

Global Discourse >
An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought
Volume 7, 2017 - Issue 2-3: Visualizing violence: aesthetics and ethics in international politics

413 Views | 22 CrossRef citations to date | 2 Altmetric


Article

Social media, gender and the mediatization of war: exploring the German armed forces' visual representation of the Afghanistan operation on Facebook

David Shim & Frank A. Stengel  

Pages 330-347 | Received 15 Oct 2016, Accepted 31 May 2017, Published online: 27 Jul 2017

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2017.1337982>

 Check for updates


Sample our Politics & International Relations Journals
[>> Sign in here to start your access](#)

We Care About Your Privacy

We and our 878 partners store and access personal data, like browsing data or unique identifiers, on your device. Selecting I Accept enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads you see may not be as relevant to you. You can resurface this menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Show Purposes link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our Website. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy. [Here](#)

We and our partners process data to provide:

- Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device

I Accept 

Reject All

Show Purpose



Full Ar
Repri

ABSTF
Studies
visual
exam
article fo
publicati
argue th
engager
and with
masculin

gulate the
able
n. This
e
ally, we
itary Studies
ion between
ary mission

in Afghanistan as represented on the German armed forces' official Facebook page.

Germany constitutes an interesting, and largely neglected, case for the growing literature on the mediatization of war: its strong antimilitarist political culture makes the representation of war particularly delicate. The article examines specific representational patterns of Germany's involvement in Afghanistan and discusses the implications which arise from what is placed inside the frame of visibility and what remains out of its view.

KEYWORDS: Social media military Facebook mediatization of war Feminist Security Studies feminist technoscience gender Critical Military Studies Germany Afghanistan

Acknowledgements

Previous versions of this article were presented at the workshop 'Visual Culture and the Legitimation of Military Interventions' at the University of Magdeburg in August 2014, the 2012 and 2015 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association in San Diego and New Orleans, respectively. The authors would like to thank the participants in these events, and in particular Anna Geis, Lene Hansen, Juha Vuori and Gabi Schlag, as well as Jana Jarren, for their insightful comments, as well as the editor and reviewers of the journal. Malte Kayßer and Philipp Olbrich have provided valuable research assistance.

Disclosure

No potential conflicts of interest were declared by the authors.

No



1. This is a preliminary report of the research. The order of the text is not necessarily the order of the events.

2. In comparison with the traditional face-to-face communication, the new focus on culture and communication is a new place via digital social media, increasingly different from the traditional face-to-face communication. Increasingly communicate not face-to-face but via digital social media, this will have an effect on

society. As opposed to that, we use the term here more broadly to refer to the representation of war and violent conflict in different media, in line with the usage in the mediatization of war literature.

3. We focus here on states and their agencies but as the example of the Islamic State makes clear, this also applies to non-state actors (see Rid and Hecker [2009](#)).

4. This not just includes traditional news media like magazines (the US Stars and Stripes and the German magazine Y being just two examples) but also popular culture, with some state agencies even producing their own comics (see Shim [forthcoming](#)).

5. Given the limited space available and the general thematic focus of this special issue on visuality, we omit a detailed discussion of the relevance of visual media in general and photography in particular. This has, in any case, been provided elsewhere (see, in particular, Hansen [2011](#); [2015](#); Shim [2014](#)).

6. The only two contributions on the German armed forces' social media presence are a descriptive overview of these activities (Jacobs [2016](#)) and an evaluation of its effectiveness in reaching the intended audience (Günther [2016](#)).

7. We would like to thank Laura Shepherd for pointing us to this aspect.

8. In reality, gender discourse is more complicated than the binary suggests, with different (Connell [2005](#)). V

9. In the (on of) death stems from ability of the human k t stems from the

10. T

11. Altho could have to do a cro

12. The 2013. From 2010 to ho had establish



13. The Bundeswehr's increased presence on social media comes amid increased recruiting efforts of the Bundeswehr after the moratorium of conscription in 2011 and attempts to raise awareness for, and the acceptance of, the armed forces' increasingly 'robust' international role in German society. According to the Bundeswehr, its YouTube and Flickr channels are intended to provide 'a "first-hand", extensive, realistic and above all transparent image of the daily routine and operational reality of our soldiers' (BMVg [2011](#)) for German citizens. It is reasonable to assume that the Facebook page also serves mainly this purpose.

14. Schlag and Heck ([2012](#)) for example analyse a single image.

15. Note that some images show different types of vehicles at once, so the numbers cannot simply be added up.

16. Due to legal restrictions, this particular image could not be reproduced here, but it is available online:

<https://www.facebook.com/Bundeswehr/photos/a.124539210944013.19483.122840837780517/220959664635300/?type=3&theater>

17. The literature on sunglasses and their effect on the outside viewer is still limited. But Brown ([2015](#)) has recently examined their connection to notions of 'cool' in fashion. Coolness above all stands for a limited emotional involvement, again a typically

masculine situation.

18. In the aesthetic retro shades (hardly imaginable like military warrior)

19. The face of coolness in the

20. When is a recurring

21. Likes unambiguously positive association with specific online content like for instance photographs or status

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by
22

Information for

- Authors
- R&D professionals
- Editors
- Librarians
- Societies

Opportunities

- Reprints and e-prints
- Advertising solutions
- Accelerated publication
- Corporate access solutions

Open access

- Overview
- Open journals
- Open Select
- Dove Medical Press
- F1000Research

Help and information

- Help and contact
- Newsroom
- All journals
- Books

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email

 Sign up

Copyright

Access

Register
5 Howick Pl

Wiley & Francis Group
Wiley is a John Wiley & Sons business

