

Researching International Politics: Qualitative Methods

Visual analysis

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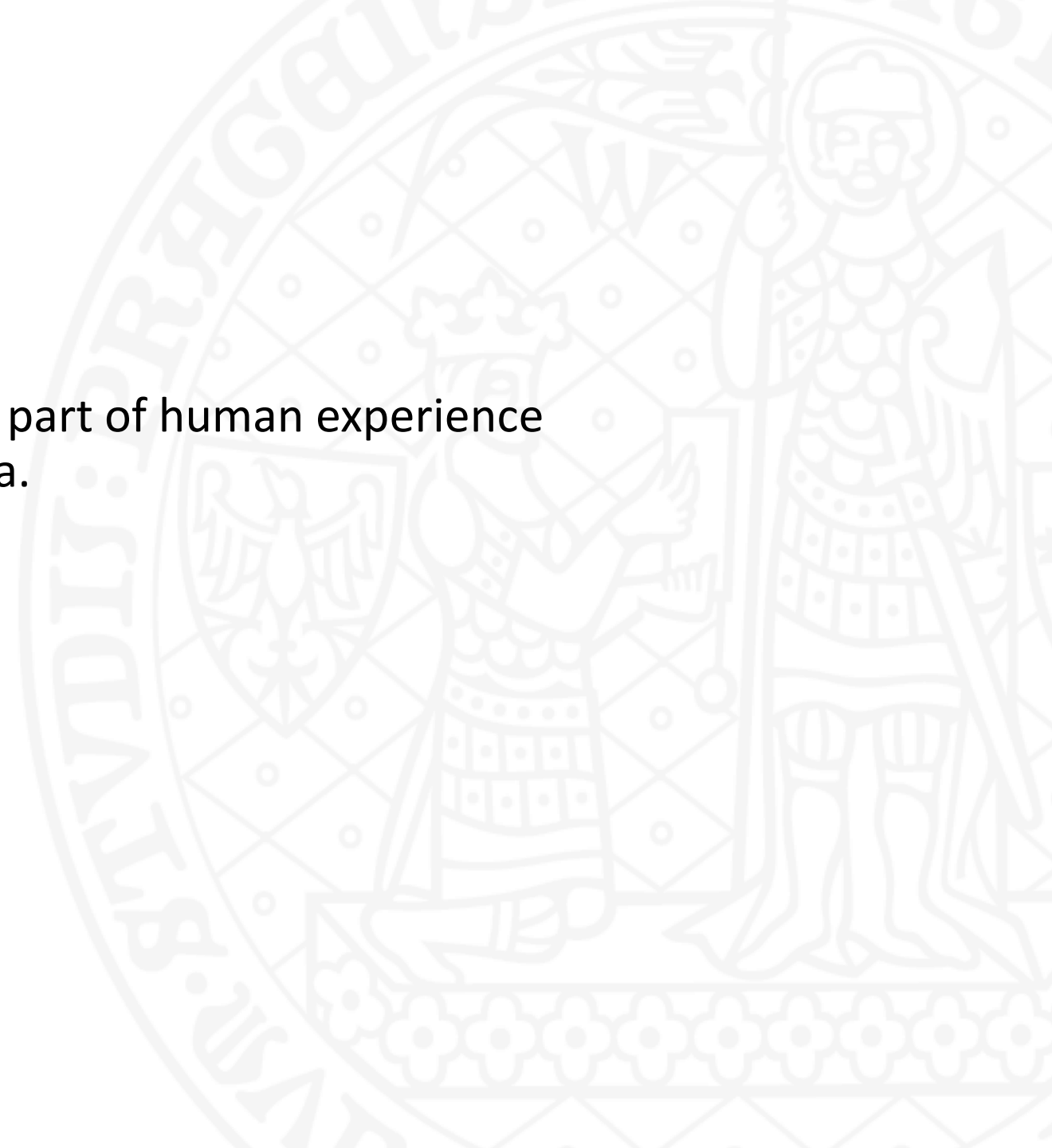
Class structure

Class aim

- Introducing visuality as an inseparable part of human experience and a mean to study social phenomena.

Class outline

- Why images?
- What do images do?
- How to research images?



Why images matter?



