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Journalism and Eyewitness Images

Digital Media, Participation, and Conflict

Mette Mortensen

Journalism and Eyewitness Images

A new era of conflict reporting has emerged since the dawn of the millennium. As a result of easily accessible digital technologies and omnipresent camera phones, formerly unobtainable images are produced and distributed on a massive scale across platforms. Some of the past years' most widely disseminated, most debated, and most conspicuous images have been created and publicized by eyewitnesses. As the first monograph to focus exclusively on eyewitness images from conflict in the digital age, Journalism and Eyewitness Images explores how this genre has transformed the public's access to information about conflict. In particular, the book examines how these images have altered the news media's reporting from conflict zones and put the restrictive communication management by state and military to the test.

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This book is dedicated to my family.

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Introduction
Eyewitness Images and Mediatized Conflict

A new era of conflict reporting has emerged since the dawn of the millennium. As a result of easily accessible digital technologies and omnipresent camera phones, formerly unobtainable images are produced and distributed on a massive scale across platforms. Some of the past years' most widely disseminated, most debated, and most conspicuous images have been created and publicized by eyewitnesses. They include footage of the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, the abuse of inmates in the Abu Ghraib prison in 2004, the bombings in London in 2005, and the hanging of Saddam Hussein in 2006. During the past years' citizen uprisings in a number of countries, eyewitness images have served to communicate protest initiatives and to inform about violence and other misuse of authority by those in power. Eyewitness images have gained the world's attention on many occasions—for example, when Burmese monks took to the streets in protest against the military regime in 2007 and two years later during the post-election rebellion in Iran. Media coverage of dissent movements across Northern African and Middle Eastern countries from 2011 have also routinely featured images taken by citizens and activists, including video footage of the capture and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Examples are legion.

This book centers on eyewitness images in the context of conflict, defined as war, armed confrontation, and terrorism. Needless to say, the circulation of visuals by non-professionals is not restricted to this domain. With the rise of the internet and digital cameras in the 1990s, the easy production and circulation of visuals has caused a dramatic upsurge in the numbers and kinds of images available in the public realm (e.g., Larsen and Sandbye 2014). The expanded circuit of digital images has undoubtedly contributed greatly to the current visual turn in news and popular culture. Documenting and sharing incidents and moods has become a habitual, if not compulsory, part of many people's lives, in relation to everyday ordinary life as well as the eruption of extraordinary events. Eyewitness recordings have entered a number of journalistic genres in step with this development. As an important parallel to eyewitness images from conflict areas, they are also included in reporting on natural disasters. This was the case, for example, in relation to the tsunami in the Indian Ocean (2004), hurricane Katrina (2005), the earthquake

in Haiti (2010), and the tsunami in Japan (2011) (e.g., Liu, Palen et al. 2009; Chouliaraki 2010; Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, and Cottle 2012). Media users also submit images to day-to-day journalistic features, such as news on the weather and changing seasons (Pantti and Bakker 2009), just as 'citizen paparazzi' supply images to celebrity news (Jerslev and Mortensen 2013).

The motivation for this book's focus on eyewitness images from areas of conflict is simple: They comprise an extreme and thus illustrative case of the effects of the extended options for communicating and retrieving information in the digital age. Belligerent states, the military, the press, participants, citizens, and other stakeholders have strong vested interests in the information stream from areas of conflict. When citizens or participants produce, distribute, and mobilize images, they engage in the ongoing battle to control and shape the public's mediated knowledge and experience of conflict: a veritable 'conflict of images', which comprises an inevitable part of contemporary conflicts.

The main research interest of this book is in exploring how eyewitness images have transformed the public's access to information about conflict. In particular, the following chapters examine the ways in which these images have altered the news media's reporting from conflict zones and put the restrictive communication management by state and military to the test.

Every participant in conflict constitutes a reporter in the making by virtue of digital technologies. Citizens, soldiers, activists, whistleblowers, and others are able to share information, experiences, and points of view, potentially with a worldwide public. Eyewitness images are the outcome of the audience assuming more active roles and contributing to the information flow by blurring the traditional boundaries between users and producers, professionals and amateurs, elites and non-elites, experts and laymen. As an effect of this unprecedented availability of exclusive first-hand sources of information, the mainstream news media have changed their production practices and coverage of conflict. Eyewitness footage remains the only user-generated content to be routinely presented by the news media in a manner similar to professionally produced content (Pantti and Bakker 2009, 485). Particularly in relation to breaking news events, eyewitness images often become the initial link in the chain of information because they have been captured by individuals present in time and space as events unfold.

The current of amateur images across mainstream news and social media platforms profoundly challenges tight military and political information management. Since the advent of modern war reporting in the mid-nineteenth century, belligerent nations have attempted to regulate the news media's access to the front line and sources of information. Many nations have adopted policies on eyewitness images and social network sites that have tried to cope with the more unpredictable and uncontrollable communication flow by alternating between censorship and assimilation.

Having explained the raison d'être for this book, I will now present an overview of eyewitness images from conflict areas, the theoretical framework 'mediatized conflict', and the content of individual chapters.

EYEWITNESS IMAGES FROM CONFLICTS

This book represents the writing of history, even if the proliferation of eyewitness images is a fairly recent development. As increasing proportions of the world's population are able to disseminate their photographs and videos of ongoing conflicts, an unprecedented landslide of visual information has emerged within a relatively short time span. The number of stories, approaches, and patterns of meaning making offered by eyewitness images seemed effectively to grow month by month as this book was taking shape. To provide a cursory introduction to the field treated in this book, the following section outlines the most significant cases, roles, and characteristics of eyewitness images.

The period under scrutiny in this book from 2001 to 2014 was chosen because the significance of digital eyewitness images first obtained public notice in the wake of the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. As Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (2003, 14) laconically remarks, this event appeared to be 'the ultimate Kodak moment'. Numerous citizen images contributed greatly to turning 9/11 into 'the most photographed disaster in history' (Stubblefield 2011). This development was hailed as a 'democracy of images'.[1] Opportunities for ordinary people to take part in the coverage and public documentation of monumental events seemed to have suddenly arisen, and the press, exhibition spaces, and books often featured images by non-professionals, alongside those provided by professional press photographers.

The most famous example to date of eyewitness images setting the news agenda in a game-changing way is probably the images from the Abu Ghraib prison released in 2004, graphically showing American guards' mistreatment of Iraqi detainees (e.g., Danner 2004; Hersh 2005; Grusin 2010). Due to censorship and embedded reporting, the Iraq War seemed to yield very few 'memorable professional images', as Janina Struk contends, and the audience was left with 'a pervading sense that traditional photojournalism was inadequate and outdated' (2011, 147). The photographs from Abu Ghraib were attributed great news value in this media climate, owing to their unfiltered display of the 'dirty reality' (Birchall 2008) of war. In contrast to the photographs from 9/11, taken by the accidental eyewitnesses of residents or tourists who happened to be in the vicinity at the time of the catastrophe, the Abu Ghraib visuals heralded a more intricate authorship for amateur recordings. The prison guards inhabited an ambiguous position between documentation and participation, which was made all the more complicated by how the act of photography seemed simultaneously to *record* the abuse of the prisoners and *contribute* to the abuse of the prisoners. This ambivalence between documentation and participation characterizes much eyewitness footage. Typically, the images are taken by people who are present at events because they perform an official or professional role or because they are involved in civic engagement. On the one hand, this double role means that

the images are habitually considered authentic on account of their urgency, immediacy, and handheld 'amateur' aesthetics. On the other hand, they put the norms, editorial routines, and professional self-perception of journalism to the test because they rarely live up to conventional ideals such as objectivity, autonomy, and transparency (e.g., Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2011a; Allan 2013; Kristensen and Mortensen 2013).

The bootleg tape showing the hanging of Saddam Hussein in 2006, to which we shall return in chapter 4, constitutes a well-known example of this double-edged sword (Mortensen 2007; Bakir 2009; 2010). A security officer working for the Iraqi Department of Justice illegally filmed the incident with his cell phone, thus undermining the authority of the Iraqi government's video issued the day before. During the unofficial, 2:35-minute-long video, the out-of-focus and fragmented images revealed that the hanging had not taken place in the orderly and regulated manner that the official video had tried to convey. The guard's incentive to take and disseminate images of this event was never shared with the public.

The two competing representations of Saddam Hussein's death underline yet another function often undertaken by eyewitness images. They provide counter-narratives to officially sanctioned narratives, which is why they are often mobilized in diverse forms of political communication. The international news media's reliance on citizen imagery in their coverage of the revolts in Burma (Myanmar) in the fall of 2007 represents a clear case in point. So-called VJs (Video Journalists) working on the streets of Rangoon submitted their images via both physical and digital transfer to the Oslo-based organization 'Democratic Voices of Burma', which in turn managed to attract the attention of major news networks with the exclusive glimpse offered by this footage into the—at this stage—hermetically closed country. Citizens acting on their own initiative have also sown the seeds of transnational media events by taking and sharing images of authorities' use of violence and other abuse of power. With an example treated in chapter 5, the videos recorded by bystanders of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan on the streets of Teheran during a demonstration in 2009 became international top news in a matter of hours, and the deceased woman was proclaimed an 'instant icon' for the protest movement in Iran.

In a similar vein, activists or citizens have, on numerous occasions, used eyewitness images to push their agendas into the news media during protests in a range of Middle Eastern and Northern African countries from 2011. The disjointed and shaky stills and videos are often demanding in terms of verifying facts, establishing time and place, and extracting a coherent narrative. Moreover, producers remaining anonymous or operating under a pseudonym have frequently complicated the standard journalistic procedure of source criticism. These two obstacles have become harder to overcome as taking pictures has developed into such a standardized response to evolving dramatic and conflictual situations that these events are often documented by large quantities of images. Sometimes they even offer deviating accounts.

An example of this surfaced during the media coverage of the killing of Libya's former long-standing president Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011. Speed appeared to outweigh verification in the international news media's handling of this breaking news event, and the first phase of the coverage consisted, to a large extent, of passing on incoming, unconfirmed, eyewitness videos as they became available in a seemingly unfiltered manner (Allan 2013; Kristensen and Mortensen 2013; 2014).

A final aspect to be considered at this stage is that the multitude of images is often accompanied by a multitude of purposes in a communicative web of actors and platforms. This became evident in the aftermath of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, which is the subject of chapter 7. Since the bombs exploded towards the end of the race, onlookers had produced footage of the scenes prior to, during, and after the attack. The vast number of videos and stills were used widely, not only by the media, but also by the FBI and the police, who examined the material for possible evidence about the identity of the terrorists and the sequence of events. At the same time, media users engaged in collaborative efforts to crowd-source the eyewitness images on social media platforms with the aim of partaking in the criminal investigation.

During the past decade and a half, the numbers, purposes, and roles of eyewitness images related to conflict have increased significantly. Eyewitness images typically enter the mainstream news media from social network sites or special outlets for citizen journalism hosted by news networks. They distinguish themselves by being exclusive in their representation of conflict, yet they are difficult sources of information because of the producers' frequent anonymity and combination of participation and documentation. Above all, the cases sketched in this section emphasize the arguably most remarkable function of eyewitness images: By infiltrating the mainstream news media, they have granted the public insight into scenes from areas of tension to which the media have no other access, typically as a result of logistic hindrances and limitations on the movement and freedom of the press in the combat zones and/or countries in question.

MEDIATIZED CONFLICT

An important ambition of this book is to contribute to the forming of a theory on the relation between media and conflict in the digital age. In the following chapters, eyewitness images are considered in the context of 'mediatized conflict'. My use of this term is indebted to the past years' deployment of mediatization theory (e.g., Schulz 2004; Hjarvard 2008a; 2013; Lundby 2009a; Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby 2010; Hepp 2013). Mediatization has mainly been brought into play as a framework for conceptualizing how the media have permeated institutions and organizations to such an extent that the media can no longer be regarded as institutions *outside* culture and

society, exerting an influence on the way culture and society are perceived. The media are *inside* society and form an integral part of virtually all institutions and organizations, which adjust to and incorporate media technologies and logics in their production, organization, and communication. With the concept 'mediatized conflict', this book attempts to shed light on the diverging interests and communicative logics at stake in the contemporary relations between media and conflict.

Extensive research has been conducted on the relationship between war/conflict and the media. Chapter 3 includes a critical review of the relevant literature in this field. At present, it is important to highlight that many scholars have maintained the traditional axis between state/military and the media: On the one hand, the literature in this area has focused on press coverage of war and paid special attention to the degree of freedom in battlefield reporting versus the news media's dependency on and loyalty to state and military (e.g., Hallin 1986; Robinson 2000; 2002; Boyd-Barrett 2004). On the other hand, researchers have looked into how nations at war take advantage of the opportunities provided by the mass media to communicate with their citizens, allies, and enemies—for example, through propaganda, censorship, and public diplomacy (e.g., Lasswell 1938 [1927]; Culbert, Cull, and Welch 2003; Taylor 2003 [1990]). This primary research interest in the state/military and media axis also characterizes the limited number of titles specifically addressing mediatized conflict (Cottle 2006; Horten 2011; Maltby 2012). From the perspective of this book, theorizing and analyzing mediatized conflict along these lines no longer seems adequate. Whereas elites from military, governments, and the news media may still ultimately control and dominate the stream of information from areas of conflict, as several researchers have argued (e.g., Robinson et al. 2010), this power is no longer entirely intact (e.g., Seib 2007; Matheson and Allan 2009; Carruthers 2011). Via digital channels of communication, actors outside military and state take part in documenting conflict, just as actors inside these institutions disobey rules and leak information. Accordingly, this book proposes to interpret mediatized conflict on the basis of the interrelations between two dimensions of mediatization.

The *first* dimension of mediatization primarily involves the top-down communication in the interplay between the state/military and the media—that is, what has here been referred to as the state/military and media axis. The institutionalized news media interact with political and military elites in order to gain access to sources of information and the front line. Conversely, states and the military have responded to the intensified media coverage by gradually adapting to, making strategic use of, and further developing the communicative technologies, practices, and logics of the media. Early stages of this arose during World War I, when states began using systematized propaganda and censorship on a large scale. In other words, this dimension came into being during the mass media era but obviously endures well into the digital age.

The *second* dimension of mediatization concerns the bottom-up movement, facilitated by non-elite actors producing and/or distributing media content, which typically attracts attention when political and military framings of conflict are challenged. These actors possess no or only loose institutional ties (e.g., citizens, activists, insurgents), or operate contrary to the employing institutions' policy on information management (e.g., whistleblowers or soldiers disseminating information on social media). Along with media content produced by non-professionals, such as blogs, eyewitness images, and entries on social network sites, another important alternative information channel may be singled out. Internal, classified military documents and data frequently enter the public domain via official or non-official sources. Due to the integration of digital media technologies at all levels of warfare, from internal and external communication, to intelligence services, to weapon technologies, and so on, the borderlines have become more permeable and crossings more frequent between conflict itself and documentation of conflict. The bottom-up dimension of mediatized conflict is primarily an offspring of digital media, even though early examples exist of soldier photography, whistleblowers, and civilians exerting an influence on the forms and extent of the population's insight into conflict.

In this book, mediatized conflict is seen as a result of the interrelations between the two dimensions. The underlying claim behind this understanding of mediatized conflict is that in today's media environment, multiple actors, institutions, and organizations attempt to control, shape, and impact the public's level of information and forms of knowledge about conflict. By defining the two dimensions, this model tries to systematize the contending interests in terms of whether they stem from elite actors within state and military or from non-elite actors residing outside the institutions that used to control the information stream from conflicts.

The institutionalized news media are central to this model because they constitute a pivotal platform for actors from the two dimensions to convey their divergent claims about and representations of the conflict in question. Even though the news media constitute the primary platform for political and military actors to inform the public, they are also vital for non-official contributions to communicating conflict in terms of reaching a transnational audience and gaining visibility and voice, seeking legitimacy, and so on. Competing and opposing ways of representing conflict by the two dimensions are thus negotiated in the mainstream news media. At the same time as the news media put on display the two dimensions, they are themselves a significant stakeholder and active player in mediatized conflict for the obvious reasons that conflict coverage amounts to a major journalistic turf, which entails various forms of interactions with sources from both dimensions.

In the cases investigated in this book, the mainstream news media do indeed play a central role as a platform for demonstrating and amplifying how eyewitness images are caught in interrelational processes between the two dimensions. Created and circulated bottom-up by non-professional

actors, the images are nonetheless enrolled in the top-down communication about conflict as well. For instance, this is the case when they contest official military and governmental versions of events, defy censorship, and appear in the mainstream news media's conflict coverage alongside official sources, but also when they are mobilized by politicians, used as evidence in legal or criminal investigations, and deployed in the military's public communication.

Even though mediatized conflict is developed in the context of eyewitness images, this theoretical framework will hopefully also be operational in relation to other overall tendencies in the current relationship between media and conflict. In a comparable manner, the conventional top-down monopoly on determining the way in which conflict is presented through and by media is challenged by the renewed prominence of whistle-blowing and the strategic communication by diverse insurrectionary and protest groupings.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE BOOK

The changes to the public's access to information about conflict brought about by the proliferation of eyewitness images are examined in the seven subsequent chapters outlined below.

The first three chapters lay the theoretical foundation. In chapter 1, eyewitness picture production and distribution are placed in wider historical, political, and cultural contexts by drawing on and further developing theories pertaining to the first-hand eyewitness (e.g., Peters 2001; Frosh and Pinchevski 2009a; Thomas 2009). Considering current non-professional images in light of theories on the witness is beneficial in terms of providing a broader historical perspective, a deeper theoretical understanding, and a vocabulary for conceptualizing contemporary eyewitness pictures and their producers. To define and delimit the research field, the chapter starts with a critical assessment of the rich literature dealing with the special position for experience and narration held by the witness, as well as this figure's political, cultural, and moral implications. This is followed by a presentation of the historical roots of witnessing in law and religion as a point of departure for arguing for the media as a separate realm of witnessing. The chapter ends with an outline of the general functions and norms of witnessing as a mediated form.

The second chapter shifts the focus from the eyewitness as a figure to defining eyewitness images from conflict as an overall genre. In other words, a shift from the eyewitness as a *source of information* to eyewitness images as *source materials* in accordance with the reconfiguration of witnessing in the digital age discussed in this book. After scrutinizing the current vocabulary for designating non-professional images and their producers, the chapter presents this book's terminology of choice: 'eyewitness images' and 'eyewitness image producer'. The next step in the definition of eyewitness images involves singling

out and explaining five specific characteristics: 1) auto-recording; 2) subjectivity; 3) media institutional ambiguity; 4) participation and documentation; and 5) decontextualization. The chapter then delineates some of the most important subgenres of eyewitness images—namely, 'first-person documentary style', 'embedded footage', and 'performative representations'—before concluding with a sketch of adjacent genres to which the definition offered in this chapter might be applicable, such as eyewitness images representing natural disasters, accidents, and school shootings.

The third chapter introduces mediatization theory and the concept of 'mediatized conflict' to explain the massive spread of eyewitness images in the context of larger ongoing transformation processes changing the relation between media and conflict. As explained above, mediatized conflict is conceptualized as an interrelation process between two dimensions of mediatization: the top-down communication of political and military elites interacting with the news media and the bottom-up communication of various other actors intervening in the flow of information. Introducing the two dimensions of mediatized conflict involves a review of the main, relevant literature in the field of media and conflict as well as the research relating specifically to mediatized conflict. The chapter concludes by addressing how mediatized conflict will serve as an interpretative framework for eyewitness images.

The remaining four chapters are analytical in scope. Many analytical cases could have been chosen. The ones studied in this book were selected because they exemplify some important functions, purposes, and roles of eyewitness images in the current media landscape. They provide *counter-narratives* and are subjected to *censorship;* they spark *media events* and are transformed into *news icons;* they prompt *metacoverage* by stories focusing on the changing media environment; and they are deployed for *multiple purposes* by authorities, news media, and citizens. Even though my treatment of these subjects revolves around eyewitness images, this book also intends to study these main themes in the connection between media and conflict in a more general manner.

Chapter 4 investigates the way eyewitness images often pose as counter-narratives to the narratives communicated or sanctioned by military and political administrations. Typically, the eyewitness images gaining public attention have undermined the tight regulations of images during conflict. The chapter starts out by drawing a historical parallel to images taken by soldiers during World Wars I and II that supplemented and rectified the official versions of events and thus represent important precedents for today's eyewitness images from conflicts. A presentation of the shifting policies for visual censorship is followed by an examination of two early cases of counter-narratives by eyewitness images in relation to the war in Iraq: The snapshot from 2004 of caskets with fallen US soldiers inside the cargo compartment of an airplane and the bootleg video of the hanging of Saddam Hussein from 2006. They epitomize two major ways for eyewitness

images to supply counter-narratives: They either deliver the only publicly available representations or cast doubt on representations made public by official sources. Whereas the amateur image from 2004 filled a vacuum of visual documentation by violating the censorship maintained from 1991 to 2009 on media coverage of home transportation of US war fatalities, the bootleg tape of Saddam Hussein's hanging undermined the Iraqi government's official video documentation. The analysis centers on how eyewitness pictures push the limits between private and public, which is underpinned theoretically in different sections by Judith Butler's (2004; 2009) concept of 'grievable lives' and Joshua Meyrowitz's (1985) notion of 'middle region'.

Chapter 5 focuses on eyewitness images that have achieved the status of 'unintentional' news icons. Empirically, this chapter takes its point of departure in the news media's canonization in 2009 of the eyewitness footage of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan, an 'instant icon' for the anti-government protests in Iran. Drawing on Bennett and Lawrence (1995), Cornelia Brink (2000), and Hariman and Lucaites (2007), the chapter offers a definition of news icons and discusses the circulation of icons as part of 'conflictual media events' (Hepp and Couldry 2010) and political processes of mobilization and legitimization. Quantitative and qualitative methods are deployed to examine the prompt iconization of Neda's image in the international news media, through intense reproduction, affirmative rhetorical acts, and an emphasis on digital technologies. The chapter also looks at how Neda Agha Soltan was recognized as an icon by being likened to earlier icons from widely different historical contexts (e.g., Joan of Arc [15th century] and the solitary man defying tanks at Tiananmen Square [1989]) and how the icon of Neda has itself become a frame of reference for establishing later icons during the reform movements in other countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa. The analysis finally examines the political mobilization of Neda's image. Public statements by US president Barack Obama as well as Iranian officials and representatives from government-loyal news media are studied as the opposing sides in the 'image-war', in which the parties fight to determine the veracity, significance, and symbolic impact of the 'unintentional' news icon.

Chapter 6 explores how eyewitness images prompt metacoverage in the established news media. As a tangible result of the mediatization of conflict, the news media have more sources of information at hand—in particular visual sources. Eyewitness images exemplify how these new sources often evade being presented as straightforward documentation and plain and simple evidence. They are likely to be entangled in ongoing struggles over how and by whom conflict should be represented. Moreover, they tend to be ambiguously situated between documentation and participation, between reporting conflict and fulfilling a specific functionality in conflict. For this reason, eyewitness images appear to invite stories on the new conditions for journalism set by the digital infrastructure of communication—metacoverage (e.g., Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001; Esser and D'Angelo 2003; 2006;

Esser and Spanier 2005; Esser 2009; Mortensen 2012b). WikiLeaks' publication in 2010 of a gun camera video from 2007 serves as the empirical starting point. The video documents US Apache helicopters shooting ten Iraqi civilians and two staff members from the news agency Reuters during an engagement in the Baghdad suburb New Baghdad. Launched under the name 'Collateral Murder', this video catapulted WikiLeaks into the general public's awareness. This is the only chapter that does not focus on photographs and videos recorded with privately owned digital cameras/mobile phone cameras; the gun camera tape may nonetheless be regarded as eyewitness footage due to the first-person perspective, the subjective viewpoint, the fusion of documentation and participation, and the decontextualized transmission to the public via non-official channels. This particular case aids the investigation into the close ties between mediatized conflict and metacoverage. According to a content analysis conducted for this chapter, the news media's treatment of the video was distinguished by a high level of metacoverage, which centered on the video's embedment in 'mediatized conflict'. In the main, the coverage paid attention to the antagonism between top-down military/political information control and WikiLeaks' (personified by Julian Assange and Bradley Manning) intervention in the information stream via bottom-up channels.

The seventh chapter concerns the many purposes for which eyewitness images are deployed in relation to sudden and dramatic situations of conflict, such as the bombing of the Boston Marathon Bombing in 2013, which constitutes the case under scrutiny. The chapter initially argues that the terror attack on the marathon instigated a shift in the mediation of this event. Before the attack, the marathon fell into the category of a *media event* in the sense of Dayan and Katz (1992), but the bombing transformed this otherwise celebratory, sportive competition and folk festival into a mediatized *conflictual media event* (Hepp and Couldry 2010), which dramatically transformed the role and task of professional news networks and non-professional photographers or 'ordinary' people on site. Examining the citizen detective work in the album of amateur images *4chan ThinkTank* on the social network platform Imgur, this chapter makes the claim that the greater availability of images pushes traditionally well-guarded borders between experts and non-experts, along with the already analyzed ones between news producers and users, elites and non-elites, professionals and amateurs. This caused a shift in the public communication and working methods of the investigative authorizes (FBI and the police), not least based on the way the news media used the crowd investigation of eyewitness images as source.

NOTE

1. See, for instance, the exhibition 'here is new york', available at http://hereisnewyork.org/index2.asp.html (last accessed June 18, 2014).

1 The Eyewitness in the Media

'Eyewitness' is an inescapable keyword in the contemporary media landscape. Formats such as 'Eyewitness News', 'Eyewitness reports', 'Eyewitness photography', 'Eyewitness accounts', 'Eyewitness sport', 'youwitnessnews', and 'Citizen eyewitness' testify to the eager embrace of this concept, particularly in the realms of nonfiction genres such as news, documentary, reportage, and sports. Witnessing[1] may, following John Durham Peters' seminal article 'Witnessing', stand for 'all three points of a basic communication triangle': message, sender, and recipient (2001, 709). Accordingly, it is 'a strange but intelligible sentence to say: the witness (speech-act) of the witness (person) was witnessed (by an audience)' (2001, 709); that is, *first-hand eyewitnesses* perform the *act of witnessing* specific events, and by so doing situate *media audiences* as *second-hand witnesses*. Media technology for storing evidence is also accorded the status of witness; for instance, the legal vocabulary refers to the 'mechanical witness' of a camera or tape recorder. In sum, the act of witnessing is performed '*in, by* and *through* the media' (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009b, 1), and the notion of the 'witness' may refer to media content, sources of information, media technologies, media users, and media *produsers* (Bruns 2008).

The multiple meanings testify to how the concept of the eyewitness lies at the heart of today's media experience and involves complex ideas of reality, communication, and technology. As a parallel to the role performed by the eyewitness in the court of law, a setting in which the 'bond between speech and truth is strictly policed' (Peters 2005, 250), negotiations of the truth in connection with media representations of events in the material world often evolve around the figure of the eyewitness and the text of the testimony. Theorizing the concept of the witness thus 'cast[s] light on basic questions such as what it means to watch, to narrate or to be present at an event' (Peters 2001, 709).

In 2001, Peters (722) argues that most eyewitnesses are not aware of their role as such until after the closing of an event, when they are called upon to account for their first-hand information, which is deemed valuable in establishing and reconstructing the factual sequence of events. This no longer holds true per se. With the proliferation of digital media, witnessing has

become an individual choice, a recurring option, a mass phenomenon. Eyewitnesses do not just make appearances in the media as sources of information, but are capable of creating and distributing media content themselves. As a standardized and ritualized response to crisis and conflict, individuals on the spot film events as they unfold with mobile cameras or other digital recording devices. The videos and photographs are instantly distributable through a web of relations ranging from media platforms, organizations, institutions, and actors in the global, digital media landscape. In other words, eyewitnesses have become self-mediated by incorporating digital media technologies into their practice and adapting to the logics of the current media system.

Today's citizen photographer is often regarded as a successor to the traditional figure of the eyewitness. In news and popular culture, phrases such as 'eyewitness photography' and 'eyewitness accounts' are applied to news images taken by amateurs. This coupling is explainable by how the current non-professional photographer shares the exclusive proximity to events, subjective viewpoint, and fragmented narrative with the classical eyewitness. Despite having received the notice of researchers, this inheritance has scarcely been theorized in a systematic fashion. Barbie Zelizer in her historical overview of the role performed by eyewitnesses within journalism sees the citizen journalist as the latest incarnation of this figure: 'Eyewitnessing's viability as a key word today rests on a curious combination of technology and nonconventional journalistic presence' (2007, 421). Taking a broader approach, Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski include the media *produser* in the concept of media witnessing, which

> casts the audience as the ultimate addressee and primary producer, making the collective both the subject and object of everyday witnessing, testifying to its own historical reality as it unfolds.
>
> (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009b, 12)

Similarly, Anna Reading (2009) considers the citizen journalist in light of theories concerning the eyewitness in a case study of the mobility and fast dissemination of amateur images in connection with the news coverage of the 2005 terror attack in London. Notwithstanding their valuable insights into contemporary eyewitness images, none of the above contributions present a thorough theoretical framework for understanding contemporary non-professional picture production and distribution as a reconfiguration of witnessing. This is the task of the first two chapters of this book. Chapter 1 outlines a theoretical framework for eyewitnessing as a mediated form, which is further developed in the definition of contemporary eyewitness images in chapter 2.

Combining amateur news images with theories on the witness serves the double purpose of contextualizing today's practices in a wider historical perspective of media, politics, and culture, while at the same time offering

a vocabulary to define contemporary amateur pictures and their producers. To establish and delimit the research field, this chapter takes its point of departure in a critical assessment of the rich literature pertaining to the special position for experience and narration held by the witness, as well as this figure's political, cultural, and moral significance. In the second section, the historical roots of witnessing in law, and, to a lesser extent, religion, are presented. This paves the way for arguing for the media as a separate realm of witnessing in the third section. The fourth section outlines three overarching tendencies in the contemporary media, to which eyewitnesses contribute by their transmission and forms of expression—namely, *liveness, individualization,* and *produsage*. Finally, the fifth section sketches some general functions and norms in relation to witnessing as a mediated form.

THEORIZING WITNESSING AND WITNESSES

Although a media history or cultural history of witnessing has yet to be written, the prominence of the eyewitness has not passed unnoticed in academia during the past decades. Judging from the literature in the field, however, the centrality of the eyewitness is not accompanied by a clear 'consensus about what it means' (Zelizer 2007, 408). This is partially a result of different fields such as comparative literature, psychoanalysis, trauma studies, cultural studies, theology, and media studies engaging theoretically with the witness. The concept also lacks precise definition within individual disciplines. Whether the term 'witness' should be reserved for first-hand eyewitnesses or extended to media audiences as second-hand witnesses is still being debated in media studies, for example.

In the 1990s, the witness became a topic for research, especially in literary, psychoanalytic, and philosophic thinking. Scholarly interest was primarily aimed at the genre of witness literature that was spawned during World War II by authors such as Paul Celan, Primo Levi, Victor Klemperer, and Imre Kertész. Literary theorist Shoshana Felman and psychoanalyst Dori Laub published their pioneering work *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* under the auspices of this school in 1992 (see also, e.g., Agamben 2000; Caruth 1995; Ekman and Tygstrup 2008). This book explores the way testimonies from Holocaust survivors continue to reverberate in politics, culture, and art despite—and, perhaps, also because of—the 'crises of witnessing' broached in the title's reference to the perceived impossibility of bearing witness to traumatic events, which have left survivors speechless. Felman and Laub examine witnessing as a means of claiming responsibility not only for the individual's own story, but also for the general writing of history, in the always-difficult transformation from personal testimony to collective memory. Alternating between a literary and a clinical perspective, the authors analyze the positions, obligations, and negotiations of witnesses in works such as Claude Lanzmann's 9-hour

documentary *Shoah* (1985) and Albert Camus' novels *The Plague* (1947) and *The Fall* (1956).

Media scholars started taking an interest in the witness in the 2000s. Rather than seeing the Holocaust survivor as the paradigmatic witness, John Ellis (2000), John Durham Peters (2001; 2005), Barbie Zelizer (2002; 2007), Lilie Chouliaraki (2006; 2008), Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchveski (2009a), and others expanded what was regarded as the range of witnesses and events being witnessed. In his influential book *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (2000), Ellis argues that the twentieth century was sealed as the century of witness when television facilitated a new, generalized mode of witnessing (6–38). Ellis encapsulates this domestic form of witnessing in his eloquent and much cited sentence '[w]e cannot say that we do not know', implying that media witnessing involves a certain responsibility when audiences obtain a 'powerless knowledge and complicity' from the safety of their homes (2000, 1). Later, Ellis has made the case that the argument unfolded in *Seeing Things* 'now seem[s] inadequate' (2009a, 73; see also 2009b; 2012). 'We cannot say that we do not know' might indeed be criticized for what seems to be a case of underlining assumptions that global audiences are united in the same interests, and that media representations invariably point to the same interpretations and solutions (for more on media and morality, see, e.g., Boltanski 1999; Silverstone 2007). This dictum also fails to specify what kind of complicity or responsibility media audiences should take upon themselves. Other scholars have further developed the notion of media witnessing. Most notably among these are Chouliaraki (2006; 2008), who has outlined different prototypical positions, and Frosh and Pinchevski, who have issued the inspirational volume *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication* (2009a), which features new essays by Peters and Ellis, among other valuable contributions (see also Ellis 2009b; 2012; Frosh and Pinchevski 2009c; Rentschler 2004; Tait 2011).

There is definitely a richness of thinking involved in the concept of media witnessing, e.g., on the position of media audiences in view of the access to still-larger amounts of mediated information. However, this book concentrates on the narrower role of the first-hand witness (but see chapter 5). The subject is delimited primarily because eyewitness images relate to first-hand witnessing. Moreover, media witnessing tends to be used as an almost all-encompassing metaphor for media representation and reception of non-fictional forms. As noted by Frosh and Pinchevski (2009b, 1), media witnessing also moves on the verge of tautology: *Witnesses,* on the one hand, may be thought of as media in and of themselves by transmitting their exclusive perceptions to others lacking access to the original event. Similarly, acts of witnessing are by definition mediated through the spoken or written word, and through visual, auditory, or audiovisual media technologies. On the other hand, *media* or *mediation* is almost always intended for an audience, whether real or imagined, and therefore 'entails a kind of witnessing' (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009b, 1). Another concern in the context of this

book is that media witnessing has primarily been theorized within the remit of the mass media, and the concept cannot be transferred directly to digital media (but see Mortensen 2011b; Allan 2013; Andén-Papadopoulos 2013). Digital media shape new roles for users, but lack the ability of television to unite large audiences in shared experiences. While television has the capacity to turn media viewers into *witnesses,* digital media may be said to turn witnesses into *produsers.*

By focusing on the first-hand witness, I subscribe to John Durham Peters' typology of four witnesses, deduced from the degree of mediation and the spatial and temporal relations to an event:

> To be there, present at the event in space and time is the paradigm case. To be present in time but removed in space is the condition of liveness, simultaneity across space. To be present in space but removed in time is the condition of historical representation: here is the possibility of a simultaneity across time, a witness that laps the ages. To be absent in both space and time but still have access to an event via its traces is the condition of recording.
>
> (Peters 2001, 720)

Peters' distinction between four prototypical witnesses accentuates the fundamental difference between the first-hand witness' physical presence and privileged access to events in time and space *and* the physical absence involved in the other forms of witnessing, which are second-hand experiences facilitated by the media making the absent in time and/or space present. The broad concept of media witnessing contains the three last-mentioned modes listed in the quote from Peters above—namely: 1) witnesses to live transmissions (present in time and removed in space), 2) witnesses to mediated historical events (present in space and removed in time), and 3) witnesses to recorded events (removed in time and space) (see Sæther 2008 for a critical discussion of this model).

If we focus our attention on the first-hand eyewitness, this figure is characterized by some basic traits. Tamar Ashuri and Amit Pinchevski (2009, 137–138) offer a definition that includes the four features *presence, rhetoric, habitus,* and *competence,* to which I would like to add *relationality* and *subjectivity. Presence,* or being where and when events happen, constitutes the *sine qua non* of coming forward as an eyewitness. *Rhetoric* is equally essential; someone must report in words or through other means of communication what took place according to his or her cognitive and/or technological recollection. *Habitus,* or the moral integrity of the eyewitness, is imperative too, because trustworthiness is vital to testimonies, and because traditionally only people believed to be on the 'right' side of history were entitled to bear witness—a point to which we shall return. Lastly, *competence* is necessary in order to make a public statement. I find it pertinent to supplement the characteristics of the first-hand eyewitness identified by Ashuri and

Pinchevski with another two: *Relationality* seems to be an equally essential feature of the eyewitness, whose performance is necessarily context-specific. Different historical periods, places, circumstances, and technologies invariably enable and/or mobilize different kinds of witnesses and acts of witnessing. Finally, a sixth feature, *subjectivity,* is strongly present in traditional and contemporary eyewitnesses alike since testimonies are invariably presented from a subjective point of view. The personal perception and proximity of the first-hand witness cause an 'annihilation of perspective', as Ashuri and Pinchevski (2009, 140) note elsewhere in their book chapter, and for this reason, testimonies tend to be fragmented and incoherent. In chapter 2, the features of the eyewitness serve as a point of departure for outlining the particular characteristics of eyewitness images, which foreground the testimony and leave the traditional figure of the eyewitness in the background.

TRADITIONS FOR WITNESSING: LAW AND RELIGION

First-hand witnessing originates from the two overarching institutions of law and religion, as John Durham Peters (2001; 2005) and the theologian Günther Thomas (2009) have established in their work on the historical traits of the witness. In the following, the main focus is on the juridical domain, since the special position of experience and communication embodied by the contemporary first-hand witness forms a parallel to and partially derives from this tradition. Although associated with authenticity, the subjective viewpoint of the legal witness continues to raise doubt about this figure's ability and willingness to convert experience into testimony in a direct and transparent manner. Witnessing in a legal context shares the strong similarity with the contemporary eyewitness in the news media that testimonies are called for in situations of doubt, if not disagreement or conflict.

Most legal systems have depended on the witness as an indispensable source of information (for juridical and juridical-psychological research on eyewitnesses, see e.g., Ross, Read, and Toglia 1994; Garrett 2011, 45–83). In bearing testimony, the witness holds the power to account for or even establish the otherwise unknown or uncertain course of events, identify the actors, and exert an influence in questions of guilt. Usually being a third party on the periphery of the charge and countercharge of the main protagonists (Wagner-Pacifici 2005a, 202), the eyewitness has a strong obligation legally and morally to testify, and to do so in accordance with the truth. The witness acts 'sub poena' (Peters 2005, 255), which means 'under penalty', and false testimony or refusal to deliver testimony constitutes a felony. Throughout history, methods have been developed for securing truthful witness accounts, from torture to limiting the right to and power of witnessing to individuals considered to be reliable by virtue of their gender, race, and social status. There is a long history of excluding 'non-christians, convicts, spouses, children, the insane, slaves, and colonized people' (Peters

2005, 251) from the witness box. From the nineteenth century, forensic science has continuously invented technologies to secure certain evidence and unambiguous identification, e.g., fingerprints, visual identification, the polygraph, and DNA-profiling (e.g., Caplan and Torpey 2001). The implementation of these methods has consistently foregrounded issues of concern regarding the protection of individuals' legal rights, integrity, and privacy, since an infallibly safe and dependable method that renders the personal witness testimony obsolete has yet to be developed (e.g., Bohn 2004; Mortensen 2012a; see also chapter 7). To sum up, the legal tradition of witnessing raises questions about authenticity, subjectivity, and contested realities, all of which are highly relevant to contemporary forms of bearing witness in and through the media.

In the present context, the religious tradition is not as important as the legal one, but a brief presentation may tip this balance. The witness—especially in the form of the martyr—is featured in various religious traditions. This is etymologically evident in the term 'martyr' from the Greek word 'μάρτυρ' ('martus'), meaning 'witness'—that is, one who attests to the truth by suffering (Thomas 2009, 95). As Thomas (2009) points out, legal and religious witnessing are intertwined, as manifested in the eighth commandment, 'thou shalt not bear false witness', and the court ritual in some countries involving witnesses swearing an oath on the Bible.

While Peters (2001; 2005) and Thomas (2009) agree on law and religion as the fundamental institutions for witnessing, their opinions differ on whether a third domain for witnessing should be singled out, and, if so, which one. In the following section, their opposing viewpoints form the basis of another line of argument with the proposal that the media represents an important separate area for witnessing.

MEDIA AS A DOMAIN OF WITNESSING

According to Peters, 'atrocity', the particular tradition of witnessing growing out of World War II, constitutes a distinct realm on a par with law and religion. Atrocity is defined in his article as '[t]he witness as a survivor of hell, prototypically but not exclusively the Holocaust or *Shoah*' (Peters 2001, 708). Thomas infers that atrocity should not be regarded as an independent field of witnessing because this tradition dates back to the specific historical event of Holocaust and has evolved from the domains of law and religion (2009, 93, note 2). He does not elaborate any further on this point, which may, however, be supported by singling out another fundamental difference: Law and religion represent constituent institutions in society, each providing tradition-bound, ritualized, and rule-governed platforms for witnessing in the courtroom (as prescribed in the legal system) and the church (based on interpretations of the Bible and various religious practices). In contrast, the frameworks for acts of witnessing by World War II survivors

and others in relation to what Peters terms 'atrocity' consist of diverse forms of media, culture, and art. Even though narratives by witness-survivors share common traits and have developed their own standardized formats, as explored, for instance, by Felman and Laub (1992), they are still far from the formalized, regulated practices of witnessing in the two other domains.

In addition to opposing the idea of atrocity as a third realm of witnessing, Thomas also argues against granting this status to the media. He proposes instead that the media should be considered dual-sided 'transformed versions of legal and religious witnessing' (Thomas 2009, 107). First, fact-oriented, forensic witnessing re-emerges in news journalism, in accordance with a claim made by Ellis that 'newsrooms have become the forensic laboratories of reality by assessing footage for its evidential qualities' (2009a, 81). Moreover, it seems obvious in this context to complement Thomas's argumentation with the way in which today's eyewitness images have often served as legal evidence—for instance, in connection with the abuse of prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison in 2004, the death of Gaddafi in 2011, and the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013. Second, religious witnessing reappears in a transformed format in entertainment talk shows, which in an affective, intimate, and confessional mode invites individuals to 'witness to their lives' as a performance of the self (Thomas 2009, 108). Eyewitness pictures also evoke the martyrdom of the religious witness insofar as the themes of suffering and sacrificing oneself for a higher cause are recurrently played through—for instance, in the media coverage studied in chapter 5 of the footage of the shooting of Neda Agha Soltan in the streets of Tehran (see also Andén-Papadopoulos 2013).

