

Death Seen, Judgement Withheld

The Inconsequentialisation of Civilian Loss in War after Hitler

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ABSTRACT

After the Second World War, Hitler became not only a condemned historical perpetrator but also a portable political measure defining the absolute enemy and the necessary war. This essay does not treat Hitler as the cause of subsequent wars; it examines how the historical justness of the war against him is transferred to other conflicts, and how that transfer can diminish the capacity of civilian losses to correct the initial decision.

“Absolute evil” is used here not as a metaphysical verdict but as a political representation that constructs the enemy as a non-negotiable threat whose stopping is obligatory. Hitler is at once a threshold that expels the enemy from ordinary politics and a limit point against which new threats are graded. The essay’s central claim is this: the specific capacity of the post-Hitler order of legitimation is not to conceal civilian death, but to prevent visible death from correcting the initial decision for war. This immunity from consequences is broken when loss reopens the initial decision to reassessment, halts the intervention, produces high-level accountability, or generates a forward-looking barrier.

Keywords: Adolf Hitler, absolute evil, civilian loss, military intervention, historical analogy, immunity from consequences, visibility, bindingness, political economy of war, Onopticon, Reality Paradigm

Introduction: Hitler died; his measure remained

Hitler and the Nazi regime represent a historical reality made concrete in aggressive war, genocide and mass extermination. The imperative to prevent the repetition of that reality is a founding moral limit. Yet Hitler has also been converted into a political measure by which new enemies are defined. To liken a leader to Hitler, a compromise to Munich, or non-intervention to appeasement is not merely to recall the past; it is to assign meaning, in advance, to the responsible option.

Yuen Foong Khong shows that historical analogies are not merely rhetorical devices that justify policies after the fact; they are cognitive frameworks that help decision-makers to define the problem before them, to evaluate options and to anticipate probable outcomes (Khong, 1992). This essay is concerned with a further function of analogy: historical analogy does not only produce the decision; it can also prevent the decision from being corrected by the consequences that later emerge.

The empirical weight of the inquiry falls on the institutional force that the memory of Hitler and of “never again” has acquired, above all, within Western-centred discourses of intervention. The

mechanism is not assumed to be universal. Non-Western uses — such as Russia’s framing of Ukraine through a rhetoric of “denazification” — show that the analogy is put into circulation by different actors, and that whose definition can harden into internationally binding reality is a question requiring separate investigation (Putin, 2022).

The absolute evil embodied in Hitler is not the direct cause of subsequent interventions. Hitler did not invent the absolutisation of the enemy; but in the post-war world he became the privileged symbolic measure of an older mechanism — one that absolutises the enemy, renders intervention obligatory, and prevents real civilian losses from nullifying the initial decision.

Nor need Hitler be named explicitly. When the enemy is constructed as non-negotiable and as an agent who will produce limitless evil in the future, the same architecture can operate. The fundamental verdict is this:

A war waged against absolute evil cannot be judged wrong; at most, it can be judged badly waged.

Even if the war’s justifications collapse or civilians die, the initial decision can be preserved, because its justness was established before the consequences, on the identity of the enemy. “Legitimate death” and “inconsequentialised death” are therefore not the same: the first is counted as justified; the second, even when condemned as tragic and unwanted, is deprived of the power to correct the initial decision.

1. Absolute evil: A political classification, not a metaphysical verdict

Where Kant thinks radical evil within the moral orientation of the human will, Arendt shows that great crimes can be produced through thoughtlessness, obedience and bureaucratic routine (Kant, 1998; Arendt, 2006). This essay does not aim to decide the metaphysical character of Hitler’s evil.

Arendt’s finding in Eichmann — not a devil, but a bureaucrat who had suspended the faculties of thinking and judging — raises a serious objection to the representation of the absolute enemy. While the discourse of absolute evil concentrates guilt in a single, extraordinary perpetrator, the banality of evil reminds us that mass crime can be produced through chains of duty, languages of expertise and normal institutions. The absolute enemy, in that case, does not only render evil visible; it can also render invisible evil’s ordinary and institutional producers. When all final guilt is gathered in the enemy, the shares of those who give the orders, select the targets, construct the legal justifications, operate the technology and watch the outcome become secondary.

