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 method to study social phenomena.

Class outline

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

Visuality as a case of reflexivity

- P. T. Jackson (2011): *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations. Philosophy of science and its implications for the study of world politics* (p 37)

		Relationship between knowledge and observation	
		phenomenalism	*transfactualism*
Relationship between the knower and the known	*mind-world dualism*	neopositivism	critical realism
	mind-world monism	analyticism	reflexivity

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

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

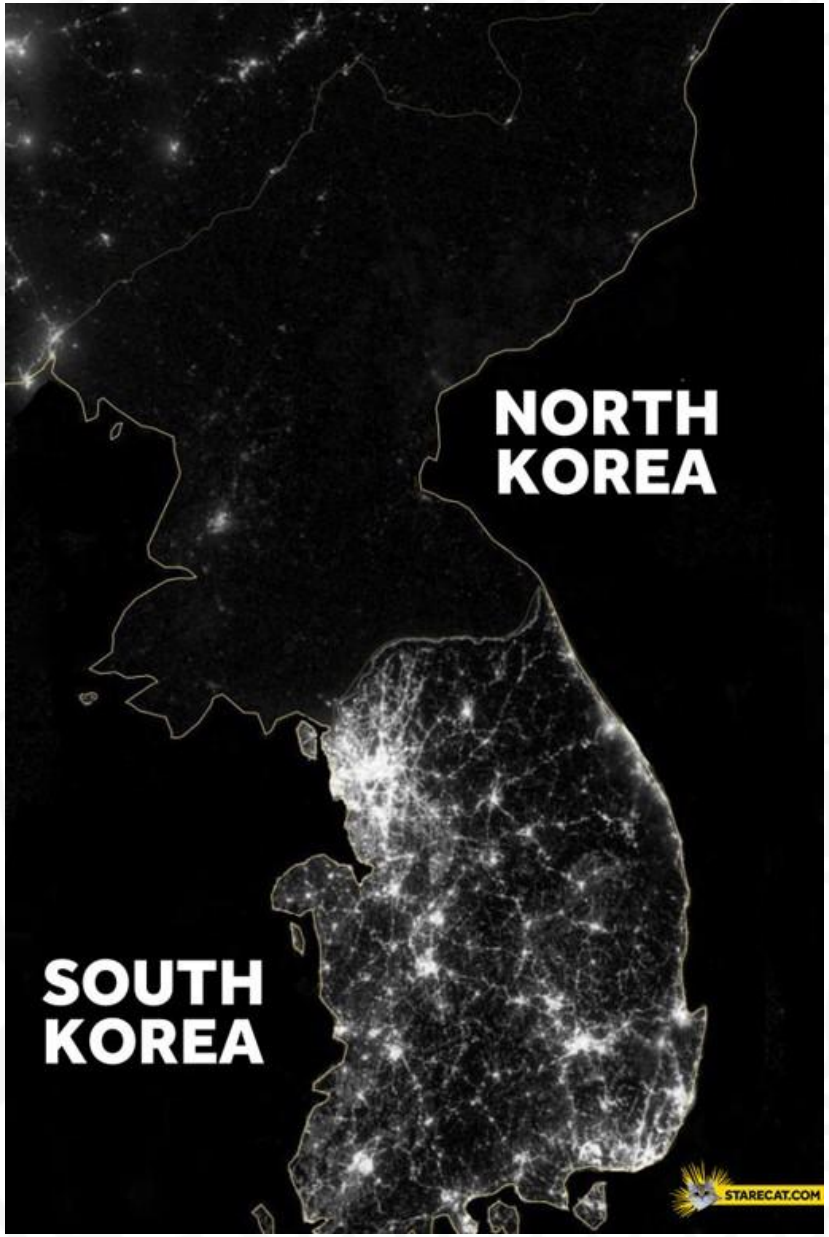
Source:
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/01/alan-kurdi-death-one-year-on-compassion-towards-refugees-fades