Even if Thomas is right in asserting that the media in many respects continue the legal and religious traditions of witnessing, I would nonetheless like to make the case that the media comprise a distinct third domain.[2] The media have facilitated new forms of witnessing, which cannot simply be classified, let alone sufficiently theorized, as adaptations of legal and religious witnessing. Furthermore, this realm covers considerably broader geographical, historical, political, and social contexts than Peters' concept of 'atrocity', which is predominantly grounded in World War II. Witnessing in the context of law, religion, and atrocity all fall short as explanatory frameworks for the role, status, and significance of witnesses and their audiences in today's media. The eyewitness in the media constitutes a far less exclusive category than in the legal and religious traditions, which reserve this position for individuals who have observed (suspected) unlawful conduct, or experienced religious revival. In a media context, eyewitnessing involves an individual sharing his or her experience of watching or attending a certain event by making a statement, performance or representation, but this act is neither confined to a particular time and space, nor to a particular platform. One may bear witness to history-in-the-making (Zelizer 2002, 697), or to the trivialities of daily life. Acts of witnessing have become an everyday, vernacular practice, while at the same time

forming a common response to unfolding crisis and catastrophe. Furthermore, unlike the limitations to experiencing the witnessing of others in the legal and religious domains, the media have created a mass audience for witness testimonies, as they have multiplied in numbers and become accessible to the general public on various platforms. Mediated witness accounts have increasingly shaped conceptions of society and history concerning daily life and not least war, conflict, and terror during the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. As Robin Wagner-Pacifici points out, witnesses play a 'crucial hinge role in moments of social and political transformation' (2005a, 201).

THE EYEWITNESS IN THE CONTEMPORARY MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The strong presence of the eyewitness in the contemporary media landscape—as a distinct domain for the witness—appears at least in part to be explicable by this figure's consistency with and contribution to three overall tendencies: *Liveness* by the immediacy of the transmission, *individualization* in the singular, subjective perspective, and *produsage* as a still more prevalent means of the eyewitness conveying his of her experiences. The media are here understood in the broad sense of news, entertainment, social media, and so on, while the rest of the book typically focuses on either the news media or social media.

First, regarding liveness, the tradition for using eyewitnesses as sources is as old as journalism itself (Zelizer 2007; Rentschler 2009).[3] Eyewitnesses have continuously been deployed by the news media 'to underscore, establish, and maintain their authority for reporting' (Zelizer 2007, 408) by conveying distant events in a seemingly immediate and authentic fashion. According to Zelizer (2007), the concept of the witness within a journalistic framework has historically been used alternatively to refer to a report (text, image), role (position), or technology (camera, tape recorder). However, mediated performances by eyewitnesses have increased with television, and in particular *live* television, in the competitive and commercialized global media environment giving priority to breaking news, live reporting, proximity, and exclusivity. Eyewitnesses may be featured in different ways and forms. Reporters either interview eyewitnesses on the spot, assume the role of eyewitnesses themselves or the coverage recirculates eyewitness images from social network sites and other online outlets. In the coverage of major breaking news events from areas of conflict and catastrophe, a combination of these options is often used. Drawing in eyewitnesses constitutes a way to generate and shape topical news stories. Hence, as Thomas (2009, 99) argues, witnessing lends itself to the media as an 'event-generator' in a dual sense. On the one hand, the act of witnessing constitutes an event in itself, which complements the conditions for live reporting. When interviewed,

eyewitnesses communicate an immediate, emotional reaction and put a human face on occurrences, which may otherwise seem distant and abstract. In the words of Anne Jerslev, they bestow on the reportage a 'unique aura of truth and authenticity' and offer a similarly 'unique trace of the event', often in contrast to recordings from the scene, which have a propensity to resemble well-known images from preceding crises (2004, 15).[4] On the other hand, acts of witnessing create or at least contribute to creating the event through the articulation and construction of a narrative, which may be transmitted live or connote *liveness* in other ways. Witnesses 'co-author' occurrences because 'their taking up of a point of view, [. . .] make[s] the world intelligible' (Wagner-Pacifici 2005b, 303).

Second, the current preoccupation with the eyewitness—or, the 'I-witness', to use a catchphrase sometimes deployed—reflects the overarching individualization in society and the media's focus on the subjective experiences of 'ordinary' people (e.g., Dovey 2000; Jerslev 2004; Turner 2010, see also chapter 2). At least partially for this reason, personal testimonies are omnipresent in today's culture and media. As Shoshana Felman (1992, 5) suggests, testimony might even be seen as the discursive mode par excellence of our times. A public statement by a person regarding a privately experienced event always contains an element of self-representation (Thomas 2009, 100–102), seeing as the account is communicated from a subjective and individualized point of view. This is further enhanced by the manner in which the eyewitness needs to persuade the audience of his or her personal ethos and credibility in order for the narrative to come across as legitimate and genuine. On account of this subjective perspective, the eyewitness often appears in news, documentary, and reality formats departing from or centering on singular, individual experiences and emotions. In addition, digital 'mass self-communication' (Castells 2009) has facilitated performative strategies for making accounts of and affirmatively staging oneself on social media, including the practice of recording everyday life as a form of witnessing of the self. According to Keen (2007), the latter development has nurtured what he critically refers to as 'The Cult of the Amateur', which is yet another manifestation of the focus on 'ordinary people' and the everyday. First-person testimonies consistently raise the fundamental issue of how private sensations might be transformed into intelligible and meaningful public statements (Peters 2001, 711). They may or may not hold the potential for addressing collective concerns by putting larger political, social, or cultural issues into perspective. However, according to Jacques Derrida, acts of witnessing always make the claim that the singular is 'universalizable', insofar as they involve both an *instant* (singular instance) and an *instance* (ideal instance) (2000, 41–42). The event is first dealt with as a privately experienced *instant,* yet when the individual addresses the public and transmits the experience as if it were or ought to be a matter of general concern, it is offered as an *instance,* 'repeatable and designed for reiteration' (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009b, 7).

Third, obviously the development at the core of this book should also be counted as an important tendency in today's media environment, to which the figure of the eyewitness contributes. While journalists take on the role of eyewitness, eyewitnesses also to an increasing extent assume the part of journalist. The blurring boundaries between media users and media producers have paved the way for an extended space for witnessing as well as a shift in the acts and forms of witnessing. As already mentioned, eyewitnesses were traditionally confined to making appearances in the media as a source of information, but now they create and disseminate media content themselves. A 'world-wide complex of relations between media organizations and ordinary people' (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009b, 10) has rendered practices of witnesses mundane.

Liveness, individualization, and produsage are here treated as parallel tendencies, but of course they often go hand in hand. To point to an evident example, eyewitness images include both an acute sense of liveness in the recording of the here and now of events playing out, they are obviously perceived and presented from the perspective of the singular individual, and they belong to produsage cultures.

FUNCTIONS AND NORMS OF WITNESSING IN TODAY'S MEDIA

The previous sections have established the media as a distinct domain for witnessing and pointed to tendencies in the current media landscape that are feeding and being fed by the proliferation of witnesses and witnessing. Proceeding on the same path, this section outlines some common functions and norms for witnesses across various media genres, platforms, and formats. Witnessing often takes place when events challenge law, order, and the common understanding of society. In this way, witnesses are not on solid ground but partake in laying new, fragile ground through their testimonies. As Wagner-Pacifici aptly explains, they are called upon to bear witness to 'a vision of the world that is *re-made* at the very moment when witnessing becomes relevant' (2005a, 206, italics in original text). Witnessing helps establish the event and re-establish societal order. Since witnessing mostly occurs in connection with uncertain or contested realities, the stakes are high in this form of utterance. Parallel to the legal domain, the witness in the media is often invited to testify in matters of dispute regarding how a certain event took place and who took part in it. Building trust is therefore essential. Nevertheless, in seeking to overcome the issue of trust, the witness may end up reproducing this uncertainty as to whether the testimony is to be trusted, on account of the precariousness involved in witnessing (Thomas 2009, 93). As Peters puts it, '[w]itnessing, an act of communication meant to establish the truth, often reveals the fragility of the forms that carry truth' (2005, 250). The risk of false evidence can lead to a '*regressus ad infinitum*'

(Thomas 2009, 102, italics in original text), in which new witnesses are called in to verify, rectify, or reject the testimonies of previous witnesses. Even though the witness carries no intention of committing perjury, memory is fallible and selective, just as perceptions may be shaped by both sensory limitations and social and cultural impacts (e.g., Butenschön 2011).

Regarding the issue of trust, different measures have, as already mentioned, been presented in a legal context to deal with the 'poor epistemological quality' of testimonies (Peters 2005, 251), just as guidelines are set up for whoever may witness. Notably, the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution states that nobody shall 'be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself'. The media do not regulate witness testimonies in a similar fashion. Professional norms and guidelines within journalism on handling sources of information probably come the closest, but they also touch on an array of other subjects and do not cover central questions concerning the witness—for instance, the particular cultural and political impact of this figure. Consequently, norms, social and political preconceptions, and practical considerations seem, to a large extent, to determine who are believed to be legitimate and trustworthy eyewitnesses in a given situation.

Witnessing, as already indicated, tends to be the privilege and right of individuals believed to be on the right side of history. Conventionally, witnessing was the lot of prevailing parties, who were trusted to hold the moral right and legitimacy to tell the version of events recorded and standing for posterity. Even *more* than a right, an *obligation* to give evidence rests upon survivors of manmade catastrophes. The witness carries 'a radically unique, noninterchangable and solitary burden' because the testimony cannot be repeated or reported by another, even though, paradoxically, bearing witness also implies speaking on behalf of the collective (Felman 1992, 3). Giving voice to this experience, Romanian-born poet Paul Celan (1920–1970) writes in the last stanzas of his famous poem *Ashglory* (*Aschenglorie*), published first in 1968: 'No one/ bears witness for/ the witness' (Niemand/ zeugt für den/ Zeugen) (Celan 1968, 68).

It is therefore clear that controversy sets in when perpetrators, offenders or others without the traditional habitus of the eyewitness undertake this role. This is often the case with eyewitness images produced by people who assume this position on their own initiative and often choose to remain anonymous. Some of the cases analyzed in the following chapters may exemplify this. The photographs by German conscripts during World War II, which documented what was later regarded as the soldiers' misconduct on the Eastern Front, generated great dispute on account of this material's profound ambivalence as witness testimony. In a similar vein, the photographs by the US prison guards from the Abu Ghraib prison were, as already mentioned, troublesome to large parts of the public because of their unclear status between documenting the assaults and playing a part in the assaults.[5] The debate over the Abu Ghraib images stresses the way in which

assuming the role of the eyewitness still raises questions of moral right and legitimacy as well as accuracy and truthfulness, even though enhanced possibilities for do-it-yourself production and publication of testimonies seem to have removed some of the existential and moral heaviness from witnessing. When bearing witness seizes to be the privilege or duty of particular people under special circumstances, and when every onlooker and every participant may join the ranks of eyewitnesses, the moral claim is negotiable to a larger degree.

FROM THE EYEWITNESS TO EYEWITNESS IMAGES

This chapter's critical engagement with the existing literature on the particular status of the witness and witnessing has served as a point of departure for arguing for witnessing as a mediated form of communication and the media as a third domain for witnessing alongside law and religion. In the next chapter, a shift of focus takes place from the eyewitness as a figure to eyewitness images. This shift reflects the basic development caused by recent years' rise in digital media. Whereas the witness used to give testimony within the confines of a media institution vouching for his or her legitimacy and relevance, the witness has to an increasing extent become auto-mediated. Accordingly, chapter 2 offers a definition of eyewitness images and chapter 3 introduces the notion of 'mediatized conflict' as their respective context.

NOTES

1. 'Witness' and 'eyewitness' are often used synonymously, and this book does not distinguish strictly between the two either. Whereas the 'witness' is the broader and more abstract designation, which may also bear religious connotations, 'eyewitness' is the more literal term for someone who has been present in time and space at an event.
2. In continuation of the points presented in this chapter, one could argue that historiography and popular history constitute important domains for eyewitnesses that are also not part of the religious or legal traditions. See, for instance, Seldon and Pappworth (1983), Young (2003) Wagner-Pacifici (2005a; 2005b), and Butenschön (2011). See Frisch (2004) for a historical account of the eyewitness in the context of the research field law and literature.
3. Zelizer (2007) presents four different historical phases in the journalistic usage of witnesses: The first period covers eyewitness reports printed in pamphlets and books from the sixteenth century. This period peaks when newspapers began sending individuals to collect eyewitness impressions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, first at local events and later at distant events, often returning with dramatized and romanticized accounts (ibid. 412–414). In the second period, from the mid-nineteenth century, more people took on the role of eyewitness (including journalists), just as the camera was ascribed the status of a witnessing technology with the emergence of press photography late in the century (ibid. 414–417). The third period, starting from the early

twentieth century, saw technologies for witnessing expanding drastically by visual, auditive, and audiovisual media (ibid. 417–421). In the fourth and current period, which coincides with the one dealt with in this book, the viability of eyewitnessing as a keyword is due to a combination of digital technologies and 'nonconventional journalistic presence' (ibid. 421).

4. Translated from Danish to English by the author of this book.
5. Another example of the dispute sparked when offenders assume the role of witnesses is related to the historical fictional novel *The Kindly Ones* (*Les Bienveillantes*, 2006) by French/American author Jonathan Littell, which called for a heated debate on account of how the narrator, a former SS officer, conveys his involvement in massacres ostensibly without regret (see e.g., Suleiman 2009; Razinsky 2010).

2 Eyewitness Images as a Genre, Genres of Eyewitness Images

While eyewitness images are proliferating, the eyewitness as a figure has subsided into the background. This development entails continuities as well as changes. Many of the qualities conventionally associated with the witness and witness testimonies are still vital to eyewitness pictures, including subjectivity, proximity, attributed authenticity, and lack of narrative unity. However, to define eyewitness images, a change of focus is required. Whereas the previous chapter perceived the witness as a privileged source of information, performing a ritualized role in the institutionalized media, this chapter theorizes witnessing as practices of creating and disseminating visual source materials by individuals with no or loose affiliation to media institutions.

This chapter aims to define eyewitness images from conflict as a genre. It consists of four sections. The first section critically examines the current vocabulary for delineating non-professional images and their producers, before arguing for 'eyewitness images' and 'eyewitness image producers' as the preferred terminology of this book. In the following section, five characteristics of eyewitness images are singled out: 1) auto-recording; 2) subjectivity; 3) media institutional ambiguity; 4) participation and documentation; and 5) decontextualization. The third section presents first-person documentary style, embedded footage, and performative representations as some of the most frequent subgenres of eyewitness images. To conclude, the final section sketches adjacent genres, which may also benefit from the definition of eyewitness images from conflict offered in this chapter.

EYEWITNESS IMAGES: TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Citizen photojournalist/citizen photojournalism, citizen images/citizen eyewitness images, citizen journalist/citizen journalism, eyewitness photographer/eyewitness photography: The many terms used to describe the non-professional producer of images and the visual genres emerging in the wake of this figure point to a lack of clarity regarding how to designate and understand the new practices. In other words, basic definitory work is required to propose

a consistent terminology and a theoretical framework. As a first step in this direction, four problems are identified in relation to the vocabulary often deployed at present: (1) 'Citizen photojournalism' and 'citizen journalism' are used indiscriminately. (2) Many of the pictures are not produced by ordinary 'citizens'. (3) 'Photojournalism' gives the inaccurate impression of uniform and consistent technologies, formats, and aesthetics. (4) 'Non-professional' and 'amateur' may also be misleading insofar as image makers are non-professionals and amateurs in terms of media production but not necessarily in regard to their involvement in the conflict. The four points are elaborated in the following (see also Mortensen 2011b; 2014b).

First, 'citizen journalism' became a widespread denomination in the aftermath of the South Asian tsunami in December 2004, when pictures produced by tourists on location were recognized as an extraordinary contribution to the coverage by mainstream journalism. According to Stuart Allan, the concept 'citizen journalism' seizes the essence of this phenomenon, which he considers in continuation of the ethos traditionally associated with the witness:

> Despite its ambiguities, the term 'citizen journalism' appeared to capture something of the countervailing ethos of the ordinary person's capacity to bear witness, thereby providing commentators with a useful label to characterize an ostensibly new genre of reporting.
>
> (Allan 2009, 18)

However, citizen journalism covers a broad field, especially since there is no clear distinction between *citizen journalism* and *citizen photojournalism*. The umbrella term 'citizen journalism' is applied somewhat gratuitously to both written and visual materials, and therefore holds no critical sensibility to the specificity of images or the particular role of the eyewitness picture producer. First on the spot and able to document unfolding events, eyewitness picture producers often alter the food chain of news. Citizen photojournalism also reaches a much larger audience than citizen journalism, as images are more easily disseminated across regional and linguistic borders and address spectators in a seemingly immediate and direct manner. This is not least ascribable to how, as Kari Andén-Papadopoulos and Mervi Pantti contend, amateur images comprise the audience-produced content most embraced by the mainstream news media (2011b, 12).

Second, simply employing the concept 'citizen photojournalism' does not solve the problem because 'citizen' and 'photojournalism' suffer from similar imprecision. 'Citizen' implies the notion of a subject in a nation state carrying rights and obligations, which is not universally applicable. Even when bracketing this reservation, large groups of picture producers scarcely meet the criteria for ordinary citizens. In contrast to eyewitness footage from natural disasters shot by people who happen to be on location and feel compelled to bear witness, picture makers in areas of conflicts often operate in

a grey zone between documentation and participation—a point soon to be further scrutinized. For example, the pictures from the Abu Ghraib prison may hardly be contained in the term 'citizen images', since the prison guards did not take the pictures in their capacity as 'citizens', and their institutional and organizational affiliation would be important to recognize in most analytical approaches to the case.

Third, 'photojournalism' does not give an accurate impression of the variety of formats in question, such as still photos, videos, and slide shows. Referring to these different visual practices as 'citizen photojournalism' might give the wrong impression that they subscribe to the more narrow tradition of photojournalism (i.e., photographs to illustrate news stories, often still adhering to the humanistic ideals established in the golden age of this genre circa 1930s–1960s). Other than photojournalistic conventions, the material draws on and mixes various other visual traditions and genres, including vernacular snapshots, musically accompanied slide shows, camcorder recordings, and fictional forms, such as video games and war movies (Mortensen 2009a).

Fourth, 'non-professional' and 'amateur' cover difficult labels as well. Although individuals behind the camera are not professionals when it comes to media production, they often take the images in another professional capacity (e.g., as army employees). The terms non-professional and amateur may still be used meaningfully (and are used in this book) if it is clear what non-professional and amateur are compared to.

To establish a more generic vocabulary, this book, along with other recent research in the field, uses the expressions 'eyewitness images'/'eyewitness image producer' (e.g., Mortensen 2011b; Mortensen 2014b; Allan 2013; Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2013). Apart from shunning 'citizen', 'photojournalism', and 'non-professional'/'amateur' as possibly misguided designations, 'images' and, alternatively, 'pictures' or 'visuals' are broad terms encompassing diverse visual and audiovisual forms. As indicated in chapter 1, this choice of vocabulary also has the advantage of relating current practices to wider historical perspectives of media, politics, and culture brought into play by the concept of eyewitness.

DEFINITION: EYEWITNESS IMAGES FROM AREAS OF CONFLICT

The definition offered in this section places emphasis on the structural conditions and formal characteristics of eyewitness images in the context of conflict. Five distinguishing traits are explained at some length: 1) auto-recording; 2) subjectivity; 3) media institutional ambiguity; 4) participation and documentation; and 5) decontextualization.

On a methodological note, the distinguishing traits have been singled out by comparing the eyewitness images analyzed in this book with the characteristics ascribed to eyewitnesses in the previous chapter (presence, rhetoric, habitus,

competence, relationality, and subjectivity). The first three features of eyewitness images (auto-recording, subjectivity, and media institutional ambiguity) reconfigure different elements of the traditional six traits of the eyewitness/eyewitness testimony, as will be explained in the relevant subsections below. *Habitus* stands out as the only trait of the classical eyewitness/eyewitness testimony not to be reinterpreted by eyewitness images. As discussed in the previous chapter, habitus may still be taken into consideration in the circulation of eyewitness images but no longer per se constitutes an essential condition. The last two traits of eyewitness images, participation and documentation and decontextualization have been added , because they capture important features of eyewitness images, not manifest in traditional eyewitness accounts.

1. Auto-Recording

Eyewitness images are usually recorded and distributed by the very same person. The first characteristic, 'auto-recording', re-formulates three features attributed to the eyewitness—namely, *presence, rhetoric,* and *competence.* In this way, 'auto-recording' underscores how eyewitness images have been produced by somebody *present* on the spot, possessing both the *rhetoric* (means of expression) and sufficient *competence* in terms of media technological knowhow.

Compared to traditional witnessing, contemporary testimonies have changed profoundly by this figure stepping behind the camera and having the option of uploading pictures almost instantaneously. The significance of this shift from the *witness as source* to the *witness as producer of source material* becomes clear when comparing eyewitness images to spoken acts of witnessing, which Peters divides into the two distinctive phases of 'seeing' and 'saying':

> To witness thus has two faces: the passive one of *seeing* and the active one of *saying*. In passive witnessing an accidental audience observes the events of the world; in active witnessing one is a privileged possessor and producer of knowledge in an extraordinary, often forensic, setting in which speech and truth are policed in multiple ways. What one has seen authorizes what one says: an active witness first must have been a passive one. Herein lies the fragility of witnessing: the difficult juncture between experience and discourse. The witness is authorized to speak by having been present at an occurrence. A private experience enables a public statement. But the journey from experience (the seen) into words (the said) is precarious.
>
> (Peters 2001, 709–710, italics in original text)

Conventional witnessing involves an act of translation between a passive, private experience and an active, public act. This passage or, as Peters terms it elsewhere in the article, 'veracity gap' (2001, 715–717) between 'seeing' and 'saying' is tricky to cross. While events are messy and hard to manage in the here and now of their unfolding, stories are expected to be

coherent and smooth (Peters 2009, 44–45), especially in the realms of the news media with their inclination towards 'storyness' (Ellis 2009a, 79–81). The media have traditionally counterbalanced the eyewitness' subjective disposition and incoherent narrative by offering a role governed by rules and rituals (Thomas 2009, 101) that turns 'seeing' into 'saying' by framing and structuring the act of witnessing.

Eyewitness images, by contrast, eliminate the distance in time and space between 'seeing' and 'saying'. The situation is already experienced in a mediated form as it plays out, both cognitively by the individual's decision to transform observation to representation in situ, and physically by the split attention between the event in real life and the mobile phone screen's reproduction of the event. Whereas the junction from 'seeing' to 'saying' used to be 'precarious' and 'difficult', as Peters contends in the quote above, this distance is now easily covered by digital recording devices. The testimonies themselves have in turn become 'precarious' and 'difficult' because of their unedited, fragmented, and subjective form. For the same reason, eyewitness images may give the impression of bringing the viewer close to the scene of the event. At least that would form a parallel to how spoken witness testimonies tend to be perceived as more authentic and intimate when they are still incoherent and unstructured, and 'seeing' has not quite yet been converted into 'saying'.

2. Subjectivity

Second, consistent with the traditional eyewitness, a subjective point of view distinguishes eyewitness images. In this way, they are congenial with the omnipresence of personal confession and the subjective viewpoint of 'ordinary' people in today's media and culture (e.g., social media and reality television). Struk, in a similar manner, argues that the Abu Ghraib pictures followed in the slipstream of reality television:

> The growth and popularity of 'reality' television, which enthralled audiences with its dramatization of the mundane realities of everyday life, had made the idea of seeing a soldier's war from the inside appealing, and a marketable proposition.
>
> (Struk 2011, 147)

The affinity of eyewitness images to reality television is symptomatic of a larger tendency for contemporary representations of war to be permeated by a subjective perspective. This applies to news reportage focusing on the experiences of troops in the battlefield, television documentaries such as *Felthospital* (*The Field Hospital*) (2010, Danish channel TV2), and documentary films such as *Armadillo* by Janus Metz (2010). Seen through the eyes of military staff, these narratives depict a stark contrast between daily life on the home front and the drama and urgency of work on the war

front. These productions pay either no or only implicit attention to overall issues such as the historical and political background or military strategies and policies. Eyewitness images, in a similar way, show war in an episodic, decontextualized, and subjective manner.

As highlighted in chapter 1, this subjective perspective sometimes has the potential for giving voice to collective concerns and experiences or general political, social, or cultural issues—and sometimes not. Along the same lines, the literature on the Holocaust witness has accentuated the paradox inherent in testifying (e.g., Felman and Laub 1992; Felman 1992): On the one hand, eyewitness testimonies stand out as singular and unique accounts of an individual's specific experiences. On the other hand, witnesses address collective experiences as they 'speak *for* and *to* others' (Felman 1992, 3; see also chapter 1). This tension between the singular and the collective often rises to the surface in the reception of eyewitness images. In connection with the Abu Ghraib photographs, for instance, debates ensued as to whether they represented the point of view of the individual military employees or epitomized the spirit and behavior of the US military in a more general way. As a result of the subjective viewpoint, many eyewitness images similarly linger ambiguously between private singular forms of expression and public shared accounts. Despite having been created for personal purposes, they play a part in the public mediation or documentation of conflict.

3. Participation and Documentation

The third characteristic of eyewitness images is their blurring of the boundaries between participation and documentation. Again, this radicalizes a trait of the classical eyewitness/eyewitness testimony. The *relationality* of the witness conventionally indicated that he or she assumed this position *in response to* specific circumstances. Now, the erased borderline between participation and documentation means that many eyewitness images are taken *as part of* the producers' active involvement in the conflict.

In some of the most high-profile media cases generated and illustrated by amateur images, photographers were on site by virtue of their occupation. This may be in the capacity of cargo worker (the picture of caskets with fallen American soldiers from 2004) or security guard (the bootleg video of the hanging of Saddam Hussein in 2006), as exemplified in chapter 4. Taking on the same dual perspective of observer and participant, soldiers and activists represent two other significant suppliers of non-professional images.

Degrees of participation vary. Theoreticians in the field have brought forward the important argument with regard to weaker forms of participation that bearing witness per definition entails a crossing of the line between observation and action (e.g., Peters 2005; Wagner-Pacifici 2005a; 2005b). Since every act of witnessing is tied to a 'transformation' (Thomas 2009, 96), taking on the part of the eyewitness constitutes a form of participation in itself. This applies especially to the auto-recorded eyewitness, whose attendance

is more self-reflexive and active than the classical eyewitness. Witnessing becomes part of the event, which changes the witness' perception of the event, the documentation and retrospective reconstruction of the event, and sometimes even the course of the event itself. The mere physical presence of the camera is often enough to exert an influence, most dramatically in regimes interpreting filming in public spaces as a sign of dissent, but also on a smaller scale when people become conscious of a recording device pointing in their direction and documenting their actions. Events take place in front of the lens, which would otherwise not have happened in that way, or would perhaps not have happened at all.

4. Media Institutional Ambiguity

Witnesses were traditionally summoned to a 'formal institutional setting: a court of law, a church, a television studio' (Peters 2005, 249–250). Formerly 'institutionally powerless' (Cottle 2006, 2) individuals are today able to produce and distribute media content outside the realms of traditional media institutions. However, to distinguish simply between institutionalized and non-institutionalized media practices would be misleading. The creation and circulation of eyewitness images often cut across the two.

As eyewitness images enter the established news media, the producers seem to gain more and more professionalism. Activists raising awareness of their cause constitute a conspicuous example. To a still larger extent, they operate on a semi-professional level to produce and distribute images targeted at established media institutions, with which they collaborate implicitly as well as explicitly. An already-mentioned example of this is the visual digital activism in Burma emanating from an organized network of so-called video journalists on the ground, supplying footage for the organization Democratic Voices of Burma, which succeeded in thrusting images of anti-government protests into the international news media in 2007. Moreover, as noted by Ali and Fahmy (2013, 55) among others, citizen journalists filter news content to ensure consistency with the values and standard narratives of the mainstream news media. To enhance the appeal of non-professional visuals, citizens and others producing and distributing images seem inclined to adjust to or internalize the logics, requirements, and norms of today's news industry—for instance, with respect to what is deemed newsworthy information, offering identification, proximity, immediacy, drama, authenticity, a sense of urgency, and so on (Kristensen and Mortensen 2013; see also Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2011a). Furthermore, amateur images produce a reciprocal effect; as they become a standardized feature in crisis reporting, they in turn change the criteria for the content and form of newsworthiness (see also Pantti 2013, 203). Institutional affiliations also tend to be unclear when employees from the military or state administrations are picture producers for the reason that it may be hard to discern the degree to which they attend to their own and to the employing institutions' interests.

From the other side of this traditional divide, amateur practices are increasingly welcomed and facilitated by the mainstream news media, despite their ambivalence with regard to the pictures' legitimacy and validity as sources. Seen from a media institutional perspective, amateur pictures have the advantage of low production costs. They also help solve some of the traditional obstacles imposed on crisis reporting by difficult logistics, concern for personal safety, and dependency on the military to establish contact with relevant sources of information and secure access to areas of combat. Non-professional images are gathered by extracting footage from YouTube and similar sites, or by the public responding to the news media's requests for footage. For example, the 'Assignment Desk' at CNN's site 'iReport' encourages the audience to report on topical subjects with the promise that 'Your iReport could be featured in a CNN story' (see ireport.cnn.com; last accessed June 26, 2014).

Even if eyewitness images enter the institutionalized news media through various routes, their origin outside a media institution remains significant. As already indicated, the traditional habitus of the eyewitness is challenged by the fact that everybody may assume this role on their own initiative without an institution vouching for their legitimacy, credibility, and relevance. Furthermore, due to the institutional ambiguity of eyewitness images, the meaning inherent in their contribution to communicating events is often unstable and open to various interpretations and framings.

A final aspect to be touched upon in relation to institutional ambiguity regards the tendency for eyewitness reports to show more graphic scenes than their professionally produced counterparts.

The news media appear more inclined to show explicitly violent amateur recordings, perhaps because they are already available in the public domain (Pantti and Bakker 2009, 472). This calls forth the familiar issue of how we are constituted and constitute ourselves as spectators to mediated human suffering (e.g., Boltanski 1999; Sontag 2004 [2003]; Seaton 2005; Chouliaraki 2006; 2008). With a 'de-territorialization' of experience, the media show the pain of distant others on a regular basis, often without giving us the option of acting on their situation, apart from 'paying and speaking' (Boltanski, 1999, 17). At stake is also the related issue of the impact of violence, given that no proportionality exists between the force of violence and onlookers' propensity for an empathic, reflective, or active response. Even when the intention is to exhibit violence pedagogically to prevent future violence, mobilize the viewer, or realistically display the brutality of armed conflicts, the spectator is enrolled in the logics of violence and needs to position him- or herself in a far-from-easy process of identification and distancing.

5. Decontextualization

Eyewitness images tend to be less informative and decodable than professional press photographs owing to the decontextualized content and

transmission of the material. Producers often do not claim authorship for the images, but remain unnamed or assume pseudonyms either for safety and legal concerns or as something of a genre convention. Moreover, information about the actors, circumstances, locations, and other elements represented is frequently neither volunteered nor easily available through journalistic research. This lack of factual information and a steady, identifiable figure or institution responsible for the images naturally makes it difficult to test the reliability of the source. Sometimes this is communicated by the mainstream news media in disclaimers about the want of certain, verifiable information, when eyewitness images are used as raw material in conflict reporting.

Following Pantti, the decontextualized images evoke a sense of 'embodied collectivity' as the creating force:

> The embodied practice of the photographer does not mean that only the individual photographer is important. On the contrary, the photographer in citizen images emerges as an embodied collectivity, as a figure inviting herself to be imagined as 'anyone'.
>
> (Pantti 2013, 210)

Although the notion of the photographer as 'anyone' holds an appeal in its idealism and humanistic thinking, one could also venture the claim that the photographer always is and remains to be 'someone': A specific person turning to witnessing for a number of reasons, be they of a personal, social, cultural, or political nature. Assuming the part of eyewitness picture producer may be spurred by the urge to document significant events or reveal conditions open to criticism. Or it may simply be an extension of the habit of visually documenting daily life; being there and being able could on its own be a motive for taking on the part of the eyewitness. In any event, *lack of knowledge* about the personal and political investment in the pictures ought not to be confused with a *lack of* personal and political investment.

As a result of their decontextualized form, eyewitness images lend themselves to be contextualized anew. They often enter into event-driven journalism as opposed to source-driven journalism in connection with breaking news events (Chouliaraki 2010; see also Livingston and Bennett 2003), on account of the tendency of news networks to simply show the information and material at hand rather than presenting a prioritized, synthesized, and balanced account (Kristensen and Mortensen 2013).

To sum up the definition of eyewitness images, they are recorded and distributed by individuals with exclusive first-hand experience, who mostly reside outside or on the margins of media institutions. However, the question of institutional belonging is not a simple one, due to the conflation of the borderlines between professional and non-professional media production. Eyewitness images contain a subjective viewpoint, which is often coupled with anonymity. They tend to be conveyed in a decontextualized

form, and are to be considered partial, if not biased, due to the merging of participation and documentation.

SUBGENRES OF EYEWITNESS IMAGES FROM CONFLICT

After having defined eyewitness images from conflict areas, this section presents the main subgenres: first-person documentary style, embedded footage, and performative representations, which in different ways and forms bring to the fore the five characteristics. The three subgenres should be perceived with the reservation that a lot of material falls in between. For instance, even though the images from Abu Ghraib are probably most firmly rooted in the documentary tradition, many of the pictures were staged and highly performative in their quotation of familiar pictorial traditions, such as pornography, sadomasochism, photographs of lynching, and colonial depictions of 'primitive' people as inferior, sexualized bodies.[1] In spite of the scenes being acted out in front *of* the camera, and conceivably even *for* the camera, they were treated as evidence that revealed the conditions of the detainees and the disregard for the Geneva conventions concerning the rights of prisoners, which again underscores their crossing of the subgenres first-person documentary style and performative representations. Another reservation is that when pictures move context, they are also prone to move subgenre. For example, contributions to the performative subgenre often recirculate documentary-style pictures and embedded footage.

First-Person Documentary Style

Eyewitness images drawing on the documentary tradition by foregrounding realism, proximity, and authenticity appear at present to be the most circulated and influential subgenre. However, the straightforward point-and-shoot appearance of the images ought not to be mistaken for ignorance of or disinterest in strategic or market-related concerns. In this regard, I disagree with the transparency Struk seems to accredit soldier images:

> They are not concerned with drama, pathos or marketability. They just say: 'Look! This is what I saw. I was there.'
>
> (Struk 2011, 150)

This quote purveys the impression of soldier photography as a pure and direct representational form. However, the producers in many cases invest various political, social, or personal interests in their pictures, which necessarily shape their choice of subject and point of view, even if this is not openly communicated.

Moreover, the documentary tradition to which soldiers and other eyewitness picture producers resort constitutes a convention in itself, which in the

words of the renowned American photographer Walker Evans may be characterized as a 'documentary style' (Katz 1971). Traces of various genres and aesthetic traditions are discernable in documentary-style eyewitness images. They include the tradition of war photographs putting immediacy and closeness above distinctness, definition, and immaculate compositions (from the 1930s and 1940s); the use of handheld camera in documentary film from the French *cinema verité* and the American counterpart *direct cinema* (from the 1960s); and the close realism in some reality television (from the 1990s). To the traits from various established genres of photography, cinema, and television, the subjective first-person perspective is added. 'First-person documentary' has been used in a different sense in film theory as reference to autobiographical films (e.g., Lebow 2012). In this book, the term 'first-person documentary' corresponds more closely to the way in which Jon Dovey employs 'first person media' in the context of factual television to express '[s]ubjective, autobiographical and confessional modes of expression' (2000, 1).

Embedded Footage

The second subgenre, embedded footage, covers videos and stills originally intended for internal military purposes that enter the public sphere. Embedded footage is distinguished by obscuring the confines between conflict on an operational level and the documentation of conflict. Often, this makes the images difficult to decipher because they are deeply entrenched in the operational context and represent conflict through what appears to be a first-person tunnel vision. They stretch the notion of eyewitness images insofar as they have not been taken with camera phones or other recording devices in private possession, but rather with professional military equipment, such as helmet cameras, gun cameras, and such. Nonetheless, they are included in the genre of eyewitness images because they show events from the subjective, singular viewpoint of the individual soldier, who—in terms of media production—must be considered non-professional (see also chapters 3 and 6). The military has a long tradition of releasing videos of precision bombings, missile attacks, and so on to brief the press on operations. In recent years, this material has also entered the public realm by soldiers uploading gun camera videos on LiveLeak and similar video sharing platforms, or by whistleblowers leaking documents claimed to evidence breaches of martial law. The intended communicative acts performed by the public release of videos and other material produced for internal military uses obviously differ greatly depending on whether they are made available via official or non-official channels.

Performative Representations

The performativity distinctive of the third subgenre typically manifests itself in staged and manipulated photographs or videos compiling images, music,

and text—for instance, in the form of music-accompanied 'slide-shows'. Some prevalent examples of this subgenre include military personnel creating and circulating triumphant or scorning videos by assembling various available stills and moving images with the ostensible aim of belittling the enemy and exulting their own supremacy (Mortensen 2009a). Mourning videos or memorial videos made by soldiers, veterans, their families, or others paying tribute to fallen soldiers belong to the performative subgenre as well (see also chapter 4). Activists or citizens also make videos to create awareness of a cause, mourn the victims of repressive regimes, and so on. Pictures and videos within one subculture tend to re-circulate many of the same images, tunes, and compositions.

In the main, this book focuses on images falling into 'first-person documentary style' and 'embedded footage' because they are appropriated with more frequency by the mainstream news media. This is explicable by how they are more easily attributed value as news or documentation than performative representations, which do not, in the same way, present direct insight into conflict from the perspective of participants, but offer more symbolically condensed and emotionally charged images. In a similar vein, their media-institutional ambiguity should be seen less in relation to the news media but more in relation to if and how the images represent and reflect their employing institution.

ADJACENT GENRES OF EYEWITNESS IMAGES

This chapter has defined eyewitness images from conflict areas as a genre. Taking its starting point in a comparison to the last chapter's definition of the classical eyewitness, five characteristics were outlined for eyewitness images, 1) auto-recording; 2) subjectivity; 3) media institutional ambiguity; 4) participation and documentation; and 5) decontextualization. Following from this, first-person documentary style, embedded footage, and performative representations were sketched as some of the most frequent subgenres. While this book does not address eyewitness images from other contexts at length, the definition and outline of subgenres are probably still fully or partially applicable. This section concludes by briefly drawing borderlines to adjacent genres, which may benefit from the theoretical framework presented in this chapter.

Most importantly, this book does not engage specifically with eyewitness images in the coverage of natural catastrophes, but transferring the definition may still be meaningful (e.g., Liu, Palen et al. 2009; Chouliaraki 2010; Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, and Cottle 2012). Producers of images from areas of natural disasters rarely inhabit the same double role of participant and eyewitness as producers of images from manmade disasters. This is not to say that they are impartial observers. Even though amateur photographers on sites of natural disasters are not involved in the same sense as,

for instance, soldiers taking photographs in war zones, they are nonetheless affected as victims or witnesses to the suffering and distress of others.

Eyewitness images of random acts of violence, such as school shootings (Muschert and Sumiala 2012), injuries, and accidents (including 'happy slapping' or traffic accidents filmed by passers-by), are similarly excluded from this book. They share many traits with eyewitness images from conflict areas but lack the political and military institutions as stakeholders. In this way, these pictures do not usually share the institutional ambiguity of eyewitness images from conflicts. Nevertheless, it may be possible to reach a better understanding of this material by drawing the traits auto-recording, subjectivity, participation and documentation, and decontextualization from the definition.

A final group of images to possibly benefit from this theoretical framework include most eyewitness images from conflict zones that remain on social media platforms without receiving any notice beyond their immediate and local contexts. They are only considered to a limited degree in this book, which focuses specifically on the way in which amateur images have transformed conflict reporting in the mainstream news media. Once again, although these representations are not equally ambiguous institutionally, elements of the definition of eyewitness images from conflict may still be transferable. The sketched subgenres of eyewitness images could similarly serve as a point of departure for more fine-tuned deliberations into these thriving online cultures for representing and documenting conflict backstage.

NOTE

1. This performative aspect was emphasized when a British counterpart to the Abu Ghraib scandal broke in May 2004 with the publication in the *Daily Mirror* of pictures allegedly showing British soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners in Basra. The pictures turned out to be a photo hoax, deliberately staged to mimic the shocking content of the Abu Ghraib pictures (Struk 2011, 109–130). Other countries, such as Germany and Denmark, have experienced similar local off-shoots of the Abu Ghraib scandal.

3 Mediatized Conflict

Chapter 1 saw the current proliferation of eyewitness images in continuation of historical forms of witnessing and the media as a distinct domain of witnessing, and chapter 2 defined eyewitness images from conflict as a genre with distinctive subgenres. This chapter presents the third component of the theoretical framework, namely the notion of 'mediatized conflict' situating eyewitness images in contemporary relations between media and conflict.

Mediatization theory has been deployed in media studies over the past years to conceptualize how the media have permeated practically all institutions and organizations to an extent that the media can no longer be regarded as an institution *outside* culture and society, exerting an influence on the way culture and society are perceived. Rather, the media are *inside* society and incorporated into central institutions and organizations, which adjust to, interact with, and depend on media technologies and logics (e.g., Schulz 2004; Hjarvard 2008a; 2008b; 2013; Lundby 2009a; Hepp, Hjarvard, and Lundby 2010; Hepp 2013).

