

Jakub Eberle: Discourse and Affect in Foreign Policy. Germany and the Iraq War

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The book *Discourse and Affect in Foreign Policy* was written by Jakub Eberle, who is a senior researcher at the Institute of International Relations in the Czech Republic. Eberle is well positioned for such a research since his areas of expertise include German foreign policy, international relations theory and international political sociology. These are all subjects that are important for writing a book on discourse in German foreign policy.

The goal of this book is to bring the attention of academic research to the importance of emotions and affect in political decision-making and to demonstrate this subject on the case of German policies. The book contributes to the literature focussing on discourse analysis and takes it in a new direction by analysing not only linguistic characteristics, but also affect. The research on discourse is growing in the 21st century, especially in critical studies. This is happening because scholars realised that it is important to look not only at what kinds of policies are adopted but also at how the politicians, media and even the public talk about the subjects of interest. It is now well known that discourse is important and can influence reality – be it through support for new policies, support for certain leaders or the spread of hate or fear among the public. While the literature on discourse is growing, the literature taking affect into consideration has been limited so far; in fact, this literature came into existence only recently. Affect is based on fantasies and emotions so we cannot think that all actions performed by politicians are only rational, as was assumed in the past. We have to take affect into consideration when analysing discursive politics, because humans are emotional beings and politicians are no exception. This is the main idea of the book, the idea that makes the book very innovative. It fills a gap in discourse analysis, which mostly focusses on linguistic characteristics or context, but so far only rarely on affect, emotions and the subjective and irrational part of discourse.

Eberle's book fulfils two purposes. Firstly, it creates an innovative methodology that allows us to study not only language but also affect. Secondly, he uses this methodology to explain Germany's behaviour during the Iraq War in 2003. While Germany refused to participate in the war and said "no" to the United States when it requested its participation, as is common knowledge the Germans still supported the war logistically by providing the United States with military bases and providing technology to the United States' allies that were involved in the war. Eberle says that these contradictory politics can be explained by an analysis of the affects involved. His book clearly shows that there is state behaviour that cannot be explained by analysing discourse merely on the basis of its language, but which can be explained by looking at the related affects.

Eberle's book is divided into six chapters. The first three chapters focus on introducing the theory and methodology of the book, and the other three chapters analyse the discourse in German foreign policy in relation to the Iraq War. Eberle draws on the Essex School and especially the Lacanian theory of the search for a perfect identity in his study. This theory states that every subject desires a perfect identity that would make it whole. However, achieving this identity is impossible and thus it is always fragmented. It is fragmented between its discursive and affective sides.

Eberle presents the idea of logics. First, he introduces the concept of social logics that “recover the meaning and pattern of coherence of a discursive formation or a practice, characterise it in terms of what it is about, who participates in it and what is at stake” (p. 22). Social logics are thus contextual. Second, he presents us with the concept of political logics. It captures the reproduction of a discourse. The discourse can either be offensive and challenge the existing setting or be defensive and attempt to preserve the existing setting. The last concept introduced by Eberle is the concept of fantasy and fantastic logic. It is the most important concept for the book and its innovative methodology. Fantasy “captures the affective dimension of subjectivity and helps to bring the excessive dimension of the Lacanian real into the discourse-theoretical framework” (p. 26). Fantasy is the subjective side and it promises to recapture the whole identity, which is, however, impossible to achieve. Fantasies present the ideal and the obstacle to achieving it. They are very clear-cut. Eberle uses example of the immigrant crisis to make the idea of fantasies clearer to readers. In the immigration crisis fantasies, there is the ideal of national and cultural renewal and it is perceived as being prevented by problems caused by immigrants. The fantasy also provides a clear solution – do not take any immigrants in. Fantasies are also often transgressive – in the example of the migrant crisis, immigrants are seen as harassing and raping local women. However, fantasies are also often contradictory (since fantasies are not rational), and thus the immigrants can be portrayed as both sexually active rapists and very religious individuals. This supports the feeling of hate towards immigrants. The author also explains that fantasies are not necessarily something that is outside of reality; they are rather clear-cut and simplified pictures of reality that help one to make sense of it. They are used to help us understand who we are and what our identity is as well as what is threatening our identity and how we can make it whole.

