

The U.S. Capitol and the German Reichstag Building under Attack: A Qualitative Study
on Visual Framing and Photojournalism in U.S. and German Online News Media

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This thesis titled
The U.S. Capitol and the German Reichstag Building under Attack: A Qualitative Study
on Visual Framing and Photojournalism in U.S. and German Online News Media

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Abstract

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The U.S. Capitol and the German Reichstag Building under Attack: A Qualitative Study on Visual Framing and Photojournalism in U.S. and German Online News Media

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The storming of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 06, 2021, and the attack on the German Reichstag building on Aug. 29, 2020, represent two incisive socio-political events in recent history. By analyzing the online news reporting of three U.S. and three German online news media, differences and similarities in photojournalistic characteristics as well as visual frames associated with the two incidents were identified. Applying the combination of an exploratory qualitative framing analysis with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) theoretical framework of visual framing, the author completed a qualitative analysis of 100 visuals published online within four days after the riots. The exploratory method suits the research objectives as they have not been scientifically examined in previous studies, yet. Thus, the grounded theory method enabled this study to extend the theoretical foundation and to assess the visual frames' implications on four levels in U.S. and German news coverage. Furthermore, this study addresses the concept of collective memory. The subject matter involves recent events of international scope brought into relation being partly comparable, yet requiring a clear differentiation, and a profound elaboration on critical social-political circumstances in both countries.

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So often in life, things that you regard as an impediment turn out to be great, good fortune.

—Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 1933-2020

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Just five months apart, two incisive socio-political incidents took place in the United States and Germany. On Jan. 6, 2021, supporters of the then President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol to stop the certification of incoming President Joe Biden. About five months before, the German democracy faced a similar crisis: A diverse group of demonstrators attacked the Reichstag building on Aug. 29, 2020, expressing their resentment over COVID-19 safety measures issued by the German government. These incidents can be described as attacks of different magnitudes, very close in time, on two centerpieces of Western democracies.

The Importance of Visual Frames

As impactful as the events were, the media coverage was extensive. The visual coverage that accompanied the reporting worldwide shaped our perception and memory. Generally, we can remember images we have already seen very well and evaluate within seconds whether we had seen an image before. This illustrates that visual information can be highly effective media messages. Depending on its purpose, they can be used either as a decorative element or as a central, content-delivering message.

This study is dedicated to the latter – the great significance of images in terms of content and substance. Journalistic images can be seen as witnesses of a moment passed, as “true” and “objective.” The notion of “seeing is believing” can weigh just as much if not more than the mere textual report, depending on the context (Pole, 2004).

In 1996, Baran and Davis stated that messages are often complex combinations of visual and verbal content, with the visual information often being so strong that it

overwhelms the verbal (p. 271). In this regard, Schwalbe and Dougherty (2015) also stated that compared to verbal content, photographs are processed faster than words alone because text requires linear logic, whereas images evoke a spontaneous emotional response (p. 142). The chemical reaction to the stimulus of a visual configuration in front of the lens leads to an identification of image and object. To put it briefly, photography and photojournalism are considered to have the potential to “transform reality into its image” (Godulla, 2019, p. 714).

That effect is based on two major potentials when visual information is conveyed: The association and the emotionalization potential. Emotions are often conveyed visually in the media. That is due to “the associative logic underlying both emotions and images, which differs from the denominational argumentative logic of textual communication” (Kappas & Müller, 2006, p. 3). A high degree of credibility is created by associative logic; thus, photojournalism and visual framing can be considered powerful tools in visual communication.

That power can be misused. For example, when it comes to an association with the terms “lying press” or “fake news.” These became standard terms established by Trump and other populists. When something is claimed to be fake news, actual news is turned from evidence-based into fake facts, mostly without any verifiability. This increasingly emerging phenomenon plays a major role when looking at the socio-political circumstances in the United States and Germany, because it’s common practice among the radical groups to which the second chapter and its sub-chapter “The Rise of Conspiracy Theories as a Common Problem” is devoted.

Visual frames play a central role in supporting what is considered “true” and “fake” news. Dr. Alexander Godulla, professor of empirical communication and media research at the Institute for Communication and Media Studies at the University of Leipzig, explained the term fake news in a poignant way:

Among many other interpretations, the temporary return of this National Socialist-influenced fighting term can also be interpreted as a symptom of a cultural struggle in which parts of the public, once imperceptible in this form or perceptibly capable of articulation, accuse journalism of insincerity or even manipulation. A key aspect of this problem is the fact that people increasingly receive messages that coincide with their interests and positions through automated filtering mechanisms in social networks. The fact that communication in mass publics instead follows the regulatory programs of professionalization criteria developed over many decades is therefore misinterpreted as a more or less strong discrepancy and thus, in extreme cases, as a form of organized propaganda (2017, p. 263).

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic extremist, right-wing, populist, and conspiracy groups instrumentalize the term fake news mainly to support their beliefs and gain new members. On the one hand, the term is used to invalidate news organizations and news media that don't coincide with their interests and positions. On the other hand, the instrumentalization serves to de-legitimize a democratic political system in its entirety, which supposedly destroys itself through fake news. It needs the liberating truth, which could only be provided by the groups who dismantle actual news to be fake.

By identifying so-called fake news – which is actually published by regulatory programs of professionalization criteria – and correcting it with unproven counter-statements, these groups see themselves in a light as if they were performing a service to society. The sub-chapter, “The Rise of Conspiracy Theories as a Common Problem”

further explains the socio-political motivations and addresses their significance in the current context of the attacks on the U.S. Capitol and the German Bundestag.

Domestic Terrorist Attacks

Both attacks have been classified as domestic terrorism. In comparison to international terrorism associated with foreign terrorist organizations or nations, domestic terrorism describes criminal acts committed by individuals or groups to ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature (Terrorism).

Christopher Wray, the director of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, confirmed the storming of the Capitol being a domestic terrorist attack. By negating the baseless claim that the rioters who took part in the attack were “fake Trump protesters,” he knocked down this assertion pushed by Republican Sen. Ron Johnson (Cohen et al.). He also stated that Anti-Facist and other left-wing groups were not part of the violence on January 6.

As such, the storming of the Capitol joins a series of tragic domestic terrorist attacks in recent time in the United States. Since 1849, over 25 notable attacks of such kind occurred in the United States (McKeever & Beard, 2021). I refer to these in the sub-chapter “United States – Trump’s Role in the Simmering of Tensions.”

Out of respect, I would like to mention three more domestic terrorism incidents: The Boston bombing in 2013, the Charleston church shooting in 2015, both in the United States, and the terrorist attack in Hanau in Germany in 2020. The third chapter presents related scholarly research on these incidents.

In Germany, too, the attack on the Reichstag building in 2020 wasn't the only domestic terrorist attack in recent years. The group Nazi Underground (Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund, NSU) dominated media headlines from late 2011 until recently. The group was accused of “ten racially motivated murders of Greeks, Turks and a policewoman [...]. It was also suspected of 14 bank robberies, several bombings and other crimes” (Terrorism in Germany).

Past terrorist attacks by individual criminals also shook German society. As I mentioned, an assassination took place in Hanau on Feb. 19, 2020, in front of a shisha bar known to be visited by people with a migration background, and nine Hanau citizens with foreign origins were murdered. The shooter was a 43-year-old from Hanau, Tobias R., who subsequently shot his mother and himself in his parents' apartment.

Sascha Lobo, a German author specializing in digital technologies, described the perpetrator's motivation as a mishmash of racist conspiracy theories. In 2020, a lot happened in Germany: After shooting deaths in Hanau in February, the first COVID-19 lockdown in March, and the attack on the Bundestag in August, Lobo concluded that

The pandemic has revealed how disturbingly great the willingness is among White Germans to regard such racism as in Hanau as tolerable. That is why ostensibly left-wing opponents of vaccination or liberal opponents of COVID-19 measures joined forces with Nazis in the streets. The current migrant rage in Germany feeds on exactly such realizations saying: In case of doubt and crisis, you [meaning people with an anti-racism or left-wing political orientation] are not serious about your anti-racism ideology (2021).

Back to the NSU: When Beate Zschäpe, a German right-wing extremist and one of the NSU's key figures, was sentenced to life in prison as the main defendant in the NSU trial on July 11, 2018, one of Germany's main underground networks was

weakened. Together with Uwe Böhnhardt and Uwe Mundlos they formed the leading trio. However, the network still exists. Anti-Semitic motivated or xenophobic crimes in general continue to increase alongside right-wing parties gaining popularity and joining forces.

In both the attack on the Capitol and the German Bundestag, conspiracy theories and right-wing extremist ideas played a leading role in the planning and execution of the violent acts. The second chapter provides the crucial background information on the socio-political circumstances in both countries.

The visual information that accompanied these incidents were etched in our memory. Therefore, they are worth examining. Not only did they accompany news messages but they constituted them to a high degree. Like Rodriguez and Dimitrova stated: “Images are powerful framing tools because they are less intrusive than words and as such require less cognitive load” (2011, p. 50).

Research Objectives

This study contributes to the state of research in three ways: First, the research interest is in the topicality of the subject matter and its international journalistic scope. A visual analysis of such acute events seems to be an important investigation of the current social and political environment.

Secondly, there is a need for research on how photojournalism and visual framing link together using the theoretical framework proposed by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011). This study closes an existing research gap. To date, there is no study that specifically links the two attacks in a visual analysis of their news coverage comparing

U.S. and German news outlets while summarizing considerable background information in an intriguing way. Using an exploratory qualitative framing analysis, the study extends the theoretical foundation to examine the power and implications of the visual frames surrounding the attacks.

This study also examines how the two attacks can be incorporated into collective memory. We are very close in time to the two incidents. My research can be useful for later evaluations to build on my findings or incorporate them from a future point of view.

Esther Bubley (1902-1972), who was world-renowned for her work photographing babies, once said: “I do not take pictures ‘of’ children, I take pictures ‘for’ them” (Durrant, 2012). The same can be applied to photojournalists: They don’t take pictures of society; they take pictures for it. Images not only carry the momentum, but they also become a part of the collective pictorial memory for posterity. Photojournalism is a particular way of documenting the world, and visually capturing moments without necessarily drawing subjective conclusions about them.

The public’s perception of news media is affected by the photographer’s first selection, which takes into consideration the public’s needs, and then by the editor’s ultimate decision on which photographs are released and how they are delivered. For publication, news media organizations select images that convey the most powerful messages. The relevance and interest of this thesis is tied to this point: Its aim is to draw scholarly conclusions from the most powerful visual information around two of the most important socio-political events in recent past.

Not least, there is a personal concern with the topic, as the two events took place in the two countries where I am earning academic degrees, and I was brought democratic, liberal values. In addition to my scholarly assessment, examining the chosen topic also broadens my personal understanding of what happened in August 2020 and January 2021.

Thesis Structure

Following the introduction, background information about the storming of the Capitol and the attack on the Reichstag building are presented in the second chapter. Two sub-chapters are dedicated to looking at Trump's role in the simmering of tensions and the bizarrely diverse resentment that led to the riot in Germany. Thereafter, the rise of conspiracy formations as a common problem in both countries is examined.

The literature review in the third chapter provides an overview of relevant scholarly and social science work as well as leading authors in the respective research fields who have shaped the central terms. In addition, I present relevant studies that served as inspiration and support for study through their use of similar research objectives or methods.

Next, the fourth chapter explains the theory on which the qualitative analysis is based: Rodriguez and Dimitrova's theoretical framework of visual framing. It was developed in 2011 and contains four levels, according to which this study performs its analysis. Also, the fourth chapter introduces the research questions which derive from the theory and the research objectives. My main research question asks:

RQ1: At the denotative level, which visual themes are present in the online reporting of U.S. news media after the storming of the Capitol, and in the online reporting of German news media after the attack on the Reichstag building?

The methods section, chapter five, introduces the qualitative research method within an exploratory qualitative framing approach. It further discusses the chosen sample and the reason for its selection. It also describes how the theoretical framework was used to structure the category system for the analysis of the visual frames. The category system was created using an exploratory technique to extend it beyond given variables.

The research questions are answered in the sixth chapter. This is combined with the discussion part, which interprets and evaluates the results, as well as their ramifications and significance. It also outlines the study's limitations and proposes further research ideas. Last, I end with a conclusion in the seventh chapter.

Chapter 2: The Storming of the Capitol and the Attack on the Reichstag Building

The U.S. Capitol is considered a symbol of democracy. The fact that rioters attacked and vandalized it is seen as a desecration by Democratic forces. The historian Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson, Professor of History of the European-Transatlantic Cultural Area at the University of Augsburg, noted how tragic the event was for the U.S. democracy. For more than 200 years it had been the first democracy in the world with a tradition of peaceful power transitions (Steinlein, 2021).

When right-wing, armed protestors stormed the Capitol, that tradition was shattered. According to David Rapoport, professor emeritus of political science and terrorism at the University of California, “no attack was ever made to overturn a presidential election result and no capitol attack involved so many participants. If it had been successful, there could have been enormous violence that could have lasted years” (2021, p. 912).

The Democratic minority leader Chuck Schumer refused to call the members of the mob storming the Capitol “protestors” but “rioters and insurrectionists, goons and thugs, domestic terrorists [who] do not represent America,” Schumer said. Egged on by then President Donald Trump, this catastrophe can be evaluated as a symptom of years of division into “parallel societies” and the increased social split due to political polarization during his era (Steinlein, 2021).

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, a similar scenario unfolded a few months earlier: On the evening of August 29, 2020, approximately 400-500 extremists were able to overcome the barriers at the Berlin Reichstag building. The pressure of the so-called

Querdenker-demonstration against the COVID-19 restrictions shifted from the streets to the stairway to the German Bundestag. The Querdenker movement (also Querdenken or Lateral Thinking) is directed against government measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Its sympathizers believe that coronavirus regulations infringe on basic rights and constitutional freedom. They oppose vaccinations and other safety measures, and they spread conspiracy narratives.

Following the approved COVID-19 demonstration, an aggressive mob mainly consisting of right-wing extremists split off unexpectedly. It moved almost unhindered by the police towards the entrance of the Reichstag building. The Reichstag building in Berlin has been the seat of the German Bundestag, the seat of the German Parliament, since 1999. Symbolically, the scenario went beyond the usual demonstration pictures: The extremists managed to triumph for a few minutes on the steps of the high security building threatening members of the German government inside (Peitz, 2020).

The following sub-chapters provide background information on the socio-political circumstances that had contributed to the outbreaks of tensions in the form of the two attacks. The entirety of all historic socio-political factors in the United States and in Germany that led to the riots can't be mentioned for reasons of research scope and focus. Therefore, I focus on selected elements that provide context for the situation.

United States – Trump's Role in the Simmering of Tensions

As a result of Trump's disinformation campaigns and his encouragement of radical groups via social media, hundreds of Republican supporters prone to violence occupied the Capitol and entered the parliamentary chamber on Jan. 6, 2021 (Gensing,

December 30, 2020). They were supported by Trump's claims of vote-rigging, although the accusation of election fraud was never officially substantiated (Mulroy, 2020).

What happened on January 6, unfortunately, was not the first attack on the Capitol. According to National Geographic, since 1814, there have been seven attacks on the Capitol building, two shootings at the Capitol security checkpoint in 1998 and 2013, and one shooting at the Capitol Visitor Center in 2016 (McKeever & Beard, 2021).

There have been other attacks, too. Rapoport describes the 1954 Puerto Rican nationalist attack, the 1971 Weather Underground bombing and the 1983 Resistance Unit bombing as it follows:

In 1954 during the 2nd terrorist wave, four Nationalist Party members seeking independence for Puerto Rico fired pistols in the House chamber injuring five Congressmen. In the 3rd wave the Weather Underground, protesting the U.S. decision to help South Vietnam invade Laos, a bomb exploded in a Senate bathroom in 1971. [In a following attack in 1983, the] Weather Underground offshoot, protesting U.S. military involvements in Grenada and Lebanon, bombed the Senate creating damage like the previous attack (2021, p. 912 f.).

Furthermore, as it was confirmed by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, the Capitol building was supposed to be a target of the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001. Fortunately, an al Qaeda hijacked United Airlines plane never made it to the Capitol building. Instead, it crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside. The intended flight route was altered by passengers who managed to rush the hijacked cockpit (McKeever & Beard, 2021).

While some attacks on the U.S. Capitol have happened before, never before was there a misattribution of the responsibility for an attack. Trump did it first. His lawyers falsely claimed that the left-wing movement Antifa and its followers supposedly dressed as Trump supporters and conjured the violence of the storming (Rapoport, 2021, p. 913).

