Pictures and Foreign Policy.
Pacifism in the German Discourse on Afghanistan

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Abstract:

The paper claims that visual analyses can easily be integrated in IR theories such as identity theory which have been primarily working with text-based discourse analyses. By proposing an analytical framework for examining images (referring on Panovsky’s model in arts) the paper asks how the persistence of pacifism can be understood in the German foreign policy discourse. The constitutive argument draws on images published on SPIEGEL covers between 2001 and 2013 on the war and the German military commitment in Afghanistan.
1. Introduction

The arrival of social constructivism in IR is the result of the linguistic turn of the social sciences. The core of which being the ontological assumption that the world is primarily defined by language. As a methodological consequence, a privilege of qualitative methods was established focussing on discourse analysis being the main research tool. Yet linguists and philosophers of science have always stressed that language is merely a code of signs amongst many others. Other codes of signs were or have been threatened to be forgotten under the primacy of language. Only since the visual turn has the scientific attention diverted to another worthwhile experimental aspect: Pictures.

This article is aiming to primarily show how by using image analysis new complementary methodological approaches can be offered. Sole linguistic orientated discussions can in our view be perfectly complemented and shaded by image analysis without any problems. For this purpose, we will introduce a model for analyzing images. Furthermore, another strength of the social constructivistic science program can be stressed and further enhanced: the interdisciplinary followability. Findings from other fields - such as the film and media sciences and semiotics - can not only be useful to solve problems faced by IR, but can also help directed back into the other fields. Finally, new perspectives on “aged” empirical questions can be given. Therefore we will be looking at the reasons for the persistent pacifism in Germany and to how and in what extent the Media illustrates it.

Our theoretical research question will therefore be: How can the image analysis be made prolific for the International Relations (IR)? Empirically turned, we want to find out to what extent pacifistic elements in the media discourse of the SPIEGEL, on the Afghanistan involvement, can be detected.

To answer this question, we offer a constitutive argument in this article that stresses the formative power of images conveyed by the media. The discursive meaning of images is generally seen as being “under-researched”, particularly because the interpretation of images is a lot harder than interpreting rhetoric. Images - as (visual) signs in the broader sense - belong to the discourse and are therefore easily connected to the theoretical assumptions of social constructivism. We will apply our model to the German Afghanistan operation, which in our view is very suitable due to 13 years of commitment. In addition, this work has an interdisciplinary concern and wants to open a new scientific field within IR by making images useful for discourse analysis as well as identity theory. It is aimed to portray how images in scientific work can be epistemologically analysed and what they can
ontologically say about the German foreign policy. So far the IR only uses verbal texts for discourse analysis and reconstructions of meanings. Only post-structural analysis - on the basis of French philosophical work\(^1\) – have so far looked at “visuality” and reflected the “power of images” in hindsight of dominating discourses (Der Derian 2000; Shapiro 1988). Yet precise image analysis are still widely omitted. In fact, recent studies concentrate more on the inter-textuality and “circulability” of images that refer to other text types and forms or visuality (e.g. Hansen 2011), or are used to criticise already existent theories (e.g. Williams 2003).

Even beyond post-structural analysis, the tremendous value of images in other scientific disciplines has been known for a while. For instance, different authors have been analysing the infamous image of the *situation room* in the White House during the raid on Bin Laden, as a gainful image from a journalistic, pedagogic, sociological and psychological perspective - an IR view though is absent (Przyborski/Haller 2014).

Which potential non-verbal texts in form of images can have for the IR, should be examined here. This work follows a qualitative evaluation method, in order for semantic aspects to be the center. We will be using a specific image interpretation model, which will be further explained in this article. The analysis of the Afghanistan discourse will be carried out in an exemplary mode with regard to a SPIEGEL cover. We hold the assumption that cover images can be seen as key images on a certain story. As the news magazine with the highest circulation in Germany, with approximately 6 million readers, the SPIEGEL can be used as a "privileged storyteller" (Milliken 1999) for the media discourse in Germany.

The approach will be as follows: At the beginning, the theoretical basis will be briefly introduced in the form of the “discourse-bound identity theory”, in which the image analysis will be embedded in. In this context, the German national identity will be taken from already existent studies, whereby special attention will be paid on pacifistic argumentation. Following this, it will be explained how images can be integrated theoretically into IR theory. For that purpose, a semiotic understanding of images will be introduced, in which images are considered as a system of signs. Leading on from there, a four stage semiotic model of analysis will be developed, which will also offer methodological opportunities for integrating images in political science research questions. In the integrated image analysis, the cover image of the SPIEGEL will be analysed by

\(^1\) Cf. Virilio 1989, Deleuze 1968 (and his works on cinema), Barthes 1989.
employing the examination model. In the end, the findings of the image analysis will be integrated into common reconstructions of the German Afghanistan discourse. In the conclusions we will sum up and discuss a few theoretical findings and identify research desideratum.

In this paper we make use of studies on Germany identity that have used the chosen theory to explain the German foreign policies, especially the security policy and foreign deployments of the Bundeswehr after 1990. Amongst others the anthology of Brummer/Fröhlich (2011) and the research works of Leithner (2009) and Harnisch (2011) have dealt in a theoretical suitable way with German foreign policy in Afghanistan. In relation to the specific research in relation to Afghanistan, Jörg Becker (2010) for example analyses images, cartoons and photos in a heuristic manner in order to denounce the “gender logic” in the coverage of Afghanistan. Bulmahn (2008: 109f.) has examined the media coverage of 2006 and comes to the conclusion that it has been widely negative about the Bundeswehr in Afghanistan. This result corresponds with the analysis of the “Tagesschau” between October 2006 and October 2008, which also has “a consistently negative image of the international ISAF Operation, yet also of the German ISAF-Mission.” (Jungbauer 2010: 114).

