

Imagining Europe's security engagement in Africa – Justification narratives and Visual Culture

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FIRST DRAFT

Under construction – comments are most welcome!

Introduction

Europe and Africa are sharing a burdened history. During the 18th and 19th century many European states established a colonial legacy in most parts of the African continent. Many of today's territorial or ethnical conflicts are the bloody heritage of colonial and post-colonial times. In the 1970s the preceding organization of the European Union, the European Community (EC), became aware of its special responsibility for Africa. The EC negotiated several multilateral agreements to intensify its economic and humanitarian assistance (e.g. Lomé conventions). Especially the northern African Maghreb states gained from economic exchange with the rich European countries. Sub-Saharan and Central African states couldn't profit in the same way. In 2000, the European Union started a new initiative to intensify its relationship with these countries. Due to massive security, economic and humanitarian problems after many years of civil war, the EU directed its eye on the Democratic Republic of Congo, a former Belgian colony. For a long time, the relationship between Europe and Africa has been dominated by economic and humanitarian issues while security assistance (in particular military missions) has been widely

excluded. In 2003 this issue has popped up on the agenda by the first military mission the EU conducted without direct NATO-support: Operation ARTEMIS. In this paper, we will focus on the question how this tremendous evolution of EU's Africa policy was made possible and how this military mission is justified by words *and* images. After we have briefly developed our key argument in the following pages, we will illustrate how "visual narratives of justification" function according to the ESDP's ARTEMIS-mission.

The paper starts with a contemplation about orders of - and the right to "justification". This leads to the question, how "justifications" as such enter political discourses. According to a post-structuralist understanding of "language" we argue that language is not only a "tool" used by the speaker but a performative act. We try to apply this argument on "visuals", stating that pictures, films and other "visuals" are performing reality and create meaning as well - they are not merely "vehicles" of information, expressing the intentions of the sender. Referring to works on visual culture and aesthetic theory, we try to provide a basic methodological framework to analyze "visuals" in IR – especially "visual narratives of justification". In the second part of the paper, we provide a basic interpretative analysis of the "visualization" of the ARTEMIS-mission.

Orders of Justification

Terms such as "politics" and "order" are widely used as a standard vocabulary in political science to address questions of authority, rule and legitimacy. However, their meaning remains rather contentious, even contested in academic and political discourses. Rainer Forst, a political theorist, addresses to these topics and argues that political orders are "orders of justification", based on norms and institutions. These norms and institutions function as justified and justifying guidelines for cooperation and conflict (Forst 2007: 9). Based on the conviction that a "universal human right of justification" exists, Forst states "that there should be no political or social power constellations that cannot be adequately justified to those affected by them" (Forst 2007: 10, translation after van den Brink 2008: 57). Accordingly, Forst develops a thoughtful theory of justification, founded on Rawls "Theory of Justice" and Kant's categorical imperative to respect other people "as ends in itself" (Forst 2007: 10, our translation).

Especially in the realm of international politics, the obligation to justify political decisions (for example embargos or interventions) seems to be essential. Because international politics are not merely organized and justified by one central authority - some IR theorists speak of an "anarchic system" (Waltz 1979) - alternative forms to produce political legitimacy become necessary. For

example, the General Assembly of the United Nations offers political leaders no matter whether they are democratically elected or not, a forum to defend or condemn political decisions, to justify these to a global public. The resolutions of the Security Council could be described as “justifications” not only in the juridical sense, but also morally. They imbue normative and reasonable arguments in order to produce acceptance of a collective decision in the absence of an unquestioned global authority. Justification orders may evolve and transform in particular in those spheres of public life where common hierarchical conceptions of politics, order and legitimacy are rather underdeveloped. Then, one could say that international political orders are merely produced and maintained by articulations and speech acts which follow a specific “grammar” of justification.

Bearing this in mind, Forst draws a distinction between “rational explanations” and “reasonable justifications”. “Rational explanations” are normatively neutral; they are merely driven by the consideration that means are perceived as appropriate to reach a specific end. “Reasonable justifications”, in contrast, must give an answer to the question, whether the decision was ethically or morally justified. They rest on normative convictions (Forst 2007: 26).

A brief look into political debates makes clear that political leaders not only use “rational explanations” but heavily rely on “reasonable justifications”. The “moral” and “normative” foundation of a political decision appears to be of higher public interest and reduces the possibility of reasonable counter-arguments. In contrast, “rational explanations” are perceived as rather “selfish”, “particular”, and “exclusive” – i.e. morally vulnerable.