Next the author proceeds by explaining the German situation and its contradictory politics and then focusses on each of the three logics in the German case. The social logics that were used in the German discourse were: state sovereignty, peaceful resolution and international communities. Germany thus wanted to be viewed as a sovereign state which does not take orders from other countries, as an actor which is not war prone but supports peaceful resolutions and, at the same time, as an actor which can fulfil its responsibilities resulting from its position in the international community. Eberle looks at how the political speakers are using the three social logics that he identifies and how these presentations are different for the government and the opposition. In the next, fifth chapter, he focusses on the political logics and on how the discourse was created. He identifies two different views of the Iraqi crisis, which each created a different discourse that fit their respective interpretation of the war. The first is the anti-war discourse, which portrayed Germany as a sovereign state that tries to preserve peace by opposing the war and which is acting according to international law and has the support of the majority of the states in the international community. The second is the anti-isolation discourse. This discourse was mostly voiced by the opposition, which criticised the German position because it feared that it could lead to Germany’s isolation in the international community.

The sixth chapter analyses three different fantasies of the German discourse. The first is titled “*Imperial crusade and Armageddon on the Tigris: fantasising ‘American war’*” (p. 108). This is a connection of two strategies – one that sees America as a war-prone country and one that perceives war as something evil. The fantasy then sees a peaceful world as an ideal in which Germany can reach its full identity; however, the American war creates an obstacle to this ideal world and Germany thus needs to oppose it. The second fantasy is titled “*Ghosts of the past: fantasising Germany’s ‘special path’*” (p. 115). This fantasy sees Germany’s position in the world as a liberal-democracy as ideal and as being threatened by isolationism. In this fantasy, if Germany will not ally herself with the United States it is at risk of repeating its past and becoming an undemocratic state once again. The last fantasy Eberle presents in his book is “*Cannibal and monster: fantasising*

'Saddam'' (p. 118), in which Saddam Hussein is portrayed as a threat to peace and democracy that needs to be removed.

Eberle's book is very innovative in terms of discourse analysis and moves the research on discourse further. It can be used as a frame for future research and as an explanation of the behaviour of actors in foreign policy and international relations in general. It points out that the current research on the topic is not enough and that it is insufficient to study only language when studying discourse. The strong side of this book is that it not only focusses on a specific German case, but, most importantly, builds a new theoretical frame and contributes to the limited literature that is already starting to recognise the importance of emotions and affect in foreign policy analysis. It has to be seen as a work of theoretical literature that uses Germany's decisions about its involvement in the Iraq War only as a case whose purpose is to demonstrate and explain the theoretical innovations introduced by the book. The presence of the German case study is also very useful because it makes it easier for readers to understand the methodology and theory developed by this book. It is already well explained in the first three chapters, which lay out the methodology and theory, but if we are still unsure about something after reading them, it all becomes perfectly clear when we look at the application of the methodology in the last three chapters, which focus on the German case study.

However, if we were interested in the book as a source of information on German foreign policy, it could have been more robust. The German case is elaborated well enough to demonstrate the use of the new methodology and the role of affect in discourse and foreign policy. It also fulfils the goal of explaining the contradictory politics in Germany prior to the Iraqi War (the contradiction of negative discourse and positive actions). The book provides examples of arguments presented by the media, the government, and the opposition and offers some quotes. Nevertheless, in order to understand the German foreign policy at the time well, I would prefer even more empirical evidence and a more detailed explanation of the discourse. On the other hand, the main goal of the book seems to be the development of an innovative methodology, and the author himself acknowledges that there is need for further empirical research on the book's topics. The goals of the book are to demonstrate the importance of affect and emotions and to develop a new methodological frame, which the book has done very well. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in discourse analysis, and it is a necessary tool that we should all have in our libraries.

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Zuzana Buroňová is a PhD candidate at Metropolitan University Prague. She focusses her research on terrorism discourse in Anglosphere countries. She is writing her rigorous thesis at Charles University, where she also gained her Master's degree in Security Studies. She is attempting to create a new alternative counterterrorism model in her thesis.