caring’. Having discussed this earlier in the chapter, and through emphasising the ‘caring’ aspect in the next chapter in terms of deploying FETs, these statements stand in stark contrast to the notion of ‘care’ in counterinsurgency. The *Alfa* article and the discussions in the wake of it also revealed a discrepancy between the public narrative told about the war in Afghanistan, with an emphasis on it being a humanitarian war as discussed in the previous chapter, and the statements by Norwegian soldiers in the Telemark Battalion (Langeland 2012). This is further emphasised by a sense of ‘disappointment’ and ‘betrayal’ felt by soldiers in the battalion, and noted by Johansen, Elden and Mella, in relation to how this was handled by politicians at the time. Thirdly, the explanation for some of the things that came out in the *Alfa* article speaks to the centrality of embodiment in war, particularly in terms of comparing battle to sex and on the importance of the battle cry.

Johansen, Elden and Mella all make efforts to explain and contextualise the problematic statements that came out in the *Alfa* piece. Johansen and Elden go to great lengths to endorse the ‘warrior culture’ and to support their former commander. They explain the importance of creating a ‘warrior culture’ for the purposes of camaraderie, morale and determination. This culture needs to nurture specific traits and values. Warriors need to be ‘aggressive’, ‘independent’, ‘brave’, ‘honourable’, ‘cooperative’ and ‘resilient’ (Johansen 2011: 32-33 see also , Elden 2012: 45-47, Higate 2003c). For Elden and Johansen both, their identity as ‘warriors’ is important for the Norwegian public to understand and they both seem to feel that there is a discrepancy between what they are trained to do and how politicians represent them. In other words, there is a tension between the kind of ‘soldier-scholar’ identity that politicians are proponents of, and what soldiers see themselves doing. Elden explains that

‘When the overall perception is that Norwegian soldiers are peace keepers on a mission for a peaceful nation, the soldiers get little or no recognition from the outside, from the civilian society. The only recognition they get is from their closest colleagues’ (2012: 50).

Mella is equally unimpressed with how the military leadership and politicians, in particular the Minister of Defense Grete Faremo, handled this scandal as 'it seemed like they were out to save their own skins instead of building understanding in the population for the complex emotions that many soldiers feel' (2013: 153)⁵⁶.

How then should statements that equate war with sex be understood? Elden explains that 'for guys in their twenties, it is easy to compare extreme battle with sex...it is the closest you get to the euphoric joy when you win a battle' (2012: 222). Mella can also relate to this and explains that 'if you look at the chemical processes that arise in a person during battle, they are similar to emotions that arise during sex' (2013: 152). In other words, the experience of war is a deeply embodied through its sexualisation, and this is central in the ways that soldiers make sense of their experiences. The importance of emotions can also be seen in how Johansen explains the first time they used the infamous battle cry ('To Valhalla!' followed by 'Orrha!' x3),

'warmth spread around my body and the sense of depression was transformed to an immense fighting spirit. The grey faces around me lit up, now we were ready. This can sound like childish "boy play", but for us it was deadly serious. We knew it was just a question of time before we would be sent to a foreign country, at war for Norway, where this training would decide whether we succeed or not' (2011: 43).

As Johansen explains, the experience of standing together with fellow soldiers shouting the battle cry is a deeply embodied experience because of its collective meaning. Johansen explains how the sensory euphoria of this filled his body with warmth and lightness and how the use of Viking insignia, along with how the battle cry works to cement the relationship between 'the guys' and strengthens

⁵⁶ Mella writes that they were all 'less surprised' at the statements by Defence Minister Grete Faremo than how Harald Sunde (former head of the Special Forces, then head of the Joint Headquarters of the Norwegian Military, now Chief of Defence) had handled the situation. We had 'lower expectations of her...when she in 2009 became the third female defence minister she had no military background' and he quotes Faremo in saying that 'I have been employed on a (gender) quota basis several times in my life, also as Minister of Defence' (Mella 2013: 153-154). In other words, the explanations for why she did not understand the 'warrior culture' was both because she lacked embodied soldier experience, and, presumably also because she was a woman.

the internal cohesion of the group. Ben Wadham explains how in the Australian military this is enabled through the notion of 'mateship' – 'an individual at heart who foregoes his individualism for the greater authority of his mates' (2004: 11). In the Norwegian military, the term 'gutta' (literally meaning boys) is used in a similar way, and referring to others 'as *one of the boys*, places the soldiers and their colleagues on the inside and outside of the operational community' (Totland 2009: 56). The use of Viking insignia and standing shoulder to shoulder shouting the battle cry are embodied ways of ensuring that a range of martial bodies become collectivised.

Appealing to the past for inspiration and symbolism is also present in *Skarpskyttere* where, from the outset, the snipers in their military role are situated in a historical perspective by recalling the 'first men who fought wind and snow across the glaciers ten thousand years ago'. Today the sniper is 'a highly trained soldier with superb combat and shooting skills, and who can deliver precise fire to selected aims across long distances', which is, the book argues, the modern day equivalent of latter day Norwegian explorers (Skarpskyttere 2010: 9). This is noteworthy, since the book deliberately appeals to historically potent images of the lone man fighting the natural elements – a significant and cherished image in the Norwegian self-image and national narrative. Appealing to historically significant martial symbols, stories and myths is important also in relation to colonial constructions of 'martial races', discussed in chapter three and six.

As a whole, the production of this new kind of 'warrior culture' in the Norwegian Armed Forces, with its emphasis on killing and combat, should be seen in relation to a willed development in reforming the Norwegian forces, as discussed in the introduction and in chapter three. It also shows as mentioned, the way that 'soldier-scholar' masculinity is contested internally within forces, pointing to the complexity of the doctrine of counterinsurgency and how the dynamic between 'killing and caring' can also manifest itself as a difficult balancing act for the forces.

2.3 *Emotions, Sexuality and Heteronormativity*

A similarly specialised 'warrior masculinity' is nourished in *Outlaw Platoon*, where there are several mentions of what it takes to be an infantry soldier. Much of the book deals with the relationships between different types of soldiers and the internal discipline of the military where 'those who appeared to measure up earned respect' while those who did not were 'regarded with distrust and became outsiders' (Parnell 2012: 4). For him, there is a simple logic, – 'in combat, men measure up. Or don't. There are no second chances' (Parnell 2012: 83). Parnell represents infantrymen as 'honourable', 'brave', 'tough' and with a 'heart of gold'. They are also better than the Special Forces (SF) –

'There were attitude differences between us regular line infantry men and the SF guys...Rather than focus on the enemy, they seemed to us to be preoccupied with frivolous and extraneous details, such as what color they should paint their weapons...much of the time they walked around nonchalantly in baseball caps. After what we'd gone through, that sort of theatrical stuff came across as sheer stupidity' (Parnell 2012: 226).

This corresponds to Hockey's argument that there is a particular kind of identity nurtured in infantry forces like Parnell's, which is often pitted against the tech-savvy capabilities of other forces (2013: 103).

Another aspect that is deemed central to 'warrior masculinity' is the importance of being unflappable in the face of danger. Failing to do so often results in becoming feminised. This is highlighted in Zeller where during an ambush he struggles with keeping his cool and feels like a 'pussy' (2012: 82).

'I was so afraid, I couldn't even cry. Yet I stayed in my position and continued to return fire. Even now, *I feel like a coward, like less of a man* for being so acutely and visibly afraid. I was just thankful my soldiers weren't around to see me break, to see me lose my military bearing to such a degree' (Zeller 2012: 81 emphasis added)

This quote tells us several things about showing emotion in war. As Michael Kimmel notes, 'masculinity is a homosocial enactment' (2005: 33), something that is emphasised by the fact that Zeller is relieved that no one saw him so

‘acutely and visibly afraid’. At the same time, crying is not necessarily always considered feminine, something that is noted throughout the memoirs and across ranks. There are numerous mentions of situations where soldiers cry, hug, and comfort one another, often in relation to other soldiers being wounded and killed⁵⁷. As Elden emphasises, ‘Professional soldiers are not afraid of showing emotions’ (2012: 186). That said, there are strict rules guiding how these emotions can be expressed which speaks to the importance of remaining well within accepted boundaries of heterosexuality. On one occasion, Parnell is so pleased with his platoon that he feels a sense of love for them. But, he cannot find a means to express his thoughts as

‘men do not do well when tender emotions exist between them. They can be there. They can even be tangentially recognized. But to acknowledge them directly would have violated the structure of our relationship...love’s the only thing that will see us through this...I was glad I hadn’t said that to my squad leaders. *Just hearing it in my head sounded gay enough.* I’d have never lived it down’ (2012: 243-245 emphasis added)

Here, the strong bond created between soldiers needs to be disciplined through codes that strictly delineate appropriate emotional masculine behavior from being gay. Heteronormativity and valorising particular forms of sexuality has historically been a strong organising principle for armed forces, and remains so, despite increased diversity (Bulmer 2013, see also Wadham 2004, Belkin 2012). While some show of emotion and vulnerability, which would on other occasions be viewed as feminine and weak can be sanctioned, it needs to be expressed ‘properly’ (Hockey 2003: 23). The importance of sexuality in the production of particular forms of military masculinity is further emphasized in chapter six, where certain behaviors of ANA soldiers are interpreted as being gay, something that implies both subordination and distance.

⁵⁷ Additionally, there are several occasions where soldiers are clearly emotionally struck down by poor living conditions for locals and particularly for children who are wounded, sick or dying. The American memoirs contain stories about how soldiers try to bend the rules to ensure medical care for particular children, how much the lack of care given to them by the military and/or their families distresses them and incidents where children die in their arms (see Zeller 2012, Parnell 2012, Courter 2008, Tupper 2010).

As is clear, there are multiple layers also to performances of warrior masculinity and these are connected to the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and the development of ‘soldier-scholar’ masculinity. As Parnell writes, ‘the nature of the war here required us lieutenants to be warrior-diplomats...the army counted on us to be emissaries and power brokers’ (2012: 34)⁵⁸. In other words, the role of the infantrymen is far more complex than simply being reliable and aggressive in combat. To succeed you also have to have good communication skills, be able to establish a rapport with local leaders, negotiate your way through difficult situations, and of course, you have to maintain a good working relationship with Afghan security forces, discussed in chapter six. This shows an awareness of the kind of ‘soldier-scholar’ masculinity discussed above and a degree of adaptability of the infantry soldier masculinity to that. However, and importantly, this does not imply a negation of kinetic, or ‘killing’ activity.

2.4 ‘Fobbits’, ‘Ducks’ and ‘Turtles’

A defining difference and crucial internal division in the American memoirs, with the exception of Courter, are between those who have combat experience and those who do not. As mentioned, Courter, as an Army Reservist, represents something of an anomaly with regard to the focus on combat and fighting. This is in accordance with Christie’s findings with regards to Army Reservists and their role in Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC). He argues that the tasks of CIMIC officers (interacting with civilians and coordinating development projects in PRTs), are ‘incompatible with the broader kinetic masculinity of soldiers’ and therefore reservists, who are seen as ‘less militarized and thus more “civilian”’ are preferred’ (Christie 2012: 61). In other words, there is an ‘outsourcing’ of the ‘armed social work’ of counterinsurgency to those that are deemed more fitted to

⁵⁸ Similarly, Elden writes that ‘as a platoon commander you not only need to have initiative and be brave, but also be an intellectual...it is expected that I am up to date on security and defence policy, military theory, the culture, religion and history of the regions where we’ll be operating, in addition to tactics and combat techniques (2012: 40).

fulfil these functions. Courter is one of these reservists and contrary to the other memoirs, far more emphasis is placed on interactions with Afghan civilians and less on combat. However, as shown in chapter five, women, in the shape of the FETs, who also perform parts of the 'caring' capacity of counterinsurgency.

Those who do not have combat experience and are reluctant to gain any, in other words, those who do not do the 'killing', are known as 'Fobbits' in US army slang. The term, as explained in chapter two, is derived from FOB (Forward Operating Base) and the Tolkien creation of Hobbits. The 'Fobbits', like Hobbits, rarely venture outside the wire (alternatively, the Shire)⁵⁹. The concept of 'Fobbits' will be dealt with here at some length as it emphasises the hierarchy of masculinity in the US military and it shows how strategies of feminisation are commonly used to distinguish those working in logistics and support from the 'real men'. While the category of 'Fobbits' can be seen as a potentially narrow one, it here represents a wider discontentment with how the primacy of killing and fighting is under threat. In other words, unhappiness about the 'Fobbits' signifies unhappiness about the 'warrior masculinity' coming under threat from a whole range of civilian, feminine and bureaucratic concerns.

Interestingly, a similar hostility between support/logistics and combat soldiers is not mentioned in the Norwegian memoirs, quite the opposite⁶⁰. However, that is not to say that there is not a hierarchy in terms of which positions are most valued, nor that these distinctions are not gendered. Rather it may simply be indicative of a more 'collegial' relationship between the two groups, partly explained by the sheer size of the force and how in Afghanistan most are deployed in the same area. When combat service and support are mentioned by Johansen he praises them as 'exceptional' and states that 'these women and men in the support staff are not the ones in the line of fire, but their role is decisive in caring for those who do...I have great respect for these people' (2011: 120). Elden

⁵⁹ Whether or not the realisation that in the end, Hobbits are hailed as the true heroes in *Lord of the Rings* is a part of the narrative here is not known.

⁶⁰ The only exception here is Mella, who complains that 'Forsvarsbygg' (in charge of buildings and maintenance of them) 'don't understand the seriousness of what goes on outside the wire. Besides them, the support functions 'delivered the goods every day' (Mella 2013: 174).

mentions a time when they returned back from combat to be greeted by ‘the girls in the kitchen’. They had ‘put together a special dinner for us, on their own initiative...Just for us. The girls smiled...they asked nicely if they could sit and eat with us. Incredible. The guys were lined up afterwards to thank the chefs, who told us that they were simply doing their jobs’ (2012: 127).

Connell argues that while hegemonic masculinity surfaces as the most revered and valorised form of masculinity, it need not be the most common, nor indeed the most comfortable (2000: 10-11). Given that there are ‘eight to eleven Fobbits for every fighting soldier’ (Tupper 2010) the majority of servicemen in the US military are in support and logistic roles. While this chapter does not want to identify ‘warrior masculinity’ as necessarily always the ‘hegemonic masculinity’, it wants to show how this kind of masculinity is contested and under threat.

In US military lingo, the number of combat troops relative to support staff is known as the ‘tooth-to-tail’ ratio (T₃R) where the ‘teeth’ are those actively seeking out and combating the enemy and the tail is everyone else. In the US military since the Second World War, the average percentage of combat troops has been around 32 per cent, leaving the rest to be filled by administrative, life support and logistics. On the whole, the number of combat troops in military operations such as Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan has steadily been in decline (McGrath 2007). In conjunction with the planned troop withdrawal in 2014, the ratio of support staff to combat personnel has come under scrutiny with one administration official stating ‘Why would you send home gunfighters and keep cooks? It doesn’t make any sense’ (Barnes 2012). In the US military, women are still not (technically) deployed in combat positions, so they are by their very nature ‘Fobbits’⁶¹, something that is discussed in the next chapter.

Tupper dedicates three whole chapters to this group of soldiers and while the nick-name awarded them may sound ‘cute and fuzzy’ it’s not meant to be, as

⁶¹ However, this does not mean that women within the US military do not have combat experience, as they in reality have been in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan both on the ground and as pilots.

‘many a fistfight in Afghanistan and Iraq has started with the insult “Fobbit” being levied by one soldier toward another’ (2010: 112) as they are nothing but ‘annoying reminders of the unequal risk distribution in Army life’ (2010: 114). ‘Fobbits’ ‘have it easy’ with ‘little to no exposure to the enemy’, they are ‘well-protected’ within the comforts of the FOB and can revel in all kinds of feminine pastimes ‘from massages to pedicures to smoothies to 24-7 coffee shops and deluxe chow halls’ (Tupper 2010: 110)⁶².

The way ‘Fobbits’ are demonized for their ample access to food, and bodily comforts is important, because it points to the way war is both a gendered and embodied practice. Higate argues that the body in the military is ‘a site of suffering and a vital resource’ (Higate 1998: 181) and an important part of soldier identity is connected to this bodily suffering. Throughout the memoirs, emphasis is placed on the role of the body and its ability to cope with lack of water, strenuous climbs, injury, fatigue and heat.

Parnell is equally resentful towards ‘Fobbits’ (or POGs – Personnel Other than Grunts) and asks ‘Band of brothers? No. Battle shifts those relationships like nothing else’ (2012: 206).

‘Our tolerance level for the petty rules and politics we faced on base diminished, even as they seemed to grow more acute and offensive. Chickenshit squared. We internalised every slight, noticed every inequity between us and the Fobbits, and fumed with resentment over the lack of respect we thought they telegraphed. The platoon withdrew into itself, the men building a protective wall around those they trusted. Everyone else was viewed with quiet suspicion’ (Parnell 2012: 218)

In a similar manner, Zeller draws up a distinction between those who have experienced combat (*turtles* who are silent) and those who have not (*ducks* who quack).

⁶² ‘Fobbit nirvana’ is Bagram Air Force base. Here, there is something else that the ‘Fobbits’ can enjoy, apart from the aforementioned goods and services, and ‘something extra-special for your average horny infantryman: *Women!*’ Not only that but ‘most, with the exception of Afghan women, are bebopping around in shorts and skimpy T-shirts. The scenery is deluxe!’ (Tupper 2010: 113-114).

'With disdain, we looked around at all the "Fobbits" and marvelled at how different they all suddenly appeared. Three weeks prior, these had been our fellow soldiers, friends of years, and yet now they were like strangers to us all. They simply couldn't relate – an abundance of ducks surrounding a group of turtles. Alderson remarked that within the first 24 hours of his arrival back at Camp Phoenix, he was ready to punch the next person who looked at him the wrong way' (Zeller 2012: 92).

'Fobbits' therefore seem to represent a fundamental division within the US military. The ones outside do the hard, gruelling, honourable work, whereas the ones inside are concerned with 'manufactured threats' (Tupper 2010: 115) and 'petty rules' (Parnell 2012: 218). The term has been subject to a series of satirical drawings and cartoons, such as the creation of 'Bob on the FOB' by SGT Albert J, Merrifield⁶³. In addition a song called 'The Fobbit Song', sung by 'Fagan & Cotto', two army veterans, details the extent to which combat soldiers detest Fobbits. The music video shows a series of 'Fobbits' relaxing around the FOB, exhibiting the range of services offered to them, including grocery stores and famous fast food outlets such as Subway and the Dairy Queen.

'You're a Fobbit and you can never relate, coz while I'm out there fighting you're watching the gate. You're putting guards on some shit that makes no sense, how can you say that being in the FOB is intense. You fucking liar, callin' home and sayin' you go out the wire, and on top of that your weapon's never been fired...' (LiveLeak 2008)

While this emphasises the importance of being actively a part of 'killing', in addition to speaking to an annoyance at 'Fobbits' ability to enjoy the comforts of life and live in relative security matters, the term can also be read as emblematic of a distaste for civilian/bureaucratic dimensions feeding into the military through what is viewed as excessive attention to rules and regulations. One of the health and safety rules that are mentioned both by Zeller and by Tupper is the enforcement of high visibility safety belts when walking around in the dark in at FOB Bagram. Tupper writes that this brings a '*Queer Eye for the Straight*

⁶³ Please see the following webpage for a selection of 'Bob on the Fob' characters, including the 'Fobbit': <http://rokdrops.com/2008/06/06/bob-on-the-fobs-creature-gallery/>

Guy aspect to our uniform that was sorely lacking’⁶⁴ (Tupper 2010: 116 see also, Zeller 2012: 234). Parnell writes that there are two wars going on in Afghanistan and there are two enemies, one is the Haqqani network that they are fighting outside the wire and ‘those we could handle...but the other enemy was more devious. How does one do battle with FOB politics?’ (Parnell 2012: 265).

The ‘civilian’ values and identities, which ‘Fobbits’ are seen to profess, speak to a longstanding division between civilian and military spheres. Victoria Basham argues that several military sociologists have emphasised the centrality of nurturing the military sphere as exempt from the civilian (see for instance Huntington 1981), something that affords militaries enough distinction from the civilian sphere to maintain a separate sense of identity (Basham 2008: 151, see also Goldstein 2003). Failing to do so, she argues, is seen to jeopardize the production of military masculinities as particular and distinct from civilian versions of masculinity, something that is often visible in discussions about diversifying the military forces in terms of race, sexuality and gender (Basham 2008: 158). ‘Fobbits’ in this regard represent this diluting of the centrality of ‘killing’ in war.