2. Identities - Discourses - Images

The discourse-bound identity theory

Identity concepts have found their way into the discipline of International Relations in general and into the social constructivism theory school in particular in a multifaceted way. A strength of identity based studies is, that it can make foreign policy actions in the context of ideal factors, i.e. the socio-cultural and historical contexts of a state, better understandable and can present explanations in areas where agents act differently under the same systemic conditions. Thereby this work conceives of collective identity as the identity of a collective, whereby this collective is defined in its entirety through particular ideas, values, norms and agendas. Collective identities are therefore “societal constructions of reality” (Berger/Luckmann 1967). So they are not exogenically specified and objectively determinable, but are generated in a social process through communication and

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3 At first glance, this looks tautological but takes into account implicit differences between collective, social, and individual identity: Schildberg 2010: 52.
interaction (Mead 1973: 222, 244f.). This process is defined by delimitation. In order to decide who belongs to which group and who does not, an ingroup/outgroup-classification prevails. A construction that is often set on the formula of “us” and “them” in cultural sciences (Todorov 1984). Identity formation is therefore an act of constructing social boundaries. The demarcation manifests itself according to semiotic relations (i.e.: “good” vs “evil” or “nature” vs “culture”; Krah 2006: 151ff.). National identity is perceived as being the “prototype” of collective identity (Schildberg 2010: 53). It is based on the self-definition of a collective as a “nation” with a common past, whereby various dimensions of nation - for example linguistic, cultural or state nation - are covered by it. In a modernist perspective, a nation does not represent a quasi-natural collective, primordial unity but an “imaginary community” (Anderson 1991) or an “intended order” (Lepsius 1990: 233). Accordingly, it is based on a specific interpretation and memory of history. In line with the discourse-bound identity theory, it is presupposed that interpretation is essentially developed through the discourse within a nation, through an act of self-attribution. Benhabib (1999: 25) refers to the narrative character of national identity formation, when she explains that cultural tatters and patches tell a story that makes sense, that is plausible and coherent.

The meaning of the notion “discourse” within the discourse-bound identity theory is “a communicative interaction with which it is tried to connect identity elements and action preferences with a consistent chain of of arguments.” (Stahl and Harnisch 2009: 42). Political discourses satisfy many functions within a democratic society, by not only explaining political action, but also justifying it and helping to interpret or reinterpret historical memories and constructing or reconstructing identity (Stahl 2006: 56). This can also be said of medial discourses that are engaged with the political topics. To this effect mass media serves as a “reality creators“ (Brand 2012: 265). Various discourse carriers (i.e. politicians, journalists) and discourse arenas (i.e. parliaments, print media) can be differentiated depending on who is involved and where the discourse takes place. Depending on what is being discussed, the discourse carriers will exchange different arguments concerning the topic (e.g. the war in Afghanistan) to compete for discourse hegemony, i.e. the control of the allocation of meaning, or the sovereignty of interpretation on this topic. This work focuses on the message (“says what”) as the main factor in the

4 In historical and political science the analytical term “collective memory” is used thereof (Erll 2011).
communication process. The political and medial discourse can therefore be considerably different to each other in its embodiment and development.

The concept of discursive formation will be referred to, in order to portray societal foreign policy tradition. A discursive formation assembles one or more common, identity formed and therefore action leading and justifying patterns of argumentation, that is being used by a group of discourse carriers (Nadoll 2003b: 176). They therefore embody a specific foreign policy narrative, that can offer at least a medium term time of permanency. In this study “pacifism” will be determined as discursive formation.

Images as part of the discourse

Discourse analysis in the social sciences have so far been predominantly concerned with language being the means of communications. It seems though that the discourse research is gradually acknowledging the potential that images have recalling that Foucault in his ground-breaking study „The order of things“ (1970) spent his first chapter on an extensive image analysis. After all, audio visual data is a relevant part of the societal meaning circulation (Keller 2011: 87) and a developed image critique can be virulent after centuries of mere text critique (Beuthner and Weichert 2003: 13). The analysis of visuality is therefore on the rise and is gradually getting influence (Ahäll 2009; Hebel and Wagner 2011; Kirkpatrick 2015). Within the International Relations especially the post structuralist firmly support a further consideration of visual material (cf. Campbell 2007: 230; Fairclough 2001: 23).

A paper that tries to integrate images as an element of discourse in a theoretical concept, naturally faces certain difficulties. Initially, it is therefore important to concede that an analysis of non-verbal materials inevitably still stands under the primacy of linguistics: „non-verbal foreign policy is brought into the realm of verbal.“ (Hansen 2006: 23). This does not mean, though, that images are dispensable in the discourse analysis, as this paper aims to show. The spectrum of findings in images is vast. Through the linguistic analogical view, the integration of images already develops a vast gain within the field of research: images are firstly omnipresent under the condition of unlimited reproduction in the digital

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5 As Lasswell famously put it for political mass communication: „Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect“ (Lasswell 1975: 117).
6 The term goes back to Michel Foucault (1989: 13) who used it for rules forming a discourse. Larsen (1997:16-17) has transferred it to IR.
age; secondly seen as "asset items" structuring our perceptions, triggering actions and (re-)constructing reality (Paul 2008: 28); while thirdly images can have a special impact and persuasive power (visual persuasiveness, cf. Burri 2008: 349 et seq.); and fourthly they can be universally understood. An image analysis therefore has to - even if following a primarily semiotic understanding - keep the focus on the image specific characteristics and integrate it in its theoretical model. The difficulties are hereby presented and the way to integrating images in the discourse is paved.