Forst’s work offers a first hint on why and how narratives of justification are important in order to understand the state and transformation of international politics. Although he basically calls his theory a “constructivist theory of justice” this statement should not be confused with common IR usages of the term “constructivism”. Forst’s central argument, that there is a universal “right to justification” poses the basic question how “orders of justification” (understood as political orders) are constituted and re-articulated. As a political theorist, he is primarily concerned with the normative, moral, and ethical foundations of justification and the question how the universal “right to justification” could be morally “justified”. In this paper, instead, the central question, we will address, is how these “justifications” practically enter public discourses. Here, “linguistic” and “visual” articulations may imbue a “grammar” of justification which has been largely ignored by IR, especially by most research on the foreign and security policy of the European Union. This paper starts an attempt to analyze “visual narratives of

justification” articulated by the European Union (and its main institutions)¹. When the use of force has to be legitimized, visual narratives may play an important part in order to produce reasons and facts why a military engagement is necessary, even unavoidable.²

The paper contains two major parts. In the first part, we will try to clarify some theoretical aspects concerning the analysis of “linguistic” and “visual” narratives of justification. In the second part, we will briefly (and only incompletely) illustrate how an analysis of linguistic and especially visual narratives of justification could be conducted.

The “linguistic turn” in foreign policy analysis

Some years ago, the “linguistic and cultural turn” has reached the margins of IR. Social constructivist and especially post-structuralist scholars have been engaged with the constitutive effects of language for quite some time and produced some fruitful methodological considerations. The pragmatist Richard Rorty has characterized the history of philosophy as a history of turns in which new problems appear while old ones begin to vanish (Rorty 1987). He proclaimed the “linguistic turn” in the late 1960’s (Rorty 1967) criticizing a foundational, a-historical strand of philosophy. In a nutshell, Rorty argues that neither society nor nature are naturally given and could be perceived as taken for granted, but are constituted by discursive representations (see also Foucault’s work). Today, language-constructivist research and post-structuralist discourse analysis are widely accepted methodologies in IR. However, one should be careful because according to Francois Debrix (2003) constructivism and post-structuralism are separated by a different understanding of language. Many social constructivists understand language merely as a “tool” and focus on the evolution of shared norm and identities as well as aspects of normative compliance. They mostly refer to language as a transporter and mirror of meaning in a neutral way. Post-structuralists, in contrast, claim that neither the intentions of the speaker nor the uncontestedness of norms and identities depicts the power of language in an adequate way. The speech, i.e. that what has been said, is the act, the performance of the object at hand. Speech acts constitute the meaning of a thing, an event, even an object.

¹ In this paper, we will not systematically address the question of actorhood, of who is speaking in the name of. It would be rather blunt to argue that the “EU is speaking”. However, it may be important to recognize that “Solana is speaking in the name of the EU”.

² Advocates of the Copenhagen School, for example, have argued that “speaking security” is productive of a state of emergency where extraordinary measures are justified in order to protect an endangered referent object (Buzan/de Wilde/Wæver 1998; Wæver 1995).

One of the most prominent advocates of discourse analytical approach to foreign policy is Lene Hansen. She states, “foreign policies need an account, or a story of the problems and issues they are trying to address (...). Foreign policies are legitimized as necessary, as in the national interest or in the defense of human rights (...)” (Hansen 2006: xvi). According to a post-structural approach, Hansen analyses processes of formulation and re-formulation of identity in foreign policy discourses. Therefore, she strongly emphasizes the importance of language as a “constitutive for what is brought into being” (Hansen 2006: 17). Hence:

“Language is not a transparent tool functioning as a medium for the registration of data as assumed by positivists, empiricist science, but a field of social and political practice, and hence there is no objective or true meaning beyond the linguistic representation to which one can refer.” (Shapiro 1981: 218, cited in Hansen 2006: 18).

Hansen differentiates between the social and the political practice of language. The social character of language implies that individuals are socialized into connecting sounds with particular objects. They learn to understand and use a vocabulary. Children discover that the sound of a specific word like “chair” or “table” refers to an object where you can sit or eat on. To understand the *political* practice of language Hansen refers to an example derived from 19th century discourses about women and politics. She argues that women were widely considered to have a political identity fundamentally different from that of men. They were defined as “motherly”, “nurturing”, “incapable of comprehending complex political and financial questions” and “emotional” (Hansen 2006: 19). The political consequences of these ascriptions had been that women were widely excluded from political processes: “it made female political influence inappropriate if not outright dangerous” (Hansen 2006: 19). Women’s movements and rights advocates challenged this conception of “being a woman” and changed the taken for granted connection of properties and gender (Hansen 2006: 19).

Referring to the works of Foucault and Derrida, Hansen describes language as a system of differential signs. According to Derrida, meaning is not established by the essence of a thing itself but through a series of juxtapositions, where one element is valued over its opposite (Hansen 2006: 19, after Derrida 1976, 1978). Discourses construct meaning by privileging one sign on the one hand and devaluing a comparable sign on the other hand. To speak of a “developed world” only makes sense, when we have an idea of “underdevelopment”. These descriptions are not politically neutral but productive of the world we act upon.

Hansen argues that an object like “woman” is defined through a positive “process of linking” propositions such as “emotional”, “motherly”, “reliant” and “simple”. However, equivalences are

juxtaposed to an object called “male” which is also linked to a series of positive characteristics. Hence, the process of positive linking is accompanied by a negative process of differentiation: men are defined as “rational”, “intellectual”, “complex”, “independent” superior to “women” who are articulated as “motherly”, “emotional” etc.. Both processes could be separated analytically but they are “both part and parcel of the process of identity construction and enacted simultaneously” (Hansen 2006: 19).