Visual Age

- 21st century defined by the oversaturation of public space with images (Mirzoeff 2016: 6)
- Every two minutes, Americans alone take more photographs than were made in the entire nineteenth century (Guardian)
 - 1st photo (1926/39) -- 1 billion (1930) -- 25 billion (1980) -- 380 billion (2012)
 - nowadays -- 1,720 billion; more than 50,000 per second
- Not only photographs – posters, murals, cartoons, comics, video games, 3D objects – infrastructure objects, sculptures, ...

Visual Age

- Speed with which they are produced and consumed
- Changing nature of authorship and audience
- Global impact of images (spread across language but also contexts)
- Many events are later recalled through images (Nazi's régime, holocaust, famines in Africa, Vietnam war, 9/11)

Images vs Text

"the realization that *spectatorship* (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of *reading* (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc) and that 'visual experience' or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable in the model of textuality" (Mitchell 1994:16).

Visuality and International Politics



Source:

[https://www.onthisday.com
/events/september/11](https://www.onthisday.com/events/september/11)

Visuality and International Politics



Sources:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OffsWTubJ9g>
- <https://www.nknews.org/2017/08/how-north-korea-makes-its-missiles/>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-50064893>

Visuality and International Politics



Source:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjz8C1o1AaY>



Source: <https://www.russiamatters.org/news/russia-ukraine-war-report-card/russia-ukraine-war-report-card-march-12-2024>

Visuality and International Politics

“The ways people come to know, think about, and respond to developments in the world are deeply entrenched in the ways this information is made visible to them” (Shim and Nabers 2013, 292)



Visuality and International Politics



Source:

<https://www.jta.org/2012/09/28/israel/at-u-n-netanyahu-tries-to-portray-iran-as-ticking-time-bomb>

Visuality and International Politics



Source:

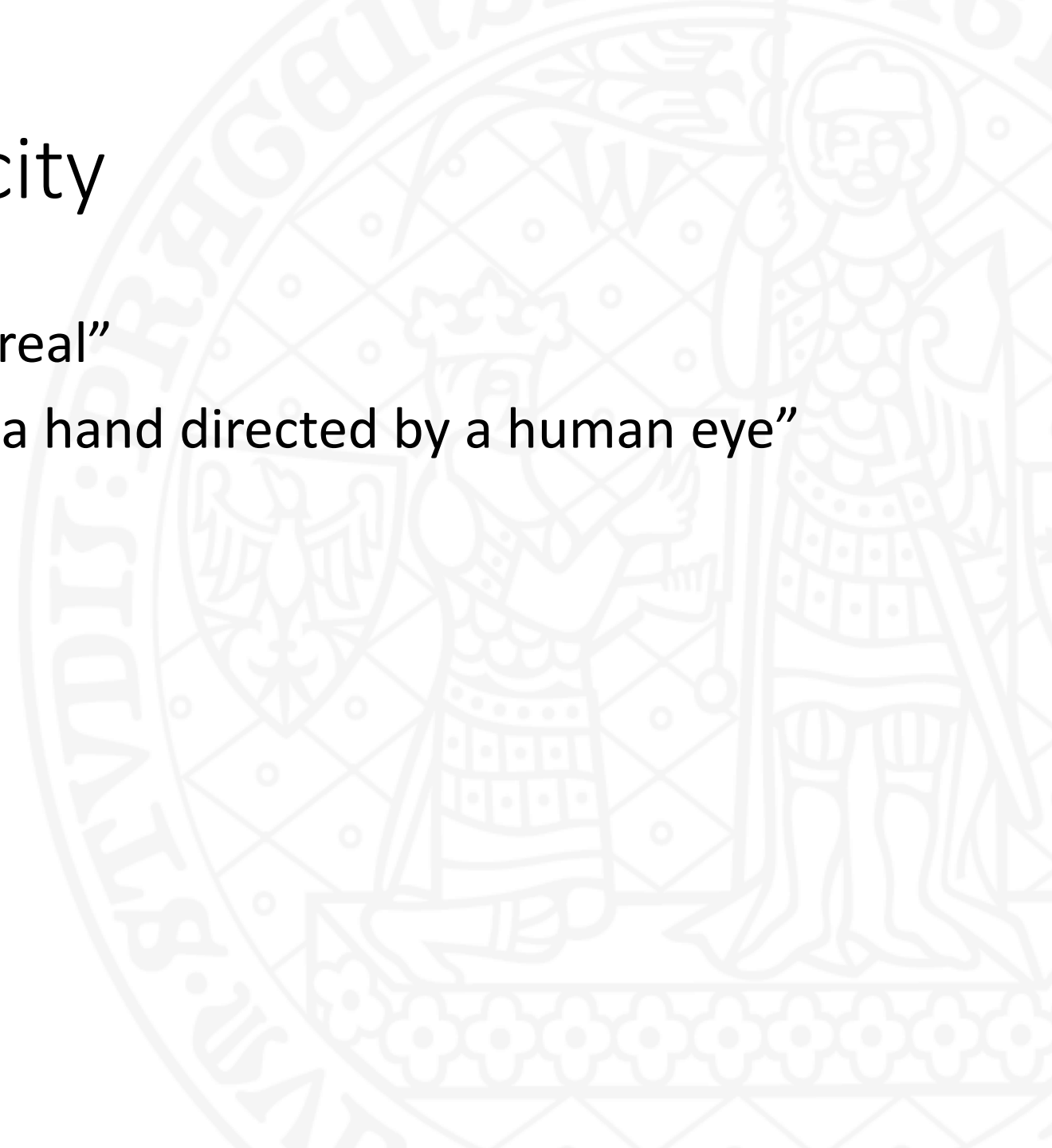
<https://www.richardsilverstein.com/2018/09/28/u-s-official-calls-netanyahu-report-of-secret-iran-atomic-warehouse-misleading/>