“Absolute evil” here is not an ontology but a form of political representation:

It is the construction of an agent as a threat that is non-negotiable, incomparable, expelled from ordinary political relation, and whose stopping is obligatory.

Hitler’s historical crimes and his function in subsequent political memory are not the same thing. The historical perpetrator becomes a conceptual measure fixing the limit of future evil. The danger lies not in the past being forgotten, but in its becoming excessively useful.

The absolutisation of the enemy is a political operation older than Hitler. Categories such as the infidel, the barbarian, the enemy of civilisation or the enemy of humanity have, in different periods,

expelled the rival from ordinary political relation. Schmitt's friend–enemy distinction, and his critique of wars waged in the name of humanity, show the danger that a universal moral concept may thrust the enemy outside humanity itself (Schmitt, 2007). Hitler is not the historical founder of this structure. What sets him apart is that, after the Second World War, he became one of the most globally recognisable and most portable symbols of absolute evil.

2. Hitler as both threshold and limit point

Hitler's operation as a "measure" takes two distinct forms.

First, Hitler is a threshold. When an enemy is placed beyond this threshold, it ceases to be an ordinary political rival. Negotiating with it can be presented as concession, waiting as complicity, neutrality as moral indifference. Once the threshold is crossed, the enemy is expelled from ordinary politics.

Second, Hitler is a limit point. How closely new enemies approach this limit can be graded. Not every enemy is Hitler; but the closer an enemy is drawn to Hitler, the wider the range of instruments that may be used against it can become.

The passage into the category of absolute enemy is therefore threshold-like, while the immunity from consequences that the category produces is graduated. The absolutisation of the enemy can make intervention appear obligatory; but how far the war will be shielded from its consequences depends on how deeply this classification is embedded in media, intelligence, law, diplomacy and military decision-making.

The structure can operate even when Hitler's name goes unspoken. References to Munich, to appeasement, to the Holocaust, to Rwanda, to Srebrenica or to "never again" are not identical; but they can form the different historical dialects of the post-war memory of absolute evil. Their common function is not merely to recall a past catastrophe, but to declare, in the present, that delay will lead to a future one.

The past thus does more than explain the present. It fills the future in advance.

2.1. *The paradox within the anti-Hitler war*

The first great scene of this order of legitimation must be sought not after Hitler, but within the war waged against him. The real crimes of the Nazi regime gave the war's general justness a powerful foundation. But the justness of a war does not mean that every instrument used within it is automatically just. The bombing of Hamburg, Dresden and Tokyo, and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, sharpened the distinction between a just war and the morality of the instruments used within it.

In the just war tradition, *jus ad bellum* assesses the justness of the resort to war, while *jus in bello* assesses how the war is conducted. When the measure of the absolute enemy erodes this distinction, the war's general justness can absorb the criticism of particular instruments used within it. Walzer's discussion of the "supreme emergency" asks whether an imminent and extraordinary threat can justify departure from the normal morality of war; but it does not justify the automatic extension of that exception to every phase of the war and to every bombing (Walzer, 2015).

The argument advanced for Hiroshima — that a ground invasion would have cost more lives — displays with clarity the counterfactual structure at the centre of this essay: realised civilian death is justified by a greater probability of death that, never having occurred, cannot be measured with certainty. The purpose here is not to settle that historical controversy, but to show that the template of immunity from consequences could operate even within the war waged against Hitler.

2.2. From securitisation to inconsequentialisation

The Copenhagen School's approach to securitisation explains how an issue, by being constructed as an existential threat, is lifted out of ordinary politics and extraordinary measures are authorised (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998). The intersection with this essay's definition of absolute evil is plain. In both approaches, the threat is not simply found; it is politically recognised, declared, and made to enable particular actions.