Lene Hansen discourse approach could help to understand how orders of justification are established. The “process of linking” attributes (emotional, motherly etc.) to a specific object (women) and linking rational, intellectual and “independent” to men follows a specific “grammar” which constructs a kind of political “narrative” or “story”. Rainer Forst’s conception of an “order of justification” rests on specific narratives, which are steadily produced and reproduced through political and social practices. The story of the “emotional” and “simple minded” women who are “politically incapable” compared to the “intellectual” and “wise” men had been inscribed into the collective identity of 19th century societies and was widely accepted as a “reasonable justification” to exclude women from political power. However, the “suffragettes” and other social movements started to doubt these established and taken for granted “reasonable justification” the political order was mainly built on. The dominant narrative on “motherly”, “emotional” and “simple minded” women was challenged, and the established “order of justification” came under attack.

We think that elaborating the link between speech acts and visual articulations in more detail could be helpful to understand how orders of justification are formed. Most convincingly to us sound those stories which are derived from reality. While statistical data is always questionable - scientific research alike - many politicians are making use of a rhetorical trick to justify their political positions or decisions. When it comes to social issues, education or health care, they tell the “sad but true” stories of people and the fates of families, they have for example met during their election campaign. In international politics, referring to “nevermore Auschwitz” (like for example Joschka Fischer did in the Kosovo-crisis) and the war against Nazi Germany (like for example President Obama did in his Nobel-price speech) is commonly used to “reasonably justify” military interventions and war. These stories are *performing* reality, they are treated as they were equal to reality, and no one can ignore or deny them without getting morally under pressure. Used as narratives of justification, these stories unfold an enormous political power because they tell us how the world *is*.

Visuals are a central part of such narratives of justification when they depict reality. We argue that “visual narratives of justification” are based on a specific visual “grammar”. The “visual grammar of justification” is on a functional level comparable to the “grammar of justification” in speech-acts, but certainly follows different “rules”. To understand these “rules” of visual grammar, it is helpful to get in touch with works on “visual culture” and “aesthetic theory”.

Identifying visual narratives of justification and the political power of “visual grammar”

W. J. T. Mitchell is certainly one of the masterminds of iconology and visual culture. In his work, he addresses basic questions like “what is a picture” or what does “representation” mean. One of the main points he is referring to concerns the difference between reality and pictures. According to Wittgenstein and in contrast to a positivistic understanding Mitchell argues, that pictures are not a “window” to, or “copy” of a specific “reality” (Mitchell 2008: 45). He compares pictures with a geometric diagram of an algebraic equation. The pictures itself are realities, although they are in some cases (films, photographs) derived from another reality, they might represent. To keep this in mind is very important because it refers to something we have already observed in the debates about the post-structuralist understanding of language: language does not only “stand for” reality, it is a performing “reality”.

This assumption shall be applied to all kinds of visuals – they not neutrally describing but performing “realities– independently from what they represent. This is a difficult task, because one might slip into an ontological trap. The philosopher Martin Seel, for example, insists that pictures cannot substitute reality, because pictures only exist, if there is a “real” reason for their being, which is different from the reality shown by the picture: “Without the reality of the picture-object, there is no picture” (Seel 2003, 292, my translation)

Seel argues, that there is still a difference between reality and the picture. In fact, this perceivable difference between the picture and the represented reality is a precondition for perceiving a picture at all. According to Seel, the *perception* of the difference is central not the material dimension of the difference. Many authors have referred to Magritte’s famous painting *Ceci n’est pas une pipe*, when it comes to the question what is “real” and what is



represented reality (see e.g. Foucault). We would argue that some pictures, especially documentary photographs or films, try to circumvent this distinction by “claiming truth”. They aim at replacing reality.

The “visual grammar” of these films, pictures and photographs tries to make us *believe* that the “story” told by the pictures and the represented *reality* are alike, although we know it is ontologically impossible. These visuals are “claiming for truth” and trying to equalize the “visual” and “reality” they represent due to a genuine justification potential.

This heartbreaking picture (published on www.worldproutassembly.org/famine.bmp), for example, shows the devastating consequences of malnutrition. The headline above this picture says “Moralists of the world - unite!” The “visual grammar” of this picture is so strong, emotional shaking and moralizing, that it seems even immoral to approach it analytically – it forces us to take it as “reality” as “true”, not as an object of representation.



To acknowledge the difference between *reality* and its representation by the picture opens the possibility to deny, ignore, and question the representations without ignoring or questioning the *reality* it might represent. The central aim of “visual narratives” which are used as moral justification (like in this example) is that they aim to dissolve this difference: their “visual grammar” is claiming for truth and equalizes “reality” and “representation”. Hence, if one ignores the picture, it is like ignoring the reality it represents. And isn’t ignoring reality immoral? The “visual grammar” of pictures holding a “truth claim” could unfold enormous feelings, emotions, and political pressure-for-action, and should be considered in political, especially IR analyses.