What images do?



(Illusions of) Authenticity

- Images supposedly capture “the real”
- However, “the lens is focused by a hand directed by a human eye”
(Perlmutter 1998: 28)



(Illusions of) Authenticity



Figure 0.6 Alojzije Stepinac (far right) with two Catholic priests at the funeral of President of the Croatian Parliament Marko Došen in September 1944

Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NDH_-_salute.jpg (in the public domain).



Figure 0.7
Cropped version of Figure 0.6

Source: Bleiker 2018: 15

(Illusions of) Authenticity



Source:

<https://photographyfromedyta.wordpress.com/2015/01/26/122/amp/>

Emotions



Source:

<https://mattvislit.wordpress.com/2013/09/17/review-kevin-carter/>

Identification vs distancing



Source:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/01/alan-kurdi-death-one-year-on-compassion-towards-refugees-fades>



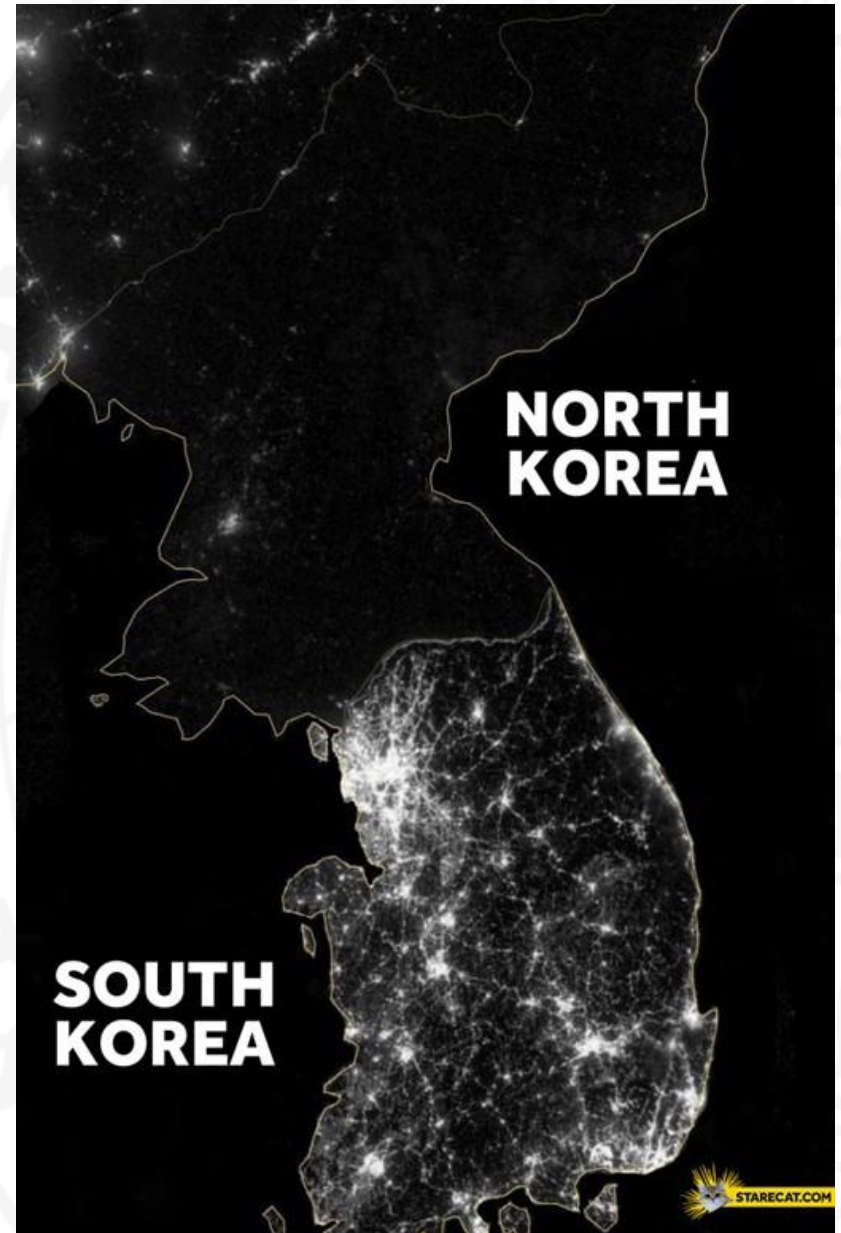
Source:

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-4524218/Book-claims-elites-UK-encouraging-mass-immigration.html>

De-contextualizing

Source:

<https://starecat.com/north-korea-vs-south-korea-by-night-lights-comparison/>



Need for interpretation

It's so badass when people stand in front of shit they destroyed



Source: FB group
"Secret Tel Aviv"

Enactment of Identities



Source:

<https://madelinpeterson.wordpress.com/2015/03/30/visual-text-analysis>



Othering



Source:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/cecilia-rodriguez/2020/02/25/20-outstanding-images-nominees-for-2020-world-press-photo-of-the-year/?sh=123357313135>

Note: Myth of protection

Our earlier definition of masculinity and femininity defined men as 'protectors' and women as 'protected' (see Elhstain 1992). It is a widespread myth that men fight wars to protect 'vulnerable people' usually defined as women and children. Yet, women and children constitute a majority of casualties in recent wars ...

In Gender, Justice and the Wars in Iraq (2006), Laura Sjoberg demonstrates that women's presumed status as innocent civilians makes wars harder, not easier, for them, by defining them as protected without regard for their actual safety. Since women's immunity from war has been presumed, belligerents have often disregarded the degree to which war causes women to suffer disproportionately. Feminists have also drawn our attention to wartime rape ... as a deliberate military strategy...

Looking at the effects of war through gendered lenses, we find that war is a cultural construction that depends on myths of protection. Such myths have been important in upholding the legitimacy of war. They also contribute to the delegitimizing of peace which is often associated with feminine characteristics, such as weakness, concession, and idealism.

(Tickner and Sjoberg, 2013, p. 213-214)

References:

- Elshstain, J. (1992), *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Sjoberg, L. (2006), *Gender, Justice and the Wars in Iraq* (New York: Lexington Books).
- Tickner, J. A. and Sjoberg, L. (2013). *Feminism IN: Dunne, T., Kurki, M. and Smith, S. (eds.) International Relations Theory: Discipline and Diversity*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 205-222.

Visibility and Invisibility



Source:

<https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/3866/south-australia-illustrated-colonial-painting-in-t/>