**Image theory**

The following remarks on the image theory primarily use the semiotic definition of images, yet not excluding the phenomenological aspects. The theoretical acquisition of images as a "tangible sign" (Sachs-Hombach/Schirra 2009: 412) is perfectly suitable to support this. Semiotics as a theory of signs gives us information about it. According to de Saussures dyadic model of signs, a sign is consisted of a significer (carrier of signs) and the meaning (content of the signs). Therefore, ever significer has a descriptive and a relevance function. Images are consequently a portray (in its dimension of description) and a symbol (in its dimension of meaning) (Burkhard 2006: 20). Every sign is organised into a sign system. The three-part structure of the notion of sign corresponds to three part theories of semiotics: Syntax (relation of one sign to another), semantics (meaning of signs) and pragmatism (relation of the signs to the users of signs). Applied to images, this means that images - like all signs - inhabit internal structures (syntax), refer to something (semantics) and are embedded in sign action contexts (pragmatism) (Sachs-Hombach 2003: 73). All three dimensions must be respected in the image analysis, in order to achieve a meaningful result. Yet the emphasis lies on the semantic level, as within the constructivist perspective the foreground is on the function of images as carriers of meaning.

For this study, it is relevant what text is semiotically given in images, not how the semiotically already existent is adopted and processed. Therefore, diegetic structures of meaning stay in the focus if image analysis. This does not mean, though, that the social component of images as a societal construct will be disregarded. “Cultural knowledge” is presupposed, in order to have an adequate and complete understanding of a text. For every image two semantic levels can be distinguished: 1. The level of denotation, or the primary

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8 Paul (2008) speaks of “a century of images” and Diers (2006: 12, our translation from German) adds: “Never before there was as much image.”
figurative signifier, or rather the primary subject, that is given independently of the context through the sign system (who or what is shown on the image?) and 2. the level of connotation, or the secondary figurative signifier, or rather the secondary subject, that registers context dependent meanings and, as a result of cultural coding, transports a certain the world view (which ideas and values are expressed through the shown and its way of presentation?) (Lobinger 2012: 247). Further meanings either result from culturally determined associations or certain visual forms of presentation (van Leeuwen 2006: 94 et seq.)

Its about capturing certain differences between language and images. Opposing the chronological consecutiveness of the language, for example, is the concurrence of the image. This does not mean, though, that images are deprived of a narrative potential. There are parts of an image that can show up the past and/or the future, beyond the image. Hence, this “implicit story of the image” is a question of cultural knowledge and can only be extracted by it. Particularly photography stands out through its narrative qualities in the visual communication culture of the modern age. Furthermore, it is imperative that images of all cultural codes, that are based on visual signs, directly illustrate, while the language of that code only indirectly illustrates. Besides, it is the fact that images show concrete, singular dimensions and individuals (e.g. people, situations, objects), whereas language forms abstract denominations and formulates rules. For the relation between text and image, this means: The image to the linguistic text allows a referencialisation, by assigning an potential referent to the meaning. The linguistic text to the image makes a semantic turn conversely possible, as the image meaning can assign a semantic classification to the referent (Titzmann 2011b: 292). Especially the latter is a vital conclusion for this study, as an analysis that has put its focus on the component of meaning cannot ignore linguistic statements to the image (e.g. subtitles, titles, report sheet), but has to make it useful for the interpretation process.

Typically cover images and lead stories fulfil the characteristic of an "key image" in the media. Following Aby Warburg, key images work with symbolic and emblematic cliches and stereotypes, so with allegorical concentration in order to fulfil its function as an assault on the public consciousness (cited in Paul 2008: 30).

Due to their specific, compressed form these images are perfectly suitable for a discourse

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9 Panofsky (1978: 50) speaks of "primary and secondary Sujets".
analysis, that asks for active elements of identity within the media coverage. Thereby, they reflect likewise the contemporary mentality of the reader as of the cover image editor, they are therefore a *pars pro toto* expression for the identity (Paul 2008: 30).

A special role in the discourse is assigned to war images, as in the first place, they let the imaginations of war become alive in a peaceful community: “Only wars that produce mass medial image evidence, are wars that stay in the memory of peoples.” (Müller-Kniper 2005: 7; our translation) They thereby do not only stay in the collective memory of a nation, or rather influence their national identity, but more likely are asset items, that structure ideas and perceptions of the past and present, trigger actions and (de-)legitimise as well as constituting reality: “The vast shaping power of war images and the interest for them, has shaped the images themselves to weapons. With them it is possible to legitimise wars and prepare societies for wars. The homeland gets involved in the events through images. Yet images can also persuade troops to retreat.” (Paul 2009: 39; our translation from German) Admittedly, the so-called CNN-effect - image triggers political decision - seem exagerrated (Jakobsen 2000) but the role of images for the politics of history of a nation looks evident.

*A semiotic-cultural model for image analysis*

In the following, we will present a model for image analysis which is based on an approach prvided by Marotzki and Stoetzer (2006). It is derived from the iconological method of Panofsky (1978), integrating findings of film science, and is therefore especially applicable to qualitative social research. The image interpretation model orientates itself to the multi-level method of image interpretation, yet modifying it by a semiotic basis. The focus tends to be on the text's internal meaning and not in the text's external meaning. The linguistic text to the image and secondary literature about the German identity both are the the most important sources for the contextualisation provided in steps two and four; the form analysis in step three - inspired by film analysis - will be carried out through the means of film semiotics.

The four steps of the model are:
1. Level of denotation
2. Level of connotation
3. Level of orchestration (mise-en-scène)
4. Synthesis and generalisation

The potency of a semiotic-cultural method for image analysis lies, first, in the reconstruction of semantic relations by revealing contents of internal meaning. Second, it respects the image's interdependence with the era, the Zeitgeist, and therefore also registers contents of the external, cultural meaning. Both factors are important, as this paper aims to expose what images mean for the national identity, how they can influence the social consciousness and how they have an impact on world views.

ad 1. Level of denotation:
The first step of image interpretation demands for the purely recognising identification of immediately visible image objects: Subjects, people, events and actions, that can be seen in the image are labeled (Marotzki/Stoetzer 2006: 17). Thereby the denotative meaning, i.e. the essential meaning, can be determined. This happens in a context independent manner through the code of signs. Panofsky (1978: 50) calls this descriptive part “pre-iconographic description”. It deals with the primary or natural subject, whereby a distinction is made between factual and expressive appearance. The sense of this approach is in avoiding an unconsciously, overhasty identification (colonising view)(Marotzki/Stoetzer 2006: 18). That way it is wise, in certain cases, to initially describe the lines, surfaces and colours of an image, so that new objects, that have been a priori culturally and semantically loaded, can be made a posteriori accessible.