The U.S. Center for Strategic and International Studies defines the Antifa movement as it follows:

Antifa is a contraction of the phrase anti-fascist and refers to a decentralized network of individuals that oppose fascism, racism, and other related ideologies. [...] It is a decentralized movement [whose] roots lie in various left-wing causes, such as communism, anarchism, and socialism. However, Antifa supporters do not necessarily share all aspects of these ideological inspirations. [...] While many Antifa sympathizers do not support violence as the only—or even the main—instrument to oppose fascism, they do view violence as a legitimate option (Jones & Doxsee, 2021).

In the overall picture, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security stated that Antifa groups had been contributing to single violence acts throughout the country— which some local police authorities have stated publicly in other cases, too – but says there is no specific evidence of Antifa-motivated violence in the Capitol riot.

Trump’s false accusation was echoed and supported by radical groups such as the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, opponents of Covid measures, and the QAnon Cult. As crowds gathered in front of the Capitol, they expressed their displeasure with the outcome of the presidential election in a figuratively aggressive way, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 1

Trump Supporters Standing in Front of the Capitol



Note: Those in attendance carry symbolic gallows for members of the elected Biden administration (from *National Geographic*, by S. Horse, 2021. Copyright 2021 by Getty Images).

In spite of or because Trump was the first president in U.S. history to be impeached as well as acquitted twice, he has been able to rally a broad swath of supporters behind him. He specifically made himself accessible to radical groups. The sub-chapter “The Rise of Conspiracy Theories as a Common Problem” addresses this issue in further detail. The Capitol’s storming involved well-organized paramilitary far-right groups such as the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, followers of the QAnon cult, and others (Sternberg, 2021). Just as in Berlin during the attack on the German Reichstag, the mob was very diverse in the composition of its ideological tendencies.

The Proud Boys can be described as “an opportunistic hate group whose message of White male chauvinism is infused with religious and nationalist symbols. They are proudly anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, and anti-feminist” (Kitts, 2020, p. 1). The movement can be described as “a provocative club for men who love America but hate political correctness while vehemently denying any connection to the alt-right” (McEvoy, 2020).

The Oath Keepers criticize that “many government officials have broken their oaths to uphold the Constitution, and in doing so have forsaken the legacy of the Founders who designed the American political system” (Jackson, 2018). The so-called patriotic organization takes an extreme position in the trend of political dissatisfaction. According to the Anti-Defamation League, “the Oath Keepers call for the nullification of all gun laws and view any gun control measures as schemes designed to dismantle the Second Amendment” (Oath Keepers). The movement was particularly active in 2020 pretending to provide so-called vigilante-style security for local communities and businesses during the lockdowns and Black Lives Matter protests.

The QAnon cult constitutes a conspiracy theory that centers on the claim that an influential global elite of pedophiles and Satanists are kidnapping, imprisoning, and torturing children, drawing their blood to produce rejuvenation drugs. For many QAnon followers, Trump is a messiah-equal savior who has come to smash the dark conspiracy and free the children trapped in underground bunkers (Spiegel, 2020, p. 16). The sub-chapter “The Rise of Conspiracy Theories as a Common Problem” takes up this topic in further detail.

Figure 2

QAnon Symbol Displayed Outside the U.S. Capitol by Trump Supporters



Note: From the *New York Times*, by W. McNamee, 2021. Copyright 2021 by Getty Images).

Trump has never clearly disassociated himself from these radical conspiracy groups or their approval of and support for him. Under hashtags such as #MillionMilitiaMarch, armed right-wing extremists from different backgrounds had been discussing violent actions for Jan. 20, 2021, the inauguration day of President Joe Biden, on social media platforms for weeks before it was executed offline (Sternberg, 2021).

Trump's obvious aim was to stop the transition to the new presidential era of President Joe Biden. Even worse, he had to be asked to stop the radical violence on Jan. 6, 2021, after he called for the riots in his speech in front of the White House on January

6, 2021: “We’re going to walk down to the Capitol. You’ll never take back our country with weakness, you have to show strength. And we fight, we fight like hell. And if you don’t fight like hell, you’ll not have a country anymore” (Rowley, 2021, 01:01:58-01:02:25).

Amongst others, his former communications director Alyssa Farah called on him to stop and condemn the violence (figure 3). At the same time, the words “You are the only one they will listen to” can be interpreted as a confirmation of Trump’s connection to the radical, right-wing, and conspiracy groups. It seemed like a verification that Trump’s incitement was the engine of the violence and his call to stop it the only brake.

As stated, Farah was a former communications director – she could be considered proficient in the use of external communication. Her words can be evaluated as either carefully chosen to separate herself intellectually from the Capitol attack without publicly denouncing Trump and withdrawing from his favor, or it was an inconsiderate, less thoughtful decision made in the heat of the moment that later turned out to be supportive of hostilities against Trump.

Figure 3

Alyssa Farah’s Request to Stop the Riot

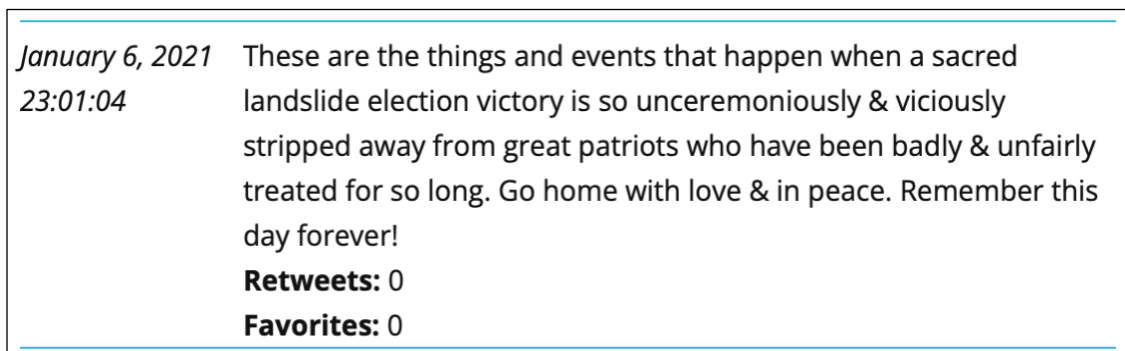


Note: From *Twitter* by A. Farah, 2021. @Alyssafarah.

Only after promptings did Trump address the invaders of the Capitol building online on Twitter. However, he defended the destructive mob for infiltrating the building, and publicly appreciated the way his supporters fought against the so-called stolen election. While Mike Pence, the then 48th vice president of the United States, announced on Twitter that the attack on the Capitol “will not be tolerated and those involved will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” Trump told his supporters to “remember this day forever” (Figure 4).

Figure 4

“Remember this day forever,” Tweeted by Donald Trump



Note: Because the original source on Twitter is no longer accessible due to Trump’s suspension from Twitter, I reference the U.S. American Presidency Project (from the *American Presidency Project*, by G. Peters & J. T. Woolley, 2021).

Nevertheless, on Jan. 13, 2021, Trump had been acquitted by the Senate in a partisan 57-43 vote in his second impeachment trial for his role in the attack (Levine & Gambino, 2021). The simple majority for retroactive impeachment was clear –

remarkably seven Republicans had voted for it with the Democrats. But a two-thirds majority would have been needed. That decision theoretically enables Trump to run for president again in 2024.

National and international media responses expressed both indignation as well as congratulation on the verdict (Suciu, 2021). On the one hand, several heads of state, including then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, publicly accused Trump of complicity in the deadly event and of desecrating democracy (Merkel: *Wütend und auch traurig*). Britain's interior minister Priti Patel also publicly criticized Trump: "He made a statement and it did very little to de-escalate the situation. Words of provocation are completely wrong," she stated (Walsh & Wesley, 2021).

On the other hand, statements from China, Russia and other authoritarian states expressed how weak Western politics appear to be. According to a Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, "the U.S. electoral system doesn't meet modern democratic standards and creates opportunities for numerous violations" (Johnson, 2021).

Following the attack on the Capitol, "Trump [himself] expressed no remorse and made no mention of the violence that unfolded in his name. Instead, he signaled his desire to remain a political force within the Republican party" (Levine & Gambino, 2021). Trump publicly reacted to the storming of the Capitol as "yet another phase of the greatest witch-hunt in the history of [the] country" (Shabad, 2021).

On Jan. 8, Twitter permanently suspended his account due to the risk of further incitement of violence. His reaction quickly followed: He announced the creation of his own social media platform. Fast forward one year, the app named Truth Social received

170,000 downloads in its first day after its launch on Sunday, February 20, 2022 (Brown, 2022). Within its first 48 hours, Newsweek claimed that the app has attracted approximately 500,000 users (Palmer, 2022). It was created by Trump Media & Technology Group (TMTG), the former president's new corporation. Devin Nunes, a former California congressman who resigned in January to become the chief executive officer of TMTG, expressed Truth Social's welcome to people who have been banned from social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter: "It's actually very moving for me to see people that are on the platform that have had their voice canceled – and that's our main goal here is to give people their voice back," Nunes said (Palmer, 2022). According to TMTG itself, Truth Social "encourages an open, free, and honest global conversation without discriminating against political ideology" (Follow the Truth).

Within a few days, the app became a sanctuary for the right-wing extremist and conspiracy groups described in this study. However, it turned out that the platform is not as free of censorship as it appears to be. For example, the web developer Matt Ortega was banned before he posted anything due to his username on Truth Social, which was @DevinNunesCow. It was inspired by the parody account on Twitter @DevinCow. The account thematizes the cows on the farm of former Republican Devin Nunes, who now no longer serves in Congress but now works as the CEO of Truth Social's parent company, Trump Media & Technology Group (Milz, 2022).

Besides Trump, other politicians were allegedly in favor of the storming. For example, the names of two far-right Republican congresswomen, who were sworn in just the week before the riot, were mentioned: Marjorie Taylor Greene from Georgia and

Lauren Boebert from Colorado. Greene campaigned on QAnon conspiracy theories and refused to wear a mask in the security room. Although it is prohibited, Boebert insisted on coming into the chamber at gunpoint, and tweeted when Nancy Pelosi had left the chamber on January 6. That tweet had been taken as a signal of cooperation to the violence-prone troops outside of the Capitol building (Reinbold, 2021).

As of Jan. 2, 2022, Twitter announced the permanent suspension of Greene's personal account due to a violation of the platform's Covid-19 misinformation policies. With the platform's five-strike system with escalating punishments for each infraction, Greene had reached the limit by repeatedly promoting the conspiracy that "the federal government is ignoring extremely high amounts of Covid vaccine deaths" (Hart, 2022).

Trump's behavior cannot be considered solely responsible for the attack, but he clearly served as an ideological role model, not least for other politicians who allegedly knew about the designated storming, his supporters, and far-right group members. To this day, not only do radical forces feel tolerated by Trump and his like-minded, they feel officially supported.

Mary McCord, a former counterterrorism officer in the U.S. Department of Justice, was involved in the lawsuit against the Charlottesville militias. She confirmed that under Trump's presidency, the far-right militias felt encouraged to engage publicly: "That's what they have always appealed to. When Trump talked about very decent people on both sides after Charlottesville, the militias picked up on his language. It helps them recruit, fundraise, and expand" (Rowley, 2021, 00:58:05-00:58:34).

Germany – A Bizarrely Diverse Resentment

In Germany, too, the Reichstag building was not attacked for the first time. Before the attack in 2020, the first one took place precisely 100 years earlier, on Jan. 13, 1920, during a hearing of the Weimar National Assembly on the Works Council Act.

Radical left-wing groups had been called upon by the socialist USPD (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany), the Moscow-affiliated KPD (Communist Party of Germany) and radical Berlin trade unionists to voice their displeasure with the new Reich government's planned Works Council Act. This happened shortly after the November Revolution of 1918/19, which led to the overthrow of the German monarchy. In the later stages of World War I, it was turned into a parliamentary democracy, the Weimar Republic, with the Reich administration. The radical left groups demanded, by and large, a socialist revolution – which should have caused a civil similar to the Russia one (Kleikamp, 2020).

In 2020, after the previous attack on the Bundestag, a question re-arose in Germany that had come up in 1920, too: Does Germany need a stricter ban circle law that would punish unauthorized demonstrations and public gatherings?

Decades before the first storming in 1920, in October 1848, the first ban circle law was passed by the Frankfurt National Assembly to designate a ban mile around the Parliament, within which public meetings and processions were prohibited. At this time, similar laws already existed in other countries, such as England. The Seditious Meeting Act of March 31, 1817, established a one-mile exclusion zone around Westminster Hall (Fischer, 2020). However, the ban circle regulation of 1848 in Germany was first violated

in 1920, when the first attack on the Reichstag building took place. In the following paragraph I briefly summarize how the attack unfolded.

At least 100,000 people had been summoned by the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, the Moscow-affiliated German Communist Party and radical Berlin trade unionists to express their displeasure with the planned Works Council Act (Kleikamp, 2020). When the few dozen police guards at the four main entrances to the building felt pressured by the masses, they first tried to keep the crowd at bay with batons. Then a first shot was fired, although it was never clarified by whom. A few seconds later, a demonstrator fired at the west portal of the Reichstag with a captured rifle. Subsequently, the guards fired at the masses with heavy infantry weapons. The police used machine guns and hand grenades, wounding dozens of people and killing 42 others (Kleikamp, 2020).

Figure 5

Members of the Security Police on Jan. 13, 1920



Note: From Welt, Copyright 2020 by Getty Images.

After the 1920 storming, lawmakers tightened restrictions to ban miles (rather than one mile) around official government buildings. This law changed distance over the decades through different state systems and powers. Today, it exists in the 2008 version in the form of the Law on Protected Districts for Federal Constitutional Bodies (Fischer, 2020).

However, nowadays, the term ban mile is not applicable. Constitutional organs belong to protected districts, which is colloquially referred to as ban miles. The Act on Protected Districts for Federal Constitutional Bodies defines these areas. Assemblies and demonstrations have to be authorized by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in agreement with the presidium of the respective constitutional body. Approval can be granted if there

is no interference with the activities of the constitutional organs. Annex 1 of the Act lists more than 18 streets and squares that protect the district around the Bundestag violated during the attack in 2020 (Anlage 1 BefBezG).

Why did a second storming of the Reichstag building occur in the first place when on August 29, 2020, almost 40,000 people came to Berlin to demonstrate? The mob was multifaceted, but right-wing political demonstrators of different parties dominated it. Among them were members and supporters of the extreme right-wing parties National Democratic Party of Germany, The Right, Alternative for Germany, the Young Alternatives and supporters of the Reichsbürger and Self Governor scene, just to name a few. According to the BBC, the demonstration was called by the Stuttgart-based group Querdenken 711 with more than 16,000 followers on Facebook. Group members communicate largely through encrypted messaging service Telegram (Germany coronavirus: Anger after attempt to storm parliament).

Before elaborating more on Reichsbürger and Self Governors, I refer to the instant-messaging platform Telegram created in 2013 as a heaven for far-right speech and extremist messages generally. After Twitter banned the content of certain radical groups or single individuals like Greene or Trump, Telegram became a sanctuary for them and their followers in the United States and in Germany. Through the app which was founded in 2013, users can plan crimes largely unhindered. Death threats against politicians, researchers and activists have regularly been spread, for example against Saxony's Prime Minister Michael Kretschmer recently in December 2021.

In Germany, Nancy Faeser, the Federal Minister of the Interior and Home Affairs, considered a shutdown of the platform. However, such a shutdown would be difficult to enforce, given that Telegram doesn't follow German or European data protection laws. The platform's servers are located internationally. When the Russian authorities blocked Telegram in 2018, the app operators evaded the blockade with technically sophisticated measures and kept the platform available for its users (Kampf gegen Extremismus).

Faeser rolled back from her request two weeks later by the end of January 2022. She simply wanted to intensify the pressure on Telegram to moderate its content, she said. Meanwhile, on Jan. 26, 2022, the Federal Criminal Police Office launched a task force. Its aim is to work with the different police forces of the federal states and the Central Office for Combating Internet Crime to identify and prosecute suspects online before they can carry out any actions. Holger Münch, the president of the Federal Criminal Police Office, stated: "We strive to cooperate with Telegram, but also apply our measures if Telegram does not cooperate" (Messengerdienste sind kein rechtsfreier Raum). His office stressed the dangerousness of the platform for people belonging to specific segments of society:

The messenger service Telegram is increasingly becoming a medium for radicalization. Particularly affected are political officeholders and elected officials as well as people from the fields of science and medicine who are publicly involved in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic (Messengerdienste sind kein rechtsfreier Raum).

This development applies to both the United States and Germany. The specific menace illustrates how topical the problem of the common rise of conspiracy groups in both countries has become.

Back to Reichsbürger and Self Governors in Germany: They are groups and individuals who invoke the historical German Reich constituted in 1871 to reject the existence of today's Federal Republic of Germany and its legal system. They deny the legitimacy of democratically elected representatives and consider themselves to be incontestable by the legal system. The scene has a strong affinity for weapons and illegal self-defense mechanisms (Reichsbürger und Selbstverwalter).