This division is distinctively gendered in the case of Afghanistan, something that is discussed at length in the next chapter. That notwithstanding, it can also be explored through how the FOB can be considered a boundary that separates not only the ‘inside’ from the ‘outside’, but also the ‘safe’ from the ‘unsafe’ and the ‘home/private’ from the ‘public’. In the military, as in society overall, masculine roles are associated with work outside of the home and feminine one’s within (Prokhovnik 1998). The nature of the FOB in the ‘theatre of war’ is as close as one gets to a home away from home. Therefore the feminisation of soldiers who work inside the FOB by the ‘real soldiers’ who conduct the ‘real work’ of soldiering outside of the home (Sasson-Levy 2007) is emblematic of this distinction. These

⁶⁴ *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* is an American reality TV show from Bravo TV that ran between 2003-2007. The concept was that ‘the fabulous five’ (all gay men) were sent to ‘help’ straight guys become more fashionable, knowledgeable about food, cooking, grooming and interior design. The entire show was therefore premised on the stereotype that gay men are superior to straight men in these areas.

roles are produced through an emphasis on two separate spheres, where the public role of the masculine combat soldier is highly regarded, cherished and glorified. Conversely, the private role of the feminine 'Fobbits' is represented as being of low value, with little or no glory, and the one in need of protection. Read this way, the hierarchy of military masculinities therefore produces a schema whereby, ironically, the majority of soldiers are feminised as very few in modern militaries actually experience combat, and the valorised few are constructed as enablers of that protection.

Throughout the memoirs it is clear that the feminised 'Fobbits' are considered to be lesser soldiers, and though it may be annoying that they are more comfortable on a day-to-day basis, there are some things they cannot hope to achieve -

'And that is the honor and prestige of being in the worst places, at the worst times, and doing the most difficult job in the world. One of the most respected awards you can get in the military is the CIB, the Combat Infantry Badge. This badge shows all that you have been in combat and that you lived to tell the tale. While the Army has recently created the Combat Action Badge (CAB) for all non-infantry soldiers who have been in combat, it remains the redheaded stepchild of the CIB...The honor and respect earned in performing daily combat operations far outweigh the enjoyment of Whoppers and movies' (Tupper 2010: 212).

Conclusion

The development towards 'population-centric' counterinsurgency entails a revitalisation of particular colonial practices of war, complemented by campaigns to emphasise 'cultural sensitivity' waged by a military elite of 'soldier-scholars'. It is enabled by an 'ardent optimism of true believers, the engagement of thousands in aid organizations, and not least the grand design of modernization theory and modernizing plans' (Feichtinger et al. 2012: 53). In other words, 'population-centric' counterinsurgency implies a host of interventions, policies, tactics and strategies that aim at representing itself as a more 'humanitarian' way of war, 'reinforcing U.S. civilizational superiority to the audience back home' (McBride and Wibben 2012: 210). However, the greater focus on 'winning hearts and minds'

through non-kinetic, or ‘caring’ activities associated with civilian and development work is found to be in tension with more traditional military values associated with combat and killing. They are also, as the next chapter shows, often performed by female soldiers.

Reading the valorisation of ‘warrior masculinity’ and the marginalisation of ‘Fobbits’ in the memoirs alongside the production of ‘soldier-scholar’ masculinity tells us a number of things about the production of military masculinity and the practice of war in Afghanistan. Fundamentally, it confirms what is argued by several scholars (Connell 1995, Higate 2003b, Duncanson 2009), that there is not one but numerous military masculinities and that they are all relied upon in the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency as the dynamic of ‘killing and caring’ shows.

The dynamic of ‘killing and caring’ is a complex one and can manifest itself as a tension, balancing act, hierarchy and complementarity. These dynamics are furthermore interwoven with how multiple military masculinities operate alongside one another and how strategies of feminisation and subordination are involved in disciplining and stratifying them. In this sense, while the military relies on soldiers to fill support and logistic positions, as in the case of the ‘Fobbits’, this majority only acts as staging props for the few who are assigned ‘beyond the wire’. This is significant because it shows not only the relationality of femininity and masculinity in war, but also how ‘killing’ still surfaces as a central component, despite ‘soldier-scholars’ emphasis on ‘caring’. That said, the historically valorised ‘warrior masculinity’ is currently under threat by the opening up of the military to multiple genders, sexuality and ethnicities, along with the doctrine of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency, which requires a whole host of different gendered bodies and performances. In this sense, the notion of ‘Fobbits’ is here symbolic of a tension in counterinsurgency of what war is supposed to be about. As shown in the next chapter, female soldiers can also be seen to disrupt and challenge particular forms of military masculinity,

while at the same time being seen as crucial enablers of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency.

- Chapter 5 -

The Practice of 'Population-Centric Counterinsurgency': Writing Women's Bodies in War

‘The empowerment of women in unstable countries benefits not only them, but all of us. It is a crucial component of a comprehensive approach to security challenges in the 21st century’

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

‘The United States is on the side of the people and it is in the people’s interest to deal with the United States’

Commander’s Guide to FETs

While the last chapter discussed the production of a multiplicity of military masculinities as crucial to the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency, this chapter continues this exploration by detailing how particular feminine gendered bodies are written in war. More specifically, it analyses the multiple and complex ways in which women’s bodies are called into being through the deployment of FETs as a part of the US military operations, and interpretations of a ‘gender perspective’ in NATO and ISAF. The previous chapter conceptualised ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency as inhabiting a gendered dynamic of ‘killing and caring’. This conceptualisation is further analysed and problematized in this chapter. In particular, emphasis is placed on how women’s martial bodies in FETs are constructed as particular martial feminine bodies that take on a feminine labour of ‘care’ for ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency. In other words, the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency resists singular notions of femininity and masculinity, and instead relies on multiple and fluid bodies and gender performances in the ‘theatre of war’.

In addition to analysing the FETs, this chapter also examines NATO’s

interpretation of UNSCR 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* in Afghanistan and the integration of a 'gender perspective' in their operations. The last decade has increasingly placed the policy issue of 'Women, Peace and Security' (WPS) on the international agenda⁶⁵. In 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously voted in favour of UNSCR 1325, a resolution that has subsequently been followed by a series of other resolutions under the same rubric⁶⁶. It is often referred to as a landmark resolution and a 'new norm in the making' (Tryggestad 2009: 539) in that it represents the first time the UNSC directly addressed the issue of armed conflict and gender (Cohn 2008: 185). The resolution itself was the result of long and tedious lobbying activity from NGOs, anti-war feminists and human rights groups⁶⁷, and since its inception, numerous organizations around the world have been set up in order to secure its implementation and advocate its usage⁶⁸. The discourse of UNSCR 1325 and the 'gender perspective' in war is not only important as a background to studying FETs, but also as a discourse that in and of itself, writes women's bodies in war (Shepherd 2008, Shepherd 2011). While most of the chapter will discuss the deployment of FET's and their crucial role in the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, the chapter shows how the logic that drives them is reiterated in NATO's 'gender perspective' efforts and in wider narratives of women's roles in peacekeeping operations.

As the last chapter made clear, 'population-centric' counterinsurgency calls into being a series of gendered bodies and performances, such as 'soldier-scholars', 'warriors' and 'Fobbits', which are all necessary not only for the functioning of the military, but also the practice of counterinsurgency. The revamped 21st

⁶⁵ It is worth noting that the resolution has not been a central part of the efforts towards peacebuilding in Afghanistan, though many of the issues of the resolution have been frequently addressed by Afghan feminists and activists (Peacebuild 2008). That said, the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) published a lengthy report in 2011, which includes detailed recommendations on how not only to implement the resolution, but to think beyond it (AWN 2011, see also AWN 2007).

⁶⁶ These include UNSCR 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010).

⁶⁷ Prior to the resolution, a working group on WPS was set down with the following six member groups: Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Amnesty International, International Alert, Hague Appeal for Peace, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice.

⁶⁸ There are several 'Friends of 1325' groups set up in numerous countries. See for instance: <http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/about/>, <http://www.fn1325.no/English>, <http://www.gaps-uk.org/>, <http://www.peacewomen.org>.

century version of counterinsurgency that places the population as the ‘centre of gravity – the deciding factor in the struggle’ (USArmy et al. 2007: xxv), requires a range of gendered bodies to access and transform the population. Because the gendered body has no ‘ontological status’ beyond the various acts that bring it into reality (Butler 1999: 185), gendered performances are constantly being acted and reacted on and by bodies through a series of ‘identifiable linguistic and non-linguistic practices that constitute our understanding of gender’ (Shepherd 2010: 13). Through studying key documents such as FM 3-24, AR 670-1 and the *Commander’s Guide to FETs*, alongside NATO documents that deal with the integration of UNSCR 1325 in Afghanistan, this chapter shows that *how* war writes women’s bodies is crucial for the practice of counterinsurgency, particularly in terms of carrying out a feminine labour of care towards the population. At the same time, the deployment of FETs also has implications into on-going domestic debates about ‘gender equality’ within the military, particularly in terms of ending the ‘combat ban’ for women in the US military.

The first part of this chapter introduces the FETs and the ‘gender perspective’ more generally. It shows how UNSCR 1325 and FETs are commonly talked about together and how this as a whole, speaks to a certain instrumentalist logic behind the inclusion of women in forces. However, while this chapter recognises this instrumentalist logic, it is not its main concern. Rather, this chapter intends to move beyond arguments of instrumentalisation and questions *how* these two policies call into being particular gendered bodies and what kinds of gendered performances are found in their practice. In other words, it will analyse how these practices write women’s bodies in war.

The second section does this by analysing how the practice of FETs has altered the role that Afghan women play in this war. By emphasising their knowledge about and influence over their local communities, these women are placed in a position where they are seen as worth being listened to. This is therefore a strong contrast to how Afghan women became cast as passive and silent victims in the invasion, as discussed in chapter three. Afghan women, through the practice of

‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency are transformed from the silent and passive victim of the invasion to becoming potential allies of the US forces, something that also enables what I call ‘armed empowerment’.

The last section analyses how FETs bodies are written in war as a central part of recasting counterinsurgency as ‘armed social work’. In order to achieve this aim, FETs’ bodies are written as caring, communicative, unthreatening and desirable. At the same time it is important not to forget that these are martial bodies that are able to perform to masculine standards. In this way, FETs’ bodies illustrate the ways that women’s bodies in war have traditionally proved difficult to code within a singular notion of male-masculine and female-feminine. Nevertheless, these bodies are primarily used to conduct a feminine labour of care and can therefore be contrasted to the warrior masculinity discussed in the previous chapter. In other words, the practice of FETs illustrates the duality in ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency between ‘killing and caring’.

1.0 Female Engagement Teams (FETs) and the ‘Gender Perspective’

As discussed in the previous chapter, the form of counterinsurgency fought in Afghanistan claims the population as its main battlefield. In other words, accessing local communities, maintaining good rapport and urging them to support the government and the NATO/ISAF efforts are a crucial part of their efforts. The rationale for the establishment of FETs is to access a segment of the population previously cut off to the US forces, namely women. In other words, FETs are crucial to realising ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency.

FETs have existed as a volunteer assignment since 2009 in the US Marines (Nelson 2009), but became a more integrated part of the counterinsurgency effort in the ISAF and the US Army in 2010. In the beginning, these teams were ‘poorly trained but highly motivated’ (McBride and Wibben 2012: 199), though

considerable efforts have been made towards standardising their training and deployment. Their training has been critiqued for being too 'ad hoc' in nature and it has been claimed that the US Army needs to 'better staff, employ and train' them in order to meet the 'strategic goals and objectives' set forth by the US military (Holliday 2012: 90).

As they currently stand, the teams vary a great deal in terms of their scope and size, with two members per team being the bare minimum. American servicewomen's exclusion from combat has meant that FETs need to be 'attached' to male units and that they are unable to patrol on their own. As Ann Jones notes, 'it's one of the ironies of FETs that women soldiers [...] must still be escorted by men, just like Afghan women' (2010)⁶⁹. Since August 2011, the Commander International Security Assistance Force (COMISAF) requires a minimum of 18 FET-trained and qualified female soldiers (which equals nine FET teams) to be assigned to each Brigade Combat Team (BCT) and that these are allowed to function as FETs full time (CALL 2011: 9-10).

FETs set out to provide basic medical services, conduct language training, go on foot patrols and have conversations with local women in their homes. These conversations are ideally facilitated through female linguists who accompany FETs on their missions and who master both Pashto and Dari, qualifications that make them 'hard to get and hard to keep' (Montgomery 2011, see also USArmy et al. 2007: 335-341, Solano 2011). With regards to their current remit, one Master Sgt. argues that this is too narrow and needs to be expanded to also include 'plans for income-generating projects, schools and clinics' (Bumiller 2010b). On the whole, they are envisioned to act in much the same way as 'American politicians who campaign door to door and learn what voters care about' (Bumiller 2010c). Evident here is an expectation that women have a unique ability to speak to other women, an expectation that is also present in arguments for increasing the number of women in peacekeeping forces. Kathleen Jennings argues that 'cynically, one could say that there seems to be the expectation that

⁶⁹ As mentioned previously, the 'combat ban' has now been lifted in the US Military. How this will affect FETs 'operational environment' remains to be seen.

the simple act of being a woman will transcend the economic, cultural, linguistic, and possibly religious, racial or ethnic differences and foster open communication based on a kind of shared global sisterhood' (2011: 9).

In 2010 former ISAF Commander General Stanley McChrystal issued the *Engagement with Afghan Females Directive* with the stated purpose to 'enable ISAF units to conduct engagements with the Afghan female population in a culturally respectful manner in order to build confidence and support for GIROA [Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan] and ISAF' (NATO 2010a: 1). While there is flexibility in the directive in terms of various national restrictions towards women in the armed forces, it was McChrystal's intent that 'all units implement this directive' and that contributing nations 'train and employ females for duty on engagement teams to the maximum extent practicable' (NATO 2010a: 2). As shown in the previous chapter, the emphasis on knowing and understanding the cultural make up of the 'theatre of war' surfaces as increasingly important in 'population-centric' counterinsurgency. The deployment of FETs is perhaps one of the strongest indicators of this (see for instance NATO 2010a, Stence 2011, Hughes 2010, Faltas 2011). One Master Sgt. expresses the necessity of FETs by stating that 'We need to be culturally sensitive, and the need arose for us to have specially trained females who would go with our special operators for that purpose' (Jordan 2011). Here, 'cultural sensitivity' translates into having female counterinsurgents accessing Afghan women in order to avoid garnering antagonism and hostility from the local population.

Like FETs, any substantial efforts on NATO's part to include a 'gender perspective' came several years into the war in Afghanistan, only really beginning in 2007. It is recognized that 'today's conflicts not only call for military responses, but need "greater capacity" to bring all necessary civilian capacity to bear' (NATO 2009a: 1-1), which in turn requires higher numbers of servicewomen deployed to the frontline. NATO's work in this area has resulted in several publications, training manuals, and recommendations for the integration of 'gender dimensions' in operations and best practice sharing. In 2009 the pre-

existing NATO Committee on Women in NATO forces (CWINF) was revamped. It changed its name to NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP), and is in charge of ensuring that any future UNSC resolutions dealing with WPS issues are integrated (NATO 2009b). In 2012, the Norwegian diplomat and Civil Servant Mari Skåre became the first person to hold the post of ‘Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security’. Like most international organisations and national governments, NATO integrates the WPS agenda through a ‘gender mainstreaming’ strategy (NATO 2009b: 9)⁷⁰.

UNSCR 1325 is founded on the recognition that ‘women and children’ are particularly ‘adversely affected by armed conflict’ and calls for ‘effective institutional arrangements to guarantee [women’s] protection and full participation in peace process’ which ‘can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security’ (UNSC 2000). It urges UN member states to ‘ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels’, and also to ‘increase in the participation of women at decision making levels in conflict resolutions and peace processes’ along with training and educational guidance (UNSC 2000). Along with this, it urges the Secretary General to seek to ‘expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel’ (UNSC 2000). This latter quotation is especially important since this is where the main argument of how including a ‘gender perspective’ and realising the aims of UNSCR 1325 is achieved through deploying more female soldiers.

⁷⁰Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay argues that while gender mainstreaming is ‘supposed to ensure that everybody is answerable for gender equality commitments it has generally meant that nobody is ultimately responsible for getting it done’ (Mukhopadhyay 2004: 98). Others are less dismissive. Jacqui True argues that despite its criticisms it can ‘balance the goal of gender equality with the need to recognize gender differences to bring about a transformation of masculine-as-norm institutional practices in state and global governance’ (True 2003: 369). While NATO encourages ‘gender mainstreaming’ as a strategy, one of their key guiding documents directs the organisation to ‘specifically focus on women and girls, but also recognizes that the protection of all children is an obligation’ (NATO 2009a: 1-1). In other words men are expressly excluded from any ‘gender perspective’. This is also the case in relation to the resolution itself where “man” is very much the absent present’ (Shepherd 2008: 121).

The American military has been at the forefront of developing the concept of FETs and deploying them in the field. While other militaries also deploy FETs (such as the British and the Swedish military), Norwegian forces have not incorporated the concept to the same extent that the US forces have (Ellingsen 2013)⁷¹. That said, from 2011-2012, the Norwegian PRT in Meymaneh had a full time 'gender advisor' who heads up a FET (Departementene 2011)⁷². The Norwegian government's definition of a 'gender perspective' is to 'acknowledge that men and women in conflict experience this differently' (Forsvarsdepartementet/MOD 2009b: 95, see also Ellingsen 2013).

FETs and UNSCR 1325 are frequently mentioned together, and reference to the former typically suggests a commitment to the latter. This is particularly the case in Norwegian and NATO discourses, and less so in the US, where there is a noticeable absence of references to UNSCR 1325 in military literature as a justification for the deployment of FETs⁷³. Rather, the emphasis in US military discourses lies firmly on how FETs enhance operational effectiveness and how they are crucial for information gathering purposes. Norway's emphasis of UNSCR 1325 is likely to be linked to the high standing that the UN has in general, and also the importance of being seen to be in compliance with the UN for public legitimacy of foreign policy. It may also indicate a broader knowledge and emphasis on UNSCR 1325 in the Norwegian military compared to the US, given that Norway has had a National Action Plan (NAP) since 2006 and the US only produced one in 2011.

References to UNSCR 1325 were therefore central for Lieutenant Colonel Rune Solberg, former head of the Norwegian PRT in Meymaneh, who suggested in 2010 that FETs should be adopted in the Norwegian army. He explains how difficult it is for male soldiers to gain access to Afghan women because of the

⁷¹ Norway has historically been a strong supporter of UNSCR 1325 and in 2006 was one of the first countries to produce a National Action Plan (NAP) that has since been revised and evaluated (NMFA 2006, NMFA 2011, Departementene 2011).

⁷² Norway withdrew most of its forces from PRT Meymaneh in Faryab in October 2012 as a part of the NATO withdrawal process and it was transferred to Afghan control.

⁷³ That said, FETs are mentioned in the US NAP on Women, Peace and Security, dealing with the incorporation of UNSCR 1325 into US policy (WhiteHouse 2011).

Afghan ‘code of conduct’, and that the practice of having a (male) gender advisor is not sufficient to fulfil the aims of UNSCR 1325, NATO’s guidelines and the Norwegian NAP. He argues that there are two main benefits to setting up a Norwegian FET. Because of ‘increased information access’ and ‘better contact with the locals’ the PRT will get ‘better force protection’. Furthermore, FETs would ‘grant the Norwegian Military and the Norwegian Forces a very good reputation’. Conversely, not operationalizing a FET shows a ‘negligence of UNSCR 1325 which could potentially be very difficult for the Norwegian Armed Forces to handle in the media’ (Solberg 2010, see also Ellingsen 2013).

The first argument for FETs concerns access to ‘increased information’ and ‘better contact with the locals’. While this is in and of itself integral to ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency, it is also something that grants ‘better force protection’ and deploying more women not only increases rapport with the local population, but also is something that enhances the security of the armed forces more broadly. These arguments are largely replicated in NATO’s justifications for including a ‘gender perspective’ in its operations,

‘More extensive information gathering capacities to *improve access and communication* with the local population in order to make better and more balanced decisions; Overall situational awareness of all parties involved in the conflict to *increase credibility and acceptance of the operation and the troops in theatre*; Enhanced mutual understanding and respect to assure *better force protection*’ (NATO 2009b: 18 emphasis added).

When the NATO General Secretary, Anders Fogh Rasmussen spoke in 2010 at a conference on the ‘Role of Women in Global Security’ he reiterated this emphasis on female soldiers being important to better force protection. He stated that ‘in most countries, women don’t want to be searched at checkpoints by men. In some cultures, it is unacceptable. Female soldiers can conduct searches without causing offence, which enhances our own security in a way that fits with the culture’ (NATO 2010c). A ‘gender perspective’ will also ‘increase credibility and acceptance of the operation and troops’ (NATO 2009b: 18).

Solberg's second concern is one of public relations in the sense that FETs are seen to be beneficial for the forces' reputation. As McBride and Wibben argue in relation to US FETs, the incorporation of women speaks of the way that 'population-centric' counterinsurgency aims to represent itself as a more 'humanitarian' way of war, 'reinforcing U.S. civilizational superiority to the audience back home' (2012: 210). As noted in chapter two of this thesis, opening up the armed forces to women is generally something that is seen as beneficial in that it makes militaries 'look modern' (Enloe 2007: 65). For the Norwegian government, this has been a central concern as Former Defence Minister Anne Grete Strøm Eriksen points to when she says that 'both at home and abroad our Armed Forces should be a showcase for our democratic political system based on human rights, ethnic diversity and equality between the genders' (2007a). As discussed towards the end of this chapter, while the deployment of FETs are a means of 'softening' the US military, it is questionable as to what extent it does 'gender equality' within the armed forces any real favours.