2. Level of connotation;
The second step, that Panofsky (1978: 50) describes as the “iconographic analysis”, engages the meaning and sense correlations. Thereby it is about the cultural, specific meaning of the objects and, if applicable, even about the narrative dimension of an image. It is imperative on the level of connotation to ask for the additional, context independent meanings that are dependable of the text's internal and external contexts. The crucial point of this interpretation step is to make the historical and cultural perceptions susceptible to reflection (Marotzki/Stoetzer 2006: 21).
So what does the pictured mean? Semantisation essentially occurs through the predetermination in the text when a text size can be attributed to an explicit or an implicit

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characteristic (Krah 2011b: 41f). This happens explicitly in visual texts - through the verbal text to an image. In order to deconstruct implicit characteristics, the cultural historic context and the identification of semantic relations are vital. Therefore, implementing cultural knowledge is central. Panofsky typifies this by using the known example of the man on the street lifting his hat: The man is lifting his hat in an apparent greeting. Action and meaning, though, are inhabited in two different levels of interpretation. While lifting the hat is culture independently (in the re-iconographic explanation) recognisable, it has a culture dependently further meaning, the act of greeting (Panovsky 1978: 37).

As a matter of fact, these hermeneutic findings should not be arbitrarily and subjectively interpreted into the image. That is why motive assumptions are only unproblematic if the meaning is institutionalised or communicatively generalised (Bohnsack 2006: 53). By relating characteristics on semantic relations it is possible to assort and hierarchise them. The most important semantic relations are in this case equipollency, correlation and opposition. They significantly establish Internal/External classifications. Characteristics can in this case be put into relation to the text, yet are indeed connected through the cultural context.

Hence, every image identified and contextualised taking different cultural backgrounds into account. To achieve this, a multitude of sources and material can be used to show the artist's intention for example, to create imaginative or empirical comparative cases, or to present information regarding the image's date and location of origin (Marotzki/Stoetzer 2006: 22). It means that in the case of analysing media images, as we are intending to do, we have to include image signatures, titles and even the continuous text, as they essentially contribute to the semantisation and illustrate the first and most important image external sources.

3. Level of orchestration:

The question of orchestration touches upon the level of illustration. While in the preceded analysing steps we looked at what can be seen in an image, we will now be looking at how it is presented (mise-en-scène). Panofsky is often accused of having neglected the third

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11 Two or more signifyers are equivalent, if the text sets their common characteristics as relevant, and the divergent characteristics as irrelevant. Cf. Krah 2006: 154f.
12 Correlation means the combination of two texts because of causal, temporal, or syntagmatic relations. Cf. Krah 2006: 153f.
13 Opposition is the counter-part to equipollency. Two signifyers stand in opposition if they exclude each other in terms of one essential characteristic. Cf. Krah 2006: 156f.
step of this model, the reconstruction of the images' formal structure (e.g. Imdahl 1994: 300).

The image composition is called *Mise-en-scène* in film science. It essentially deals with the three determinants colour, line and form yet including open and closed forms, image limitations, image framings, “marigins”, foreground - middle ground - background, dominance of lines, forms, symmetries, image divisions, position of the object/figure to each other, sharpness, depth of focus, colour codes, light, and lighting. In addition, we include the camera distance (e.g. close-up, long shot, panorama) and the perspective (e.g. line of sight angle, horizontal angle) as well as the interaction of the pictured objects with the viewer (e.g. eye contact). The reconstruction of the perspective has to literally be determined as the “insight into the *perspective* of the pictured image producer and in his *view of the world*.

4. Synthesis and generalisation:

The final step of image interpretation finally carves out “the societal content of the image” (Marotzki/Stoetzer 2006: 26). The point is to synthesise the so far gained findings and to put them into a the socio-historical context. Panofsky (1978: 50) calls this step the “iconological interpretation”. It develops the actual meaning of an artwork, that creates the symbolic value. The image therefore gets a meaning, that can be accounted as for a person, an environment, a society, or culture-bound, historically contingent mentality (Marotzki/Stoetzer 2006: 26).

For the theoretical frame of the paper, this means that: The image serves primarily as an expression of the media discourse. Furthermore it is, as the theoretical concept of the discourse supported identity theory intends to, co-determined with the national identity of Germany, in the sense that it is likewise product and producer of the (national) identity. On the one hand identity functions as the basis for the image, which cannot be understood correctly without the identityrelated background and on the other hand it provides information about which identity characteristic is aktiv in the particular (image) discourse. The fourth step establishes a synthesis between the first three steps of analysis and connects these findings additionally - when reasonable - with further artefacts of the discourse, in order to accomplish a generalisation of the single image meanings. Essential for this last step is the creation of paradigms. By systematising and synthesising the image
meanings on the overlapping paradigms, as well as being compared with further material of media coverage, it can be assured that single images representatively stand for the overall media discourse. The additional material is in this case likewise non-verbal texts in form of further images and verbal head lines and subtexts. Simultaneously the single active elements of identity can be partially named in this step. A further dimension of meaning, which has already been explained earlier on in this digression on German identity, naturally lies in the historical fundament.

3. Germany in Afghanistan

The German foreign policy identity

The experiences of the Second World War strongly influenced German foreign policy after 1945: “After Hitler, the first rule was to reject all forms of violence and power politics and to fit into international communities.” (Bender 2008: 3; our translation from German). Hereby two of the main dominant elements of German identity have been outlined. The elements that can be described as (1) “the responsible Germany” and (2) “Germany as part of the West” (Nadoll 2003c: 350). Looking at the systemic level, one can therefore add the “German question”, historically perceived from the German foreign policy between 1871 and 1945 - “influenced by militarism, partial uncontrolled political action and a lack of sensitiveness for the fears and needs of others” (Görtemaker 2009; our translation) which has completely changed due to unification.