What we are referring to here, is the difference between the philosophical contemplation on the distinction between the visual performed “reality” and the “reality” represented by pictures, and the political or social use of pictures as “visual narratives of justification”.

Let us briefly repeat the baseline of the theoretical argument, we would like to present in this paper. Political decisions call for more than a “rational explanation”, they require a “reasonable justification” (Forst). Reasonable justifications are based on a specific storyline or a narrative, which is largely taken for granted and dominating the discourses (Hansen). Language and its performative ability play a crucial role in this process. According to this position, all kinds of pictures, films, photographs etc. are *performing* reality, too. In particular those visuals which are presenting their content in a way of “claiming truth” are of central political relevance. Due to their “visual grammar”, these pictures are likely to be used as “visual narratives of justification”, because they are trying to equalize the difference between the “visual narrative” and the “reality” this narrative is based on. Entering political discourses as narratives of justifications these “visuals” unfold massive political pressure and power.

The visual turn in IR – some suggestions on existing research

An intellectual history of the visual can be dated back to the invention of mankind, for example the wall-paintings of hunting during the stone-age, the cave allegory of Plato or the biblical prohibition of visualizing God. Since the 1950s arts and social sciences have been infected by a cultural turn which emphasized the social construction and reproduction of artefacts as systems of meaning and communication. The turn to culture was closely linked with the “linguistic turn” confessing that meaning is only produced by and through language. Today, social sciences propagate an “aesthetic” (Bleiker 2001), “pictorial” (Boehm 1995) “iconic turn” (Mitchell 1995) arguing that non-linguistic artefacts such as images, photos, symbols, architecture and art also produce systems of meaning.

The scientific tradition of analysing culture, particularly visual culture is long and manifold. While iconography was interested in an intrinsic interpretation of visuals (mainly paintings and sculptures of fine art), members of the Frankfurt School such as Theodore W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Walter Benjamin argued that culture is detected by modern, industrial mechanisms of production where artefacts become goods.

After the WW II the analysis of cultural processes developed as a distinct research field, especially in Great Britain and the USA. Fine art as the dominant research object was slowly replaced by popular culture and mass media. For example, Richard Hoggart studied cultural practices like reading literature in relation to individual lives and analysed the relationship between popular culture and British working class society. Thereby, cultural studies explored cultures’ political function and the link between culture and the state (i.e. education, funding). The linguistic turn refocused the analysis of cultural artefacts on semiotics, the study of signs and “their general role as vehicles of meaning in culture” (Hall 1997:6, James Clifford). Hall conceptualised culture as a signifying practice which is distributed by institutions and media. Therefore, questions of coding and de-coding the meaning of culture became more prominent. Hall criticized the linear conception of communication (“sender – message – receiver”) and emphasised the active process of producing and understanding culture. While Hall’s perspective excluded the question of power to be a category for discursive approaches (Hall 1997:6), upcoming French theory emphasised topics like cultural capital (Bourdieu) and different ways of belonging, self-formation associated with power and knowledge (Foucault).

This (very) short overview shows that artifacts like images and photos are embedded in an interdisciplinary field analyzing the production and reception modes of culture, its societal implications and power effects from various theoretical perspectives. Recently, International

Relations (IR) scholars have tried to follow this way by incorporating movies, photos, art, literature and music into their research.

How visuals entered IR

Political science in general has occasionally paid attention to visual culture. In the German context, Klaus von Beyme argued for the development of a “Kunstpolitologie” (study of art politics) to pose questions of legitimacy and democracy related to cultural artefacts (von Beyme 1998). Von Beyme is mainly interested in the relation between art and political power, e.g. how states fund artists, how architecture communicates principles of democracy. IR has chosen a quite similar way. A growing discussion of visual culture in IR is linked to the formation of postmodern and poststructuralist strands in the discipline (for a critical approach see, Holden 2006). Michael J. Shapiro and James Der Derian were sensible for the visual dimension of politics already in the mid 1980s. Since then, the inclusion of films and images has reached its preliminary climax with two special issues of *Millennium* (2001, 2006) on the aesthetic turn and a special issue of *Security Dialogue* (2007) on Securitization, Militarization and Visual Culture in the Worlds of post 9/11.

The recent proclamation of a “pictorial turn” in IR seems to be a promising starting point in order to understand the practices of visual justification. The pictorial turn is primarily about the inclusion of visuals into the analysis of ir/IR. Visuals range from popular culture, e.g. comics, movies, music, photography to arts in a more narrow sense such as literature and paintings. Either the political implications of visual products are analyzed or products of popular culture and high art are used as sources of illustration or critique. The political quality of a painting or a symphony is not primarily judged by its content or context (for example Picasso’s *Guernica*) but intrinsic to its relation to the “consumer”. The variety of how to incorporate the visual and audio is quite broad and rather creative/eclectic.