I now address the diverse composition of the mob on Aug. 29, 2020, in Berlin. Besides the right-wing party supporters mixed with Reichsbürger, the crowd was miscellaneous. It included, for example, critics of conventional medicine, vaccination opponents, esoterics, hooligans, Reich citizens and right-wing extremists (Bewarder et al., 2021).¹ In fact, an alternative practitioner named Tamara K. was one of the initiators and main speakers. She was already known as a right-wing activist and speaker prior to the attack.

Uniting this bizarrely diverse social resentment was the exceptionally strong opposition to the COVID-19 strategy of the German government. However, the increasing permeability of the boundaries between people who feel inclined to spiritual practices, conspiracy theories, and the Reichsbürger scene, for example, is a phenomenon that had been noticeable before the pandemic, according to Dr. Matthias Pöhlmann, Commissioner for Worldview Issues of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria. Yet, the current health crisis has intensified this phenomenon as times of emergencies are high phases for conspiracy theorists of all kinds, he said. The feeling of losing control or being

¹ In this case of the COVID-19 opposition, esoterics are followers or representatives of mystical or religious teachings as well as pseudoscientists.

helpless favors conspiracy ideas. What unites the various ideological tendencies is “distrust and general suspicion of larger institutions” and the belief that “common enemies have finally been identified,” Pöhlmann said (2020, p. 4). He observes an enormous potential for frustration and anger within this scenario.

Prior to the incident on Aug. 29, 2020, the Berlin State Criminal Police Office established a special investigation group called Quer due to increasingly right-wing populist dissemination of radical ideas coming from the Querdenker movement. It uses the COVID-19 measures as fuel for their ideology against the German government. The criminal investigators examine different incidents caused by the movement, including the arson attack on the Robert Koch Institute, one of the leading medical institutes during the pandemic, in Berlin on Oct. 25, 2020. However, this investigation centers on the storming of the Bundestag.

In an interview with the German newspaper WELT, the alternative practitioner Tamara K. revealed that the plan for the attack had been hatched online weeks before. This is another commonality compared to the socio-political circumstances in the United States. K. had been asked online by other initiators if she would be willing to go on stage as the last speaker and call for the storm, to which she agreed. She publicly called in her speech to “take back [their] house,” meaning the Reichstag building, but stressed in later interviews that she had only “wanted to ask protesters to sit on the steps” (Heilpraktikerin aus der Eifel). In her speech, she announced that the then President Trump had landed in Berlin on August 29, 2020, to help Germany get rid of its corrupt government. According

to Tamara K., an ally in the Berlin police wanted to ensure that the building was unprotected “at the right moment” (Bewarder et al., 2021).

The reconstruction of the events shows that rumors and targeted false reports played a central role in inciting the crowd. During the demonstration, for example, rumors had repeatedly spread that police officers had removed their helmets in front of the Russian embassy and deserted to join the diverse mob. In fact, neo-Nazis had rioted in front of the embassy, and the police arrested numerous participants. Moreover, initiators repeatedly exaggerated numbers of participants during the march. Over the course of the weekend, figures of up to six million participants had circulated (Gensing, August 31, 2020).

Figure 6

Tamara K. During Her Speech in Front of the Russian Embassy



Note: First violent disturbances occurred in front of the Russian Embassy in Berlin which the march of the demonstration passed. It then continued towards the Reichstag (from *Tagesspiegel*, Screenshot Twitter, 2020).

However, as the protesters approached the Reichstag building, police personnel were unprepared for such an onslaught and were temporarily overwhelmed. Police told the Bundestag's Interior Committee that about 2,000 people split off from the main demonstration to the Reichstag. Due to gaps in the police defense, the barriers in front of the Reichstag building could be torn apart, explained Berlin's deputy police chief Marco Langner. From 400 to 500 demonstrators ran up the steps of the building (Bewarder et al., 2021).

Figure 7

The Crowd on the Reichstag Stairs



Note: Protestors broke through the barriers and stormed towards the Bundestag.

“Now we are going to get the Reichstag,” a man shouted. The crowd was stopped by a few policemen at the entrance of the building (Gensing, August 31, 2020), (from *Berliner Zeitung*, by J. M. Wiesner, 2021. Copyright 2020 by Getty Images).

There was no threat of an intrusion, according to the police (Bewarder et al., 2021). However, Bundestag President Schäuble later said that members of the Bundestag were in danger. As a result, the state police were ordered to strengthen their forces in order to safeguard the Reichstag building and the U.S. Embassy.

The Rise of Conspiracy Theories as a Common Problem

In retrospect, the Charlottesville demonstration almost seemed like a prelude to what was to come. Only a few months after Trump’s inauguration on January 20, 2017, White supremacy nationalists committed arson, public hunting of counter-demonstrators

and serious bodily injury with death as a result on an open street in Charlottesville, Virginia: A woman was killed and 29 other people injured when a neo-Nazi crashed his car into a group of counter-demonstrators. Since then, the lines between right-wing radicals and conspiracy theorists increasingly blur. Additionally, both sides offer mutual support to each other. According to the Oscar-nominated journalist and documentary filmmaker Rick Rowley (2021), who extensively researched these movements in the United States since 2016, many Proud Boys also belong to White supremacy nationalist groups.

Under the slogan “Unite the Right,” far-right nationalist groups demonstrated on the evening of August 11 and the morning of August 12, 2017, infamously carrying lit tiki torches. The protest was brought about by the removal of the statue of pro-slavery Confederate General Robert E. Lee in the university town with 50,000 inhabitants, against which right-wing radicals demonstrated. Clashes with counter-demonstrators led to an escalation (Harte, 2021).

Participants belonged to the Alt-Right, Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, and others. Highly visible were also the far-right, neo-fascist, and exclusively male Proud Boys with their chairman Henry “Enrique” Tarrío. The ideology of prevailing White supremacy united these groups (Rowley, 2021).

Also present and however slightly deviating from the general White supremacy ideology was the Boogaloo movement. Being monitored by law enforcement investigations, “it believes in a coming second U.S. civil war – referred to as the boogaloo” (Examining Extremism). The U.S. Center for Strategic and International

Studies describes the difficulty to characterize the movement: “While some Boogaloo adherents promote White supremacist beliefs, others have demonstrated alongside racial justice protesters, for example the Black Lives Matter movement. That makes Boogaloo difficult to classify along traditional political lines” (Examining Extremism). In June 2020, Facebook conducted a coordinated takedown of Boogaloo content. Trump’s reaction to Charlottesville was just as ambiguous as after the Capitol riot:

That was a horrible day. I have watched it very closely, much more closely than you people watched it, and you had a group on one side that was bad and a group on the other side that was also very violent. And nobody wants to say that, but I’ll say it right now (Rowley, 2021, 00:04:42-00:05:00).

It was this tolerance between the lines that marked the beginning of a new era of empowerment for conspiracy theorists and White nationalists under Trump. In 2017, the German Newspaper Zeit stated: “Of all things, Trump has no clear words to say about the neo-Nazi protests in Charlottesville. The president does not want to scare away America’s right-wingers because he is counting on them” (Caryl, 2017). Bond and Neville-Shepard aptly summarize this peculiar symbiosis:

Trump’s eventual embrace of QAnon in the final days of the 2020 presidential campaign marked a new shift in political appeals to religion, representing what we call the rise of »presidential eschatology«. While presidents have appealed to Christianity since the founding of the Republic, religious language has escalated since the Reagan presidency. [...] We contend that Trump’s alliance with QAnon symbolized a shift from presidents appealing to God to presidents becoming a messiah in a political religion, in this case through the acceptance of a millennialist narrative fashioned by the fringe conspiracy movement that portrayed the president as their Savior (2021, p. 2 f.).

Why do QAnon members believe Trump to be their Savior? “At its heart, [the QAnon theory] says that Trump is waging a secret war against elite Satan-worshipping pedophiles in government, business and the media.” They also hope for a day of

reckoning on which “prominent people such as former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton will be arrested and executed” (Wendling, 2021). QAnon members regularly join public events and successfully spread new fallacious claims. According to the *New York Times*, in November 2021, hundreds turned up in Dallas “expecting to see John F. Kennedy Jr. – the former U.S. president’s son, who died in a plane crash in 1999 – announce his intentions to be Mr. Trump’s running mate in 2024” (Alba, 2021).

Those who think that this ideology sounds too far-fetched to be worth believing might be surprised by its proximity to actual politics: One outspoken QAnon supporter, Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, was elected to the US Congress in November 2020. According to a Pew Research Center study in September 2020, nearly half of U.S. Americans had heard of QAnon. Moreover, Trump retweeted QAnon content before he had been suspended from Twitter, leading social media platforms to tighten their rules on QAnon content and deleting supporting content where it could be detected. Threatening messages online play one role, but the actual threat offline plays another. Twitter officially expressed that a potential for “offline damage” can be attributed to the QAnon Cult (Wendling, 2021).

In Germany, too, democracy is under threat from extremism of various forms, fueled by conspiracy theorists. In this regard, the same socio-political development can be observed as in the United States: The intersections between diverse anti-democratic, racist, fascist, and COVID-19 groups are multiplying, and members are increasingly finding the lowest common ideological denominator (Verfassungsschutz, 2022).

The president of Germany's Federal Office of Constitutional Protection, Thomas Haldenwang, officially recognized demonstrators against the COVID-19 policy as a new scene of state enemies. Their observation shifted from state to federal level by the end of 2021. This new, diverse scene of state enemies can no longer be clearly assigned to previous concrete categories such as right-wing or left-wing extremism.

Today, anti-government extremists are not united by a single ideological bracket, but by their general contempt for the democratic constitutional state and its representatives. "They fundamentally reject our democratic state system," Haldenwang said (Verfassungsschutz, 2022). At the same time, this driving denominator causes any ideological differences to diminish in importance.

In Saxony, Germany, the minor party Freie Sachsen (also Free Saxons) succeeded in exerting a major right-wing influence on the COVID-19 movement, according to the Federal Office of Constitutional Protection. His agency monitors it, Haldenwang emphasized. Freie Sachsen was founded in 2021, approximately one year after the first lockdown in Germany. Among others, the founding board includes Martin Kohlmann, a city councilor in Chemnitz for another far-right minor party called Pro Chemnitz (Unvereinbarkeitsliste).

Again, the similarity to the United States can be observed – more descendants of different groups continuously form, disappear or merge. While U.S. members of the decentralized Boogaloo movement mix with Proud Boys, QAnon cult and White supremacists, in Germany right-wing extremists of various small parties form up with

Reichsbürger, esoteric-spiritual people, German QAnon followers, and opponents of COVID-19 safety measures.

The QAnon myth emerged in the United States in 2017 before it reached Europe. In the European area, the largest number of followers can be found in Germany, according to a report by Hope Not Hate, a U.K. advocacy group that opposes racism and fascism. What led to this popularity in Germany? Lawrence and Davis propose the following explanation:

While some European individuals and groups had been promoting the theory since its earliest days, they were largely looking in from the outside at an explicitly US-centric phenomenon and a narrative with little applicability to the politics of their own nations. [...] However, it was in 2020 that QAnon truly began to spread and take root across Europe, adapting itself to local contexts and interacting with culturally-specific reference points rather than existing as a foreign import (Lawrence & Davis, 2020, p. 19).

Lawrence and Davis (2020) confirm that the onset of the pandemic was a facilitating factor for the network to grow within Europe, especially in Germany. In October 2020, “the German-language Qlobal-Change network had 106,000 subscribers to its YouTube channel and a remarkable 122,000 subscribers to its Telegram channel,” and the numbers have been rising since then (Lawrence & Davis, 2020, p. 19).

Figure 8

QAnon Flags Alongside Reichsbürger Flags in Berlin



Note: The Reichsbürger movement significantly gained popularity in Germany, but it's a subset of a wider global phenomenon which also includes Sovereign Citizens and Freemen on the land, groups commonly found in the English-speaking world (Lawrence & Davis, 2020, p. 20), (From *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 2020. Copyright 2020 by picture-alliance/dpa).

The State Office of Constitutional Protection in Baden-Württemberg rates QAnon as highly dangerous, however, the movement is not classified as extremist by any state or the federal office, yet. When the Capitol was stormed, the German political scientist and QAnon expert Josef Holnburger noted that “the German QAnon groups were very

focused on the U.S. situation. For this, calls for violence [and executions of traitors of the Republicans like Mike Pence, and Nancy Pelosi] were shared online” (Klaus, 2021).

Quite late, the Federal Office of Constitutional Protection announced the setup of an investigation group on April 29, 2021, called Delegitimization of the State Relevant to the Protection of the Constitution. Its aim is to ensure targeted and differentiated investigations into the anti-constitutional efforts originating from the QAnon-Reichsbürger movement. Unfortunately, there have been no further statements on the monitoring of the conspiracy network since then.

The radicalization of German right-wing ideologists sharpened to such an extent that the party chairman of the Alternative for Germany (also AfD, Alternative for Germany), Jörg Meuthen, announced his immediate resignation on Jan. 28, 2022, and left the party. The AfD is the country’s largest right-wing party. Meuthen realized that a certain part of it, called “the wing,” does not respect the democratic foundation of Germany’s political system anymore. In an interview with the German broadcaster Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF), he stated that the “noisemakers” would have gained too much power – and that he as the chairman would no longer have been able to exert pro-democratic influence, especially since the first lockdown was issued in Germany in March 2020 (Klaus, 2022). Many party members were offended by Meuthen’s proposal that the AfD’s far more radical wing should split apart. The former chairman had also spoken out against several of the party’s program’s intensifications, such as the Dexit – Germany’s exit from the European Union (Klaus, 2022). The overall development is

likely to provide the German Federal Office of Constitutional Protection with further arguments for an observation of the party.

The formation, splitting, and merging of radical groups is not only a separate problem in both nations, the United States and Germany, but it is also shown that individuals and organizations interchange and merge on a transcontinental level, based on the facts outlined in this sub-chapter. Democratic decision-makers and the corresponding institutions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches in both countries are delegitimized in ways that threaten security while facing the same oppositions: A rejection of the state, its government, and pandemic-related security measures driven by racism and White supremacy.

Recent Developments Until 2022

In 2022, the U.S. government continued to investigate losses that resulted from the breach of the Capitol, including material damage to the building and grounds. All in all, more than 725 defendants had been arrested in nearly all states (One Year Since the Jan. 6 Attack on the Capitol). Approximately 100 federal defendants received sentences for their criminal activity or have been sentenced to periods of incarceration (Capitol Breach Cases). While additional cases are expected to be adjudicated, several sentencing were scheduled for 2022 (Popli & Zorthian, 2022). Two convictions are mentioned below as current examples.

Jacob Anthony Chansley was one of the main characters highlighted in the media coverage due to viral photographs of his outlandish getup. He was dressed in horns, a bearskin headdress, red, white and blue face paint, shirtless, and tan pants. The U.S.

Department of Justice charged him with violently entering a restricted building without lawful authority, and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds (Three Men Charged in Connection with Events at U.S. Capitol). The self-described shaman and follower of the QAnon conspiracy theory was sentenced to 41 months in prison (Popli & Zorthian, 2022).

Figure 9

Chansley, Named the Bison Man, Standing Inside the Senate Chamber



Note: From *Time*, by W. McNamee, 2021. Copyright 2021 by Getty Images.

Another invader, Richard Barnett, spent four months in jail after Jan. 6, 2021. According to the United States Department of Justice, among others he was charged with “entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds with a deadly or dangerous

weapon” (Barnett, Richard). The 61-year-old was scheduled to appear in federal court again on Feb. 4, 2022, and faced a sentence of up to 87 months in prison if found guilty on all charges (Popli & Zorthian, 2022). As of Feb. 22, 2022, there was no update on his sentence given by the United States Department of Justice (Barnett, Richard).

Figure 10

Barnett Inside of Nancy Pelosi’s Office



Note: The US Attorneys’ Statement of Facts quotes Barnett on saying: “I got blood on her office. I put a quarter on her desk even though she ain’t fucking worth it. And I left her a note on her desk that says Nancy, Bigo was here, you Bitch” (Barnett – Statement of Facts, p. 2), (from *Time*, by S. Loeb, 2021. Copyright 2021 by AFP/Getty Images).

Concerning Trump, there are several ongoing lawsuits against him for having allegedly incited the riot. For example, Officer Marcus J. Moore, who was working at the Capitol building during the riot, sued him in federal district court. Moore seeks damages of more than \$75,000 for the “physical and emotional injuries” the officer suffered on January 6, which he said were caused by “Trump’s wrongful conduct inciting a riot” (Durkee, 2022). According to *Washington Post* and follow-up reports by Forbes and CBS in 2022, at least 10 individual police officers sued Trump as of Jan. 25, 2022 (Legare & Kaplan, 2022).