These statements might suggest that the inclusion of women follows a wholly instrumentalist logic (Jennings 2011). Clearly, there is little doubt that many of the arguments for FETs and integrating a 'gender perspective' into military operations follow an instrumentalist logic. However, as discussed in chapter three, while this might well be the case, this thesis is interested in *how* this happens, what it speaks to and what bodies it produces in its wake. In other words, how these practices of war write women's bodies.

To this end, the chapter makes use of three important US military guides and regulations, in addition to several NATO documents. The US military documents include the aforementioned FM 3-24 (USArmy et al. 2007), AR 670-1 (the US Army's uniform and insignia regulation) (USArmy 2012) and the *Commander's Guide to FETs* (CALL 2011). The uniform and insignia regulation, as mentioned in chapter two, contains detailed guidelines on the appearance of military bodies, and regulates these bodies to appear appropriately masculine and feminine, while conforming to uniformed standards. Its 357 pages were recently revised,

tightening up regulations on tattoos, cosmetics and makeup and hairstyles, to name a few (ArmyTimes 2012). The *Commander's Guide to FETs* is the first US Army document that details training for FETs and is intended for commanders and staff as a 'living document' that acts as an introduction, justification and explanation of FETs. It is produced by the Centre for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) and is a roughly 120 page long guide that includes detailed information as to composition, recruitment and requirements of FETs, including annexes with examples of anything from recruitment posters, mission and organisation, packing lists and volunteer statement examples. NATO documents include the *Secretary General's NATO Briefing on Women, Peace, and Security* (NATO 2010b), *How can gender make a difference in security operations?* (NATO 2011b), *Recommendations on implementing UNSCR 1325* (NATO 2009b). These are all examples of how laws and regulations are written on the body and how 'law "takes hold of" bodies in order to make them its text' (De Certeau 1984: 139). In other words, these are texts that call particular gendered bodies into being.

2.0 Creating Potential Allies

The *Commander's Guide* places FETs in a longer history and argues that 'women have exerted varying degrees of influence on men throughout history' and that 'various military forces have learned this lesson' (CALL 2011: 2). The examples chosen to explain 'FET history' are interesting. The first one is of the Persian King Xerxes who 'took advice from his Queen' which purportedly 'prevented mass genocide'. Since 'we are still in Persia' and 'conversations still go on between men and women behind closed doors' 'we' need 'to understand those conversations and more importantly how we may be able to influence these conversations' (CALL 2011: 2). Just like Xerxes listened to his Queen, the US military is now positioning Afghan women where they can be listened to. In other words, the practice of FETs claims Afghan women's embodied experiences and knowledge as important for the 'success' of its operation. Hence, it writes them as potential allies.

The more recent example of ‘FET history’ comes from France’s colonial warfare in Algeria between 1954 and 1962. This example is particularly telling in terms of furthering a reading of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency as driven in part by a biopolitical logic. The *Commander’s Guide* argues that the use of ‘female engagements’ through ‘Equipes Medico-Sociales Itinérantes’ (EMSI) to ‘support pacification efforts...engage with Algerian women to enhance their living conditions and to improve France’s reputation’ was ‘one of the most efficient ways to engage the population’ and the ‘large numbers of Muslim Algerian women who integrated into the EMSI program showed the relevance and success of the concept’ (CALL 2011: 3). The fact that the US military references the EMSI as a part of FET history and as one of the historical examples that shows the importance of engagement with local women is in a sense surprising since it so unequivocally links US warfare in Afghanistan with colonial warfare. As noted in the previous chapter, counterinsurgency has long been the colonial warfare of choice for imperial forces (McBride and Wibben 2012, Feichtinger et al. 2012), and the fact that the practice of FETs so clearly situates itself as a continuation of this history is noteworthy.

The French EMSI teams aimed to win local women to the French colonial cause through hygiene, housekeeping and childrearing workshops (Lazreg 2008: 148), all efforts that are concerned with the biopolitical management and governing of the population. As discussed in chapter three, combating the use of veils was a central part of French ‘gendered warfare’ in Algeria (Fanon 1980). EMSI teams preached that ridding the country of veils was ‘on par with getting rid of “flies”, “ticks” and “lice”’ (Lazreg 2008: 148)⁷⁴. The French government’s policy towards Algeria saw women’s development as part and parcel of its *mission civilisatrice*. ‘[P]rotecting colonial women from their own society served as an illustration of the humanitarian aims of colonial war’ (Feichtinger et al. 2012: 41). Pre-deployment, the EMSI staff were warned against having ‘empathy’ with the

⁷⁴ Overall, the importance of getting rid of ‘lice, ticks and fleas’ speaks to broader biopolitical intent. While this is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting that efforts such as these can be understood as a medicalization of security. Adding to the already extensive list of what is deemed security threats are also the spread of disease, aided by poor hygiene (see for instance Elbe 2010).

impoverished conditions of the locals. It was feared that this may detract attention from the ‘real objective’ which was to ‘collect information on their subjects, identify potential allies, disseminate government directives, and sell colonial ideology through a critique of the role of women in native society’ (Lazreg 2008: 147). The ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency warfare fought in Afghanistan today is a ‘remarkable (indeed disturbingly) similar mission to that of the late-colonial warrior: to construct a civil-military war machine using a complex combination of scholarly guidance, development expertise and both metropolitan and local military forces’ (Feichtinger et al. 2012: 37).

2.1 Women as Eyes and Ears

While FETs are a relatively recent addition to the counterinsurgency toolkit, the necessity to have female soldiers perform certain duties because of ‘culture’ is recognized in FM 3-24 under the heading ‘Engage the Women, Be Cautious Around the Children’, which reads,

‘Most insurgent fighters are men. However, in traditional societies, women are hugely influential in forming the social networks that insurgents use for support. When women support COIN efforts, families support COIN efforts. Getting the support of families is a big step towards mobilizing the local populace against the insurgency. Co-opting neutral or friendly women through targeted social and economic programs builds networks of enlightened self-interest that eventually undermine insurgents. Female counterinsurgents, including interagency people, are required to do this effectively’ (2007: 296).

This article is almost identical to article 19 in Kilcullen’s *Twenty-Eight Articles on the Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency* (2006b)⁷⁵, albeit, with

⁷⁵ Kilcullen’s articles should be seen in relation to T.E. Lawrence’s aka ‘Lawrence of Arabia’s’ famous *Twenty Seven Articles* (Lawrence 1917). In addition to the titles being similar, Gonzales points out that several of the articles include comparable concerns. For instance, where Lawrence writes ‘Go easy for the first few weeks. A bad start is difficult to atone for, and the Arabs form their judgments on externals that we ignore. When you have reached the inner circle in a tribe, you can do as you please with yourself and them’; Kilcullen writes, ‘Do not try to crack the hardest nut first. Do not go straight for the main insurgent stronghold or try to take on villages that support insurgents. Instead, start from secure areas and work gradually outwards. Extend

some notable differences. For instance, where it reads ‘Female counterinsurgents, including interagency people are required to do this effectively’, the original states ‘You need your own female counterinsurgents, including inter-agency people, to do this effectively’ (Kilcullen 2006b: 137). The change is no doubt in part an attempt to ‘clean up’ the language, but nevertheless, the original signifies something important beyond this. In the original, the counterinsurgency soldier is originally male, and he is the referent object of the articles. *He* needs to ensure that *he* has *his own* female counterinsurgents in order to complete the task of gathering valuable intelligence, ‘turning’ local women to the counterinsurgents’ cause, and entering into spaces where male counterinsurgents may find it difficult to enter without garnering substantial antagonism from the local population. From the outset then, women are not considered the referent object of counterinsurgency doctrine, nor are female soldiers necessarily regarded primarily as soldiers, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Matt Pottinger, who initiated one of the first FETs in Afghanistan, argues that there are certain myths about the usefulness of speaking to Afghan women and of including more women in counterinsurgency operations that need to be dispelled. Contrary to the ‘conventional wisdom’ of US military officers that Afghan women ‘don’t have enough influence or knowledge to make valuable allies’, it is in fact found that they ‘wield more influence in their homes – including over their husbands and their sons – than people uninitiated in Afghan family culture believe to be the case’ (Pottinger et al. 2010: 2). Importantly, ‘they know who is doing what, who should and should not be in the area’ (Pottinger et al. 2010: 2). Another proponent of FETs argues that ‘Westerners often think that Afghan women are powerless, not only because of cultural constraints but also because Afghan men do not support rights or opportunities for women. This generally isn’t the case’ (Holliday 2012: 91). Of course, a number of scholars and activists argued for years that the notion of Afghan women solely as victims is deeply reductionist and negates important social and historical contingencies

influence through the local people’s networks. Go with, not against, the grain of the local populace’ (Lawrence and Kilcullen quoted in Gonzalez 2007: 16)

(Brodsky 2003, Daulatzai 2006, Rostami-Povey 2007). Nevertheless, the practice of FETs requires a repositioning of Afghan women in their society, from passive victims as discussed in chapter three, to influential in and knowledgeable about their local communities. The necessity to point this out and to emphasise it (Pottinger et al. 2010, Holliday 2012), speaks to the strength of the discourse that equated Afghan women to passive victimhood that was discussed in chapter three.

The meetings that FETs have with local women are intended not only to 'hand out school supplies and medicine, drink tea and make conversation'. Ideally, they will also result in FETs getting 'information about the village, local grievances and the Taliban' (Bumiller 2010c). As a head FET officer-in-charge puts it 'Their primary purpose is intelligence gathering from Afghan women' (Stadtlander 2011). Since counterinsurgency needs to rest on 'a firm foundation of energetic IO' (Kilcullen 2009 : 60) the belief is that deploying FETs potentially opens up a wealth of information that is just waiting to be discovered. One Marine explains that on several occasions the FETs got 'different and better information' than the male soldiers (Hlad 2012). In the NATO/NCGP document entitled *How can gender make a difference in security operations?* it is stated that FETs can 'exploit gender norms towards achieving a desired end'. They can get information that would otherwise have been lost, which has included 'details about the identities of Taliban supporters' (NATO 2011b: 29).

As noted in chapters two and four, the dynamic of 'killing and caring' in 'population-centric' counterinsurgency manifests itself in different ways. While it can at times be said that there exists a tension between the two, a balancing act or a hierarchy, as shown in chapter four the 'clear, hold, build' strategy of counterinsurgency expects a linear development where the 'killing' or 'clearing' *enables* the 'caring' of 'hold and build'. In this context and in the emphasis on the importance of deploying FETs as seekers of intelligence, the dynamic seems to work the other way around. The 'caring' of FETs through their 'social work' engagement with local women is expected to provide them with valuable

information about the Taliban, the primary targets for 'killing'. In other words, the complex dynamic of 'killing and caring' is such that, in this case, the 'caring' perhaps enables the 'killing'.

The providers of this valuable information are Afghan women and the *Commander's Guide* tells us that,

'Men, women, and children are part of the triangle of knowledge that must be targeted for information collection. In Afghanistan, we observe rather consistent themes. Men interpret information and tell you what they think you want to hear. Women see and hear what goes on behind the walls' (CALL 2011: 1).

Some of the imagery used to depict this kind of 'triangulated information' and the 'human terrain' is very interesting⁷⁶. Firstly, the image is a very embodied one, representing the 'human terrain' or the 'body politic' as a body (albeit as a 'stick man'). It shows how women are the 'eyes and ears' of the population, the men are the 'mouth' and the children are the feet. In this sense the image speaks to the public/private distinction in that it represents women as those that hear and see what goes on in the private, 'behind the walls'. And it is this information that is important to harness, this is the information that is valuable.

The valuable information that Afghan women have is also central in NATO's integration of a 'gender perspective'. Several times in the *NATO Briefing* it is mentioned how the information that Afghan women share with NATO is important. It is noted that the interaction between 'female officers' and 'women in the local community' can lead to 'timely information being shared on critical security situations' and that 'beyond rights, it is smart to let [Afghan women] participate' (NATO 2010b: 4-5). Here, as in the case of deploying FETs in the US military, the case is made that Afghan women should be included because they have important information that can prove useful to the operation.

⁷⁶ Please see the following webpage for images and power point slides. The discussion refers to slide number 5: <http://openanthropology.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/comisaf.pdf>

This reframing of Afghan women, from being passive victims in need of rescue, as was discussed in chapter three, to being seen as possessing valuable information and being crucial actors in their families and communities is significant. It implies not only that Afghan women are granted a position where they can be listened to; it also, as argued in the next section, implies that they can be transformed.

2.2 Armed Empowerment

The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was preceded and followed by a particular vision of who Afghan women were and who they could become. As discussed in chapter three, the invasion was steeped in a gendered discourse that framed the invasion as an exercise in feminist liberation through war (see among others Abu-Lughod 2002, Weber 2005, Shepherd 2006, Hunt and Rygiel 2006, Khalid 2011). This discourse involved not only justifications of the war being ‘for women’, but crucially required a self-representation of the West as having the capacity to save (Young 2003b). It therefore reiterated what Spivak argues defines neo-colonial practices of the West - that ‘White men are saving brown women from brown men’ (1999: 303).

However, as shown above, Afghan women’s bodies are no longer solely related to passive victimhood, or represented as the silent and (in)visible body in the burqa. Afghan women’s bodies are written differently in this kind of counterinsurgency. In exchange for ‘targeted social and economic programs’ (USArmy et al. 2007: 296) they are expected to share their local and embodied knowledge. FM 3-25 tells us that ‘When women support COIN efforts, families support COIN efforts’ (USArmy et al. 2007: 296). The realisation of this is argued by advocates for FETs to be ‘imperative’ to ‘winning the war against terrorism in Afghanistan’, and through the deployment of FETs ‘the U.S. military may gain a unique advantage in demonstrating to the local population that America’s mission in Afghanistan is not necessarily antithetical to preserving Afghani [sic] cultural integrity’

(Faltas 2011: 102). The practice of FETs therefore enables the US not only to gain valuable intelligence, but also to do it in a way that shows ‘cultural sensitivity’.

As discussed in chapter four, Kilcullen sees counterinsurgency as ‘armed social work’ (Kilcullen 2006b: 138). However, through the deployment of FETs it also attempts to cast itself as, what I here call ‘armed empowerment’. FM 3-24 holds an expectation that the engagement with Afghan women will yield benefits not only to the war effort in terms of gaining better intelligence and fostering relations with the local population, but to individual Afghan women as well. Provided that they are seen as potential allies in the war, there is an expectation that they can transform the societies they live in through the influence they wield in their respective communities and families. FM 3-24 tells us that Afghan women can become ‘enlightened self-interested beings’, if they are ‘friendly’ or ‘neutral’ (USArmy et al. 2007: 296). It is not necessarily clear what ‘friendly’ or ‘neutral’ means, and disregarding the patronizing assumption that they are not already ‘enlightened’, one is left to wonder what becoming ‘enlightened’ implies.

That the US military is developing a keener interest in Afghan women through the deployment of FETs is often characterized as a ‘progressive’ step both for women as ‘practitioners’ and ‘targets’ of counterinsurgency⁷⁷. Counterinsurgents should understand that on a tactical level they can ‘positively influence men in patriarchal society’ and one Sergeant states that ‘we want to empower the women to the point where they can have a positive influence on the men, when they’re alone, in the home’ (Loftus 2008: 15-16). As Sasha Mehra argues, ‘there is a space for the U.S. military to insert itself in the community-level discourse’ and, if done correctly, the counterinsurgency forces ‘can leverage the community discourse to build the trust of Afghan women’ (2010: 19). The *Commander’s Guide* explains that part of the rationale behind FETs is to ‘empower [Afghan women]

⁷⁷ For instance, a report from a large international conference in Copenhagen in 2010, entitled ‘The Role of Women in Global Security’ concluded that ‘the existence of such teams recognizes the importance of local women’s perspectives and their influence on local situations, to which the all-male forces in these cultures have limited or no access’ (Norville 2011: 4, see also Ellingsen 2013). Furthermore, many of the articles that argue for expanding the role of FETs have ‘feminist alluding’ titles that speak to this being seen as a ‘progressive’ step (Loftus 2008, Pottinger et al. 2010, Mehra 2010).

to have a voice and ownership in solutions for problems in their families, villages and country' (CALL 2011: 2). That said, there is recognition that this is a slow process and since 'rural Afghanistan is still a medieval society, development will have to come in stages' (CALL 2011: 78).

Regardless of the effectiveness or substantial impact of this kind of 'armed empowerment'⁷⁸, the belief that 'population-centric' counterinsurgency has transformational potential is written into its very doctrine, through FM 3-24. It is also a part of a wider trend associated with the shift to 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, with a 'functional integration of destruction and development, of military and civil forces' which together form a 'transformative invasion' (Feichtinger et al. 2012: 37). Through 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, mediated by FETs, Afghan women can be transformed, away from their current roles in their societies – to gain 'enlightened self-interest'. They can be reshaped and 'liberated' into understanding that the US forces are there for their benefit and subsequently use this 'enlightened self interest' to transform and reshape their societies. To achieve this, 'population-centric' counterinsurgency inserts itself into the private spheres where 'women' dwell. Since 'local women raise future generations and exercise strong influence in the family, including on their husbands' those with 'positive attitudes towards the Afghan government and ISAF will influence the perceptions of their sons and daughters' (Haugegaard 2010). What kind of influence women wield alongside their men 'when they're alone, in the home' (Loftus 2008: 15-16) therefore becomes something that counterinsurgency is concerned with. As Miemi Byrd and Gretchen Decker, warn - 'since women in most societies are traditionally responsible for passing on the cultural expectations of their communities to their children, women become vehicles for transmitting norms of violence, radicalism,

⁷⁸ Jonathan Gilmore warns that 'the use of human security-like principles and the concern for local engagement and cultural sensitivity do not automatically equate to the genuine empowerment of local populations in shaping the future of their country' (2011: 22). Likewise, Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam argues that 'crude and unsophisticated methods, such as badly designed and implemented projects to combat Taliban efforts on the non-kinetic front, to win hearts and minds, to ensure force protection, or to win support for the Afghan government, are not currently helping build credibility and trust' (2008: 66).

and martyrdom' (2008: 99). Hence, 'population-centric' counterinsurgency needs to concern itself with the most intimate parts of life, the lessons taught to children and the conversations had with husbands.

As the *Commander's Guide* explains, the 'desired end states are four fold' –

'For women to influence families/communities not to support the Taliban; for women to influence other women to demand basic services from the local government with coalition force support; for women to influence family and community members to support GIRoA; and for women not to support/enable the insurgency' (CALL 2011: 2)

3.0 A Woman's Touch to Counterinsurgency

How is this all to be achieved? What kinds of gendered bodies are called into being to do this part of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency? What gendered performances does it require? As discussed theoretically in chapter two, bodies are targets for mechanisms of power (Foucault 1991: 155), they are called into being and disciplined through various regulations and technologies. In the case of FETs, these bodies gendered in particular ways to suit the mission.

As discussed above, and in chapters two and four, counterinsurgency operates both in the registry of death and the registry of life through the dynamic of 'killing and caring'. In that sense it practices both classical and biopolitical conceptions of sovereignty (Foucault 1997, Foucault 1998, Weber 2008a). Chapter four showed how classical sovereignty is regularly performed in counterinsurgency, and visible in the still privileged position that combat and killing has for soldiers. As shown in chapter six, this is also central in the training of the ANA. However, counterinsurgency is also 'armed social work' (Kilcullen 2006b: 138), and, as shown in chapter four, while several male soldiers and 'soldier-scholars' emphasise the importance of the 'caring' of counterinsurgency, the dynamic between 'killing and caring' takes on particular gendered and embodied dimensions through the deployment of FETs.

3.1 *A Feminine Labour of Care*

As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, performances of masculinity and femininity do not necessarily follow the male-masculine and female-feminine binary. Rather, military masculinities are multiple and fluid (Higate 2003b, Higate and Henry 2004, Duncanson 2009, Henry 2012), and are assigned to and can be claimed by male and female bodies (Halberstam 1998, Tasker 2002). This means that how women's bodies are written in the 'theatre of war', and in the military more broadly, is a complex balancing act between ensuring appropriate feminine appearance and performances, while making sure that they remain capable of performing traditional male tasks and physically heavy work. It is also a process that requires considerable negotiation by women within the military (Barrett 2002). In other words, they must be 'masculine enough' to pass as soldiers, but 'feminine enough' to pass as women. These concerns are therefore all present in the writing of FETs bodies and their roles in 'population-centric' counterinsurgency as primarily carers, albeit as martial feminine bodies as a part of recasting counterinsurgency as 'armed social work'.

As discussed above, the US military and NATO claim that FETs are central to intelligence gathering, for the individual and collective empowerment of Afghan women, and for the acceptance of the allied forces more broadly. The *Commander's Guide* states that 'when Afghans see U.S. military females in the field, the civilian population become more accepting of the U.S. military in their area' (CALL 2011: 60). Afghans reportedly view female soldiers very differently by than their male counterparts - 'your men come to fight, but we know the women are here to help' (Pottinger et al. 2010: 4). FETs are perceived as soldiers who care, as opposed to soldiers who kill. In other words, the statement, made by an Afghan man and cited in Pottinger, speaks directly to the dynamic of this type of counterinsurgency, between 'killing and caring'.