The eyewitness images of interest to this book acquire their meaning and significance through intricate interactions and negotiations between two dimensions of mediatized war. Created and circulated by actors outside the institutionalized news media, they nonetheless break into political and military communication about conflict. The fluctuation of eyewitness images between the two dimensions manifests itself, for instance, when they defy censorship, contest official military and governmental versions of events, and appear in the mainstream news media's conflict coverage alongside official sources, but also when they are mobilized by politicians, deployed in the military's public communication, or become evidence in criminal investigations. In this way, the two dimensions often have divergent interests, but sometimes also share overlapping interests. Mediatized conflict, accordingly, is theorized as an interrelation process between the two dimensions.

The *first* dimension of mediatization takes place top-down by the institutionalized news media interacting with political and military elites in order to gain access to sources of information and the front line. Conversely, the political and military institutions respond to the intensified media coverage by gradually adapting to, making strategic use of, and further developing

the communicative technologies, practices, and logics of the media. Having taken its first tentative beginnings during World War I with the emergence of systematized propaganda and censorship, this dimension evidently endures well into the digital era.

The *second* dimension of mediatization concerns the bottom-up movement facilitated by non-professional actors producing and distributing media content, which typically attracts attention when political and military framings of conflict are challenged. These actors possess no or loose institutional ties, or operate contrary to the policy on information management of the institutions in which their primary obligations lie. Early isolated examples of whistleblowers or soldier photography might be tracked back to the age of mass media dominance, but this dimension has developed and grown dramatically with the rise of digital media.

First, this chapter presents the notion of an interrelation process central to mediatization theory. Next, the media and state/military axis is introduced as the first dimension of mediatized conflict. This includes a review of some important research traditions within this field—specifically, the literature on mediatized conflict/war, propaganda, and the media-state relationship. The following section presents the second dimension of mediatized conflict as the various communicative attempts by actors outside institutions to impact the public's mediated knowledge and experience of conflict, which has been the subject of disparate scholarly approaches, including the literature on eyewitness images. Finally, the conclusion provides examples of the way in which mediatized conflict may work as a theoretical framework for eyewitness images.

MEDIATIZATION AS AN INTERRELATION PROCESS

Conflict is an area to which research into mediatization has paid relatively little attention. 'There is no separate theory for the mediatization of conflict', as Knut Lundby (2009c, 298) observes (but see Cottle 2006; Horten 2011; Maltby 2012; to which I shall return). By contrast, the adjacent field of mediatized politics has been the subject of a number of studies (e.g., Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Strömbäck 2008; 2011; Strömbäck and Esser 2009; Driessens et al. 2010; Hjarvard 2013). According to Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Winfried Schulz's early definition, mediatized politics has lost autonomy and become 'dependent in its central functions on mass media, and is continuously shaped by interactions with mass media' (1999, 250).[1] Studies into mediatized politics are relevant to comprehend mediatized conflict, insofar as this process is also to an extent driven by the interaction between the news media and political actors. However, mediatized politics has mostly been examined in the context of national politics and national media, whereas the mediatization of conflict is inscribed in the fields of international politics and the international media circuit. Another marked difference to take into

consideration is that mediatized conflict includes both political and military institutions, just as digital media have enabled various other players to make their entrance into this field. Therefore, this chapter also aims to contribute to a separate theory of mediatized conflicts.

Mediatization has mainly been deployed to explain long-standing, multidimensional processes of cultural, social, and political change prompted by the mutual impact of the media and other institutions in society. Further to this interpretation of mediatization, Andreas Hepp, Stig Hjarvard, and Knut Lundby make the case that this exchange should be understood as an 'interrelation process':

> In general, the concept of mediatization tries to capture long-term interrelation processes between media change on the one hand and social and cultural change on the other. As institutionalized and technological means of communication, media have become integral to very different contexts of human life. The media are not just neutral instances of mediation: Media like television, radio, newspaper, the web or the mobile phone are in themselves mediators of social and cultural change.
>
> (Hepp, Hjarvard, and Lundby 2010, 223)

The idea of an interrelation process corresponds with most studies on mediatization, concerned with how the media alter specific institutions, and how the media are themselves altered in turn.

Mediatized conflict is similarly theorized as an interrelation process in this book. But the approach is different. This specific interrelation process does not implicate the media and another institution, which existed independently before the media's influence. Proposing an interrelation process between conflicts per se and conflicts under media influence hardly makes sense in light of the deep connections between media and conflict developed over the past century.[2] Instead, this book presumes that conflict *is* thoroughly mediatized on communicative, organizational, strategic, and operational levels: from the great involvement of the press in all aspects of conflict; to the professionalized communication of political and military actors; to participants in conflict taking advantage of social media and the news media to inform, mobilize, and propagate their cause; to the blurring of boundaries between weapons technologies and media technologies; and so on. Interpreting mediatized conflict as an interrelation process between two dimensions of mediatization offers a model for analyzing the integration of eyewitness images into different, co-existent layers of media and conflict. This grip on mediatized conflict is motivated by the way in which multiple actors, institutions, and organizations in today's extended media environment make an effort to control, shape, and impact the public's level of information and forms of knowledge about conflict. By defining the two dimensions, this model tries to systematize the interests in terms of whether they stem from elite actors within state and military or non-elite actors

residing outside the institutions that conventionally controlled the information stream from conflicts.

As argued in the introduction, the institutionalized news media are central to this model because they constitute an important platform for actors from the two dimensions to push their diverging claims about and representations of the conflict in question. The news media constitute the primary platform for political and military actors to keep the population updated and informed, but they are also vital for non-official contributions to communicating conflict in terms of reaching a transnational audience and gaining visibility and voice, seeking legitimacy, and so on. Contending ways of representing conflict by the two dimensions are thus presented and negotiated in the mainstream news media. The news media put on display the two dimensions while at the same time playing the role of significant stakeholder and active partner in mediatized conflict, inasmuch as conflict coverage represents an important journalistic turf, which entails different forms of interaction with both elite sources from the military and political domains and non-elite sources such as citizens, grassroots, activists, rebels, insurgents, and so on.

DIMENSION I: MEDIA AND STATE/MILITARY

The top-down dimension of mediatized conflict involves the mainstream news media's coverage of conflict as well as the incorporation of media technologies and logics into the political and military institutions in order to shape and influence the population's mediated knowledge of conflict. To elaborate on the top-down dimension of mediatized conflict, this section takes its point of departure in the existing definitions of mediatized conflict because they almost exclusively deal with this perspective (Cottle 2006; Horten 2011; Maltby 2012).[3] To gain a more in-depth understanding and a historical perspective on this research field, literature on war and propaganda (e.g., Lasswell 1927; Culbert, Cull, and Welch 2003) and on the media-state relationship during times of conflict is drawn in (e.g., Hallin 1986; Robinson 2000; 2002). Although these two research traditions do not deploy the term *mediatization*, they describe key processes covered by this term in their approach to the vital elements of the relationship between media and conflict.

In their analyses of mediatized war/conflict, Simon Cottle and Gerd Horten share as their starting point the deep and intricate interdependency between the news media, on the one side, and political and military institutions, on the other. Cottle defines 'mediatized conflicts' in the following manner in his book *Mediatized Conflict: Developments in Media and Conflict Studies* (2006):

> The phrase, 'mediatized conflict', the chosen title and subject of this book, is deliberate. It is used to emphasize the complex ways in which

> media are often implicated within conflicts while disseminating ideas and images about them. As such, it signals a much stronger sense of media involvement than, say, 'mediation'. 'Mediation' tends to suggest a view of media as a neutral 'middle-ground', equidistant perhaps between events that the media report on and the audiences that view/read/hear about them.
>
> (8–9; for more on mediation vs. mediatization, see, e.g., Couldry 2008; Strömbäck 2008; Hjarvard 2013)

According to Cottle, mediatized conflict denotes that the media's influence on conflict goes beyond merely distributing information as a neutral 'middle-ground', like the one implied by the concept 'mediation'—that is, an act of communication through a medium. Mediatization indicates greater media infiltration in 'complex, active and performative ways' (Cottle 2006, 9).

In a similar vein, the historical approach by Horten mainly considers mediatization to be synonymous with the press's immense involvement in conflicts, which have turned the media into a 'fourth branch' of military operations akin to army, air force, and navy (2011, 32). He sketches a development in which the mediatization of war goes back to World War I, and reaches new heights during the Vietnam War (1959–1975) and the Iraq War (2003–2011). Towards the end of his article, Horten opens up for a broader understanding of mediatized conflict:

> The Iraq War represents a new chapter in the mediatization of the war because the media indeed functioned increasingly as the fourth branch of military operations. The key components of this transformation are related to three overarching developments: the emergence of rival global news networks and the creation of an oppositional global public sphere; the professionalization of the military's information strategies and warfare, which included the utilization of embedded reporters; and, finally, the emergence of the internet both as a medium for alternative news sources as well as an arena for expanded warfare in the form of cyberwar.
>
> (Horten 2011, 43)

Horten identifies the mediatization of conflict as a number of processes, which have their origin in either an institution (news networks, the military) or in a medium (the internet). While I agree with his historical perspective and differentiated understanding of mediatized conflict, the concept might, from the perspective of this book, be structured more systematically so as to facilitate and underpin empirical analysis.

A more narrow take on mediatized conflict is offered by Sarah Maltby in her book *Military Media Management: Negotiating the 'Front' Line in Mediatized War* (2012), which relates her analysis of the British military's media management to mediatization research, primarily the writings of Stig

Hjarvard. On account of her object of study, the military-media axis occupies a central position in her understanding of mediatized conflict:

> It is here that the processes of mediatization become more evident as the military institution—and war conduct—is transformed by a progressive dependence upon, and integration of the media into operational planning. In short, militaries recognize that the execution of war increasingly has an intrinsic 'performance' element, and therefore consciously and purposefully organize their activities to coincide with those of media organizations.
>
> (Maltby 2012, 102)

In a sense, the military's adaptation to the demands and opportunities of the media forms a schoolbook example of mediatization as an interrelation process. The military institution and the conduct of war have been transformed by what Maltby refers to above as 'progressive dependency upon' the media, and, conversely, the media's approach to and coverage of war have been drastically altered by the military's increased exploitation of media dynamics. Maltby takes the two previous definitions of mediatized war/conflict by Cottle (2006) and Horten (2011) a step further by underlining that the impact and integration of the media stretch to the operational level, on which the military also adheres and adjusts to media logics.

To sum up, the sparse literature on mediatized conflict/war concentrates on the interaction between the media and the military/political institutions. In this regard, mediatization has primarily supplied the existing literature on media and conflict (to which we shall shortly return) with two new aspects. First, mediatization has provided a more fine-tuned vocabulary to delineate the mutual dependency between media and military/state as a basic condition for understanding conflict and media. Second, this concept also places emphasis on the higher degree to which the military/political institutions rely on and utilize the media on diverse levels. Be that as it may, the research on mediatized conflict continues, to a large extent, along the track laid down by the rich literature on media and conflict, which in the following is divided into two main traditions: the research on propaganda and on the media-state/military axis.

To inform the first dimension of mediatized conflict further, the research into war and propaganda offers historically oriented reflections on the way popular media for news and entertainment have become instrumental in exerting an influence or manipulating the perception, attitude, and behavior of targeted groups (see also Mortensen 2013a). According to the definition proposed by the pioneer in the systematic study of propaganda, the American political scientist and communication theorist Harold D. Lasswell, propaganda amounts to 'the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols' (1927, 627; see also Lasswell 1938 [1927]). The media are vital to this effort, and consequently, the development of propaganda

in the modern sense of this word coincides with the rise of mass media in the 20th century. While propaganda in some form has undoubtedly existed throughout much of human history, the term itself was first coined in a political context around World War I (Culbert, Cull, and Welch 2003; Taylor 2003 [1990]; Willcox 2005). War reporting emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, but initially the military and state administrations primarily deployed the strategy of withholding information in response to this new communication flow. During World War I, however, they started making active and coordinated use of media such as cinema, leaflets, radio, and posters for the sake of mobilizing the support of their civilian populations for the 'Total War'. Morale was recognized as a significant factor, and states faced the urgent task of justifying their entry into war, since public opinion could not be disregarded in the formulation of foreign policies (Culbert, Cull, and Welch 2003; Welch 2005; Messinger 2011). Propaganda became the principal instrument of control over public opinion and grew dramatically in scale over the course of the twentieth century.

Propaganda has arguably lost some of its former significance as a central term for understanding the relations between media and state/military during wartime. Compared to the large-scale propaganda campaigns orchestrated during the World Wars, today's initiatives to exert an influence on public sentiment are more differentiated and directed at specific audiences. Moreover, propaganda is commonly associated with a one-way traffic from state/military to the media, which does not make allowance for diverse attempts to involve journalists or audiences in two-way exchanges. The term falls short, for example, in relation to interactive and multi-media platforms for information and entertainment developed by the US military, such as video games, monitored YouTube channels, and apps for tablets and mobile phones. Similarly, the concept of propaganda is hardly attuned to collaborations between the media and the state/military, such as embedded reporting.

By contrast, the mutual exchanges between media-state/military are at the core of the third research field brought in to illuminate the first dimension of mediatized conflict. Research into the media-state/military relationship typically centers on two major issues, which are in effect different sides of the same coin: 1) the press' impact on opinion polls and policymaking, and 2) the press' degree of freedom and independence during conflict. Throughout the history of war reporting, the news media have been obliged to cooperate with the military in order to gain access to warzones and be included in the flow of information. War reporters consistently face challenges with regard to balance, allegiance, responsibility, and truth (Allan and Zelizer 2004, 3) on account of recurring conflicts of interest between security politics and the freedom of information. Proximity to the battlefield constitutes an enduring ideal of war reporting, yet the critical distance and objectiveness of correspondents who collaborate with the military has continually been called into question.

Debates on the role of the news media in times of conflict have typically gathered strength following the introduction of new media technologies that

have been ascribed the power to transform the forms and amounts of information available to the public. The Vietnam War constitutes a famous example of dispute regarding the degree of media influence on public opinion and policymaking. 'Living room war' was the popular designation for the war in Vietnam, based on the interpretation that nightly television reports from the front line diminished public backing and affected the outcome of the war. According to widespread belief, reporters in the field enjoying unprecedented freedom created headlines on human suffering rather than on the political objectives of the intervention. The US government was (allegedly) forced to end the military involvement due to this graphic and decontextualized television coverage, which left the home front with the impression of a war fought in 'military and moral quicksand', as President Nixon put it (cited after Hallin 1986, 3). Daniel C. Hallin's (1986) seminal study challenges this interpretation by asserting that reporting remained loyal to government policy as long as consensus ruled. The critical approach was prompted by the change in political climate from 1967, when the news media's primary sources, government officials and soldiers in the field began expressing divided opinions. Even then, the news media scarcely reported outside the bounds of the political demarcation of the debate; for instance, arguments were seldom heard about the war being fundamentally wrong (Hallin 1986, 159–210).

The so-called 'CNN effect' associated with transnational 24/7 news channels in the 1990s represents another example of the inclination to assign new media formats and technologies the power to change public opinion, policymaking, and political action, which is then later called into question by empirical research. Post-Cold War 'humanitarian' military interventions led by the US, for instance in Iraq (1991), Somalia (1992), Rwanda (1994), Bosnia (1994–1995), and Kosovo (1999), were interpreted as a direct result of televised images of human suffering. Scholars have since maintained that the catchphrase 'CNN effect' is not only exaggerated (e.g., Perlmutter 1998; Robinson 2002; 2004) but also used indiscriminately to cover three distinct meanings, as Livingston (1997) argues: Firstly, an *accelerant* to policy—that is, a shortened response time for decision making. Secondly, an *impediment* to the achievement of desired policy goals through coverage compromising operational security or undermining morale. Thirdly, an *agenda-setting agent*—that is to say, the foreign policy mirrors the news media's framing of, for instance, a humanitarian conflict. According to Livingston's line of reasoning, the influence of the 24-hour news cycle should be regarded as conditional and specific to the policy types and the objectives of the conflict.

Claims about the revolutionizing impact of emerging media technologies have led scholars in media studies and political science to reflect on the actual causes and effects in the relationship between media and state/military. Contrary to the tendency to attribute inordinate power to the latest media innovations, scholars have argued that, essentially, the news media tend to be loyal to government agendas in matters of war and national

security (e.g., Hallin 1986; Thussu and Freedman 2003; Boyd-Barrett 2004). The mainstream news media are inclined to 'manufacture consent' (Chomsky and Herman 1988) due to their business model and the propensity for journalists to rely on elite sources and remain faithful to national interests. Building a bridge between the two positions, 'the policy-media interaction model' by Robinson (2000; 2002) proposes a more differentiated approach by extending the research conducted by Hallin (1986) and outlining three degrees of media influence according to the level of elite consensus and policy certainty. The media may, according to this model, have a direct influence on government policy; when elites dissent, a clearly articulated policy line is absent, and the media frame victims in a critical way.

To summarize, the research traditions on mediatized conflict, war and propaganda, and the media-state/military relationship seek to provide answers to the enduring question of how the relations between media and state/military are to be understood in light of shifting characters and conducts of conflict as well as shifting media technologies. These traditions inform the top-down dimension of mediatized conflict, which in short concerns the interdependency between the media and state/military.

DIMENSION II: MEDIA, CONFLICT, AND PARTICIPATION

The bottom-up dimension of mediatized conflict might be defined as citizens, grassroots, NGOs, activists, military employees, and others engaged in either structured, strategic or random, uncoordinated acts of publicly circulating and recirculating information. Either the material in question is their own or other people's non-professionally produced media content, or internal and classified governmental/military documents.

As digital media allow more actors to take part in communicating facts, knowledge, and experiences from areas of conflict, the bottom-up dimension plays an increasingly important role in the way conflicts are fought and represented. Some of the most conspicuous examples include insurgents publishing extreme videos online to issue threats, demand ransom, and show acts of violence. Cyber attacks and hacking contribute to transforming the internet into a battle space on its own. Activists and other participants deploy social media to organize internally, recruit new members, mobilize support, and inform the public about their struggles. Soldiers also use social network sites as platforms for publishing internal footage or documents, blogging, or putting on display their depictions of conflict. Whistleblowers leak governmental and military documents to newspapers and/or organizations like WikiLeaks, which use them to fight against what they consider unjust and illegal behavior by those in power.

Unlike the first dimension, the second dimension of mediatization does not summarize and further pursue distinct scholarly traditions, to which it may be compared, in order to single out the contribution of mediatized

conflict to the existing research. The different scholarly attempts at understanding the new conditions for communicating and conducting conflict are somewhat disparate, which is hardly surprising considering the broad and diverse field covered by this concept. Whereas the research on the first dimension centers around the media-state/military axis, the second dimension is by definition decentered because of how it may be initiated by various actors. This also opens up for a broader understanding of conflict than the one typically applied by the research traditions related to the first dimension—that is, armed conflict between two or more sovereign nation states. The second dimension may encompass both conflicts between nations and within nations (e.g., armed confrontations in connection with civic engagement).

Researchers have addressed the bottom-up dimension of mediatized conflict from a number of perspectives, such as the impact of digital media on war reporting (e.g., Matheson and Allan 2009) and war representations (e.g., Mirzoeff 2005) and on citizen journalism (e.g., Allan and Thorsen 2009; Wall 2012). In the current context, it is most relevant to highlight the growing body of literature on eyewitness images, which often concerns this genre's transformation of conflict coverage and the obstacles and opportunities posed for journalism as a profession (e.g., Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2011a; Allan 2013; Mortensen 2011a; Kristensen and Mortensen 2013). However, researchers have also examined the way in which eyewitness images challenge political (Bakir 2009, Mortensen 2007) and military framings (Christensen 2008; Andén-Papadoupolous 2009a; 2009b; Mortensen 2009a; 2009b; 2014a). In other words, the research within this field has mainly looked at how eyewitness images put to the test dominant ways of communicating conflict by the news media, state, and the military, which indirectly confirms the relevance of the model of mediatized conflict proposed by this chapter.

On a more general level, researchers have debated the *actual* influence of digital media on the power balance between elites and non-elites, a debate that resembles previous discussions on the impact of new media technologies. The Kosovo War (1998–1999) (e.g., Arthur 1999), the Afghanistan War (2001–) (e.g., Srodes 2008), and the Iraq War (2003–2011) (e.g., Hammersley 2003) have all been dubbed 'the first internet war' by the news media. Similarly, in connection with public uprisings across a number of Middle Eastern and Northern African countries from 2011, catchword explanations of the so-called 'Twitter revolution', 'YouTube revolution', or 'Facebook revolution' have circulated in the media and led to discussions on whether new media technologies mobilize and empower social and political movements or whether existing groupings are simply endowed with new means of communication. The eagerness to attach an innovative signature medium to each conflict is contested by the way in which most communication technologies are gradually spread and implemented; their effects are mostly neither easily measured nor unequivocal, and they converge and interplay in other

ways with established media technologies. Similar to how the focus in earlier debates was specific to the medium and conflict in question, the focus in this debate is adjusted to the particular questions arising from digital technologies, most importantly whether they decentralize and democratize the flow of information from conflict zones. Scholars are divided on this issue: Some studies suggest that conflict reporting is an example of a profoundly changed journalistic area because digital media have undermined official control, allowed more actors to take part in the news production, and expanded the numbers and kinds of platforms for seeking news on ongoing conflicts (e.g., Allan and Thorsen 2009; Matheson and Allan 2009; Mortensen 2011b). Other studies maintain that political and military elites still hold the power to define the news media's framing (e.g., Robinson et al. 2010). Consistent with other research in the field (e.g. Kristensen and Mortensen 2013), this book claims a middle ground insofar as it hesitates to argue for the absolute dominance of actors from one dimension or the other, but rather makes the case that with the rise of digital media, the power distribution between elites and non-elites finds new forms and patterns.

To sum up, the bottom-up dimension of mediatized conflict concerns the way in which actors outside the conventional institutions of guarding and governing information from areas of conflict have, in recent years, started to challenge the top-down dimension of mediatized conflict.

MEDIATIZED CONFLICT AS AN INTERRELATION PROCESS

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework of mediatized conflict. Given the focus on eyewitness images, this book places more emphasis on the bottom-up dimension than would, for instance, studies on military communication management or public diplomacy. Still, the conceptualization of mediatized conflict as an interrelation process represents an addition to the existing literature on mediatized conflict, which predominantly focuses on the traditional media-state/military axis. This framework has developed from empirical analysis of eyewitness images, but would likely be transferable to other cases, in which digital media are deployed to offer alternative insights into conflict. For instance, the two dimensions of mediatization would probably be relevant in relation to analysis of the military's presence on social network sites as well as other aspects of activism and whistleblowing than the ones covered in this book.

To conclude, this section specifies how a handful of the eyewitness images analyzed in the following chapters are to be considered a specific outcome of the interrelation process inherent in mediatized conflict.

The bootleg footage of the hanging of Saddam Hussein was recorded and distributed by a security guard from the Iraqi ministry of justice—that is, an individual operating in opposition to the interests of the employing institution. This tape provided a counter-narrative to the Iraqi government's

official documentation of the hanging. Spread and mobilized at great speed on the internet, the unauthorized tape quickly became breaking news internationally, with devastating effects for the Iraqi government.

The footage of the death of the Iraqi woman Neda Agha Soltan from 2009 delivers another example of the distribution and dissemination of images by non-elite actors, which are then contested by elite sources. In this particular case, the Iranian government strongly questioned the veracity and credibility of the tape. However, the video was framed in another elite narrative by the Western newspapers, seeking to understand the content of the extremely violent tape by comparison with familiar iconic representations of student uprisings, Middle Eastern women, and martyrdom.

The gun camera tape, dubbed 'collateral murder' by WikiLeaks, was only intended for internal military use but was leaked by a whistleblower and sparked many reactions from military and political actors, bringing into doubt the legitimacy of WikiLeaks and the documentary value of the footage. In chapter 6, the analysis lays bare how the media coverage of this case reflects the two dimensions of mediatized conflict by constantly juxtaposing the interests and viewpoints of representatives from the military and political establishment with the interests and viewpoints of whistleblowers, hackers, activists, politicians, and others associated with or supporting WikiLeaks.

With regard to the Boston Marathon Bombing, the interplay between elites and non-elites takes the form of both collaboration (e.g., the public was urged to submit their recordings of this event to the FBI and the police) and diverging interests (e.g., when crowd-sourcing by social media users led certain news media to put the images of innocent bystanders on the front page as the offenders).

These examples demonstrate how mediatized conflict may offer an interpretive framework for eyewitness images because their power and meaning is constantly negotiated between, on the one hand, the interests and actions of government and military actors and, on the other hand, the interests and actions of diverse other actors and stakeholders. Moreover, these examples highlight how the news media constitute a central stage for making visible and enforcing the interrelation process between the two dimensions of mediatized conflict.

NOTES

1. Mazzoleni and Schulz outline five core processes that contribute to the mediatization of politics (1999, 250–252): 1) The selectiveness of the news media. 2) A public sphere of information and opinion controlled and shaped by the mass media. 3) The media logic (cf. Altheide and Snow 1979) understood as 'the frame of reference within which the media construct the meaning of events' (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, 251). 4) As a reciprocal effect of the media's impact, political actors adapt to media formats and demands and, in

so doing, instrumentalize the media to obtain their goals. 5) News partisanship, i.e., the news media's political function as watchdogs, forming opinions and investigating political issues.

2. Inherent in the model of mediatized conflict as an interrelation process is the notion of 'the media mediatized', which may seem like a pleonasm. Nevertheless, the changes in social practices and the modes of user-generated content engendered by digital media have a reciprocal effect on the established news media, which are influenced by mediatization in this and many other ways. In the words of Lundby, when the news media '(re)shape the technologies and the social and cultural contexts where the media are embedded, the media institutions are themselves transformed' (2009b, 2).
3. Denis McQuail's (2006) critical book review of a number of publications on war and media called 'On the Mediatization of War: A Review Article' is not included in this overview of literature on mediatized conflict because it does not unfold the concept of mediatization suggested by the title.

4 Counter-Images

Visual Censorship and the Challenges of Digital Media—The Snapshot of Fallen US Soldiers (2004) and the Bootleg Tape of Saddam Hussein's Hanging (2006)

This chapter deals with the way in which eyewitness images pose counter-narratives to the narratives communicated or sanctioned by military and political administrations. The non-professional pictures gaining public attention typically undermine the tight regulations of images during conflict. Still more visuals enter the media circuit, which in pre-digital times would have been subjected to censorship, press self-censorship,[1] or not recorded and distributed at all. In agreement with the dynamics of mediatized conflict outlined in chapter 3, competing ways of communicating conflict are negotiated in the mainstream news media, which make up the primary platform for political and military institutions to inform the public and an important outlet for eyewitness images.

Two early cases triggered by eyewitness footage from the war in Iraq constitute the empirical point of departure for this chapter: the snapshot from 2004 of caskets with fallen US soldiers inside the cargo compartment of an airplane and the bootleg video of the hanging of Saddam Hussein in 2006. Their many evident differences aside, the footages share the common trait of making *counter-images* available to the public.[2] They epitomize two major ways for eyewitness images to go against prevalent political and military narratives in relation to the documentation of important events or circumstances from areas of conflict. Eyewitness images either deliver the only publicly available representations, or they cast doubt on representations made public by official sources. First, the eyewitness image from 2004 filled a vacuum of visual documentation by violating the censorship maintained from 1991 to 2009 on media coverage of home transportation of US war fatalities. Second, the bootleg tape of Saddam Hussein's hanging undermined the Iraqi government's official video documentation of this event, issued just hours before, by revealing the disorderly manner in which the hanging took place.

This chapter starts out by establishing a historical perspective on the mobilization of eyewitness images as counter-narratives by looking into the role played by soldier photography in British news coverage of World War I and German World War II historiography. The following section outlines changing guidelines, introduced in response to the emergence of digital cameras

and social media, on whether military employees are allowed to produce and distribute images from the front and to what extent. Departing from a historical overview of censorship policies on visuals and especially 'The Dover Test' (i.e., the impact of images of fallen soldiers), the following sections engage critically with Judith Butler's (2004; 2009) concept 'grievable lives' and analyze the eyewitness image of caskets from 2004. In particular, the analysis centers on how this eyewitness picture enters into and complicates existing discussions pro et contra censorship on images of fatalities, which have traditionally been divided into arguments for how publication of this material might *either* serve to inform the population about the toll of war *or* violate the sanctity of private life for the families of the deceased. To further underpin 'public' and 'private' theoretically as the main opposition in censorship debates, the analysis of the snapshot of caskets concludes with a discussion of Joshua Meyrowitz's (1985) notion of 'middle region' in relation to eyewitness images. In order to show how eyewitness images may contradict official representations, as the other main way for this genre to deliver counter-images, the chapter studies the eyewitness video of the hanging of Saddam Hussein from 2006. Finally, the conclusion draws parallels to other eyewitness images serving as counter-narratives.

COUNTER-IMAGES FROM WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II

Eyewitness images were obviously not as common in the public realm before the advent of digital media, but the current spread of this genre still has an important prehistory. Photographs by soldiers and other military personnel constitute by far the most influential non-professional images of conflict from a historical perspective. Public attention to eyewitness pictures by civilians has been more sporadic, even though, as Zelizer contends, 'making and using photos would become a standard response' (2002, 700) to traumatic events since World War II. There are some isolated instances of analogue eyewitness images documenting major crisis events—for example, the amateur recording (the 'Zapruder Tape') of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1962 (e.g., Zelizer 1992; Vågnes 2011), and the video clip from 1991 of the brutality of Los Angeles police officers against the detainee Rodney King.

This section focuses on soldier snapshots entering the news coverage of World War I and the historiography of World War II with the aim of singling out some characteristic traits of what is here termed 'counter-images' across epochs, media systems, and technologies. An inherent instability of meaning manifests itself as a dominant feature due to a recurring ambivalence about *who* and *what* the pictures represent. Consistent with the characteristics of eyewitness images charted in chapter 2, the counter-images fluctuate between documenting specific episodes and general circumstances, between

showing private recollections and historical evidence, and between offering individual and institutional perspectives.

A small number of soldiers at war took photographs as soon as the technological opportunity presented itself in the mid-nineteenth century. From World War I, soldier photography increasingly gained ground, despite and often in defiance of military rules and restrictions, such as bans on bringing cameras to the front and enforced destruction of images—for example, during World War I (1914–1918), World War II (1939–1945), The Falklands War (1982), The First Gulf War (1990–1991), and the wars in Afghanistan (2001–) and Iraq (2003–2011) (e.g., Heer and Naumann 1995; Heer 1996; Heer et. al. 2008; Mortensen 2009a; Allan 2011; Struk 2011). Based on her extensive empirical research, Janina Struk outlines some typical themes for soldier photography across history—namely, 'touristy pictures, pictures of colleagues and social occasions, a fascination for indigenous peoples, military brutality and the dead' (2011, xv). In addition to the predictability of the motives—which might be said to resemble amateur snapshots on the whole—Struk argues for expanding the canon of war photography and acknowledging representations by soldiers as important and valid source materials (2011, xvii).

By the outbreak of World War I, amateur photography flourished. Military staff sent images home in such large quantities that camera manufacturers targeted advertisements at soldiers with taglines such as the one by Kodak: 'It is as small as a diary and tells the story better' (cited after Allan 2011, 55; see also Remus 2008; Struk 2011). Soldiers not in possession of a camera could still participate in the thriving snapshot culture by compiling postcards and images circulated amongst troops in photo albums (Remus 2008; Struk 2011). The photographs largely refrained from showing violence and death on account of the soldiers' self-censorship, which proved more efficient than the random testing of letters by official censors (Remus 2008, 8; Allan 2011, 54).

Photographs by soldiers remained mostly in narrow military circles or were used to nurture the bond between soldiers and their families (Struk 2011, 47). Notable exceptions do exist, however. As a countermove to the rigid military censorship on press photography, British newspapers weary of 'posed, reconstructed or faked official photographs' (Struk 2011, 36) ran competitions from 1915 with large cash prizes for the best soldier snapshots from the battlefields of World War I. Thousands of photographs were submitted to the editorial offices. The ones entering into print mainly showed cheerful scenes, depictions of injury and death being rare exceptions. Although the images by soldiers barely functioned as corrections to official narratives, they were still highly valued by the press on account of the personal interpretations of war, along with their perceived reliability and truthfulness, which formed a contrast to the loyalty of professional photographers with official agendas (Struk 2011, 36). In 1916, the Press Bureau, the British government organ in charge of monitoring and controlling the

information flow from the front line, issued a notice forbidding soldiers to take pictures and ordering newspapers to refrain from future calls for troops to submit images (Struk 2011, 38). Disobedient soldiers were threatened with instant arrest and death by firing squad (Allan 2011, 55–56).

During World War II, German soldiers were purportedly the most eager non-professional photographers (Struk 2011, 73). Images by conscripts on the Eastern Front represent a particularly interesting example of the capacity of amateur representations to destabilize official or widely accepted narratives. Disregarding an order issued by a Wehrmacht commander on the Eastern Front in 1941 against taking and distributing images of shootings and hangings, conscripts took large numbers of photographs showing executions, burnings, and other war crimes (Struk 2011, 19; see also Heer and Naumann 1995; Struk 2004). For this reason, they were used in post-war debates on whether the Wehrmacht was an apolitical fighting force following orders, or whether it partook willingly and systematically in genocide and other crimes of war. When entering the public domain in the mid-1990s, the images cast doubt not only on the soldiers' individual recollection but also on the collective memory of the generation of adult Germans living during World War II, which tended to subscribe to the dominant national narrative of the Wehrmacht simply obeying instructions (Heer 2008, 234). Debates were heated, not least among scholars and the general public in Germany when a selection of the photographs went on display in the touring exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941–1944* (*War of Extermination: Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941–1944*), which opened in Hamburg in 1995 and travelled to 32 other venues in Germany and Austria before closing in 1999 (Heer and Naumann 1995; Heer et al. 2008; see also, e.g., Hüppauf 1997; Zelizer 1998; Rossino 1999; Struk 2004; 2011; Andén-Papadopoulos 2009a; Allan 2011; Guerin 2012; Hirsch 2012). Later, opponents of the exhibition vehemently questioned whether the photographs provided accurate evidence of the war crimes (accounted for in Heer 2008; Struk 2011).

Facts are sparse in many cases concerning where, when, and by whom the photographs (and limited number of 8 mm films) were recorded. Consequently, scholars disagree about the conscripts' motives for producing the pictures. Discussions have transpired as to whether the photos were taken as a reflection of anti-Semitism (Rossino 1999) or whether they enabled the conscripts to distance themselves from the atrocious scenes (Hüppauf 1997). Others have suggested that they form an integral part of the 'machinery of destruction' and document a 'genocidal gaze' (e.g., Hirsch 2012, 130). More pragmatically inclined readings have argued that they are in fact taken for various and even conflicting reasons, which, apart from the already established ones, might also include curiosity, fascination, a desire to secure trophies, etc. (e.g., Struk 2004). As already mentioned, these discussions ensue from basic uncertainty concerning the means and ends served by the photographs. The equally famous amateur pictures taken by American and

British soldiers from inside concentration camps upon the War's end form a contrast by their lack of ambivalence. These images fulfilled the clear-cut and highly valued purpose of documenting the systematic genocide and the conditions in the camps, just as they helped soldiers overcome the traumatic experience of witnessing atrocity, and, in so doing, contributed to collective healing and the writing of history (Zelizer 1998; 2002; Brink 2000). This counterexample once again accentuates how contributions of eyewitnesses to constructing wartime history are likely to be more difficult to accept as legitimate and valid when the testimonies stem from the side of the defeated and/or from perpetrators.

Another interesting question concerns how the pictures by German soldiers on the Eastern Front can and should be handled as sources of information. A further point of note to add to the discussion on their validity as historical evidence regards the documentary value ascribed to the photographs, which tend to be detached from the specific events represented. They are used to shed light on overall issues, such as whether the war crimes should be considered individual acts by soldiers or collective acts by the Wehrmacht. Although this parallels the well-known movement from the singular to the general in the reception of eyewitness narratives, focusing exclusively on deducing exemplary or broad historical knowledge from the photographs would seem problematic in view of the specific war crimes depicted.

The related issue of how the spectator might situate and position her- or himself in relation to the scenes shown on the photographs taken by Wehrmacht soldiers has also been raised. As image making appears to be intrinsic to the acts of 'subjection and brutality' (Tait 2011, 1226; see also Zelizer 1998; Hirsch 2012), the visuals place the viewer in the difficult situation of having to adopt the gaze of the person embodying the triple position of witness, photographer, and perpetrator. In the words of Marianne Hirsch, he or she 'share[s] the space of looking at the victims with the spectator' (2012, 134). Other scholars have rightfully argued against the assumption that viewers are left with the one option only of taking over the gaze of the war criminal, because this constitutes a primitive model for the possible scenarios of audience identification and investment (e.g., Guerin 2012).

To sum up the historical perspective, pictures by military personnel (and other amateurs) are called for, produced, mobilized, and/or presented to the public to correct or supplement official versions of events, and they have—for the very same reason—consistently been met with bans and censorship, just as they have stirred commotion and dispute. A significant lesson to be learnt from soldier photography during the World Wars concerns the lack of interpretive fix points, which resonates with the definition of eyewitness images presented in chapter 2. First, as exemplified by German amateur representations during World War II, they are often devoid of stable meaning in contrast to the usually direct and clear communication on the part of professional press photographs. Amateur images do not '*tell stories*' but rather

'*prompt stories*', as Struk points out (2011, 150, italics in original text). Whereas press photographers often strive for synthesized or condensed pictures to symbolically capture an event or a phenomenon, eyewitness images have a tendency to be less didactic, informative, and self-explanatory. Second, the photographs have an ambiguous institutional affiliation regarding whether they represent only the point of view of the individual soldier, or illustrate the spirit and acts of the military/army in a more general way. Third, their documentary value might often be attributed both to specific actions captured and to a more general representation of war. Fourth, uncertainty also characterizes their status between public and private recollection, in as much as many of them have been created for personal purposes while at the same time playing a part in the official writing of wartime history.

POLICIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND EYEWITNESS IMAGES

Following the historical overview of counter-images produced by soldiers during the World Wars, the remainder of this chapter examines how contemporary conflict-related eyewitness images challenge official framings of conflicts. To first set the scene, this section introduces military policies in response to eyewitness images and social media.

Cameras have, as a matter of course, been brought along to the front during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, owing to the general profusion of digital photo culture into everyday life. Military personnel have uploaded photographs and videos on various personal, military, and commercial websites (mainly YouTube, Facebook, LiveLeak, and similar sites, but also pornographic ones; see Andén-Papadopoulos 2009a). Examining the regulations on photo production and sharing by activists and others would also be interesting indeed, but forming an overview of this subject is difficult, as the examples are legion and span across vastly different national, political, and social contexts. This section therefore focuses on changing policies in the US concerning whether and under which circumstances military employees are permitted to take and disseminate images. Various strategies have been deployed by other nations opting for lower or higher degrees of openness. As the leading military power, the US, however, is a good example of some of the general obstacles and opportunities associated with social media and user-generated content from a military perspective. Also, its policies are important both to the analysis in the current chapter and chapter 6.

At the outset of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US military supported the thriving digital image culture and encouraged soldiers to use photographs to keep in contact with families and friends (Struk 2011, 18). However, digital recording devices were forbidden after the release of the Abu Ghraib pictures in April 2004. Along with the prohibition against bringing cameras to areas of conflict, other means of preventing soldiers from

assuming the role of do-it-yourself war photographer included blocking access to YouTube, MySpace, and eleven other sites on the army's computers in 2007. The US Defense Department justified this action by arguing that the circulation of amateur images posed a 'significant operational security challenge' (Spillius 2007). From their perspective, soldier imagery threatened to reveal classified information, aggravate violent confrontations, or misrepresent American warfare. As Lt. Col. Christopher Garver, a spokesman for the US military in Iraq, explained:

> It has been frustrating. There are 150,000 troops out here doing great work every day, but what you see is the one knucklehead who shot the three-legged dog and put it up on YouTube.
>
> (Zavis 2007)

However, censorship as the default solution to soldier photography turned out to be an inefficient way of controlling the easy production and circulation of digital images, which by the beginning of the 2000s had become a habitual component of everyday life. Conceivably for this reason, the US military changed its attitude and strategy towards soldier photography and social media.

In a memorandum issued in February 2010, The Department of Defense 'clearly indicates that use of social media in the DOD [Department of Defense] is authorized' (cited after Office of the Chief of Public Affairs 2011, 3). The US army has also introduced various strategies for embracing videos and photographs taken by its staff, such as launching several YouTube channels on which the publication of pictures and clips is monitored (Christensen 2008). Moreover, the army is massively present on other social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, SlideShare,[3] just as it hosts numerous blogs.[4] The military urges its personnel to act according to the prescribed lines for proper, secure, and ethical behavior on social media. In the *U.S. Army Social Media Handbook* available online, guidelines are offered to army employees on how to navigate in the new media landscape (Office of the Chief of Public Affairs 2011). Soldiers are made aware that on social media platforms, they 'still represent the Army' (Office of the Chief of Public Affairs 2011, 4). In addition, the handbook recognizes the importance and inevitability of social media as part of cross-media communication strategies. This development may turn to the army's benefit with respect to crisis communication, press management, and public diplomacy, and allow soldiers to connect with colleagues, friends, and family. Chief of Public Affairs, Stephen R. Lanza, states in the handbook:

> Social media is another set of tools that helps us spread the Army message faster than ever. These tools not only help us to respond to a 24-hour news cycle, but also help us lead conversations and participate in the stories. By reaching out to the online community, we're able to

> be where more and more people get their news, and by doing so, we're better serving our warfighters.
>
> (Office of the Chief of Public Affairs 2011, 3)

But the handbook also warns against the potential risks and hazards of social media with regard to revealing information about locations in status updates and geotagged pictures:

> Sharing what seems to be even trivial information online can be dangerous to loved ones and the fellow Soldiers in the unit—and may even get them killed. America's enemies scour blogs, forums, chat rooms and personal websites to piece together information that can be used to harm the United States and its Soldiers. The adversary—Al Qaeda and domestic terrorists and criminals for instance—have made it clear they are looking.
>
> (Office of the Chief of Public Affairs 2011, 4)

As indicated by the quotes from the *U.S. Army Social Media Handbook,* the digital media landscape has prompted the military to develop new policies on the production and distribution of images from the front line. The next section examines an example from the beginning of the Iraq war, which demonstrates how photographs by military personnel challenge censorship by cutting across the conventional division between what constitutes 'public' and 'private' spheres. This selfsame division between public and private has traditionally been made to justify the ban on publishing images of fallen US soldiers.