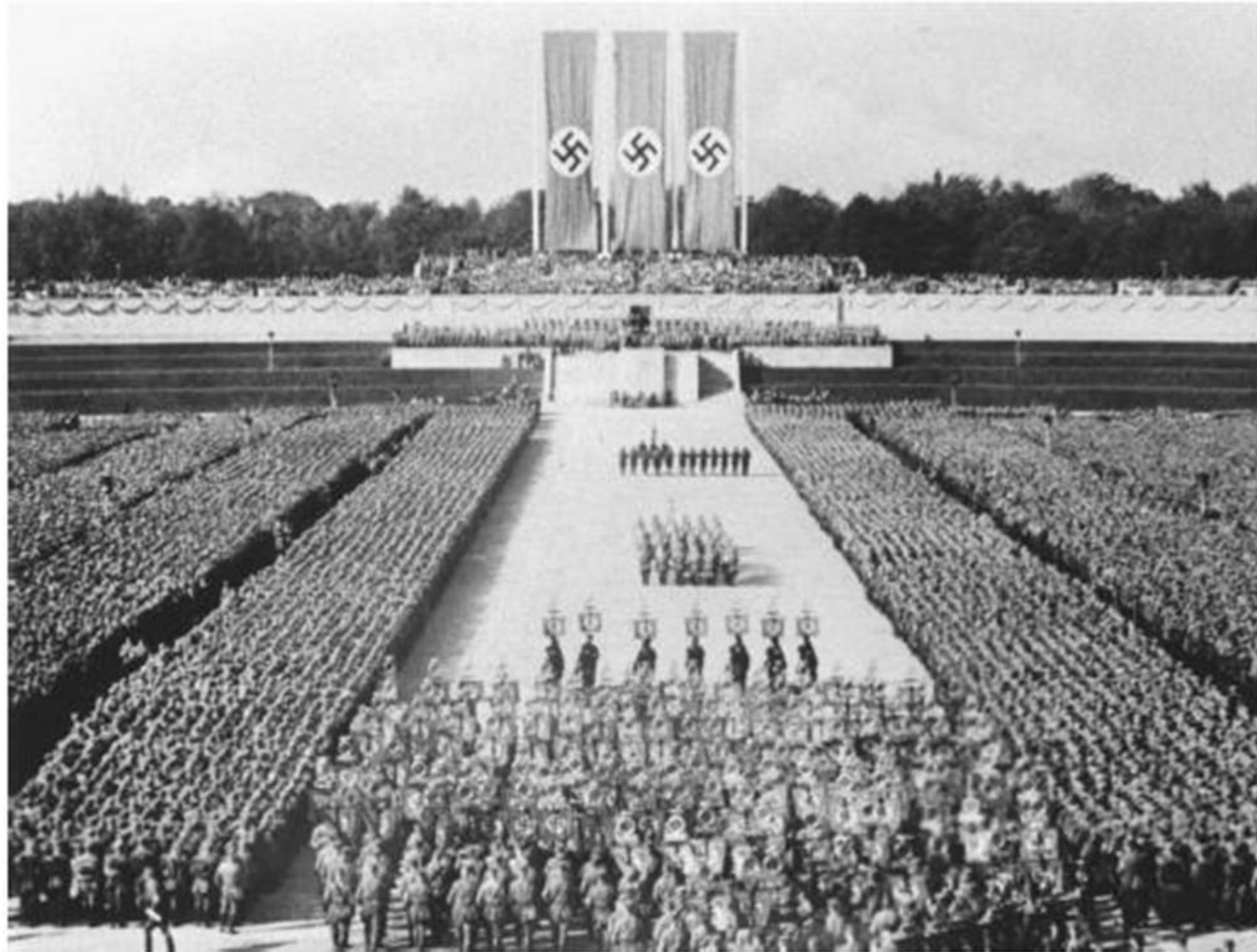
Visibility and Invisibility



Source:

<http://www.brockpress.com/2016/03/canadian-military-pushes-for-more-drone-use/>

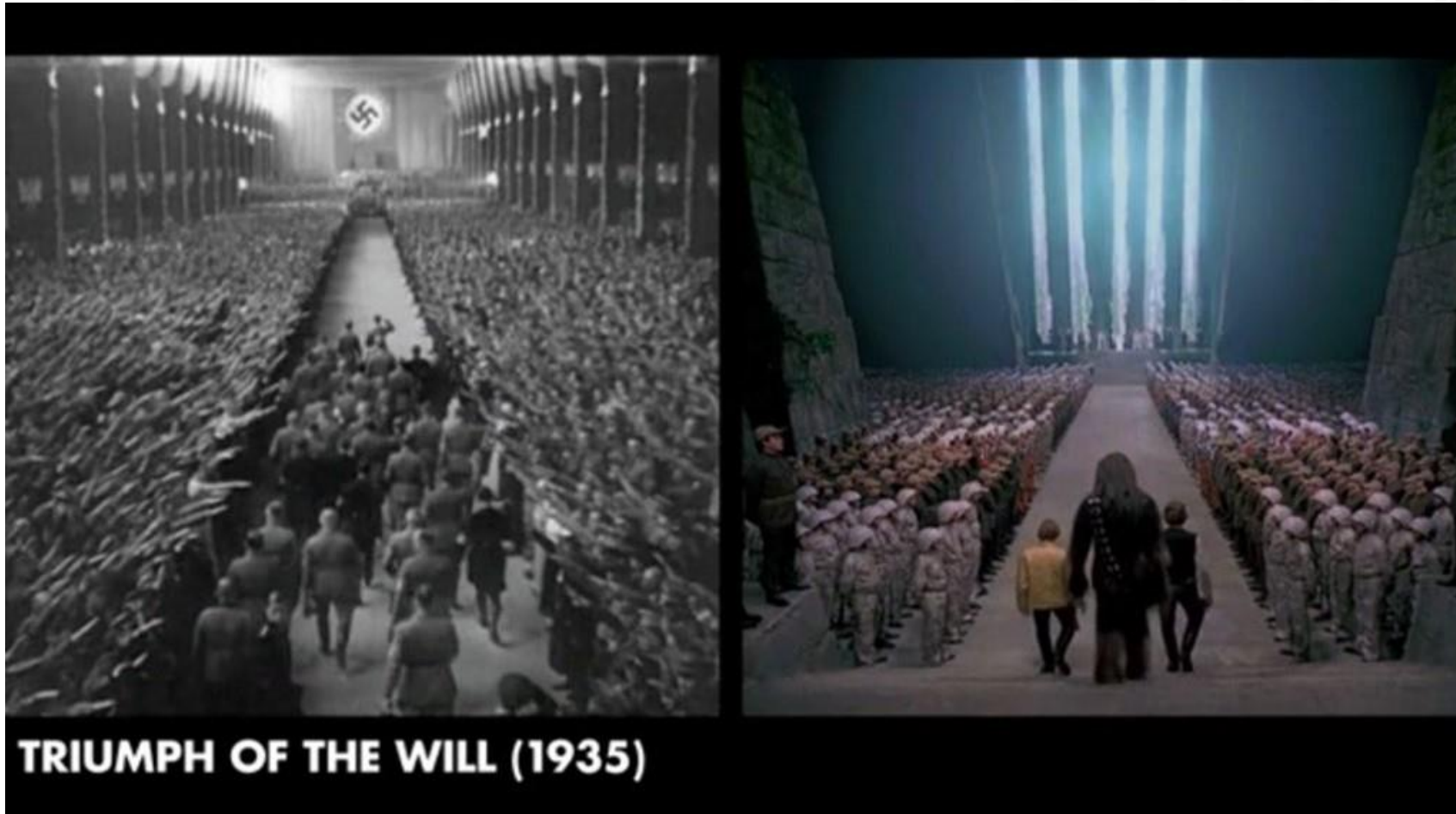
Power



Source:

<http://www.filmreference.com/Films-Thr-Tur/Triumph-des-Willens.html>

(... Power ...)



TRIUMPH OF THE WILL (1935)

Source:
<https://www.fortressofsolitude.co.za/iconic-movie-scenes-ripped-off-from-other-movies/>

How to research images?



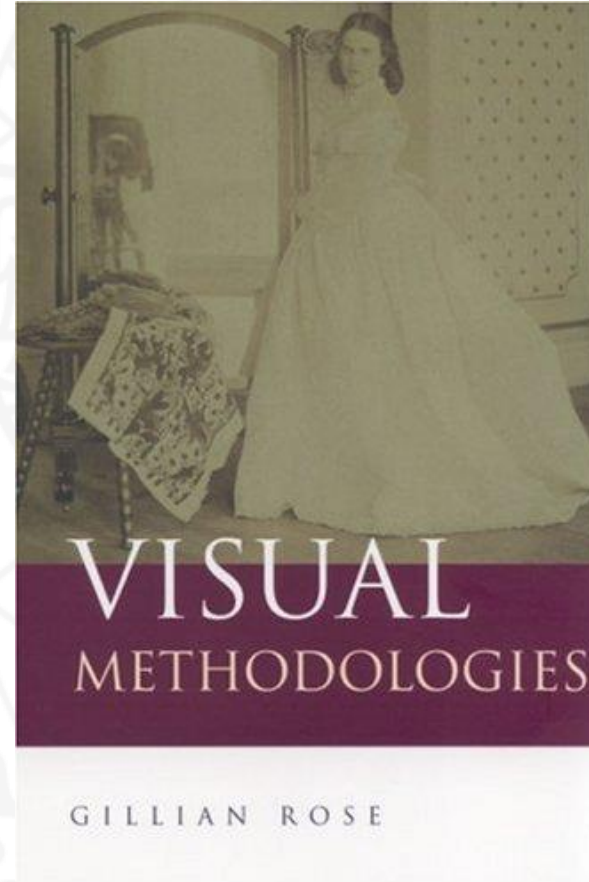
Visual methodologies

- Fairly eclectic set of approaches



Sites of Visual Methodology (Rose 2016)