Wanting to 'empower' or 'help' Afghan women surfaces as a key motivation for several of the women who have signed up as FETs - 'I think that women in the United States have a lot of freedom and Afghan women don't. And I want to help

in some way' (Lawrence 2011). This view is seconded by one FET member who claims that 'the FET is a way to get the Afghan women's voices heard' (Pisachubbe 2011). Another claims that 'I think we give them hope. We are proof that women can do anything we set our sights on' (NATO 2011a). Overall, to 'make a difference' is cited by several to be a key reason to volunteer to become a FET (McCullough 2012). FETs envisage and experience their mission as contributing to the social, economic and personal empowerment of Afghan women. This element is emphasised by NATO as well, with one Gender Advisor explaining that 'ISAF is playing such an important role in Afghanistan and most of the women are so happy we are there to help' (NATO 2010b: 5).

This sentiment, and notions of this feminine labour of care comes out strongly in a roughly three minute video about the FETs from the White House website entitled *Female Engagement Teams: The Changing Face of the US Marines*. It's introduced as 'Meet the brave women who are on the ground, building relationships in combat zones' (WhiteHouse 2012). The film features four female US Marines and Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, known as an active supporter of military families and veterans. The film shows images of Afghan children and women, either on their own, in a group, or together with FETs. FETs show them how to wash their hands and put on Chap Stick, they hold children and babies and they talk to children and women. These images are cross cut with the FETs themselves speaking in a studio, and with Jill Biden explaining what FETs do.

FETs explain that 'we're changing people's lives', 'we can do great things' and that by talking to women you 'get that different story'. They talk of how they found a 'hidden talent' that they did not know they had before, and that FETs constitute a 'very big step for women in all military branches'. Biden explains how they 'help women with things that all American women are concerned about, like healthcare. They help start businesses so women become independent, they start schools... these women are a whole new generation of pioneers. This is something we've not really seen in the military before'. One of

the FETs states that ‘I don't want to be considered any different, a Marine's a Marine, but we are still able to do things that males aren't able to do’ (WhiteHouse 2012).

These are all statements that operate in the ‘register of life’ and they are stories about caring. They are far removed from the emphasis on killing and combat that was discussed in relation to ‘warrior masculinity’ in chapter four, yet they still conform to the ethos of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency. As McChrystal explains, ‘the whole point of the war is to take care of people, not just to kill them’ (McChrystal 2013).

The *Commanders Guide to FETs* gives detailed guidelines on how to achieve this caring, which in turn exemplifies the way that laws are ‘written on the body’ (De Certeau 1984) and the production of women's bodies in war. Three examples will be given particular weight here – hairstyles and headscarves and the way FETs behave when approaching homes – all of which not only discipline women's bodies in war, but also, crucially, act to construct them as cooperative, non-threatening and caring.

If the female counterinsurgents have long enough hair to have it in a ponytail, they are encouraged to let these show out the back of their helmets (CALL 2011: 75). Letting your long hair show, something that would perhaps under other circumstances be deemed inappropriate or ineffective, is in the context of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency an important visual clue that gives the civilian population an assurance that this is a female soldier. At the same time, ‘pony tails could also be a target indicator for the Taliban’ and given that female soldiers are seen to be a particularly cherished targets for the Taliban, FETs should wait until they are just outside a home before letting their ponytail out (CALL 2011: 75). Headscarves work in a similar way. While they are not deemed strictly necessary, it is emphasised that ‘the moment the FET walks into a village wearing headscarves and politely approaching local families, the FET is already sending a powerful and positive message’ (CALL 2011: 59). In other words, the wearing of a headscarf signifies respect and acceptance of local traditions and

shows 'cultural sensitivity'. However, FETs should avoid brightly coloured headscarves as they can 'easily identify the soldier as female at a great distance' and stick to 'olive drab, black, brown or multicam' (CALL 2011: 76). Once inside a home, they should 'should take off their body armor, eye protection and helmets' as a sign of good will, and these items might just act as an icebreaker and a conversation topic (Pottinger et al. 2010: 7). FETs are also encouraged to tell locals that they are married and have children (and to bring photos along), and to tell them that male soldiers accompanying them are their brothers or cousins - 'just make sure every Soldier knows the story' (CALL 2011: 77).

In addition to FETs' ability to speak with Afghan women and children, they are also said to have a unique ability to engage with Afghan men. The presence of FETs is seen to soothe the overall atmosphere and to be beneficial to the overall aims of any operation (Pottinger et al. 2010). This is worth noting, as women's bodies in the military have historically proven a challenge in the sense that their bodies cannot be coded according to existing forms of military masculinity in quite the same way as male's bodies can (Tasker 2002).

The *Commander's Guide* discusses the ways that FETs can positively influence operational effectiveness citing a range of issues as discussed above. However, the impact they are claimed to have on Afghan men is noteworthy,

'Many males feel comfortable speaking with female Soldiers. They find them to be an anomaly, intriguing, and less threatening than male Soldiers. This is particularly true with adolescent males...adolescent males have a natural desire to impress females. This is true regardless of the adolescent male's race or nationality. Using this desire to interact with and impress females can be advantageous to U.S. military forces when done respectfully to both the female Soldier and the adolescent Afghan males' (CALL 2011: 63).

This quote not only dictates a deeply problematic 'natural' heterosexual desire to all adolescent males (regardless of race or nationality), something that is discussed further in the next chapter, but it also encourages the US military to harness this desire to their advantage. The not so subtle insinuation that this is about sexual desire is merely highlighted with the insert that this needs to be

done ‘respectfully’. Hence, the assumed sexual desire of adolescent Afghan men towards (predominantly) white Western women is something that the US military should realize as an asset that can work to the advantage of the US forces.

3.2 The Politics of Martial Femininity

As discussed above, women’s bodies have historically been difficult to discipline and manage in militaries. As Enloe shows, women’s bodies in the military have historically required a range of particular regulations, in order to ensure that they remain respectable and feminine, yet crucially to ensure they are not mistaken for men (Enloe 2000: 261-273). The managing of women’s bodies takes on extraordinary details in AR 670-1. Lipstick and nail polish colours cannot be ‘unmilitary’, but must be ‘conservative’, in ‘good taste’ and ‘compliment their uniform and complexion’. Consequently, banned colours include, but are not limited to ‘purple, gold, blue, black, white, bright (fire-engine) red, khaki, camouflage colours and fluorescent colours’ (USArmy 2012: 5). These policies on the use of make up and cosmetics need to be observed not just in uniform, but also in civilian clothes if the soldier is on duty. Ponytails must not be held together with anything that can be construed as being for ‘decorative purposes’ (such as ‘lacy scrunchies’ and ‘barrettes with butterflies’ (USArmy 2012: 5). In other words, nothing excessively feminine or ‘girly’ is allowed.

Jean Bethke Elshtain famously claimed that women’s and men’s roles in war follow a ‘beautiful soul/just warrior’ dichotomy (1987, see also Sjoberg 2010) which grants men the privileged masculine role of protector (soldier) and women as those requiring protection (civilians). In other words, masculinity has only been accessible to male bodies whereas women were cast in the feminine role of the victim and civilian. However, this neglects to recognize how masculinity can also be assigned to and claimed by ‘other’, sometimes female bodies, as argued by Halberstam (1998).

As shown here, the military's management of women's bodies in war needs to ensure that they are masculine enough to do the job they are required to do, but not *too* masculine, as they need to still be identifiable as women. This is crucial not only internally in the military, but in their practices in Afghanistan as well, as shown in the detailed regulation of women's appearance and movements in the *Commander's Guide*. Chapters two and four showed how militaries and the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency requires a range of military masculinities in order to function, including the feminised 'Fobbits', the strategic rationality of 'soldier-scholars' and the historically valorised 'warriors'. FETs, as soldiers stationed in a combat zone also exist within these hierarchies of militarised masculinities, albeit within a female martial body.

While women are set to perform what can be characterised as traditional feminine roles of caring and nurturing in the practice of FETs and providing a feminised labour of care, they still need to be able to perform as a martial body, as a soldier. In other words, there is a delicate balancing act at play in the ways that women's bodies are managed in the 'theatre of war' and in the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency as they are required to live up to particular physical and mental standards on the same ground as male soldiers. As the FET in the White House video quoted above stated, 'a Marine is a Marine' (WhiteHouse 2012).

The *Commander's Guide* explains that a FET is an 'operational Soldier', which includes capabilities like 'extreme mental and physical preparedness' and ability to function well 'in austere mountainous environments and extreme hot/cold weather' (CALL 2011: 84). For instance, in order to qualify as a FET, soldiers are required to carry a 15 kg rucksack, wearing protective gear, weapon and ammunition on a 10 km march in two hours and 24 minutes (CALL 2011: 40). Despite this, there is reportedly an expectation by several male soldiers that they cannot handle the physical strains of wearing and carrying heavy gear on patrol, and many male soldiers fear 'either for their safety or that they would get in the way' (Bumiller 2010b). In addition, female soldiers meet scepticism about their

purpose for joining up from 'young infantrymen who remain resentful of the attention from commanders and the news media' (Bumiller 2010a).

All the while, volunteering as a FET requires an ability to perform *as* a soldier. As one FET member explains, 'you need to know what every infantryman knows – how to react to contact, how to defend yourself and how to return fire' (Irby 2012). Another explains that 'I heard that it will be hard for us to physically meet the expected standards of infantrymen, and for that reason they push us a lot during training, but I can show them that I physically can do this' (Irby 2012). In other words, the women that make up FETs are, like any other soldier, trained to kill. However, women's ability, and perhaps also their desire to kill needs to be suppressed in the conceptualisation and assigned tasks of FETs. FETs are therefore particularly constituted gendered bodies that are 'a necessary, indeed desired, adjunct or accessory to an asymmetrical war' (Khalili 2010a: 13). This constitution involves them being communicative, caring and nonthreatening, but they are also advantageous because their bodies are (assumed to be) sexually desirable for local Afghan men. At the same time they need to be capable of performing to standards required of any soldier stationed in a combat zone.

Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry argue that female soldiers represent much more than just 'a soldier' and that they are 'anything but gender-neutral or gender-equal' (2008: 84). Using the highly publicised story of the rescue of Jessica Lynch in Iraq, they argue that despite her being a fully trained soldier, in the public representation of her, she could 'never escape the weaknesses of femininity' (2008: 85). They summarise today's 'woman soldier' as such,

'She is brave, but needs the men around her to survive. She is trained, but cannot be self-sufficient. She is fragile, but puts on her game face. She is sexy, but not sexual. She can fight, but the kind of fighting she can do is sanitized: she cannot engage in cruelty or torture. She is never far from her maternal instincts. She is a soldier and a participant, but fundamentally still innocent [...] capable as a male soldier, but as vulnerable as a civilian woman' (2008: 86).

Because militaries often remain hostile towards women, and because of these multifaceted and intricate roles that women are supposed to fill, female soldiers

have to continuously navigate a range of complex gendered and sexualised positions and embodiments in relation to each other, the locals they meet and their male colleagues. Through research on the US Navy, Frank J. Barrett argues that while women are subject to many of the same tests and strains of training and deployment, they face different kinds of negotiations.

'Women cannot go too far in being like men, or else they are seen as "unnatural"...women face a core contradiction in this culture: the more that men witness women successfully "doing masculinity", the more they are vulnerable to charges of lesbianism...but if they chose to conform with the traditional images of femininity, they can risk going too far in this endeavour as well' (Barrett 2002: 171-172)

As shown here, the emphasis in both the deployment of FETs and an increase in female soldiers more broadly with a reference to a 'gender perspective' and UNSCR 1325, not only requires a detailed management of women's bodies in the 'theatre of war', but also seem to reiterate some familiar stereotypes of women's roles in war by emphasising how women can calm and soothe the atmosphere and engage better with local women. This feeds into powerful narratives of women as peaceful and nurturing, something that is visible in wider discussions of women's roles in peacekeeping forces as well. Johanna Valenius argues that women's entry into peacekeeping forces broadly end up reinforcing rather than resisting traditional gender roles, and thereby negating or ignoring variations in both masculinity and femininity (2007). Similarly, Jennings finds that arguments for the benefits of increasing the number of women in peacekeeping operations are 'far from progressive' and that 'much of the argumentation hinges on the assertion, whether implicit or explicit, that it is not what women *do*, but who they *are* that makes the difference' (2011: 7 emphasis in original). This means that 'cumulatively, the traits that seem to underpin the ideal-type woman peacekeeper – compassion, empathy, asexualised, disciplined and disciplining, connector, consensus-seeker – are also often associated with that most typical of womanly acts, mothering' (Jennings 2011; 7-8).

This strengthens the association with women as embodied and 'natural' carers and nurturers, further distancing a possibility of women to be associated with

'killing'. That said, the increased deployment of women in both Iraq and Afghanistan are frequently cited as reasons for the recent lifting of the 'combat ban' for women in the US military. However, while FETs are often considered to advance women's roles in the military with references to 'gender equality', this is enabled through a reiteration of traditional and stereotypical notions of womanhood. In other words, women's bodies in these practices are set to do the kind of work that women's bodies have always been seen to do best, namely nurturing and caring. Consequently, McBride and Wibben conclude that 'while FETs are making some inroads, their effectiveness is limited more by US commanders than patriarchal Afghans' and they should not be seen as representing a 'new era' for women in the military (2012: 211).

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, women's bodies are written in complex ways through the US military practice of FETs and NATO's integration of a 'gender perspective'. Together these policies call into being particular gendered bodies, both as 'targets' and 'practitioners' of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency. Subjecting 'population-centric' counterinsurgency to this kind of feminist analysis shows the extent to which women's bodies are increasingly important for the success of the US military in Afghanistan. This has included a shift in the equation between Afghan women and victimhood, so crucial for the justification for the invasion as discussed in chapter three, to a conception of them as allies of the US counterinsurgency project. Furthermore, the deployment of FETs, while being important for information operations and intelligence gathering, is also represented as central to Afghan women's empowerment. In other words, 'population-centric' counterinsurgency is not only 'armed social work' (Kilcullen 2006b: 138) it is also 'armed empowerment'.

Carol Cohn has argued that the rhetorical strategy used to 'sell' the importance of a 'gender perspective' has 'has largely rested on the "women-as-untapped-

resource’ or “use-value” argument’ (2008: 201, see also Gibbings 2011). Moreover, the incorporation of women into armed forces and the ‘theatre of war’ has been enabled with reference to better force protection and better operational effectiveness (Jennings 2011). In other words, these practices might point to a wholly instrumentalist logic. However, I would like to suggest that this is not the only interpretation. Rather, there seems to be an assumed equation between the well-being, development and empowerment of women (both Afghan and American) and the aims and objectives of the US military and NATO. The *Commander’s Guide* sets this out clearly, ‘It is about reassuring local women that U.S. intentions are good and that the United States is there to protect them’ (CALL 2011: 59). Therefore, ‘advancing women’s rights through modernisation is automatically seen as meeting the national security interests of the US’ (Khalili 2010a: 7). What is visible here is therefore not only an instrumentalist move, but also how this type of counterinsurgency presents itself as being on the side of women and local populations, equating the interests of the US military with the interests of Afghan women and the Afghan population.

The deployment of FETs enables an emphasis on ‘care’ above ‘killing’, in a way that further complicates the dynamic of ‘killing and caring’ in ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency. The incorporation of women’s bodies therefore speaks of the way that ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency aims at representing itself as a more ‘humanitarian’ way of war (McBride and Wibben 2012: 210), casting itself as a progressive development to the benefit of local women, and women within the armed forces. It is a way of realising the aim of ‘armed social work’ and the biopolitical logic of counterinsurgency. However, rather than this signalling a radical move in a progressive direction, it ‘shows not only the flexibility of the machinery of rule, but also the dynamic recreation of power *hierarchies* throughout’ (Khalili 2010a: 21).

This thesis has so far analysed the various embodied and gendered manifestations of the war in Afghanistan in the invasion and the practice of counterinsurgency. The next and final chapter takes this exploration further to

argue that the 'Exit Strategy' of NATO and the allied forces also relies on calling into being particular gendered bodies and subjectivities.

- Chapter 6 -

(Re)Producing Martial Bodies and Military Masculinities: The Training of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the 'Exit Strategy'

‘Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them’

‘Lawrence of Arabia’, 27 Articles

‘When we’re talking about basic training, we’re talking about really basic training’

Robert Gates

The previous chapters have shown how the war in Afghanistan is gendered and embodied in both the invasion and the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency in complex, fluid and, at times, contradictory ways. These substantive chapters illustrated how war calls into being a multiplicity of gendered bodies, and relied on their gendered performances in order to evolve. This final chapter similarly examines how the ‘Exit Strategy’ of NATO and the allied forces also requires the production of particular subjects. It analyses how martial bodies are made in the ANSF, with particular emphasis on the ANA, and argues that such productions are affected by pre-existing perceptions of Afghan ‘cultural traits’ that reiterate colonial and orientalist tropes of modernity and tradition.

The chapter begins by briefly outlining the history and logic behind training the ANA. While this is in part a statebuilding strategy, and an integral part of counterinsurgency, it is also something that enables the realisation of withdrawing from Afghanistan through the building of a national army and

security force that can take over responsibility for security. Section one explains that the background and underlying rationale behind the project of rebuilding the ANA requires a repositioning of Afghan recruits as 'less-than-radical-others' (Hansen 2006). In other words, Afghan recruits are positioned as being malleable and redeemable through appropriate mentoring and training. However, as is demonstrated throughout the course of this chapter, this remaking often relies on orientalist preconceptions.

Section two details how the Afghan recruit needs to be remade in particular ways, involving both an individual and embodied remaking of the recruit as a modern martial body. This involves disciplining the recruit's body to behave in ways that are recognisable *as* martial to Western armed forces, not only in terms of training and skill, but also following particular gendered and sexual embodiments that cohere with the heteronormativity of Western military forces. The ANA as a whole needs to follow a standardised hierarchy, similar to that evidenced by Western forces, while at the same time placing the nation's interest above the self. However, this process reflects the similarly essentially symbolic remaking of the entire 'body politic' of Afghanistan as a modern society.

However, as section three shows, the remoulding of Afghan soldier bodies in this way is complicated by the orientalisation that it is embedded in. Orientalisation involves on the one hand fascination, exotification and a certain desire, visible in the admiration for the pre-modern and 'authentic' Afghan man, associated with the mythical fighters in the Mujahedeen and Afghanistan as the 'graveyard of Empires'. On the other hand, Afghan men are also seen as effeminate and unfit for the disciplined life of modern militaries. This orientalist frame, while allowing for a certain fascination and 'awe', ultimately ends up reinforcing Western perceptions of its own superiority with regards to the martial body, rooted in modernity, uniformity and discipline. As a whole therefore, the emphasis on 'cultural incompatibility' between ISAF and Afghan forces ends up reiterating familiar colonial tropes that does the potential for success in terms of rebuilding the ANA no favours.

1.0 Enabling the 'Exit Strategy' and Handing over Security

Shortly after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, rebuilding the ANA began, though it took several years before it became a real priority for ISAF. For the fourth time in 150 years,⁷⁹ Afghanistan was to have a new National Army and, like the previous attempts at rebuilding, this one has repeatedly run into difficulties (Giustozzi 2007a, Jalali 2002)⁸⁰. While the numbers at first were humble (an initial target of 70,000), the army has grown steadily⁸¹, and the ANA currently stands at 195,000 with a target for the whole of ANSF at 350,000⁸². The growth of the security forces is by any account staggering - made possible financially by massive support from the US and politically by NATO's desire to withdraw its own troops, which required an emphasis on 'Afghanisation' (Suhrke 2011: 144). The term 'Afghanisation' is associated with gradually returning control and responsibility to Afghans themselves. This is in and of itself an ambiguous term, sometimes meaning a 'gradual withdrawal of foreign troops', and other times referring to a 'gradual shift of the weight of fighting from the international contingents to the Afghans' (Giustozzi 2008). The composition and structure of the ANA has been determined to a great extent by the US (Suhrke 2011: 144)⁸³. Giustozzi argues that

⁷⁹ There seems to be some dispute in the literature about whether it is the fourth or the fifth time in the history of Afghanistan that a new national army has been created (See for instance Giustozzi 2007a, Jalali 2002, Haug 2009)

⁸⁰ The intent to rebuild was established already in the Bonn Agreement of 2001, and was hailed as a cornerstone of the state and nation building of Afghanistan (Suhrke 2011: 145). The Bonn agreement stipulated that - 'Upon the official transfer of power, all mujahidin, Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country shall come under the command and control of the Interim Authority, and be reorganized according to the requirements of the new Afghan security and armed forces' (Bonn 2001). At the time, it was seen by the US to be an 'effective alternative to the expansion of international security forces' (Jalali 2002: 72).

⁸¹ Reportedly, there was discussion in the Pentagon about lowering the initial target to 50,000, recognising that Afghanistan would not be able to pay for a 70,000 strong army until 2063 (Feickert 2006: 9). The suggestion to lower targets was opposed by the Afghan Minister of Defence Abdul Rahim Wardak. He suggested that rather than lowering the target, it should be heightened to 150,000-200,000 (AP/NYT 2006). As it turns out, Wardak eventually gained support for this.