BREAKING THE BAN

The spring of 2004 was epoch-making in terms of political and public attentiveness to the power of images taken by military personnel. On April 18, shortly before the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, a non-professional picture published by *The Seattle Times* of the home transportation of fallen American soldiers created differences of opinion in the US. The image shows the inside of a cargo compartment of a plane in Kuwait with rows of caskets, which cargo workers are in the process of handling and arranging (Figure 4.1).

The caskets had been flown in from Baghdad, and the photo depicts the plane as it is being readied for an interim stop in Germany before heading for Dover Air Force Base in Delaware as its final destination (Bernton 2004, April 18). When the photo editor of *The Seattle Times,* Barry Fitzsimmons, first saw the photo, he reacted in the following manner:

> 'I just said, 'Wow,' Fitzsimmons recalls. 'The picture was something we didn't have access to as the media, and it was undeniably newsworthy and exclusive'.
>
> (Fancher 2004)

Figure 4.1 Tami Silicio; photograph of caskets with fallen US soldiers inside airplane, 2004

The newsworthiness of the picture, detected instantly by Fitzsimmons, should be seen in light of how the US was facing its deadliest month of the war so far with the loss of at least 94 servicemen (Bernton 2004, April 18). Furthermore, the photo editor refers to the picture as 'exclusive' in the quote above, probably because representations of this subject were not otherwise obtainable by the media due to the ban in the period from 1991 to 2009 on covering home transportation of US war deaths. Cargo worker Tami Silicio, a US citizen, had taken the snapshot and thus broken the ban. According to *The Seattle Times,* she did not receive any financial compensation for placing her picture at the newspaper's disposal (Bernton 2004, April 18). Silicio explained that her intention had been to show the families of the deceased soldiers how the home transportation was handled with dignified and devoted care (e.g., Bernton 2004, April 18; Fancher 2004). This argument had no mitigating effect, and she was immediately discharged from service for violating the regulations of the US government and her employer, Maytag Aircraft Corp.

This early instance of a digital, non-professional image setting the news agenda arguably concerns *the* most sensitive, debated, and censored front-line motif, namely representations of wounded and dead soldiers. The case thus illustrates how eyewitness visuals add another chapter to the long and contentious history dating back to the mid-nineteenth century regarding the public's access to images of war fatalities. It is interesting to note that the

ban broken by the publication of the snapshot had consistently been justified and explained by how pictures of coffins with fallen US soldiers would violate their families' privacy. The photograph by Silicio complicates matters of whether visuals of war fatalities belong in the public or private sphere, since a snapshot taken by a non-professional photographer would traditionally have stayed within the private sphere. However, the photo was printed in *The Seattle Times* along with the claim that it deserved the attention of the public—including not least, as Silicio argued—that of the fallen soldiers' families (Bernton 2004, April 18; Bernton 2004, April 22; Fancher 2004). This illustrates how the digital circulation of eyewitness images from conflict zones puts pressure on traditional censorship by testing the norms and regulations prescribing which pictures are considered fit and relevant for the public to see, and which are regarded as private and/or morally offensive.

As the restrictions conventionally applied to depictions of fallen soldiers constitute an essential background for understanding the case, the following sections establish an overview of the censorship on images of fatalities in general and of the so-called 'Dover Test' specifically. The chapter then examines Judith Butler's (2004; 2009) concept of 'grievable lives' to frame the discussion of whether the images of fallen soldiers belong in the public or the private realm. Next, the eyewitness snapshot is analyzed with special focus on how it confronts the common understanding of pictures of dead soldiers within the public-private dichotomy. The final analysis of Silicio's snapshot leads to a further characterization of eyewitness images within the confines of Joshua Meyrowitz's (1985) 'middle region'.

VISUAL CENSORSHIP: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE REGULATION OF IMAGES OF WAR FATALITIES

Images of war causalities are believed to arouse strong emotional responses and affect public opinion in ways words alone cannot.[5] The pictures work as tools for what Liam Kennedy in a different context refers to as 'the production of national identity' (2008, 280). Images of fallen soldiers obviously represent the individuals who have lost their lives, but they also reflect national values and priorities with regard to foreign policy. This is particularly evident when the pictures are subjected to censorship or political mobilization. The interpretive framework for images of fatalities varies. On some occasions, they are regarded as demoralizing for the support of war. On others, they enter the cult of the fallen soldier, central to national identity as a symbol of the noble and necessary sacrifices of war (e.g., Mosse 1990; Hutchinson 2009). The latter interpretive framework is mostly applied after the war, or at particular moments when depictions of casualties correspond to 'public-relations needs' (Roeder 1993, 7).

Photographs of wounded and dead soldiers have appalled and shocked the public since Alexander Gardner's 1962 series from the US Civil War (1861–1865) (e.g., Wendell-Holmes 1863; Horan 1955; Trachtenberg 1985;

1989). When the photographs were exhibited in Mathew Brady's New York gallery, a reviewer from the *New York Times* described how an audience accustomed to reading 'a casualty list in the morning paper at breakfast, but dismiss its recollection with the coffee' was struck by the photographs' ability to 'bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war' ('Brady's Photographs . . .' 1862). The reviewer also anticipated later debates on whether mediated violence confronts the viewer with the suffering of war or represents combat as a morbid spectacle (e.g., Moeller 1999; Seaton 2005; Chouliaraki 2006) by noting a certain ambiguity in the 'terrible fascination about it that draws one near these pictures . . .' ('Brady's Photographs . . .' 1862).

Still, the dissemination of pictures of war fatalities remained limited until the reproduction of photographs became a standard feature of newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The question of visual censorship therefore first posed itself on a grand scale during World War I, when military censors were largely able to prevent photos of casualties in the American (Roeder 1993) and British (Struk 2011) press. This ban was extended to World War II based on policymakers' fear that these pictures might lead the public to favor withdrawal from war without it having achieved its aims. Towards the end of World War II, this policy was changed in the US, and images of wounded and dead soldiers were published in order to strengthen public commitment to the War (Roeder 1993, 5–6).

In line with the commonly held assumption that declining support is the inevitable result if populations of warring nations are exposed to graphic images, politicians and military leaders post-World War II have often resorted to the strategy of suppressing perceived offensive material (Roeder 1993, 2–3). The Vietnam War represented a decisive break from this policy when the news media were granted admission to the battle zone to an unprecedented extent. However, as discussed in the last chapter, it remains debated whether the pictures of atrocity actually turned public sentiment against war, or primarily consolidated already existing anti-war opinions. Be that as it may, the idea of a 'Vietnam Syndrome' was planted, based on the assumption that the US was forced to withdraw troops partly as a result of televised images of human pain and suffering. As David D. Perlmutter argues, 'if leaders believe that opinion is driven by images, they will act accordingly to encourage or forestall opinion' (1998, 208).

PUTTING THE DOVER TEST TO THE TEST

Due to the 'Vietnam Syndrome', the news media were again restricted from publishing pictures of wounded or killed American soldiers. As one major initiative from 1991 to 2009, the news media were forbidden to report on homecoming ceremonies at the Dover Air Force Base in Delaware in honor of US soldiers who had lost their lives in operations overseas. This ban was probably induced by the Defense Department not wishing a repetition of

the press coverage during the Vietnam War, when the news media regularly featured pictures of lined-up caskets shrouded in Stars and Stripes. These images came to epitomize the 'Vietnam Syndrome' as imperative icons of the War's tremendous human costs. The ban relates to a highly disputed issue in American politics in the post-Vietnam War era—namely, the 'Dover Test', which alludes to the tolerance for pictures of fatalities (Gast, no date; Holert 2006; Mortensen 2009b). Opinions diverge on the origin of this expression[6] but not on its implications. The 'Dover Test' refers to the Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, which airplanes with US war casualties transit through en route to local destinations. This expression refers to the population's reaction to combat fatalities as a measure of its support for military operations. Research by Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler (2009; see also Lacquemant 2004) puts the 'Dover Test' in perspective by suggesting that the public might be more 'defeat phobic' than 'casualty phobic'. They claim that the prospect of losing is more likely to turn the public against a war than a high casualty rate. One could argue against Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler's interpretation that war casualties suffered by Western countries in recent decades might require a more compelling justification because the wars have not been fought in local areas to defend national borders but rather for humanitarian reasons and/or as part of the War on Terror.

The ban on media reporting from the Dover Air Force Base was allegedly prompted by one specific episode (Gast, no date, 8). On December 21, 1989, the White House held a press conference following the military intervention in Panama to remove General Manual Noriega from power. A plane landed at Dover Air Force Base at the exact same time with 23 US soldiers killed during the operation. Three television networks chose to transmit the two events live on a split screen. One half of the screen featured President George Bush delivering his jocular account of the successful military action, while the other half presented the solemn homecoming of the fallen soldiers. Needless to say, this did not place the President in a favorable light.

Enforced by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney in 1991 on the eve of the invasion in Iraq, the ban was retained during The Gulf War. It was generally disregarded during President Clinton's administration, but reintroduced by President George W. Bush at the outset of the Iraq war in 2003 (Annas 2005, 501). In April 2004, the ban was broken on two highly publicized occasions within the same week. On the 18th, *The Seattle Times* ran Tami Silicio's eyewitness picture, to which we shall soon return. On the 23rd, 288 pictures taken by the US Air Force as their own documentation of homecoming ceremonies were published on *thememoryhole.org*. The Pentagon had submitted these pictures to the site's administrator, Russ Kick, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request concerning the public's right to insight into the political administration. Kick joined other critics in the argument that the ban violated the First Amendment of the US constitution regarding the freedom of press. Within a few days, the Department of Defense denounced the publication of the photos as a mistake

not to be repeated. On the contrary, restrictions would be reinforced (e.g., Calvert 2004). This statement urged Ralph Begleiter, Professor of Journalism at the University of Delaware and former CNN foreign correspondent, to make a case together with the National Security Archive under the Freedom of Information Act, because they wanted the Air Force and the Defense Department to release all visual records of homecoming ceremonies (National Security Archive 2005). The outcome of the case was that another 268 photographs were submitted to Begleiter and published on the website of the National Security Archive.[7] Approximately half of the photographs handed over to Begleiter had been redacted to a lesser or greater extent (Mortensen 2009b). According to a cover letter by the Air Force, this was done in order to remove

> all personally identifying information of the remains as release could rekindle grief, anguish, pain, embarrassment, or disrupt the peace of mind of surviving family members, invading their privacy.
>
> (cited after Annas 2005, 501)

Once again, censorship on images of fatalities is justified and explained as compassion for the grieving families in need of protection against unwanted attention to their loss.

President Barack Obama abolished the ban in 2009 during his first year in office as a consequence of his campaign pledge to improve transparency (McIntyre 2009). The Department of Defense has since launched a special theme section on dignified transfers on the website of the Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations (no date; see www.mortuary.af.mil). While the ban was in effect, the American public was denied access to photo documentation of the returning coffins of an estimated 5,000 military personnel killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Washington Post, February 17, 2009).

Even before the ban was abolished, pictures of homecoming procedures were circulated widely as part of the online mourning culture. This forms a noteworthy side-story to the military response to the eyewitness photo of caskets from 2004 by pointing to the many ways in which non-professional actors put pressure on the traditional censorship of images. Photographs of homecoming ceremonies at the Dover Air Force Base are recurrent in memorial videos, a popular genre on YouTube and other video-sharing sites (Mortensen 2009b). The images featured in the videos made predominantly by soldiers and others associated with the military appear to be identical to the ones released by Pentagon. Once the video commemorations of fallen soldiers are released publicly, they no longer revolve solely around singular deaths and private grief, but also address larger political issues. In this sense, the videos resemble impromptu memorial sites, which, according to Michael Hviid Jacobsen, have both a ritual function and contain ‘political manifestations and grounds for mobilization’ (2005, 67).[8]

GRIEVABLE LIVES

The presence of casket photos in memorial videos raises a question central to the dispute about pictures of fatalities in general and the eyewitness photo by Silicio specifically. Should grief over casualties be considered a public or a private matter? Maja Zehfuss addresses this topic in an article on the British military's tribute to fallen soldiers:

> Grief seems, on the face of it, to be deeply personal and private. Yet inasmuch as violence is perpetrated by and against human beings as members of communities, it becomes public.
>
> (Zehfuss 2009, 420)

An article published in *The Seattle Times* on April 26, 2004, similarly frames the core of the controversy sparked by this newspaper's publication of the image by Silicio as a matter of whether images of fallen soldiers belong in the public sphere of the news media, or whether their release violate the privacy of the grieving families:

> The publication spawned broad debate over the ban, which the military says protects the privacy of the soldiers' families; opponents say the public has a right to see images that show the toll of war.
>
> (Bernton and Rivera 2004)

Since the ban was first enforced in 1991, the battle lines of the dispute have been drawn in this manner. On the one hand, critics argue for the public's right and need to see the images to learn about the toll of war. On the other hand, the prohibition has consistently been justified by how homecoming pictures transgress the privacy of the dead soldiers' relatives, possibly also prompting 'lawsuits on the basis of privacy issues' (cited after Calvert 2004, 150). In addition, it has been argued that making the transferals open to the public would put undue pressure on the families for attending the ceremonies.

Scholarship on this subject (e.g., Annas 2005; Gast, no date) generally agrees that the claim made by the US government about the ban as a protection of privacy should, above all, be seen as a rhetorical maneuver to cover up the concern about the possible anti-war sentiments evoked by the photos of coffins. Several factors support this presumption.

First, a study conducted in 2004 concludes that servicemen and their next of kin are opposed to the ban (National Annenberg Election Survey 2004). This is in line with the opinion held by the general American population made evident in other polls (Zelizer 2005, 30; Kelley 2012, 10).

Second, respect for privacy seems like a weakly stated case when bearing in mind that the deceased are not named or otherwise identifiable (Annas 2005, 501). Furthermore, flag-draped coffins are a vital part of the existing

iconography of public grief—for instance, in connection with press-covered military funerals.

Third, US governments have made exceptions to the ban and invited the press to attend homecoming ceremonies on special occasions (Gast, no date, 9–10). For example, the news media were present at Dover Air Force Base in November 2001 when the first American casualties from the invasion in Afghanistan returned home. With 9/11 in fresh memory, the population stood firmly behind the government. According to Kelly Gast, this temporary abolition of the ban is likely due to how, in the specific political climate, the pictures of fallen soldiers symbolized the sacrifices the United States was prepared to make in the War on Terror (no date, 10–11).

Regardless of whether privacy issues de facto are the main reason for the ban or represent a somewhat convenient explanation, the public-private discussion still constitutes the dominant way of framing the Silicio case. This involves the larger question of public grief or forfeit of public grief as a resource for political mobilization, which Judith Butler reflects on in her books *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004) and *Frames of War. When is Life Grievable?* (2009). In particular, Butler's introduction of the concept 'grievable life' in these two publications is relevant in connection with policies regulating the public exposure to representations of military deads. Butler (2004) first coined this expression in essays written in the wake of 9/11, discussing how the sense of grief and vulnerability after the attack could have created a momentum for reconsidering the role of the US as a superpower. Instead, according to Butler, 9/11 evoked a nationalistic discourse with increased surveillance and limitations on civil rights. If violence is not to breed violence, she ponders, 'it is no doubt important to ask what, politically, might be made of grief besides a cry for war' (Butler 2004, xii). With the concept of 'grievable life', Butler criticizes the political mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that draw the line between lives worthy of grief and those unworthy of grief. Rhetorically, she asks: 'Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives?' (Butler 2004, 20). Butler makes reference to the American victims of 9/11 as an example of lives calling for public grief. The last minutes of their lives were told over and over again, while the lost lives of enemies and marginalized groups were not mourned (Butler 2004, 38).

Butler highlights the different means of establishing and distributing public grief, including the obituary as a building stone for the nation and national sentiment:

> There are no obituaries for the war casualties that the United States inflicts, and there cannot be. If there were to be an obituary, there would have had to be a life, a life worth noting, a life worth valuing and preserving, a life that qualifies for recognition. Although we might argue that it would be impractical to write obituaries for all those people, or for all people, I think we have to ask, again and again, how the obituary functions as the instrument by which grievability is publicly distributed.

> It is the means by which a life becomes, or fails to become, a publicly grievable life, an icon for national self-recognition, the means by which a life become noteworthy. As a result, we have to consider the obituary as an act of nation-building.
>
> (Butler 2004, 34)

Parallel to Butler's account of the role of the obituary, pictures of war fatalities have the potential to function as a way of announcing and recognizing public grief and creating a community between viewers, just as they may be mobilized as icons for the national self-understanding. However, in relation to the current study, one reservation to her line of reasoning must be expressed. Fallen soldiers form a paradox as to who are counted as 'grievable' lives. As a cornerstone in her argument, Butler points out that '[w]ar is precisely an effort to minimize precariousness for some and to maximize it for others' (2004, 54). According to the logic proposed by Butler, soldiers would normally be considered 'grievable' because they represent the nation. This does not minimize their precariousness, however. The implicit willingness to risk soldiers' lives constitutes a basic premise of war (Mortensen 2009b). Zehfuss voices a similar critique of Butler:

> Whilst Butler at one point mentions 'US soldiers dead and decapitated in Iraq', by and large in both books military service personnel figure only as perpetrators, especially of the abuses committed at Abu Ghraib. This is particularly surprising as she offers reflections on the nation-state as a source of both protection and violence. The armed forces are central to this arrangement, and yet Butler does not refer to them in this context.
>
> (Zehfuss 2009, 424)

Even though I agree with Zehfuss' argument, Butler's concept of 'grievable life' remains productive. The public recognition and honoring of fallen soldiers appears, to a certain extent, to be dependent on whether grief as an inherent resource for political mobilization is deemed productive or counter-productive in specific situations. Another important point to be deduced from the writings of Butler is that public commemoration may not necessarily find its counterpart in private grief but also in lack of recognition and oblivion. If we relate this to the eyewitness photograph from 2004, debates regarding the ban on showing pictures of war fatalities address precisely whether this protects privacy or whether the images are in fact suppressed.

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

The release of the snapshot taken by Tami Silicio fuelled and further complicated the debate on whether homecoming photos are to be considered

'public' or 'private'. This image blends the usual understanding of the public-private distinction on the levels of genre, producer, recipients, and content. Each level is going to be dealt with in turn.

First, on the level of genre, an image taken by a non-professional photographer would traditionally have remained in the private sphere. However, the photo was printed along with the claim that it deserved public attention.

Second, on the level of producer, the snapshot was turned into a public record of war, even though the US military and Silicio's employer, Maytag Airforce Corp, condemned the photo and by so doing implied that the production and distribution had taken place on her private initiative. But then again, as Silicio had access to and experienced the transportation of the caskets in her capacity as cargo worker, her point of view can hardly be understood as completely private.

Third, on the level of the recipients, Silicio repeatedly justified her actions in interviews by explaining that the publication of the photo fulfilled the private needs of the families of the deceased:

> The way everyone salutes with such emotions and intensity and regret. The families would be proud to see their sons and daughters saluted like that.
>
> (Bernton 2004, April 18; see also Bernton 2004, April 22; Fancher 2004)

In this manner, Silicio further inverts the public-private division by underscoring empathy and compassion with the families as an explanation for the public dissemination of the photo.

Fourth, this inversion of public and private is also reflected on the level of the content, which calls for more careful elaborations than the previous three levels. The snapshot contains elements of both the traditional solemn and ceremonial presentation of fatalities in the public realm, and the everyday work life and physical labor of the cargo workers. Two different statements by Silicio highlight these contradictory readings of the situation. In one interview, she accounted for the somberness of the scene:

> Silicio boarded the plane. A half-dozen people labored largely in silence to secure the coffins for takeoff. To the 50-year-old Silicio, it felt more like a shrine than an airplane.
>
> (Bernton and Rivera 2004)

In contrast to this comparison of the airplane to 'a shrine', Silicio also explained the everyday repetitiveness of the situation:

> 'So far this month, almost every night we send them home,' Silicio said. '. . . It's tough. Very tough.'
>
> (Berton 2004, April 18)

The picture itself replays this tension between the formal and extraordinary (and therefore normally associated with the public sphere) versus the everyday and the ordinary (and therefore normally associated with the private sphere).

On the one hand, the representation of military caskets covered in Stars and Stripes is coupled with ceremonial and symbolic public displays of grief. Constituting one of the most important national symbols, the American flag unanimously establishes the identity of the fallen soldiers. Besides, the flag links this representation to other representations in which Stars and Stripes signifies loss and mourning, most importantly among these are photos or television broadcasts from military funerals and memorials. The depiction of the cargo workers also emphasizes the official military element of this scene. Even though they are not wearing uniforms, the army camouflage suits signify the crew's affiliation. Similarly, the figure in the foreground carries an official identification card clipped on to his pants as a further indication of his official role and function.

On the other hand, this snapshot of flag-draped military coffins inside the cargo compartment of an airplane also appears to represent the everyday of war. The photo shows cargo workers ostensibly unaware of the camera's presence as they are preoccupied with the physical work of readying the caskets for departure. In the foreground, the blurred figure of a man is caught in motion while bending down to take care of something beneath the frame of the photo. Another approximately seven more-or-less indistinct people are featured in the background while handling the caskets. The blurred figures become—using the title of an essay by Roland Barthes from 1968—an indexical *effet de reel,* or reality effect, as they point back to the moment the snapshot was taken and froze their movement in the condensed time of the image. As another sign of the everydayness of this scene, the picture shows, behind the man in the foreground, the fronts of three caskets, on which the American flag is wrapped and tied with string. Although the flag is fulfilling one of its most solemn functions, it also appears as a manifest, tangible piece of fabric to be handled and arranged. What is more, the caskets in the foreground each comprise the first of three long and seemingly endless rows of caskets. The rows give the impression that more caskets could be added continuously. In contrast to the ceremonial farewell to individual soldiers at military funerals, the depicted scene might call for an interpretation of war deaths as de-individualized and still growing in numbers. Cargo wrapped in black and white plastic is piled up next to the row of caskets, highlighting once again the physicality of the transportation of the fallen soldiers. As a whole, the snapshot format combined with the cargo workers' absorption in carrying out their job conveys the scene's everydayness; the handling of fallen soldiers is represented as physical labor and a daily occurrence. To sum up the level of content, the fallen are coupled with national identity and official front-stage representations of grief by the strong presence of Stars and Stripes in the photo; but they are also connected with the manifest and private loss of lives and the backstage treatment of US war fatalities.

All in all, the photograph permeates the tension between public and private on the level of genre, producer, recipients, and content. By controversially violating the ban on showing the transferals of the caskets, this snapshot demonstrates an important role played by eyewitness pictures in representations of war: They push the limits between public and private, and by so doing, create counter-narratives to official representations of war. In this case, they contradict prevalent public delimitations and constructions of 'grievable lives'.

EYEWITNESS IMAGES FROM THE MIDDLE REGION

This blurring of boundaries between public and private might be further theorized by briefly drawing attention to Joshua Meyrowitz's concept 'middle region', which was introduced in *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* in 1985. Middle region is developed in continuation of Erving Goffman's micro-sociologist interpretation of everyday communication and interaction as a set of stages, on which we take turns playing the parts of performers and audiences for each other. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* from 1959, Goffman famously outlines *front stage* as the space for official and public performances, while social actors resort to *back region* to restitute and rehearse for future onstage performance. Meyrowitz (1985) importantly adds the impact of media on everyday communication to the equation. Electronic media have created new stages for performance, rendering the stages defined by Goffman's less distinct. Meyrowitz explains:

> By changing the boundaries of social situation, electronic media do not simply give us quicker or more thorough access to events and behaviors. They give us, instead, new events and new behaviors.
>
> (Meyrowitz 1985, 16)

According to Meyrowitz, the advent of electronic media led to aspects of former back region and front stage behaviors blending into a new middle region. At the same time, a new deep back region materialized as a more extreme version of Goffman's back region, and similarly, a new forefront as a radicalized version of Goffman's front region. In Meyrowitz's words:

> Using the concepts of back and front region as a base, the new behaviour that arises out of merging situations could be called 'middle region' behaviour. Conversely, the two new sets of behaviors that result from the division of situations could be called 'deep back region' behavior and 'forefront region' behavior. Middle region behavior develops when audience members gain a 'sidestage' view. That is, they see parts of the traditional backstage area along with parts of the traditional onstage

> area; they see the performer move from backstage to onstage to backstage. To adapt, the competent performer adjusts his or her social role so that it is consistent with the new information available to the audience. A middle region, or sidestage, behavior pattern contains elements of both the former onstage and offstage behaviors but lacks their extremes. 'Deep back' and 'forefront' region behavior develop when performers gain increased isolation from their audience. The new separation of situations allows for both a coarser backstage style and a more pristine onstage performance.
>
> (Meyrowitz 1985, 47)

Meyrowitz's concept of middle region is, of course, conceived in connection with the impact of electronic media. Even so, it may aptly be applied to and developed in the context of digital media, which have further dissolved the boundaries between the disparate stages. Middle region corresponds well with the particular sidestage glance offered in many eyewitness images at situations traditionally confined to back region. This surely is the case of Tami Silicio's snapshot. The caskets are in transit not merely from warfront to homefront, but also from private viewing to public viewing and from backstage to frontstage, insofar as they are being readied for home transportation and official military funeral. Middle region in this way offers a frame for comprehending why this photo contains elements of the ceremonial and official as well as the mundane and non-official. This might be taken as a symptom of the way in which eyewitness images have opened formerly shut-off areas and arenas to the public, including new spaces for negotiating national identity and 'grievable lives'.

LOSS OF POWER, LOSS OF IMAGE

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the bootleg tape of the hanging of Saddam Hussein in 2006 as another famous example of the capacity of eyewitness images to present counter-images (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). In contrast to the Silicio case, the bootleg video did not fill a void of visual documentation, but undermined the official narrative of this major event. This video illustrates that the power to subvert the official narrative is not necessarily accompanied by an ability to put in its place a coherent and conclusive account of what actually took place. In this way, the images not only destabilize the official narrative but may also add further instability to the factual reconstruction of events.

Like Silicio's image, this video may be defined within middle region as it merges public and private as well as formal and non-formal. On the one hand, the tape in a mediated form reintroduces the highly ritualized and tradition-bound spectacle of the public hanging and documents a significant event in recent history. On the other hand, the mobile phone camera footage

Figure 4.2 Still from bootleg video of the hanging of Saddam Hussein, 2006

Figure 4.3 Still from bootleg video of the hanging of Saddam Hussein, 2006

inhabits the snapshot aesthetics (Sandbye 2007) and the origin outside an established media institution characteristic of eyewitness images. Similarly, it gives access to scenes of violence and death, traditionally liable to censorship and regulation.

To understand the wider significance of the bootleg video, it should be regarded as the final part of the propagandistic battle on the public image of the dictator, initiated when Saddam Hussein assumed presidency in 1979. Political leaders are represented and remembered in photographic icons, epitomizing their power as well as the historical period and political regime they personify. Implicit or explicit power struggles hide behind the images of political leaders on account of the vested interests in how they are represented. Saddam Hussein carefully crafted his projected public identity by staging various roles: the beloved father figure with a child on his arm, the powerful ruler firing a rifle into the air, the man of the people 'eating bread with poor villagers', and so on (Bakir 2010, 129). Other extremes in the propagandistic fight about the image of Saddam Hussein include the American trophy pictures from 2003 of the captured, untidy-looking ex-president, obediently opening his mouth for a medical examination.

The dissemination of this video points to an overall change in the representation of political figureheads. Whereas digital media, and social media especially, facilitate communication and interaction with citizens in more direct ways, the ever-lurking camera phone lenses of ordinary citizens and others threaten to distort the public image political leaders attempt to project and control. Therefore, the loss of political power may also mean a loss of power over the public image, which involves not only the political leader in question but also other parties with strategic and political interests in representing this person in a certain manner. In pre-digital times, images of the death of political leaders were also, on rare occasions, made available, typically by their opponents and/or successors, as was the case with the pictures of Mussolini in 1945 and the post mortem photographs of Ceauşescu and his wife made public in 1989. However, the emergence of digital media has made it possible for bystanders or people performing a professional role on site to take and distribute images of political leaders death or dying. The hanging of Saddam Hussein was the first example of this, to be followed by the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2007 (Sjøvaag 2011) and the capture and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 (Kristensen and Mortensen 2013; 2014).

THE OFFICIAL AND THE NON-OFFICIAL VIDEOS OF THE DEATH OF SADDAM HUSSEIN

Following his imprisonment and trial, the death sentence by hanging of Saddam Hussein was executed on December 30, 2006. With only a few hours' delay, the Iraqi government issued a video of his death that was filmed by Ali

al-Massedy, the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's official videographer (Bakir 2010, 135). The video was transmitted to a worldwide audience primarily via television broadcast. Consisting of moving images without sound, the official video shows how Saddam Hussein is escorted to the scaffold and a noose put around his neck. The film cuts prior to the actual hanging, which is omitted from the documentation. In the next scene, Saddam Hussein is shown dead. According to the Iraqi government, the official video was released in order to prove that the death sentence had in fact been carried out. This is not an anomaly in an Iraqi context where '[p]roof of death had long been used [. . .] to signal regime change', as pointed out by Vian Bakir (2010, 132).[9] President al-Maliki issued the following written statement upon the death of the former dictator, which also evaluated his emotional state before the hanging:

> Justice, in the name of the people, has carried out the death sentence against the criminal Saddam, who faced his fate like all tyrants, frightened and terrified.
>
> (cited after Bakir 2010, 135)

A mere one day later, on December 31, a video of the hanging emerged on the internet, which not only contradicted the statement by al-Maliki about Saddam Hussein's emotional state but also the official video's account of the course of the event. The pixelated, chaotic, and shaky pictures clearly indicated that this was the work of a non-professional photographer. According to Bakir, the US military and the Iraqi authorities 'were taken by surprise by the transmission of the unofficial mobile phone footage' (Bakir 2010, 125), considering the low penetration of mobile phones and internet at this point in Iraq. In contrast to the official video, the two-minute-and-thirty-five-second bootleg tape includes a sound track and explicitly shows the actual hanging. The video thus reveals that the Iraqi government must have edited the official video in order for their handling of this event to seem better organized and more controlled than was in fact the case. Compared to the official video, the agitated voices on the audio track give the impression that the hanging took place in a much more unruly manner. Right before the trap dropped under the ex-dictator's feet, some of the executioners yell offensive remarks at Saddam, to which he replies, and this exchange of opinions evolves into an argument. Also, members of the audience cheer enthusiastically after his death, shouting 'the tyrant has fallen' and 'let him swing for three minutes' (Bakir 2010, 137).

Television stations mostly refrained from showing the bootleg video in full length. However, it was—and still is—just a few clicks away on the internet.[10] Only three days after its release, the video had been shown around five million times on Google and three million times on the video-sharing site LiveLeak, an indication of the overwhelming interest in the violent clip. After seven days, the views on Google had doubled to ten million (Borch

2007). It was also featured on a number of other sites, just as it was circulated in SMS chains and sold on DVDs in combination with highlights from the trial against Saddam Hussein in the Middle East (Mortensen 2007).

A little over a week later, another eyewitness video was published on an internet site belonging to Saddam's Baath party. The video showed Saddam Hussein post mortem, and, once again, was disseminated at great speed to other sites and the mainstream news media.

The next major news in the case was the arrest of two security guards from the Iraqi Ministry of Justice charged with filming the videos. As is often the case with eyewitness images, their motives for filming the event were not communicated to the public, and they also performed the characteristic split role between participation and witnessing.

The pictures caused many reactions. To briefly account for the major ones, some Sunni Muslims vehemently protested and demonstrated against the way their co-religionist had been scorned by Shia Muslim guards. The pictures also caused a major setback in the attempt to unite the different groupings in Iraq, and made the conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims more inflamed in large parts of the Middle East. Moreover, the videos cast doubt on the Iraqi government's ability to and possibility of ruling the country, which also caused embarrassment at the White House on account of the US government's support of prime minister al-Maliki. All in all, this eyewitness footage demonstrates the power of this genre to produce counter-images that capture the political agenda and cause unrest.

HISTORICAL EVENT IN A 'HOME VIDEO'

The analysis of the image taken by Silicio reached the conclusion that eyewitness images might be said to occupy a middle region by the conflation of public and private. Taking this argument a step further, this analysis scrutinizes the characteristics of this middle region in terms of the particular viewpoint offered by eyewitness images, which destabilizes the official narrative without offering a stable narrative in return.

The bootleg tape of the hanging of Saddam Hussein appears as a curious combination of a documentation of a significant historical event and a 'home video'. In this way, form and content chart different interpretative courses. On the one hand, the video reintroduces the strongly ritualized performance of the public hanging and depicts the fall of an iconic and prominent political leader. On the other hand, the aesthetic quality clearly indicates that the video was recorded under cover with a handheld camera. The pictures are heavily pixelated, out of focus, and stirred. In contrast to the fairly coherent narrative of the official video, the unofficial one is more fragmented. Since the mobile phone is—or, at least appears to be—held close to the body, the producer's movements are registered on the images as shakes and abrupt shifts of focus; the camera points to the ground, shows a few glimpses of

Saddam Hussein on the scaffold, turns to black, et cetera. The aesthetic quality seems to expose the security guard/eyewitness picture producer's agitation at being present and recording the hanging of the ex-dictator. In this way, the aesthetics point back to the time and place of the recording and to the recording subject. The recordings are tied to a specific but—to most viewers—otherwise unknown body. Despite the lack of factual knowledge about the producer, the images convey a strong sense of his bodily presence while filming events. In the act of viewing, spectators in a sense have to share the perspective of the creator. This underscores the indexical bond between representation and the represented but also the inherent paradox in the co-existence between bodily presence and anonymity.

Combining amateur aesthetics with the documentation of a major political and historical event, the video offers the audience a particular viewpoint—namely, the viewpoint of contemporary eyewitness images. The video thus clearly exemplifies the point brought forward in chapter 2 concerning eyewitness images closing the distance between 'seeing' and 'saying', which was developed from Peters' (2001) analysis of traditional oral testimonies falling into these two distinct phases. With the camera as an extension of his body, the creator of the bootleg tape of Saddam Hussein appears to be seeing and sensing but tells no straightforward and coherent account. As a consequence of this raw footage, the spectator is put in the position of, so to speak, carrying out the work for him and covering 'the difficult juncture between experience and discourse', as Peters (2001, 710) puts it. The spectator has to take part in the construction of meaning to prevent the recordings from remaining accumulated fragments. Figuratively speaking, the viewer has to imagine being in the shoes and body of this eyewitness and picture producer and will the video to compile into the documentation of a significant historical event.

In this way, viewing the video of Saddam Hussein's death would involve a double movement. By means of his or her active co-creation, the viewer crosses the distance in time and space to the hanging. However, the extremely violent content and the uncertainty with regard to the creator's motivation for recording and disseminating the footage might make it necessary for many viewers to distance themselves from the particular perspective offered. This double movement of breaking and drawing boundaries in a sense defines the viewer as viewer, just as it defines the object of viewing as the object of viewing. In this way, the representation inserts the viewer into the story, which he or she takes part in writing.

This interpretation of the bootleg tape of the hanging of Saddam Hussein brings us closer to a special characteristic of the unedited, fragmented proximity in eyewitness images. Even though the counter-images provided by eyewitnesses equipped with cameras undermine official accounts, they also tend to add a certain insecurity regarding the exact cause of the event. In a middle-region junction between front stage and back region, public and private, formal and informal, they fill a void of information or subvert

the official narrative but not necessarily with the authority to establish a definite or conclusive account.

IMAGE WARS

Eyewitness images create counter-narratives by making otherwise off-shielded middle-region spaces for representing conflict publicly available. Whereas the photographs by German soldiers from World War II have gradually been dug out of archives and albums through a long process, today's eyewitness images are instantly uploaded and distributed. They contribute not only to the writing of history but also to the representation of current affairs. This is particularly evident in cases of major breaking news events, such as the death of Saddam Hussein or when eyewitness images becoming breaking news themselves because of their disruption of censorship, as was the case of Silicio's snapshot. Accordingly, this chapter has pointed to two different possibilities for the counter-narratives posed by eyewitness images. From empirical observation, it seems fair to assert that these two possibilities are typical of the role and function performed by eyewitness images. First of all, they are exclusive in their documentation of events, such as the public protests in Burma, Iraq, and the deaths of Muammar Gaddafi and Benazir Bhutto. The images made public in connection with these events all show scenes, which would not otherwise have been shown. Second, eyewitness images offer alternatives to official representations, as was the case with the Abu Ghraib images and a number of other military images. This chapter has also studied the specifics of these counter-narratives. Both footages were on a general level defined within the middle region because of the blurred boundaries between public and private and between formal and informal.

NOTES

1. It is beyond the scope of this book to deal with press self-censorship; please see, e.g., Calvert and Torres 2011.
2. Another common trait is that both cases involve images of death and enter an enduring ethical and moral discussion about depictions of violence in the public realm (e.g., Seaton 2005; Hanusch 2010). However, this discussion is not explicitly relevant to the current chapter.
3. For an overview, please see http://www.army.mil/media/socialmedia/ (last accessed June 26, 2014).
4. See http://armylive.dodlive.mil/ (last accessed June 26, 2014).
5. This section focuses solely on the reception of visual representations of war fatalities in their homeland, and does not reflect on the related issue of reactions to images of dead enemies because this would involve entirely different contexts and logics.
6. According to Grant Penrod, the 'Dover Test' was a term coined in 1994 by former Senator John Glenn, who asked 'Will public opinion and will support

in the Congress still be there when the body bags or the coffins start coming back through Dover, Delaware?' (2004, 7). Tom Holert points out that the term 'Dover Test' was first used in public by General Henry Shelton on January 19, 2000 (2006, 30). Kelly Gast quotes Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey as saying that the 'Dover test' was coined by the Pentagon itself (Gast, no date, 11).

7. The photographs are available on the website of the National Security Archive. Please see www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB152/casket_exhibit.html (last accessed June 26, 2014).
8. Quote translated from Danish to English by the author of this book.
9. Focusing on the international circulation of the footage as a counter-narrative, this interpretation of the case does not take into account the Iraqi media environment as a context for understanding the video and its impact (see Bakir 2010).
10. See, for instance, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmlaPQOtDbQ (last accessed June 26, 2014), or search for it by name on YouTube.

5 The Unintentional News Icon

The Canonization and Political Mobilization of the Footage of Neda Agha Soltan in the Post-Election Revolt Iran (2009)

Two overall forms of contemporary witnessing were presented in chapter 1: the first-hand witnessing of the bystander or participant, and the second-hand witnessing of the media audience. In the current media landscape, the two are interrelated. When eyewitness images gain momentum as the main sources of information in the coverage of topical events, they situate distant audiences as witnesses by proxy. Situations thus still more frequently occur in which 'the witness (speech-act) of the witness (person) was witnessed (by an audience)', to borrow the words of John Durham Peters (2001, 709).

In this chapter, the two forms of witnessing are interpreted as eyewitness images and the news media's framing of witness accounts for distant audiences. They are analyzed on the basis of the international news media's deployment of eyewitness footage in the coverage of the anti-government upheaval in Iran in 2009. On-site citizens protesting against the suspected rigging of the June 12th election that secured Mahmoud Ahmadinejad another term in office turned into essential sources of information for the international news media because of the government's ban on foreign media reporting from within Iran. Despite the considerable number of non-professional sources at hand, the news media took familiar paths and constructed the imagery of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan as a centralized, symbolic icon to illustrate the complex political situation. While standing on the edge of a demonstration in Tehran on June 20, the 26-year-old graduate from the Islamic Azad University was suddenly shot by a sniper believed to belong to the Basij, a volunteer militia. Two grainy and graphic camera phone films documenting the event were spread virally on Facebook, YouTube, and other social media sites before CNN broke the killing as a major news story. The images were soon after featured, described, and commented on everywhere in print, broadcast, and online news. At least for a while, media audiences became familiar with Neda's face: young and blood covered. This case highlights how the two forms of witnessing feed into each other and are linked to distinct—and converging—media systems: The 'new' media logic of multiple and fragmented citizen reports from conflict areas, and the 'old' media logic of using photographic icons as a condensed and symbolically charged way of representing and remembering war and conflict.

Taking its point of departure in the news media's canonization of the eyewitness footage of Neda as an instant icon for the anti-government movement

in Iran, this chapter seeks to answer the following research questions (please see Mortensen 2011a for an earlier analysis of this case): What characterizes news icons and eyewitness images as 'unintentional' news icons? What is the extent to which the news media attach the word 'icon' to the footage of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan? What significance is attributed to this news icon in the coverage both as part of a conflictual media event and a historical event? And how is it subjected to political mobilization?

This chapter consists of six main sections. First, the case and its immediate circumstances of digital activism in connection with the 2009 uprising in Iran are presented.

Drawing on Bennett and Lawrence (1995), Cornelia Brink (2000), and Hariman and Lucaites (2007), the second section offers a definition of news icons, and discusses the circulation of icons as part of 'conflictual media events' (Hepp and Couldry 2010) and political processes of mobilization and legitimization.

The third section focuses on the methodology, and the fourth deploys quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the prompt iconization of Neda's image by intense reproduction, affirmative rhetorical acts, and emphasis on digital technologies as the driving force behind the iconization. This section also investigates the meaning attached to the particular 'moment' represented by the icon. In the news coverage, 'the moment' both stands as *pars pro toto* of the conflictual media event and wider historical frames of reference by likenesses to earlier icons such as Joan of Arc (fifteenth century) and the solitary man defying tanks at Tiananmen Square (1989). This section concludes with a brief analysis of how, in the intervening years, the news icon Neda has become a frame of reference for establishing later icons during the reform movements in other countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

The fifth section examines the political mobilization of Neda's image. Public statements by US President Barack Obama as well as Iranian officials and representatives from the government-loyal media are analyzed as the fronts in an 'image-war' fought to determine the veracity, significance, and symbolical impact of the eyewitness footage.