Taking visuals in IR seriously is a process, which started already in the 1990s with the emergence of post-positivist approaches. Roland Bleiker was one of the first IR-researchers who proclaimed an “aesthetic turn” in IR. Bleiker argues that social science for a long time followed a “mimetic” principle of research believing that social sciences are able to bring out something ‘true’ and ‘real’ using “well-established procedures of inquiry” (Bleiker 2001: 509, quoting King/Keohane/Verba 1994: 6). Bleiker observes two ways of social research: “The first seeks to discover a truth or an origin that somehow escapes the necessity of interpretation. The second accepts or even affirms that representing the political is a form of interpretation that is, by its very nature, incomplete and

bound up with the values of the perceiver” (Bleiker 2001: 511). Although Bleiker’s intentions are highly valuable he primarily re-labels a rather old debate between positivism and post-positivism (see e.g. Onuf 1989, Kratochwil 1989, later Campbell) which started already in the late 1980s in terms of “mimetic” versus “aesthetic” approaches.

The fundamental problem here is that the term “aesthetic” seems to be quite misleading. “Aesthetic” is a process of becoming aware of the “existence” of the regarded object without any external end. To approach objects aesthetically means to experience their existence as such,



despite all external means and ends the objects might have in other contexts. High art (here van Gogh’s *Star Night*) is especially receptive for aesthetic approaches, because the aesthetic experience is more or less its destiny. Of course, we could approach van Gogh’s work in non-aesthetic

ways, if we treat it for example as a financial investment, or a research object of art-history. However, these approaches are driven by external ends, not by an aesthetic experience. Science is always driven by external ends, at least to “find something out” which goes beyond perceiving and experiencing the mere “existence” of an object. “Aesthetic”-science, then, may sound as a contradiction in itself. With regard to the recent debate in IR, we would prefer the term “visual turn”.

Nevertheless, Bleiker is one of the most important researchers, when it comes to the question how and why IR should take visuals seriously:

“By legitimising images, narratives and sounds as important sources for insight into world politics, aesthetic approaches have moved scholarship away from an exclusive and often very narrow reliance on diplomatic documents, statistical data, political speeches, academic treatises and other traditional sources of knowledge about the international” (Bleiker 2001: 526).

Bleiker refers to the work of many photographers who visualized indigenous life (e.g. Alphonse Bertillon) and shaped western understanding, prejudices, and colonial discourses (Bleiker 2001: 528). Beside Bleiker many scholars focussed on visual and popular culture in recent years. One of the first journals which published discussions of visual culture was *Millennium* including contributions on the relation between ir/IR and science fiction (Brown, Neumann), movies (Caruthers, Lacy), literature (Costantinou, Smith), new media (Der Derian), comedy (Odysseos), music (Shapiro), and art (Sylvester).

In 2006, *Millennium* published a special issue on the sublime including work on movies, literature and art again. Here, Holden’s contribution on cinematic IR is extremely instructive. For Holden

the gravity centre of the aesthetic turn is the “widespread conception of intertextuality and mutual constitution between aesthetic treatments and the stuff of world politics” (Holden 2006: 801). Although being sympathetic with the aesthetic turn, he argues that “aesthetic IR’s self-presentation as ‘critical’ leads to a dilemma: either works of art are irrelevant to IR, or aesthetic IR fails to make good its claim to offer a specific and original contribution” (Holden 2006: 793). When selecting their sources, most scholars rely on a crude binary of critical/un-critical aesthetic work (Holden 2006: 794). Either fails aesthetic IR to show the added value compared to research done in the cultural studies (for example) or the selected movies and literature simply illustrate the normative judgments of being ‘critical’ one holds in advance.

The central argument of the visual turn – so far reconsidered – is twofold. First, aesthetics help to understand the inevitable gap between the representation and the represented (the signifier and the signified). Epistemologically, aesthetic approaches are post-positivist and constructivist. What we know and how we know is dependent on representations of x, not x itself. In this sense, the aesthetic turn shares much of its epistemological and ontological basis with the so called linguistic turn, the evolution of social constructivism and poststructuralism in IR. However, the proponents of the aesthetic turn try to go a step further and advocate non-linguistic artifacts such as photos, movies, art, and music as a source for contemplating (mostly “critique”) about world politics. If we want to learn something about war, we should look at photos – for example. This leaves us with the question how the word and image relate to each other. Is signification by a painting without uttering words possible?

One major shortcoming, we argue, is an abstinence of a thoughtful theorizing of the visual in aesthetic ir. Most scholars of the aesthetic turn “just use” aesthetic work without debating its aesthetic character. What is a painting? What do pictures do? The differentiation of genres seems to be a quite important topic the aesthetic turn has only slightly addressed. A painting of art is based on different practices of production and consumption than a photo, a novel or a symphony. To understand the use of language – visual language – we should be aware of the context- and genre-specific practices. Common references to intertextuality and representations are not enough to really understand the power of the image. How can we catch the power of images in the realm of international politics?