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) also filed a lawsuit against Trump, Rudy Giuliani, the Proud Boys, and the Oath Keepers in February 2021. (Schneider, 2021). After Trump's electoral defeat in November 2020, Giuliani, Trump's lawyer, was one of the main forces behind the dissemination of baseless charges of election fraud. Ten Congress members, who were present at the Capitol when the rioters stormed the barriers, joined in signing the NAACP lawsuit until April 2021 (Schneider, 2021).²

Almost all complaints filed against Trump allege that he violated the Ku Klux Klan Act, a Third Enforcement and Civil Rights Act. Representative Samuel Shellabarger of Ohio introduced it on March 28, 1871, with the aim of stopping extralegal violence and protecting the civil and political rights of four million freed slaves:

² The congress members who joined were Cohen, Reps. Karen Bass of California, Bonnie Watson Coleman of New Jersey, Veronica Escobar of Texas, Hank Johnson Jr. of Georgia, Marcy Kaptur of Ohio, Barbara Lee of California, Jerry Nadler of New York, Pramila Jayapal of Washington and Maxine Waters of California.

The Fourth Amendment, ratified in 1868, defined citizenship and guaranteed due process and equal protection of the law to all. Vigilante groups like the Ku Klux Klan, however, freely threatened African Americans and their White allies in the South and undermined the Republican Party's plan for Reconstruction. The bill authorized the President to intervene in the former rebel states that attempted to deny any person or any class of persons of the equal protection of the laws, or of equal privileges or immunities under the laws (The Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871). By claiming that the riot "was a direct result of Donald Trump's rhetoric and

words," NAACP, the Congress members, and the Capitol police officers blame Trump to have deliberately put formerly enslaved African Americans and lawmakers in Congress in danger threatened by White supremacist violence. The Ku Klux Klan Act also protects police officers in the United States by making it illegal to harm or obstruct them from performing their duties (Durkee, 2022).

Trump's representatives did not comment on the lawsuits publicly, but stressed his "absolute immunity from lawsuits over official actions taken while he was in office" (Duggan & Hsu, 2021). Moreover, they argue that his speech relating to the election is protected by the First Amendment.

The Congress' January 6 committee issued subpoenas on January 18, 2022, to four Trump campaign allies and attorneys: Giuliani, Sidney Powell, Jenna Elisa, and Boris Epshteyn (Capitol Riot Committee Subpoenas Trump Attorneys Giuliani And Powell, 00:25–00:30). Other individuals who refused to comply with a subpoena have been charged with contempt of Congress by the Department of Justice, including former Trump advisor Steve Bannon and former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows (Capitol Riot Committee Subpoenas Trump Attorneys Giuliani And Powell, 02:20–02:30).

While seeming to ignore the lawsuits against him, Trump sued the Congress' January 6 committee to prevent it from accessing White House records. He also made a point of publicly highlighting his ongoing lawsuit against African-American New York Attorney General Letitia James. For the past three years, James has conducted a civil tax fraud investigation into Trump's company's business practices. She plans to continue "because no one is above the law, not even someone with the name Trump" (Gregorian, 2021).

Compared to the United States, recent developments in Germany have been less striking and less media driven. There was a total of 272 preliminary proceedings relating to the attack and 46 people were identified as participants. The attack on the Reichstag was followed by a temporary ban on Querdenken demonstrations shortly after. In 2022, the investigation group Quer of the State Criminal Police Office is still investigating. In addition, parts of the Querdenken movement are now being observed by the federal Office for Constitutional Protection. These include right-wing extremists, Reich Citizens and self-governors, as well as Qanon supporters in the German scene.

This subchapter concludes the socio-political background research. Based on this background knowledge, the following chapter is devoted to an outline of the theoretical scholarly background of photojournalism, framing, visual framing, relevant studies, and collective memory.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In this chapter, I explore the current state of research on photojournalism, visual framing, and collective memory. I also mention inspiring or relevant studies that worked with a similar research design or referred to my overall research subject.

Photojournalism

Photojournalism is a form of journalism in which textual material is subordinate to visual, often photographic, presentation of news items, or in which a significant proportion of pictorial presentation is employed (Photojournalism). There are different kinds, each with its own purpose for being shared with the public. The most common kinds include news photography, feature photography, sports photography, and celebrity photography.

Visual communication has developed as an autonomous research field since the late 1990s, coinciding with the commencement of digitalization (Lobinger, 2012, p. 65). While journalistic media images were published primarily in newspapers and magazines until the 1990s, journalistic reporting and thus also the publication of images has since shifted increasingly to the Internet (Lobinger, 2012, p. 68). Therefore, theoretical work in visual communication and photojournalism has increased. However, according to Grittmann, it is only in the penultimate decade that research has been more devoted to theorizing the complex social and cultural contexts in the field of photojournalistic image communication (2019, p. 131).

The concept of online photojournalism as an area of visual communication study is differentiated in this thesis from photojournalism as a professional practice, which I don't take into account. In the field of photojournalism as a professional practice, Runge (2017) distinguished between three phases: Image production, image distribution, and the final publication, for example by the editorial offices of news media (p. 50). This study only focuses on visual communication study once the final phase of image publication had been completed.

Framing

When we think of framing in general, we associate a focus on textual content including its functions and effects. The origin of the scholarly concept of frame in general goes back to the psychiatrist Gregory Bateson. Back in the 1950s, he started to observe the role of context and culture in the building of what he started to call frames. Individuals and society as a whole employed the frames available in the culture at any given moment, according to his perspective. This concept restricted newsmakers' power to establish media frames since they would not design the frame but rather use it to create the news (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015, p. 426). Bateson later combined these observations, notably the removal and inclusion of specific information, in his book *A Theory of Play and Fantasy*. It became the seminal work to define the term frame as the cornerstone of our present understanding published in 1972.

After Bateson, the sociologist Erving Goffman adopted the term to establish it with his framing analysis in 1974. In contrast to today's communication science, he didn't apply the concept of frame to mass communication, but to everyday

communication among people. Nevertheless, Goffman is known to have established “the sociological basis for news framing analysis” (D’Angelo, 2019, p. 1). He had realized that frames control the direction of the information process and govern which aspects of a presented reality we are more likely to notice by arranging particular issues.

In the research field of framing analysis in general, Robert Entman (1993) also played an important role. He started to focus on journalism and argued that “framing is a fractured paradigm because researchers had not yet articulated a general, unified theory” (D’Angelo, 2019, p. 1). As a political scientist and communication scientist, looking at political reporting seemed to be a natural research perspective to him. Entman considered frames to be a part of our cultural environment, too (1993, p. 53).

In the following decades, many scholars such as Scheufele (1999, 2007), D’Angelo (2002, 2019), Reese (2007) and Shaw (2018) developed the term as well as different theories, functions, and effects of it. Today, framing research has grown to be quite wide and specialized in several domains, such as news reporting, political agenda setting, priming, psychology, advertising, and public relations.

Visual Framing

In terms of visual framing in particular, there has been a significant increase in research efforts concentrating on visual rather than just textual information during the last three decades. Visual frame research has grown in tandem with the rise of photojournalism on the Internet in the early 1990s. That marks the timeframe for which I review literature on visual framing.

In 1993, Pan and Kosicki conducted a study on the U.S. American news discourse “focusing on the sociocognitive process involving all three players: sources, journalists, and audience members” (p. 55). The scholars initially focused on “texts as a system of organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the texts” (p. 55, 61). They did, nevertheless, begin to integrate visuals in their research in the context of newsworthiness and augmentation of metaphors or emotions on a smaller scale.

A few years later, in his article *Camera as Witness, Image as Sign: The Study of Visual Communication in Communication Research*, Michael Griffin had summarized the state of the art in visual communication research at the time in 2001. He emphasized the need of narrowing the notion of image, because visual communication is relevant to a wide range of professions, and the concept of image is quite broad. He cited Johnston’s (1990) study, pointing out that while visual framing was being studied at the time, visual forms and their role in communication processes were being overlooked:

Even studies of political communication, where one might expect a keen interest in the role of visual images, focus overwhelmingly on rhetorical strategies, issue framing, [...] and lack a sustained attention to the contributions of the visual. A 1990 survey of political communication literature, for example, found that only five out of more than 600 articles and studies actually examined the concrete visual components of televised election coverage and advertising, and that when the term *image* was used it most often referred to conceptual interpretations of the public ethos of political candidates rather than specific concrete visual attributes of media presentations (Griffin, 2001, p. 2 f.).

Consequently, there was potential for the evolution of visual framing as well as its concretization in many study domains. Visual framing, which was explored separately from textual framing and focused on visual shapes and effects, also required advancement.

In that context, one could ask “Can visual framing be detached from textual framing?” Scholars continue to criticize that visual framing remains a component of the wider framing idea because its explanatory effectiveness appears to be limited without a textual context (Geise et al., 2013, p. 47). However, a textual framework is not only influenced by the presence of images, but, if intended, intensified. In 2001, Farrell et al. suggested that when there’s a conflict between textual and visual framing, visuals are rather convincing (p. 1338). Rodriguez and Dimitrova supported this argument: “Images are powerful framing tools because they are less intrusive than words and as such require less cognitive load. Therefore, peripheral rather than central processing may be activated, and audiences may be more likely to accept the visual frame without question” (2011, p. 50).

Rodriguez and Dimitrova’s (2011) theoretical framework of visual framing serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. By conceptualizing visual frames at four levels – the denotative, stylistic, connotative, and ideological level – the authors have set a cornerstone in visual framing analyses (p. 52). The fourth chapter goes into further detail, at this point I offer a brief summary of the four levels:

The first level discusses how visual pictures are denoted and represented. This level is based on the image's denotation, or literal meaning, as determined by visual semiotics (Rodriguez and Dimitrova's, 2011, p. 53). The second level discusses the aesthetic and semiotic connection of pictures, with an emphasis on design and presentation characteristics. The image's connotative meaning is the third degree of analysis. This level is concerned with the meaning connection provided to thoughts or ideas evoked by the visual (p. 56). The fourth level represents the image's ideological meaning. This is when pictures may take on multiple ideologies or belief systems depending on how they are interpreted visually (p. 57). To guide my visual analysis within the exploratory qualitative framing approach, I combine the variables of the four levels with my own identified variables in the category system. The method chapter elaborates on it.

Another central fact for the theoretical definition of visual framing is the comparison with the overarching concept of framing. In his definition from 1993, Entman described the dimensions of framing that are still relevant today:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (p. 52).

The selection of perceived aspects of reality, the elevation of their prominence, and the supply of related interpretation patterns are therefore the primary roles of frames. An individual can use this interpretation system to swiftly classify and analyze incoming information.

Visual framing is a specific dimension of framing. Geise et al. (2013) defined it as follows:

Visual framing is the process and/or the result of selecting and accentuating certain aspects of perceived reality in a communicative context by means of visual communication, by which specific structuring and interpretation patterns and/or recommendations for action are suggested for the described facts and which influence information processing (p. 46).

The peculiarity is that visual frames, in comparison to verbal frames, tend to emerge sooner in the recipient's perception process and are accompanied by a longer viewing period (Geise, 2010). Due visual information being cognitively perceivable almost effortlessly, they tend to have a higher memory effectiveness compared to verbal information. Moreover, interpretation patterns can be easily activated (Geise et al., 2013, p. 46). Geise et al. rejected the notion of written or spoken information as competing rather than interacting elements in this context. Image and word are frequently given together, and they are rarely received separately and without mutual reference.

My study furthermore requires a decision for a perspective of framing. Scheufele (1999) offered two perspectives when he divided the concept of framing: The macro and micro level. At the micro level, framing describes how an individual recipient cognitively processes a mass-mediated message. More relevant to my study is the macro level which relates to how editorials and news outlets construct and interpret reality that is communicated – also through visual information (p. 106).

Further scholars who completed a significant body of research in the international research field of visual frames are, for example, Katharina Lobinger (2012, 2015, 2019), also in collaboration with Cornelia Brantner (2011, 2015), Elke Grittmann (2007, 2012,

2019), Porismita Borah (2011, 2021), Renita Coleman (2006, 2010), and Greenwood (2015, 2020). Two of Greenwood's studies I present in the following sub-chapter.

Three Relevant Studies on Visual Framing

Keith Greenwood conducted two relevant studies on visual framing. With Joy Jenkins in 2015, he examined the framing of the Syrian conflict in news and public affairs magazines. Five years later, together with T.J. Thomson in 2020, the authors touched a similar topic by conducting a visual analysis of news photographs showing people fleeing war and persecution.

The first study, conducted with Jenkins in 2015, looked at the visual framing of 139 photographs published during the Syrian conflict in 2011-2012, which erupted from the Arab Spring movement in northern Africa and the Middle East (p. 107). It focused on printed photographs in the international news section from 11 magazines distributed nationally in the United States. *Time magazine* and *Newsweek* were the two most frequently read news magazines in the United States in 2012, having circulations of 3.3 million and 1.5 million, respectively (p. 213).

Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) observed that “prior research regarding the visual representation of international news to American audiences has indicated photographs are more likely to depict violence and disaster than peaceful solutions to problems” (p. 208). They sought to identify how the Syrian conflict had been framed in U.S. magazines.

When it came to the chosen sample, “photographs were initially selected by searching the website of each magazine for articles that mentioned Syria” (p. 213). In their codebook, the authors used Fahmy and Neumann's theory (2012) and its variables

related to peace and war frames in order to analyze their sample. I follow the same process, except I apply Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) theory to build my category system.

Greenwood and Jenkins' (2015) study showed that "the war frame was communicated by role of the subject in 80 % of the photographs," which supported their hypothesis of a dominant war frame (Greenwood & Jenkins, 2015, p. 215). Only one of 193 photographs "depicted a subject in a role that could be construed as a negotiator" (p. 215). The result suggested that frames are not exclusive, but complementary, and slightly different frames can occur simultaneously in one magazine. The authors stressed another finding:

The representation of peace and war frames varies between publications of differing perceived political/editorial orientations. The moderate publications accounted for 136 photographs depicting a war frame and 27 depicting a peace frame, meaning the peace-framed photographs accounted for 19.85 % of the total published in this category of magazine (p. 218).

Greenwood's second study in collaboration with Thomson in 2020 followed a similar research design. Just as the 2015 study compared the depiction of war and peace frames, the 2020 study *Framing the Migration: A study of News Photographs Showing People Fleeing War and Persecution* identified either frames of hardship of flight or of any welcome migrants had received (p. 146).

The sample consisted of 811 images "that could include but were not limited to migrations from the Syrian, Afghan or Iraqi refugee crises across the Mediterranean Sea into southeast Europe (p. 147). The images were taken from the Exodus category of the Pictures of the Year International (POYi) 2019 competition. Greenwood and Thomson

categorized them into seven categories, such as transit, interaction, waiting, and action imagery (p. 148).

As a result, transit was: The 280 photographs in it account for a little more than a third (34.5 %) of the total number of images [...]. These photographs showed people on the move, whether by foot, wheel or water” (p. 150). The smallest theme is portrait, containing 39 images” (p. 150). The author’s hypothesis was supported after using a quantitative tool, the chi-square test. They confirmed that the frame “that the migrants are in transit, having left one place where they belonged and not yet having reached a new one” dominated (p. 156). As a result, the visuals primarily addressed a conflict frame within the frame of hardship of flight.

Just as Greenwood and Thomson, I use an inductive approach for sorting visual information and categorizing them to identify different themes and image groups. Next, using a deductive, theory-driven approach, I apply Rodriguez and Dimitrova’s framework (2011) according to the respective variables.

In 2017, another relevant study was presented that applied Rodriguez and Dimitrova’s (2011) theoretical approach to a refugee crisis: Zhang and Hellmueller (2017) conducted a study of visual framing of refugees by *CNN* and *Der Spiegel*. The authors chose *CNN International* because it’s a well-known transnational U.S. broadcast that reaches about 260 million people throughout the world. At the same time, Germany had the largest number of asylum applications. Subsequently, *Der Spiegel* was chosen as Germany’s leading weekly news magazine.

Zhang and Hellmueller picked up on Greenwood and Thomson's (2020) finding that "the visual representation of international news varies among different organization and publications" (Zhang & Hellmueller, 2017, p. 9). They suspected a similar result of their study, because *CNN International* and *Der Spiegel* appeal to different audiences based on their mission statement. The former serves a global community, whereas the latter leans toward a relatively parochial viewership.