Finally, the conclusion elaborates on the contradiction at play when eyewitness images gain iconographical status. Even though the videos of Neda Agha Soltan originated from the multiplicity and fast circulation of images characteristic of today's visual culture and online media flow, the news media conducted 'business as usual' in their framing of the footage as a symbolic icon.

DIGITAL ACTIVISM IN IRAN 2009: MEDIA CONVERGENCE AT WORK

The news media's treatment of the videos of Neda should be seen in the context of digital activism during the 2009 revolt in Iran, and the conditions set for covering this and other conflicts by the extended circuit of news arising from the convergence between the institutionalized news media and social network sites. A historical perspective may illustrate the scope of this change. The

Persian Gulf War was popularly dubbed 'the CNN War' due to this network's pioneering live broadcast from the front line, amounting to the vanguard media experience of conflict in 1991. Eighteen years later, CNN's live news on the uprising in Iran repeatedly took the form of transmitting and discussing photos and videos from rallies submitted to iReport and social media platforms. The websites of *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Huffington Post*, and many other leading media similarly posted a mix of unverified videos, minute-by-minute blogs, and anonymous twitter messages (Stelter 2009).

This coverage reflects how Iranian protesters circumvented the strict governmental control on digital communication and shared their experiences of the regime's brutal handling of opponents in recordings on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and news network sites such as iReport (Web Ecology Project 2009). CNN's iReport alone received a total of 5,200 Iran-related submissions in June 2009 (Stelter 2009). For obvious reasons, the frequently asked question of whether citizen reports should be regarded as a democratization of the news bears a special resonance within the 2009 Iranian context of a theocracy holding one of the world's most sophisticated centralized technical filtering systems (OpenNet Initiative 2009). Internet censorship in Iran at the time completely blocked social network sites such as Flickr and MySpace. Access to YouTube, Facebook, and other platforms were similarly shut down in the period surrounding the presidential election. In addition to internet censorship, satellite television signals were jammed and protesters' mobile phones confiscated. However, as observed by *The New York Times*, it was easier for the Iranian government to limit the transfer of images and other forms of information inside than outside of national borders, owing to a loosely knit international network of sympathizers helping to connect activists and spontaneous filmmakers (Stelter and Stone 2009a).

The uprising over the assumed electoral fraud in Iran was soon named 'The Twitter Revolution' because of the way opponents of the political regime communicated internally and externally via social network sites. Some Western media even went as far as to announce this to be the 'true birthplace of citizen journalism' (Ali and Fahmy 2013, 59). By the same token, former U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor Mark Pfeile argued in favor of Twitter as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize (Pfeile 2009). Digital media have no doubt empowered people to share viewpoints, experiences, and information, thereby making it more difficult to keep brutal acts out of sight because 'the world is watching', to quote a popular expression in the coverage of the unrest in Iran (e.g., Clark-Flory 2009). Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that only 35% of Iranians had internet access in 2009. The use of videos and text messages as news sources does not reflect the support for president Ahmadinejad among the poorer, rural population, who are less likely to use social media (Flitton 2009; OpenNet Initiative 2009, 2). Moreover, as has often been remarked upon, social network sites present a two-edged sword, given that, for example, Twitter constitutes a powerful tool to track dissidents.

Parallel to discussions on the impact of social network sites, the power balance between social network sites and the news media also came up for

debate in the wake of the 2009 protests in Iran. Some researchers argued that precisely because of the mainstream news media's tendency to frame user-generated content in conventional ways, the '"revolutionary" purpose' of this material was undercut (e.g., Ali and Fahmy 2013, 56). While media coverage of Neda supports this belief to an extent, one could also argue that without social network sites and eyewitness images, the killing would never have been documented. Even though news organizations 'pick and choose what information from these sites is most relevant to their routines and narratives' (Ali and Fahmy 2013, 56), it still seems to be a hastily drawn conclusion that the coverage of the protests in Iran simply maintains the journalistic status quo. Making the opposite argument, Lisa Lipscomb (2012) contends:

> The video of Neda was recorded and distributed by two individuals and did not require the mainstream media in order for it to gain widespread attention.
>
> (Lipscomb 2012, not paginated)

Lipscomb's interpretation represents the other extreme. However, it seems unlikely that this killing would have gained worldwide notice if the footage had remained on social network sites and not entered the mainstream news media. This debate about the convergence between social network sites and the established news media follows a dramaturgy of deciding which system 'wins' in terms of power and influence. From the perspective of this book, it seems more pertinent to discuss the interplay between the two media systems.

THE YOUTUBE MARTYR

Notwithstanding the great number of amateur sources available in relation to the turmoil in Iran, most attention was devoted to the two videos of Neda Agha Soltan's killing.[1] The longest lasts approximately 40 seconds and begins with Neda collapsing in front of a white car, a large pool of blood spreading on the ground. Two men, later identified as Neda's singing instructor and a doctor, are frantically trying to save her, but evidently in vain. Her eyes then slide down and blood flows out of her nose and mouth. Originally, the video of the killing of the young woman was posted on Facebook and YouTube by an Iranian asylum seeker in Holland, after a friend in Tehran called on June 20th at 5pm asking the asylum seeker to publish a film he had just recorded (Tait and Weaver 2009). The second video is 15 seconds long, was filmed by an anonymous filmmaker, and contains a close-up of Neda Agha Soltan, unconscious and bleeding heavily. In the news media and social media, still images from the videos seemed to be circulated to a higher extent than the full-length videos. Some of the most widely spread are a still from the first video of Neda lying on the ground while the two men are performing first aid (Figure 5.1) and a still from the second video of Neda's blood-covered face (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.1 Still from a video of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan, 2009

Figure 5.2 Still from a video of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan, 2009

In the coverage of the case, the represented and the representation were treated as if they are interchangeable. Both Neda herself and the images of Neda were attributed iconographical status. By their intense dissemination, the news media turned the footage into an object of intense public emotionality and ascribed Neda/her image instant authority as the principal icon of the protest movement in Iran. Tribute was paid to Neda as a 'YouTube Martyr', and the international media told the same story over and over again of how the murdered woman became an instantaneous icon, which lent the Iranian demonstrators a name, a face, a 'unifying symbol' (e.g., Parker 2009; see also Rajabi 2012). On Google Earth, the site of her death was renamed 'Martyr Square', and Neda was selected as Time's 'Person of the Year' in 2009. Her face was reproduced on t-shirts and posters—one of them designed to imitate Barack Obama's iconic 'change' poster from the 2008 presidential campaign. People attending demonstrations in Tehran and elsewhere carried placards with her face to the rallying cry of 'We are Neda' (see also Assmann and Assmann 2010; Stage 2011). In their Facebook status updates, users wrote 'is Neda' and uploaded her photo as their profile picture. Furthermore, as part of online memorial culture, the internet was flooded with pictures, poems, and songs praising Neda as 'Angel of Freedom', 'the Iranian Joan of Arc', and so on.

DEFINING NEWS ICONS

The driving force behind the iconization of Neda Agha Soltan's image is anything but new. Since photojournalism peaked during the Spanish Civil War and World War II, the news media seem to have pursued the one decisive and iconic picture to symbolically represent the conflict in question. Often focus has been on human sacrifice, as in Robert Capa's image of the falling republican soldier from the Spanish Civil War (1936), formally titled *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death, Cerro Muriano, September 5, 1936*. National identity, conquest, and victory are also major themes, as exemplified by Joe Rosenthal's *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* (1945). Iconic images have also called attention to suffering, as in Nick Út's photograph of the Napalm-burnt Vietnamese girl (1972), or civic opposition, as in the photograph by Jeff Widener of the lone Chinese man defying a row of tanks on Tiananmen Square in Beijing (1989) (for more on photographic icons, see Mortensen 2013b).[2]

Few analogue amateur images have iconic status. The most famous ones are the photographs from concentration camps taken by the allied forces towards the end of World War II and the Zapruder tape of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, which were mentioned in the previous chapter. More eyewitness images have entered the exclusive ranks of icons after the profusion of digital technologies. According to the definition of news icon below, they include some of the most widely reproduced pictures from 9/11 of the

hijacked planes about to hit the World Trade Center as well as the hooded man standing on a box and a few other Abu Ghraib photographs. Examples of iconic eyewitness images also count footage of monks protesting in Burma 2007 and, of course, the videos and stills of Neda dying.

Whether used in reference to religious imagery, spiritual or political figureheads, celebrities, or high-profile brands, the generic term 'icon' describes worshipped, mass-depicted, or reproduced people/objects/images with broad and popular appeal. In the secular context of the news media and popular culture, 'icon' mostly refers to widely circulated and recognizable photographs, which first make the front pages, and, in time, the history books. They are, in colloquial language, the images that 'made history' (Brink 2000, 137).

In order to ground the theory and analysis in journalism, this book favors the term 'news icon' over the more generic 'secular icon' (Brink 2000). 'News icon' was launched by W. Lance Bennett and Regina D. Lawrence in the article 'News Icons and Social Change' from 1995. They define 'news icon' as '[a] powerful condensational image, arising out of a news event, that evokes primary cultural themes and [. . .] contradictions and tensions' (1995, 22). News icons emerge 'when an ongoing news story is crystallized in a dramatic event', and they are also used 'to symbolically recount stories about larger issues' (Bennett and Lawrence 1995, 23 and 25). Mostly, news icons are 'vivid' visual images, but they may also be 'word pictures' (Bennett and Lawrence 1995, 23). In contrast to Bennett and Lawrence, this book uses 'news icons' exclusively in relation to visual images. Although Bennett and Lawrence's broadening of the concept rightfully acknowledges the connection between words and pictures, textual 'news icons' are not distinctly defined in their article, nor is the category of icons particularly relevant to this book.

One may interpret what counts as a news icon with more or less rigor and exclusiveness. Where should the line be drawn between 'influential' and 'iconic' images? How many recipients with familiarity to the image in terms of numbers and geographical reach does it take for the label 'icon' to be appropriate? Might icons first have appeared in yesterday's news, or should their centrality pass the test of history?

This book leans on a pragmatic understanding of 'news icons' as selected images, which are ascribed iconicity through intense circulation across journalistic platforms and repeated rhetorical acts of confirming their meaningfulness, symbolic power, and historical significance. As an act of simultaneous creation and declaration, the canonization process often includes the recurrent use of the word 'icon' about the image in question. According to this anti-essentialist approach, 'iconic' would not be something an image simply *is* owing to a set of inherent values and aesthetic properties. For instance, the image of Neda dying was not an icon before it was transformed into an icon. This chapter thus devotes substantial attention to the construction, which takes place in the *process of iconization* or, as it is also referred to, the *canonization*—that is, the way an image is spread and promoted through

diverse interactions between news media and politics.[3] For the media, icons offer a ritualized, simplified, and symbolically compressed way of representing significant events, which are otherwise difficult to provide an overall view of. For political actors, icons belong in the toolbox of communication as instruments to draw attention to certain issues and explain and legitimize political action.

To outline the distinctive features of news icons, this section firstly draws on the book *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (2007) by rhetoric scholars Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, who focus on 'several registers of ritual and response' (1) evoked by icons. They present the following five characteristics: 1) aesthetic familiarity; 2) civic performance; 3) semiotic transcriptions; 4) emotional scenarios; and 5) contradiction/conflict. In the definition below, the theoretical framework by Hariman and Lucaites (2007) is supplemented with the more aesthetically oriented characterization of secular icons by historian Cornelia Brink in her article 'Secular Icons: Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps' (2000). Brink underlines the inherent paradox of simultaneous authenticity and symbolicity as being important to the meaning making of icons. Icons are distinguished by combining indexical, photographic documentation with symbolic allusions to larger frames of understanding. Taking her point of departure in the resemblance to religious cult images, Brink identifies four characteristics of secular icons: 1) authenticity; 2) symbolicity; 3) canonization; and 4) showing and veiling. The outline of seven characteristics below only includes authenticity and symbolicity from Brink's definition because the remaining two appear somewhat redundant: 'Canonization' constitutes an entry-level criterion for discussing icons. No icon exists without a preceding canonization, so it seems to be a tautological characteristic. Similarly, the definition below excludes 'showing and veiling'. Using an oxymoron, Brink elegantly explains that 'the visible makes us blind' because 'these pictures have pushed themselves between ourselves and reality like a "protective layer"' (2000, 144). Although this point is not explicitly made by Brink, 'showing and veiling' appears to describe the effects of simultaneous authenticity and symbolicity, since 'show' is coupled with authenticity and 'veil' with symbolicity.

To sum up the sources of inspiration for the seven characteristics listed below, 'aesthetic familiarity', 'civic performance', 'semiotic transcriptions', 'emotional scenarios', and contradiction/conflict' were coined by Hariman and Lucaites (2007), while 'authenticity' and 'symbolicity' were first introduced by Brink (2000). To tighten the definition, the seven characteristics are divided into three levels: context, identification, and aesthetics. These three levels address the overall political and societal background for the news icon (the level of *context*), reception and audience identification (the level of *identification*), and formal aesthetic qualities (the level of *aesthetics*). The definition below adheres neither to the order of succession presented by Hariman and Lucaites nor Brink but is structured as follows (see also

Level	Characteristic feature
I. Context	1. *Contradiction and Crises* (Hariman and Lucaites 2007)
II. Identification	2. *Civic performance* (Hariman and Lucaites 2007) 3. *Semiotic transcriptions* (Hariman and Lucaites 2007) 4. *Emotional scenarios* (Hariman and Lucaites 2007)
III. Aesthetics	5. *Aesthetic familiarity* (Hariman and Lucaites 2007) 6. *Authenticity* (Brink 2000) 7. *Symbolicity* (Brink 2000)

Figure 5.3 Definition of news icons

Figure 5.3). *Context* is the first level, under which is listed *contradiction and crises*. *Identification* constitutes the second level, and it covers *civic performance*, *semiotic transcriptions*, and *emotional scenarios*. *Aesthetics,* the third level, includes *aesthetic familiarity*, *authenticity*, and *symbolicity.* To create an overview, the seven characteristics are first introduced individually and then discussed as a whole in the following sections.

I. CONTEXT

1. Contradiction and Crises

News icons are usually born out of a context of difference and contradiction, if not of crisis and conflict. They reflect a 'recurrent crisis within the society, a deep problem that will already be coded into the picture' (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 36). For this reason, news icons are contested. Their meaning is debated and their authenticity questioned by accusations of manipulation and falsification. Apart from the footage of Neda, prominent examples include Capa's picture of the falling republic soldier (1936) and Rosenthal's *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* (1945).

II. IDENTIFICATION

2. Civic Performance

'Images in the public media display the public to itself', Hariman and Lucaites observe (2007, 12). By showing various actions and patterns of behavior, icons propose different models for identification and inspiration (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 33). On the level of civic performance, the image does not mirror spectators' individual or private selves but puts on

display roles and acts for citizens to imitate—for instance, of sacrifice, resistance, or patriotism.

3. Semiotic Transcriptions

Through semiotic transcriptions, news icons are receptive for personal audience investment. They possess 'strong economies of transcription' and tend to be semantically open for projections of diverse and even opposed perspectives, meanings, and interpretations by individual spectators (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 34).

4. Emotional Scenarios

Research on secular icons invariably accentuates their profound emotional impact (Goldberg 1991; Brink 2000; Hariman and Lucaites 2007; Mortensen 2013b). Photo historian Vicki Goldberg makes the case that, as a replacement for the public monument, icons inspire a repertoire of emotional responses in the larger public:

> They concentrate the hopes and fears of millions and provide an instant and effortless connection to some deeply meaningful moment in history. They seem to summarize such complex phenomena as the powers of the human spirit or of universal destruction.
>
> (Goldberg 1991, 135)

Whereas Goldberg highlights the emotional reaction stimulated by icons writing popular history in (seemingly) universal messages, Hariman and Lucaites note the emotionality sparked in individual viewers by their affective response to the bodies depicted. Icons 'concentrate and direct emotion' by showing expressive bodies 'in a social space' and place the 'viewer in an affective relationship with the people in the picture' (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 35–36).

III. AESTHETICS

5. Aesthetic Familiarity

Icons are woven into a rich intertextual fabric. The standard composition and aesthetics of icons are at once simple and evocative, and they carry intertextual references to art history, film, advertisement, and so on, as well as to preceding icons. Hariman and Lucaites point out that:

> [I]conic photos must be structured by familiar patterns of artistic design. They draw on generic conventions from the middlebrow arts such as

> landscape or portrait painting, and they do not feature the sharp contrasts, double image, or other techniques of avant-garde photographic art. They also draw on other, similarly limited repertories of design and response: popular iconography (mother and child, a soldier saluting), representational realism (everything to scale, nothing uncanny), journalistic conventions (balanced composition, a sense of decorum), visual grammars learned from films (establishing shots) advertising (image before text), and so forth.
>
> (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 29–30)

Icons look like pictures we know already, and rarely break new ground with respect to style and content. Once they enter collective memory, icons claim to be undemanding and self-explanatory, not least because they are embedded in mainstream culture and experienced within the everyday media routines of consuming news, culture, and entertainment. They present political paradigms or sets of beliefs as if they were a matter of course.

6. Authenticity

Authenticity is attributed to news icons both on the level of content (claim to reality and truth) and style (realism). As they appear to be indexical representations of what happened at a specific time and place, authenticity is intimately connected with news icons. Icons from situations of conflict further connote authenticity as death or the risk of dying often constitutes their subtext, and they represent existential and political struggle and sacrifice—life and death. For this reason, photographic icons from war and conflict demand our attention with more urgency, and are even said to touch us more directly and deeply (Brothers 1997, xi). Authenticity is also tied to news icons stylistically, since photographic realism constitutes the favored form of expression.

7. Symbolicity

According to the contradiction of terms already mentioned, icons unite authenticity with symbolicity by alluding to frames of understanding, which transcend the specific situation represented. Icons easily acquire symbolic meanings by their ability to summarize complex situations or phenomena in a simple, condensed, and therefore also 'exemplary' manner (Brink 2000, 141). Due to this symbolic potential, news icons lend themselves to being 'event-enhancing narrative possibilities' (Bennett and Lawrence 1995, 27).

To sum up, the seven characteristics delineate news icons on the levels of context, identification, and aesthetics. The following section builds on this definition to theorize the circulation and canonization of unintentional news icons in the contemporary media landscape, as well as the role they play in media events and political mobilization.

CIRCULATION, CANONIZATION, AND UNINTENTIONAL NEWS ICONS

To understand the transformation of eyewitness images into news icons, it is necessary first to explain what is meant by canonization. The implications of this word obviously differ greatly from the meaning attached to the canonization of religious icons (Brink 2000)—that is, the declaration by the church that a deceased individual is recognized as a saint. 'Canonization' in this context refers to the process by which broad media dissemination turns certain images into objects of veneration and political investment for the larger public. The cheap, fast, and easy circulability of photography is instrumental to the canonization of news icons, and the pace and scope of this process is determined by an interplay between media actors/platforms/institutions, political actors/institutions, and 'popular demand'. Sometimes mutual agreement and collaboration drive this process. Sometimes canonization is the result of clashing interests if, for instance, the media uncover controversial stories in the form of a striking image against the will of the responsible politicians.

Two factors in the current media landscape may, at first glance, be interpreted as arguments against the continued centrality of news icons: professionalized public relations and visual user-generated content.

First, for icons to appear authentic, they must convey the impression of spontaneity, of being taken by chance or accident (Bennett and Lawrence 1995, 23). As observed by several researchers, the public seems to be increasingly weary and skeptical of pictures that appear to be the result of photo opportunities, designed by governmental and military communication departments to encourage the press to bring certain advantageous images. Nicholas Mirzoeff refers to this as 'visual revisionism' and gives as an example the 'carefully choreographed' announcement by President George W. Bush, appearing under the banner 'Mission Accomplished' on the navy ship *USS Abraham Lincoln,* that the Iraq War had ended on May 1, 2003 (2005, 18). Recordings of the toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue at Firdos Square in Baghdad, April 2003, represent another conspicuous example of the way images too obviously orchestrated to become icons are met with distrust. When the news of this event broke, the images were greeted with analysis of how they were the outcome of a deliberately staged 'photo opportunity' (e.g., Fisk 2003).

Second, the steeply ascending curve of online visual material also seems to challenge the logics of iconization. Digital, visual culture is generally structured according to an accumulative 'quantity' rather than a hierarchical 'quality' of images, which more easily allows certain visuals to rise above others.

However, even though digital, visual media have augmented the number of images produced and accelerated the speed by which they are circulated (and possibly also forgotten), the news media still on occasion engage in the opposite movement of intensely circulating one particular non-professional

image. Eyewitness images, in this sense, not only pose a problem but also offer part of the 'solution' to the increasing disbelief in iconic images. The canonization of eyewitness footage causes the—in many respects—contradictory logics of iconization and digital, visual culture to merge.

Eyewitness images turn into what might be termed 'unintentional news icons' because they achieve this status without necessarily being designed or published for it. Digital technologies have made canonization less controllable and predictable. Similar to other icons, unintentional news icons gain momentum on account of their ascribed ability to express the public's anxieties and aspirations in particular circumstances. Canonization in this way seems to transfer the weight of history to the otherwise fleeting and transitory mass of online eyewitness images.

It might be pertinent to ask if unintentional news icons stretch the concept of news icons too far. According to Brink (2000) and Hariman and Lucaites (2007), lasting centrality constitutes the litmus test for icons:

> They are a small set—fifteen, twenty, maybe thirty at the most across a span of generations. They in no way comprise the long list of influential photos, but they are the photos that stand out from all the others over time.
>
> (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 6)

If, according to Hariman and Lucaites, icons are only consolidated over decades, any notion of contemporary icons would be discarded. This standpoint seems unsatisfactory in view of the modus operandi of the news media and the vested political interest in images of topical conflicts. Aside from ruling out eyewitness images as present day unintentional news icons, this line of argument also limits the analysis of historical, analogue icons. For instance, if one were only to consider Joe Rosenthal's *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* an icon after history had passed judgment, the political and cultural importance would be overlooked of how the instant canonization mobilized support and funds on the home front at the release of this image in February 1945. Accordingly, this book interprets historical significance mainly as the ascribed capacity of icons to write contemporary history and sum up a historical span.

CONFLICTUAL MEDIA EVENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC ICONS

Icons are often part of 'media events'. In Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz's pioneering work on media events as a genre, they use this term for preplanned and ritualized live transmitted events, which interrupt the routines of everyday life and are presented with hegemonic '*reverence* and *ceremony*' to construct and confirm the unity of the audience (Dayan and Katz 1992, 7,

italics in original text). As they write in the beginning of the book, media events are the 'high holidays of mass communication' (Dayan and Katz 1992, 1). They outline the three prototypical media events 'contests', 'conquests', and 'coronations'. Later studies have questioned the adequacy of this relatively narrow selection of media events. In particular, objections have been raised to Dayan and Katz's assertion that media events 'celebrate not conflict but *reconciliation*' (1992, 8, italics in original text). Arguments have been voiced about the need to expand the concept to include sudden and disruptive events. Paddy Scannell, for instance, distinguishes between arranged events and spontaneous or accidental happenings (cited after Hepp and Couldry 2010, 6; see also Dayan 2010; Katz and Liebes 2010). In their typology of media events, Andreas Hepp and Nick Couldry similarly operate with 'conflictual media events', 'ritual media events', and 'popular media events' (2010, 12). Conflictual media events, defined as 'mediatized terror attacks, disasters or wars' (Hepp and Couldry 2010, 12), constitutes a relevant concept in the current context due to its emphasis on the 'conflictual' and subscription to mediatization as a basic premise for media events of today (see also chapter 7). They are no longer exclusively broadcast-borne but belong to the extended media circuit. Most importantly, contemporary media events are products of the new possibilities of reporting and engaging audiences provided by networked journalism and social media as well as professionalized strategic communication representing diverse commercial, cultural, and political interests.

Media events take place without icons. Icons emerge without media events. But often icons are related to media events. On rare occasions, icons generate media events. This is especially the case with 'conflictual media events'. Examples include the Rodney King tape and the videos of Neda, which drew media attention to circumstances that would not, in all likelihood, have become known internationally otherwise. However, media events generating icons is the most common order of succession. In some of the examples presented by Dayan and Katz, icons encapsulate the media events. The stills of Neil Armstrong planting the flag epitomize the moon landing of 1969. The funeral of John F. Kennedy is remembered by the image of his veiled widow Jacqueline Kennedy standing by the casket. As Stephanie Marriott points out:

> The live television event is driven by a complex set of imperatives. It must, first of all, produce the moment: the instant or instants which can be seized upon as iconic. In some instances, a situation will throw up one and only one such element which clearly manifests itself as *the one:* Nelson Mandela's walk to freedom, Jack Ruby's shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald, Charles' and Diana's post-wedding kiss on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. To miss such a moment, essentially, is to have mislaid the event.
>
> (Marriott 2001, 725)

The production of live transmitted media events feature a search for 'the moment', the icon in the making. Icons define and brand the media event in two ways: First, as the event unfolds, the icon is established as an apt emblem and potent symbol for that particular event. This is done through frequent reruns and acts of rhetorical affirmation and designation of meaning and value to the particular moment represented in the image or brief clip. Second, icons constitute the main 'leftovers' of the event; these images stand for posterity and enter into popular history. In this way, media events and icons represent reverse movements in time and space. Whereas media events stretch in time even to the degree that they become 'disaster marathons' (Liebes 1998), the icon stands as the condensed part of the whole: the one defining and decisive moment that summarizes, symbolizes, and makes itself available to recirculation.

THE POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF NEWS ICONS

Some icons direct the attention of the outside world to a given conflict or issue. Some are even said to work as 'focusing events' in 'policy making processes' (Bennett and Lawrence 1995, 26). As Hariman and Lucaites write:

> Iconic photographs provide an accessible and centrally positioned set of images for exploring how political action (and inaction) can be constituted and controlled through visual media.
>
> (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 5)

As a result of the political interests vested in news icons, political scientists have taken a growing interest in the role played by pictures related to foreign affairs (e.g., Campbell and Shapiro 2007; Hansen 2011). However, the specific effects of icons mobilized to legitimize political actions or promote certain viewpoints or patterns of behavior are difficult to measure. Surveys have been conducted as a way to quantify the impact of iconographical pictures on opinion formation and foreign policy. For example, they have been used to examine whether CNN's broadcast in 1993 of the body of an American soldier dragged through the streets of Mogadishu led to a decline in public support for the invasion and expedited the withdrawal of US forces from Somalia (Perlmutter 1998). Even though surveys may provide an overall outline of the impact of visuals, their shortcomings are evident. For instance, they fail to account for the long-time effect of pictures functioning as historical frames of reference for future conflict or crisis. A well-known example of this is Thomas E. Franklin's (itself iconic) photograph from 9/11 of three fire fighters raising the American flag on the debris of the World Trade Center and re-enacting the composition and subject matter of Rosenthal's *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* from 1945 (Mortensen 2013b). Vested interests in the interpretation of the cause and effect of icons

are also immeasurable quantitatively. The press may argue for the impact of high-profile images on public opinion and political decision making to confirm the power of its own system, while politicians would perhaps be more reluctant to highlight the direct influence of the press on policy making.

This section does not enter further theoretical and methodological discussions on how to measure the impact of icons. Instead, some fundamental aspects are sketched of the political mobilization of news icons.

For a start, the media choose, circulate, and comment on certain images with the aim of enhancing the public visibility of a particular political battle or cause. Political actors addressing the icon (or icon to be) in different types of communication often further this process. News icons become part of political 'soft power' (Nye 2004) when instrumentalized by one or more of the involved fractions to promote their own cause and weaken the cause of their opponents. Moreover, icons are increasingly mobilized by bottom-up political communication, such as social media campaigns, strategic efforts to bring specific images to the attention of the established news media, the deployment of iconographic images in demonstrations, and so on.

The combination of authenticity and symbolicity (or 'showing and veiling', according to Brink 2000) plays a key role in the news icons' ability to open a space for political mobilization. Media circulation ensures that projected ideas and values, such as political struggle, oppression, fellowship, conquest, and victory, are added to the photograph's referential meaning. Hariman and Lucaites aptly describe this aspect of the canonization and mobilization of news icons as a 'referential slippage' (2007, 105; see also Mortensen 2013b). News icons seem to convey universal messages while in effect giving way to situated identifications that work as interpretive frameworks for the legitimization of political beliefs and calls for action. Therefore, as a tool for visual persuasion, icons might be mobilized to authorize diverse ideologies and political standpoints as well as diverse frameworks, agendas, and stories. When 'freed from their original contexts, they enter the narrative streams of subsequent, disparate, and often unconnected events' (Bennett and Lawrence 1995, 23). The analysis of the coverage of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan is going to explore this 'referential slippage' in more depth.

Hariman and Lucaites point to icons' distinction and fame as another aspect to be taken into consideration in their potential for visual persuasion:

> The combination of the icon's visual eloquence and its wide circulation provides figural resources for subsequent communicative action. As the image is known for being known, it becomes a technique for visual persuasion. Easily referenced and, due to the proliferation of digital technologies, easily reproduced and altered, the iconic image offers a means to tap into the power of circulation and the rich intertext of iconic allusiveness for rhetorical effect.
>
> (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 12)

A news icon not only prompts the audience to relate to the subject matter represented but also to what might be phrased the 'icon's iconicity'—that is, its own history of circulation, contexts, and intertexts. Canonization in itself becomes part of a news icon's meaning. Therefore, icons are more susceptible to political mobilization when news coverage explicates and enhances this self-referentiality by stories focusing on their great impact. The modes of identification outlined above are typically brought to the fore in coverage centering on how an icon has inspired resistance and opposition, created reflections of identity, and resulted in great emotional outpours. In this manner, the coverage of icons is often distinguished by a high degree of metacoverage (see chapter 6). This metacoverage plays an instrumental part in mobilization processes since the news media not only reproduce the icon but also elaborate on the sort of emotions and viewpoints supposedly evoked in the audience. In other words, the news media both co-establish and report on the news icon's political power and emotional effect.

In summary, the theoretical section presented a non-essentialist understanding of news icons as a meaning ascribed to certain images through intense circulation and confirmatory rhetorical acts. Following from this understanding, seven distinctive features were outlined. The section then proceeded to the notion of unintentional news icons and to icons as 'defining moments', generated by or themselves generating conflictual media events. Finally, the political mobilization of icons was discussed.

METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE KILLING OF NEDA AGHA SOLTAN

The methodology chosen for this chapter is mainly qualitative but takes its departure point in a quantitative component. Two samples of news coverage of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan taken from a broad selection of international news media provide the foundation for analyzing the iconization of her image. Media content from both samples was procured from June 20 to July 19, 2009, according to the following reasoning: June 20 was the day of murder, and July 19 was chosen as the end date, based on the assumption that the intense interest in the case would have declined after a month. This was confirmed by the samples as the very last item appeared on July 14. Created by the search words 'Neda' and 'Iran', the *first* sample consisted of media coverage of Neda and Iran. A student assistant discarded irrelevant articles and duplicates, narrowing down the sample to 1122 items. 'Icon' was added to the search words 'Neda' and 'Iran' to create the *second* sample and filter the first. The second sample was compiled according to the same principles as the first sample, thus reducing it to 195 news items. However, this number should be taken with the reservation that news stories might describe the footage as iconic without using the word 'icon'—for instance, by describing Neda as the

'face', 'leitmotif' or 'symbol' of the protest movement in Iran. This means that the 195 items comprising the second sample probably constitute the lowest and most conservative estimate of the news items treating the images as iconic.

Using the search engine *Lexis-Nexis,* the samples were created by incorporating all possible news media sources, including print and online news, television transcripts, news wires, press releases, and aggregate news sources. Blogs, country and region reports, statistics, industry trade press, and executive material were excluded. The news media included in the search are based in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, The Middle East, and North America. This broad regional selection of news media makes it possible to trace the iconization of the images of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan across national, political, and cultural contexts.

As explained in the introduction, the overall objective of this chapter is to examine how two media systems converge in the international news media's canonization of the eyewitness footage of Neda as an instant icon for the anti-government movement in Iran. To this end, the analysis aims to answer four main questions: one quantitative and three qualitative.

> RQ1: Based on a quantitative analysis of the two samples, what is the degree to which the news media use the word 'icon' in the coverage of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan?

On the basis of the second, narrower sample, the qualitative analysis investigates the following layers:

> RQ2: What are the terms and phrases attached to Neda Agha Soltan and/or the representations of her death in the canonization process, and what significance is attributed to technology in this regard?

> RQ3: How are the temporal components of the icon constructed in the media as a defining moment, summing up the past and pointing to the future, in particular through references to past icons?

> RQ4: How was this icon subjected to political mobilization?

The analysis below is structured in the same order as the research questions.

THE INSTANT ICON

Neda as an Icon

To introduce the canonization process, this analysis starts by relating the definition of icons above to the features highlighted in the news coverage of Neda's death. With regard to overall context, the footage stems from and represents emerging *crisis and contradiction* between the Iranian government

and citizen protests as well as between Iran and parts of the international community. The visuals paved the way for diverse identifications: *civic performance* because Neda's death was said to inspire Iranian citizens to join the revolts and gather international support for the opposition in Iran. Concerning *semiotic transcriptions,* the news media similarly reported close identification with Neda, in particular because of her gender, which 'enraged what appears to be large numbers of female protesters' (*Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees* 2009). *Emotional scenarios* were also on display in the strong images of the sudden and random murder of the young woman, as well as in the attempts, desperate and hopeless, to save her life. As Michael Kruse of the *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida) states, '[o]bviously it's had a tremendous emotional impact' (Kruse 2009). *Aesthetic similarities* are strongly featured as well. Included in the intertexts, many news items remark upon resemblances to earlier icons of youth protesters and depictions of martyrdom, a subject to which we shall return. The eyewitness footage was also ascribed a high degree of *authenticity* for different reasons, such as the violent content, the representation of the fleeting moment between life and death, and the subversion of the tight Iranian censorship. Lastly, with regard to *symbolicity*, implications such as martyrdom/sacrifice and resistance were foregrounded immediately.

This brief sketch of how the seven defining traits are prevalent in the coverage has served to introduce the points in a systematic way before the processes of iconization and mobilization are dealt with in more detail.

Iconicity as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

To gain an overview of the degree to which the news media attach the word 'icon' to the case, a comparison between the numbers of items in the two samples is helpful. As mentioned in the methodological section, the first sample created by using the search terms 'Neda' and 'Iran' contained 1122 items. The second, created by means of the search terms 'Neda', 'Iran', and 'icon', comprises 195. In other words, the word 'icon' was attached to the case in 17.4% of the articles. Considering that 'icon' is not a word used at random nor as a synonym for other terms, this constitutes a noteworthy finding. This number points to the way circulation and canonization run as simultaneous and mutually perpetuating processes. While the imagery was turning into a top story and the stills and clips were shown, the news media engaged in a collective and performative speech act of repeatedly attaching the word 'icon' to it and consolidating its significance as a unifying symbol by other rhetorical means.

Some of the many catchphrases to appear in international online, print, and broadcast news from June 21 through June 24, 2009 (i.e., within four days of the killing) referred to Neda as an 'instant internet icon' (e.g., Al-Bawaba Reporters 2009), 'internet resistance icon' (e.g., 'UN Secretary-General Calls for End of Violence in Iran,' *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 2009),

'icon of Iran revolt' (e.g., Kruse 2009), 'icon of Iran unrest' (e.g., Weissenstein and Johnson 2009), 'undisputed icon' (Kole 2009), 'worldwide cyber icon' (*Evening News* 2009), and 'protest icon' (e.g., Kennedy 2009). These quotes bear testament to the media's role in declaring the footage's iconic status as a self-fulfilling prophecy. As early as June 21, 2009, the day after the killing, 'icon' was used repeatedly in connection with Neda or the visuals, as if iconicity was a given fact. For instance, in ABC's coverage on *Good Morning America*:

> Every time protesters tried to gather, they were attacked with tear gas, batons, and according to some witnesses, live fire. One of the most shocking images, a young woman shot by paramilitaries, according to witnesses, bleeds to death on camera. Later identified as Neda, she's become an icon of the protest, drawing an outpouring of emotion from supporters on Twitter and other websites.
>
> (*Good Morning America*, June 21, 8.02 AM EST 2009)

This quote illustrates the simultaneity between the news of the murder breaking and the recognition of the visuals as iconic. Many other news media similarly treat the iconization as a matter of fact or pass meta-reflective remarks on the instant canonization. As this takes place before details of the story are verified, the visuals and their iconic potential seem to be regarded as more important than the woman's exact identity and the factual sequence of events. For instance, on CBS's *Early Show* on June 22, correspondent Richard Roth first mentions the 'unconfirmed' information before conveying incorrect facts about Neda's age and full name:

> Well, all of the information about her comes unconfirmed from websites, which do claim her name was Neda, which in the Farsi language means the voice, or the call, and the last moment of her life is now resonating around the globe and [sic!] instant internet icon of the confrontation in Iran [. . .]
>
> In video and still photos, the grim scene ricocheted through cyberspace accumulating detail. She was sixteen, it said, a philosophy student. Her full name was Neda Sultani, and her body was quickly buried. But her image now has attained immortality on the internet, the centerpiece of tribute sites and songs and poems, calling her the angel of Iran and the symbol of Iran's anguish now on posters around the world.
>
> (*CBS the Early Show* 2009)

CBS's coverage by no means represents an isolated instance. The news media generally adopt a strategy of *first* publishing the images and making declarations about their iconic status, and *later* sorting out various rumors and providing correct and verified information (see also Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2011c; Mortensen 2011a).

Parallel to this unanimous proclamation of Neda as an icon, a sense of unity was also communicated through the consistent referral to onlookers as 'we'. The slogan 'We are Neda', soon to be propagated by online, broadcast, and print news, constitutes a self-evident example. In the slogan's symbolic assumption of the woman's identity, the personal pronoun 'we' establishes a consensual, joint ownership of the canonization of the imagery. Another rallying cry, 'My name is Neda' (e.g., Bisbee 2009), seems to serve the same purpose but with an added first-person appropriation of the dead woman's identity. An alternative version of this, 'I am Neda', echoes 'the solidarity of those Roman slaves who claimed, one after the other, "I am Spartacus"' (Joseph 2009).

All in all, proclamations of the footage's iconic status and the unity of reception enlist the members of the audience in assumed agreement on the same understanding of the image. The canonization of Neda's image demonstrates how emotional and political unity may be articulated as an established fact in the reception of news icons, when in reality this articulation is itself instrumental in constructing and mobilizing this very unity.

Viral Wildfire

Some of the above-mentioned catchphrases used in connection with the representations of Neda dying insert references to digital technology as prefixes to the word icon, for example, 'instant internet icon', 'internet resistance icon', 'cyber icon', 'internet icon', and 'worldwide cyber icon'. This shows how the news media often point to digital technologies as the motivating force behind the iconization, which is a final aspect to be analyzed in this section. For example, in the *Liverpool Daily Echo*:

> Then, with a few clicks on a website, someone converted one frame of that cell phone video into a copy of something familiar, an image of one woman turned into a symbol of Iran's anguish.
>
> Neda's image, though, is different to all the rest.
>
> In past times it would have been left to a journalist to cover her death, to snap a photo and send it back home to the newspaper editor who would debate whether it was a fit topic for publication.
>
> Now we live in a digital age.
>
> Now everyone's a photo-journalist who can upload indiscriminately at the touch of a button. And that means we can watch Neda's last moments on YouTube—again and again.
>
> ('An Icon to Make Us All Voyeurs,'
> *Liverpool Daily Echo* June 26, 2009)

According to this quote, the news media follow the agenda set by the online mobilization of images on social network sites. Social agents are alluded to,

albeit in vague terms, slipping from someone to everyone ('someone converted one frame' and 'everyone's a photo-journalist'). However, much of the coverage presents technology as a driver of change in its own right. This is illustrated in the following quote, which also underlines the evasion of censorship by the new digital infrastructure, turning a 'nameless victim' into 'an icon':

> Despite a prolonged effort by Iran's government to keep a media lid on the violent events unfolding on the streets, Ms. Agha-Soltan was transformed on the Web from a nameless victim into an icon of the Iranian protest movement.
>
> (Stelter and Stone 2009b)

In this quote, digital technologies are referred to almost as if they, on their own, had the power to drive political processes of change by the instant iconization and the subversion of censorship. This is reminiscent of the way slogans such as 'Twitter Revolution' and 'Facebook Revolution' deployed in the coverage of the revolt in Iran in 2009 and later public protests in the Middle East and Northern Africa foreground the inherent power of technologies rather than the people using them to create political change. As *Al-Bawaba,* a Middle Eastern news network headquartered in Amman, Jordan, reports on its website June 22:

> The video clip has spread like wildfire overnight, sparking large responses worldwide on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
>
> (Al-Bawaba Reporters 2009)

The metaphor 'wildfire' gives the impression that the fast and vast viral communication is not just self-ignited and out of control but also capable of developing in unexpected directions. On a historical note, it is important to emphasize that the canonization of images has, of course, accelerated with the advent of digital media. However, during the mass media epoch, canonization could also occur in a matter of a few days, even though the image came from war overseas, as was the case with *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* in 1945 (Mortensen 2013b).

THE NEWS ICON—MOMENT, EVENT, AND HISTORY

The Moment and the Momentum

Coverage of Neda's death exemplifies how the news media establish the connection between 'the moment' (the part standing for the whole) and 'the conflictual media event' (the event in its duration), presented in this chapter's theoretical section. Many news items address how the moment captured on the tape relates to the conflictual media event of the ongoing protests in Iran and to wider Iranian and international history. In the following, I will analyze

the temporal juxtaposition of 'the moment' and 'the event' before proceeding on to the news media's construction of the footage's roots in vastly different historical contexts on the basis of resemblance to established icons.