The main tendency of pacifism in Germany can be traced back to the lost Second World War and the mental and physical destruction that it caused, not only in the world, but also in Germany itself. The relevance of foreign policy reignited in the debate for rearmament (1950-55), as pacifistic arguments took over a dominant part of the discourse formations of “Priority of reunification” and “neutrality” (Nadoll 2003c: 343, 345). Anti-militarism, disarmament and the alienation to the idea of having soldiers were not only present within the majority of the SPD, but also in many other political parties. Furthermore, it is significant that pacifistic arguments were always closely tied to the neutrality option (Schubert 1972: 127 et seq.). Pacifism as an alternative to rearmament was, for example, seen as the best option by the so-called Nauheimer circle, whilst many parts of the population answered with a simple “not with us!” to the plans of rearmament (ibid 131). Adenauer was able to achieve his prime target of west integration by linking the rearmament with the fear of communism and the “security by the West” (Nadoll 2003c: 351).
Subsequently, the west integration took on a special significance within the German foreign policy, from the founding of the ECSC in 1951 to the Treaties of Maastricht (1992) and Lisbon (2008). Indeed the geographic location of Germany, in the heart of Europe, has always been of political relevance. This can be determined as the element of identity (4) “Germany in Europe” - next to the “German question”. After all Germany does follow the norms of collective, multilateral action as a collective actor and partner and is an opponent to unilateral action (element of identity (5) “never alone” or rather “the multilateral Germany”).

Pacifistic statements always had their place in the debates about German foreign policy after the rearmament debate - consequently the majority of the political class in Germany was surprised in the face of the “ferocity of anti-war mood in Germany” (von Bredow 2008: 150) on the occasion of the second Gulf War 1990/91: Three quarters of the population rejected a military participation of Germany (Kaiser and Becher 1992: 48). Pacifistic arguments became more defensive in the late 1990s, after the western politics of enclosure and non-intervention in Rwanda (1994) and in Bosnia (1992-95) could not prevent genocide: In April 1999, 63% of the German population supported German participation in the air strikes of the NATO-led Kosovo conflict (which took place without the mandate of the UN Security Council), only 34% disagreed (Ramet and Lyon 2001: 92). Significantly, there were hardly any demonstrations during the bombing campaign, pacifistic arguments seemed marginalised within the political discourse (Schwelling 2007: 105). This changed during the occasion of the Iraq War 2002/03 and the Libya decision - in both cases pacifistic arguments played a crucial role once again. In that way, the main argumentation, for the legitimisation of the position to the Iraq War, mainly aimed at Germany’s freedom of choice and the unforeseen risks of intervention, yet was complemented to Germany’s pacifism. The argumentation pattern “no German soldier in a war” was central in the (post factum) Libya debate and was prominently used, not only by the Chancellor, but also by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Westerwelle (Stahl 2012b: 589-592).

14 Considering Chancellor Schröder’s words: „I can only warn of playing around with war and military intervention. We will not support this.” Speech at the launch of the election campaign in Hannover at 5/8/2002, also see Forsberg 2005: 221-225.
### Table 1: The pacifist discursive formation (Stahl 2012b: 580)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse formation</th>
<th>Identity elements</th>
<th>Argumentation pattern</th>
<th>Recommended action</th>
<th>Discourse carriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DF of absolute restraint = pacifistic DF</td>
<td>the responsible Germany, the European Germany, the German question</td>
<td>unique moral responsibility (&quot;nevermore war&quot;), refusing military means, no German uniforms overseas, avoid &quot;old&quot; fears of neighbours, suffering of the civil population</td>
<td>no deployment of the Bundeswehr, preference for diplomatic solution, prevention of militarisation of CFSP</td>
<td>PDS/Die Linke, &quot;Fundis&quot; of the Geen Party, Left wingers in SPD (and FDP until 1998), FDP since 2006 and parts of the CDU/CSU since 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The security political dogma of the German elite stayed significantly stable, even though the German Afghanistan commitment produced, at the best, mixed political results (Schroer 2014: 95-96). The political discourse on the Afghanistan mission has been accordingly homogenous and continuous throughout more than ten years of commitment, one can merely identify a slight shift of emphasis in the legitimisation (Harnisch 2011: 244). Some discourse figures set their arguments emphasis more on the security for Germany and the international protection against terrorism, others preferably stress the humanitarian rebuilding of Afghanistan and the peace process. Generally speaking, both aims are seen as being dependant of each other. In regards to the discourse hegemony, the “unconditional solidarity” prevailed in 2001 (for the “War on Terror”, OEF and ISAF), between 2002 and 2005 the “security for Germany” as formulated by Germany's minister of defence, Struck, between 2006 and 2009 the “humanitarian commitment”, and since the end of 2009 “security in Afghanistan”, have become the dominant elements of the discourse (Müller/Wolff 2011: 213-216). Yet all in all, the statements do give an uninspired impression: “The politically intended weak commitment corresponds accurately with the weak statement.” (Müller/Wolff 2011: 217; our translation from German).

In the discourse on Afghanistan, the identity elements “the responsible Germany”, the “multilateral Germany” and the “Germany as part of the West” have been dominating the domestic debates. The overwhelming majority of German MP’s agrees with the

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15 Jacobi et al (2011) assess this as “a case of failing security communication”. 
commitment of the Bundeswehr in Afghanistan. Merely a small pacifistic discourse formation, mainly represented in Parliament by DIE LINKE, contains criticism towards the governments promise of “unconditional solidarity” and in the progress of the conflict, openly criticises the USA and NATO. As an opponent to the mission, the LINKE follows the catch phrase “No more War!”, criticises the “logic of war” of the other parties and bemoans the civilian casualties and the human rights abuses.