The difference is temporal. Securitisation principally explains how the threat authorises extraordinary action. The concept of inconsequentialisation developed here asks, instead, how the same threat-frame can diminish the capacity of the civilian losses that emerge after the action to correct the initial decision.

Securitisation renders visible the authorisation before the war; inconsequentialisation renders visible the obstruction of correction after it.

3. The three faces of “never again”

“Never again” is, at first sight, an absolute prohibition of violence. But the question of what must never happen again opens the principle in three directions.

Its first meaning is this:

No one must ever again be subjected to mass violence.

Its second meaning is this:

Intervention must come before a new Hitler, or a new mass crime, emerges.

The first verdict establishes a normative limit against violence. The second can, under certain conditions, morally authorise the use of force. The same historical memory can stand both as a barrier before war and as war's justification.

There is also a third face: “never again” can turn the gaze from the realised consequences of the previous intervention towards the new threat to come. Confronting the consequences of the past war is thereby deferred within the urgency of preventing the approaching catastrophe. In this use the principle imposes no explicit prohibition on self-criticism; but by directing political attention perpetually towards the next potential Hitler, it makes the re-judgement of the previous decision harder. One of the cultural supports of immunity from consequences is this temporal movement, in which the past consequence changes places with the future threat.

The tension between the first two faces is plain in the debate over the Responsibility to Protect. The 2005 World Summit Outcome defines protection together with peaceful means and collective action

within the framework of the UN Charter; it establishes no automatic or unilateral authority for military intervention (United Nations General Assembly, 2005). The principle also encompasses prevention, assistance and capacity-building (Bellamy, 2009). The problem is the narrowing of this multi-instrument responsibility into military necessity, so that an identity is forged between “protecting” and “striking”.

“Never again” does not speak of its own accord. There are centres of decision that make it speak. It is these centres that declare the magnitude of the approaching evil, the exhaustion of peaceful options, and the transformation of intervention into a last resort.

4. Absolute enemy and absolute victim

The post-Hitler order of legitimization does not operate through the enemy’s evil alone. The same structure can also be built upon the protection of the victim.

The enemy-centred verdict runs:

We must stop him.

The victim-centred verdict runs:

We must protect them.

These verdicts can be the complementary poles of a single logic of intervention. The enemy is converted into a non-negotiable threat, and the population facing it into a victim requiring urgent rescue. Mamdani’s critique of humanitarian intervention shows how the saviour–victim–perpetrator division can pull back the political history of a conflict (Mamdani, 2009). The absolute victim can thus cease to be a political subject and become the moral justification of external intervention. The problem is not that the aim of protection is necessarily false, but that an identity is forged between protection and military intervention where none exists of itself.

What must be asked is this:

At what stage is the responsibility to protect converted into military necessity, and why does the civilian who was to be protected before the intervention become, during the intervention, a loss to be endured?

Libya is among the clearest instances of this tension. The UN Security Council’s Resolution 1973 of 17 March 2011 authorised “all necessary measures” to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack, while excluding a foreign occupation force (United Nations Security Council, 2011). The subsequent United Kingdom parliamentary inquiry concluded that a limited intervention to protect civilians had drifted towards a policy of regime change, and that no adequate strategy had been constructed for Libya after the intervention (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016).

These documents do not by themselves prove that the intervention was false from the outset. But they show that the distance between the declared aim, the instrument applied and the outcome produced cannot be closed by the adjective “humanitarian”.

5. Real death and counterfactual catastrophe

The civilian death caused by intervention has occurred; it can be counted and shown. The catastrophe that would allegedly have occurred without intervention is counterfactual. Yet in political reasoning the hypothetical catastrophe can come to weigh more than real death:

The intervention may have caused civilian losses; but had there been no intervention, far more people would have died.

This proposition may, in some cases, be true. Political decision is obliged to reckon with probable futures. The problem is not counterfactual thinking itself. The problem is that the counterfactual catastrophe and the realised loss are not subjected to the same measures of verification and responsibility.