The word 'moment' frequently occurs in the coverage; for instance, one news show mentions how this constitutes a 'defining moment', 'moment of truth', and 'naked moment'. The quote below represents a typical wording from this show:

> It is the defining moment of the unrest in Iran, it is also the most disturbing image from the violence so far. [. . .] Her name was Neda. And, in death she has become an iconic symbol for resistance, for tragedy and for outrage.
>
> (*Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees* 2009)

In the coverage, 'moment' is used in two interrelated senses. First of all, it is introduced in reference to Neda's 'final' or 'dying' moment reproduced on the tape. 'The moment' marks the urgency, topicality, and newsworthiness of the killing as a breaking news event. Accordingly, the 'conflictual media event' is initiated by the icon/moment, dramatically intensifying media attention, and the coverage following the well-known dramaturgy of breaking news with repetitions, follow-up stories, et cetera. Second, 'the moment' is used in the sense of a 'momentum', representing a particular and decisive instant in the history of Iran. A typical statement illustrates this usage:

> Neda's fame marks the moment when Iran's repression emerged from the forest of newsprint and became personal. We are all Iranians now.
>
> (Joseph 2009)

Yet the images, the news, the stories of the killing of Neda not only create a momentum in the contemporary history of Iran—they also lead into the future:

> In death, Neda has become a symbol of the struggle in Iran, perhaps the most lasting one.
>
> (*Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees* 2009)

Even more than that, Neda's death similarly points back in time and sums up three decades of Iranian struggle:

> With Neda's death, the Iran I know finally has a face. The sequence of her death is the sequence of our nation's struggle in the past 30 years: The democratic future that 1979 was to deliver collapsing, then trails of blood—that of so many executed or assassinated—streaming across its bright promise. The film of Neda's death is the abbreviated history of contemporary Iran.
>
> (Hakakian 2009)

In other words, the footage of Neda signifies a double 'moment': A breaking news moment in the international cycle of news, and a defining, decisive momentum in the history of Iran, which summarizes the past and leads the way into the future.

This distinction between 'moment' and 'momentum' corresponds to different levels in the coverage. Aleida Assmann and Corinna Assmann make a similar point: 'What had started as an *image of* ends up as an *image for*' (2010, 235, italics in original text). In the *breaking news moment,* the footage serves as the evidential image of Neda's death, and as *historical momentum,* the footage serves as a symbolic image of the present, the past, and the future. The quote from Assmann and Assmann gives the impression that the relationship between *image of* and *image for* is one of a gradual process; that is, the footage has to be an image *of* before it can be an image *for.* However, focus on the image *of* (the moment of current turmoil in Iran) and the image *for* (the moment in the history of turmoil in Iran) appeared instantaneously. This became evident with the news media's grand statements about the symbolic and historical significance of the footage, made before facts were investigated and verified.

The History in the Icon and the History of Icons

When the analysis of the 'momentum', the ascribed historical significance of the footage, is taken a step further, one interesting recurring phenomenon in the coverage is how this newly founded icon was said to relate not only to the specific history of Iran, but also to history narrated by previous icons from different historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. A commentary published by Iranian-American poet and journalist Roya Hakakian on CNN.com on June 26, 12:54 PM EST, presents a noteworthy point concerning the role played by news icons in the writing of history:

> If history is a contest among competing narratives and icons, let the image of a young woman lying on the ground endure as that of Iran today.
> (Hakakian 2009)

The formulation of history as 'contest among competing narratives and icons' precisely addresses how foregrounding likenesses to preceding icons constitutes the major way of establishing this particular moment/icon as being representative of a significant historical event. A typical quote illustrates this:

> Exactly 20 years ago, a single protester brought People's Liberation Army tanks in Beijing's Tiananmen Square to a halt, and with that one act of courage, gave the Chinese struggle for democracy a global dimension. Neda Agha- Soltan's alleged killing by the Basij paramilitary force in Tehran could well be that moment for Iran.
>
> Neda's face has now become one of those iconic images which we shall all come to recognise. It has joined other pictures, the tanks in Tiananmen Square, the victims of Hiroshima, the WW1 Tommies in the

> trenches, that epitomise a time or a moment in history. They require no words, no explanation. They just are.
>
> ('An Icon to Make Us All Voyeurs,' *Liverpool Daily Echo* 2009)

Bearing in mind the many words, the many explanations at play to proclaim Neda an icon, it seems somewhat puzzling that icons require 'no words, no explanation' because they 'just are'. With these sentences, *Liverpool Daily Echo* refers to the universality often associated with icons, which supposedly rise above specific time and space while, paradoxically, also intensely representing and symbolizing this exact time and space. Combining these two characteristics, authenticity and symbolicity, the article compares the images of Neda to icons from greatly different historical and geographical contexts.

A few icons are mentioned repeatedly in the coverage: Joan of Arc, the French national saint and army commander (1412–1431); Nick Út's Vietnam War photograph from 1972 of a napalm-burnt girl; the images of the deaths of student protesters Benno Ohnesorg (West Berlin, 1967) and Jan Palach (Prague, 1969); Iranian students in demonstrations during the 1979 revolution; and the lone Chinese man on Tiananmen Square (1989). In the following, the news media's parallels to Joan of Arc (Figure 5.4) and Tiananmen Square (Figure 5.5) are analyzed. These two icons were selected for the simple reason that they are among the most frequent references, and they illustrate the great span of history, ideas, and events in the allusions to existing icons. Joan of Arc is a historical figure and a religious icon who was canonized as a saint by the Catholic Church in 1920. She is not associated with any particular iconic picture but constitutes an icon herself. Parallels are drawn to Neda because the two icons are both female, young, and died for a cause.

On the other hand, the Tiananmen Square photograph represents a secular news icon and is linked to Neda because it depicts the individual, 'ordinary' citizen resisting oppression and the use of force. The photograph is a news icon, but the depicted man is not regarded as iconic himself, and he does not appear in any other famous pictures.

The news media first began associating Neda with Joan of Arc on June 23. John McCain, senator of Arizona, was the first person to bring public attention to this comparison: '"She had already become a kind of Joan of Arc," he told the US Senate' (Kalbag 2009). In *Christian Science Monitor,* also on June 23, the likeness is reiterated with a reference to Neda's beauty:

> As the violence continues to escalate on the streets of Iran, the beautiful philosophy student who had been engaged to be married, is now being hailed as the country's Joan of Arc.
>
> (Murphy 2009)

This is certainly not the only news item to refer to Neda as beautiful. By being mentioned in the same sentence as Neda, the French national icon meets the archetype of the young, beautiful Middle Eastern woman, who

Figure 5.4 Joan of Arc, miniature graded, 1450–1500

traditionally represents an area of intense political and erotic investment in European culture. Going back to the colonial period, bodies of Middle Eastern women have constituted a fierce symbolic battleground in various manifestations of 'orientalism' (Said 1978). The desire to liberate the veiled woman has, on several occasions, served as an argument for Western intervention in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

However, criticism was also voiced about Neda's looks being an important reason why precisely this image received iconographic status:

> 'Neda is not the first person to die in this,' a woman who identified herself only as Fatemeh said Thursday in a post on the blog of the

Figure 5.5 "China Tiananmen" photo: AP/Jeff Widener.

> Muslimah Media Watch, which tracks Muslim women in media and pop culture.
>
> 'She's not the first person whose death has been captured on video camera, either. But she was young, slender, and pretty, and so Western media images are obsessed with watching her die over and over'.
>
> (Kole 2009)

In addition to the attention directed at Neda on account of her appearance, her gender also carries certain symbolic connotations. The most important one is a democratic vision for a new Iran, with the 'truly significant role' carried out by young, educated women in spite of the limitations to women's rights imposed by President Ahmadinejad (Peterson 2009).

Along with the ideas linked to gender, the correspondence to Joan of Arc is also founded on the notion of martyrdom (i.e., sacrificing one's life for a higher goal):

> She is being viewed by some in the outside world as an Islamic Joan of Arc; her murder a sacrifice to democracy.
>
> (Kelly 2009a)

As is commonly known, martyrdom has given rise to several iconographies both in Christianity and in historical and modern Islam. Several articles remark upon the significance of martyrdom in Iran, most famously by referring to the 'Martyrs of the Revolution', the Iranian dissidents killed

in the 1979 revolution (e.g., Weissenstein and Johnson 2009). All in all, the likeness established to Joan of Arc carries associations with both gender and religious martyrdom.

Second, the affinities with the secular, photographic icon of the man defying tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989 is not equally ripe with interlocking discourses. The news media focus on the analogy with Neda's image primarily because both incidents feature an individual performing the simultaneous acts of standing out from the crowd while at the same time incarnating the crowd. To quote CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees*:

> Tiananmen Square, one man standing-up against a row of tanks; he didn't stop the army from crushing the demonstrators but he sent a message to the government and to the world.
>
> And now in Iran there is Neda. She was one of many in the crowd. Now she is mourned by millions.
>
> (*Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees* 2009)

Other than that, the references made to Tiananmen Square do not appear to be essentially different from references to other famous photographs of student or youth protesters risking their lives during anti-government demonstrations. In their coverage of Neda Agha Soltan, the news media similarly find resemblances to the images of German student leader Benno Ohnesorg, who was shot during a rebellion in West Berlin in 1967, and the Czechoslovakian student Jan Palach, who set himself on fire in 1969 in the struggle against Soviet repression (e.g., Jardine 2009; Joseph 2009; Kennedy 2009). The news media do not distinguish greatly between Teheran 2009 and Beijing 1989, or Berlin 1967 and Prague 1969, for that matter. This iconographical figure established in the wake of the revolts across Europe in the late 1960s has become a powerful visual frame of reference for student/youth rebellion, across, or even despite, regional, national, and political contexts.

In sum, the parallels to Joan of Arc and the image from Tiananmen Square indicate the great span in the understanding of the historical significance of Neda's image: From Neda as an icon to her image being iconic; from a religious icon to a secular news icon; from martyrdom to political resistance; from Western medieval history to recent Middle Eastern, Asian, and European history.

The news media's constant analogies to earlier icons were instrumental in the canonization of the eyewitness image. They inserted Neda into the history of icons. This case illustrates how news icons 'allow journalists to create shorthand historical references in a narrative genre that is ordinarily devoid of such context' (Bennett and Lawrence 1995, 26). News icons are used as 'thematic organizers' to create connections and coherence in the fragmented news flow (Bennett and Lawrence 1995, 26). Thus, icons can be 'dropped into stories about otherwise isolated events to boost their importance and

provide interpretive coherence for otherwise fragmented stories', as Bennett and Lawrence emphasize (1995, 27). Yet when history is understood as the history of icons, differences cease to exist at the expense of allusions to general ideas of sacrifice, opposition, and resistance.

The Cycle of News Icons

Since 2009, the icon of Neda has been used as a framework for the press' regular proclamation of new icons. This is characteristic of the cycle that news icons enter into:

> They come to represent large swathes of historical experience, and they acquire their own histories of appropriation and commentary.
>
> (Hariman and Lucaites 2007, 1)

As mentioned earlier, the representations of Neda's death became the object of what might be called a political commodification; stills from the videos were reproduced on t-shirts, banners, facial masks, etc. What is even more interesting in this context is that the visuals have been brought in as frame of reference for the iconization of images of civilians met with force and violence during later uprisings.

Parallels were drawn to the footage of Neda when the fruit vendor in Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi, 26, lit himself on fire in protest against the humiliating treatment he had received from the local government. By doing so, he was said to have 'kick-started the entire Arab upheaval', as Kyle Almond points out in an article on CNN.com on April 1, 2011, which establishes the connection with Neda:

> 'Everyone tells me when I go there, "If there were no Muhammed Bouazizi, none of this would have happened,"' Dajani said.
>
> —And even before the recent wave of unrest, there were the 2009 protests of the Iranian election.
>
> Neda Agha-Soltan, 26, became the rallying point of the protesters' struggle when she was fatally shot during the government's crackdown. Her death was captured on video and aired worldwide.
>
> (Almond 2011)

Following the same pattern as Neda's iconization, the pictures of Bouazizi and his symbolic sacrifice were heralded as the defining and decisive single event in the Tunisian struggle by being compared to a preceding icon: Neda.

A few months later in 2011, reference to Neda is made once again. This time in relation to the 13-year-old boy Hamza el-Khateeb in Syria, who allegedly died in the custody of the government in April 2011 after having attended a demonstration with his father as part of the civil uprising in this

country. Below is a transcript from the coverage on CNN's *John King* Show, June 1, 2011, 7 PM EST:

> How has Hamza's horrifying death impacted the uprisings?
>
> GORANI: It's had a galvanizing effect, Jessica. In the same way, for instance, you'll remember, during those protests in Iran, after the election, Neda Agha Sultan, the image of her dying on the streets of Tehran. Or that fruit salesman in Tunisia, who self-emulated [sic!], who ended up dying—he became the icon for the uprising in Tunisia.
>
> This young boy—this young teenager, barely a teenager, Hamza el-Khateeb, has become an icon, a figurehead and a galvanizing force.
>
> (*John King* 2011)

Here, we see the fast evolution of icons; Bouazizi, referred to as 'that fruit salesman in Tunesia', is already lined up as an iconic frame of reference on a par with Neda.

Lastly, Neda was also mentioned in the international coverage of the so-called 'standing man', a silent, solitary figure standing in passive defiance of the Turkish prime minister's demand that protesters clear Taksim Square in central Istanbul in June 2013. For instance, *The Associated Press* asks whether the 'standing man' is to become an icon and identifies Neda as one of several predecessors (Reid 2013).

To sum up, the stills of Neda have become part of what Hariman and Lucaites call 'iconic circulation' (2007, 38). As a news icon, the well-known footage is used to establish and mobilize new icons, just as preceding news icons were used to establish and mobilize the images of Neda Agha Soltan's death as iconic.

POLITICAL REACTIONS AND CALLS FOR ACTION

The previous sections examined the canonization process. Special attention was paid to the proclaimed unanimity of reception and the meaning attached to 'the moment', before moving on to an examination of how the visuals of Neda's death were established as an icon against the backdrop of earlier icons, and how this icon itself became a backdrop for announcing later icons. Focus shifts in this last analytical section to the political mobilization. The current chapter thus illustrates the significant overall outcome of 'convergence culture' (Jenkins 2006): Collective meaning making within the news media and popular culture changes the way politics operates. Via active user participation, media content is generated and travels across media platforms and sets the political agenda, often in unpredictable manners.

Following the murder of Neda Agha Soltan, political statements went from the level of grassroots to leaders of state. Unconfirmed reports spoke about the police sending away large numbers of people turning to the streets

to mourn Neda's death in Iran (e.g., *American Morning* 2009). However, it is difficult to analyze the impact of the iconization of Neda on mobilizing protests in Iran on the basis of the empirical foundation of this chapter, even though this would be a most interesting aspect. Furthermore, since the samples are concerned with the international reception of the case and the mobilization of this icon took place in the international arena of politics, it makes sense to focus on the responses of US President Barack Obama and the Iranian leadership.

'This Is What We've Witnessed'

As an indication of the swift iconization of Neda, President Barack Obama made reference to the footage on June 23, in a statement on the political unrest in Iran at a press conference held three days after the killing. Obama combines the two levels of witnessing in his rhetorical mobilization of this image:

> The Iranian people can speak for themselves. That's precisely what's happened in the last few days. In 2009, no iron fist is strong enough to shut off the world from bearing witness to peaceful protests of justice. Despite the Iranian government's efforts to expel journalists and isolate itself, powerful images and poignant words have made their way to us through cell phones and computers, and so we've watched what the Iranian people are doing. This is what we've witnessed. We've seen the timeless dignity of tens of thousands of Iranians marching in silence. We've seen people of all ages risk everything to insist that their votes are counted and that their voices are heard. Above all, we've seen courageous women stand up to the brutality and threats, and we've experienced the searing image of a woman bleeding to death on the streets. While this loss is raw and extraordinarily painful, we also know this: Those who stand up for justice are always on the right side of history.
>
> (Obama 2009)

Obama establishes a link between the *first-hand witnessing* of the 'Iranian people', who by 'cell phones and computers' have made available 'powerful images and poignant words', and the *second-hand witnessing* of these representations by the plural 'we' of a global public or media audience, to which Obama makes recurrent references. Each time Obama brings forward a 'we', he links it to a metaphor for the verb 'to look'. 'We've seen' is repeated three times, along with 'we've watched', 'we've witnessed', and 'we've experienced'. With this rhetorical act, the President situates himself among media spectators watching the unrest in Iran from a distance. Parallel to the news coverage, his reference to a consensual joint 'we' includes the members of the audience in assumed agreement of the understanding of the image of Neda and other pieces of information surfacing from the otherwise

closed country as a result of the active participation of Iranian citizens. The icon works as a means of political mobilization to denounce the actions of the Iranian government precisely by Obama linking citizen witnessing and audience witnessing, or the Iranian people and the international audience. This link is enabled by the way in which the footage both depicts citizens and is produced and distributed by citizens, thus opening a passage to 'ordinary' Iranians. Another similarity between the news media's and Obama's framing is that he, too, endows the footage with historical significance. The President concludes the statement with the words 'Those who stand up for justice are always on the right side of history', which once again seems to imply that the footage of Neda dying constitutes a momentum in the history of Iran.

In sum, by foregrounding the unity of spectators and the historical significance of the image, Obama deploys some of the same rhetorical means as the news media in his condemnation of the Iranian leadership. Moreover, he combines the two levels of witnessing to highlight the solidarity with the Iranian people when he takes a stance against the Iranian government and speaks on behalf of an international public, investing opinions and emotions in the news icon watched from a distance.

'Obama Has Shed Crocodile Tears'

The Iranian government also entered into the propagandistic image-war, in which the contending parties fight through the media about which truth the news icon substantiates. While there was consensus among European and US news media to interpret the clips as the appalling killing of an innocent bystander, the government-loyal Iranian news media ventured other explanations, which pushed the blame away from the political regime. The newspaper *Javan* claimed that a woman by the name of Neda Agha Soltan had presented herself at the Iranian embassy in Greece, maintaining she was the person depicted in the pictures falsely documenting her death (e.g., 'Iran Paper Says Neda's Death During Post-Poll Protest "Suspicious,"' *BBC Monitoring Middle East* 2009). Another story published in the pro-government paper *Vatan Emrouz* claimed that the newly expelled BBC correspondent Jon Leyne had hired a contract killer in order to film the shooting (e.g., Fletcher 2009). Other media agreed with the version put forward by the Iranian security forces that the videos in themselves proved the killing had been staged because the filmmakers must have been forewarned in order to be able to record the event (e.g., Kelly 2009b). A different version asserted that fellow protesters were behind the killing, as expressed in the following quote from Hamid Reza Moqaddamfar, head of *Fars,* the government's news agency:

> 'An armed rioter had killed her,' he said. 'Many of those limited number of people killed during the incidents were killed in the same manner;

> i.e., killed by some armed individuals who were blindly shooting from among the population'.
>
> (Saunders 2009)

These and other more or less conspiratorial theories illustrate how news icons give way to situated interpretations and are used to legitimize different political beliefs and calls for action.

Aside from venturing alternative explanations for the killing, the Iranian regime also commented on Obama's emotional appeal in his address about the icon:

> [C]onservative cleric Ahmad Khatami, who led Friday prayers in Tehran, said Neda's killing was a story created by the rioters influenced by the Western media.
>
> 'Consider the case of this lady (Neda) who was killed and for whom (US President Barack) Obama has shed crocodile tears. Anyone who sees this film can understand that it is the rioters who have created this story from scratch,' he said.
>
> ('Iranian Doctor Blames Militia for Killing Neda' 2009)

While Obama used the icon to criticize the Iranian government's treatment of its people, supporters of the Iranian regime criticized Obama's mobilization of the icon as an empty emotional appeal.

The political mobilization of the footage of Neda confirms how icons are invariably contested. In this case, the images of the killing of an Iranian citizen became the eye of an international storm played out at the highest political level, with the vying parties talking through the media and using the image as an argument for their opposing viewpoints.

EYEWITNESS IMAGES AS UNINTENTIONAL NEWS ICONS

The footage of Neda Agha Soltan and the story of Neda Agha Soltan gave rise to strong emotions. Outrage, grief, and fear turned into 'a resource for politics' (Butler 2004, 30), and the imagery also inspired hope and a sense of unanimity. The case is a good example of how iconographical status might be attributed to eyewitness images. It is also an example of how the news media, regardless of their acclamation of the democratic hope conceived by the 'Twitter Revolution' and the multiplicity of sources available, resort to conventional framings of conflict by creating and celebrating the imagery of Neda Agha Soltan as *the* one collective icon. Even though the news media, in the coverage of the citizen uprising in Iran, applauded the availability of manifold amateur productions in the decentered and heterogeneous fashion of social media networks, they took familiar paths when seeking out the footage of Neda as a centralized, symbolic icon to illustrate the complex political situation.

In reflections on how journalism fosters news icons, Bennett and Lawrence make the observation that 'the routines of journalism can bring ideas from outside the mainstream into the mainstream' and give space to 'oppositional and nonmainstream sources' (1995, 35). This point is worth remembering in relation to the journalistic coverage of conflicts. Eyewitness images promoted to unintentional icons constitute a way to add mainstream alertness to matters that would not otherwise grasp the attention of media audiences.

The myriad of new sources begs the questions: Which visuals travel from digital subcultures to the center stage of mainstream media? Why did the visuals of Neda become an icon? The recordings (and especially the stills) of the young woman bleeding to death on the street in Tehran seemed to have triggered an emotional response by confirming predominant conceptions, not only about the conflict in Iran, but also about a larger framework of politics and popular culture established by preceding icons. Icons look like other icons and seem to tell people what they already know or what they wish to be told. Facilitating this approach, the footage of Neda shares an inciting combination of affective appeal, semantic openness, and rich intertextuality with other news icons (Goldberg 1991; Brink 2000; Hariman and Lucaites 2007).

When social media and other platforms for eyewitness images function as germinating boxes for news icons, one might think that the number of iconic images would grow. Yet to date, only a handful of digital eyewitness images enjoy iconic status. This indicates that unintentional news icons are not randomly canonized but achieve this attention and recognition only if they live up to the conventions of news icons, outlined in this chapter's definition. For one thing, they all stem from a context of conflict and confrontation. They also possess aesthetic similarities to other icons and compositions from news, popular culture, art, et cetera. For instance, remarks were made on how the famous images from 9/11 of the planes heading into the towers of the World Trade Center bore likeness to the grand scale attacks established in the popular imagination by film. Also, the release of the images from Abu Ghraib prompted comments about their similarity to familiar pictorial traditions, such as pornography; sadomasochism; photographs of lynchings; 'trophy shots'; and colonial depictions of 'primitive' people as inferior, sexualized bodies rather than individuals with rights (e.g., Sante 2004; Solomon-Godeau 2004; Sontag 2004). These unintentional news icons reflected the suddenness, shock, and violence of the events while at the same time mitigating the novelty of the situation by facilitating familiar frames. This also relates to the identificatory modes typically offered by news icons—civic performances, semiotic transcriptions, and emotional scenarios—which provide different models for audience investment. An example would be the monks taking to the streets in Burma in the so-called saffron revolution. Their silent protest against the oppressive regime put on display a model for civic engagement, but their stoic and mute protests also left room for semiotic transcriptions, for projections, and for emotional scenarios in the

non-violent opposition and the mass of people standing together, fighting for what they believe. Furthermore, interpretations of the unintentional news icons highlight the combination of authenticity and symbolicity: the authenticity inherent in the exclusive, unique moments captured, on the one hand, and the symbolic suggestiveness when it comes to (interpreted) references to overall ideas of resistance, heroism, martyrdom, et cetera, on the other.

A final issue to be addressed is how unintentional news icons stand out from professionally produced news icons. As indicated by the news coverage and Obama's speech, news icons from outside the established news media—with their business models, professional standards, and traditional dependency on state and military—posses different qualities. The imagery represents the civic perspective of the man on the street, the ordinary Iranian citizen. For this reason, the production and distribution led to acclamations of the 'YouTube icon', and so on, which granted both civilians and digital technologies the agency to create political change. The blurring boundaries between participation and documentation may also aesthetically and conceptually give the eyewitness images an edge of authenticity, of struggle, of fight. Unintentional news icons, such as the one of the death of Neda Agha Soltan, do not merely depict conflict; they are themselves produced, distributed, and mobilized as part and parcel of this conflict.

NOTES

1. The videos are available on YouTube and various other sites in different versions. See, for instance, www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DH9USpc9pM&skip contrinter and www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbdEf0QRsLM (last accessed June 26, 2014).
2. Jeff Widener took the most well-known picture of this incident; however, other photos and videos also depict the man standing in front of tanks on June 5, 1989, as part of the ongoing protests on Tiananmen Square in Beijing.
3. Consistent with this book's focus on eyewitness image from conflict, the news icons included have a clear political aspect. In fact, this is characteristic of many news icons, including the ones analyzed by Bennett and Lawrence (1995), Brink (2000), and Hariman and Lucaites (2007). Of course, news icons may also represent apolitical scenes and tone down the emphasis on conflict and crisis, such as landmark events (e.g., royal weddings, funerals of prominent people), scientific breakthroughs (e.g., moon landing), sports events and athletes, and iconic moments in the lives of musicians and other celebrities.

6 Metacoverage and Mediatized Conflict

WikiLeaks' Release of 'Collateral Murder' (2010) and the Transformation of the Information Flow

This chapter investigates metacoverage as another prevailing strategy applied by the mainstream news media when following up on eyewitness images and other online visual sources provided by non-traditional media actors. Metacoverage has mostly been understood as a response to the professionalized communication environment along with the intensified and increasingly fragmented flow of information. In the case of conflict reporting, metacoverage stands as an umbrella term for various stories about the infrastructure of communication and the conditions for accessing and assessing information from areas of conflict (see also Mortensen 2012b). Some metacoverage is concerned with military and political strategic communication and news management, including public relations, public diplomacy, propaganda, and censorship. Other metacoverage stories are preoccupied with the transformed media landscape in which journalists have to maneuver because of the rise of social media and networked journalism. Moreover, metacoverage deals self-referentially with the news media's role in warfare by centering on framing and agenda setting as well as audience responses—for example, emotional reactions to war pictures and reports (Esser 2009, 712–713). The stories-on-the-stories and the stories-behind-the-stories also focus on ongoing struggles between different actors concerning the availability, interpretation, and mobilization of various pieces of information. Lastly, media practitioners are brought to the fore—for instance, in the propensity to turn the conflict correspondent into the celebritized subject of the story (Cottle 2006, 94) or in accounts of the political and personal motives driving whistleblowers, activists, and other media actors.

This chapter has the ambition of addressing metacoverage at a structural level as an effect of mediatized conflict. For the established news media, the mediatization of conflict results in the availability of more sources, and in particular, visual sources, such as eyewitness images. However, the images often evade being presented as straightforward documentation or plain and simple evidence. They are likely to be entangled in ongoing negotiations and struggles over information. They tend to be ambiguously situated between documentation and participation and often also between reporting conflict and fulfilling a specific functionality in the conduct of conflict—for instance,

as a gun camera tape and other forms of surveillance. For this reason, eyewitness images appear to invite stories on the infrastructure of communication.

WikiLeaks' 2010 publication of a gun camera video from 2007 serves as the empirical point of departure. The video documents US Apache helicopters shooting ten Iraqi civilians and two staff members from the news agency Reuters during an engagement in the Baghdad suburb New Baghdad. Launched under the name 'Collateral Murder', this video catapulted WikiLeaks into the awareness of the public at large and led to discussions about the role and unorthodox working methods of this organization but also about the news media's altered conditions for gathering information.

This case serves to investigate the close ties between mediatized conflict and metacoverage. According to a content analysis conducted for this chapter, the news media's treatment of the video was distinguished by a high level of metacoverage (see also Mortensen 2012b), centered on the video's embedment in 'mediatized conflict'. In the main, the coverage paid attention to the antagonism between top-down military/political information control and WikiLeaks' bottom-up intervention in the information stream.

The current chapter stands out from the others as the only one not to focus on amateur images. As will later be argued in more depth, the gun camera tape may nonetheless be regarded as eyewitness footage because of the first person perspective, the subjective viewpoint, the fusion of documentation and participation, and the decontextualized transmission to the public via non-official channels.

The chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first section takes its point of departure in the existing literature on metacoverage in general and metacoverage of conflict specifically, primarily that of Frank Esser and his various co-authors, to argue for metacoverage on the interrelation between two dimensions of mediatized conflict as an overlooked aspect of the scholarship in the field. In the second section, the method applied to the analytical parts of this chapter is presented. The third introduces WikiLeaks, the case, and the specificity of the gun camera tape as eyewitness account and aerial targeting. The analysis consists of four layers: 1) the soldiers' deployment of the gun camera as aerial targeting; 2) the military investigation examining the tape as evidence; 3) WikiLeaks' publication and framing of the tape; and 4) a lengthy study of news media's approach to 'Collateral Murder' in the form of a quantitative analysis of the connections between metacoverage and mediatized conflict. This is combined with a qualitative reading of metacoverage in the form of *personalization* based on the news media's representations of WikiLeaks' figurehead Julian Assange and the whistleblower Bradley Manning. The three first layers of the analysis differ slightly from the main focus of this chapter: the relation between mediatization and metacoverage. They are briefly included as important contexts for understanding the heightened degree of mediatization and how this may spur metacoverage. The conclusion reflects on the main points concerning metacoverage and mediatized conflict.

METACOVERAGE

Research into metacoverage has emerged since around 2000, mainly in the field of political communication. Most prominently, Frank Esser and various co-authors have studied the tendency in the coverage of electoral campaigns to focus on the performance of the press and strategic communication (Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001; Esser and D'Angelo 2003; 2006; Esser and Spanier 2005). From an overall point of view, Esser, Reinemann, and Fan (2001) argue that metacoverage does not merely amount to a particular reporting form and style but constitutes a stage in the gradual development of the press. Their outline of the evolution of stages is based on press coverage of US elections but would probably be transferable to other national contexts. From around 1900, the press conducted issue coverage distinguished by descriptive reporting, which allowed the candidates' policy statements to be the main agenda setters (Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001, 16). This was substituted during the election in 1972 with strategic coverage centering on the competitive race between candidates, thus allowing opinion polls, performance, and such to come to the fore (Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001, 17). As the third and final stage so far, metacoverage emerged during the 1988 election. Metacoverage typically highlights the interplay between journalism and political public relations, or, in the words of Matthew Robert Kerbel, '[t]he story of the campaign is the story of the media in the campaign' (1998, 46, cited after Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001, 17).

In line with the sketched development of political reporting, Gitlin (1991) coined the term 'metacoverage' precisely in connection with the 1988 presidential campaign (Esser and D'Angelo 2006, 47). Gitlin sees metacoverage in accordance with the postmodernity en vogue during this period:

> What I will call campaign metacoverage, coverage of the coverage, partakes of the postmodern fascination with surfaces and the machinery that cranks them out, a fascination indistinguishable from surrender—as if once we understand that all images are concocted, we are enlightened.
> (Gitlin 1991, 122)

Others have echoed Gitlin's negative take and criticized metacoverage for reflecting the media's self-absorption and reducing political news to the cynical terms of strategy and performance at the expense of substance and thorough investigation of the cases' political, juridical, and social implications (e.g., Vreese and Elenbaas 2008). Metacoverage may additionally serve the interests of military and policymakers by concentrating on the processes of communication rather than on political issues, for which they could otherwise be held accountable. This parallels the spin maneuver of, so to speak, shooting at the messenger instead of dealing with the message. However, other scholars take a more positive stance in the normative estimation of

metacoverage. As a fulfillment of the news media's 'social responsibility to educate the public about the changed rules of media politics and media wars and hold participants accountable for their actions' (Esser 2009, 729), metacoverage has been considered a 'democratic advantage' (Kristensen and Ørsten 2007, 333). Metacoverage may train media users' critical faculty by initiating them into the many interests at stake and actors at play, as well as the working conditions for journalists, which might at times challenge the ideals of unbiased and fair coverage.

METACOVERAGE OF CONFLICT

In contrast to the research into metacoverage in the context of political communication, the literature on metacoverage in relation to conflict is sparse. Many publications on media and conflict take note of the press' inclination towards self-reflexivity (e.g., Tumber and Palmer 2004; Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2005; Kristensen and Ørsten 2007), but few have conducted research specifically into this subject. Frank Esser (2009; see also Mortensen 2012b) constitutes a notable exception with his comparative content analysis of the level of metacoverage in German newspapers in connection with the First Gulf War in 1991 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. He operates with a broad definition of metacoverage, which includes the news media's framing of war as well as the communicative practices on the part of the political and military institutions:

> [N]ews stories that report on war topics in their connection to the role of the news media (i.e., media actors, media practices, media standards, media products, or media organizations) or political PR/publicity (i.e., protagonists and practices of military news management or communication-based strategic public diplomacy).
>
> (Esser 2009, 713)

Along with the well-known types of metacoverage from political journalism, the quote by Esser implies that metacoverage of war also pays attention to the information management of an additional, important institution: the military.

Wars usually increase metacoverage, and the amount of metacoverage has increased with every war in recent history in which the US and coalitions of partners have played a part (Esser 2009). This culminated during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, when, as Tumber and Palmer observe,

> journalists themselves constantly examined their own and other journalists' efforts, and commented on the communications strategies of other actors.
>
> (Tumber and Palmer 2004, 7)

According to Esser, the share of metacoverage in five German newspapers grew from 10% of the total war coverage in 1991 to 16% in 2003 (2009, 721).[1] Esser ascribes this rise to the 2003 invasion being the most media saturated ever. Three thousand journalists were assigned to the region, partly as a result of the mounting number of media networks, including Al Jazeera and others from the Middle East. Furthermore, the military's enhanced media professionalism had a 'reciprocal effect' on war reporting (Esser 2009, 730), insofar as the news media adjusted their own working routines accordingly and also reported on these changes.

PROTOTYPES OF METACOVERAGE

The broad application of 'metacoverage' calls for further qualification of the concept. If we examine the literature in the field, Esser, Reinemann, and Fan (2001; see also Esser and D'Angelo 2003; 2006) outline two overall story types covered by the term. *Self-referential news* centers on the media's own role and performance. *Process news* focuses on public relations, news management, and other attempts by candidates to control information and agenda setting (Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001, 19). Keeping in mind how the press and publicist strategies often constitute countermoves to one another, self-referential news and process news are closely interrelated, and often appear in the same stories (Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001, 20).

Of relevance to this book are Esser's (2009; see also Esser and D'Angelo 2003; 2006) four different frames in the specific context of war reporting: 1) conduit; 2) strategy; 3) accountability; and 4) personalization. The four frames are applied both in connection with press and with publicity (i.e., eight frames in total). Conduit frames concern the descriptive dissemination of information by the press, or publicity acts by political or military actors to 'emphasize the basic connectivity function of mass communication in modern societies' (Esser 2009, 715). Strategy frames focus on the struggle between the news media and political or military actors 'over message control' (Esser 2009, 715), again seen from either a press or a publicist perspective. Accountability frames consider the democratic function of the news media to communicate 'useful and self-critical information on press behaviour' or 'instructive and insightful information on the public relations aspects of political action' (Esser 2009, 716). Finally, personalization frames involve the press' propensity for 'self-observation' (Esser 2009, 717), while on the publicist level, stories center on the personalities 'of political or military publicity' (Esser 2009, 717).

The eight frames presented by Esser resonate with the empirical material for this chapter, in which they can all be found. However, overlapping forms and co-existence with other framings and perspectives make it difficult to apply Esser's model empirically and distinguish between the various sorts of metacoverage (see also Esser and D'Angelo 2003; 2006). One might even

argue that metacoverage—as a symptom of mediatized conflict—has a tendency to include more than one aspect, because the embedment of media in conflict connects the different agents and agendas in self-perpetuating reciprocity or interdependency. For instance, military strategic communication maneuvers in response to anticipated and actual press coverage, which in turn relies on the military for sources, informants, collaborators, and such. The goal of this study is not to venture further into this particular discussion, however. Rather, the research design was set up to reflect the two dimensions of mediatized conflict as outlined in chapter 3. This priority is based on the assumption that press coverage of communicative performances and attempts to shape the information flow differ greatly depending on whether they stem from the government/military or from WikiLeaks. Moreover, by applying this method, it was possible to see the two dimensions of mediatized conflict juxtaposed in the news items. In the methodological and analytical sections, this approach will be explained in detail.

METACOVERAGE AND TWO DIMENSIONS OF MEDIATIZED CONFLICT

In order to establish a theoretical framework for this chapter's coupling between mediatization and metacoverage, I review Esser's theoretical reflection on this subject before moving on to present the specific link between metacoverage and bottom-up mediatized conflict, which has scarcely received any scholarly attention so far.

Esser ascertains the link between metacoverage and mediatized war by arguing for metacoverage as the

> discursive outcome of structural mediatization processes in modern media wars. Structurally, mediatization represents one of several macro trends of social change—besides commercialization, modernization, and so on—and describes the mass media's evolution to the central intermediary agent, or conduit, between communication partners in society.
> (Esser 2009, 729)

Esser sees mediatized war as a meta-process (similar to the conceptualization of mediatization by Krotz [2007a; 2007b]). Moreover, he outlines mediated war (a concept which he appears to use interchangeably with mediatized war in this article) as the dense entanglement of media, military, and politics along with a still more complex web of media actors and organizations, obscuring from the public the agendas and deliberations behind media representations of war:

> We speak of mediated wars (a) when they are perceived by the audience almost entirely through channels of mass communication; (b) when

> their coverage follows news-value–driven selection criteria, presentational styles, and media frames that are determined by a distinctive media logic; (c) when political and military protagonists increasingly adapt their behavior to the routines and requirements of the news media or try to exploit news journalists for their own ends; and (d) when the boundaries between mediated and nonmediated aspects of reality dissolve because the media have become so deeply integrated in the sequence and interpretation of events.
>
> (Esser 2009, 710)

'Collateral Murder', the case under scrutiny in this chapter, fits Esser's description of mediated/mediatized war on all accounts. The audience experiences the tape through the media. As the analysis is going to make evident, media coverage follows news values and adheres to media logic of metacoverage and the personalization frame. Political and military protagonists use the media as an arena to raise objections against the actions of WikiLeaks. Finally, the gun camera tape demonstrates the blurred boundaries between mediated and nonmediated 'aspects of reality', as Esser puts it above, by the conflation of the conduct of conflict and representations of conflict. This appears to be a radicalization of the observation made by James der Derian that 'new wars are fought in the same manner as they are represented' (2001, xviii). As an outcome of mediatized conflict, today's wars are also represented by the very technologies deployed to fight them.

Even if Esser's definition of mediated/mediatized war corresponds point-by-point to the case, it still does not adequately capture its full complexity. His definition only partially corresponds to the one offered in this book. In the quote above, he primarily associates mediatized conflict with 'mass communication' and the elite actors of 'political and military protagonists'. Put differently, he focuses on the top-down dimension of mediatized conflict. This is hardly surprising considering his empirical point of departure in the 1998 and 2003 invasions of Iraq. Even though blogs by civilians and military personnel, for example, had started granting access to alternative news during the latter war, bottom-up mediatized conflict was still not as pronounced as it is at present. As already mentioned, the current chapter focuses on metacoverage, which reports on mediatized conflict, often centering on the interplay or antagonism between the top-down and the bottom-up dimensions of mediatization, according to the model of mediatized conflict presented in chapter 3.

Theorizing metacoverage as a reflection of both dimensions of mediatized conflict not only makes sense in the current context but also in more general terms as the bottom-up perspective is gaining increasing importance. As explained in chapter 3, the bottom-up dimension of mediatized conflict generates two overall kinds of new sources: On the one hand, soldiers and other participants produce and distribute visual and audiovisual content. On the other hand, files originally intended for internal military or political purposes, such as documentation, correspondence, and surveillance, enter the public sphere through hacking, whistleblowing, or other acts of activism. So

far, this book has not devoted attention to this second category of sources, which can be understood within the broad concept *sousveillance*. According to the author of this term, Steve Mann, sousveillance aims to 'mirror and confront bureaucratic organizations' (Mann 2001, cited after Bakir 2010, 21) by, so to speak, surveilling surveillance, that is, turning surveillance at the performances of surveillance themselves. As an example of the logic of sousveillance, WikiLeaks introduces itself as 'the first intelligence agency of the people' (www.wikileaks.com). WikiLeaks' claim to facilitate intelligence *of the people* contrasts with the conventional understanding of surveillance and intelligence as information *about the people* procured and registered by the authorities. This inversion of surveillance epitomizes a paradigm shift prompted by the emergence of digital media (see also Mortensen 2014a). The power to surveil is no longer confined to state, military, and private corporations protecting their territory and property. Citizens, activists, whistleblowers, and others monitor those in power and make the results or documentation available online, as a prevalent example of the second, bottom-up dimension of mediatized conflict to be explored in the following section.

METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS APPLIED TO FOUR-LAYERED ANALYSIS

The analysis consists of fours layers, which study different aspects and stages of the tape's use and reception. They are ordered chronologically in the following way: 1) the soldiers' deployment of the gun camera as aerial targeting; 2) the military investigation in which the tape served as evidence; 3) WikiLeaks' publication and framing of the tape; and 4) at length the news media's approach to 'Collateral Murder'. The four layers call for different methodologies. While the first three analyze available documents and images on the ways in which the tape is used and interpreted, the fourth layer requires a more fine-meshed methodology in order to gain a detailed and thorough overview of the newspapers' approach to the case. To this end, the last and largest part of the analysis deploys a content analysis, which requires a more systematic presentation.

For a previous article (Mortensen 2012b), a basic content analysis was conducted in order to gain an understanding of the shares between coverage and metacoverage in three US, three UK, and three Danish newspapers. This content analysis was recoded and extended to answer the following research questions:

> RQ1: To which extent was the coverage in selected newspapers of the gun camera tape released by WikiLeaks distinguished by metacoverage?
>
> RQ2: To which extent and how does metacoverage reflect mediatized conflict by focusing on the interplay between actors representing a political/military/legal perspective (top-down) and a hacker/whistleblower/activist perspective (bottom-up)?

The quantitative results are deployed as the starting point for a qualitative analysis of how metacoverage and mediatized conflict manifest themselves in the personalization frame applied to Assange and Manning.

The United States, the United Kingdom, and Denmark were chosen as national contexts because each country had troops in Iraq at the time of the shooting in 2007, and they represent a super, a major, and a minor power, respectively. Three opinion-leading papers were selected for each country, covering a spectrum of political orientations. For the United States, *The New York Times, The Washington Post,* and *LA Times* were chosen; for the United Kingdom, *The Independent, The Times,* and *The Guardian;* and finally, the Danish papers included *Jyllands-Posten, Politiken,* and *Berlingske Tidende.* It should be noted that *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* collaborated with WikiLeaks on the publication of the written leaks from Iraq and Afghanistan in the later part of the period included in the sample, which might influence their coverage of 'Collateral Murder' and WikiLeaks. For this reason, Einar Thorsen, Chindu Sreedharan, and Stuart Allan (2013) focus in their analysis of the media's framing of Bradley Manning only on newspapers collaborating with WikiLeaks. This difference in the newspapers' background for covering WikiLeaks is not crucially important to the current analysis because, first of all, they did not team up in their coverage of 'Collateral Murder', and, second, a broader impression of the news coverage of 'Collateral Murder' might be gained by choosing a selection of newspapers both in and outside this partnership with WikiLeaks.