Europe’s engagement in Africa – a short overview

The history between Europe and Africa is all but glorious. Both continents shared a bloody colonial history, when the predecessor of the EU, the European Community, started in 1975 to

foster the relationship with former colonies of its member states. The Lomé conventions provided the African, Caribbean, and Pacific states (ACP-states) with special trading conditions. Europe developed a new policy approach toward Africa (Holland 2002). But Europe's strategy was mainly driven by geostrategic thinking. While North-Africa, especially the Maghreb region and the Mediterranean states became a region of special interest for trade and economic exchange (Barcelona-process), the African states in the Sub-Saharan region remained recipient of development aid and humanitarian assistance. Then, at an intergovernmental conference in Cairo in 2000, the EU initiated an EU Africa dialogue to build up a "new strategic political partnership for the future, overcoming the traditional donor-recipient relationship" between Europe and especially Sub-Saharan Africa (Lisabon declaration EU-Africa summit). The EU declared to establish an integrated approach of conflict prevention based on economic, political and increasingly military instruments. Beside this engagement of the EU, there is still a bilateral policy of the member states, in particular France and Belgium.³

The case: EU operations in the DR Congo

The Great Lakes region in Africa is facing multiple security problems since the 1960s. Most prominent was the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The bloody conflicts in the DR Congo only occasionally appear in our newspapers, for example when the German journalist Thomas Scheen was kidnapped by the Mai Mai rebels in 2008.

Belgian-Congo became independent from Belgium in 1960, but remained an object of interest of Western powers during the Cold War. After the assassination of the first elected president Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Desire Mobuto, who was leader of a strong rebellion group overthrew the government in 1965 and named the country Zaire. Mobuto ruled the country with "a rod of iron" until he was overthrown himself by Laurent Kabila in 1997, who renamed the country Democratic Republic of Congo. Although Kabila was supported by neighboring countries, he never managed to establish a stable order. Especially the Kivu region in the north-east remained disordered. The Kivu region, which is neighbored by Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi is famous for one of the most important objects of desire buried in the earth of Congo: Coltan. Coltan is a raw material, which contains one of the most expensive naturals: Tantal. These materials are used in nearly all modern technologies and are of high strategic importance. One out of many reasons

³ Unfortunately, the bilateral engagement could not be considered in this paper, although it would be extremely interesting whether one could observe different visual narratives of justification on the national level. This could be one point for further research.

for the violent situation in the DR Congo and ongoing fights with rebellion groups in neighbor-states, is certainly the fight for Coltan (e.g. Wallbott 2010)

Since 1994 Congo has witnessed a brutal civil war interconnected with violent conflicts in its neighboring countries, especially Uganda and Rwanda. During the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 nearly one million refugees, victims and criminals escaped to the Congo and furthered the destabilization of Kivu. One major problem at that time was that in Rwanda the tensions between the Hutu and the Tutsi increased dramatically. Mobutu was unable to stop the formation of Hutu groups on Congolese territory - the Hutu have been the oppressed majority in Rwanda - and therefore conflicts with the Tutsi government in Rwanda broke out. Mobutu's major rival, Laurent Kabila, now president of Congo, gained support of the neighbor states which enabled him to overthrow Mobutu in 1997. But, he put this support at risk, when he started to deal with the Hutu after he became president (Martinelli 2008, 115).

The political, material, ethnical and historic dimensions of this conflict are much more complex, than emphasized here. The civil war casualties are estimated to be more than four million people.

Operation Artemis



In 1999 the UN succeeded in negotiating a cease-fire and sent a peace-keeping force to the North-east. In 2002 the peace agreement ended six years of civil war in the DR Congo and arranged a constitutional process, including economic reforms and election in 2006. In 2000, the UN started one of the largest peace-keeping missions in its history: MONUC. In 2004 the UN decided to equip MONUC with a robust mandate under chapter VII. The annual financial costs of MONUC exceed one billion dollar.

In 2003, the first EU-led mission was launched in the DR Congo, called Artemis. According to UNSC Resolution 1484 (2003) the Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan requested the EU to implement an “interim emergency multinational force” in the north-east of the DR Congo to ease the tensed relationship between the Hema and Lendu tribes in preparation to strengthen the MONUC-mission (Menon 2004, Brittain/Conchiglia 2006, Lindstrom 2004, Mair 2003). 2000 Soldiers, half of them French, were deployed in Bunia, the capital of the Ituri region. France acted as a framework nation, leading a troop of armed forces from 17 countries (Gegout 2005: 435). The operation Artemis was the first EU-led military mission without NATO support and realized the new framework nation concept the EU had endorsed in July 2002. The

mission was conducted beyond the Berlin plus agreement that NATO members (especially the USA) had no influence on the conceptualization, implementation and enforcement of the Artemis mission.

Analyzing narratives of justification

Before we start to analyze the visual narrative of justification, the linguistic narrative of justification of the Artemis-mission should be reconsidered. Therefore, we have chosen the first official statement of the High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, Javier Solana, on the preparation of the Artemis-mission.⁴

Quotations from the first remarks on the preparation of the Artemis-mission, by Javier Solana:

“I just met with the ambassadors of the Political and Security Committee and I am pleased to announce that we have agreed on the Joint Action, which establishes the principle of launching an EU-led military operation.