- The site of production
- The site of image
- The site of circulation
- The site of audience



Four aspects of images (Hansen 2011)

- the image(s) themselves
 - the immediate intertext
 - the dominant policy discourses in the country/locale in question
 - the linguistic texts that attribute meaning to the image or a group thereof
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- “Depending on the genre and the case under study, analysis might order and combine these components differently.” (Hansen 2011, 55)

Iconic images (Hansen 2015)



Harim and Lucaites' define icons as "those images appearing in print, electronic, or digital media that are widely recognized and remembered, are understood to be representations of historically significant events, activate strong emotional identification or response, and are reproduced across range of media, genres, or topics." (Hansen 2015, p 268)

Source:

<https://whenthe-next-day.com/2012/04/01/abu-ghraib-prison-scandal/>

Iconic images (Hansen 2015)

- Step 1: The iconic image itself
 - What is the formal composition of the image and what do we actually see?
 - What 'factual' meaning is attributed to the image?
 - **What inter-iconicity is evident or attributed to the image?**
 - When multiple images exist, what might explain this image's rise to iconic status?
- Step 2: The international status and political impact of the icon
 - In terms of circulation is the icon a foreign policy, a regional, or a global icon?
 - How is 'the international' constituted through the icon and discourses attributing meaning to it?
 - What political impact has the icon made and according to which criteria?
- Step 3: Appropriations of the icon
 - What is the range of appropriations in terms of media and geographical location?
 - Which appropriations are singled out as making critical interventions and why?
 - Which alternative readings might be possible?
 - Are there discernible limits to appropriation?

Iconic images (Hansen 2015) – analysis



<https://www.dw.com/en/looking-back-at-the-us-capitol-riot/g-60325480>



Iconic images (Hansen 2015) – analysis



<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/article/covid-victim-photograph-sparks-fascination-and-denial-indonesia>



Sources (visual analysis)

- Bleiker, Roland. 2018. 'Mapping Visual Global Politics.' In *Visual Global Politics*, edited by Roland Bleiker, 1–29. Abingdon; New York: Routledge.
- Hansen, Lene. 2015. 'How Images Make World Politics: International Icons and the Case of Abu Ghraib.' *Review of International Studies* 41(2): 263–88.
- Hansen, Lene. 2011. 'Theorizing the Image for Security Studies: Visual Securitization and the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis.' *European Journal of International Relations* 17(1): 51–74.
- Robinson NT. 2014. Have you won the war on terror? Military videogames and the state of American exceptionalism. *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 43(2): 450-47
- Rose, Gillian. 2016. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*.
- Schlag, Gabi. 2016. 'Imagining Security: A Visual Methodology for Security Studies'. In *Transformations of Security Studies: Dialogues, Diversity and Discipline*, edited by Gabi Schlag, Julian Junk, and Christopher Daase, 173–89.

RIP assignment



Assignment: methodological reconstruction

Methodological Reconstruction (30%):

- select one of the assigned articles and reconstruct its methodology

rubrics (each 300 words)

- research objectives
- theoretical framework
- methodology
- limitations

Start date: 29 April

Deadline: 12 May

Assignment: methodological reconstruction

Process-tracing

- Sjöstedt et al. (2024). Socializing Warlord Democrats: Analyzing Violent Discursive Practices in Post-Civil War Politics. *International Studies Review*, 26(1), viae005.
- Hauter, J. (2023). Forensic conflict studies: Making sense of war in the social media age. *Media, War & Conflict*, 16(2), 153–172.

Discourse analysis

- Rojo, L. M., & van Dijk, T. A. (1997). “There was a Problem, and it was Solved!”: Legitimizing the Expulsion of ‘Illegal’ Migrants in Spanish Parliamentary Discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 8(4), 523–566.

Content and visual analysis

- de Buitrago, S. R. (2018). Grasping the Role of Emotions in IR via Qualitative Content Analysis and Visual Analysis. In M. Clément & E. Sangar (Eds.), *Researching Emotions in International Relations: Methodological Perspectives on the Emotional Turn* (pp. 303–324).

Comments, questions, ...