The articles were assembled by a research assistant from the search engines Lexis-Nexis (US and UK newspapers) and infomedia (Danish newspapers), using the key words 'video' and 'WikiLeaks' across a time span from 1 April 2010 to 17 December 2010. A number of articles did not deal exclusively with 'Collateral Murder' but also paid attention to, for example, WikiLeaks' other leaks. Irrelevant articles emerging in the search were discarded, and the sample thus narrowed down to 106 items. As this is a relatively small sample, the findings are primarily presented in absolute numbers rather than percentages. Reflecting the two research questions, the content analysis focused on two levels: 1) the extent of metacoverage and 2) the specificity of the metacoverage as a reflection of the two dimensions of mediatized conflict. The results are presented in the analysis of the news coverage.

WIKILEAKS

Founded in 2007, WikiLeaks has since established itself as an influential and disputed platform for whistleblowers to upload documents, which are 'classified, censored or otherwise opaque to the public' (www.wikileaks.com), and reveal purported unethical and unlawful behavior by governments and corporations. WikiLeaks is said to have only a handful of professional staff on the payroll, but draws on hundreds of volunteers with different areas of expertise, from law to handwriting analysis and video encryption (Warrick

2010). The organization ferociously protects the anonymity of whistleblowers with advanced encryption technologies (Lynch 2010, 311) and claims to have methods superior to those of the mainstream news media of conducting source criticism, such as forensic analysis (Nakashima 2010). As Lisa Lynch remarks, finding a suitable label for WikiLeaks is difficult because the organization is something of a 'chimera', shifting mission and strategies as new opportunities come along (2013, 315). They have fulfilled different functions in different periods: 'neutral brokering service for whistleblowers', contributors to 'investigative journalism', 'advocacy journalism', 'publisher and media outlet', 'cyber activism', etc. (Lynch 2013, 315–316; see also, e.g., Benedetta, Hintz et al. 2013).

WikiLeaks' most significant disclosures prior to 2010 included former Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi's family corruption case; the standard operating procedures for the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center; the contents of Sarah Palin's e-mail account; and text messages of those killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The organization increasingly trained its eyes on the conduct of the US military and government with a number of spectacular revelations that turned 2010 into the 'eye-opening, game-changing year of WikiLeaks' (Glenny 2010), when the organization gained the attention of the public at large with its three biggest cases to date. Apart from the release of 'Collateral Murder', WikiLeaks published the 'Afghan War Diary 2004–2010', consisting of over 91,000 reports, in July. This was followed in October by the 'Iraq War Logs', which WikiLeaks proclaimed to be 'the largest classified military leak in history', with 391,832 reports by US soldiers concerning the war in Iraq (www.wikileaks.com). WikiLeaks has since 2010 faced external as well as internal turmoil owing to sanctions, Assange taking up residency in the Ecuadorian embassy in London to avoid a European arrest order, and several former members criticizing his managerial dispositions and style.

Bradley Manning, ex-US soldier, was convicted and sentenced to 35 years in jail in July 2013 for hacking into army databases and handing over the material to WikiLeaks for the three major 2010 cases, including 'Collateral Damage'. Immediately after the trial, Bradley Manning changed his gender and is now known under the name 'Chelsea Manning'. The current chapter refers to Manning as 'him' and 'Bradley Manning', however, obviously not out of disrespect, but simply because the analysis builds on a sample of news articles from 2010, when 'Bradley Manning' was still his public identity.

OLD AND NEW MEDIA

Even though WikiLeaks defines itself as a media organization and supplies background information on the leaks, it passionately courts the attention of journalists in order to win 'maximum political impact' and 'to ensure that all the leaked information it [WikiLeaks] receives gets the attention it deserves' (www.wikileaks.com; see also Lynch 2010). The exchange between WikiLeaks and the mainstream news media is indicative of the

mutual dependency between conventional journalism and unconventional online media outlets as part of the ongoing transformation of the news production. WikiLeaks maintains that rather than undermining conventional journalism, the organization seeks to 'make mainstream journalism cheaper. We enable them to do things that no single newspaper can do by itself', in the words of Daniel Schmitt (pseudonym for Daniel Domscheit-Berg), WikiLeaks' spokesperson at that time (Warrick 2010). Moreover, the new sources of information about conflict tend to require a journalistic framing in order to be distributable to a mainstream audience. Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, describes WikiLeaks' reliance on 'old journalism' in the following manner:

> WikiLeaks has the ability through its network to amass many documents, but maybe not the expertise to make sense of them all. Old journalism still has the means, experience, expertise and resources.
>
> (Levey and Martinez 2010)

Another role performed by the mainstream news media is to evaluate the credibility and encapsulate the possible evidence of the leaks.

WikiLeaks states that the organization fights non-profit for:

> [T]he defence of freedom of speech and media publishing, the improvement of our common historical record and the support of the rights of all people to create new history.
>
> (www.wikileaks.com)

Nonetheless, WikiLeaks holds an interest of its own in gaining attention so as to uphold the agenda-setting role and obtain funding. To this end, the organization pursues different strategies. For instance, WikiLeaks allowed *Der Spiegel, The Guardian,* and *The New York Times* to review the so-called 'Iraq War Logs' before publication, while the 'Collateral Murder' video was framed to set a media agenda on the case's political, juridical, and human perspectives. Not all people associated with WikiLeaks welcomed this strategy. Internal criticism was raised against Assange's editorial decision to name the video 'Collateral Murder' because in this way WikiLeaks renounced neutrality. According to former WikiLeaks member Herbert Snorrason, this directed undesirable attention on WikiLeaks, and Daniel Domscheit-Berg contended that by this move, the organization took a 'fame-oriented, pop band direction' (Nakashima and Faiola 2010).

EXPOSING SECRETS THROUGH SECRECY?

WikiLeaks divides the fronts between those consenting to its insistence on serving 'information activism' (e.g., Moss 2010), and those believing that

'information vandalism' (e.g., Schmitt 2010) with no regard for security, personal privacy, or intellectual property would be a more accurate label. A key discussion in this regard concerns the relation between sousveillance and transparency. WikiLeaks has been praised for exercising 'radical transparency' (Sifry 2011) in accordance with the organization's self-understanding that it:

> improves transparency, and this transparency creates a better society for all people. Better scrutiny leads to reduced corruption and stronger democracies in all society's institutions, including government, corporations and other organizations.
>
> (www.wikileaks.com)

WikiLeaks equates leaks with transparency and further equates transparency with enhanced democracy (see also Fuchs 2011). Supporting this interpretation, some observers welcome WikiLeaks as a significant contribution to the democratic debate and a better-informed public. For instance, Daniel Ellsberg, the former Defense Analyst, who leaked the 'Pentagon papers' about the US government's decision-making in relation to the Vietnam War in 1971, stated that WikiLeaks has helped 'fuel major news stories and public debates about U.S. foreign policy and other global issues' (Levey and Martinez 2010).

Conversely, the organization has been criticized for creating only 'the illusion of a new era in transparency' because the policy of 'leak, publish, and wait for the inevitable outrage' (Roberts 2012, 117) offers haystacks with no guarantee of finding a needle. The big data leaks, or 'mega leaks' (Foreman 2011, 28) as Assange calls them, are demanding in terms of sorting out the information and foregrounding essential findings. The modus operandi of WikiLeaks provokes recurrent criticism; the group's former spokesperson Domscheit-Berg, among others, has accused the organization of exposing secrets through secrecy (e.g., Warrick 2010; Domscheit-Berg, Klopp, and Chase 2011). A related objection was raised in connection with 'Collateral Murder'. Simply leaking the gun camera tape did not enhance transparency, critics argued, owing to the video's lack of context (Bumiller 2010). According to then-Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, viewers are invited to see war 'through a soda straw' (Bumiller 2010) on account of the footage's incomplete and fragmented glimpses of war. Even if Gates' statement is politically motivated, the reception confirms that the video is far from self-explanatory.

'COLLATERAL MURDER' AS SOURCE: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT AND AERIAL TARGETING

At a press conference on April 5, 2010, Assange announced the release on the website collateralmurder.org of a gun camera video from a US Army

Apache helicopter involved in the attack on July 12, 2007, in New Baghdad, a suburb to Baghdad. Even if the footage dated almost three years back, WikiLeaks argued that this publication delivered new proof: 'The military did not reveal how the Reuters staff were killed, and stated that they did not know how the children were injured' (www.wikileaks.com). Confident in the power of the leak, Assange declared that 'one classified video can possibly stop a war, and maybe fifty definitely can' (Foreman 2011, 27). In the attack, the photographer Namir Noor-Eldeen and the driver Saeed Chmagh, from Reuters, as well as ten civilians were killed. Two children were seriously wounded. Reuters had unsuccessfully tried to obtain the video through a Freedom of Information Act. However, on this news agency's request, the incident was investigated in 2007, and the US military concluded that the actions of the soldiers were in accordance with the law of armed conflict and its own Rules of Engagement.

Gun camera tapes are of particular interest in connection with mediatized conflict because they are utilized in both the top-down and bottom-up communication of conflict. On the one hand, they have been played at military press conferences—for instance, during the First Gulf War when the use of this footage was criticized for sanitizing war (e.g., Aday 2005). On the other hand, gun camera tapes have in recent years been made public as part of the bottom-up communication, not only by organizations such as WikiLeaks, but also by soldiers disseminating them via Liveleak, YouTube, and other social network sites. A thorough presentation of the gun camera tape as eyewitness account and aerial surveillance/targeting is called for in order to understand the framing and reception of this material.

The video is associated with an eyewitness account in the internal military investigation of the case:

> The video provided me [sic] an accurate timeline of events and allowed me to corrobarate or deny other eye witness [sic] testimony received into evidence.
>
> (United States Central Command, *Investigation* 2010, 2)

We cannot assume this choice of words to be deliberate. Nonetheless, the association of the video with an eyewitness account is remarkable. This term implies that the gun camera tape provides exclusive access to events in time and space in the fashion of the classical eyewitness narrative. Although gun camera tapes might not be readily understood as eyewitness narratives in the traditional sense, they share the defining traits for eyewitness images outlined in chapter 2. First, they are auto-recorded insofar as military personnel operate the camera themselves. Second, they are infused with the soldiers' subjective perspective. Third, while they are not media institutionally ambiguous in the same way as amateur images, their institutional belonging is still ambiguous; in this case, the tape originally belonged to the military institution but was turned into a public record of war by WikiLeaks. Fourth,

gun camera tapes cross the line between participation and documentation because they are initially used as part of a weapon's technology and later to document the very event in connection with which they were first utilized. Fifth, the characteristic trait of decontextualization also applies in light of the narrow viewpoint and the lack of perspective.

Having related the definition of eyewitness images to the gun camera tape, the material also needs to be presented as aerial surveillance (see also Mortensen 2014a). The tape may be regarded as surveillance on account of its function and form. The footage served to monitor potential targets from the helicopter, and later interpretations have also focused on the 'evidence' to be extracted. Moreover, what might be called 'surveillance aesthetics' characterize this video, which connotes surveillance on account of the distinctively blurred, pixilated representation of the urban space with GPS coordinates and marking of a foresight. This highly recognizable style and form is of course known from the news media's coverage of conflict, crime, and accidents. Similarly, it has frequently been appropriated in fictional forms, such as works of art, film, TV series, and video games (e.g., Lyon 2007; Lefait 2013).

The tape belongs to the particular form of surveillance designated 'aerial targeting' (Adey 2010), which might be considered surveillance par excellence, if we take the meaning of this word literally. Surveillance consists of the two words 'sur' meaning 'over' and 'veiller' meaning 'to watch' (i.e., to watch from above). Aerial surveillance has been coupled with military power since World War I, when it was first used to construct maps (Adey 2010, 87). Along these lines, the space represented on the tape was clearly demarcated as a warzone at first, since the helicopters were delegated into the area in response to ongoing combat between US ground forces and insurgents. The events depicted constituted an 'air target' as a location on the ground 'identified for attack from above' (Adey, Whitehead, and Williams 2011, 175). Even if aerial targeting makes the urban space legible for military intervention, the vertical viewpoint renders the city unrecognizable compared to everyday experience. Coupled with control, policing, and territorial power, the aerial gaze has been criticized for obliterating the 'lived' world of 'experiences, perceptions and sensations' (Bishop and Philips 2002, 159) and 'elide the real and destructive consequences from its representation' (Adey, Whitehead, and Williams 2011, 175). In this way, the space represented by aerial surveillance is both 'abstract and targeted' (Adey 2010, 87); the place appears *abstract* in as much as it looks like any other cityscape represented by technologies of aerial surveillance, and *targeted* as the representation shows an exact place at an exact time. Aerial surveillance hence presents a paradox: Even though the place is 'derealized' (Butler 1992, cited after Adey, Whitehead, and Williams 2011, 174) by this meticulous, bureaucratic reproduction of the urban landscape as a GPS-coordinated grid, the moving images offer the indexical promise that they capture the locations, actions, and events occurring at this very place within this precise timeframe.

The following, four-layered analysis focuses on the way the tape was used in different contexts and for different agendas by key actors in mediatized conflict: soldiers, military/political information control, an activist media organization, and the news media. First, during the operation, *soldiers* used the footage to monitor actions on the ground and respond to perceived threats. Second, the US *military/government* dealt with the tape in the internal military investigation and later in the information management of withholding the video from public viewing and disapproving of WikiLeaks for releasing the tape. Third, the *activist media organization* WikiLeaks entered the bottom-up information stream by leaking the tape along with the accusation that the soldiers were guilty of a crime of war and attempted to draw attention to the victims of the attack. Fourth, *the press* performed the double role of covering (or, for the most part, metacovering) the case and also playing a part in it both on account of the killed staff members from Reuters and the leak pointing to the changing food chain of news.

I. THE GUN CAMERA AS A WEAPON'S TECHNOLOGY: VISUAL EVIDENCE?

An important discussion in relation to 'Collateral Murder' concerns the tape's status as evidence, which is construed differently in the four interpretive contexts. From the available sources of the gun camera tape itself and transcripts of the radio communication provided by WikiLeaks, two remarkable scenes in the footage question the very notion of 'visual evidence'. Both scenes demonstrate the soldiers' misreading of the action captured by the gun camera, which they saw live and we see in hindsight. This illustrates how the targeted and abstract aerial gaze opens room for interpretations in the gap between representation and the represented. At least in part, the killing of civilians and the Reuters employees was due to the pilots' assumption that they were insurgents after mistaking a long camera telephoto lens for a Rocket Propelled Grenade (Figure 6.1).

The pilots' analysis of perceived threats might be reconstructed on the basis of the footage and radio communication between the two helicopters and ground forces control (numbers refer to time-codes on the tape):

01:33 Hotel Two-Six this is Crazy Horse One-Eight [communication between chopper 1 and chopper 2]. Have individuals with weapons.

01:41 Yup. He's got a weapon too.

01:43 Hotel Two-Six; Crazy Horse One-Eight. Have five to six individuals with AK47s [automatic rifles]. Request permission to engage [shoot].

01:51 Roger that. Uh, we have no personnel east of our position. So, uh, you are free to engage. Over.

Figure 6.1 Still from 'Collateral Murder', WikiLeaks, 2010

02:00 All right, we'll be engaging.

02:02 Roger, go ahead.

02:03 I'm gonna . . . I cant get 'em now because they're behind that building.

02:09 Um, hey Bushmaster element . . .

02:10 He's got an RPG [Rocket Propelled Grenade]?

02:11 All right, we got a guy with an RPG.[2]

The reliability of the footage is obviously questioned by the soldiers' (fatal) interpretative mistake. In another sequence, this very issue is brought up when one pilot is wondering whether to believe that a tank drove over a body, which was the impression he gained from watching the gun camera:

18:29 I think they just drove over a body.

18:31 Hey hey!

18:32 Yeah!

18:37 Maybe it was just a visual illusion, but it looked like it.

The pilot using the phrases 'visual illusion' and 'looked like' might be read as indirect references to how aerial targeting drives a wedge between

the physical space and the mediated space. This inherent instability of the tape as source endures beyond its initial function as real-time aerial targeting. In the later reception, the tape was drawn in as evidence for conflicting interpretations of the event. Whereas the US military considered it proof of the soldiers' statuary conduct, WikiLeaks maintained that the footage documented the illegitimate killing of civilians.

II. MILITARY INVESTIGATION: THE TAPE AS DOUBLE EVIDENCE

The investigation and subsequent publication changed the video's status from a weapons and surveillance technology into a documentation of a particular episode. Regarded as a source, the video is typical of the way in which the intensified mediatization blurs the boundaries between conflict and representations of conflict. 'Collateral Murder' thus illustrates the dual purpose often served by aerial targeting: Pilots initially deploy the gun camera tape as real-time visual technology to watch and analyze the positions and movements of individuals, vehicles, and objects on the ground. Later, the footage functions as documentation of a specific event, in this case to investigate the mutual effects of the action on the ground documented by the tape and the interpretation and response by the military personnel. The Deputy Brigade Commander responsible for the military investigation into the shooting episode repeatedly comments on how viewing the tape in hindsight as evidence constitutes an altogether different experience from the pilots viewing the sequence of events in real time:

> ***Only after an extensive review of the AWT's gun-camera video and with knowledge of the two missing media personnel, is it reasonable to deduce that two of the individuals intermixed among the insurgents located in the engagement area may have been reporters.*** [. . .] The aircrew erroneously identified the cameras as weapons due to presentation (slung over shoulder with the body of the object resting at the back, rear of the torso) and association (personnel collocated with others having RPGs and AK-47s).
>
> (United States Central Command *Findings* 2010, 3; italics in original text)

The tape is here reviewed as evidence and efforts are invested in reconstructing the reality of the space 'derealized' by aerial targeting. In this phase, the footage's temporal and spatial components are staggered, and the simultaneity between representation and the represented has seized to exist. Accordingly, the tape now serves as documentation for past events, with a distance in time and an 'intensifying presencing' (Scannell 1996, 84) of the space depicted. Based on this reading of the tape as double evidence

of the actions recorded on the tape and the soldiers' immediate reactions to the tape, the military investigation concludes that '[t]he proceedings comply with legal requirements' (United States Central Command, *Investigation* 2010, 3).

III. WIKILEAKS' FRAMING OF 'COLLATERAL MURDER': HUMAN INTEREST AND CRIME OF WAR

WikiLeaks released the video in two versions: an unabridged 39-minute version and an edited 18-minute version. After the tape had first functioned as real-time aerial targeting in a combat situation and, second, as evidence in the military investigation into this episode, WikiLeaks attempted to establish the place represented as a scene of crime. Turning surveillance into sousveillance, the organization tried to enhance audience identification with the victims by accusing the aircrew of behaving as if they were playing a video game.

First, although Assange's interpretation differs greatly from that of the United States Central Command, he, too, approaches the tape as double evidence of the incidents on the ground and the soldiers' response. In the press conference, he asserts that the soldiers failed to distinguish between 'higher score' and 'higher number of kills' in their video-game perception of the victims:

> The behaviour of the pilots is like a computer game. When Saeed is crawling, clearly unable to do anything, their response is: come on buddy, we want to kill you, just pick up a weapon. . . . It appears to be a desire to get a higher score, or a higher number of kills.
>
> (quoted after McGreal 2010; see also Allan and Andén-Papadopoulos 2010)

Assange is referring to the radio transmissions, which caused controversy due to the pilots' apparent eagerness to fire weapons. One of them impatiently exclaims, 'come on let us shoot!' (time code 7:41), and they also comment on the heavily wounded Chmagh, saying, 'all you gotta do is pick up a weapon' (time code 6:38, Figure 6.2), implying that the pilots would then have a legitimate reason to shoot again. In his criticism of the soldiers, the founder of WikiLeaks radicalizes the claim about aerial targeting as a de-realization of the physical space.

According to Assange, they look upon the people on the ground as figures in a video game. In this way, Assange directs his criticism at the individual soldiers rather than at the political or military system. Moreover, his reference to Chmagh's first name 'Saaed' can be interpreted as a way of familiarizing the public with the killed driver and photographer assistant from Reuters.

Second, regarding the online framing of the case, the shorter edited video and WikiLeaks' presentation of it on the website collateralmurder.com is of

Figure 6.2 Still from 'Collateral Murder', WikiLeaks, 2010

most interest to the current context. The website foregrounds a juridical-political perspective and a human-interest perspective—that is, an emotionally engaging focus on the participants in events common in soft news conflict reporting (e.g., Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2005; Kristensen and Ørsten 2007). The name 'Collateral Murder' indicates that the tape attests to an illegitimate killing of civilians by playing on the term 'collateral damage'. This concept was first used in a systematic manner during the 1991 Gulf War to 'describe the killing of civilians in attacks on military targets', and was criticized for sanitizing war by avoiding and softening 'the negative associations of words that deal directly with taboo subjects' (Cameron 2012, 73; see also Aday 2005). A quote from George Orwell at the beginning of the video sets the scene accordingly: 'Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give the appearance of solidity to pure wind'.

Moreover, WikiLeaks accentuates the 'human interest' perspective by trying to enhance the viewers' identification with the victims and their relatives. After providing a brief account of the incident, the shorter video shows a picture of Saeed Chmagh's grieving son holding a photograph of his father, and one of Namir Noor-Elden accompanied by a text stating that despite his young age of 22, he was considered one of the best war photographers in Iraq. In WikiLeaks' editing of the actual gun camera footage, emphasis is similarly placed on human interest—for example, through inserted texts identifying the indistinguishable figures in the grainy pictures as Chamgh

and Noor-Elden. The website www.collateralmurder.com/en/resources.html features other resources serving the same purpose, including pictures from the funerals of the two Reuters staff members, images of the two wounded children's scars, and an interview with their mother, whose husband (i.e., the children's father) was killed in the attack.

The fourth and final interpretation of 'Collateral Murder' below reveals that WikiLeaks' framing did not in fact have a great impact. In the coverage, the newspapers only superficially probed into the political-juridical effects of the shooting and the stories of the victims. Or, in other words, they went along with WikiLeaks' framing insofar as they also focused on what Esser (2009) terms personalization frames, centering on the actors involved. However, contrary to WikiLeaks' presentation, the press exhibited more interest in Julian Assange and Bradley Manning than in the victims.

IV. NEWS COVERAGE AND METACOVERAGE OF 'COLLATERAL MURDER'

Inferring that the leak competes for attention with WikiLeaks is hardly an exaggeration. As the content analysis lays bare, the newspapers, to a high degree, treated this organization as the real news.

The first level of the content analysis aimed to answer RQ1 presented in the methodological section: 'To which extent was the coverage in selected newspapers of the gun camera tape released by WikiLeaks distinguished by metacoverage?' (see also Mortensen 2012b) The articles were classified as

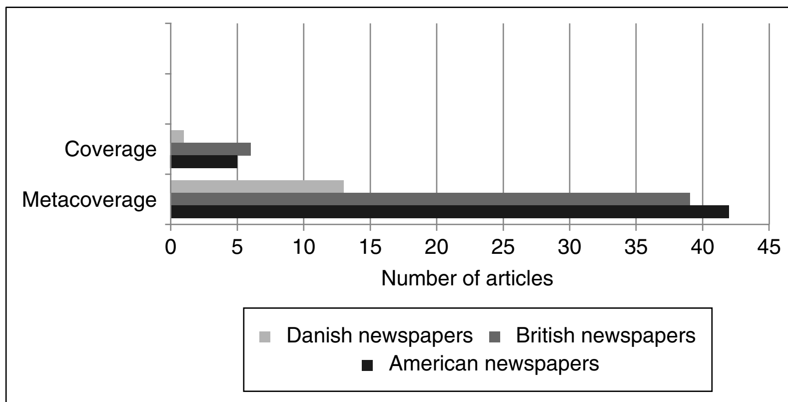

Figure 6.3 'Coverage' and 'metacoverage' of 'Collateral Murder' in US newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *LA Times*), in UK newspapers (*The Independent*, *The Times*, and *The Guardian*) and in Danish newspapers (*Jyllands-Posten*, *Politiken*, and *Berlingske Tidende*) on 1 April 2010 through 17 December 2010, n = 106.

either ‘coverage’ or ‘metacoverage’. Coverage was defined as any treatment of the video’s content. This involves stories about the people directly or indirectly involved in the incident, primarily the soldiers, the victims, and their families, as well as interpretations of the case’s immediate and long-term human, political, and juridical consequences. Articles were categorized as metacoverage when they mentioned the gun tape video, but one or more of Esser’s (2009) eight framings presented in this chapter’s theoretical section were given greater priority: 1) press conduit; 2) publicity conduit; 3) press strategy; 4) publicity strategy; 5) press accountability; 6) publicity accountability; 7) press personalization; and 8) publicity personalization. In US newspapers, ‘Collateral Murder’ was the subject of 47 articles, out of which 5 concern the content of the video directly, and the remaining 42 are coded as ‘metacoverage’. The British newspapers show roughly the same tendency. Out of a total of 45 articles, 6 are categorized as coverage and 39 metacoverage. As for Denmark, the material is more limited: of a total of 14 articles, only 1 deals with the content of the video and may thus be categorized as ‘coverage’ (Figure 6.3). Out of the total of 106 articles, 12 cover the content of the tape and the remaining 94 are metacoverage.

The second level of the content analysis examined the actors mentioned and/or quoted in the newspapers’ coverage in response to RQ2: ‘To which extent and how does metacoverage reflect mediatized conflict by focusing on the interplay between actors representing a political/military/legal perspective (top-down) and a hacker/whistleblower/activist perspective (bottom-up)?’

In relation to this specific material, it did not make sense to distinguish between whether the individuals in questions were cited as sources or constituted the objects of interest for the articles, because in many cases the two merged, or it was unclear whether the newspapers had interviewed the people themselves or recycled quotes from other media. This level of the content analysis provides a general idea of the focus of the articles, and whether they primarily concentrated on individuals associated with WikiLeaks, with the political/military/legal systems, or, indeed, as was often the case, with the conflicting interests between the two. As explained earlier, it was not the intention of this analysis to examine the different frames outlined by Esser. It should also be stressed that by coding for actors, this content analysis obviously holds a bias towards the personalization frames. Other frames might be co-present without distinctly rising to the surface in the results.

To gain an overview of the prominence of actors from the two dimensions, each article was coded for the individuals mentioned/cited. Consistent with the small number of articles coded as ‘coverage’ (i.e., stories concentrating on the content and implications of the tape), the victims of the attack do not occupy much space. A mere 16 articles mention the killed employees from Reuters, Namir Noor-Eldeen and Saeed Chmagh, despite WikiLeaks’ proclaimed goal of leaking the tape to inform the public of their suffering

and death. Eleven articles (of which most also mention Noor-Eldeen and Chmagh) bring up the other victims and/or their next of kin, who are mostly not referred to by name. No US soldiers, neither the ones involved in the attack nor others who might provide background information, appear in the articles. Again, this deviates from WikiLeaks' online presentation, which also includes a link to an interview with a soldier who was engaged in firefights on the ground.[3]

In contrast to the relatively scant attention to the victims and the complete absence of focus on the soldiers, the newspapers take a great interest in Assange and Manning. Assange is presented or discussed in well above half of the articles: 63 out of 106. The coding distinguishes between whether his name comes up merely as the founder of WikiLeaks or whether he was dealt with in more detail. Once more, the results point to a strong interest in Assange. Three articles merely mention him, while 63 engage with WikiLeaks' figurehead in more detail. The same pattern applies to Manning: Of the total of 56 articles in which he plays a role, three only mention his name (e.g., as the, at that time, alleged whistleblower responsible for the leakage of the gun camera tape). Eight of the 56 articles also cite his family, friends, and acquaintances as sources of information. Furthermore, the news coverage makes frequent reference to other people associated with the leak or with WikiLeaks: Adrian Lamo, a former convicted hacker who tipped the authorities about Manning, is brought to the fore in 31, or nearly a third, of the articles. Other representatives of WikiLeaks appear in 18 articles, which mention present or former associates of WikiLeaks. Only 17 articles do not bring attention to one or more of the people connected with the leak or WikiLeaks, while the remaining 89 articles do.

The analysis contains some noteworthy results if we focus specifically on the codings, which reflect mediatized conflict by bringing attention to diverging interests between actors in the top-down and bottom-up flow of information. This aspect of the coverage was highlighted quantitatively by examining the articles juxtaposing Manning, Assange, and other WikiLeaks associates with representatives from the political, military, and legal systems. If we start with the political sphere, top politicians appear in a number of articles and are almost inevitably juxtaposed with WikiLeaks representatives. President Barack Obama is mentioned in 11 articles, for example, and 10 of these also include people surrounding WikiLeaks. Robert Gates, the US Secretary of Defense at this point, appears in 12 articles and always in connection with representatives from WikiLeaks. One or more other representatives from the US government or central government agencies (such as FBI) appear in 27 articles, 24 of which are in connection with representatives from WikiLeaks. Moreover, 14 articles include politicians from other countries, and they all, except for one, feature WikiLeaks representatives as well.

The US military also have a strong presence in the articles. One or more representatives/spokespeople appear in nearly one third, or 34, of the articles; in 22, they appear alongside WikiLeaks associates. Attention to the point of

view of the military is relatively strong in the 12 articles coded as 'coverage'; of the 34 articles, 10 are coverage while 24 are metacoverage (phrased differently; only two of the articles coded as 'coverage' do not contain statements from or references to military representatives). This finding suggests that the military is frequently brought in to comment on the actual content of the tape.

The content analysis was also designed to capture the prominence of representatives from the legal system. They are featured less than political and military actors, who also, on occasion, make statements on the legal aspects of the matter. Representatives from the US legal system figure in 7 articles, and 2 articles mention representatives from the Swedish legal system in connection with the rape charges against Assange. In all cases, they are featured together with WikiLeaks collaborators.

From an overall perspective, individuals connected with WikiLeaks (Assange, Manning, and others) were combined with one or more elite actors from the political, military, and legal domains in more than half, or 51, of the 89 articles, that bring attention to WikiLeaks actors.

To sum up the quantitative analysis, metacoverage was the favored approach to 'Collateral Murder', and the articles to a high degree put a spotlight on people associated with WikiLeaks and the leak, in particular Assange and Manning, who are frequently juxtaposed with actors from the political, military, and legal spheres. The great attention to Assange and Manning implied by the quantitative analysis made it relevant to further investigate in the qualitative analysis how specifically the newspapers dealt with these two prominent figures.

METACOVERAGE AS PERSONALIZATION

Building on the quantitative analysis, the qualitative analysis examines the newspapers' portrayal of Assange and Manning. They are presented as significant actors in the extended circulation of information from areas of conflict and as opponents of the norms and rules of the military, political, and legal systems. This qualitative analytical approach is chosen to shed light on the news media's representations of the bottom-up intervention in the flow of information, and, in particular, how the specific actors are depicted as anti-authoritarian and in opposition to the institutions that have traditionally governed communication from conflict zones.

Assange and Manning are depicted in the coverage as rather colorful personae. Many articles devote considerable effort to constructing their life stories and thus deploy the before- mentioned 'personalization frames' proposed by Frank Esser:

> Personalization frames encompass stories about media personalities who make their own personal experiences and subjective perceptions the center of their war reporting. Such stories structure a war report

> around the personality of the author or another journalist. Accordingly, a similar frame was used for the publicity dimension of metacoverage as well to determine whether stories on news management were also tied more to personalities.
>
> (Esser 2009, 724–725)

In accordance with Esser's definition, the newspapers tie their coverage of 'Collateral Murder' to personalities. The news items thus shift their focus away from the tape and the possible evidence provided and toward Assange and Manning as players in the new infrastructure of communication. By deploying the personalization frame, the actions of Assange and Manning as activist/figurehead or whistleblower/hacker are explicitly and implicitly explained through life experiences and traits inherent in their characters.

According to the newspapers, the specific stories of Assange and Manning contain some similar elements. Assange and Manning are both characterized as misfits; social and sexual deviants. They both have a track record of constantly changing addresses and troubled relationships with authorities. This, however, is where the similarities come to an end. The dissimilarities highlighted in the portrayal of Assange and Manning amount to two different models for the representation of what Assange himself has termed an 'information activist' (Moss 2010). Assange is described in mythological terms while Manning is portrayed as a marginalized individual. Bringing matters to a head, one could argue that the representation of Assange places him above the institutions he is opposed to, while Manning is maneuvered to the side of them. These differences can be ascribed both to differences in their constructed personalities and stories as well as to the parts Assange and Manning play as activist/figurehead and hacker/whistleblower, respectively.

Assange: Mythologized and Celebritized

Detailed descriptions of Assange's looks and life story seem to build up to a mythologization and celebritization of WikiLeaks' leader. 'The provocateur-in-chief' (Shane 2010) is compared to various charismatic lone figures from fiction and the arts who abide by their own rules. He is characterized as a fleeting and flamboyant Warhol-like character (Moss 2010), Robin Hood (*The Guardian,* April 7, 2010), 'the James Bond of journalism' (Burns and Somaiya 2010), and the 'scarlet pimpernel of cyberspace' (Taylor 2010). This mythologization and celebritization seems to be motivated not least by Assange's looks and lifestyle, but there are also recurring references to his anti-authoritarian existence on the run.

Below are some typical examples of the many articles dwelling on Assange's looks and lifestyle:

> His face looked young, but his hair was white. His attire appeared to have been assembled at random: a smart blazer and white shirt on top

> and, beneath, combat trousers. He spoke haltingly, he seemed nervous at first, but his words would be carried around the world.
>
> (Pavia and Coghlan 2010)

> He demands that his dwindling number of loyalists use expensive encrypted cellphones and swaps his own as other men change shirts. He checks into hotels under false names, dyes his hair, sleeps on sofas and floors, and uses cash instead of credit cards, often borrowed from friends.
>
> (Burns and Somaiya 2010)

This focus on Assange's looks and lifestyle paints a picture of a person living on the edge of conventions and norms. Similarly, the newspapers repeatedly recount his supposedly tumultuous upbringing and youth:

> His parents met at an anti-Vietnam demonstration. His mother believed that a formal education would instil [sic!] an unhealthy respect for authority on her son and he moved 37 times before he was aged 14. During one of the moves, he lived opposite an electronics shop and went there to write programmes on an early home computer, quickly learning to crack into programmes.
>
> (Taylor 2010)

This quote creates an image of Assange's anti-authoritarian upbringing, which ultimately leads to his status as a top hacker/activist. Being on the run is another apparent constant in the life of WikiLeaks' founder, according to the newspapers. His attempts to escape various authorities allegedly started with his stepfather and culminate in the Interpol rape charges:

> Mr Assange has lived most of his life on the run: as a child, from his domineering stepfather; as a young adult, from Australian authorities seeking his arrest for computer hacking; and in his latest incarnation as the 'founder, philosopher, spokesperson, original coder, organiser, financier and all the rest' of WikiLeaks, from the myriad malevolent forces he has long believed are out to get him. Now that those forces are real, in the form of an Interpol arrest warrant for alleged rape in Sweden and the scramble in Washington to devise a means to prosecute him, Mr Assange cuts a lonelier and more shadowy figure than ever, substituting in-flesh appearances with video conferences, e-mails and webposts, aided by a diminishing band of supporters.
>
> (Philp 2010)

To sum up, a great deal of energy is invested in describing Assange's looks, background, and current life style. These narratives contain a sense of determinism and inevitability by placing his present role in the landscape of politics and media in the context of his past. From the newspaper's columns, Assange appears to deviate, and to always have deviated, from prevailing

norms. By concentrating on Assange's ostensibly eccentric and out-of-the-ordinary biography and character, his work and engagement in WikiLeaks are automatically relegated to a less significant position. Described in mythological terms as one-of-a kind rather than one-out-of-many, he is not portrayed as a prototypical incarnation of the new circumstances for producing and distributing information.

Manning: Powerful on the Margins

In contrast to Assange, Manning is predominantly depicted as a symptom of the ease with which diverse actors enter the bottom-up leakage and dissemination of information. His constructed personality and life story therefore add to both a de-herotization of the whistleblower and an embodiment of the current and future threats to states with regard to controlling and protecting classified information. Manning is often presented as a personification of the ideological beliefs, organizational structures, and technological knowhow behind the new way information from conflict zones travels:

> Manning was partly driven by the fundamental human urge to disseminate information, to let others know what he was reading and seeing and thinking from his dusty little military prefab under Iraq's unforgiving sun. Previously powerless, small but watchful soldiers like Manning and other whistle-blowers discovered in the past half decade a new and efficient vehicle to spread the news: WikiLeaks.
>
> (Glenny 2010)

This new figure seems to be, at least in Manning's case, regarded as an anti-hero, who breaks with the dominant media narrative of the heroic whistleblower. However, the general approach to Manning reflects the typical news stories about whistleblowers inasmuch as they are 'event-orientated' and 'frequently personalised' (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt 2012, 400). To understand Manning's version of the whistleblower, a brief look into some of the literature on this subject is called for.

According to Thorsen, Sreedharan, and Allan (2013, 101), a certain mythology—not least nurtured by Hollywood films—surrounds whistleblowers. Whistleblowing typically involves informants inside an institution or organization, who enter into collaborations with the media to disclose unlawful or unethical behavior. According to a content analysis performed by Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt (2012) about press coverage of whistleblowing activities from 1997 to 2009, the news media typically pay careful attention to whistleblowers, who are usually portrayed in a neutral if not favorable light:

> Ultimately, we suggest that journalistic story-telling constructs narratives of whistleblowers as heroic, selfless individuals to establish the legitimacy of their claims of systemic wrongdoing in the public interest.
>
> (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt 2012, 400)

As part of this heroic, self-sacrificing narrative, it is vital to establish the 'ordinariness' of the whistleblower (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt 2012, 409). To this end, stories about the whistleblower traditionally follow a certain model:

> [W]e must find the story of a humble birth, a background of normalcy. The Hero must be one of us. Yet from this humble background, the Hero must emerge marked by and driven by a quest. This quest must have social value and significance. It must be fraught with adversity and struggle.
>
> (Lule 2001, 102; cited after Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt 2012, 409)

Based on the articles included in the sample, the personalization of Manning takes the opposite direction from the prototypical whistleblower narrative. He is represented as the very counterpart to ordinary, just as his motives for whistleblowing are not depicted as altogether noble. Parallel to the coverage of Assange, much effort is invested in establishing his life story as a route to his current actions. This might be illustrated by a lengthy quote:

> To antiwar campaigners, Bradley Manning is a hero, a whistleblower extraordinaire [. . .]
>
> To many others, he is a traitor who has betrayed his country and its secrets to its enemies in a time of war.
>
> Private First Class Manning's journey from troubled childhood to suicide watch at a military prison is a story of isolation, self-discovery and search for meaning [. . .].
>
> His classmates in Crescent remember a skinny boy who stood out for his refusal to accept the mainstream view [. . .]
>
> He insisted that teachers should respect the separation of Church and State, refusing to say 'under God' in the daily pledge of allegiance or to do Scripture work.
>
> He left Crescent aged 13 after his parents' divorce and moved to Haverfordwest, Wales, with his British mother. He struggled to fit in. Classmates teased him for his American accent, but when they began to suspect he was gay, the bullying grew worse. [. . .]
>
> Shortly before deploying to Iraq as an analyst, Private Manning fell in love with Tyler Watkins, a drag queen from Cambridge, Massachusetts.
>
> (Philp and Bruxelles 2010)

Several points are worthy of note in this presentation of Manning. First, the hero-traitor opposition is established as categories he might fall into, depending on whether anti-war campaigners or 'many others' pass judgment. Second, Manning is seen as anti-authoritarian, opposed to his family, school, religion, the military, and the nation (by his unwillingness to correctly perform the daily pledge of allegiance). Third, like many other articles, this one brings his sexuality and gender to the fore as one of the

reasons for his unwillingness to play by the rules and exclusion from his peers at school and in the army.

Some articles take the story a step further and cite Manning's sexuality and anti-authoritarian/anti-institutional stance as his incentive for hacking and whistleblowing:

> But it was around two years ago, when Pfc. Bradley Manning came here to visit a man he had fallen in love with, that he finally seemed to have found a place where he fit in, part of a social circle that included politically motivated computer hackers and his boyfriend, a self-described drag queen. So when his military career seemed headed nowhere good, Private Manning, 22, turned increasingly to those friends for moral support.
>
> And now some of those friends say they wonder whether his desperation for acceptance—or delusions of grandeur—may have led him to disclose the largest trove of government secrets since the Pentagon Papers.
>
> (Thompson et. al. 2010)

Another article links Manning's hacking to his possible transgender identity, which leaves him in great crisis and distress:

> Private Manning was struggling with gender identity and contemplating a 'transition' not only to civilian life but to life as a woman.
>
> 'I wouldn't mind going to prison for the rest of my life, or being executed so much, if it wasn't for the possibility of having pictures of me . . . plastered all over the world press . . . as boy . . .' [. . .] 'i've totally lost my mind . . . i make no sense'.
>
> (Philp and Bruxelles 2010)

The articles also contrast Manning's allegedly unstable psychological constitution at the time of the leaks with his power to easily access and drain military systems for information:

> In his computer chats with Mr. Lamo, Private Manning described how he downloaded the video and lip-synched to Lady Gaga as he copied hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables. "Hillary Clinton and several thousand diplomats around the world are going to have a heart attack," he boasted. But even as he professed a perhaps inflated sense of purpose, he called himself "emotionally fractured" and a "wreck" and said he was "self-medicating like crazy".
>
> (Thompson et. al. 2010)

This and other articles portray the vulnerability of the military and policymakers when it comes to controlling information. In this case, Manning's fragile psychological state and crisis in relation to his gender is compared with, on the one hand, his minimal logistic and technological effort to obtain

information, and, on the other, his sense of the worldwide political importance of his actions.