The situation in the Ituri region constitutes a threat to the peace process in the Democratic Republic of Congo and to peace and security in the wider Great Lakes region (...). We are facing a humanitarian crisis (...).

Our objective is to help stabilise the situation, pending the reinforcement of the MONUC contingent (...). They all [President Kabila (DR Congo) and President Kagame (Rwanda), AH] have welcomed and supported the EU engagement in response to the UN request.”

This statement exemplifies how the linguistic narrative of justification works. Solana proclaims a UNIVERSAL THREAT, because WE are facing a HUMANITARIAN CRISIS. By using the term WE, Solana emphasizes that he does not only speak for the members of the European Union, otherwise he could have said that explicitly. WE means all of us, we the “public”, the people of the world. Naming the crisis “humanitarian” detaches the crisis from its geographical focus, which is the great lake region. “Humanitarian crisis” is a transcendent term, which affects us all, “humanitarian” is not a matter of geography it’s a matter of humanity. To call a crisis “humanitarian” constructs a universal, non-geographic state of emergency, certainly providing the move for legitimizing extraordinary measures: a MILITARY OPERATION. A “humanitarian crisis” requires a “humanitarian intervention”, although Solana avoids the term “intervention” and uses OPERATION. He reassures the public that the EU is not intervening, but invited by

⁴ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Remarks%20SOLANA%2004.06.2003.pdf>

the regional groups. The object is to STABILIZE and pending the REINFORCEMENT of UNs MONUC contingent. Furthermore, the governments of the region SUPPORTED the EU engagement. By unifying the universal goal to stop a “humanitarian crisis” with the legitimacy of the UN and the support of local political leaders, he constructs a “reasonable justification” for a military operation and the decision to send 2000 European troops to the DR Congo.⁵

Let us offer a hypothetical argumentation to demonstrate the contingencies and the difference between “reasonable justification” and “rational explanation”. Solana could have argued, the EU seeks to enhance its geostrategic focus, to secure natural resources, to demonstrate post-colonial preponderance in Africa, to balance Chinas increasing influence etc. But these would have been more or less “rational explanations” not “reasonable justifications”.

There is much more depth in this example (and these remarks are just the beginning of a much broader narrative of justification), than illustrated here. How the use of language and the specific grammar suggested by using “humanitarian crisis” opens the scope of extraordinary action especially becomes obvious when we realize how language could be used to do the opposite – as Madeleine Albright did in 1994, when she spoke in front of the UN Security Council about the situation in Rwanda. With her famous phrase “there are single acts of genocide, but there is no genocide” she constrained the scope of action, she de-legitimized a possible intervention with regard to the UN-Charta.

The “visual narratives of justification” of the Artemis-Mission

The EU provides homepage-visitors with many pictures and audiovisual materials of the different ESDP-missions. Behind this visual presence certainly stands a corps of advisers, who have carefully chosen the pictures and videos According to our conceptualization of language and visuals as performative, the “true” intension of these advisers is not of importance here. The question is not to find out, what do they want to tell us or why did they select this photo. We are primarily interested in the stories and narratives told by the pictures. How is the mission “reasonably justified” by the visual narrative, how is the mission “visually performed”?

⁵ An additional theoretical framework to reconstruct such narratives could be Securitization Theory (e.g. Wæver 1995, Buzan, de Wilde, Wæver 1998).



“Commander in Chief”



“Diplomacy”



“Humanity”



“Statesmanship”

The EU provides 12 pictures (here a selection of nine) of the Artemis mission, covering Javier Solana’s visit to Buni, the capital of the Ituri-region where most tensions and conflicts are situated. The pictures are dated from July 16 2003, the order in which they are presented on the homepage seems not to be of further importance. To start the analysis, we linked the pictures to specific stories: “commander in chief”, “diplomacy”, “humanity” and “statesmanship”.

Legitimacy by Acceptance

The first two pictures show Javier Solana with soldiers and military representatives. Solana wearing a suit underlines the difference between his political status and the military personal. Nevertheless, the “visual grammar” makes him look like the “commander in chief” who is politically in charge. These pictures contain a doubled narrative of justification. On the one hand Solana’s authority official represents the EU and legitimizes the presence of the troops. On the other hand, soldiers talking to Solana legitimize his status as a political leader who is respected by the troops. This narrative of justification is referring to large debates within the EU about the

nexus between political and military authority and the question whether national army's would respect a centralized European command. Although ARTEMIS was under French command, the visual grammar of the pictures force us to believe that the EU is capable of holding military control over national troops. Of course, this debate could be traced back to the 1950s and the failed attempt to conduct the European Defense Community, because France refused to subordinate its national army under a European command. In 2003, the pictures say, things may have changed.

The next two pictures show Solana talking to local political authorities. The first one appears more informal, the second looks like a negotiation meeting. Solana doesn't wear a suit; he looks much more casual than his Congolese counterpart. The "visual grammar" of these pictures is referring to situations we commonly link to "diplomacy": politicians, representatives talking, while the delegations sitting in opposite to each other etc. In opposite to the first couple of pictures, this one shows a civil situation. Interestingly, the visual grammar is referring to debates about the diplomatic capability of the EU, which has been often accused of being cacophonous, and incoherent. The visual grammar makes Solana look like the central political representative in foreign affairs who is authorized to negotiate in the name of the EU.