Here lies the epistemic inequality: real death requires proof, yet may not suffice to show the decision wrong; the hypothetical catastrophe never occurs, yet may suffice to make intervention appear obligatory. When the counterfactual is used with enough certainty to authorise action and enough indeterminacy to generate no responsibility, the future that was never lived excuses the outcome that was.

6. The distribution of responsibility before the war

The absolute enemy does not merely constitute the cause of the war. It is also counted as having assumed, in advance, the responsibility for the losses the war will produce.

The logic runs:

The enemy must be stopped. To stop him, war is necessary. The ultimate bearer of the unavoidable losses caused by a necessary war is the enemy who made the war necessary.

At this point physical cause and moral responsibility come apart. The actor who drops the bomb is known; but it is said that what made the dropping of the bomb necessary was the enemy.

The intervening power can thus remain the agent of the act while distancing itself from ultimate responsibility. “Pre-allocated responsibility” is the charging to the enemy, by virtue of his absolutisation before the war begins, even of losses that have not yet occurred.

This allocation does not succeed in every case. International humanitarian law does not extinguish the attacking party’s responsibilities of distinction, proportionality and precaution. But the more political discourse concentrates final guilt in the enemy, the further the ordinary and institutional perpetrators whom Arendt made visible recede from the field of responsibility. The chain of responsibility must therefore extend not only to the absolute enemy, but to the order of decision that classifies him, declares the war necessary, supplies the instruments, and reduces the consequences to internal corrections.

6.1. The order of war concealed by the names of states and the transactions of the market

To read a war solely through the names of its official parties is misleading. Law may classify a conflict as one between two states; but those who supply the weapons, extend the credit, and furnish

intelligence and diplomatic protection also participate in the war's structure of possibility. The legal parties to a war and the actors who produce the war's reality are not the same set.

From the standpoint of the Reality Paradigm, the "Iran–Iraq War" is for this reason not a closed bilateral war. Iran and Iraq are the official belligerents; but both were heavily dependent on external support for weapons and other forms of assistance (SIPRI, 1984). The names of states, by representing a multi-actor network of production as a bilateral encounter, render the share of the external suppliers secondary.

Market transactions, too, can render the same network invisible by fragmenting it. Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism — in which social relations between people appear as relations between things — can here be applied to the material circulation of war (Marx, 1976). When arms sales, energy transport, credit, military logistics and reconstruction contracts are represented as mutually independent commercial transactions, the common relation they maintain with war capacity and the production of death recedes from view. Civilian death is thus not only morally secondarised; its cost can be externalised onto broad populations and target geographies, while the returns of war concentrate in organised actors.

Yet economic interest does not, by itself, produce immunity from consequences. For material gain to be converted into political immunity, the networks of arms, energy, credit and reconstruction must gain access to the order of representation and to the institutions of decision. Political economy is therefore not a hidden true cause substituting for discourse, but a material stratum that can make it harder for counter-evidence to become decision.

This invisibilisation took a new form after the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Iraq, which had grown strong within external networks of arms, credit, technology and intelligence during its war with Iran, was re-represented in Saddam's person as the absolute perpetrator. The parallel Bush drew between Saddam and Hitler authorised the intervention while pushing into the background the relations within which that capacity had been produced (Bush, 1990). The external suppliers do not thereby automatically become legal belligerents; but judgement must be able to return not only to the one who fires, but to the relations that build and sustain the capacity to fire.

7. Immunity from consequences

The soundness of a decision can normally be reassessed by its consequences. But when a war has been constructed at the outset as necessary action against absolute evil, the corrective force of consequences weakens.

The justification proves false. The plan fails. The state dissolves, or civilian losses mount. And yet the following verdict is preserved:

Still, something had to be done.

This sentence moves the argument from the consequences of the act to the hypothetical consequences of inaction. The war ceases to be a wrong decision; at most it counts as a right decision wrongly executed.

A bad outcome does not prove of itself that the initial decision was wrong. The decision-maker may have acted reasonably within the information and options then available, and an unforeseeable outcome may have followed nonetheless. But the outcome remains counter-evidence: it requires re-examination of the information available at the moment of decision, of the options allegedly exhausted, and of the verdict of necessity. Immunity from consequences is not the shielding of a sound decision from the unjust verdict of ill fortune; it is the prevention of the outcome from reopening the possible defects in the initial decision.