The qualitative analysis thus points to how the great interest in Assange and Manning as opponents of military, political, and legal systems turns to their biographies and personalities to find explanatory models for their leakage and publication of the gun camera tape. By highlighting their social and sexual deviance from prevailing norms and lifestyles, their actions seem to be ascribable to the constructed personae of a mythologized figure and therefore one-of-a-kind (Assange), or a marginalized figure and therefore potentially one-in-many (Manning).

The newspapers' application of the personalization frame to Assange and Manning, two actors interfering with the communication of conflict bottom-up, emphasizes that this dimension of mediatization by now plays a significant role in the way conflicts are fought, communicated, and covered. Moreover, the newspapers' recurrent juxtaposition of Assange and Manning with actors from the political, military, and legal systems point to the diverging interests between the two dimensions of mediatized conflict. Thus mediatized conflict is itself a major theme for the news media in their reflections on ongoing changes in the relation between media and conflict. Whereas actors from the political, military, and legal spheres speak for and on behalf of systems and institutions, the actors from the bottom-up dimension of mediatized conflict are portrayed as opposed to these very systems and institutions, which they attack from both the inside (Manning) and the outside (Assange). The coverage, or rather metacoverage, of 'Collateral Murder' thus focuses on the structural and systemic changes engendered by digital media as well as the new actors emerging in the wake of this development.

MEDIATIZED CONFLICT AND THE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE OF INFORMATION

Based on the four contexts in which the so-called 'Collateral Murder' gun camera tape has been used or mobilized, the tape emerges as a clear-cut example of mediatized conflict on account of the multifaceted infiltration of mediatization on operational and communicative levels of conflict. First, during a military operation, the footage enabled soldiers to monitor actions on the ground in real time. Second, the tape was used as evidence in the internal US military investigation into whether the soldiers' conduct was in keeping with the law of armed conflict and the army's rules of engagement. Third, WikiLeaks published the tape along with the accusation that the soldiers were guilty of a war crime for taking up arms unnecessarily because of their misinterpretation of the gun camera representation. Fourth, the press covered WikiLeaks' launch of the case, but paid more attention to the organization itself than to the alleged war crimes.

One might think that firsthand accounts stemming directly from the scene of events, and themselves a part of warfare, such as a gun camera tape, would bring the audience closer to the battlefield. This effect was hardly achieved by WikiLeaks' publication of 'Collateral Murder'. Even though the newspapers definitely paid attention to the human-interest angle launched by WikiLeaks, this attention rather unanimously turned back on the people associated with WikiLeaks. Moreover, the content analysis also disclosed that actors associated with the two dimensions of mediatized conflict were very often juxtaposed in the coverage. Hence, this study expands the understanding of the linkage between mediatized conflict and metacoverage established by Esser (2009) by arguing that metacoverage concerns not only top-down political and military strategic communication, censorship, and so on, but also the increasing numbers of bottom-up interferences in the flow of information from areas of conflict.

NOTES

1. Two other studies of the coverage of the 2003 invasion in Iraq by Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005) and Kristensen and Ørsten (2007) put the results of Esser (2009) in perspective. However, the articles do not specifically focus on metacoverage, and the tendency is less pronounced in the countries under their scrutiny. Dimitrova and Strömbäck find that 7% of the articles in the *New York Times* and 6% of the articles in the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* focused on 'media self-reference' (2005, 410), while in Kristensen and Ørsten's survey of a broad sample of Danish news media, 'media' amounted to a relatively low 4% (2007, 332).
2. Quoted transcripts are provided by WikiLeaks. See www.collateralmurder.com/en/transcript.html (last accessed June 29, 2014).
3. See www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/04/2007-iraq-apache-attack-as-seen-from-the-ground/ (last accessed June 29, 2014).

7 Citizen Investigation and Eyewitness Images

The Boston Marathon Bombing (2013)

On April 15, 2013, David Green had just completed his first Boston Marathon when two bombs exploded close to the finish line. One of them detonated right in front of him. In an interview with *Huffington Post,* Green's initial reaction is paraphrased:

> One of his first instincts was to get a quick photo. Then he proceeded toward the victims to try to help.
>
> (Kanalley 2013)

The photo taken by Green with his iPhone (Figure 7.1) was time-stamped 2:50:15 PM, a mere one minute after the bomb had gone off at 2:49 PM (Somaiya and Zilar 2013). Green posted the photo on his Facebook profile the next day, Monday, April 16, along with a status update describing his experience of the marathon and the attack. On April 18, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) made surveillance footage public of the presumed perpetrators, the Chechen brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who had repeatedly been recorded by store security cameras and onlookers' smartphones (Montgomery, Horwitz, and Fisher 2013). This move was partially in response to *New York Post* and other media posting eyewitness photos of innocent bystanders on the front page, implying that they were the suspected terrorists, based on participatory investigations by users on reddit, Imgur, and other social network platforms (Montgomery, Horwitz, and Fisher 2013). After the images of the suspects had been released, David Green was made aware by one of his Facebook friends that a man depicted to the left in his photo bore a striking resemblance to Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. He contacted the FBI, and an agent informed him that 'this is probably the best we have right now' (Kanalley 2013). Green once again posted the photo on Facebook, this time with a new text:

> Friends & Family,
>
> I have been feeling down since the Boston Marathon bombing because I couldn't do anything to help the injured victims . . . until now. Thanks to my friend Jason who pointed out to me that the photo I took

Figure 7.1 “Police Converge Mass” photo: AP/David Green.

> right after the second bomb and posted on FB has suspect #2 in the left hand corner of the photo. White baseball cap turned backwards, black sweatshirt, NO BACKPACK right after the bomb went off. Compare to the ones posted by CNN, it is unmistakable. I spoke to the FBI and it is may be the best photo they have at current time!!! One step closer to taking these @!#?#’s down . . . share as much as you can so that if someone knows this person they can turn them in.
>
> (Kannalley 2013)

This post went viral and received considerable attention. Users on reddit debated whether the photo had been digitally manipulated, and several news media picked up the picture and the story behind.

David Green’s photo from the Boston Marathon points to three developments highlighted in this book, as well as a new one to be explored in this last and shortest analytical chapter. First, to many eyewitnesses, documenting evolving crises with their mobile phones has become ‘an instinct’, as Green puts it in the quotation above. Second, selected auto-mediated witness accounts are circulated via social media to mainstream news media. Third, they serve purposes of surveillance and security. The fourth and final aspect not covered so far is that eyewitness images make provision for the ‘people formerly known as the audience’ to enter traditional domains of experts. In

this case, they knock on the door of forensic science and criminology with a collective investigation of the masses of online available eyewitness images for clues about the identities of the terrorists. Whereas visual evidence was formerly protected and kept strictly within the institutions responsible for surveillance and criminal investigation, this material becomes accessible to a still larger extent in the public domain via diverse online outlets. This book has analyzed one example of this already with 'Collateral Murder'.

With eyewitness images as a pivotal point, this chapter focuses on how the thorough mediatization of conflict blurs the distinction between experts and laymen. This is taken to be a result of the way other important boundaries between users and producers, professionals and amateurs, elites and non-elites have become less distinct, as discussed throughout this book. Through the active involvement of users in creating and spreading media content, images of relevance to the authorities in relation to criminal investigations and surveillance are produced, which are at the same time available in the online public sphere.

This chapter first offers an overview of the Boston Marathon bombing, and second, argues that the terror attack instigated a shift in the character of this event from a media event (Dayan and Katz 1992) to a conflictual media event (Hepp and Couldry 2010). As a conflictual media event, the Boston Marathon bombing involved interrelation processes between the two dimensions of mediatized conflict outlined in chapter 3. In this case, the FBI and citizens worked together and against each other in different phases of the investigation into the identity of the terrorists. Third, the album *4chan ThinkTank* on the image-based social media platform Imgur is analyzed as a tangible manifestation of the blurring boundaries between experts and layman. The specificity of the amateur detective work is studied as a combination of two different constructions of identity. On the one hand, there is the bureaucratic attempt to establish the visual identity of the suspected terrorists in a stable and unequivocal manner, thus continuing the nineteenth-century forensic and criminological tradition of using photography as a means of identification (e.g., Mortensen 2003; 2012a; see also, e.g., Sekula 1986; Tagg 1988; Hamilton and Hargreaves 2001). On the other hand, the citizen investigators also profit from the practices of collective construction and management of identity online, heralded as a playfield for performativity in the early years of the internet but now tending more towards fixing individuals in a singular and unequivocal manner (e.g., Trottier and Lyon 2012; van Zoonen 2013). The conclusion elaborates on this erasure of the borderline between experts and non-experts as one outcome of mediatized conflict.

THE BOSTON MARATHON BOMBING (2013)

Held for the first time in 1897, the Boston Marathon is the world's oldest marathon and one of the most prestigious. The marathon has an implicit

patriotic dimension as it takes place every year on Patriots' Day, a US national holiday commemorating the first battles of the American Revolution. During the 2013 Boston Marathon, two pressure cooker bombs killed three bystanders and injured hundreds.

Public communication by FBI and other authorities taking part in the investigation emphasized from the outset that surveillance and amateur footage played a major part in the reconstruction of the attack:

> 'We will go to the ends of the earth to identify the suspect or subjects responsible for this despicable crime,' Richard DesLauriers, special agent in charge of the city's FBI office, said at a news conference. [. . .] He said citizens can help by sharing images. 'There has to be hundreds, if not thousands, of photos and videos,' said Timothy Alben, superintendent of the State Police. Boston Police Commissioner Ed Davis said security footage had been taken from nearby businesses. 'Even as we were removing victims, officers were assigned to go into the local establishments and secure those videos,' he said.
>
> (Moroney, Gopal, and Blum 2013)

Spectators and surveillance cameras had carefully documented what turned into a crime scene before, during, and after the explosions. The prominence of these two types of visual material reflects parallel developments manifesting themselves especially in the aftermath of 9/11. Surveillance cameras set up in urban environments on federal or private initiative have increased greatly in numbers. Similarly, as stated in the introduction to this book, eyewitness images experienced a breakthrough in connection with media coverage of 9/11 and subsequent exhibitions and books about the event. With regard to the Boston Marathon, both surveillance and eyewitness footage were recorded on private initiative but with the different goals of protecting businesses against theft and taking snapshots of the sports performance respectively. FBI collected an estimated one million hours of footage, which 'almost became a management problem, there was so much of it' (Montgomery, Horwitz, and Fisher 2013). This material was analyzed both manually and by special software designed to search for people, types or objects, or patterns 'such as a certain car that turns up in different places' ('FBI Release Video of 2 Boston Bombing Suspects,' 2013).

As already mentioned, three days after the attack, on April 18, surveillance stills and videos were released of the two suspects, who were identified as Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev later on the same day. This identification set off a series of dramatic and violent events. The suspects killed a police officer, stole a car, and got into a gunfight with the police. While fleeing from the scene, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, already wounded by gunshots, died after his younger brother ran him over with the car. A large-scale manhunt ensued on April 19 to catch Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was later found

injured in a boat and arrested. Citizens living nearby were instructed to remain indoors during the intense manhunt.

FROM MEDIA EVENT TO CONFLICTUAL MEDIA EVENT

The terror attack transformed the media event of the marathon into a 'conflictual media event' (Hepp and Couldry 2010; see also chapter 5). This transformation drastically changed the roles and tasks of both the professional news networks and the onlookers and runners taking photographs on site: from covering, celebrating, and acquiring visual souvenirs from the festive, athletic event to documenting the attack and its effects. Marathons belong to 'contests' in Dayan and Katz' typology of media events, and their role is to 'accumulate and boast honor through heroic deed and display, to promote unity and collective memory' (1992, 28). 'Who will win' is the drama inscribed in contests, and the event proceeds according to rituals and agreed rules (Dayan and Katz 1992, 34–35). However, the label 'contest' is slightly misleading, Dayan and Katz maintain, since marathons mark the sportive accomplishment of 'collective protagonists' rather than 'individual actors' (1992, 49). The audience may identify as much or more with ordinary runners striving to complete the run than with professional athletes aspiring to win. Using The New York City Marathon as an example, Dayan and Katz describe the scene thus:

> The great metropolis is cleared for the run, traffic is interrupted and made to digress, throngs line the streets of the five boroughs, and everybody—as the ABC commentator notes—'has' somebody who is running: his mailman, her doctor, their priest.
>
> (Dayan and Katz 1992, 49)

The race to be the first across the finish line is not the main focus of the bystanders along the route. However, the 'communion' transforms into a 'contest' once the marathon is experienced via televised transmission, which to a much higher degree stresses the rivalry between top athletes to win and set new records.

This combination of folk festival and athletic competition adds a vibrant atmosphere to the city, which momentarily replaces the everyday awareness of its lurking dangers with an enchanted view of the urban space as the scene of the marathon:

> The spectators are not knowledgeable fans, and the participants are not champions, except for the international start of the 'contest' which is superimposed on the folk festival. They all participate in the experience that transforms a dangerous city—Los Angeles, New York, or Paris—into an amiable stadium. They also participate in the interactive

> experience that permits ordinary spectators to step collectively into a media event, to bask in its aura. Home viewers of these events rediscover their cities.
>
> (Dayan and Katz 1992, 207)

The 2013 Boston Marathon puts this quotation in perspective. First, the city turned into a major crime scene, its dangers resurfacing in a most ferocious way, and the media event was transformed to a conflictual media event. This reversal is obviously not without precedents. Sport events have attracted attacks on previous occasions because the combined presence of the media and vast numbers of people accommodates the general goal of terrorism to seek maximum attention by spreading utmost fright and damage to individuals and material. Second, according to Dayan and Katz, marathons invite 'ordinary spectators' to collectively 'bask' in 'the aura' of the media event; in 2013, members of the crowd also took pictures to memorialize and inscribe themselves into the celebratory narrative of the marathon.

The bombing of the 2013 Boston Marathon emphasizes the point made in chapter 5 on the basis of Hepp and Couldry's (2010) idea that 'conflictual media events' are mediatized. In the case of the Boston Marathon, the investigation and coverage of the attack generated an extended information circuit of communicative platforms and genres, including press conferences, statements by FBI and other authorities, news networks, social network media, eyewitness footage, material from surveillance cameras, etc. The interrelation process between the two dimensions of mediatized conflict manifested itself in the way in which the FBI adjusted its investigation to benefit from or prevent potential damage from the active contribution of citizens. Eyewitnesses were first called upon to hand over their photos and videos to the FBI. This may have suggested to the public that the answers and solutions to the criminal investigation were hidden in this material. The FBI's decision to release the photos of the suspected terrorists a few days later was at least in part motivated by concern that the criminal investigation might otherwise be harmed by citizens scrutinizing the selfsame eyewitness images and the news media using their results as sources:

> Investigators didn't want to risk having news outlets put out the Tsarnaevs' images first, which might have made them the object of a wave of popular sympathy for wrongly suspected people, as had happened with two high school runners from the Boston area whose photos were published on the front page of the New York Post under the headline 'Bag Men.'
>
> [. . .] Investigators were concerned that if they didn't assert control over the release of the Tsarnaevs' photos, their manhunt would become a chaotic free-for-all, with news media cars and helicopters, as well as online vigilante detectives, competing with police in the chase to find the suspects. By stressing that all information had to flow to 911 and

> official investigators, the FBI hoped to cut off that freelance sleuthing and attend to public safety even as they searched for the brothers.
> (Montgomery, Horwitz, and Fisher 2013)

Several elements are worthy of note in the deliberations of the FBI on the release of the visuals. First of all, *New York Post*'s wrongful exposure of innocent bystanders as the suspects had weakened the trust in the news media. Therefore, if the images of the actual terrorists were published by the media first, this might be interpreted as another cry wolf. The FBI had to assert its authority to issue the images, which the public should put faith in and pay attention to. As the FBI agent in charge of the investigation, Richard DesLauriers, states in another article, 'The only official photos, which should be officially relied upon, are those you see today' (Fahrenthold and Dewey 2013). The release of the footage of the perpetrators was also an attempt to 'assert control' and hinder citizen investigators from once again naming and shaming people who happened to be male and carry a backpack near the finish line of the marathon. Whereas the FBI had profited from the involvement of citizens during the initial stages, the possible damage exerted on the investigation by professional and non-professional media now became a major consideration for the FBI in the conduct and communication of the search for the terrorists.

This is not to say, of course, that the media playing an active part in a criminal investigation constitutes a novelty. Still, the investigation of the Boston Marathon Bombing added a further dimension:

> Davis [Edward Davis, Boston Police Commissioner (ed.)] had learned of the central importance of video from a police commander in London after the public transit bombings there in 2005, when the city's extensive system of surveillance cameras led to identification of four suspects within five days of the attacks, after examination of hundreds of hours of video.
>
> Eight years later, the social media revolution meant that the FBI and Boston authorities were under intense pressure to move even faster, because thousands of amateur sleuths were mimicking the official investigation, inspecting digital images of the crowd on Boylston Street and making their own often wildly irresponsible conclusions about who might be the bombers.
> (Montgomery, Horwitz, and Fisher 2013)

Enhanced possibilities of collective detective work facilitated by online availability of evidence, mainly in the form of eyewitness images, have added a new aspect to the mediatized interrelations between FBI/the police, the media, and the public in the clearing up of a major crime. Regarded as a 'conflictual media event', the afterplay of the Boston Marathon attack reveals the many and deep relations between actions and reactions from professional and non-professional media outlets as well as expert and non-expert investigators.

PARTICIPATORY INVESTIGATION AND COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE TERRORISTS' IDENTITY

Online accessibility of empirical data and knowledge along with networked communication and crowd sourcing constitute the spine of what has alternatively been termed 'crowd science', 'networked science', 'public science', or 'crowd-sourced science'. Alexander Halavais comments on this emerging field:

> Non-academics have long done social and behavioral research, just as non-journalists created news long before and after the professionalization of journalism. In both cases, networked communication makes it relatedly easier for non-professionals to engage on their own time and in their own ways, finding communities of likeminded individuals. The resources available to today's amateur are different not just in scale but in type from those available in previous decades.
>
> (Halavais 2013, not paginated)

In the case of the Boston Marathon Bombing, users, as a form of crowd science, engaged in participatory investigation and surveillance on various platforms. Receiving most attention, the subreddit 'findbostonbombers' on reddit was named 'the flagship site for the unofficial investigation' (Fahrenthold and Dewey 2013). A few quotations from the anonymous moderator of this subreddit in *Washington Post* might give an impression of why this was considered a controversial venue:

> 'Find people carrying black bags,' wrote the Reddit forum's unnamed moderator. 'If they look suspicious, then post them. Then people will try and follow their movements using all the images.'
>
> The moderator defended this strategy by arguing that 'it's been proven that a crowd of thousands can do things like this much quicker and better. . . . I'd take thousands of people over a select few very smart investigators any day.'
>
> (Montgomery, Horwitz, and Fisher 2013)

The statements by the subreddit moderator seem to imply that terrorists 'look suspicious' (i.e., have a certain appearance and exhibit specific forms of behavior, which are perceptible and recognizable to the untrained eye). Further, the moderator argues that 'thousands of people' may accomplish more than 'a few very smart investigators', despite this case pointing to the obvious fact that a misidentification remains a misidentification regardless of how many times it is repeated. Reddit would have been an interesting case to scrutinize further on account of the public debate. However, the subreddit was closed, and reddit does not wish to make this material available for research.[1]

The following section takes its point of departure in the social media site Imgur, and the amateur investigation posted in the online gallery *4chan ThinkTank*. Other sites could have been analyzed, but Imgur has the advantage of being an open and predominantly image-based group.

Imgur promotes itself as 'the simple image sharer', and, similar to reddit, the content of the site is structured on the principle of user popularity (Imgur 2014). Images receiving the highest number of 'likes' and the fewest 'dislikes' have the most 'points' and appear when one enters the site. One may alternatively choose to view images according to whether they are 'most viral', 'user submitted', 'highest scoring', or 'memes'. Users also vote on the comments, which also appear in the order of the popularity. Another option is to create 'galleries' or 'albums' such as *4chan ThinkTank*. In contrast to reddit, Imgur is not primarily oriented towards news but indulges in a variety of subjects, mainly a lighter repertoire of jokes, entertainment, and celebrities. Imgur presents itself and its users in the following manner:

> Imgur is the go-to destination for viral images. Backed by a friendly and funny community, Imgur is the best place to spend your free time online.
> (Imgur, no date b)

With regard to 'Gallery Rules', the site pushes the entertaining, sociable aspect of online image sharing to the forefront in a similar vein:

> The gallery is meant to be a fun, friendly place to share your unique images that have universal appeal.
> (Imgur, no date a)

Despite this emphasis on fun and friendliness, the Imgur gallery *4chan ThinkTank* consists of images from the 2013 attack on the Boston Marathon.[2] Judging by the name, the gallery was transported to Imgur after having first been created on 4chan, another online image-based bulletin board. The gallery contains 57 images, most of which appear to have been taken by eyewitnesses, but some television footage is also featured. Many duplicates and reproductions with different crops are included in the 57 images. No information is publicly available concerning the initiator(s), editor(s), and contributors to *4chan ThinkTank*. The album appears to have been created by users, and the pictures carry their notes in the form of colored lines and circles pointing out proclaimed traces and clues. From the annotations, one may gather that the citizen investigators are preoccupied with individuals looking and/or behaving in allegedly suspicious ways. Many of the circles mark backpacks resembling the one depicted in photos published by the FBI and identified as the bags in which the terrorist carried the bombs. Along with the lines and circles, the notes identify two young men as 'suspect #1' and 'suspect #2'. These men appear to be identical to the individuals denounced as the perpetrators by *New York Post,* and referred

to as the 'Bag men' and 'Backpack brothers' in the media (Fahrenthold and Dewey 2013).

The notes scribbled on the first image in the gallery *4chan ThinkTank* give an impression of what 4chan/Imgur users consider leads and traces in their scrutiny. Lines drawn on the photo encircle a woman who is taking a photograph of a man carrying a small child on his arm. An arrow points to a lone man in the lower left-hand side of the photo, ostensibly to imply that his frontal image must be featured in the background of her photo. His bag is circled with red. From annotations on other images, the implication of this inscription is clear: the interpreter perceives the bag's (alleged) heaviness as a sign that it could possibly contain a bomb. A drawing inserted next to another image is accompanied by the caption, 'bag pointing downward. Probably heavy. 30 LBS+'. If we return to the first image, the text on this photo says:

1: ALONE
2: BROWN
3: Black backpack
4: Not watching

The inscription on the photo provides an impression of how citizen investigators are on the outlook for specific clues, including physical appearance, ethnic characteristics, behavior, and the carrying of accessories (primarily backpacks). Different versions of this image are reproduced a total of 12 times in the gallery. In some cases, the picture is closely cropped to zoom in on the man with the backpack. The caption 'suspect #1' has been added to one of the pictures, along with a note commenting on the zippered pocket of his backpack. The other versions of the image have also been written upon to focus attention on the companion of this man, who wears a cap. Another one draws arrows so as to cross-identify the men, who are also represented in another picture. Apart from the two men, users are also preoccupied with a man wearing a blue robe. He attracted attention, it seems, on account of his backpack and apparent lack of interest in the marathon.

Shortly after the creation of this album, the identities of the terrorists were made public. Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev were not in the spotlight of the citizen interrogations. *4chan ThinkTank* and the vain attempt to solve the criminal investigation were still online a year later.

BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHIC IDENTIFICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA COLLABORATIVE IDENTITY-CONSTRUCTION

The users behind the collective album *4 chan ThinkTank* synthesize perceived clues to draw conclusions. These acts of (mis)identification might be interpreted as a fusion of two established approaches to identity and

identification. First, photography has been used since the nineteenth century as a means of identifying the individual and fixing his or her visual identity in a singular and stable manner. Second, the other tradition brought in play by the album was the collective management and construction of identity on social network sites (e.g., when individuals put on display or have put on display by others a desired and designed image of the self, or when they are publicly denounced as offenders). Whereas the bureaucratic approach attempts to pin down identity as something an individual *is,* the social network sites identity construction in general suggests that identity is something an individual *does* (van Zoonen 2013, 44).

Liesbet van Zoonen addresses the meeting between these two constructions on a general level in reflections on how a number of recent forces run counter to 'multiplicity and towards the fixation of single identities' (2013, 44)—that is, some of the differences between the two understandings of identity are becoming less discernable. Van Zoonen gives as an example the internet, which has not fulfilled the hope of early observers that it would open a space for creative, performative, and fluid conceptualizations of identity:

> Nowadays, however, the anonymity of the internet and the construction of online personas that do not reflect offline identities have been reconstructed as 'risk factors' of internet use (van Zoonen, 2011). Governments, schools, parents and other concerned parties now routinely warn against online imposters, bullying and identity theft, and social network sites like Facebook or Google+ have policies requiring users to register with their real names and data, and prevent them from having more than one account.
>
> (van Zoonen 2013, 45)

Van Zoonen's juxtaposition of the late modern understanding of identity as performative and in flux and the tendency towards singular and stable representations of identity for reasons of security may aptly be applied to the online construction of the identities of the suspected terrorists. Accordingly, the following sections presents the criminological tradition of applying photography as a means of identifying the singular individual and the performativity of online construction of identity on social media.

Photography as a Means of Identification

The collective construction of identity on social media has been theorized both in terms of its empowering and exploitative sides (Trottier and Lyon 2012, 93; see also, e.g., Fuchs, Boersma, Albrechtslund, and Sandoval 2012). Along these lines, the crowd investigation to identify the terrorists accentuates latent monitoring and surveillance as the flip side of the possibilities for performative displays of the self on social media. To understand the role

performed by citizens trying to walk in scientific footsteps, these endeavors must be contextualized historically in relation to the respective fields of established expertise pursued. The attempts by amateur investigators to single out the terrorists responsible for the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing by means of eyewitness images thus continue a tradition of visually determining and/or constructing the identity of criminals and other individuals believed to be dangerous to common law and order.

On a general level, it should be stressed that since early forms of personal identification came into existence during the Middle Ages, the enduring goal has not been met of developing an objective, safe, and faultless method to register the singular individual in a manner that makes him or her recognizable at all times and places (e.g., Gulddal and Mortensen 2004). To fix people's identity and control their movements across territories, a combination of different methods is often applied to obtain the highest possible security, be they textual (personal data, personal description, biography, etc.), visual (scanning, photography, lithography, drawing, etc.) or code (DNA, fingerprint, etc.).

Photographic identification has its roots in the nineteenth century when criminology developed into an independent science and, similar to other evolving human sciences such as anthropology and psychiatry, made use of photography to classify and categorize different characters, types, and individuals (Mortensen 2003; 2012a; see also, e.g., Sekula 1986; Tagg 1988; Hamilton and Hargreaves 2001). Individuals who deviated from 'The Standard White-Man Face' (Broeckmann 1995) for ethnic, medical, social, or moral reasons were particularly likely to be photographically registered. The police in a number of Western countries embarked on photographic identification in the 1860s to meet the security demands of rapid urbanization. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the standardized photographic mug shot was developed, comprising one image en face and one in profile, which was the achievement of the French police officer and biometrics researcher Alphonse Bertillon (1853–1914). However, the confidence of Bertillon and his predecessors in bureaucratic photography as secure and objective proof has been refuted by a long list of miscarriages of justice due to misinterpretations or mistakes based on human error or subjective/personal bias (Mortensen 2012a).

On the face of it, photography is more easily accessible than most other means of identification. Fingerprints, DNA profiling, facial and body scanning require technical instruments and expertise to carry out the identification. Laymen, by contrast, may draw comparisons between a physically present person and a person depicted on a photo, or between two or more photos. However, as the amateur detective work performed during the investigation of the Boston Marathon bombs exposed, regular users' familiarity with the medium of photography does not necessarily mean that they possess the skills to process photography as a means of surveillance and identification, particularly not on such large scale.

Collaborative Constructions of Identity on Network Sites

At first glance, the identity construction on social media seems to correspond to how identity in recent decades has been theorized as performative, relational, and fragmented within, for example, post structuralism and post colonial and queer studies. Trottier and Lyon use Facebook as an example of how users participate in the online collaborative identity creation:

> Facebook allows users to share information about their friends with those friends. Profiles are composed of fields where both users and their friends can add personal information about that user. By default this information is shared with both users' networks of friends. Thus, speaking to a colleague also means speaking about that colleague to an extended audience of users.
>
> (Trottier and Lyon 2012, 94)

If we transfer this point to the collaborative investigation into the identity of the terrorists, the men under scrutiny were most likely not befriended on social network sites with the amateur investigators. The images seem to have been circulated via different social network sites, which also made platforms available for the investigation. This underlines how social media content lends itself to be recontextualized. As already mentioned, *4chan ThinkTank* does not pass on information regarding the origin of the images; they might have been posted to 4chan or Imgur by the photographers or others, or they might have been taken from Flickr, reddit or other social media platforms. This exemplifies an overall point made by Trottier and Lyon in relation to Facebook:

> Information is increasingly free from its initial context when uploaded to Facebook, augmenting the scope of any single act of surveillance. This speaks to some of the key features of most contemporary surveillance: where information is gathered in a particular setting and context, is scrutinized elsewhere, and the consequences of this scrutiny may occur in yet another context. This in turn is why simplistic notions of privacy, including those relating to privacy settings found on social media sites, are inadequate to contemporary conditions. Context is crucial.
>
> (Nissenbaum 2010, cited in Trottier and Lyon 2012, 101)

Context is crucial, as Trottier and Lyon state. And context is fluid, especially when it comes to images. The easy movability of social media content applies especially to visuals, seeing as they—as pointed out several times in this book—are characterized by their circulability. In the 1980s, Sekula (1986), Tagg (1988), and other photo theorists presented the notion of photography as a context-bound medium. The effects of

this are becoming even more manifest in the digital age. In this case, snapshots from the festive occasion of the marathon floated between professional and non-professional media alike and were scrutinized by expert and non-expert investigators alike. Casually taken snapshots were recontextualized, collected, and transformed into a flexible map of clues, traces, and hints to be deciphered by members of the crowd. This example emphasizes how the collective identity on social network sites by means of images and other forms of communication may be pieced together both by peers and outsiders.

As the recontextualization of visual content requires little effort, the everyday image of the snapshot turned into evidence, and the everyday platform of social media turned into a site for participatory surveillance and collaborative investigation. This may be put in perspective by a general point made by Trottier and Lyon:

> '[H]owever fluid and flexible, all online surveillance contributes to social sorting and to the reproduction of difference'.
>
> (Trottier and Lyon 2012, 93)

Social network sites make it possible to physically identify people and locate them in time and space, whether by geo-tagging or by time stamps on the image. In the case of the sudden, disruptive, and catastrophic conflictual media event of the Boston Marathon Bombing, the online construction of identity on social media drew on the tradition of using photography as a means of fixing the identity of people believed to be dangerous and the possibilities of collective constructions of identity on social media. Eyewitness images slide into both of these understandings of identity. On the one hand, the amateur investigators make an effort by the act of identification to determine and deliver proof of the singular identity of the men depicted. On the other hand, the availability and circulability of images allow for the performative element of taking images from one context and inserting them into another in order to piece together the identities of the suspected terrorists based on typification. The construction of identity in this way lingers between singularity and performativity, between individual and type.

EYEWITNESS IMAGES BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN EXPERTS AND NON-EXPERTS

The media coverage and investigation of the attack at the 2013 Boston Marathon point to several crucial questions regarding the news coverage and criminal investigation of a conflictual media event: Which images are available to document the event in question? What purposes do they serve?

Who are the actors behind their production, distribution, and mobilization? How do they travel? How are they interpreted and by whom?

This chapter has stressed that the mass availability of eyewitness images facilitates a breaking of the barrier between experts and non-experts. The online accessibility of eyewitness images also causes a shift in the public communication and working methods of the authorities, not least based on news media's use of the crowd investigation as source. Eyewitness images once again became the pivotal point for the interrelation process between the two dimensions of mediatized conflict. The Boston Marathon Bombing highlights an important aspect of mediatized conflict: both authorities and citizens transform their behavior. FBI and the police had to take into account how the active involvement of citizens may both be helping and hindering the criminal investigation. Citizens empowered by digital technologies take on the role of eyewitness or amateur sleuth on their own initiative and play a more active part in the investigation. This chapter has only studied one perspective on the interrelation process in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon Bombing. Other interesting subjects to pursue in future research would be the authorities' deployment of Twitter to communicate directly with citizens and the news media, the circulation in the news media of eyewitness images proclaimed by amateur investigators to contain evidence about the identity of the terrorists, and an overview of how the actors and institutions with a share in mediatized conflict become sources in the media coverage.

This chapter started by accounting for the way in which an eyewitness photograph, accidentally documenting Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's flight from the scene, changed from one marathon runner's personal recollection to evidence. By this change, the image migrated from Facebook to FBI and to the news media. This migration also works the other way around, which is a final aspect to be briefly touched upon. Sean Murphy, a Massachusetts State Police sergeant who worked as a tactical photographer, was relieved of duty in July 2013 after leaking internal images to *Boston Magazine* from the capture of the wounded and bloody Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (e.g., Wolfson 2013a; 2013b). Murphy explained that he decided to share the images with the public after taking offence to a front cover of the magazine *Rolling Stone,* which he—along with other critical voices—thought glamourized the younger of the Tsarnaev brothers. This is yet another indication of how the visual representations of the terrorist identities indeed constitute a contested terrain. Once again, this also points to the effects of the intensified circulation of images. The leak has become a 'standard feature for information exchange' (Trottier and Lyon 2012, 101) with the consequence that classified and internal documents, including images, have become a more bendable category than in the pre-digital age as they still more often enter the public realm, just as hitherto private eyewitness pictures are more prone to enter into various public and official contexts.

NOTES

1. Mail correspondence with author January 15, 2014. See also www.reddit.com/r/findbostonbombers/ (last accessed April 15, 2014).
2. See Imgur.com/a/sUrnA (last accessed April 15, 2014).

Conclusion

During the past years, digital media have transformed the options for observers of and participants in conflict to communicate their experience, knowledge, and viewpoints through eyewitness images. This development has changed the public's access to news and insights from the front line, media coverage of conflict, and information management by state and military. In treating these subjects, this book has continued and developed the emerging research on eyewitness images as well as the rich literature on media and conflict. Still, as the first monograph to focus exclusively on eyewitness images from conflict in the digital age, an important aim has been to lay out some of the groundwork and establish wider historical and cultural contexts, single out a genre definition, delineate a systematic theoretical framework, and present a number of exemplary analyses.

The book has provided historical and cultural contexts for understanding the current proliferation of eyewitness images by drawing on and expanding theories concerning the first-hand eyewitness. Critical engagement with existing theories on the witness and witnessing served as point of departure for arguing for witnessing as a mediated form of communication and the media as a third domain for witnessing alongside law and religion. In addition, a genre-specific historical background was sketched in chapter 4. As introduction to the analysis of eyewitness images as counter narratives, this chapter looked into the role performed by soldier photography in the British coverage of World War I and German historiography after World War II. These early examples of eyewitness images offering counter narratives indicated an inherent instability of meaning as a dominant feature due to recurring ambivalence concerning *who* and *what* eyewitness images represent. They oscillate between documenting specific episodes and general circumstances; between showing private recollections and historical evidence; between offering individual and institutional perspectives.

This book also proposed a genre definition of eyewitness images. Reflecting the rise of do-it-yourself conflict reporting, this entailed a shift in focus from the eyewitness as a figure to eyewitness images. Whereas the witness used to be a privileged source of information performing a ritualized role in a media institution vouching for his or her legitimacy and relevance,

individuals with no or informal institutional affiliation increasingly assume this role on their own initiative. This development involves continuities as well as changes. As argued throughout the book, many of the qualities traditionally coupled to the witness and witnessing are still at play in eyewitness pictures, including subjectivity, proximity, attributed authenticity, and lack of narrative unity. However, the definition still mirrors the change from studying the figure of the eyewitness as a source to eyewitness images as source materials. Accordingly, to define eyewitness images from conflict as a genre, five characteristics were singled out: 1) auto-recording; 2) subjectivity; 3) media institutional ambiguity; 4) participation and documentation; and 5) decontextualization. Some of the most frequent subgenres of eyewitness images were presented as well: first-person documentary style, embedded footage, and performative representations. Additionally, the adjacent genres of eyewitness images of natural catastrophe and random acts of violence were sketched, which might also benefit from the definition of eyewitness images from conflict.

As stated in the introduction, this book held the ambition of contributing to forming a theory about the relation between media and conflict in the digital age. To this end, chapter 3 situated eyewitness images within 'mediatized conflict', which was theorized as an interrelation process between two dimensions. The first dimension concerns the interplay between the state/military and the media. The second dimension involves the bottom-up movement facilitated by actors outside the institutionalized media producing and distributing media content and/or actors inside state and military working against the policies on information management. Even though this framework was developed from empirical analysis of eyewitness images, it would likely be transferable to other examples of digital media, enabling alternative insights into conflict, such as non-visual forms of digital activism and whistleblowing, the military's incorporation of soldier images on social network sites, and blogs by soldiers (so-called miliblogs or milblogs).

The book included four analytical chapters, examining different aspects of the role and function of eyewitness images from conflict. Chapter 4 studied the ability of this genre to provide counter-narratives to officially sanctioned narratives on the empirical basis of the 2004 snapshot of caskets with fallen American soldiers and the bootleg tape of the hanging of Saddam Hussein in 2006. These examples are characteristic of how the eyewitness pictures gaining public attention have typically undermined the tight regulation of images and made otherwise shielded spaces for representing conflict publicly available. The chapter identified two prototypes for counter-narratives posed by eyewitness images. Either they are sole and exclusive in their representation of conflict, or they undermine official representation by showing more uncensored, raw, and fragmented versions of events.

Chapter 5 launched and examined the term 'unintentional news icon' to designate the way certain eyewitness images from areas of conflict, such as the footage of the killing of Neda Agha Soltan from 2009, come to perform

the traditional part of news icon in the media. Taking its point of departure in the news media's canonization of the eyewitness footage of Neda as an instant icon for the anti-government movement in Iran, the chapter offered a definition of news icons and looked into the circulation of unintentional news icons as part of 'conflictual media events' and political processes of mobilization and legitimization. Moreover, attention was directed to how Neda has become a frame of reference for establishing later icons during the reform movements in other countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa, as well as the political mobilization of this icon.

The propensity of mediatized conflict to spur metacoverage was the subject of chapter 6, which drew empirically on media coverage of the gun camera tape leaked and named 'Collateral Murder' by WikiLeaks in 2010. Mediatized conflict results in the availability of more eyewitness images and other visual sources, but the images are often difficult to present as straightforward documentation or unequivocal evidence. Eyewitness images are prone to be inscribed in ongoing negotiations over information and be ambiguously situated between documentation and participation/being part in the conduct of conflict. For these reasons, eyewitness images appear to invite stories on the infrastructure of communication. The quantitative and qualitative analyses in this case laid bare that the news coverage deployed a personalization frame and focused attention on Julian Assange and Bradley Manning as key and prototypical players in the new infrastructure of communication.

Chapter 7 took as its departure point how the multiple eyewitness images created and disseminated in relation to current conflictual media events are likely to fulfill multiple purposes, before focusing on the citizen investigation of eyewitness images in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon Bombing (2013) as an indication of blurring boundaries between experts and laymen. Through the active involvement of users in creating and spreading media content, images of relevance to the authorities in relation to criminal investigation and surveillance are produced, which are at the same time available in the online public sphere.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The primary research interest of this book was to investigate the way in which eyewitness images change the stream of information from areas of conflict. Accordingly, the book has examined how eyewitness images infiltrate the news media's coverage of contemporary conflicts and put state/military information management to the test. Opportunities and challenges posed by eyewitness images to the news media and the state/military have been highlighted throughout. This has primarily been by examining various examples of how eyewitness images are a result of and further contribute to erasing borderlines between producers and users, professionals and

non-professionals, elites and non-elites, experts and laymen. In other words, eyewitness images put pressure on the confines, which have traditionally defined and guarded the news media as an institution—and thereby also on the state and military in their attempt to exert influence on mediated communication about conflict.

In the examples studied in this book of the news media's approach to eyewitness images, the same dilemma has persistently manifested itself. On the one hand, eyewitness images are low-cost and easily available source materials, providing exclusive and authentic insights into conflict from a first-person perspective. On the other hand, they are also troublesome in terms of extracting a coherent narrative, verifying information, identifying the actors involved, and getting to the bottom of the various interests vested in the production, distribution, and mobilization of the images. To further investigate how the news media come to terms with this dilemma, a relevant and interesting subject for future research would be production studies on the editorial routines and standards in response to the masses of online accessible eyewitness images. Techniques for source criticism are becoming more refined—for instance, the possibilities for crosschecking meta-data and information explicitly communicated by the pictures with information on the location, weather conditions, and so on. Even so, the news media still do not seem to have developed standardized procedures for handling eyewitness images as sources.

From the perspective of military and state, eyewitness images have contributed to the stream of information from areas of conflict becoming more unpredictable and uncontrollable. However, eyewitness images are also mobilized politically and used in military social media strategies to put a human face on the army and conflict. Along these lines, an interesting question for research in the future would be the use of eyewitness images for strategic communication by actors involved in conflict. How do people involved in conflicts look upon and experience the new communicative options for taking and spreading images? What do they perceive as the effects and consequences of producing and distributing images? And what effects and consequences have they faced? Another interesting study would be to continue in the tracks laid out by Struk (2011) and examine the burgeoning number of images putting on display the mundane aspects of conflict. An example of this surfaced during the conflict in Ukraine unfolding at the time of writing this text. News media reported on how citizens on the Crimean Peninsula posed for selfies with what was referred to as 'Russian masked gunmen' (Brady 2014) and pondered whether these images were to be regarded as 'tone-deaf faux pas or a genius PR move' (Shim 2014).[1]

This book initially recognized the terror attack on September 11, 2001, as a landmark in terms of bringing attention to the influence of eyewitness images in the documentation of conflictual media events and concluded with analysis of the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013. In the intervening years, taking and sharing images has become a standard, habitual

response to bearing witness to conflicts. A new genre of conflict reporting has emerged. A new way of getting involved, taking part, delivering testimony—and informing the public about ongoing conflicts.

NOTE

1. The images may be seen, for instance, on: www.policymic.com/articles/84089/selfies-with-soldiers-is-the-coolest-new-thing-in-crimea (last accessed June 29, 2014).

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