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

De-contextualizing

… But what do we know about North Korea and how do we come to know it? This book argues that visual imagery plays a decisive role in this operation. By discussing two exemplary areas – everyday photography and satellite imagery – the book takes into account the role of images in the way that particular issues related to North Korea are understood in contemporary geopolitics. Images work. They do something by evoking a **particular perspective of what is shown in them, allowing only specific ways of seeing *and* knowing.** In this sense, images are deeply political

In David Shim (2014), **Visual Politics and North Korea: Seeing is Believing**



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

Need for interpretation

Source: FB group “Secret Tel Aviv”

Enactment of Identities

Source:
https://madelinepeterson.wordpress.com/2015/03/30/visual-text-analysis

Othering

Source:
https://www.forbes.com/sites/ceciliarodriguez/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 delegitimating of peace which is often associated with feminine characteristics, such as weakness, concession, and idealism.

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

References:

- Elshtain, 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.

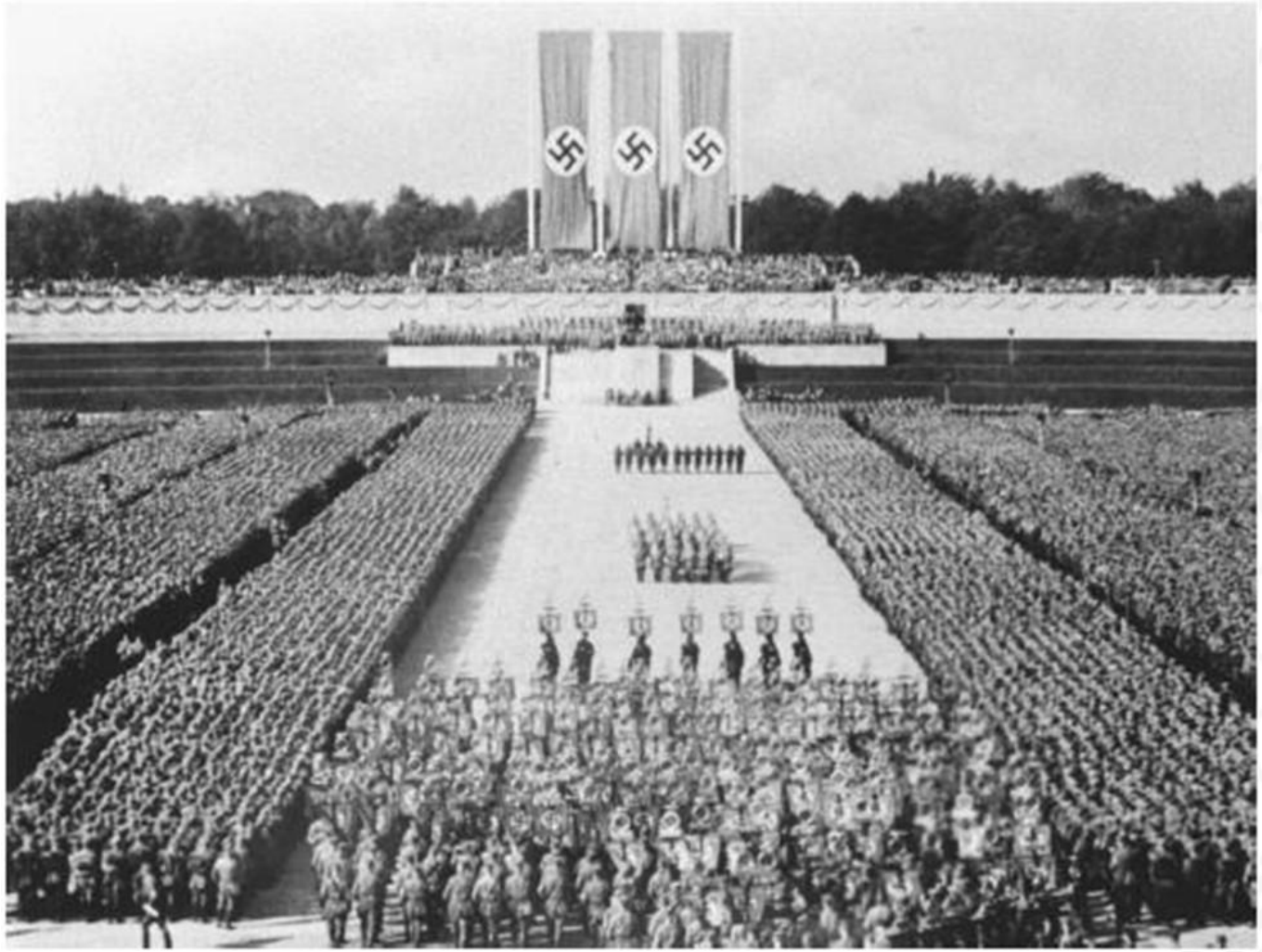
Visibility and Invisibility

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

Visibility and Invisibility

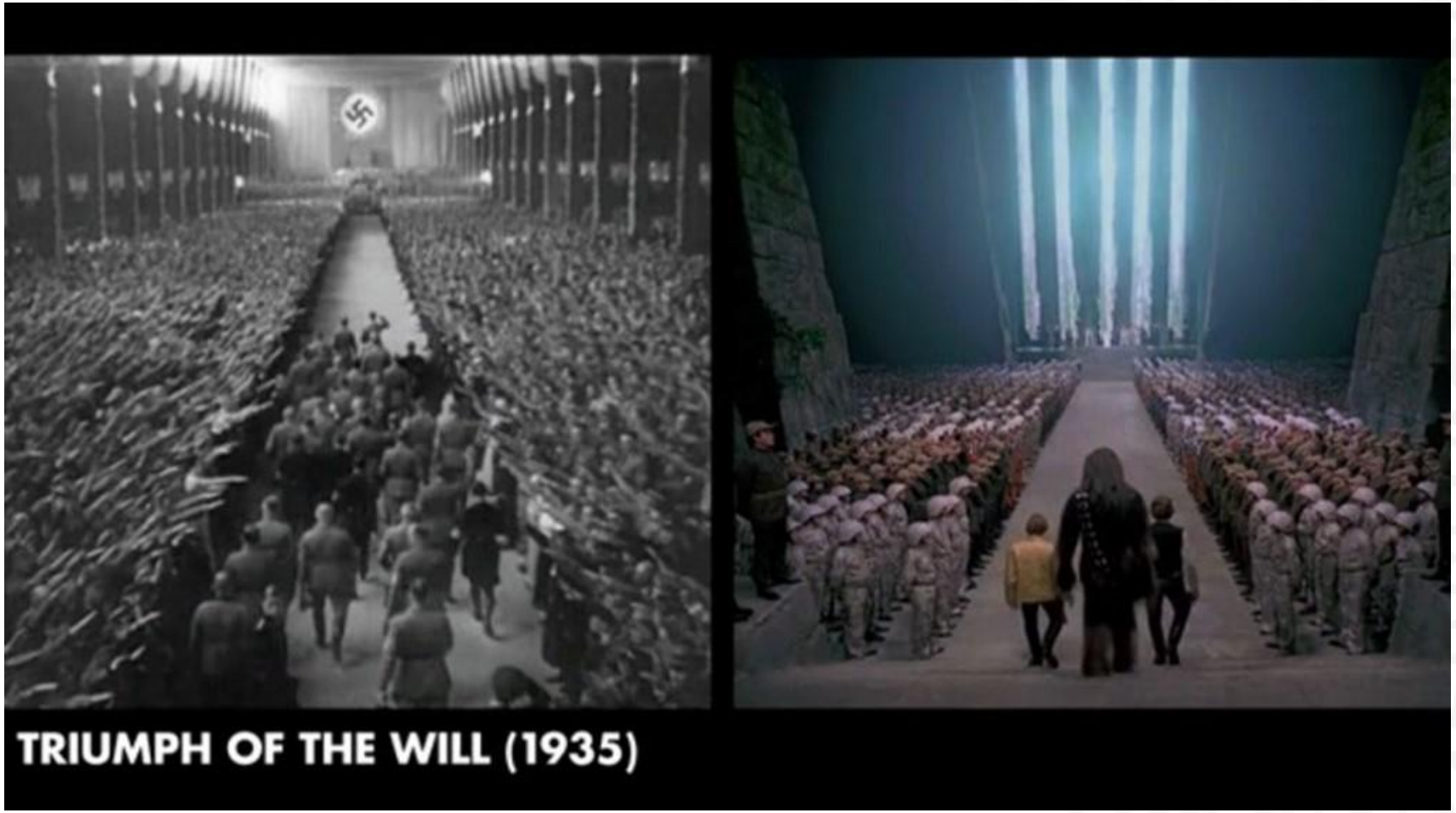
Source:
http://www.brockpress.com/2016/03/canadian-military-pushes-for-more-drone-use/