⁸² The ANA target of 195,000 was reached in June 2012, three months ahead of the set schedule (Nordland 2012)

⁸³ For example, the maintenance of vehicles and weapons follows the 'American model' where private companies are required for servicing and the like. Provided that the security situation in parts of the country is still quite volatile, several private companies are unwilling to perform this service. This along with other factors leads Giustozzi to argue that Afghanistan 'cannot accommodate or afford the army model being imposed on it' (2009: 37).

from the very outset, the ANA were torn between being a ‘auxiliary indigenous force of an occupying power’ and becoming a ‘central/national army’ (2007a: 48).

Today it is ‘widely accepted’ that rebuilding the army is essential for ‘long-term success’ and that, without it, the country will ‘slip back into chaos until some force, probably the Taliban in this case, restores some order’ (Younossi et al. 2009: 1-2). In other words, this is not only about attaining stability and order, but about achieving a *particular* kind of order – one where ‘building the ANSF’ is seen as ‘the fastest possible way of solving the security problem in Afghanistan’ (Haug 2009: 49). Crucially, it also forms a key part of the NATO strategy for withdrawal. The ISAF operation plan reads, ‘NATO’s exit from Afghanistan is, inter alia, dependent on the successful establishment of an integrated security structure that is owned by the Afghans, capable of maintaining security within its own borders and of deterring foreign adversaries’ (quoted in Younossi et al. 2009: 35). President Obama highlighted this in the revised strategy for Afghanistan, announced in December 2009. The new strategy emphasised the importance of ‘the surge’ of 30,000 troops in order to ‘increase our ability to train competent Afghan security forces, and to partner with them so that more Afghans can get into the fight’, which will ultimately ‘help create the conditions for the United States to transfer responsibility to the Afghans’ (Obama 2009).⁸⁴ This sentiment is echoed also in Norway, where Norwegian officials and military leaders have emphasised that the training of ANA and ANP is one of the key priorities for the Norwegian army (NRK 2011, Gahr Støre 2012). Currently, responsibility for more and more provinces is being transferred to the ANSF as part of the three phase withdrawal plan for NATO forces, which was agreed upon in the Lisbon Summit in 2010 (Brooke-Holland and Taylor 2012).

⁸⁴ In January 2013, Obama and Hamid Karzai met in Washington and it was suggested that US troops might pull out sooner than expected in 2014. However, somewhere between 3 and 9,000 troops are set to remain in the country also after 2014 (MacAskill 2013). In February 2012, US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta announced that combat troops would withdraw as early as mid-2013, one year before the scheduled exit. Forces would remain, however, to ‘advise and assist’ the ANSF (Bumiller 2012)..

The training of 'host forces' or 'indigenous forces' is also a central component of counterinsurgency (Corum 2006, Cassidy 2007, Ramsey III 2008, Gortzak 2009). Essential to achieving the aims of counterinsurgency is 'developing an effective host-nation security force' (USArmy et al. 2007: 199) and this is 'one of the highest priority COIN tasks' (2007: 235). It will ideally result in a force that is 'flexible', 'proficient', 'self-sustained', 'well-led', 'professional' and 'integrated into society' (USArmy et al. 2007: 207-208)⁸⁵. Herein, 'manpower is not enough', nor is bravery or willingness to fight, as it is 'well-trained and well-disciplined forces that are required' (USArmy et al. 2007: 235).

As a whole therefore, this 'Exit Strategy' relies on Afghan recruits being constituted as what Lene Hansen calls, 'less-than-radical Others' (2006: 37-41) - a relation that can encompass a temporal dimension and relies on the Other being redeemable and malleable. This is crucial for the entire project of training the ANA, which is grounded in the belief that through appropriate training and dedicated mentoring, the temporally backward Other, in the shape of the Afghan man, can be transformed from a recruit to a 'proper' soldier. Similarly the Afghan military is reconstituted from brave but undisciplined collections of warriors into a single, 'modern' force.

However, the remaking of Afghan recruits' bodies into soldiers by Western forces meets a whole host of challenges. As Corum argues, dealing with 'military forces with a tradition of incompetence and corruption' (Corum 2006: v) is both a difficult task and a 'slow and painstaking process' (USArmy et al. 2007: 207). As shown in chapter two, 'soldiers are not born, but made' (Woodward 2000: 640) in detailed, complex and carefully designed ways. However, moulding the Afghan soldier body is frequently presented by allied forces as being that much more difficult than the making of a Western soldier, with the perceived

⁸⁵ Generally, the experience of the British forces in Malaya (1948-1960), known widely as 'the Malayan Emergency', is hailed as an example of a successful counterinsurgency (Strachan 2007), and it is also here that examples of best practice in terms of training indigenous forces are taken from (Corum 2006). The *U.S Counterinsurgency Field Manual* mentions how the British were able to train commissioned and non-commissioned officers which 'dramatically improved' their discipline and led to 'better relations between population and security forces' which meant that people began to provide the security forces with information about the insurgents.

challenges rooted in particular orientalist and colonial presuppositions about the Afghan Other.

2.0 Moulding the Afghan Soldier Body

Building militaries is not only about weapons systems, equipment, structures, skills and logistics; it is also about instilling certain values and identities into the forces, and about remaking ‘natural’ recruits bodies into trained and disciplined soldier bodies. As discussed theoretically in chapter two, building a military requires the production of military bodies, a view that rejects regarding the body as something ‘given’ and ‘natural’. Through training, mentoring and partnering, ISAF forces are set to mould, guide and fight alongside Afghan forces, in the hope that this will produce the conditions for increased security for civilians, increase the legitimacy of the Afghan government and, crucially, enable NATO’s withdrawal. This endeavour is about not only reshaping martial bodies, but also about calling into being specific subjectivities and political rationalities, away from the ‘traditional’ and towards a replication of superior ‘modern’ subjects and practices.

Since 2009, the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) has been responsible for training and equipping the ANA, both for higher and lower level military personnel. Recruits to the ANA go through basic training at the Kabul Military Training Centre (KMTC) and, whereas they were previously trained by ISAF forces, the basic training is today conducted by higher ranking ANA soldiers (Rayment 2012). Basic training lasts for 10 weeks, and consists of rifle marksmanship, small infantry tactics, mountain training, urban combat, but advice is given on ‘everything from training to logistics’ (AP 2009). As Former Defence Secretary Robert Gates emphasised, ‘when we’re talking about basic training, we’re talking about really basic training’ (Levine 2008).

The training of the ANA follows an embedding principle, where ‘mentors’, either from one nation, as in the case of the US, or for smaller nations like Norway, together with others, train, live and fight alongside the ANA. There are usually between 13 and 20 personnel working alongside an ANA battalion, or *kandak* as they are known in Afghanistan (Haug 2009: 47). In the US these teams are known as ETTs (Embedded Training Teams), whereas for the rest of the NATO countries they are referred to as Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs), though their function is the same⁸⁶. A similar principle is followed in relation to the police force.

The ultimate aim is to produce a force that *comes close to* resembling one’s own. It would ideally be a force that is professional in its conduct, thinks strategically and is concerned with planning ahead in order to guard for the unforeseen. It should be well equipped, serious in its mission, concerned with limiting civilian deaths and with winning ‘hearts and minds’. It should not complain, but nurture a ‘stick with it’ attitude. It should be bound together by heteronormative bonds of camaraderie and the willingness to sacrifice one’s life for the sake of the force and the nation (Wadham 2004). In other words, training the ANA is about calling into being particular martial bodies that can perform their duty and thereby reinforce the classical notion of sovereignty - that of killing and dying for one’s country (Weber 2008a). One of the soldiers themselves, reflects on the role and responsibilities of the professional soldier by explicitly referring to the constitutive role that the soldier plays in performing, and therefore maintaining, the classic interpretation of sovereignty:

‘To be a professional soldier is to understand that we administer the state’s monopoly of violence, and that we at the end of the day are hired to be extremely good in organised violence. We need to understand and accept that we represent something bigger than ourselves. This means that personal feelings about a mission is irrelevant, and that we are loyal servants of the nation’s

⁸⁶ According to Haug there are differences in the time spent on ‘training the trainers’ prior to deployment. Where the Norwegian mentors for instance received 9 months of training for the OMLT, the Americans only received 72 days of training for the ETT (2009: 51).

interest for better or for worse. In this is also a recognition that we often represent higher principles like democracy, justice and human rights' (Elden 2012: 47).

The following three sections show how this moulding is both individual and collective, in that individual embodiment aims at the same time to change the entire 'body politic'. The first and second sections deal with the disciplining of individual soldier bodies aimed to instil and embody particular military masculinities. The last section examines the institutionalisation of specific hierarchical structures, which import ideals of counterinsurgency and 'soldier-scholar' masculinity and emphasise the importance of 'national unity'. These specific processes of rebuilding the ANA are designed to transform the entirety of the 'body politic', away from the 'traditional' and towards the 'modern'.

***2.1 'Strong fighters don't always make good soldiers'*⁸⁷**

Producing disciplined, or 'docile bodies' is one of the central tenets of building a modern military. Military discipline enables a set of martial bodies to function as one, as a collective whole. As discussed in chapter two, Foucault argues that enclosure, partition, ranks and serialization form an integral aspect of building a modern military organisation (1991). Julian Reid explains how 'enclosure' enabled 'new forms of control and security'; 'partitioning' individualised men and 'supervised the conduct not only of the mass body but the life of bodies individually'; 'ranks' cast bodies in a 'network of relations of exchange' and 'serialization' provided 'fixed positions for individuals' (2006: 130). Evident here is a tension between collectivisation and individualisation: how to simultaneously build individual capacity while joining soldiers' bodies so that they may function as a collective mass.

A frequent complaint about the ANA is that they are undisciplined, disorganised and/or incompetent (Parnell 2012: 58, 77, 325, Tupper 2010: 90, Courter 2008: 115,

⁸⁷ This is a quote from Guardian journalist Declan Walsh's photo essay about the British training of ANA in Helmand province (Walsh 2011)

211), 'faults' which are recognized in the broader literature as well (Hansen 2012a: 14, Younossi et al. 2009: 18, Giustozzi 2009: 37). One US soldier states, 'They are just about useless; genuinely stupid' (Bordin 2012: 25). Another claims that 'this is a lazy-ass culture; they won't do anything unless they have to... we do everything for them. It's like a kid you have to spoon feed' (Bordin 2012: 64). The ANA's lack of discipline and training means that, on several occasions, ISAF soldiers take on the role of a parent in relation to them. About halfway through his mission, Courter becomes concerned for their safety, that they may 'stumble and get shot' and like a parent complaining about his children he says,

'They can be childish at times, they only seem to pay attention for short periods of time, they are usually almost completely self-absorbed and self-interested, they do not seem to care much about their fellow Soldiers, and they would rather do anything than learn or work hard...yes, training them is sometimes like teaching children, but these are grown men. One would think they would know better, but one would be wrong' (Courter 2008: 212-214).

Elden, who proudly recalls returning to the FOB after a particularly gruelling combat experience, echoes a related parental sentiment and sense of achievement,

'around a hundred Afghan soldiers and police officers stood along the wall and smiled humbly and respectfully. They knew what we had done and had a look of awe in their big white eyes. I was proud when I saw the gratification in their eyes. If what we did today gave them a motivation to fight for their country, that was the greatest reward I could imagine' (Elden 2012: 157-158).

As discussed in chapter two and again in chapter five, performing military masculinities and disciplining martial bodies requires serious attention to particular collective aesthetic appearances. Recall how AR 670-1 states that 'a neat and well-groomed appearance by all soldiers is fundamental to the Army and contributes to building the pride and esprit essential to an effective military force' (USArmy 2012: 2). The ANA's lack of discipline is therefore often immediately visible in their poor attire and 'liberal' approach to uniforms. Parnell tells of how the ANA 'sat in the dirt with vacant eyes, smoking hash. Their polyglot uniforms were ill tended. They were poorly groomed. They looked like a unit that just didn't give a shit' (2012: 254). Clothes and attire are in this

way ‘instruments’ that ‘regulate[s] and exercise[s]’ bodies to appear in a certain way (De Certeau 1984: 147). This is so important that Elden, after noticing numerous faults in appearance, took his troop aside to give them a stern reprimand,

‘I expect everyone in the troop to wear correct attire, have short hair and that you are either shaved or grow a proper full beard. Moustaches are out of the question! ...Correct attire is how we show that we are professionals. First impressions matter’ (2012: 71-72, see also Johansen 2011: 35-36).

The contrast between the well groomed, properly attired ‘warrior masculinity’ of the ISAF soldier and the slack attitude of the Afghan soldier wearing a mix of ‘do-rags, Arab-Style head scarves and baseball caps’ (Tupper 2010: 19), symbolises not only their lack of discipline, but also a broader division between the civilised and the barbarian, the modern and traditional.⁸⁸

It is not only in maintaining their groomed appearance that Afghan soldiers are regarded as lacking discipline. Their aversion to training (Skarpskyttere 2010: 105, Courter 2008: 213-214) is also noted by their Western trainers and mentors. As discussed in chapter four, an important part of performing ‘warrior masculinity’ is being active and ‘in the action’, as opposed to remaining ‘inside the wire’ or not participating in various assigned tasks. Repetitions and drills are crucial to the internalisation and embodiment of military masculinity (Myrntinen 2008: 135). However, internalising military masculinity becomes an uncertain process when the ANA recruits are reluctant to commit even to the most mundane tasks like target practice. Trainers comment that Afghans appear to ‘have a strong dislike of training of any type’ (Tupper 2010: 91), leading Parnell to recall how he

⁸⁸ Challenges involved in disciplining of the ANA have also made it to the internet, with numerous photos and videos being posted on sites like YouTube and LiveLeak. A popular one seems to be filming Afghan soldiers doing ‘Jumping Jacks’ as a part of their physical exercise and failing to jump in rhythm and a straight line (YouTube 2009, see also FoxNews 2010b). US armed forces and NATO also publish videos, which show how Afghan soldiers are being trained. One includes images of ANA picking apart and putting together rifles, doing stop and search operations, and marching, all under the watchful eye of their trainer (RCEast 2012). Others again show Afghan soldiers training in urban warfare (McCabe 2010).

‘watched these slovenly dispirited cops, and wondered how on earth such a group could ever be moulded into an effective force’ (2012: 58).

Despite all this, several of the allied soldier memoirs praise Afghan troops for their bravery. Tupper notes that they are ‘as brave, if not braver’ than the average American soldier (Tupper 2010: 16 see also , Skarpskyttere 2010: 105), their pursuit of the enemy is reminiscent of ‘hunting dogs anxious for the chase’ (Tupper 2010: 16) or like ‘sharks smelling blood in the water’ (Tupper 2010: 26). The chosen analogies are both likening Afghans to fearless animals, something that is akin to colonial imaginings of the ‘savage’ having a closer connection to nature. However, these phrases are meant to praise them; Tupper is clearly in awe of their capabilities to ‘sniff blood’ and ‘hunt’, which are qualities necessary to be a good combat soldier. However, as Courter notes, Afghan soldiers may be brave ‘but bravery does not compensate for skill and tactics. Bravery alone is a poor substitute for knowing what you are doing and being competent in doing it. We need them to be ready for battle’ (Courter 2008: 211). There is therefore a curious mix of applauding their ‘primal’ qualities, while at the same time a distinct sense that they need to be reformed because bravery is not enough. Thus, the recruits’ bravery needs to be regimented, collectivised, sanitized and disciplined, as glory and respect are only granted ‘the fighting men whose aggression is controlled and regulated by the State and used to uphold the authority of the State’ (Higate and Hopton 2005: 435), reminiscent again of placing the trained martial body in the service of killing and dying for the nation in the classical understanding of sovereignty (Weber 2008a).

2.2 Holding Hands and Watching Porn

The moulding of soldier bodies also involves a disciplining of their sexuality and specifically requires the embodiment of particular versions of sexuality. As discussed in chapters two and chapter four, heteronormativity remains an important aspect in the disciplining of soldiers’ bodies. The privileging of

heterosexuality, as well as the resultant subordination and feminisation of men that are deemed to not conform to it, have historically been important for the production of military masculinities (Britton and Williams 1995, Belkin 2003, Belkin 2012). Heterosexuality remains a strong signifier and organising principle for the military (Bulmer 2013), despite the production of multiple masculinities and the opening up of militaries to women and other minorities, as discussed in previous chapters. Warrior masculinity in particular is ‘resolutely heterosexual’ (Woodward 2000: 643), which means that actions and sentiments that are perceived as homosexual are regarded as highly incompatible with soldier identities. In other words, the production of soldier bodies is embodied not only in the physical sense of training to particular military fighting standards, but also by instilling particular notions of appropriate sexual behaviour.

The internalisation of such heteronormativity is strongly evident in the allied soldier memoirs. For instance, Courter reflects on the challenges of going for long periods of time without sex, and what options there are, ‘given our hormones and the male genetic disposition and sexual drive’ (2008: 39). He is keen to stress that any action taken to release sexual tension ‘rules out homosexual activity, because this is unattractive to us and besides, Army regulations preclude homosexual acts between soldiers’. However, he notes that he has been made aware that ‘in parts of the Middle East, including Afghanistan, homosexual sex is more common (Courter 2008: 40).

The issue of Afghan sexuality and how it potentially could ‘interfere’ with the training of Afghan soldiers and the practice of warfare in Afghanistan forms the topic of a US HTT report entitled *Pashtun Sexuality*.⁸⁹ A Fox News report on the HTT study notes that ‘as if U.S. troops and diplomats didn’t have enough to worry about in trying to understand Afghan culture, a new report suggests an

⁸⁹ The report was written by the HTT AF-6, a team assigned to the US Marines who worked at the time alongside British Forces in Lashkar Gah, Kandahar. The stated aim of the report is to ‘provide insight on Pashtun cultural traditions regarding male sexuality for reasons of enhanced baseline cultural understanding for improved interaction as well as any IO [intelligence operations] applicability’ (HTT 2010).

entire region in the country is coping with a sexual identity crisis' (FoxNews 2010a). The report states,

'Military cultural awareness training for Afghanistan often emphasizes that the *effeminate characteristics of male Pashtun interaction* are to be considered "normal" and no indicator of a prevalence of homosexuality. This training is intended to prevent service members from reacting with *typically Western shock or aversion to such displays*. However, slightly more in-depth research points to the presence of a culturally-dependent homosexuality appearing to affect a far greater population base than some researchers would argue is attributable to natural inclination' (HTT 2010: 2 emphasis added).

Afghan, and more specifically Pashtun men⁹⁰, are known to have 'effeminate characteristics' and the presence of 'culturally-dependent homosexuality' seems to 'affect' a greater amount of people in Kandahar than what would be 'natural'. US and Western soldiers are 'frequently confused' about how to relate to Afghan men who are 'outwardly affectionate toward both one another and male ISAF members', who are 'extremely gentle in their demeanour and touch', and who have 'taken great care in embellishing their personal appearances with fingernails dyed red, hair and beards hennaed in careful patterns, and eyes very subtly outlined' (HTT 2010: 3). These 'feminine' embodiments, involving not only appearance, but also behaviour and mannerism, are often interpreted as homosexual.

The report explains the prevalence of homosexual behaviour as stemming primarily from men's lack of interaction with women prior to marriage, which is often an expensive affair that many cannot afford. While the report notes that homosexuality is indeed prohibited in Islam, in rural Afghanistan, this prohibition is often interpreted as only pertaining to feelings of love. It is noted that 'loving a man would therefore be unacceptable and a major sin...but using another man for sexual gratification would be regarded as foible' something the report interprets as a 'cultural misunderstanding of Islamic tenants' (HTT 2010: 5-6). This 'misunderstanding' results in a problematic privileging of

⁹⁰ Pasthuns are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, making up around 40 per cent of the population.

homosexuality (in the Western definition of it as including both sexual acts *and* love) over heterosexuality. This stems in part from a belief that women are 'unclean' due to menstruation, which means that 'local cultural interpretations have created the passionately if erroneously held belief that women are physically undesirable' (HTT 2010: 6-7).

The HTT report itself is fascinating as it reveals Western confusion, unease and, ultimately, dismissal of any notion of liberal or adaptable sexual norms that might be attributed to Afghan culture. Moreover, the report's analysis illustrates an obsession with binary constructions of sexuality. When Afghan men are found to interpret Islamic restrictions concerning homosexuality as encompassing solely feelings of love rather than physical acts, this is dismissed by the HTT as being a 'cultural misinterpretation' of 'true' Islam. In other words, Western constructions of sexuality, existing within a binary that includes both the physical and the emotional, and composed of rigid categories of 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual', are projected upon the potentially more fluid understanding of male sexuality in Afghan culture.

A similar sense of confusion is present in Tupper's memoir in a chapter entitled *Afghan Porn* where he shares some reflections on the relationship between masculinity, femininity and sexuality in Afghan society. He describes how one of the Afghan soldiers brought (what was interpreted as) a 'porno DVD' to the camp.