Indeed, they suspected right. The findings illustrated a significant difference on the denotative level between the two news outlets in terms of visually presenting refugees: "While *CNN International* used more close-up shots, *Der Spiegel* used more long-shot images to cover different news actors and thus provided viewers with a broader news context" (p. 15). In addition to close-up shots which are more likely to evoke emotion, reflection, and action for media audiences, "*CNN International* featured significantly more images of individual refugees and families. In this way, *CNN International's* coverage humanized those sufferers" (p. 17). All in all, "*CNN* increased humanized visual framing while *Spiegel Online's* visual coverage was leaning toward increased border control" (p. 1). Thus, a clear difference in visual frames between the German and the U.S. news outlet was identified.

Zhang and Hellmueller's work is an excellent sample study for my research, as the similarities between my and their study consist in four essential aspects: The application of Rodriguez and Dimitrova's framework (2011), the use of a quantitative visual content analysis, the publication of visuals to be analyzed in mass media coverage, and in the specific comparison of German and U.S. news media.

Collective Memory

When studying photojournalism, it is critical to address the field of collective memory, given the vital role of visual information in global media and their impact on creating history. The study of collective memory is an important topic in sociocultural psychology. Furthermore, it has been interpreted in anthropology, history, and sociology, among other fields (Wertsch, 2007, p. 645).

The U.S. scholar Carolyn Kitch (2008), who is known for her extensive work linking magazine journalism and collective memory, has carried out relevant research in this field. She argues that journalism in general is “a main site for public anticipation of memory: as ‘the first draft of history,’ journalism is also the first draft of memory, a statement about what should be considered, in the future, as having mattered today” (p. 312). Photojournalism being indispensably linked with journalism in general she describes as “a powerful memory vehicle” (p. 316).

With reference to Lehrer and Milton (2011), Kitch emphasizes the communicative power of “place,” meaning a geographical location, by stating that “even while their actions are multi-mediated and globally communicated, social movements employ locality – place – in ways that construct and reshape memory” (2018, p. 89). This particularity plays a central role when examining the two incidents that are the subject of this thesis.

Kitch (2018) highlights the communicative significance of “place,” meaning a geographical location, by claiming that “even as their acts are multi-mediated and globally disseminated, social movements exploit locality – place – in ways that create and

change memory,” citing Lehrer and Milton (2011) (p. 89). This particularity plays a central role when examining the two incidents that are the subject of this thesis. Despite the fact that the two incidents my study focuses on occurred on two continents, I claim they had an impact on local and national memory as well as on a worldwide collective memory, especially in times of globalized digitization.

Janice Hume of the University of Georgia, who was awarded several times for her research, has made a major contribution to the research field of collective memory. She specialized on the history of U.S. American journalism as it relates to U.S. American culture and public memory. According to her, “particularly photographs provide still more windows into public memory [than press coverage]” (Hume, 2010, p. 189). Throughout her research, she arrived at many conclusions, of which two examples are relevant:

In collaboration with Roessner in 2009, the authors discovered that U.S. newspapers and magazines actively incorporated oral “myths” from the past into their reporting related to the Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman’s March to the sea in 1864 that resulted in the end of the U.S. Civil War. The editors and publishers legitimized such myths and passed them on to future journalists in their collective memory, even with disclaimers (p. 130). Furthermore, together with Winfield (2007), she conducted a study of “historical referents” in 19th century and found out that the journalistic press coverage had played an historical role in building the United States’ collective consciousness and memory (p. 187).

For this master thesis, it is of interest to find out whether the online news reporting about the two attacks was also actively linked to similar events from the past in order to “weave” them into the collective memory. I also study whether there are differences between German and U.S. news outlets in the way that their reporting is either exclusively devoted to national or also international concerns within the context of collective memory. I hypothesize an international reference to be the case since the subjects are attacks on two Western democracies politically linked to one another in their socio-political backgrounds. Moreover, the concept of place in a geographical meaning might play a role in the U.S. and German online news media I analyze. Despite the fact that the events occurred on two continents, I claim they have an impact on local and national memory as well as a worldwide collective memory, especially in times of globalized digitization. In the method section, I elaborate on how I analyzed my sample referring to collective memory.

Three Relevant Studies on Domestic Terrorism and Visual Frames

As I mentioned in the introduction section, I review current scholarly research about three additional domestic terrorism attacks, two in the United States, and one in Germany: The Boston bombing in 2013, the Charleston church shooting in 2015, and the terrorist attack in Hanau in 2020. The research area of domestic terrorism and mass media is vast, with origins dating back to World War II. For reasons of research scope, I solely discuss current research published in the United States and Germany in the past nine years following the Boston bombing in 2013.

In her master's thesis, Wannet (2016) examined the relationship between terrorism and U.S. media. To be precise, she analyzed the visual representations of the Boston bombing in 2013, and the Charleston church shooting in 2015 in four U.S. newspapers. Before I address her findings, I briefly outline what happened in both attacks.

The Boston bombing was an attack on the annual Patriots' Day city marathon in Boston, Massachusetts, on April 15, 2013. Two explosive devices hidden in backpacks burst near the finish line of the marathon. The explosions killed three individuals and injured 264 others. Federal officials declared the incident a terrorist attack (Fielding, et al., 2014, p. 4). While the brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev carried out the assault with homemade bombs, they did it arbitrarily and without a specific goal. The Charleston church shooting, on the other hand, was motivated by racism and bigotry:

A terrorist killed nine African Americans at a Bible study at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17, 2015. The assassination was another act of gun violence, signaling the resurgence of violent White nationalism in the United States.³ On the night of June 17, the assassin, 21-year-old Dylann Roof, entered the Bible study group. His extreme radicalization and intense White supremacist beliefs caused the young American to shoot into the crowd of African Americans. He wanted to kill himself after but ran out of ammunition. In his trial, he was sentenced to death (Charleston church shooting).

³ More deadly events caused by White nationalist violence erupted before 2015 and after, including the murder of Heather Heyer at a right-wing rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, and the massacre at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018 killing 11 people. Also, the Oklahoma City bombing of the federal building killed 168 and wounded more than 680 people in 1995.

Wannet (2016) summarized the visual representation of these two attacks in the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Daily News*, and *Washington Post*:

The media chose to mediate the Boston bombing in a very explicit and sensationalist manner, showing all of the atrocities at the scene of the explosions, while the Charleston shooting's coverage was much more subdued, sober, and definitely much less sensationalist. (2016, p. 63). [Moreover], *New York Times* decided to frame the Boston bombing by connecting its imagery to a war narrative [depicting it] as a terrorist attack, while framing the Charleston shooting as a hate crime (p. 25, 60). [While] imagery including bombs automatically becomes linked with the idea of warfare and terrorism, guns conjure up much different visual connotations. A mass shooting, especially when the public misses the visual images of the actual crime scene and victims, as was the case with the Charleston shooting, misses the element of theater that bombs represent (p. 39).

To summarize, the two incidents which are both domestic terror attacks were framed very differently – the Boston bombing was framed as a war and terror scenario, the Charleston shooting was depicted as a hate crime.

When it comes to my research, such a different portrayal of the two attacks as in Wannet's examination was not to be expected because at their core, the attack on the Capitol and the Bundestag are both attacks on important government buildings of two democracies. This main feature they have in common. However, as discussed in the second chapter, the socio-political background factors that led to the outbreaks of violence need to be differentiated. Given this elementary commonality and certain distinctions at the same time, my aim is to find out whether there's a comparable distinction in visual framing in the news outlets I study.

The Boston Marathon Bombings: A Case Study in Visual Framing Ethics is another study which "sought to understand the visual frames used to represent the Boston Marathon bombings coverage" (Hunt & Jalette, 2021, p. 121). The authors applied a

mixed-method approach of a thematic analysis. They looked at the front-page imagery of 397 international newspapers over four days, starting on April 15, 2013, and combined it with a textual content analysis. In addition, they conducted expert interviews in the field of photojournalism.

Hunt and Jalette's (2021) findings align with those of the first study by Wannett (2016): The most prominent verbal frame in headlines was "terror" (p. 121). Combined with the corresponding images, it becomes more powerful than words or image on their own, according to the authors. The study also discovered that the frames changed on a daily basis. On the day of the bombing, April 15, the visual frames most frequently used were "crowd reactions" (24.2%) and "suspects" (24.2%). Following, on April 16, it was "rescue attempts" (50%). Within the following days, it changed to "officials" (42.2%), crowd reactions" (40.2%), and "suspects" (90.5%) (p. 117).

As an example for the application of Rodriguez and Dimitrova's visual framing theory (2011), they used the following picture (figure 11) of the Boston bombing and explained four-tier visual frames:

The first level of visual framing reveals an image of officers attentive and in motion and looking around as a runner lies on the ground and smoke from an explosion is in the background. At the second level, the headlines come into play and reveal an altered frame when the headline changes our perception of the event; in this case, the terror frame was often present to accompany the image. At the third level, viewers may begin to make associations and apply connotative meanings to the event, such as a terrorist attack. [...] As other major news events have had one or two powerful images that rose to prominence above all others, in terms of being memorable and serving as the icon for that event, it is possible that this image may serve as the image that best represents the Boston Marathon bombings. Therefore, this image then might become iconographic and will be embedded with various ideologies beyond the news cycle – representing the fourth level of visual framing (p. 121 f.).

Figure 11

Bill Iffrig and Boston Police Officers



Note: Bill Iffrig was a then 78-year-old participant next to whom one of the bombs exploded on the run course. He picked himself up and crossed the home stretch (from *The Boston Globe*, by John Tlumacki, 2013).

Hunt and Jalette’s study looked at two forms of frames: The first researched question asked “How were the news images of the Boston Marathon bombings framed by media outlets?” The second one asked: “How were newspaper headlines of the Boston Marathon bombings framed by media outlets?” (p. 115). Thus, both, images and headlines – meaning visual and textual information – were analyzed. In my study, I examined both visual and textual information, too, but only include textual content when

it comes to collective memory. Therefore, I also applied a similar method mix as I explain in the method section.

Next, to examine how the terror attack in Hanau in 2020 was portrayed in German news media was the aim of Kauhanen's study *A Loner, But Not Alone: Analyzing the Hanau Terror Attack in German News Media*. She focused on the portrayal of the perpetrator when conducting a qualitative content analysis of 25 articles published in 2020 in two major German newspapers, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (2020, p. 33).

According to her findings, the assassin was “depicted as both a regular, unpredictable citizen as well as a mentally ill and disturbed person,” instead of as what he was – a terrorist (p. 57 f.). By doing so, the newspapers might have lowered the threat perception of far-right terrorism. This result shows that framing a domestic terrorist attack does not necessarily have to emphasize its magnitude but can also trivialize it.

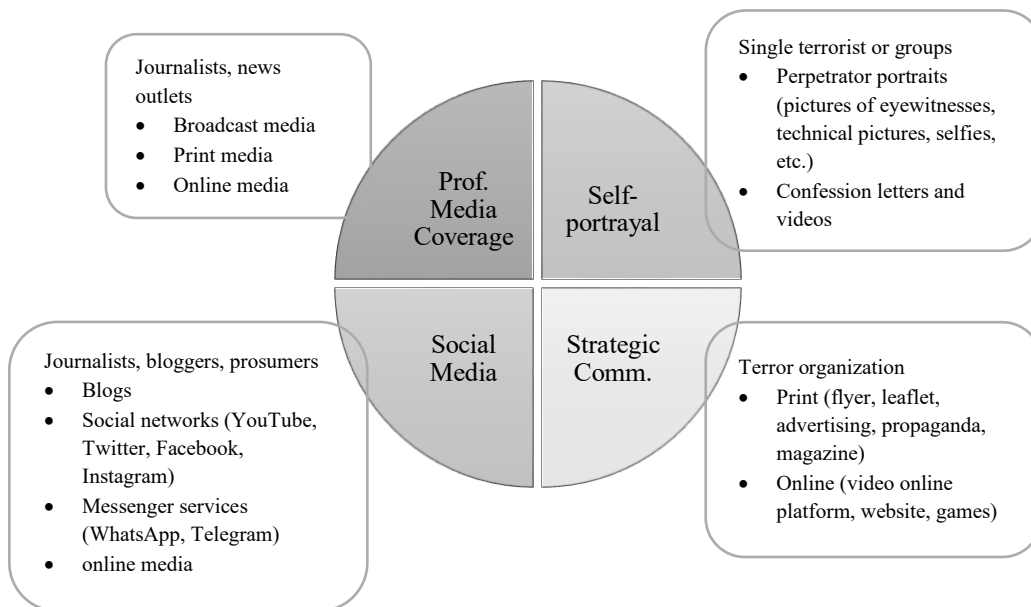
Although there are visual studies on international terrorist attacks in Germany in general (Müller & Knieper, 2019; Haußecker, 2013; Seib, 2017), there is little research in the niche of visual frames of domestic, far-right terror attacks in Germany. Most studies focus on international and Islamist terrorism.

However, a useful system for analyzing visual communication in the context of terror has been created by Müller and Knieper (2019). They recognized that image functions depend on the types of media for which it was produced, the image production technologies available at the time, and cultural aspects. The following table illustrates the

four different forms of communication and media types: Professional media coverage, self-portrayal, social media, and strategic communication.

Table 1

Four Forms of Communication and Media Types of Image Communication in War and Terrorism



Note: From Müller & Knieper, 2019, p. 150

This model suits my study, as it relates to the German far-right terrorism group NSU, and therefore to the niche of domestic terrorism and visual communication. The authors also provided a concrete example for the self-portrayal of the terror group NSU:

For propaganda objectives, the NSU used elaborately edited videos. They employed the cartoon character Paulchen “Pink” Panther in them, with whom the terrorist group’s victims were humiliated under the headline “Paulchen’s new pranks” (Müller &

Knieper, 2019, p. 169). One video contained images of the funeral of Michèle Kiesewetter, a young policewoman who was killed in public by the NSU in 2007. The attack is also known as the Heilbronn police murder. The visual communication products of the NSU trio, which consisted of Böhnhardt, Mundlos and Zschäpe, have been scientifically studied in rudimentary form at best (Müller & Knieper, 2019, p. 169).

To summarize, there is room for research in the niche of visual communication analysis of domestic terror in Germany. My study contributes to fill that research gap focusing on professional media coverage, the first of four communication types according to Müller and Knieper (2019).

Chapter 4: Theory

The following sub-chapters explain the theoretical foundation of this study in detail. At first, the terms still, hybrid and moving images are defined. I go on to present the research and sub-research questions guiding this study, define the term photojournalistic characteristics, and explain Rodriguez and Dimitrova's theory (2011).

This research looks at still, moving, and hybrid images in digital forms that were published on the websites of the six news media outlets within four days after the two incidents. Only photographs taken with a camera device are defined as still images, I don't consider drawings, illustrations, photo-illustrations and other graphic elements as they don't appear in the news coverage I analyze. Videos taken with a camera device by journalists or spread on social media are referred to as moving images. Hybrid images include video elements that feature the intercutting and sequencing of individual photographs, as well as the combination of videos and images in one element.

Photojournalistic characteristics are defined as repeatedly occurring features which form different themes. These features on the denotative level referring to objects and distinct elements. The characteristics are evaluated in the category system developed within my exploratory qualitative framing approach.

The following sub-chapters are dedicated to Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) four-tier visual framework. In a leveled hierarchy, the framework recognizes multiple levels of information and possible analytical perspectives, with an emphasis on multimedia phenomena.

Visuals on the denotative level are stimuli that “activate the nerve cells in the eyes to convey information to the brain” (Kelly, 2006, p. 50). At this basic level, “frames result from recognizing design elements and by organizing or combining visual sensations into themes following some principles of organization (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011, p. 53). Frames are detected by quantifying the actual objects and distinct elements. They organize visual perceptions into themes based on visual features. Visual elements are primarily described at this level. On the other hand, what they indicate remains an open question.

The denotative level relies on the analogic and indexical features of images, as defined by Messaris and Abraham (2001). Because visuals are viewed as closely analogous to reality, photographs create one-to-one linkages between what is captured by the camera and what is seen. Although frames are understood by recognizing who or what is portrayed, people’s capacity to recognize just what they are familiar with limits framing at this level (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011, p. 53).

The stylistic level refers to conventions and how pictorial styles gain social meanings. Pictorial style variables can be, for example, the camera position, the dominant aspect or focal point, subject behaviors or visual modality (color, representational detail, depth, tonal shades, etc.) (p. 55). Other variables are, for example, visual subordination, social distance, imaginary contact, behavior and general contact (Fahmy, 2004, p. 91).

The so-called face-ism index is another variable “that allows researchers to measure the prominence of the face in a photograph” (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011, p. 53). This method claims that centralizing a person’s face in a photograph leads to the recipient’s

increased perception of their intelligence and ambition. When the body is focused on, the individual is thought to have more non-intellectual traits like beauty or emotion.