The 2003 Iraq war shows the weight of this distinction. The Iraq Inquiry concluded that, when the United Kingdom went to war, diplomatic options had not yet been exhausted and military action was not a last resort; it further identified grave inadequacies in the processes of decision and planning (The Iraq Inquiry, 2016). These findings do not by themselves settle the whole meaning of the war. But they compel inquiry into how the claim of “necessity” was constructed before the consequences, and to what extent it could be corrected afterwards.

Immunity from consequences is not the absence of criticism. Even when errors are admitted and inquiries conducted, if none of this reaches the initial decision, the system has absorbed the criticism.

Immunity from consequences is not the impossibility of criticising the war; it is the incapacity of criticism to nullify it.

The House of Commons’ rejection, on 29 August 2013, of the Government motion that could have opened the way to military action in Syria shows that the immunity can be broken. The lessons of Iraq were raised explicitly in the parliamentary debates, and after the vote the Government announced that the United Kingdom would take no part in military action (House of Commons, 2013; House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2014). The event did not retroactively annul the Iraq decision in law; but it showed that the accumulated consequences of Iraq could bind a future decision for another war.

Immunity from consequences is therefore no closed law operating in every case. Where visible harm leads to the formal reassessment of the initial decision, to the ending of the intervention, to high-level accountability, or to the prevention of a comparable future intervention, the immunity is broken at that level.

8. Invisible death, and death visible but not binding

This essay does not claim that all civilian deaths are visible. In some wars death is systematically unrecorded, unfilmed, uncounted, or barred from public circulation. That is the regime of invisibilisation.

But a further capacity is possible: to neutralise death without having to conceal it.

Two distinct mechanisms must therefore be distinguished:

1. *Invisibilisation*: death cannot reach the public.
2. *Inconsequentialisation*: death reaches the public but cannot reach the decision.

In some forms of modern war, deaths make the news, images are published, reports are compiled, investigations are opened and apologies are offered. Yet the war's initial justness is preserved.

This distribution is not equal for all lives. Mbembe's analysis of necropolitics shows that sovereignty determines who may be abandoned to death (Mbembe, 2019). Colonialism, race, citizenship and geography can render certain losses worth only internal correction, but not worth changing the constitutive decision. Necropolitics explains who can be abandoned to death; immunity from consequences explains whose death cannot return to the decision that produced it. The distinction thus encompasses not only the inequality of lives before death, but the inequality of deaths in their capacity to produce judgement.

Visibility shows that the death is known. Bindingness shows that this knowledge can change the decision. But not every change breaks the immunity from consequences. Two levels must therefore be separated:

1. *Internal bindingness*: criticism changes the method of targeting, the conduct of the operation or lower-level practice, while the justness of the initial decision is preserved.
2. *Constitutive bindingness*: criticism opens the initial decision to formal reassessment, ends the intervention, produces high-level accountability, or prevents a comparable future intervention.

Internal bindingness is not without effect; it can protect lives and constrain the operation. But when it does not reach the constitutive decision, it becomes at the same time the system's way of absorbing criticism. Immunity from consequences is broken only when constitutive bindingness occurs. Loss of reputation is not equal to high-level accountability, nor operational change to the nullification of the initial decision.

A definitive verdict on the immunity can be established only in retrospect. In an ongoing war, the fact that constitutive bindingness has not yet arisen does not show that it never will. In continuing cases, what is measured is therefore not a completed immunity but the delay of counter-evidence in reaching the constitutive decision, or its non-occurrence within the period observed.

The conversion of visible loss into constitutive bindingness does not happen of itself. It requires that objection reach an institutional veto point such as a parliament or a court, that it divide the consensus within the deciding elite, and that it generate a public interpretation rivalling the initial narrative of necessity. In Syria in 2013, the political legacy of Iraq, the parliamentary vote and the Government's abandonment of military action showed that this passage is possible.