'The screen came alive with a woman dancing evocatively and seductively. Except upon closer review, it became clear that this woman was in fact a man. He was surrounded by a crowd of at least fifty Afghan men of all ages and ethnicities, all gazing at him with starry eyes...compared to your standard MTV video, the dance and the costumes were mild and tame. Nothing was revealing, nothing shocking, nothing explicitly sexual...But in the Afghan context, this video was triple-X' (Tupper 2010: 145)

What Tupper explains here is a ‘tradition’ of *bachabas* (or *bacha bazi*)⁹¹, which translates as ‘boy toucher’ or ‘boy play’. He writes that the boy in the film was ‘obviously homosexual’ but since ‘men are literally condemned to a female-free existence until they marry’, these films served a purpose. The fact that ‘a woman cannot appear in public, but a cross-dressing gay prostitute is permitted’ more than anything speaks to the ‘moral of the story’, according to Tupper, which is that ‘all efforts to stifle and repress sexual activity just pushes human desire into other outlets’ (Tupper 2010: 146-147). While Afghan men may have to contend with ‘mild, if not boring’ films of ‘cross-dressing gay prostitutes’ at the moment, Tupper thinks that ‘it’s only a matter of time before some Jenna Jameson DVDs find their way into ANA hands, and once they do, I have a feeling the *bachabas* DVDs will be collecting a lot of dust’ (Tupper 2010: 148).

Mella also reflects on Afghan sexuality and relates it specifically to the practices of Afghan soldiers. He describes how he and a fellow soldier were stranded at a police station when one of their cars broke down and recalls how ‘great dark eyes studied us from top to bottom, as if we were beautiful girls they couldn’t keep their eyes off...I was a bit embarrassed’ (Mella 2013: 146). They tried to speak to them, but the ANA soldiers did not speak English so communication broke down. More and more soldiers gathered around them and Mella notes that while he could understand how people in the rural countryside were often curious about them as Western soldiers, this was something different, as the ANA ‘were not curious about the uniform or our weapons. It was us as guys that they thought were exciting. I noticed how they looked at my long blond hair, at my body. They looked at us as if we were girls’ (Mella 2013: 147). He explains how,

‘homosexuality is really prohibited in Islam, but sex between men is common in Afghanistan. When my brother was here, sex was one of the first things he was offered by an Afghan. During training we were also warned: if you get caught you should expect to be raped. Several times I

⁹¹ According to both Civil and Sharia Law, ‘bacha bazi’ is illegal in Afghanistan. It was banned under Taliban rule but has flourished since 2001, also in major cities like Kabul. In many instances it involves young boys being forced into this trade as a part of strong and powerful warlords who keep them as part of their entourage. They are usually released at the age of 19 when they can ‘reclaim their status as “male”’ (Abdul-Ahad 2009). This practice is also noted extensively in the HTT report.

saw soldiers from the ANA holding hands. They would lie and relax in each other's laps or lie extra close in the evenings' (Mella 2013: 147).

In a second chapter that deals explicitly with Afghan sexuality, Tupper shares his 'solution' to the war in Afghanistan. Here, Afghan men's sexual frustration is argued to feed their 'macho warrior culture',

'It is my conclusion, based on pseudoscientific research I've conducted on myself during months of female deprivation, that the root of all Afghan problems resides in the pent-up desires and frustrations of Afghan men. They are denied any access to women until marriage...the men are frustrated, *sexually frustrated*, to the point that they pick up guns, put on their finest suicide vests, and get their energy out through holy war. It's the only rational explanation for the macho warrior culture of Afghanistan ... So here is my master plan: lets import fifty thousand Brazilian women and one thousand Italian-American women into Afghanistan. *Seriously*. If you unleash this untamed and passionate assault wave onto this country, it won't be long until Afghan women are streaming to the spa to get a Brazilian wax. Burning burkas will illuminate the streets as women march to purchase thong bikinis.' (Tupper 2010: 108).⁹²

Here, as in the HTT report, Western understandings of sexuality are projected upon Afghan society. In this case, Tupper draws his conclusions based on 'pseudoscientific research conducted on himself', something that suggests that this is not necessarily about Afghan men at all. All the while, Tupper's 'solution' feeds into a powerful discourse of Muslim men as overtly sexual and hypermasculine, and at the same time incorporates a not so subtle critique of Afghan women. The former is (understandably) frustrated and therefore resorts to violence or homosexual intercourse, while the latter should embrace Brazilian pubic waxing and thong bikinis.

There is therefore a curious mix of representations of Afghan sexuality here. On the one hand Afghan men are found to be 'hypermasculine' and unable to control their urges, which feeds their lust for war; on the other hand, they are feminized and suspected of being homosexual. However, as Puar explains, this

⁹² While this is probably intended as humorous, as the chapter appears under the section 'laughter is the best defence', paired with the 'Afghan porn' chapter (which is in a different part of the book), they present of a picture of the curiously hypermasculine and simultaneously feminised ANA.

interpretation of sexual norms in the Middle East is not uncommon. The belief that 'sexuality is repressed, but perversity is just bubbling beneath the surface forms part of a centuries long Orientalist tradition, an Orientalist phantasm' (Puar 2007: 83, see also Khalili 2010a: 15-16). The representation of Afghan men therefore portrays them as simultaneously hypermasculine (contrary to the restrained, women-friendly and protective masculinity of Western men) and feminized or homosexual (contrary to strong, heterosexual, capable, professional Western soldiers). Crucially, however, there is an expectation that this Oriental sexuality will evaporate and be reformed with its encounter with a superior sexuality (in this case, illustrated by a Jenna Jameson DVD).

2.3 To help them become better Afghans⁹³

In addition to instilling certain values into Afghan men in particular gendered, sexual and embodied ways, as discussed above, the strategy to rebuild the ANA is also about transforming the wider 'body politic'. Constructing a modern Afghan army is often hailed as essential for the development of the Afghan state itself, to the extent that, unless the ANA become a professional force, 'the promise of real democracy in Afghanistan is doomed' (George 2011: 1). This means that Afghan soldiers need to acknowledge that their service and skills should benefit the whole of Afghan society, and this in turn requires a 'breakdown of the tribal societies' (George 2011: 6). In other words, the building of ANA into a professional and modern army requires simultaneous radical societal shifts, which align the individual soldier with the state. For them to become 'sentinels of Afghan democracy' (Chan 2009) these bodies need to be remade in order to mirror the modern and transcend the traditional. While the previous section dealt with the importance of instilling discipline into the ANA in order to call into being particular martial bodies, able to embody discipline individually and

⁹³ This is a phrase used by Courter when he writes that 'I do not want them to be like Americans. I want them to become better Afghans' (Courter 2008: 213)

collectively - this section deals with the two other central 'lacks' of the ANA, namely, the acceptance of a standardised hierarchy and a sense of national unity.

Producing modern militaries requires institutionalising standardised hierarchical structures and ranks. Therefore, in addition to KMTC mentioned above, since 2003 the National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA) has been training higher-level officers. It is formally connected with the US Military Academy at West Point, and provides four-year courses taught in English. At the end, cadets leave with bachelor degrees in return for a ten year commitment to serving in the ANSF (ISAF 2011a). Moreover, a dedicated counterinsurgency manual (ANA 3-24), has been produced for/by the ANA and whose primary audience are the 'leaders and planners at the Kandak [battalion] level or above' (ANA 2007). The manual states that practicing counterinsurgency requires a 'flexible, adaptive force led by agile, well-informed, culturally astute leaders' and the manual is intended to 'provide the necessary guidelines to succeed in such a campaign' (ANA 2007: 3).

The creation of this manual is an attempt to instil the values of 'soldier-scholars' into the higher-level leadership of the ANA inspired in particular by the US. It is therefore not surprising that the Afghan manual (ANA 3-24) largely replicates its American original, FM 3-24, discussed in chapter four. However, comparing the 'Guide for Action' appendix of both manuals, one can discern some differences. Broadly, the appendix in the ANA manual is identical to the US appendix, but it is written in simpler language and uses less abbreviations.⁹⁴ It is especially interesting that the 'Engage the Women, be Cautious around the Children' paragraph from the US manual, quoted in chapter five, is altogether omitted in the ANA manual.

In addition to instilling the values of 'soldier-scholars' into the leadership of the ANA, another aspect of the hierarchy that largely mirrors that of the US is the

⁹⁴ For example, under the heading 'Remember the Global Audience', directing counterinsurgents to bear in mind that the world is watching, the ANA manual has exchanged the word 'omnipresence' with 'global reach' (ANA 2007: 187, USArmy et al. 2007: 296)

emphasis on a functioning Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) corps⁹⁵ (Cordesman et al. 2010). An NCO corps is considered to be crucial for establishing leadership and command structures. However, 'efforts to create Afghan officers and NCOs that mirror Western military systems have to be tempered with the understanding that there are limits to how quickly Afghan concepts of military training and operations can be changed – if at all' (Cordesman 2010: 46-47). Lt. Gen Caldwell, who since 2009 has led the NTM-A, argues that the 'leadership deficiencies across the spectrum of insufficient numbers of junior officers and NCOs, gaps in the midgrade ranks and corrupt senior officers – pose the greatest threat to our Afghan allies' (Caldwell 2011b: 77).

The challenges associated with institutionalising a standardised notion of hierarchy speaks to a difference in 'culture', some argue, and the ways that US and Afghan notions of 'warrior cultures' diverge. There are perceived differences in terms of how leadership is viewed, and whether this is hierarchical and standardised as in the US military, or personal and social as is the case in Afghanistan (Willis 2011). While technical skill in the US military is 'trainable', and the aim is effectively to train the soldiers to an extent that they can take over, 'an officer in the ANA may train their subordinate leaders sufficient military skills to enable them to competently follow orders, but not to take his position' (Willis 2011: 58). In other words, argues Willis, there are cultural inhibitions associated with Afghans that makes institutionalising a standardised hierarchy and the training of leaders difficult.

As Giustozzi argues, 'large numbers of the ANA personnel would appear to place personal benefit ahead of national interest' (2009: 39 see also, Thruelsen 2010, Felbab-Brown 2012)⁹⁶. Willis argues that 'while Afghans have a national identity, and have fought to maintain their independence, their goals for independence

⁹⁵ Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) are officers without a commission who reach their promotion through enlisted ranks and can be considered the mid-level leadership. In the US, ranks of sergeant and corporal are normally considered NCOs. The Norwegian Military does not have an NCO corps, but operate with roughly three 'ranks', *befal* (commanders), *stabsoffiser* (staff officer) and Generals.

⁹⁶ Interestingly, this issue did not really surface as an issue in Krekvik's study, something he found 'surprising' given the prominence it has in the literature and debates on ANSF forces (2011: 32).

tended to orient around local and personal motivations' (2011: 62-65). In addition, the idea of changing sides 'in the middle of battle' does not exist for US soldiers (Willis 2011: 56-56). Conversely, while US forces are motivated by numerous factors, these are understood to 'ultimately be tied into a national strategic objective' (Willis 2011: 66)⁹⁷. This shows that the training of the ANA is about calling into being particular martial bodies that can perform particular gendered notions of sovereignty associated with killing and dying for one's country.

As shown here, the ANA needs to be remade *individually* through a disciplining and moulding of recruit's bodies. At the same time, the rebuilding of the ANA is also aimed at reforming the entire 'body politic'. The various ways in which the ISAF forces remake the Afghan soldier body shows how 'war is fought for political order not among states, or in the territorial battlefields where military forces clash, but on the terrain of the human body' (Reid 2006: 130). However, in the case of the training of the ANA, this human body is also symbolic of a wider effort to transform the subjectivities of the entire 'body politic' – from the 'traditional' to the 'modern'. In the words of Courter,

'I truly want to change them – I do not want them to remain as they are. I am actually trying to change their values and habits. I do not want them to be like Americans; I want them to become better Afghans...I want to take away their complacency and replace it with zeal – a strong desire for change, to improve their country, and a willingness to work hard to see it happen' (2008: 213).

3.0 Producing the Oriental Other in 'the Land that Time Forgot'⁹⁸

Having discussed some of the embodied and gendered ways in which ISAF tries to remake not only individual Afghan men into soldiers, but also the wider 'body politic', this chapter moves on to discuss how this process is driven by particular

⁹⁷ This claim needs to be tempered with a recognition of how it is not uncommon for people to serve in the military without having rights as citizens, or as a means to gain citizenship as in the case of several Latinos (Amaya 2007, Sanchez 2013)

⁹⁸ This is how Parnell describes Afghanistan (2012: 272)

colonial and orientalist logics. As shown in chapter four, Western militaries are increasingly deploying the language of 'culture' as a means to frame *how* wars should be understood - from cause, to practice and in their results. The memoirs analysed here show that soldiers themselves utilise the language of cultural difference in order to make sense of their experiences. 'Culture' is therefore increasingly considered by the military to explain successes and failures as the result of long-standing historical and cultural traits (Porter 2009). However, 'culture' can easily become a 'catch-all' term that supposedly explains most of the problems Western forces have encountered in rebuilding, training and relying on Afghan forces. 'Culture' therefore, is oftentimes little more than a different name for orientalisation.

Like all discourse, the discourse about Afghan soldiers in memoirs, reports and academic literature attempts to 'fix meaning' through linking particular actions, notions and traits to the Other, thereby simultaneously constructing the Self. However, as noted previously, Othering does not necessarily follow a strict and radically different Self-Other duality. While the strategy of training the ANA relies on Afghan soldiers being seen as 'less-than-radical-others', it may still be the case that ISAF soldiers themselves continue to view Afghans as more or less radical Others (Duncanson and Cornish 2012). Take the example of corruption, mentioned by many of the soldiers, either on a small scale or with the 'higher ups' (Elden 2012: 145, 205-207, Parnell 2012: 35, Zeller 2012: 179, Tupper 2010: 18, Skarpskyttene 2010: 106-107, Courter 2008: 323, Johansen 2011: 108-109). While the memoirs indicate that all soldiers find the issue of corruption problematic and counterproductive to their efforts, it is not necessarily represented in the same way. Some show instances of understanding by saying that 'corruption and crime is not unusual, but the only thing they really want is to feed their families. Afghans have, like everyone else, a will to survive' (Johansen 2011: 108-107 see also , Tupper 2010: 18). In other cases, thievery and crime are presented as non-situational, non-contextual and as something inherent to Afghan culture - 'I know they're poor; if they'd just ask for it, if we can, we'd give it to them. But

they'd rather just steal. They go into denial saying, "We are Muslims, we don't steal". Bullshit!' (Bordin 2012: 24).

That said, the conception of Afghan soldiers and Afghan society in general reiterates several familiar orientalist tropes. Orientalist discourse, and the process of orientalising the Other is a complex process, involving both condemnation and fascination, exotification and desire. At times, it can be relatively innocent, likening the experience of Afghanistan to how distant places have been represented before. For instance Emil Johansen writes how 'when the night closes and morning dawns with the sun slowly creeping over the hills in the east, you can hear prayer calls from the several hundred minarets in the town' which was 'like an exotic scene from a movie' (2011: 56). In this vein, the way that soldiers themselves reiterate orientalist and colonial discourse is not necessarily surprising, given that a certain 'colonial nostalgia' is, in a sense, 'written into' the very concept of counterinsurgency itself, evident in the frequent references to 'colonial heroes' such as 'Lawrence of Arabia', as discussed in chapter four (Porter 2009). For instance, Mella explains that after fighting in the mountainous area between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1897, Winston Churchill described how "every tribesman has a blood feud with his neighbour. Every man's hand is against the other, and all against the stranger". Mella reflects that 'It's like this still, over a hundred years later. Even with a UN-mandate and support from the Afghan government, we as foreigners will always be seen as intruders' (2013: 125). Here, Afghanistan is seen as a place lost in history, perpetually backwards, as a 'land that time forgot' (Parnell 2012: 272).

As noted above, orientalism is 'highly fluid' (Porter 2009: 23), involving a complex mix of admiration, contempt, praise, disgust, fascination and confusion. As Gerd Baumann and Andre Gingrich argue,

'Orientalization constitutes self and other by negative mirror imaging: 'what is good in us is lacking in them', but also adds a subordinate reversal: 'what is lacking in us is (still) present in them.' It thus entails a possibility of desire for the other and even, sometimes, a potential for self critical relativism' (2004: x).

Baumann and Gingrich explain how what is considered positive in the ‘occident’ finds its counterpart in the ‘orient’ and vice versa. These kinds of mirror images are also visible in the memoirs in the discourse about Afghan society. However, while orientalisation *can* entail a positive admiration of an exotic place, a longing back to an ‘easier time’ or a degree of fascination, more often than not, it signifies an overtly violent and dangerous place, much like the colonial imaginaries of untouched places, ripe for civilising projects (McClintock 1995). Feminisation and infantilisation are often integral aspects of orientalism⁹⁹ that posit the West as a superior civilization, in opposition to the East which is perpetually inferior (Smith 2006: 68). As shown above with the example of sexuality and the prevalence of heteronormativity in Western militaries, being designated as effeminate is incompatible with a soldier identity.

Mirror Imaging in Orientalisation:

Occidental Positive	Orient Negative
Rational	Irrational
Enlightened	Superstitious
Technological	Backward
Occident Negative	Orient Positive
Calculating	Spontaneous
Sober	Luxuriant
Materialist	Mystical

Figure no.1: *The Grammar of Orientalization or Reverse Mirror-Imaging* (Baumann 2004: 20)

Soldiers deployed to Afghanistan therefore make sense of their experiences partly through reiterating orientalist and colonial narratives, whether designated as ‘oriental negative’ or ‘oriental positive’ in Baumann and Gingrich’s framework. Woodward and Jenkins argue that British soldier memoirs are also often framed with ‘reference to a geographical imagination of Afghanistan haunted by the ghosts of the colonial past and its personification in the present’ (2012: 123). Similarly, Duncanson and Cornish argue that while there are exceptions, ‘the

⁹⁹ Ryerson Christie argues that a similar tendency is present in the practice of PRTs where locals are ‘orientalised and feminised as either passive recipients of aid or as the brutal and cowardly insurgents’ (2012: 54)

colonial overtones are clear in the simultaneous positioning of [British] soldiers as superior, controlled, enlightened and rational, bringing stability and civilised values to the primitive native' (2012: 158).

Afghanistan as a country is, along with its culture, commonly represented as overtly violent. Violence is naturally a recurring theme in any soldier memoir, but it is worth noting that violence is often seen as something inherent to Afghanistan itself, rather than something soldiers create or contribute to. Johansen for instance writes that while 'cultural training' was central prior to the deployment of Norwegian troops (learning correct manners and phrases), this seemed of little relevance when they arrived. Afghanistan turned out to be a place where 'you are not judged by how nice you are. It is survival of the fittest' (Johansen 2011: 131, see also Skarpskyttere 2010: 80). Repeated references are made in Elden to Ghowrmarch (area in Faryab) being 'indian country, our *indian camp*, the place where children die and warriors are born' (2012: 91 emphasis in original, see also 131), reiterating the imagination of a 'wild west' where the good guys (white cowboys) fight against the savage natives (brown Indians).

This discursive link between Afghanistan and violence is also related to the ways in which it has been historically seen as a country of warriors, related to the notion of 'martial races'. A prevalent discourse in imperial Britain, this ideology holds that certain races of men are either culturally or biologically predisposed to warfare and fighting. Heather Streets argues that the power of this ideology, applied to Ghurkhas, Sikhs and Scottish Highlanders, stems from its flexibility and ambiguity: it was 'adaptable to a variety of historical and geographical situations and functioned alternately to inspire, intimidate, exclude and include' (Streets 2005: 4). Connell likewise highlights the colonial designation of supposed effeminate Bengali men, while Pathans (Pashtuns) and Sikhs were seen as strong and warlike (2000: 48). Inherent here is an intimate relationship between masculinity and martiality, to the extent that 'the two terms were occasionally used interchangeably' (Caplan 1995: 101) and where the ability of the 'martial races' to make war was conflated with their masculinity (Streets 2005: 12).

This kind of orientalisation involves a certain fascination and awe of ‘the Afghan man’ enabled through linking Afghan masculinity to a mythical ancient man, surrounded by harsh nature and challenging topography. In some instances, the geographical reality, and what kinds of men it breeds, is preferred to what can be found back home. In *Skarpskyttere*, the author contrasts the ‘simple’ life of the Afghan farmer with the ‘broken backs’ of the ‘Norwegian man’, who has left traditional farming behind. Invoking historically important figures such as Otto Sverdrup (Arctic explorer) and Hjalmar Johansen (Olympic skating champion) the author finds it ‘disgusting’ to think how the once proud Norwegian man has gone from being a ‘stalwart hard worker to a sleek prancer’ (Skarpskyttere 2010: 134-135). He contrasts the ‘modern’, ‘vain’, ‘demanding’ Norwegian man -- a ‘shame for the country’ -- with the ‘poor’, ‘simple’, ‘smiling’ Afghan man who is leading a ‘hard, but uncomplicated’ life. The soldier clearly favours the latter by romanticising and orientalising the harshness of Afghan life and Afghan men’s ability to survive in it, over the feminisation of Norwegian men who ‘prance’. In a sense, *Skarpskyttere* here invokes another mythical martial race, namely that of the Viking, and validates both cultures as being symbolic of what ‘real men’ are all about and laments Norwegian men’s departure from it. Recall here the importance of the Viking myth for the building of the Norwegian warrior culture, as discussed in chapter four.