The third group of pictures shows Solana grouped by ordinary people. The visual grammar underlines the "grass root"-factor of the mission. Solana appears to be nearby the people, aware of their sorrows, not just as elite-talker. The pictures tell us the story of "humanity" and the humanitarian character of Solana and the whole mission he represents.

The visual grammar of the fourth group is referring to situations we know from political summits. Politicians take their official role as state-representatives, being interviewed, and posing for the family photo. Solana embodies the casual European "statesman". Similar to the second group of pictures the visual grammar is referring to pictures we identify with as typically "state-like". The EU is depicted not only as an international organization, the pictures perform the EU acting like a "state".

Although each group, even each photo has its own "visual grammar" and its own story, we would argue that one meta-narrative keeps these pictures together: "acceptance". "Acceptance" seems to be one narrative-strand, all pictures more or less are relating to this theme. Solana is accepted as commander in chief by the European troops, he is accepted as a negotiating partner by the local authorities, he finds acceptance even by ordinary people, because he listens and takes care, and he is accepted as a states-representative. Solana as High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy politically represents the ARTEMIS-mission and, thereby, the whole

European Union. All visuals establish a grand narrative of a “common” EU foreign policy in the DR Congo, largely independent from its member states. Hence, the acceptance of a genuine role of the EU is a necessary precondition for legitimacy. In order to demonstrate the legitimacy of the mission, the visual narrative of the pictures reveals its broad acceptance.

Legitimacy by Subordination: Diplomacy over Military

While “acceptance” acts as a meta-narrative of justification, we would like to point out another meta-narrative to establish legitimacy: the visual grammar subordinates the military under diplomacy. At first glance, the presented pictures stand in a tremendous tension to the narrative presented by Solana in his remarks, where he named ARTEMIS a military operation to stop a humanitarian crisis. According to the pictures, Artemis appears much more like a diplomatic mission than a military one. Nevertheless, military elements are part of the visual narrative, and it seems to be interesting, how they appear.

In the second picture, military aircrafts come into view, but only in the background. In another picture a UN-soldier takes a dominant position. Interesting is, what we don’t see: guns and weapons. The aircrafts are transporting units, the UN-soldier only wears a bullet-proof vest and a blue helmet and has a leash around his neck; the (assumed) gun in his hand is kept out of sight. Again, whether the gun was intentionally “cut” out of the picture is not the point, but the absence of weapons and guns shapes the visual grammar of these picture and the whole story for what the EU and UN are really doing in the DR Congo. In our common understanding, we link guns and weapons to soldiers. Military operations are not of civilian-political nature, military missions are not diplomacy. Soldiers run military operations - soldiers carry weapons, soldiers sometimes have to kill, soldiers sometimes die. By the visual absence of weapons and guns, the EU and UN soldiers appear somehow “peacefully”, with “good purposes”, “passively”. The “visual grammar” of the pictures corresponds to the term “military operation” and “humanitarian crisis” only peripherally: the highest EU-diplomat runs the mission and the military only “backs it up”, appears primarily secondary. The visual narrative establishes a hierarchic order between the dominant political-diplomatic and the subordinated military level of the Artemis-mission, culminating in a visual “diplomacy first” rhetoric. We would argue that this hierarchic ordering of the diplomacy/military nexus is the second main story performed by the pictures. These pictures nicely correspond to a common understanding of EUs foreign policy as a “civilian” or “normative” power. What makes this narrative politically powerful is its claim for truth. Hence, these pictures undermine the difference between the “reality” of the Artemis- mission and the represented reality in the pictures. They force us to believe, that the EU acts in a diplomatic and

peaceful manner, only to back the UN-mission and everything takes place in accordance with the local authorities and is accepted by the people. When Rainer Forst states that there should be no political or social power constellation that cannot be adequately justified to those affected by them, these visuals imbue a key function in providing narratives for justification. In this regard, the EU-mission affects the people in the DR Congo, because the mission is located and operating there and the people in Europe, in whose name the EU acts.

Conclusion

The central aim of this paper was to develop an argument, how and why visual narratives of justification should become an object of inquiry in IR. However, the caveats are quite complex when one tries to “theorize” visuals. We think that a more systematic, certainly interdisciplinary debate on the performative power of visuals and their political consequences is highly valuable and overdue.

Beside these conceptual challenges, one could speculate that the visual grammar of the Artemis-story directly counters the story told by the US-led mission in Iraq, where the military solution was placed over the diplomatic efforts some European states favored. In a broader context, these visual narrative even refer to the debate about Kagan’s Mars/Venus analogy. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare the “visual narratives” of the ESDP to the “visual narratives” available on e.g. official US-military websites, to see, whether the visual narratives of justification differ significantly or share a common “visual grammar”.

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