The media discourse in Germany
By the means of a single image analysis of a SPIEGEL cover image, it will now be shown which argumentation pattern will be visually picked up and to which element of identity it will be referred to.

Single image analysis: SPIEGEL cover image from the 12th November 2001

Level of denotation: The image shows us two sawn off logs of wood, or branches, assembled in the angle of 90 degrees to a cross. The longer, vertical branch is red, the shorter, horizontal branch is green. It is birchwood. The wood is is scared in various places. A soldiers helmet is placed on the top end of the vertical, red log. The background

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is white. The heading of the image is: “Bundeswehr to be deployed to Afghanistan (Title) - CASE OF EMERGENCY FOR RED-GREEN (Subtitle)”.

**Level of connotation:** The illustrations just described add themselves together to an iconographic motive, the “soldier’s grave”. This cross is a Latin cross (a.k.a. high cross or passion cross), in which the stringer is longer than the cross-piece, crossing it above the centre. In the Christian tradition, this symbolises the sacrificing death of Jesus Christ on the one hand and on the other hand the connection between earth and heaven, or rather between humans and god. It has been the symbol commemoration for graves, or rather for death since the early modern age. In this respect it symbolises, in reference to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, death and the hope of resurrection of the deceased. In this context it is in fact interesting that the cross, as a religious icon, represents the Jewish-Christian tradition of Europe and is semantically loaded as a symbol of collective identity through the historic context of, amongst others, the crusades or contemporary discourse, for example about the ‘crucifixion verdict’ in Germany (Esser 2000).

The helmet on top of the high cross is the combat helmet of the Bundeswehr (made of the synthetical material Aramid) aimed to protect the soldier, as used in Afghanistan. In connection with the cross, it commonly symbolises the grave of a soldier killed in action. Usually the gravesite in this form are anonymous and temporary. This is underlined by the scared piece of wood and the absence of a significant sign for the identification of the (allegedly) dead person. In our cultural knowledge, the soldier's grave is mainly in connection to the institutionalised military cemeteries and memorials of the First and Second World Wars. These take over a special reminder function: “War graves urge us to peace and remind us of war, displacement, captivity, home coming.” (Nowey 2009; our translation).

Certainly the colours of the branches, that are formed to a cross, are significant in this correlation. The heading of the image makes it unambiguously clear. “Case of Emergency for Red-Green” refers to the linguistic usage of the denominated German (red-green) coalition government of the SPD and the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Green Party). As the cross, or rather the grave, is coloured in the colours of the coalition, it allows us to identify two interpretations, that result from the correlation of the connotates of “death” and “coalition government”: On the one hand the code of colours assigns the responsibility of the soldiers grave. And on the other hand the possible end of the coalition is symbolised through the connotation of the cross with death. In this context the word “Emergency” is to
be understood in a double meaning. This is due to the fact that “for Red-Green” is the prepositional object to Emergency - it could just as well have been “for German/our soldiers” or “for Germany”. The verbal text thereby presents the coalition as an actor into the center of attention, whereby the non-verbal text, or rather the image focusses on the dead soldier. The title image foregrounds the decision of the coalition for a mission in Afghanistan and its causal (deadly) outcome. By doing so, the image at the same time presents a reference to the clearly stated responsible people, or rather perpetrators - i.e. the government - as well as their anonymous victims - the soldiers. The argumentation logic of the SPIEGEL follows up that the perpetrators can also rapidly become (political) victims of the Afghanistan mission, in the sense of the end of the coalition.

**Level of orchestration:** The orchestration of the image is very canny. Yet especially in the reduced form we find the most important stylistic device in the way of representing: Namely the focus on the substantial statement of the few image elements. The historical level is supposed to be emphasised additionally by the depicted discourse. This is underlined by the choice of perspective. The close-up of the soldiers grave explicitly shows what the focus is on - and just that. In that way we can explain the white background, not wanting to distract from the meaningful foreground, yet aiming to create the biggest possible contrast and highlight it with the most clinical precision unchanged.

**Synthesis and Generalisation:** A glimpse on further title images (frames 2-7) shows that the chosen title image absolutely is a typical one for the news coverage by this magazine, in the time between 2001-13:
By analysing these different frames (in this case exemplary one image will be presented in three steps) the following conclusion can be made. The SPIEGEL denies the mission in Afghanistan any form of legitimisation right from the beginning, both within the limits of OEF and ISAF. The magazine manages this by using the paradigms of “risk” and of “death”, both of which the title covers to the Afghanistan mission are filled with. The war in Afghanistan appears as either a soldiers grave, alternatively an abyss, a trap, graveyard (according to frames No.2, 3, 7) or a “hopeless bombing war” (frame No.3). The Bundeswehr is portrayed as weak, overstrained and as a force, that can’t fulfil the requirements of the mission. In the process of which a clear distinction into “Us” and the “Others” is made. The Us-construction unfolds predominantly through the definition of the Others (so that, what we aren’t) and less through the self definition (so that, what we are). The Other in the form Afghanistan, or rather the Afghans, is alien, scary and volatile; it
contradicts the 'Us' on all living environmental levels and gets hostile characteristics attributed to; the “other” people are illustrated as holy warriors and barbarians (frames No. 2 and 7). Through these characteristics the images quasi create a threat and the supremacy of the other on his own territory - and an inferiority of the Us. The Us though is only limitedly to be equatable with the western allies in NATO, as nevertheless there is a dividing line between Germany and the USA. As a result Germany is partially differentiated from its transatlantic partner, explicitly identified in the title “Americas […] bombing war” and its formal orchestration (frame No. 3). In this respect Germany gets a special, or rather an island position within the coverage of the SPIEGEL.