At other times, orientalisation happens through distinguishing between different types of Afghan warriors, validating those that fulfil a mythical image of the proud Afghan warrior as opposed to those who do not. When Elden explains his first meeting with the local police¹⁰⁰ (called *arbakee*) he writes that they came riding towards them on ‘grand horses, dressed in colourful saddles and carpets’. They had ‘pretty clothes, trimmed moustaches and beards, and AK’s and RPG’s hanging over their shoulders’, which gave him a ‘flashback to *Rambo III*, when Rambo worked with the riding mujahedeen-insurgents to beat the Russians’. These are contrasted with the ANA/ANP in that *the arbakee* do not receive any

¹⁰⁰ The *arbakee* is a kind of tribal or local police, outside the formalised structures of the ANP. They implement the rule of the tribal *Jirga* and are legitimated and controlled by tribal elders (Schetter et al. 2007: 147).

backing from the government, and they are ‘real warriors’ and ‘proud Afghans who protected their own’ (Elden 2012: 167). For Elden, these men bore a resemblance to the notorious and mythical mujahedeen, and seem to confirm the image of the dedicated, proud and tough Afghan warrior.

As shown above, the process of orientalisation is multifaceted, involving a complex dynamic of fascination and contempt, evident in the interactions and observations of both US and Norwegian troops with the ANA recruits and the wider Afghan society more generally. The final section below provides an analysis of how these colonial and orientalist frameworks affect NATO’s ‘Exit Strategy’, and attempts to give an account of what possibilities these orientalisating constructions both enable and restrain.

3.1 The Politics of Cultural Incompatibility

It is not the intention here to dispute the many challenges and frustrations felt by those deployed as trainers, mentors, advisors and soldiers alongside the ANA (see among others Haug 2009, Krekvik 2011, Giustozzi 2009, Bordin 2012). However, since this thesis understands performances of identity as relational, *how* these challenges are represented and what they imply is very important (Duncanson and Cornish 2012: 158). The memoirs and reports discussed above form part of the ‘regime of knowledge’ (Foucault 1994: 331) about Afghan men as soldiers and as such, construct certain ‘truths’ about the ANA and Afghanistan more broadly. When culture is deployed as a ‘catch all’ term, which supposedly explains the perpetual gap between ISAF and the ANA through a series of negative traits, this becomes deeply problematic, not only practically in terms of the potential for success in this ‘Exit Strategy’, but also politically.

In addition to the memoirs and wider academic literature on training the ANA, this chapter has drawn on two recent reports that study the relationship between US and Norwegian soldiers and their Afghan counterparts respectively. One

focuses specifically on Norwegian officers experiences as OMLT staff and aims to shed more light on the role that the military forces can play in implementing Norwegian foreign policy (Krekvik 2011: 8). As such, the report reads as a means through which the military can identify best practices and take appropriate measures to institutionalise these.

However, the US report has a rather different story to it. It is entitled *A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility*, and was published as ‘unclassified’ in May 2012. It aims at ‘understanding and mitigating the phenomena of ANSF committed fratricide murders’ (Bordin 2012). Since its publication, however, the number of ‘green on blue’ attacks against ISAF forces have increased dramatically, with a total of 60 NATO troops killed in 2012 (BBC 2013, see also Guardian 2012a), and the report was subsequently ‘retrospectively classified’ by the US military (Graham-Harrison 2012).¹⁰¹ Bordin argues that the ISAF has been ‘disingenuous, if not profoundly intellectually dishonest’ in its insistence that these attacks are ‘isolated’ or ‘extremely rare’ (2012: 5). The ‘green on blue’ attacks are most often explained as a new tactic from Taliban forces, which are said to have infiltrated the ANSF and subsequently attack ISAF soldiers. However, several indicators suggest that the attacks are sparked less by the Taliban and more by internal animosity between coalition forces and Afghan soldiers.¹⁰²

It might be worth considering, however, whether both the Taliban and internal animosity are a smoke screen that hinders us from recognising that the ‘green on blue’ attacks may also be a strategy of resistance. As Barkawi argues, while ‘culture’ may be a medium whereby discontent is expressed, the real reason for ‘green on blue’ attacks are that Afghan soldiers are resisting foreign occupation (2012). Similarly, Nasim Fekrat, an Afghan blogger, argues that the NATO night raids resulting in civilian casualties mean that the ‘attackers are not necessarily

¹⁰¹ It is worth noting here that as of yet, Norwegian soldiers have not been attacked by ANSF forces (Hansen 2012b). In comparison, of the 39 being killed between July 2010-May 2012, 32 were Americans (Bordin 2012: 4). That said, there are thousands more US soldiers in Afghanistan than Norwegians.

¹⁰² CNN reports that Taliban forces cause around 25 per cent, a number that matches Bordin’s report (Starr 2012, Bordin 2012, see also Graham-Harrison 2012).

linked to the Taliban; most of time, they act independently, inspired by their need to bring pride back to their families' (2012).

The story behind this report is in and of itself telling in terms of understanding the challenges associated with the 'Exit Strategy' and the difficult waters in which it treads. What is also telling is how differently the US and ANA soldiers express their grievances towards one another. The Afghan complaints are centred mainly on operational aspects (e.g. use of night patrols, civilian casualties, flawed intelligence sources and US road blocks) and, as such, express concerns that can be addressed. By contrast, the US grievances are far more concerned with (immutable) cultural differences (Afghans lie, use drugs, are traitorous, dangerous and incompetent), through which Afghans are stereotyped.¹⁰³

A recurring representation in the US report and in some of the memoirs, or at certain points in a memoir's narrative, is that Afghan soldiers, and Afghans in general, are untrustworthy and deceitful - something that is explained as a cultural characteristic. Courter explains that, 'When caught in a lie, an Afghan will often try to change the subject, rather than accept personal responsibility...it happens a lot and seems to be one of the more negative aspects of their culture' (2008: 133). Parnell was told before his deployment that, 'Lying is a part of their culture' and that, 'there is no stigma to it; it is expected' (2012: 40). Likewise, the 'crisis of trust' between the US forces and the ANA is destined to stem from 'cultural incompatibility', with one soldier stating that, 'I wouldn't trust the ANA with anything, never mind my life' (Bordin 2012: 25).

¹⁰³ The report groups together the complaints in different tiers, based on the number of times they were raised in focus groups, surveys and interviews. Of the top tier ANSF complaints, only 3 out of 9 can be said to be cultural in character (don't respect women or their privacy, they curse constantly, are extremely arrogant; fail to listen to or take advice from ANSF). While this is not unsubstantial, it is far less than the US grievances. 7 out of the 11 first tier complaints by US soldiers can be categorised as cultural, leaving 'poor/unsafe weapons handling discipline, 'poor fire control during fire fights', 'dysfunctional logistics/supply systems' and 'poor ANA leadership' to be the only structural or operational grievances. It is also worth noting that 'particularly low ratings were found among U.S. officers' and senior NCOs' ratings as well as among those soldiers located in the most combat-intensive regions' (Bordin 2012: 29). Conversely, Krekvik's study found that frustrations over ANA behaviour was stronger with younger soldiers who were not deployed in a mentoring capacity and those who did not have a 'personal relationship' with an Afghan partner (2011: 33).

The US report, together with the orientalist and colonial representations discussed throughout this chapter, is both practically and politically problematic. Western perceptions of what Afghans 'lack' are shaped in large part by an orientalist and colonial frame, and an excessive focus on cultural explanations. While the 'crisis of trust' is no doubt deeply damaging to any potential of *genuine* alliance between the ISAF and the ANA, equally problematic is what the equation between this 'lack' and 'culture' enables Western militaries to claim, once they have withdrawn. When this is a reality in 2014, probably regardless of the state of the ANSF - whatever follows in terms of instability and insecurity can then be explained in these cultural terms. For, if 'their' culture was always 'incompatible' with 'ours', 'we' can then claim to have tried as hard as 'we' could, but 'they' were simply unchangeable.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed how the rebuilding of the ANA involves a complex and ambitious combination of disciplining individual soldier bodies, and the transformation of the entire Afghan 'body politic'. It has focused on what Afghan soldiers are deemed to be lacking in order for them to become recognised as 'real soldiers'. Only by becoming disciplined, by accepting a standardised hierarchy and coming together with a sense of national unity, can they become protectors of the transition in Afghanistan from the 'traditional' to the 'modern'. In other words, this rebuilding requires a change of Afghan 'culture'.

The first section outlined the background of the history of rebuilding the Afghan military and its place in the broader liberal project in Afghanistan. While the 'Exit Strategy' arguably relies on the ANA soldiers being viewed as 'less-than-radical-others', this neither means that allied soldiers themselves perceive them as 'less than radical', nor that the remaking is made any easier.

As shown in the second section, both individual soldier bodies need to be remade alongside the entire 'body politic' of Afghanistan. Individually, Afghan soldier bodies need to be regulated in deeply embodied and gendered ways, involving not only a regulation of training and skill, but also of their sexuality. This shows how Western militaries remain bastions of heteronormativity - equating soldiering with heterosexuality and, consequently, subordinating a range of 'confusing' Afghan practices as homosexuality. While Afghan soldiers are recognized as brave in both the memoirs and in other army literature, in order for them to become 'real' soldiers, their bravery needs to be sanitised and controlled through discipline and professionalization. In addition, as shown in chapter two, the moulding of an army requires that bodies be also ordered in relation to one another by incorporating them in a hierarchy. The chapter discussed how allied forces emphasise the ways in which Afghans have a different perception of leadership from the one the West is trying to instil upon them, which arises as a problem for the institutionalisation of a standardised and bureaucratic hierarchy.

The last part of the chapter illustrated how soldiers rely on complex orientalist presuppositions in the way they encounter and represent their Afghan counterparts. Afghanistan is at once a fascinating and condemned place, to be desired and abhorred. Evident in these constructions is a kind of colonial nostalgia, and imaginings of Afghan men representing the hypermasculine, authentic and ancient man that are contrasted with the civilised and therefore feminised Western man back home. While the memoirs include both 'good' and 'bad' Afghans, the 'culture' of Afghanistan is rarely, if ever, represented as something positive or worth maintaining. In other words, those who are deemed 'good' Afghans, often run in the face of a monolithic and appropriating 'culture', and therefore stand out as exceptions. As a whole, therefore, this chapter has shown how complex and detailed the gendered and embodied remaking of the ANA is, as well as its orientalist underpinnings.

The next chapter concludes this thesis by highlighting its key claims and contributions to knowledge. Like this chapter has shown, it emphasises that the way in which war is gendered and embodied is complex, fluid and multifaceted.

- Chapter 7 -

Conclusions

Gender, when studied in a poststructuralist/critical feminist framework can be a difficult concept to 'handle'. It is flexible, slippery, multiple and 'messy'. Instead of trying to bridge or resolve gender's inconsistency, this study has aimed at embracing its fluidity and internal contradictions as inherent to its very possibility. As Kathy Ferguson has suggested, keeping contradictions alive may just be the feminist way of generating new knowledge (Sylvester 2002: 21).

There are three key claims that this study has made, all of which have implications not just for how we approach the war in Afghanistan, but also for studying war more broadly. This conclusion will proceed to first summarise these three claims in relation to the four empirical chapters, before discussing them more in more detail in relation to conceptual and theoretical contributions. The conclusion will end by providing some directions for future research.

First, this thesis has argued that war is gendered and embodied in the way that it calls into being a multiplicity of gendered bodies that in turn perform femininity and masculinity in various and often contradictory ways. In the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, as shown in chapter three, the oppression of Afghan women's bodies surfaced as a legitimisation for why it was just to invade. Afghan women's bodies, in the words of Foucault, became a 'political field' where power relations took hold (1991: 25). Through a strong visual and discursive emphasis on the (in)visible 'body in the burqa' the discourse of liberation was written on Afghan women's bodies (De Certeau 1984). This critical feminist reading of the gendered intervention in Afghanistan showed that while gender performances were important to the legitimisation of the war in both American and Norwegian narratives, these were played out differently. While the focus on the burqa as a symbol of oppression was stronger in the American than in Norwegian narratives,

the Norwegian government's decision to participate in the OEF revealed other gendered dimensions of its foreign policy constructions. There was a need for Norway, as a 'small boy', to be seen as 'capable' and 'relevant' in relation to the US and NATO as the 'big boys', something that required a kind of 'remasculinisation' of Norwegian foreign policy. However, despite the various differences between the US and Norway, performances of 'protective masculinity' (Young 2003b, Young 2003a) were central in the ways that both countries legitimated the invasion.

Second, the analysis of the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency in chapters four and five, illuminates how the practice of war calls into being particular gendered bodies and gendered performances through its dynamic of 'killing and caring'. While militaries have always required a number of roles and responsibilities, in turn produced by and productive of a multiplicity of military masculinities (Higate 2003b, Duncanson 2009, Belkin 2012), 'population-centric' counterinsurgency has in a sense written this into its very doctrine. However, while the doctrine of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency encompasses both dimensions, the way this is played out entails a series of complex gendered productions and positionings. 'Killing' and combat, primarily associated with the historically valorised 'warrior masculinity' is tempered by 'soldier-scholars' and performances of 'protective masculinity'. 'Soldier-scholars' advocate a type of warfare that places the population as the 'centre of gravity – the deciding factor in the struggle' (USArmy et al. 2007: xxv), which requires a range of 'non-kinetic' activities with the aim of 'winning hearts and minds' through providing medicine, digging wells and building schools. Recalling here Zeller's description of counterinsurgency as a 'thinking man's fight' (2012: 221), this is cast as being a smarter, more intelligent and culturally 'in tuned' way of warfare. In other words, it relies on different productions and performances of military masculinity, that at times appear as superior. However, the memoirs show that soldiers are not necessarily particularly interested in a devalorisation of 'killing' and combat, something that is visible in the way that 'Fobbits' are continuously feminised and subordinated and become symbols of the 'civilianising' of the military. In other words, 'soldier-scholar' military masculinity is far from being hegemonic, as the

desire to experience combat and to perform as 'real soldiers' is still strong. Furthermore, 'warrior masculinity' is under threat by the greater diversity of tasks assigned to soldiers. Similarly, as discussed in chapter five, female soldiers in their capacity as FETs, remain central to the 'caring' of counterinsurgency, as they carry out particular forms of feminised labour for counterinsurgency. This is in turn reliant upon another gendered production, where Afghan women are re-configured from the silent and passive victim of the invasion, to being cast as valuable and knowledgeable information sources, and positioned as worth listening to. As such, this type of warfare, while encompassing a multiplicity of gendered performances and ebbs and flows in terms of which type of military masculinity is deemed superior at any given time, also tends to reinforce particular gendered constellations where women are primarily associated with caring and nurturing, or as bearers of 'secret' and private knowledge that needs to be accessed and harnessed.

Third, as part of studying war's gendered and embodied nature, this examination has also shown how Western warfare in Afghanistan aims at having transformational effect on individuals and the wider society. This is evident throughout the course of the war, whether in the discourse of women's liberation in the invasion, as discussed in chapter three; in the way that counterinsurgency conducts 'armed empowerment' through seeking to insert itself into the gender dynamics in Afghanistan with a view to transform these, as discussed in chapter five; or in the case of the remaking of Afghan men into soldiers in a modern and effective army, as discussed in chapter six. Chapter six shows how the remoulding of Afghan soldier bodies involves a series of complex gendered relations where Afghans are cast as simultaneously hypermasculine and feminine, and these orientalisations affect the production of bodies. While Afghans may be perceived as brave and willing to fight, this needs to be regimented, collectivised and martial in particular ways. The bodies of fledgling Afghan recruits are here sought to be transformed as parts of a wider collective body, a 'body politic' that is disciplined, hierarchically and bureaucratically organized and beaming with a sense of national unity. By way of Foucault, who argued that war is fought on the 'terrain

of the human body' (Reid 2006: 130), we can see in Afghanistan the means by which Afghan soldiers' bodies need to become 'sentinels of Afghan democracy' (Chan 2009), these bodies need to be remade in order to transcend the 'traditional' in favour of mirroring the 'modern'. These transformations speaks to a type of warfare that reiterates several colonial and orientalist tropes, and is a kind of 'civil-military war machine' that employs a 'complex combination of scholarly guidance, development expertise and both metropolitan and local military forces' (Feichtinger et al. 2012: 37).

1.0 Writing Martial Bodies of the War in Afghanistan

One of the key contributions that this thesis wants to make therefore is to offer an understanding of the way that war writes bodies. While bodies are everywhere in IR, the body remains the most visible and invisible component of politics (Coole 2007: 413). The thesis conceptualises its theoretical approach to studying the production of gendered bodies in war through a poststructuralist/critical feminist approach, but combines the performativity of gender, drawing particularly on Judith Butler with an emphasis on performativity's embodiment through the work of De Certeau and Foucault. The thesis has sought to develop a theoretical framework that emphasises the intimate links between gender performativity and the production of gendered martial bodies, by taking as its starting point that discourses manifest themselves and call into being particular bodies. In the words of De Certeau, laws and regulations 'take hold of bodies' (1984: 139).

Conceptually, this claim rests on feminist interventions in political thought that challenging the mind-body dichotomy and the privileging of the mind over the body. As Grosz explains, this privileging is associated with a whole range of other binaries such as reason/passion and sense/sensibility that constitutes the masculine with the privileged and the feminine with the subordinated (1994: 3). Bodies are not, as in Cartesian dualism, neutral vessels for the mind, a conception that has historically left women with little of the mind and all the body. Bodies are

not ahistorical, biologically given and acultural (Grosz 1994: 18), nor are they devoid of race. Rather, as Foucault argues, they are subject to power relations that invest in them, mark them and bring them into being as they are 'directly involved in the political field' (1991: 25). How war writes gendered bodies has been explored in this research through various bodies that are produced during the course of this war. The (in)visible 'bodies in the burqas', which were used to legitimate the invasion; the bodies of female soldiers necessary to access other female bodies in order to gather intelligence and to 'reinforce the message that the United States is on the side of the people' (CALL 2011: 59); the body of 'Fobbits', 'warriors' and 'soldier-scholars' with their multiple performances of military masculinity; and the bodies of fledgling Afghan recruits being moulded into the shape of a modern military force. These bodies are not superficial to the legitimization, practice or outcome of war but integral to it in every way.

Hence, *how* the military writes (about/on) bodies has formed a central part of the analysis. According to De Certeau, the clue to understanding how bodies are called into being is in the everyday, seemingly trivial details. He writes that

'as in the case of removing the hair from one's legs, or putting mascara on one's eyelashes, having one's hair cut or having hair reimplanted, this activity of extracting or adding on is carried out by reference to a *code*. It keeps bodies within the limits set by a norm' (De Certeau 1984: 147).

Militaries are places where bodies are disciplined and regulated to extreme degrees in order to conform to 'a code' and 'a norm', whether these are Western martial bodies or bodies of Afghan soldier recruits. The military recognizes that bodies are not given, but can be marked, trained and shaped. Bodies are here 'pliable and plastic material, which are capable of being formed and organised' (Grosz 2004: 181). Diet, exercise, appearance, grooming and sexuality all fall under the domain of what the military needs to concern itself with. As the Norwegian soldier Emil Johansen recalls once taken up in the military – 'I no longer decided what clothes to wear, how my hair would look, or how I would shape my beard. Now I represented something more than myself.' (2011: 34).

The aesthetic conformity of the military has been important for the analysis in several parts of this thesis, both as something that signifies internal coherence to a regulation, and thereby confirms soldiers belonging to ‘something more than themselves’, as Johansen puts it, but also something that signals a differentiation to a ‘constitutive outside’ (Derrida 1982), be this civilians or Afghan soldiers. This differentiation and what it represents is what Elden refers to when he disciplines his command about correct attire in the ‘theatre of war’ (2012: 71).

It is therefore not surprising that several of the memoirs equate Afghan soldier’s lack of discipline with slack regulations on uniforms (Parnell 2012, Tupper 2010). Strict regulations in terms of grooming and uniform wear symbolises not only the transition from the civilian to the martial and military body, but also signals a professionalism and belonging to a higher purpose of national unity. As chapter six shows, the rebuilding of the ANA requires soldier bodies to be remade in order to mirror the makings of a modern military, signalling not just the dawn of a new security force to protect the population and the state from internal and external threats, but also a transition of the entire ‘body politic’ from the ‘traditional’ to the ‘modern’, with the ANA as the vanguard of this transformation.

A related, but non-martial bodily transition is visible in the case of the unveiling of Afghan women and the *Kabul Beauty Academy*, discussed in chapter three. Here, Afghan women’s liberation from the ‘traditional’ and into the ‘modern’ was not only about securing a set of political and civil rights, but also about access to particular kinds of corporeal beauty regimes. The transformation of Afghanistan was also an aesthetic and visual process where Afghan women’s bodies became sites to measure progress since ‘beauty acts as a life-affirming pathway to modern, even liberated, personhood’ (Nguyen 2011: 368).

However, when this type of disciplining occurs on women’s martial bodies it takes particular gendered meanings as the management of women’s bodies in the military also show (Enloe 2000, Basham 2012). While it is important that these bodies become instilled with a kind of military masculinity (capable of performing as ‘real soldiers’), it is crucial that they maintain their femininity. AR 670-1 details

how make up must ‘compliment their uniform and complexion’, but not defer from the ‘conservative military image’ (USArmy 2012: 5). Likewise, practical tools such as ‘hair holding devices’ can be used, but they must not have a ‘decorative purpose’ (such as ‘lacy scrunchies’ and ‘barrettes with butterflies’) (USArmy 2012: 3-4). As shown in chapter five, this curious production of women’s martial bodies is driven by a duality – being able to perform as a man, but desirable to the ‘population-centric’ operations precisely because one is not. In other words, women’s martial bodies need to be maintained as feminine, desirable to Afghan men and aesthetically pleasing (make up must complement complexion), but not too feminine, and surely not girly (laces and butterflies). This entails a coproduction of masculinity and femininity on women’s martial bodies which enables them to perform a kind of female masculinity, or masculine femininity (Halberstam 1998).