The connotative level refers to the ideas or concepts attached to a visual information. Symbolic meanings and visual metaphors play a major role:

At this level, persons and objects shown in the visual not only denote a particular individual, thing or place, but also the ideas or concepts attached to them. [...] Frames evolve by critically examining the perceived signs for their more complex, often culture-bound interpretations. Consequently, the meaning one gets from a symbol is highly personalized and distinct (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011, p. 56).

The existence of symbols in the photographic field is used to identify frames in this case. According to van Leeuwen (2001), there are two sorts of symbolic meanings: abstract symbols, which are typically forms or objects with certain values (e.g., the cross), and figurative symbols, which depict people or places with values attached to a specific figure or event (e.g., the Dalai Lama).

The connotative level also includes the usage of visual metaphors as frames. A visual metaphor is a depiction of an abstract notion through a tangible image that shows some resemblance to the concept. The usage of the U.S. flag in news images, for example, signifies patriotism, military strength, or heightens people's feeling of location.

The fourth level connects to the third: The ideological level searches for the "why" behind the frames. It questions how news images are employed as instruments of power or influence in the shaping of public consciousness and historical imagination. The level addresses questions like what interests are being served by these representations; whose voices are being heard; and what dominating ideas are addressed (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011, p. 57 f.). The ideological level assembles an image's symbols and aesthetic aspects

into a cohesive interpretation. Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) named a suiting example from the early days of visual framing analyses:

Gilens (1996) used this approach to study how photos in the two leading newsweeklies as well as images in 50 network television news stories depicted poverty. He found that African Americans made up 62 % of the poor people shown in the magazines and 65% in TV news stories. In reality, African Americans make up 29 % of the poor in the US. Gilens concludes that by amplifying [Black U.S. citizens] as poor, the media thus framed poverty as the seemingly exclusive lot of [Black U.S. citizens] (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011, p. 58).

That example demonstrates that the ideological level behind the denotative depiction of dark skin color suggested the idea of systematic prejudice, disadvantage, and poverty applying to a suggested major population of Americans which wasn't a majority.

Based on the state of research I presented, the theoretical foundation and the prior example studies that provided inspiration for the design and conduction of my research, this study proposes the guiding research questions (RQ), sub-research questions (SRQ) and an assumption (A). They indicate the research gap which my study contributes to fill.

RQ1: At the denotative level, which visual themes are present in the online reporting of U.S. news media after the storming of the Capitol, and in the online reporting of German news media after the attack on the Reichstag building?

SRQ1: Which photojournalistic characteristics and visual frames apply to both online news media in the United States and Germany?

SRQ2: How do the photojournalistic characteristics and visual frames comparing U.S. and German online news media differ from each other?

RQ2: At the connotative and ideological level, what were the dominant frames used by U.S. and German news media in their visual coverage of the two attacks?

A: In their reporting, U.S. and German online news media link the consternation caused by the attack on democracy not only to national, but to international concerns between the United States and Germany.

Chapter 5: Method

The process and characteristics of exploratory research are described in the following paragraph. Then I'll go into how the sample was generated, what elements it holds, and how the qualitative analysis was carried out. The sub-chapter "*New York Times* Category System" in the appendix also outlines how to put the qualitative analysis into practice.

Exploratory Qualitative Framing Analysis

Exploratory research looks at research questions that haven't been thoroughly investigated before while keeping the research process somehow flexible in its design. When the researcher has no or not much previous data or only a few studies to refer to, an exploratory research design is used to address the objectives. This research form is mostly designed as a qualitative approach. Because of its open-ended and flexible nature, exploratory research is also known as interpretive research or a grounded theory method (George, 2021).

As the name indicates, this method aims to only investigate the research issues rather than provide definitive answers to existing problems. It is typically used to investigate a topic that has yet to be fully identified and to uncover the nature of a problem (Saunders et al., 2009). It's not designed to produce definitive proof, but rather to assist us gain a deeper knowledge of the situation and to delve into the subject at different levels of depth. Interpretive research methods are frequently used in exploratory investigations, which address questions such as what, why, and how (Brown, 2006, p. 43). Therefore, my theory providing a four-tier-analysis fits the method well.

Exploratory and its counterpart conclusive research can be distinguished by indicating that exploratory studies yield a variety of causes and alternative solutions for a specific problem, whereas conclusive studies obtain the final information that is the only answer to an existing research problem. An exploratory research design allows opportunity for more investigation, whereas a conclusive research design aims to deliver ultimate results (Nargundkar, 2008, p. 38). I specified these principles on exploratory qualitative framing analysis. The primary distinctions between conclusive and exploratory research design are shown in the table below:

Table 2

Main Differences Between Conclusive and Exploratory Research Design

Factor	Conclusive	Exploratory
Objectives	To test hypothesis and relationships	To get insights and understanding
Characteristics	Research process is formal and structured	Research process is unstructured and flexible
	Large, representative sample	Small, non-representative sample
	Data analysis is mostly quantitative	Primary data analysis is qualitative
Findings	Conclusive	Tentative
Outcome	Findings are considered a definitive answer to the research problem	Findings offer different perspectives for interpretations and address questions such as what, why, and how

Note: From *Conclusive Research* based on Nargundkar, 2008, p. 39 f.

Sample

The selection of a total of six online news media is based on those that had a high national reach at the time of the incidents. I chose established news outlets considered traditional media that expanded their reporting to online news media. The study focuses on the online editions of the newspapers to draw attention to the distribution level, as more visuals can be published online as opposed to the limited space in the printed edition. The international consideration is limited to U.S. and German newspapers as the two central incidents happened in these countries.

The U.S. online news media I analyzed are the *New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, and *the Wall Street Journal*. On the German side, *Der Tagesspiegel*, *die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and *Berliner Zeitung* are examined. I examined how the U.S. online news media reported on the storming of the Capitol and how the German ones covered

the attack on the Reichstag. In addition to covering a variety of domestic topics, the newspapers regularly cover international news events, both through text and photographs, too.

I analyze the online reporting published on the newspaper's websites. The online coverage is accessed by subscribing to the six online news media to study all articles containing visual information published within four days after the incidents. The following filters were applied to the archives:

On the websites of the U.S. online news media, I searched for the keyword "Capitol". On the websites of the German online news media, I searched for the keyword "Reichstag". The search for the keyword "Reichstag" yielded matching articles whereas the search for the keyword "Bundestag" related to general political topics rather than the attack. Additionally, I selected a time period of four days from Jan. 6 to Jan. 9, 2021, for U.S. news media, and from Aug. 29 to Sep. 1, 2020, for German news media. Moreover, I selected the section "Politics" in all archives. Otherwise, sections like "Art, Health, Opinions, or Lifestyle" would have influenced the search results.

The number of articles in each archive differed. For example, the *New York Times* offered a total of 242 articles related to the Capitol in four days. If restricted to the "U.S." and "World" sections, which represent the political sections in the filter system of the online newspaper, still 139 articles remain (see figure 12). In contrast, the archive of the *Berliner Zeitung* was less extensive.

Figure 12

139 Articles in the New York Times' Archive



Note: The screenshot was taken on Feb. 1, 2022, using the keyword Capitol and applying the depicted filters for the date and type to the archived content (from: the *New York Times*).

Since the analysis of all articles would require a quantitative method, four articles were randomly selected from every news media's archive from each day taken into account. All German online newspapers only published articles on three out of four days. Therefore, my sample consists of 21 randomly selected articles providing the visuals to be analyzed.

The entire sample consists of 21 articles containing a total of 100 visuals for analysis. They are composed of 91 still images, eight moving images (videos), and one hybrid image (table 4).

Only the visual content of the photographs was analyzed. Captions were omitted, despite their value in giving further information and context. To find the themes that evolved among the visuals, they were first sorted using an inductive approach. The photographs were then classified according to Rodriguez and Dimitrova's four tiers,

using a deductive approach (Greenwood & Thomson, 2020, p. 147). Based on that, the themes were categorized, and photojournalistic characteristics on all levels were recognized.

The category system was created using the variables displayed in the table attached to the appendix. I began by coding a training sample of 10 visuals consisting of four still, four moving, and two hybrid images. The testing sample was gathered from other online news outlets that covered the incidents but were unaffiliated to the six online news media chosen. Difficulties in coding were then reviewed, and changes to the category system were made before I started to code the final sample consisting of 100 visuals in my category system.

Image analysis is an essential component in many disciplines, including visual communication and psychology. As a data extraction process is error-prone, a reliable assessment is required. Qualitative methods should be evaluated using criteria such as accuracy, repeatability and objectivity (which may depend on the context), sensitivity to nonverbal cues (such as an individual's culture), and ease of use (including clarity of directions). To ensure these criteria, the category system developed for this study guarantees transparency of the research process and recognition of the results.

Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) provide a qualitative approach of visual analysis that fits the research goals I specified in the introduction and linked to the sample studies in the literature review. The approach may also be used to determine which levels of frames are successful, with the denotative, connotative, and ideological levels being specifically targeted in the research questions.

For the operationalization of visual frames, it is to be determined which categories and variables were exploratively registered. Table 3 summarizes the variables provided by Rodriguez and Dimitrova in combination with the ones I defined in my exploratory qualitative framing approach. The category system illustrating the final coding process can be reviewed in the appendix. The ideological level was not included in the tables in the coding process since its implications are dependent on the first three levels and described in the sixth chapter.

Also, amateur images published by the news media and professional images are both taken into account. With the advancements of technology, highly developed cameras allow any person with a cell phone to take pictures and publish them. According to Andén-Papadopoulos and Mervi (2014), “amateur images have come to have cultural significance and shape public perception of world events mainly because of their dissemination and publication in the mainstream news media” (p. 9). Hume (2010) also notes that “technologies of interactivity promise more and more inclusion of everyday people and their stories into the media landscape” (p. 193).

Table 3*Summary of Theoretical and Exploratory Qualitative Framing Analysis Variables*

Level	Theory	Exploratory
Denotative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Material objects ○ Distinct elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Capitol or Reichstag building ○ Different variables for flags ○ Public places ○ Firearms ○ Objects for self-defense, weapons ○ Physical Violence ○ Fire or explosive material ○ Number of rioters, demonstrators ○ Number of White People ○ Number of African American or Black people ○ Number of single individuals with specific tasks ○ Number of police officers, security forces
Stylistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dominant aspect or focal point ○ Camera position ○ Visual modality (dominant colors, representational details) ○ Face-ism index ○ Physical activity (inanimate vs. active) ○ Imaginary contact (to establish eye-contact with the recipient) ○ Social distance (close-ups in the foreground vs. long shots) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Depiction of the exploratory elements through the theoretical stylistic variables, e.g., camera position when fire or physical violence is shown
Connotative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Signs perceived from symbolic meanings ○ Visual metaphors ○ Abstract vs. figurative symbols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Symbolic meaning of the denotative exploratory variables, e.g., meaning of conspiracy logos
Ideological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What interests are being served by the representations? ○ Whose voices are being heard? ○ What dominating ideas are addressed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the different ideologies presented in the visuals? ○ In what light are these ideologies presented by the online newspapers?

Note: The column “Theory” refers to the variables based on Rodriguez and Dimitrova.

The column “Exploratory” lists the variables I defined when conducting my analysis.

Last, I explain how to examine the topic of collective memory within my study. To analyze it, I looked at the textual information of the online reports that delivered the images composing my sample. A textual or content analysis was not performed, rather a determination of whether the reports textually referred to the topic of collective memory. If they did, it was documented how they went about it. As a result, it was determined if the skimmed articles a) indicated the factor of place in terms of geographic localization, b) referred to previous event that were meaningful for the formation of a collective memory, and c) tied to an international level of memory. These points examine the assumption made.

Chapter 6: Results and Discussion

In this chapter, I respond to the research questions and examine my assumption. The findings add to the research topic by providing a complementary, insightful perspective.

About A Tiny Bouquet of Flowers and Tear Gas

RQ1: At the denotative level, which visual themes are present in the online reporting of U.S. news media after the storming of the Capitol, and in the online reporting of German news media after the attack on the Reichstag building?

To answer RQ1, it can be noted that several different visual themes were displayed in the online reporting of U.S. online news media after the storming of the Capitol, and in the online reporting of German online news media after the attack on the Reichstag building. I present the most dominant themes and visual frames in the sub-chapter “A Question of Violent Masculinity and White supremacy.” First, I list which visual themes were identified in the 100 visuals in general.

All the online newspapers included the depiction of the attacked buildings (Capitol or Reichstag building outside and inside), the waving of a wide variety of flags (U.S. flag, German national flag, QAnon flag, Reichsbürger flag, Trump flag, and others) as well as the depiction of physical violence between protesters and security forces. When considering the variable of protesters or demonstrators, I differentiated between White people and African American or Black people. This distinction was chosen to further illustrate the atmosphere that prevailed during the demonstrations. Without going too deeply into the differences between German and U.S. photojournalistic characteristics

at this point, it can be stated that African American or Black people were only seen in extremely small proportions and only in very specific functions. I elaborate on that issue in the sub-chapter “Much Physical Confrontation and Little Imaginary Intimacy.”

Other themes displayed were single individuals with specific tasks (SIT) and public places (PP) being a part of the larger demonstrations. In response to RQ2, the sub-chapter “A Question of Violent Masculinity and White Supremacy” explains which of these themes dominated the online news reporting.⁴

The display of general themes can also be divided into peaceful and violent themes. Whenever public places were shown in connection with crowds of demonstrators, it represented the peaceful parts of the respective demonstrations, whether in U.S. or German online news media. For example, the following figure shows peaceful demonstrators during a sit-in at Berlin’s Victory Column in the afternoon before the breakaway demonstration formed to attack the Reichstag building in the early evening of Aug. 29, 2020 (figure 13). The Berlin Victory Column is a repeatedly used figurative symbol in German media coverage, as I explain in the following paragraphs. Figure 14 shows another example of the juxtaposition between peaceful and violent themes. It depicts a male demonstrator holding flowers in front of police officers in the public square in front of the Russian embassy in Berlin.

⁴ The abbreviations in parentheses refer to the codes in the category system in the appendix.

Figure 13

Woodstock-Like Sit-In: Demonstrators at Berlin's Victory Column



Note: From Süddeutsche Zeitung, by M. Sohn, 2020. Copyright 2020 by AP.

Figure 14

Demonstrator Symbolically Handing Flowers to Policemen



Note: From Tagesspiegel, by C. Soeder, 2020. Copyright 2020 by DPA.

In the three U.S. online news media, peaceful moments were almost only seen when the demonstration's procession was not yet in front of the Capitol, but in front of the White House during Trump's incitement speech. As soon as the visuals involved the Capitol building with its exterior or interior depiction, usually acts of physical violence as well as the use of explosive materials and tear gas used by police forces (figure 15). In the sub-chapter "Loaded Firearms vs. a Random Clutter of Flags," I further elaborate on these different themes.

Figure 15

Security Forces Tried to Keep the Rioters Under Control



Note: With the use of tear gas, police forces responded to the rioters. This visual theme was featured in many U.S. online news media beyond the three ones analyzed in this study. Figure 15 shows another example displayed in *Forbes* (from: *Forbes*, by Probal Rashid/Lightrocket via Getty Images, 2021).

All variables and themes can be found in the appendix in the category systems individually created for the six online news media. The themes were adjusted slightly differently for German and U.S. online news media. For example, the variable “capitol building outside” (CO) in the U.S. sources became “Reichstag building outside” (RO) in the German ones. Moreover, the category system for German news media contains two more themes, namely the variables “Reichsbürger flag” (RF) and “German national flag”

(GF). The reason for this is because the coverage on the German side had a wider range of flags, which I address in the sub-chapter “Loaded Firearms vs. a Random Clutter of Flags.”

Much Physical Confrontation but Little Imaginary Intimacy

That leads to the next subject, which refers to the differences between and similarities in photojournalistic characteristics and visual frames in the international online news media. This sub-chapter is dedicated to answering SRQ1, the subsequent sub-chapter to addressing SRQ2. Accordingly, I start with the similarities in photojournalistic characteristics.

SRQ1: Which photojournalistic characteristics and visual frames apply to both online news media in the United States and Germany?

In both U.S. and German online news media, there was a clear common focus on demonstrators (D) and security forces or police officers (PO) as denotative variables. This was especially evident when the Capitol or the Reichstag building were displayed in the visuals. At the same time, the visuals focus on the confrontation between the demonstrators and security forces – police officers were never shown without any demonstrators.

Related to this result is also the stylistic variable “physical activity” (PA) in its active expression, which was also the most common in all articles. Any physical activity in which a person moves was counted as active expression. Inanimate people were represented in fewer than five of 100 visuals. When this was the case, it was only with

individuals performing special tasks or duties (SIT), captured sitting or standing still, as not moving away from a spot, or interacting with other individuals.