Power



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

(… Power …)



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

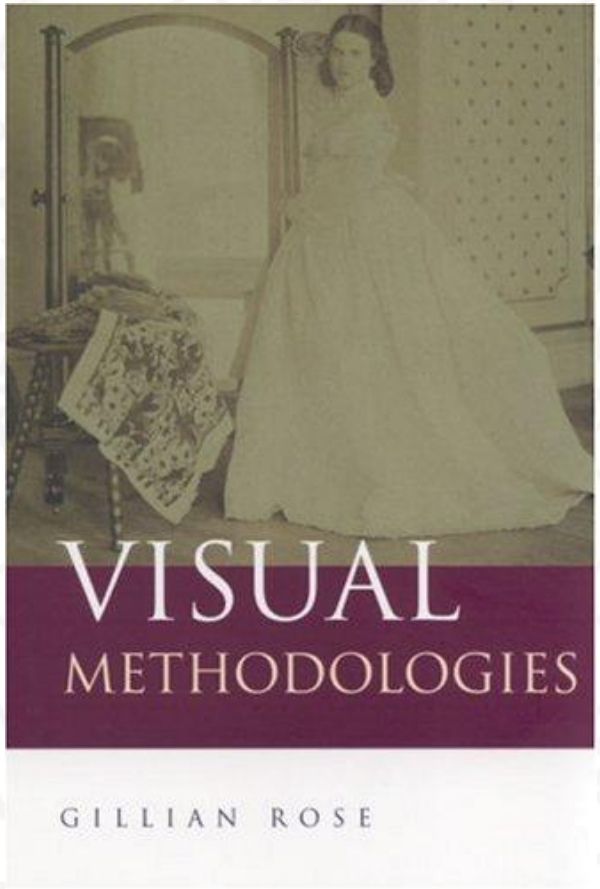
How to research images?

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

- “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://whenthenextdaycomes.wordpress.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?

What makes images resonate? (inter-iconicity)

What makes images resonate? (inter-iconicity)

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

What makes images resonate? (inter-iconicity)

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.

Assignment: methodological reconstruction

Methodological Reconstruction (30%):

- Select two of the assigned articles and carefully review the methodology

What to review

- research problem
- theoretical framework
- methodology
- design and its limitations

Tests

- Tuesday, 28th of April, at 7 pm: Regina Heller (2018) More Rigor to Emotions
- Tuesday, 28th of April, at 8 pm: Huseyn Aliyev (2022): Social sanctions and violent mobilization
- Wednesday, 29th of April, at 8 am: Jakob Hauter (2023): Forensic conflict studies
- Wednesday, 29th of April, at 9 am: Roxanna Sjöstedt (2024): Socializing Warlord Democrats

Comments, questions, ...