The practice of war and the specificities of women’s deployment in the field also influence the making of women’s martial bodies. Chapter five analyses this production of a complex female military masculinity in relation to the practice of FETs in Afghanistan and their primary role as engaging with Afghan women. This practice is underpinned by a significant change in how Afghan women are conceptualised. Chapter three shows how Afghan women’s bodies became important rallying grounds for the legitimation of the invasion through an emphasis on the (in)visible ‘body in the burqa’. However, in the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency, Afghan women take on a new role away from their previous positioning as powerless, silent and passive victims in need of rescue. While they in ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency still remain victims and in need of empowerment, they are reconceptualised as influential, knowledgeable and central players in their families and communities. In other words, they become potential important crucial allies for the US military.

Through its emphasis on the plurality of bodies and their fluidity rather than singularity in terms of performances of femininity and masculinity, this thesis has aimed to push gendered analysis to embrace and analyse the plurality of gendered

bodies and their performances in war. It emphasised how gendered bodies are not superficial or arbitrary, but that their fluidity and plurality is a crucial enabler of this type of late modern, neocolonial warfare.

As discussed above, De Certeau claims that laws are written on bodies and are what bring bodies into being. However, bodies are not only disciplined and made by laws, they are also clues that tell us what the laws are. The way bodies are disciplined are ways of '*making the body tell the code*' (De Certeau 1984: 148 emphasis in original). So what is this code? What is it that gendered bodies and gendered performance of war help us understand about the *kind* of war practiced in Afghanistan? The code is the dynamic of 'killing and caring' in 'population-centric' counterinsurgency – this is what calls into being and necessitates the complex multiplicity of gendered bodies and performances of femininity and masculinity in the war in Afghanistan.

2.0 Counterinsurgency as 'Killing and Caring'

Throughout this thesis, 'population-centric' counterinsurgency has been understood as existing within a dynamic of 'killing and caring'. It is at once a type of warfare that exhibits traditional conceptions of war, involving soldier's killing for and dying for one's country. At the same time, this type of warfare involves not only 'killing for', but 'caring for' one's country through 'population-centric' counterinsurgency's aim to not only bring death, but also life to the people of Afghanistan. This dynamic cannot be fully understood without paying attention to its gendered dimensions. In other words, this complicated, messy and multiple conception of warfare requires equally complicated productions of various gendered bodies.

The March/April edition of *Foreign Affairs* featured an interview with General Stanley McChrystal entitled 'Generation Kill'. Here the General spoke about his recent book, his views on US foreign policy and military strategy, the differences

between the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and his experiences as ISAF Commander in Afghanistan from 2009-2010. Towards the end of the interview, McChrystal is quoted in saying something that speaks directly to this dynamic and how it is gendered. He is asked how he responds if someone says that they like ‘the Iraq Stan McChrystal of raids and drones and targeted strikes’ (killing) but not the ‘Afghanistan Stan McChrystal of clear, hold and build counterinsurgency’ (caring). He replies -

‘I would argue that they should like all the Stan McChrystals. If you look at the role I had in Iraq, *it is sexy, it is satisfying, it is manly*, it scratches an itch in the American culture that people like. But I was doing that as part of a wider effort in Iraq, and it was that wider effort that I took control of in Afghanistan. And those wider efforts were about people. *The whole point of the war is to take care of people, not just to kill them*. You have to have a positive reason that *protects people*, or it’s wrong. So while I did what I had do in Iraq, and did a lot of that in Afghanistan too (because we had a significant effort along those lines there), the broader purpose is what’s important, and that’s what I think people need to be reminded of. *The purpose is the Afghan kid. The purpose is the Afghan female. The purpose is the 50-year-old farmer who just wants to farm*’ (McChrystal 2013 emphasis added).

McChrystal identifies here ‘raids, drones and targeted strikes’ – the kinetic element, the ‘warrior masculinity’ – as ‘sexy’, ‘satisfying’ and ‘manly’ – three obviously gendered terms. This is also what people like to see, it ‘scratches an itch’ in the American culture and displays war as ‘we’ like to see it – violent, precise and brutal ‘out there’ – this is what is ‘satisfying’ about war. At the same time, people ‘need to be reminded’ that this is not what is important as ‘the whole point of the war is to take care of people’, particularly children, women and elderly men¹⁰⁴. Counterinsurgency in the way that McChrystal describes it produces alternative versions of military masculinity associated with caring for ‘children and females’ that can co-exist alongside the more kinetic elements. These may be less ‘satisfactory’, ‘sexy’ and ‘manly’, but they are nevertheless what the war is about. The ‘Afghan female’ is the target, she is the symbolic intent of this war and people need to be reminded of this and marshal around it.

¹⁰⁴ Given that the average life expectancy in Afghanistan is 48 years (WB 2013), a 50 year old can accurately be described as elderly.

McChrystal's reflections around how the domestic public in the US valorises the 'raids, drones and targeted strikes' above the kind of counterinsurgency practiced in Afghanistan is interesting when contrasted to the Norwegian case, which is why analysing the two alongside each other is illuminating. As discussed in chapters two and four with the *Alfa* example, Norwegian soldiers performing 'warrior masculinity' and apparently enjoying killing, attracted a great deal of criticism from both politicians the broader public, and internally within the military. This speaks perhaps to a difference not only in military culture, but also what role the military forces are supposed to play in Norwegian public discourses. The Norwegian public seem to prefer to think of their soldiers as peacekeepers rather than killers, at the service of a nation with humanitarian aims.

Moira Gatens argues that bodies should be viewed as 'determinant in the organization of culture, we can view them as products of the way that culture organizes, regulates and remakes itself' (1996: 52). This analysis shows how militaries are reinventing, reorganising and restructuring in order to fight insurgencies in late modern warfare, and how the practice of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency precisely requires bodies to be rearranged for its own purpose. While these bodies and the kind of work they perform may be 'unmilitary', in the words of Kilcullen – get over it' (2006b: 135). In other words, the multiplicity of gendered and martial bodies that are called into being during the course of this war shows *how* military culture is remaking itself.

Seeing the production of multiple gendered and martial bodies in the military as not just necessitated by particular forms of warfare or 'operational environments', but as a part of the remaking of military culture in this way is particularly interesting when the US is studied alongside Norway. As argued in the thesis's introduction, military culture and domestic politics influences the way that war is practiced and what kinds of gendered forms it takes. What has been shown here is that when counterinsurgency and the practices of late modern warfare are read through the dynamic of 'killing and caring', it takes the US and Norway in some interesting and perhaps unexpected directions. While Norway has a history of

combining peacekeeping with development work and is therefore prolific in the ‘caring’ part of counterinsurgency, this has not been the main endeavour of the US military who have historically been associated with the ‘killing’. However, what has happened in the last ten years is an increased focus on the ‘caring’ aspects of warfare in the US military by ‘soldier-scholars’ like Patraeus, Nagl, Kilcullen and McChrystal, made perhaps particularly visible in the deployment of FETs. And, as shown in chapter four and noted above, Norwegian soldiers are not altogether comfortable with being seen as soldiers only capable of or associated with the ‘caring’ part of counterinsurgency, and this, paired with the restructuring of the Norwegian military away from ‘territorial defence’ and ‘low intensity’ peacekeeping deployments, to make it a more ‘competent and capable’ partner in NATO (Forsvarsdepartementet/MoD 2003-2004, Haaland 2010), shows a military that is seeking to expand its traditional peacekeeping remit. In other words, the dynamic between ‘killing and caring’ works not only within a particular ‘theatre of war’, within a company, or within a military, but also *between* these two cases. Studying these two very different NATO forces alongside each other in the way this thesis has done, shows therefore how these militaries are remaking themselves in different ways in order to navigate the gendered dynamic of ‘killing and caring’ and using the gendering of bodies in different ways.

This dynamic does not operate strictly as a binary. At various times through the course of this thesis it has been pointed out that it can function as a tension, a balancing act, as complimentary and as the one working through the other. Said differently, ‘killing and caring’ are two sides of the same coin. To fully grasp this dynamic between ‘killing and caring’ this thesis argues that one has to firstly recognise how the practice of it is profoundly gendered and, secondly, that it reveals counterinsurgency’s biopolitical intent and how it operates both in the ‘registry of death’ and the ‘registry of life’.

As discussed in chapters four and five, this dynamic is profoundly gendered in two ways. Firstly, it relies on alternative productions of military masculinity. As chapter four showed, there are multiple military masculinities associated with

counterinsurgency that operate together at any given time. While it is argued that counterinsurgency is 'armed social work' (Kilcullen 2006b: 138, USArmy et al. 2007: 299), there is no doubt that counterinsurgency also requires killing. There is therefore a multiplicity of performances of military masculinity at play in counterinsurgency at any given time, where 'soldier-scholars' emphasise the protective and developmental (Duffield 2007) qualities of counterinsurgency, whereas 'warriors' find this threatening and wish to emphasise the 'killing'.

Secondly, this type of counterinsurgency, as shown in chapter five, involves a gendered division of labour. FETs do not have access to the 'killing' side of counterinsurgency but operate primarily as 'carers'. They perform a feminine labour of care for counterinsurgency, something that requires them to be called into being as unthreatening martial bodies productive of improved social relations. As the *Commander's Guide to FETs* tells us, their purpose is to 'build support and confidence of the Afghan population on issues of security, health care, education, justice and economic opportunity to enable their families to live in a safe and secure environment' (CALL 2011: 9). Counterinsurgency therefore reinforces familiar notions of women's bodies as primarily sites for reproduction and of women as nurturers and carers – providers of life, rather than takers of it. As Simone de Beauvoir puts it 'For it is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth life but to that which kills' (de Beauvoir 1972: 95-96).

This type of counterinsurgency therefore involves not only disciplinary power working productively on soldiers' bodies, but also biopolitical power working productively on the Afghan population. While individual bodies are disciplined, as discussed throughout this thesis with reference to political and military discourses of bodies, biopolitics takes whole populations as its cause. As Foucault argues 'after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing, but, if out like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but as man-as-species' (1997: 243). The

population therefore, in biopolitical governmentality, as in counterinsurgency, is 'a political problem' (Foucault 1997: 245). What biopolitics involves therefore is a transition from the 'register of death' to the 'register of life' as 'power is decreasingly the power of the right to take life, and increasingly the right to intervene to make live (Foucault 1997: 248). 'Population-centric' counterinsurgency is situated in the midst of this transition, at once sovereign over death, but also over life.

Therefore, the dynamic of 'killing and caring' encompasses two complimentary performances of sovereignty. It is no longer enough for war to claim soldiers to die for their country, but they also need to care for it (Weber 2008a: 126). However, the way that counterinsurgency exerts biopolitical power over populations, needs to be understood as gendered. As shown in chapter five, FETs are the ones most closely associated with the 'caring' of counterinsurgency and in performing their feminine labour of care for the people of Afghanistan, they are doing the biopolitical work of the state. According to counterinsurgency doctrine, 'winning hearts and minds' is crucial to its success because 'the civilian population is the centre of gravity – the deciding factor in the struggle' (USArmy et al. 2007: xxv). Therefore, precisely by conducting this biopolitical work through their engagement with the Afghan population, they are not only 'caring' for them, but, more importantly, they are 'caring' for their country.

A central enabler of biopolitical power is knowledge about the population and chapters four and six discuss how this often reiterates familiar colonial and orientalist tropes. The turn to culture, and particularly the role that FETs play in this, signifies a commitment to how this warfare takes place in the intimate spheres of life, between wife and husband, mother and child, and sexual partners. As shown in chapter five, one of the justifications for an increased deployment of female counterinsurgents in Afghanistan is with reference to culture (see for instance NATO 2010a, Stence 2011).

The emphasis that 'soldier-scholars' place on understanding the 'culture' of the population is shown chapter six to be an invocation of familiar colonial objectives.

Invariably this means that it produces particular types of knowledge through ‘ordering social reality in order to define, to judge or to understand’ (Jenkins 2005: 4). However, this is not knowledge production for its own sake. The emphasis on knowledge about the Afghan population’s culture, habits and social practices in order to better influence and fight them, should not simply be seen as a pragmatic adjustment to a difficult ‘operational environment’ as McFate argues (2010). This is knowledge production about the Other with the declared aim to ‘win hearts and minds’ and transform societies, it is a means to better govern populations biopolitically. Kienscherf argues that the emphasis on gaining cultural knowledge about populations in counterinsurgency entails a reformulation of Foucault’s claim that a crucial part of biopolitical warfare is its racialized element.

‘Liberal governance can no longer triage between ‘safe’ and ‘dangerous’ species-life on purely racial grounds. Yet, the notion of culture, even if it remains implicitly racialized is not nearly as politically suspect as the category of race’ (Kienscherf 2011: 527)

This, of course, enables a kind of strategic ‘cop-out’. If the liberal project in Afghanistan fails, this does not need to be explained by lack of forces, funding or expertise, it can fail because of the remnants of a ‘culture’ that is resistant to biopolitical interventions. The emphasis on culture allows a logic whereby one can show that one has tried to improve conditions for security, democracy or women’s rights, but they are, after all that trouble, perpetually stuck in their culture. There is simply too much culture to be had.

As a whole therefore, the practice of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency exemplifies Foucault’s claim that war is fought ‘on the terrain of the human body’ (Reid 2006: 130). Herein, the terrain of the human body can be understood individually, as disciplinary power, or in the extended and reversed as the human terrain, collectively and biopolitically. The population is the battlefield in this type of warfare and ‘the whole point of the war is to take care of people, not just to kill them’ (McChrystal 2013). This in turn produces and relies on a multiplicity of complex, fluid and at times, contradictory gendered bodies and performances and

these bodies illuminate the ‘code’ of ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency as encompassing a dualism of ‘killing and caring’.

3.0 Towards a Feminist Reading of Late Modern Warfare

As shown in this conclusion and throughout this thesis, the ‘theatre of war’ contains a multiplicity of gendered performances. There are cracks in the singularity of military masculinity and men and women’s roles in war are increasingly more complex than the ‘beautiful souls/just warrior’ dichotomy suggests (Elshtain 1987). Military masculinities are here shown to be in tension, something that is enabled in how the invasion, counterinsurgency and the ‘Exit Strategy’ calls into being a multiplicity of ‘killing and caring’ practices. In this, it is possible to read an optimistic story in terms of how these ‘cracks’ in military masculinity may open up for progressive possibilities. However, there is a cautionary tale to be told here about how this multiplicity also reiterates a series of stereotypical gendered and racialized tropes and ‘shows not only the flexibility of the machinery of rule, but also the dynamic recreation of power *hierarchies* throughout’ (Khalili 2010a: 21).

As discussed in chapter three, the war in Afghanistan was glazed with a feminist veneer since its outset. This co-optation of feminist rhetoric in the ‘war on terror’, and feminism’s own role within it has since proven to be divisive in the feminist movement and one of the battles of the ‘war on terror’ more widely has been over the meaning and ownership of women’s rights (Bhattacharyya 2008). While many feminists have been critical of the employment of ‘feminist like’ rhetoric at the start of the war, others have lamented the decreasing focus on Afghan women in later years, since at least the original focus meant an opening to a consideration of women in the middle of everything else. However, this thesis remains deeply sceptical about instrumentalist concerns for women and how the protection of women’s rights or for women’s liberation became a pretext the concept for waging war in the way that the war in Afghanistan was as ‘it is precisely in this realm of

escalated rhetoric and assured contrasts that women are more absent than ever...women are invoked, but are not present' (Franks 2003: 137). Furthermore, it bore the neocolonial promise of 'White men are saving brown women from brown men' (Spivak 1999: 303).

Much of this neocolonialism is repeated in the practice of war. Counterinsurgency's 21st century edition of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency, however, entails considerably more emphasis on 'winning hearts and minds' through social and economic incentives for the population. As argued in chapter four, this is aided partly by a new kind of military masculinity, 'particularly well-suited to the liberal interventionist model' (Khalili 2010a: 17), namely the 'soldier-scholar'. This kind of military masculinity embodies a combination of willingness to violence with a self-declared concern for the population. While this vanguard of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency are mainly US based, politicians, particularly in Norway, argued that the invasion was a 'humanitarian intervention' (Stortinget 2001a), thus invoking a kind of 'muscular humanitarianism' (Orford 1999). The combination of violence and compassion that this discourse requires speaks not only to the political problematic concept of 'humanitarian intervention', what Sylvester calls 'kill-to-be-kind' (2012), but also to the complexities of gender performances in war. On the one hand there is here a reiteration of familiar military masculine tropes of violence and aggression, but this is tempered with, at times, uncomfortable and contested claims to compassion and liberation, something that produces an alternative performance of masculinity in foreign policy and the military.

While this on the surface can be interpreted as less problematic from a feminist perspective, 'protective masculinity' creates its own oppressive mechanism as 'ostensibly progressive masculinities can have a deeply regressive effect' (Duncanson 2013: 12). Fundamentally, it still relies on 'good men' saving 'good women' from 'bad men'. It is therefore worth pausing to consider what these changes mean for feminist scholarship on war, security and IR more broadly.

Feminists have historically been more comfortable studying peace rather than war, although war is 'just as much ours to investigate as anything that affects embodied women and "women" and "men" as subject statuses' (Sylvester 2013: 6-7). Feminists who work on the military and war (and other overtly militarised and patriarchal spaces) are often faced with several challenges. Cynthia Enloe argues that doing feminist research on these spaces requires a cultivation of a 'heightened consciousness of how one's own compassion and imagination, one's own sense of a "good" story, one's own sense of "seriousness" each can become militarised in the process' (2007: 83). Said differently, one is a part of the production of knowledge as a scholar, something that leaves oneself and one's research open to numerous interpretations, co-optations and manipulations. As Christine Sylvester points out, 'no one can claim to be outside of the institution of war, although anyone can hold normative positions against it' (2013: 7).

Anne Orford shares a story that illustrates some of the challenges feminists face. She attended a workshop about gender and international humanitarian law with numerous high-ranking military officials from across the globe. In the end of the two-day seminar, a senior military lawyer had shed his scepticism of the importance of gender in war and became convinced that gender matters. So far so good. Then he claimed something that by now should sound familiar - gender matters because 'they are intelligence issues! Gender is a force multiplier - if you understand how gender works in a particular society, you can control that society much more effectively!' (Orford 2012: 8). Reflecting on this Orford presents a critique against this 'uptake' of gender and also perhaps a warning,

'to become an object of knowledge is to become a potential target. So, to introduce gender, or bodies, or human suffering, into the system for producing knowledge about war automatically means that knowledge about gender, or bodies, or human suffering, becomes a part of the targeting machine' (Orford 2012: 8).

This thesis has tried to be critical of the way that gender and women become a 'target' of knowledge by power. While producing knowledge about gender and targeting women in war might open up a possibility for change, and might

arguably be 'better than nothing', viewing the increased incorporation and remaking of women's bodies in war as a 'progressive step' should be approached with caution. As Carol Cohn notes with regards to UNSCR 1325, 'protecting women *in* war, and insisting that they have an equal right to participate in the processes and negotiations that *end* particular wars, both leave *war* itself in place' (Cohn 2008: 198). While gender and women therefore seem to be 'targeted' increasingly in both justifications for invasions and in the practice of war as an 'issue area' to be factored in by military elites, as a feminist, it is worth asking with Wendy Brown – '*is this the most we can hope for?*' (2004). I hope not.

This study has tried to contribute to the growing body of literature from feminist and critical voices on late modern warfare in three interconnected ways. It contributes to IR and political theory through its theoretical and empirical emphasis on gendered bodies as key actors in international politics and methodologically through its use of soldier memoirs as embodied testimonies of war. It furthers feminist studies of war and feminist theory through its application of performative gender in the practice of war. Herein it shows how war calls into being a range of gendered bodies that perform fluid and multiple notions of femininity and masculinity and shows how these enable the practice of late modern warfare in the form of 'population-centric' counterinsurgency. Thirdly, it contributes to existing literature on counterinsurgency from postcolonial and biopolitical approaches by showing how gender performances are important parts of the realisation of this neocolonial and biopolitical endeavour.

Finally, I would like here to point to future directions and possibilities for research. Many of the concerns of this thesis are not unique to the war on Afghanistan and the theoretical and conceptual framework of gender performances in war as outlined here could be applied to other wars as well. Similarly, this work has potentially opened up possibilities to explore not just contemporary but also historical examples of counterinsurgency. Furthermore, if, to paraphrase Leonard Cohen, the 'cracks' in particular kinds of gender productions are to let in some light, these 'cracks' should be studied as sites of resistance. While this has not

been a central part of this study, I would like to point this out a key area for future research. How do gendered bodies resist their remaking in militaries and in war? If, in the words of De Certeau, 'it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it' (1984: xiv). It can only be through the resistance of gendered bodies, to particular ways of gendering, and to particular practices of war, both within and outside of the military, both in targeted geographic locations where wars are fought and in the 'metropole' that the potentials for a progressive politics lie.

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