Another stylistic variable that occurred in the same ways in U.S. and German online news media was the camera level. It captured the scenes from above or at eye level. Both served to either create a perceived proximity of the recipient to the events or to better capture the scope of the incidents, for example, when approximately 2,000 people were photographed from a bird's eye view as part of the demonstration in front of the Capitol. In only three of 100 visuals there was a camera perspective chosen that captured the moments from below.

Also, close up shots were a minor stylistic variable, regardless of the number of visuals the articles included. In all news outlets, close up shots mostly focused on individuals with particular tasks (SIT). These were either individual politicians, such as Trump during his speech in front of the White House, and the then mayor of Berlin, Michael Müller, when he admitted mistakes in the police operation on Aug. 29, 2020 (figure 16). In three other close up shots, single individuals involved in the storming were depicted (figure 17).

Figure 16

Michael Müller, the Then Mayor of Berlin



Note: From Berliner Zeitung, by Darmer, S., 2020. Copyright 2020 by Davids.

Figure 17

Pro-Trump Protester Screaming



Note: From Washington Post, by Andrade-Rhoades, A., 2021. Copyright 2021 by the Washington Post.

The presence of only a few close up shots goes hand in hand with a low face-ism index. On average, people's bodies were focused on up to three and a half times more often than their faces. According to Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011), that would indicate an emphasis on non-intellectual traits like beauty or emotion (p. 53). However, in the case of this study, it were implications like the willingness to use violence, aggression, expressing raging masculinity, and the emergence of a threateningly large mass of demonstrators via the presentation of numerous bodies that were emphasized, not non-intellectual characteristics like attractiveness.

Given the few close ups in conjunction with a low face-ism index, there was also very little imaginary contact between the person portrayed in a visual and the recipient. Imaginary contact is created by an imaginary eye-contact, which is found in all news outlets only in very few cases.

When imaginary eye-contact occurred, however, the recipient's sensation and emotional involvement were different than when it did not occur. Why wasn't there more virtual eye-contact shown in the graphics to address the recipient even more directly and induce emotional connection more frequently? One explanation might have been that the editorial offices did not want to include more visuals creating imaginary eye-contact. Since the incidents were severe, a higher level of emotional engagement might have served as a deterrent to the recipient. Another probable reason, owing to the state of emergency and disturbance on the ground, might have been that not enough usable images existed that showed a person involved in the events in direct eye contact with the camera device.

Another similarity is that the visuals were mostly characterized by the same colors: black, dark blue, and red. They were sparked by a large number of protestors wearing these colors and carrying flags in many of these colors. The color representations in all news outlets expanded to include the color beige when the targeted buildings were included in the visuals from the outside, as both the Capitol and the Reichstag buildings are built with beige, solid stone in their exterior facades.

The U.S. flag (UF) was prominently displayed in both German and U.S. news outlets. Only the Reich flag (RF) was displayed second most in German news media, while the Trump flag (OF) was featured second most in U.S. news media. Almost every depiction of demonstrators, including the Berlin crowds, displayed U.S. flags.

That finding illustrates the impact of the U.S. socio-political forces on the German resentment, which I discussed in the second chapter. A significant effect of German protestors was seen not only in the rise of anti-democracy ideology associated with Trump's presidency since 2017, but also in the creation and expansion of radical groups that originated in the United States. The analysis of the sample confirms the socio-political background check I carried out.

There was also a significant number of other flags present on both sides. These included, for example, many Trump flags, which made up most of the variable "other flags" (OF) in U.S. online news media. There were even more "other flags" in front of the Reichstag building. I discuss their variety in the following sub-chapter.

The final key similarity, which underlines a subtle but substantial distinction, is that a sizable minority of African American or Black people was seen in all visuals.

There was even no coverage in German news outlets. It can be firmly stated that this was not due to a form of media underrepresentation but rather to the physical absence of this and other suppressed ethnical groups during the criminal acts. The organizations behind the Capitol building assaults were fighting for a political system that, among other things, opposes African American or Black rights. I purposely analyzed this variable to find out in what situations African American or Black people were to be seen at all in the social environment of the attacks that were tremendously detrimental to their ethnicity.

Loaded Firearms vs. a Random Clutter of Flags

SRQ2: How do the photojournalistic characteristics and visual frames comparing U.S. and German online news media differ from each other?

The findings last mentioned links straight to answering the SRQ2 asking about the main differences between U.S. and German online news media. First, when it came to portraying White people and African Americans or Black people in German media, there was no depiction of this ethnicity or people with skin colors other than White.

In U.S. news media, two out of three outlets depicted African Americans or Black people: Three of the 25 visuals in the *New York Times* articles portrayed African American or Black people. Only six out of 37 visuals in the *Washington Post* did the same, while none did in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Almost all African American or Black people featured in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* held security positions inside the Capitol building or were staff members (figure 18). Only in one of 100 visuals in the *New York Times* one person was

visually identified as an African American or Black person. He was observed as a bystander in the crowd during Trump's speech in front of the White House.

It must be considered that the crowd was peaceful at that time. Later, in front of and inside the Capitol, no African American or Black person was seen as part of the rioting crowd at all. It was a precarious position, and there was no certainty that the violence would have been limited to the Capitol as a symbol of democracy, which the rioters detested owing to an allegedly rigged election, as well as the legislators and security officers within. People from suppressed ethnic groups may have been attacked just as ruthlessly. The portrayal of the few African American or Black people who were part of the security forces within the Capitol reflected this dread.

Figure 18

Capitol Staff Members Barricade Office Doors for Protection



Note: From Washington Post, by Voisard, A., 2021. Copyright 2021 by the Washington Post.

Moreover, all U.S. news outlets clearly focused on portraying the Capitol building inside when protesters had already invaded. It can be stated that the internal destruction of the Capitol is a central point in the visual communication. A comparison to the German news media is only possible to a limited extent, for the sole reason that the demonstrators never entered the Reichstag building. Therefore, the three German news

outlets were only able to focus on the representation of the building from outside, which was one of the most dominant themes.

The predominant representation of the Capitol inside was also accompanied by a change in the dominant colors. In the visuals in which the variable “capitol building inside” (CI) was detected, the colors cream, beige, and light green predominated due to the interior design of the building.

Furthermore, the usage of loaded firearms by rioters was visible in 74 % in the U.S. articles while that was not the case in the German articles. The only loaded guns exposed in Berlin were on the police officers’ uniform belts as part of their on-duty equipment in 22 % of the visuals analyzed.

In addition, the U.S. articles showed many more items for supposed self-defense, as well as items such as ladders and shields that were used to violently enter the Capitol. On the German side, again, there was less display of these items. The only obviously recognizable ones were police truncheons, which were used at the barriers and in front of the entrance to the Reichstag building to hold back the crowd.

While gun violence was a dominant theme in U.S. articles, a random clutter of different flags was in Berlin. A wider range of flags could be recognized, including the flag of the People’s Republic of China. The Berlin crowds appeared to be doing everything they could to pull together as many divisive flags as possible, even with Asian influences to promote the rejection of democracy. What developed was a mishmash of flags and their anti-democratic symbolic implications, which appeared to be a frantic attempt to defame German democracy.

Moreover, the Reich flag was almost absent on the U.S. side, while in Berlin it veritably defined the visuals. In many cases, Reich flags were coupled with a reference to the Christian God helping the German people to “win back their country.” Also, the Iron Cross, clearly an object with a symbolic value, was often applied to the Reich flag, the symbol of the Reichsbürger movement. The Iron Cross was an original Prussian, later German war award, which was also awarded as a high decoration in World War II. The right-wing and Reichsbürger scene has nowadays adopted the Iron Cross as their symbol, as well as the Reichsadler (also Reich eagle) with spread wings and swastika as a symbol of National Socialism under Hitler, which was also found in individual flags exclusively in Berlin.

At this point, I reference back to the theme of public places (PP). As noted in the first sub-chapter, whenever public places were shown in connection with masses of demonstrators, it was the peaceful part of the respective demonstration, no matter if in the U.S. or German online news media. When the central buildings were displayed in conjunction with large crowds of protestors, however, the U.S. articles linked it to physical violence between police officers and rioters. In the German articles, not all visuals in which masses of demonstrators were shown in connection with the Reichstag building showed violent actions.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall level of violent rioting in Berlin was lower than in Washington. This finding also confirms the background check in the second chapter. The German newspapers did not try to exaggerate the violence in photographs. However, the only two videos shown were live footage of demonstrators

showing chaotic scenes at the stairs of the Reichstag at the most hectic moments of the attack. Other, less frightening moments, such as the mostly peaceful demonstration in front of the Russian embassy, were not featured in the footage.

An additional elementary difference is that the U.S. news outlets published a variety of articles matching the Capitol keyword on each of the four days considered. All selected German news outlets did not. Partly, that is related to a key limitation of my study, which did not allow for an examination of other major news media that published daily on the attack on the Bundestag. That limitation is due to reasons of accessibility and completeness of archives. Why the selected German news outlets did not publish a related article online on each day cannot be answered in this study. It might be caused by editorial reasons of prioritizing the publication of printed articles on the day of the attack.

A Question of Violent Masculinity and White Supremacy

RQ2: At the connotative and ideological level, what were the dominant frames used by U.S. and German news media in their visual coverage of the two attacks?

This sub-chapter is dedicated to answering RQ2, which asks about the particularly dominant visual frames used by U.S. and German online news media. Some dominant themes or photojournalistic characteristics have already been addressed. These include, for example, the dominant camera perspective, the dominant colors, the U.S. flag, and the high number of demonstrators and security forces. Following, I present the most striking dominations and their implications.

Peaceful topics were in the minority in public settings, as previously noted. In contrast, violent rioting predominated at critical periods during the attacks, much more so

in U.S. news than in German news. This may be attributed to an increasing propensity to use firearms, which originates from the country's socially accepted gun culture, as well as a generally more violent escalation of the Capitol storming.

The dominant portrayal of protestors vs police officers underlined the tension at the core of both sides' attacks: the intensification of the conflict between an angry sector of society and the political system's attempt to protect itself. This contradiction is a newsworthy aspect that, on the one hand, catches the recipient's attention and, on the other hand, emphasizes the dreadful scope of the incidents through its primary framing.

The most dominant flags on both sides, the U.S. flag and Trump flag on the U.S. American side, and the Reichsbürger and U.S. flag on the German side, carried another dominant visual frame: God's guidance and a legitimization of the violent action through Christian-motivated forces. Not every flag had an English or German wording saying, "May God Help Us." The bulk of the thousands of marchers who wanted to enforce White supremacy, however, obviously felt divinely inspired and legitimized to carry out their actions. That goes back to the circumstance I described in the second chapter which was outlined by Bond and Neville-Shepard in their article *The Rise of Presidential Eschatology: Conspiracy Theories, Religion, and the January 6th Insurrection*:

While presidents have appealed to Christianity since the founding of the Republic, religious language has escalated since the Reagan presidency. [...] We contend that Trump's alliance with QAnon symbolized a shift from presidents appealing to God to presidents becoming a messiah in a political religion, in this case through the acceptance of a millennialist narrative fashioned by the fringe conspiracy movement that portrayed the president as their Savior (2021, p. 2 f.).

Along with the depiction of public places, symbols with figurative value clearly dominated the coverage in both U.S. and German news media. One of them, as a public square in Berlin, was the Victory Column. The reason for its construction was Prussia's victory in the German-Danish War of 1864. Within a few years, two further victorious wars were added, the German War of 1866 against Austria and the German/French War of 1870/1871. Today they are called the Wars of Unity (Siegessäule in Berlin). The Victory Column stands for the greatness and strength of the German people, which, according to radical groups, must be regained. Again, similar motivations as to Trump's campaign slogans in 2016 can be recognized.

The White House, in front of which Trump gave his speech, and the Capitol both serve as figurative symbols in Washington. An attack on these buildings, as described in the opening chapter, is an unmistakable strike on the incumbent governments in both nations. Abstract symbols, which are often shapes or objects with specific values, were in the minority, and swastikas or the Q sign represented them.

Besides that, the visuals may appear to show men and women equally at first glance. That may be deemed true in the early phases of the demos. There were various visuals, particularly in German news sites, that emphasized the presence of women. However, as of January 6, 2021, and August 29, 2020, that impression shifted: During the actual attacks on the Capitol and the Bundestag, White men endowed the scenes, especially in Washington when they violently entered the Capitol. The face of White supremacy could scarcely be more visually apparent as a result.

Reporting That is Rather Self-Centered

A: In their reporting, U.S. and German online news media link the consternation caused by the attack on democracy not only to national, but to international concerns between the United States and Germany.

The assumption puts forward states that in their reporting, U.S. and German online news media linked the consternation caused by the attack on democracy not only to national, but to international concerns between the United States and Germany. The assumption is unproven and can't be supported.

In only one of 21 articles, only one news outlet, the *New York Times*, referred in a short passage to Germany and its past experiences regarding attacks of the Reichstag:

The message was clear: The U.S. American president was playing with fire. This could only stir German memories of the Reichstag fire of 1933 that enabled Hitler and the Nazis to scrap the fragile Weimar democracy that brought them to power. Painful memory has not been confined to Germany. Throughout much of Europe - a continent where totalitarian rule is not some distant specter, but something people alive today have lived – Mr. Trump's attacks on an independent judiciary, a free press and the sanctity of the ballot were long seen as ominous (Cohen, 2017).

Surprisingly, neither the *Washington Post* nor the *Wall Street Journal* referred to the attack on the Bundestag in the Reichstag building in Berlin although it took place just five months before the storming of the Capitol. They did not reference the previous attack in Germany – another Western democracy and a longtime partner in stable international relations since the end of World War II.

At the same time, the *Tagesspiegel*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and *Berliner Zeitung* did not address the socio-political unrest in the United States that took place before German demonstrators attacked the Bundestag, partly in the name of conspiracy theories

that evolved in the United States. Considering the budding election campaigns before the penultimate presidential election on November 3, 2020, which clearly had identifiable influences on the German society's resentment, referring to these unrests could have been expected.

A reference to each country's past and present socio-political challenges would not have been out of place. However, because it was not made, the idea of collective memory was only mentioned in one of the 21 articles, and thus played no role in the news reporting. Therefore, no comparisons can be made to the results of the previous studies presented on collective memory: The two attacks were not actively linked to similar events from the past in order to "weave" them into the collective memory. The only difference between German and U.S. news outlets in the way that their reporting was either exclusively devoted to national or also to international concerns consists in the reference of the *New York Times* to German history. The international references of the online news media I assumed could not be confirmed. Thus, also the concept of place in a geographical meaning did not play a role. Neither did it have an impact on local, national, nor on international news coverage.

This finding is rather surprising given that the three U.S. news organizations chosen are well-established news organizations with a large reach and international coverage. The lack of coverage of an event that occurred so recently and was so similar in essence to the attack on the Capitol suggests either that German socio-political events are unimportant in world affairs, or that there is a deliberate silence about negative U.S.

American influences on German society, which would have been obvious had the Berlin riots been covered more extensively in U.S. online news media.

Research Limitations

This study was limited by the aspects related to the following main points: a) a framing research exclusively dedicated to the analysis of the singular visual mode, b) an exclusively qualitative approach in the analysis and evaluation of the sample, c) the omission of content on social media platforms, d) the reference to only U.S. and German online news media representing a pro-democratic perspective, c) the sole analysis of online articles in the political segment of news outlets, and d) the limited accessibility of suiting research material.

Regarding the first point, the third chapter of the literature review already argued that visual framing research dedicated to only one mode (only visuals) has a limited explanatory power, especially in the context of omnipresent multimodality and digitized media diversity. Geise et al. (2013) sum up this limitation in their framing research:

If we take multimodality seriously as a regular case of media communication, framing research devoted exclusively to the analysis of a singular mode (e.g., image only, text only, audio only) must be viewed with the appropriate limitations, as it might lead to an incomplete understanding of the events and objects under investigation. Thus, we not only consider visual framing as an integral dimension of the broader framing concept, but also take the position that verbal framing approaches that exclude visual elements have limited explanatory power. From this perspective, too, the findings of visual communication research can only enrich the general, more text-centered framing research (p. 47).

Using a combination of textual and visual framing could explain the frames even deeper. Eleven years ago, Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) stated that one of the reasons why visual framing is used in so little research compared to textual framing is because

there is still a lot of uncertainty about how visual frames should be detected in the first place (p. 50). To date, much has been done in this regard. It can no longer be said that there is a general uncertainty about how visual frames should be detected. However, merging visual and textual frames require a larger research scope than that of this study.

That introduces the next limitations: The analysis was designed to be exclusively qualitative. In future research, this limitation could be counteracted by, for example, expanding the research team so that intersubjective comprehensibility would be increased, and a creation of the category system with more perspectives than that of a single researcher would be ensured. With a quantitative analysis, for example, more visuals could be analyzed, thereby increasing the representativeness of the results.