Regarding the motives and causes of the mission in Afghanistan, religion gets an important significance assigned to (frame No. 1). It is though consistently negatively connoted and in a double perspective the characteristic of the Other (primarily the muslims in Afghanistan (frame No. 2, in addition the protestants in the USA). Religion correlates with violence and irrationality in general and in particular with war, terrorism and fanaticism. The mission in Afghanistan, as part of the War on Terror is synonymous with the war of religion(s) and equates to the “Clash of civilisations”. Paradoxically the SPIEGEL often uses religious emblems of death allegories for its construction of meaning, for example the cross, or rather the grave (frame No. 1) or the abyss (frame No. 2), yet at the same time promotes its degradation. While religion perceived as being the key cause of the war, the history is an unprecedented warning sign. On one hand the frames refer directly to the Vietnam War with its traumatic effects it had (frame No. 3) and on the other hand indirectly to the First and Second World War with its anonymous mass graves (frame No. 1). Furthermore the mission gets related to the Afghanistan War of the USSR during the Cold War in the 80s and gets set on the same level as it directly, on the image level (especially intriguing!) without further indication (frame No. 7).

That this pattern of argumentation is dominant within the coverage of the SPIEGEL in 2001 can be emphasised through further evidence. “Danger” and “Death” related to Afghanistan are omnipresent. According to an article from 22nd October, Afghanistan is “a cemetery of invaders” (SPIEGEL 2001 (22 Oct): 150). The associated image seems to be de facto burying American troops through the grainy green view of night vision glasses. America is on “the brink of panic” (SPIEGEL 2001 (29 Oct): 140) in the War on Terror, illustrated by armed Taliban warriors. A “fiasco at the Hindukush” (SPIEGEL 2001 (5 Nov): 140) seems to be looming, visualised through a huge detonation mushroom cloud.
Kabul is designated as “pandora's box” (SPIEGEL 2001 (3 Dec): 178), Masar-i-Scharif as the “terrain of death” (SPIEGEL 2001 (3 Dec): 182).

A clearly identitary differentiation is done by an article of 8th October to the topic of Afghanistan with the title “Our world is different to yours”. According to this there is a living environmental specific image of a refugee camp and of a bazar, as an image of the Other, or rather the strange (SPIEGEL 2001 (8 Oct): 147 et seq.). The same edition underlines this with the title “Religious insanity. The return of the middle ages.” in the usual manner of (anti) religious rhetoric and emblematic, through the use of icons, amongst them the crescent, Osama bin Laden, crusaders and the burning towers of the World Trade Center, visualised equally for Islam and Christianity under the paradigm of “violence” (SPIEGEL 2001 (8 Oct): 1). The edition of 22nd December 2001 (SPIEGEL 2001 (22 Dec): 1) sets in contrast to “religious insanity”, “dignity” and “intellectual tradition” of the “Belief of the Non-Believers” in form of icons such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Marilyn Monroe and the female national emblem of the French Republic (Marianne) from Eugène Delacroix's famous painting “For the liberty of the people”. The ideal point of reference is hereby formed though the enlightenment, the humanity and the secularity of the western culture. To underline this it is said: “Her intellectual tradition is worth to be defended - even against Islam.” (SPIEGEL 2001 (22 Dec): 50). At the point where religion and politics form a symbiosis, they get irrational and justify wars. Then they become a part of the Other. Yet the division of the two stands for peace, reason and knowledge and is therefore essential for the Us-construction of the SPIEGEL.

The media discourse and German identity
Formative arguments of the political discourse, such as “humanitarian aid”, “human rights” or “democratisation” are practically non existent in the media discourse on Afghanistan. Nonetheless we do not find the argument of “alliance solidarity” for the legitimisation of the German mission. On the contrary: “The american bombardments in Afghanistan put a strain on the international alliance against terrorism”, it is said on 15th October 2001, illustrated in front of a dark night photography with the subtitle “Like in an inferno” (SPIEGEL 2001 (15 Oct): 158). The “unconditional solidarity” of chancellor Schröder turns out to be a “Case of Emergency for Red-Green”, with the iconographic motive of the soldier's grave, confirming equally the end of the coalition as perpetrator and the death of the soldier as victim.
In this respect, the SPIEGEL judges the decision of the German government (and of the Bundestag) to deploy German troops, as irresponsible and refers to the identity characteristic of the “responsible Germany”. On its behalf, the SPIEGEL illustrations exchanges it with an “irresponsible Germany”, which deploys its troops to a hopeless war, even after the lessons learnt from history, against an unpredictable, religiously motivated, irrational holy warrior. In the consequently anti-war presentation under the paradigm of “Death” and “Danger”, we identify a pacifistic tenor, that will not justify war under any circumstances. War, with all of its negative attributes, is a part of the Other and never compatible with the Us-construction of the SPIEGEL. In this context we can find indicators to the “Germany as part of the West”. Germany is differentiated in this regard towards the USA, an identitary difference is suggested, so that already in 2001 we can find a certain anti-american attitude in the news coverage. This finds its justification primarily in the aspect of religion. The SPIEGEL puts the the religious fanaticism as the main reason for the war in contrast to the enlightenment and secularisation of the Western, especially European culture. The latter being part of the German identity, so that in this case it is referred to an identity element, which so far has been seen as insignificant for the German foreign policy and has not been mentioned in the digression. One could paraphrase this element of identity as “the Christian-enlightened Germany”. Ultimately, the comparably small significance of religion, or rather of the reformed version in Germany, forms the basis for the propagated pacifism of the SPIEGEL. Coherent with this, Germany in the world view of the SPIEGEL, is identitarily more “part of Europe” than “part of the West”. The basic most distinctive element of identity of the “responsible Germany”, plays an essentiell role in the image connotation. The SPIEGEL sees the responsibility of Germany in the unconditional refusal of military means. For the SPIEGEL, the deployment of German troops is a clear violation of the pacifistic maxim and therefore illustrates it as the “irresponsible Germany”. That way Germany was at war from the first day on, faced with the paradigms of “Death” and “Danger”. The death imagery follows up even more drastically and explicitly throughout the length of the conflict. While humanitarian help is irrelevant in the illustration of the SPIEGEL until 2006, it played a greater role from 2007 on, depicting the aspect of failure in that area as a part of the German irresponsibility.