Thus, a future quantitative study could move from the exploratory approach toward the conclusive approach, as definitive answers could be based on greater representativeness. Also, a quantitative analysis could replace a category system formed in the exploratory approach with a codebook. If two codebooks were used, one for the analysis of visual frames and one for the analysis of textual frames, the combination of them could provide more comprehensive insights. Exploratory studies often employ a small sample, which may or may not sufficiently reflect the target population. As a result, the results of an exploratory qualitative framing analysis cannot be applied to a larger population.

Moreover, this study focuses solely on U.S. and German online news media that take a pro-democracy perspective. Future research could either focus on U.S. and German publishers and editors who take an anti-democratic or highly critical stance, or it

could include other international sources that also take a democracy-averse approach, such as sources from authoritarian state systems like the People's Republic of China or Russia. How anti-democratic news outlets dealt with the incidents in the United States and Germany would contribute to international framing research with possibly controversial perspectives.

The omission of content on social media platforms is also due to the limited research scope. While the idea of including Twitter content was considered at the beginning of the research conception, the idea was not carried out because a quantitative research approach would have been more appropriate. Future research could focus only on communication on selected social platforms. Both the tweets of selected online news media could be studied textually and visually or be combined with an analysis of particular Twitter statements by individuals involved in the incidents.

This study focused on online articles in the political segment. Again, due to the research scope, it suited the qualitative approach not to refer to segments other than the political one in the selected articles. Including other section such as art, history or lifestyle, which also contained the search terms "Capitol" and "Reichstag," would have required a quantitative analysis, too.

As I stated already, a key limitation of my study, which did not allow for an examination of other major news media that published daily on the attack on the Bundestag due to reasons of accessibility and completeness of archives. Originally, the (online) magazine *Focus Online* was to be analyzed instead of the newspaper *Berliner Zeitung*. Unfortunately, *Focus Online* archived its online articles only without visual

elements. The (online) magazine *Spiegel Online*, the online news outlet t-online and the broadcaster Tagesschau were also considered, but they also did not have a suitable online archive with sufficient visual communication. A future study could turn to these media and analyze the online archives from a different perspective focusing on textual frames.

In order to ensure intersubjective comprehensibility in a transparent way, the individual category systems are included in the appendix. The focus of the discipline of communication and media studies, which traditionally sees itself as an empirical social science, is to produce intersubjectively comprehensible data that result from quantitative and/or qualitative research designs. This primary orientation is accompanied by the fact that theories of visuality are rather imported than produced by the discipline itself (Lobinger et al., 2019, p. 726).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Germany and the United States joined a global re-establishment of populists and anti-democrats. Donald Trump's presidency from 2017 to 2021 represented only one central outcome of populist campaigns but served as a form of breeding ground for the strengthening of radical groups in the United States, whose influences spread to Europe.

The intensity with which radical right-wing parties and conspiracy groups such as the Proud Boys or the QAnon Cult gained public support is unprecedented in the history on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean since the end of World War II and the global liberation from Nazism. Germany, for historical reasons, has been under the constant economic, political and socio-cultural influence of the United States ever since.⁵

What unfolded on Capitol Hill on Jan. 6, 2021, was more than simply a news event in the United States. It was keenly watched by Germany from the minute that word of the mob approaching the Congress broke. It was observed with a mixture of shock, bafflement, and, in some circles, delight. However, the storming of the Reichstag building, which occurred before the Capitol riot, did not receive the same amount of publicity in both German and U.S. online news newspapers. Although the same conspiracy theories and anti-democratic political culture that had inspired those who broke into the Capitol were present in Berlin, too, the attack was not even noticed by the entirety of German citizens, as the author observed in personal experiences.

⁵ This is particularly relevant in the field of communication and media history. The reconstruction of broadcasting by the Allies in Germany is a historical example: Following the surrender of the German Wehrmacht in 1945 and the partition of Germany by the Allies, U.S. Americans established a decentralized broadcasting structure in what was formerly West Germany and negotiated with the state governments to take over broadcasting sovereignty after the formation of the German states. Following Germany's reunification in 1989, these structures were preserved and enlarged to encompass the entire country until today.

Extremists and “wanna-be revolutionaries” in both countries have so far been very public about their motivations. In Rowley’s documentary (2021) Mike Dunn, a former Marine soldier who is now the leader of one of the United States’ most conspicuous Boogaloo groups in Virginia’s rural southern area, said on camera that “we are beyond the point of peace. I am thinking about a revolution against the government. It’s inevitable” (Rowley, 2021, 00:56:28-00:56:33).

Whether this aim could be achieved remains uncertain. However, considering the global connections of radical scenes, the acceptance of their ideologies even among U.S. Congress members like Taylor Greene, and the ongoing favorable conditions of the pandemic, it is difficult to provide a confident “never” as an answer. Dunn’s statement was no less threatening in 2021 than it is in 2022. The fact that Trump could run for president again in 2024 makes it even more relevant.

We are definitely the modern militia. We are crazy enough to actually do something. I think a lot of people have realized that it’s not an America of freedom anymore. A lot of people woke up to that in the past four years. Trump [...] put us in the spotlight even more,” Dunn added (Rowley, 2021, 00:53:50-00:54:20).

The results presented in this study highlight the socio-political developments I elaborated on in the second chapter. Dominant visual themes emphasize the international relationships among conspiracy theorists. They also revealed the extent to which rioters were able to commit violence, particularly gun violence in the United States. Most notably, the concept of White supremacy, which is as old as the country itself, was constantly highlighted through the visuals, even though the articles reviewed did not support it. Its aggression is portrayed as a major danger in both countries via the graphics.

If the visuals underline one thing through their forcefulness and content, it is that threat: The closer the demonstrators got to within a few steps of the Capitol and the Reichstag building, the closer they had gotten to the heart of the democratic systems, until they invaded it and caused lasting damage, even death. With the two assaults, the metaphorical difference between democracies and their invaders was erased, as was the distance between far-fetched conspiracies and the politically neither right nor left middle of society.

In the United States, the heads of the single decentralized radical movements mainly disappeared by the end of 2020, saying they are preparing for a revolution (Rowley, 2021). In Germany, the chairman of the largest right-wing party resigned because of the party's alarming development. These circumstances foreshadow that the radical movements of any natura presented have not grown to be gone tomorrow. Likewise, the possibility remains that the visuals that captured the incisive attacks may not be the last of their kind we might have seen in the future.

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Appendix

Number of Articles Sample Composition

Table 4

Number of Articles and Sample Composition

	New York Times	Washington Post	Wall Street Journal	Tages- spiegel	Südd. Zeitung	Berliner Zeitung
Total number of articles linked to keyword, time period and section	139	36	97	16	9	22
Number of articles selected (1 per day)	4	4	4	3	3	3
Total number of articles						21
Total number of visuals in the articles	25	37	14	13	7	4
Kinds of visuals	24 still, 1 video	33 still, 3 videos, 1 hybrid	13 still, 1 video	11 still, 2 videos	7 still	3 still, 1 video
Total number of visuals (sample)						100
Proportionate number of visuals (sample)						91 still, 8 videos, 1 hybrid

Table 5*Selected Articles per Day*

	New York Times	Washington Post	Wall Street Journal	Tages- spiegel	Südd. Zeitung	Berliner Zeitung
Jan. 6, 2021	Fandos & Cochrane	Demirjian et al.	Freeman			
Jan. 7, 2021	Cohen	Fisher et al.	Luttwak			
Jan. 8, 2021	Herndon	Hermann et al.	Ballhaus et al.			
Jan. 9, 2021	Barry et al.	Singh	Hagel			
Aug. 29, 2020				–	Heidtmann	–
Aug. 30, 2020				A1	A4	A5
Aug. 31, 2020				A2	Heidtmann	A6
Sep. 1, 2020				A3	–	A7

Note: The sources A1 to A7 are given in the references.

Category System *New York Times*

The category system applied to the newspapers can be explained in the following way: The first column “Denotative” names the variable, the second one, “Result,” lists the results. Same goes for the following columns “Stylistic” and “Connotative.”

On the one hand, the first table rows specify a numerical value that determines the occurrence of the variable in one visual. For example, if six U.S. flags were depicted in one visual, it was coded with “1.” On the other hand, the five bottom rows starting with the description “Number of” list a concrete number of objects. For example, if four visuals showed three police officers in each visual, the number of police officers adds up to 12.

Variables occurred simultaneously. For example, the Capitol building and firearms could have been seen in the same visual. If a certain number of demonstrators and police officers occurs in the same visual, too, a specific number is summed up in the respective variable.

The comparison of numbers in the form “x:x” in the “Result” column associated with stylistic variables counts the occurrence of depictions compared to each other. This is based on the concept of “Number of”. For example, if the face-ism index is 4:21, the centered depiction of a person’ face was detected in four images and was not found in 21 visuals.

As I mentioned in the method section, the ideological level was not included in the tables in the coding process since its implications are dependent on the first three levels and described in the sixth chapter.

Table 6*Category System New York Times*

Denotative	Result	Stylistic	Result	Connotative	Result
Capitol building inside (CI)	9	Dominant aspect, focal point	D, CI, SIT	Signs perceived from symbolic meanings	UF, QF, OF, PP
Capitol building outside (CO)	4	Dominant camera position	Eye level, from above	Visual metaphors	F vs. masks
U.S. flag (UF)	11	Visual modality (dominant colors, representational details)	Black, dark blue, red (CO) vs. crème, beige, light green (CI)	Abstract symbols vs. figurative symbols	13:12
QAnon flag or content (QF)	1	Face-ism index (centralizing a person's face vs. body)	4:21		
Other flags (OF)	9	Physical activity (active vs. inanimate)	3:22		
Public places (PP)	3	Imaginary contact (imaginary eye-contact vs. not)	2:23		
Firearms (F)	3	Social distance (close-ups in the foreground vs. long shots)	4:21		
Objects for self-defense, weapons (SW)	6				
Physical violence (PV)	4				
Fire, explosive material (F)	3				
Number of rioters, demonstrators (D)	~200				
Number of White people (WP)	~200				
Number of African American or Black people (AA)	3				
Number of single individuals with specific tasks (SIT)	8				
Number of police officers, security forces (PO)	11				

Category System *Washington Post*

Table 7

Category System *Washington Post*

Denotative	Result	Stylistic	Result	Connotative	Result
Capitol building inside (CI)	23	Dominant aspect, focal point	D, CI, CO, PO, UF	Signs perceived from symbolic meanings	UF, QF, OF, PP
Capitol building outside (CO)	16	Dominant camera position	Eye level, from above	Visual metaphors	Trump flags, CO stairs
U.S. flag (UF)	36	Visual modality (dominant colors, representational details)	Black, dark blue, red (CO) vs. crème, beige, light green (CI)	Abstract symbols vs. figurative symbols	7:35
QAnon flag or content (QF)	0	Face-ism index (centralizing a person's face vs. body)	8:27		
Other flags (OF)	36	Physical activity (active vs. inanimate)	27:0		
Public places (PP)	5	Imaginary contact (imaginary eye-contact vs. not)	2:40		
Firearms (F)	11	Social distance (close-ups in the foreground vs. long shots)	5:39		
Objects for self-defense, weapons (SW)	8				
Physical violence (PV)	16				
Fire, explosive material (F)	7				
Number of rioters, demonstrators (D)	~600				
Number of White people (WP)	~600				
Number of African American or Black people (AA)	6				
Number of single individuals with specific tasks (SIT)	8				
Number of police officers, security forces (PO)	70				

Category System *Wall Street Journal*

Table 8

Category System Wall Street Journal

Denotative	Result	Stylistic	Result	Connotative	Result
Capitol building inside (CI)	6	Dominant aspect, focal point	D, PO, CI, PV	Signs perceived from symbolic meanings	PO vs. masks
Capitol building outside (CO)	7	Dominant camera position	Eye level, from above	Visual metaphors	UF
U.S. flag (UF)	12	Visual modality (dominant colors, representational details)	Black, red	Abstract symbols vs. figurative symbols	38:6
QAnon flag or content (QF)	1	Face-ism index (centralizing a person's face vs. body)	13:30		
Other flags (OF)	5	Physical activity (active vs. inanimate)	34:0		
Public places (PP)	4	Imaginary contact (imaginary eye-contact vs. not)	0:34		
Firearms (F)	2	Social distance (close-ups in the foreground vs. long shots)	12:34		
Objects for self-defense, weapons (SW)	1				
Physical violence (PV)	3				
Fire, explosive material (F)	1				
Number of rioters, demonstrators (D)	~1000				
Number of White people (WP)	~1000				
Number of African American or Black people (AA)	0				
Number of single individuals with specific tasks (SIT)	13				
Number of police officers, security forces (PO)	50				

Category System *Tagesspiegel*

Table 9

Category System Tagesspiegel

Denotative	Result	Stylistic	Result	Connotative	Result
Reichstag building inside (RI)	0	Dominant aspect, focal point	RO, D, PO	Signs perceived from symbolic meanings	Flowers vs. police officers
Reichstag building outside (RO)	5	Dominant camera position	Eye level, from above	Visual metaphors	Flowers vs. police officers, close-up of leaders arrested
Reichsbürger flag (RF)	4	Visual modality (dominant colors, representational details)	Black, red, white	Abstract symbols vs. figurative symbols	11:1
German national flag (GF)	4	Face-ism index (centralizing a person's face vs. body)	3:9		
U.S. flags (US)	3	Physical activity (active vs. inanimate)	12:0		
QAnon flag or content (QF)	0	Imaginary contact (imaginary eye-contact vs. not)	1:11		
Other flags (OF)	3	Social distance (close-ups in the foreground vs. long shots)	4:8		
Public places (PP)	2				
Firearms (F)					
Objects for self-defense, weapons (SW)	0				
Physical violence (PV)	3				
Fire, explosive material (F)	0				
Number of rioters, demonstrators (D)	~1200				
Number of White people (WP)	~1200				
Number of African American or Black people (AA)	0				
Number of single individuals with specific tasks (SIT)	0				
Number of police officers, security forces (PO)	50				

Category System *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

Table 10

Category System *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

Denotative	Result	Stylistic	Result	Connotative	Result
Reichstag building inside (RI)	0	Dominant aspect, focal point	D, P, RO, RF	Signs perceived from symbolic meanings	Sit ins vs. police arresting
Reichstag building outside (RO)	3	Dominant camera position	Eye level, from above	Visual metaphors	close-up of leaders arrested
Reichsbürger flag (RF)	4	Visual modality (dominant colors, representational details)	Black, dark blue, red, white	Abstract symbols vs. figurative symbols	7:0
German national flag (GF)	4	Face-ism index (centralizing a person's face vs. body)	1:6		
U.S. flags (US)	2	Physical activity (active vs. inanimate)	7:0		
QAnon flag or content (QF)	1	Imaginary contact (imaginary eye-contact vs. not)	1:6		
Other flags (OF)	2	Social distance (close-ups in the foreground vs. long shots)	3:4		
Public places (PP)	3				
Firearms (F)					
Objects for self-defense, weapons (SW)	0				
Physical violence (PV)	1				
Fire, explosive material (F)	0				
Number of rioters, demonstrators (D)	~2000				
Number of White people (WP)	~2000				
Number of African American or Black people (AA)	0				
Number of single individuals with specific tasks (SIT)	3				
Number of police officers, security forces (PO)	15				

Category System *Berliner Zeitung*

Table 11

Category System Berliner Zeitung

Denotative	Result	Stylistic	Result	Connotative	Result
Reichstag building inside (RI)	0	Dominant aspect, focal point	D, RF, SIT	Signs perceived from symbolic meanings	
Reichstag building outside (RO)	2	Dominant camera position	Eye level, from above	Visual metaphors	
Reichsbürger flag (RF)	3	Visual modality (dominant colors, representational details)	Black, dark blue, red, white	Abstract symbols vs. figurative symbols	
German national flag (GF)	2	Face-ism index (centralizing a person's face vs. body)	1:3		
U.S. flags (US)	2	Physical activity (active vs. inanimate)	3:1		
QAnon flag or content (QF)	2	Imaginary contact (imaginary eye-contact vs. not)	0:4		
Other flags (OF)	2	Social distance (close-ups in the foreground vs. long shots)	2:2		
Public places (PP)	0				
Firearms (F)	0				
Objects for self-defense, weapons (SW)	0				
Physical violence (PV)	0				
Fire, explosive material (F)	0				
Number of rioters, demonstrators (D)	~800				
Number of White people (WP)	~800				
Number of African American or Black people (AA)	0				
Number of single individuals with specific tasks (SIT)	1				
Number of police officers, security forces (PO)	30				



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