Right from the beginning the SPIEGEL makes a differentiation to the USA and exposes anti-american tendencies in its reporting. The argument of “Germany a part of the West” is thereby inverted - and is paraphrased in the sense of “Germany as the opposite to the
USA”. American militarism and German pacifism rule each other out and strain the transatlantic relations. The American position of power over the Federal Republik, which his promoted through the failure in Afghanistan, is assessed negatively. All in all, the Western orientation Germanys is characterised as being dysfunctional. The idea of “Germany in Europe” finds hardly any consideration in the course of the Afghanistan mission. The few references the SPIEGEL makes towards this, include Europe to the German ’Us' and displays it a space for freedom and enlightenment. An essentiell aspect of the SPIEGEL’s transatlantic delineation is religion, which forges an opposition between Germany, or rather Europe, and the USA. Hereby - in the frame of the theory - a new identity characteristic is brought up, the “Christian-enlightened Germany”, which devaluates any form of ideology and religion. A nonreligious state emerges as a characteristic of German foreign policy that correlates with peace, while the Islamic terrorists and the evangelical Americans act militantly as the Others. Religion is in general fanatical, irrational and violent. Intriguingly, the SPIEGEL uses religious (predominantly Christian, as know by their readers) icons for their anti-religious constructions.

A second, new element of identity becomes noticeable in the media discourse - the “threatened Germany”. For the SPIEGEL, the Afghanistan mission presents a domestic political security threat. The worsening of the threat increases with every renewal of the mandate. The argumentation goes therefore contrary to the political discourse, whereby the actors refer to the domestic security situation - security serving as a positive justification.

How does the relationship of the political and medial discourse present itself and what can we conclude from it? Initially, the differences regarding the particular discourse hegemonies are interesting. While the supporters are clearly in the majority in the political discourse and therefore the arguments for a legitimacy of the mission are hegemonic, the SPIEGEL is clearly and permanently an adversary of the mission. In the case of Afghanistan we can say there currently is a oppositional medial sphere. This was entirely non-existent during the Kosovo War. As Eilders and Lüter (2002: 118) state:

“The public becomes particularly significant, when there is a vast consent in the parliamentary system and, in this respect, the opposition does not take on its control function […] The analysis of the medial discourse in the Kosovo War showed us impressively that the critics of the NATO intervention did not achieve to reach an audience in Germany on a mass media level. The consensus portfolio in the medial discourse concerning the legitimacy and the usefulness of the war were […] exceedingly extensive.”

[our translation from German]

This oppositional public sphere to the hegemonial pro-Afghanistan-discourse of the political class is exemplary formed by the SPIEGEL in this paper. The magazine largely
follows the argumentations of the pacifistic discourse formation, that is represented in parliament by members of the LINKE (leftist) and clearly is in the minority. Consequently it takes on an oppositional control function (Strohmeier 2004: 72 et seq).

The fundamentally pacifistic reporting of the SPIEGEL could have been the cause for the increasingly dismissive attitude in the public, regardless of the acceptance in the political discourse throughout the course of the campaign. Should this thesis be confirmed by further media research, it would indicate a reciprocal relationship between the media and politics.

Generally the points of reference are similar within the political and medial discourse, in the way that they both refer to the principles of German identity. While the political class takes the identity stocks up more explicitly, we find them more implicitly in the media imagery. They can be identitarily tied back through the deconstruction of semantic relations, Us-Others-, or rather Friend-Enemy-dichotomies and paradigm creations. The medial form of illustration follows typical enemy image constructions. This being prototypical for the SPIEGEL in the case of Afghanistan and can be seen in similar ways in the coverage of magazines such as Focus, Stern and in the BILD newspaper: “These print editions function through a mix of image language and symbols, with threatening masses of people, angry men, veiled women.” (Becker 2002: 149, our translation)

Furthermore, certain elements are more present in the political discourse as in the medial discourse and vice versa. In that respect the multilateral and european Germany has no significance in the SPIEGEL, while in politics it forms the central argumentation pattern. Equally, a certain ignorance is shown by the medial discourse towards the international institutions and treaties, for example towards the UN, NATO and the international law: While the UN and the international law find great significance in the political discourse and are the main argument for the legitimacy of the Bundeswehr mission, they stay meaningless in the medial discourse. For the SPIEGEL, religion is an important aspect, perceived as new in the foreign political German discourse and refers to the identitary basis of the Christian-enlightened Germany. Remarkably, in the debate of the political elite, this element of identity stays insignificant. Admittedly, this is certainly due to particularities of

19 Cf. Becker 2002: 148 et seq. Following his findings, only the Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung is excluded from this assessment.
the medial discourse, that have been hinted on in this analysis and that are commonly known in the media sciences. They can be summarised under the catchwords 'emotionalisation', 'personalisation', 'dramatisation', 'eventisation'. Even the SPIEGEL follows boulevard typical forms of illustration, which comes as a surprise, as the SPIEGEL is commonly not known to be a boulevard magazine.

4. Perspective

The present pilot study has viewed the medial discourse on Afghanistan under identitary aspects. The images from Afghanistan have produced partly foreseeable and partly surprising results. In any case, they will open a new spectre of research in IR and expose new theoretical, methodical and empirical findings. The idea was mainly about image meaning and content, as the main research interest of this paper was in the message of images. Continuative papers in the areas of communicator and effect research, focusing specifically on the image producer and receiver, would be intriguing. The present paper understands itself to belong to pioneer studies of image analysis in IR that discusses and makes image meaning in its illustrative and culturally dependable dimension accessible. The hermeneutical process leads to a better understanding of foreign political reporting in particular, and the in- and exclusion process, friend-foe dichotomy, cliches etc. with the construction of reality and identity in general.
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