Britain's decision of 2013, set against the American strikes on Syria in 2017 and 2018, shows the weight of the institutional veto point more clearly still. In Britain, the Government's will to intervene met a binding obstacle in Parliament, and the military option was withdrawn. In the United States, the strikes were carried out by presidential decision without prior specific Congressional authorisation, with notification to Congress following the action (Trump, 2017, 2018). The contrast shows that public objection alone does not produce bindingness: for criticism to be able to stop the decision, an institutional channel reaching into the decision process is required. The institutional veto point does not break the immunity automatically; but it creates the political possibility of binding correction.

Rwanda renders visible the reverse face of the same relation. Knowledge of mass violence, and the memory of “never again”, produced no automatic bindingness in favour of intervention. The United Nations’ independent inquiry determined that the fundamental failure stemmed as much from the absence of the necessary political will as from the inadequacy of resources (United Nations, 1999). This shows that visibility neither halts of itself an intervention already begun, nor launches of itself an intervention that never came. What is decisive is not merely that the suffering is known, but that the knowledge can be converted into decision capacity.

Civilian deaths are the reality of war. To disregard them is to deny the reality of war. To leave them without binding force is to nullify that reality without denying it.

The true subject of this essay is this second mechanism, in which reality is nullified without being denied.

8.1. The technological infrastructure of inconsequentialisation

Inconsequentialisation does not operate through discourse alone. The professional army, precision munitions, remote targeting, regulated media access and the centralisation of executive authority — though born of different needs — can together lower the domestic political cost of military action. In the United States conscription ended in 1973, and precision munitions entered use during the Vietnam War; it would be wrong to count these as a single retrospectively designed plan (U.S. Department of Defense, 2023; Correll, 2010). Even so, the brevity of the 1991 Gulf War, the low American military casualties and the narrative of precision made intervention appear politically repeatable. Bush’s declaration that “we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all” summed up that political claim (Bush, 1991).

Drones and precision targeting reduce military casualties without eliminating civilian death; they can shift responsibility from the decision for war to faulty intelligence, technical malfunction or the enemy. Yet the same technology also produces counter-evidence — sensor records, satellite imagery, targeting data. The Onoptic function lies not in the image itself, but in the regulation of the channels through which the image might reach the constitutive decision.

9. The spectator: The separation of compassion from decision capacity

The visibility of civilian death does not necessarily render the spectator indifferent; but when compassion does not reach the decision circuit, it is severed from political capacity. Boltanski interrogates the spectatorship of distant suffering; Sontag, the failure of the image to produce any single moral conclusion; Butler, which lives are counted as public loss (Boltanski, 1999; Sontag, 2003; Butler, 2009). There is no necessary passage between seeing, mourning and judging. To declare the spectator an outright accomplice is therefore to overlook his want of binding decision capacity.

The spectator grieves; but his grief is not converted into decision authority.

The Onopticon need not destroy sensibility; it renders it manageable, in such a way that it cannot reach the constitutive decision.

10. The Onopticon: The reality in which the consequence cannot correct the decision

The Onopticon,¹ developed by Hakkı Tan within the Reality Paradigm, is the regime of reality in which the conditions of visibility, classification, option and objection are structured before they enter the subject's field of decision (Tan, 2026). It is not another name for the Hitler analogy: the Onoptic structure emerges when the absolutisation of the enemy, the rendering certain of the future catastrophe, the devaluation of peaceful options and the advance distribution of responsibility are joined in a single decision circuit. If peace is counted from the outset as appeasement or complicity, an option exists; but the meaning of the options is not free.

The contribution of the Onopticon is to show why the consequences cannot correct the initial classification. Civilian death enters not a neutral field but a pre-constructed circuit of meaning, which can recognise it as the price of the enemy's having made intervention necessary.

The Onopticon need not render death invisible; it bars death from reaching the field of reality in which it could judge the decision that produced it.

Historical analogies are not the sole producers of decisions for war. Strategic interest, domestic law, alliances, bureaucratic continuity and technological distance also insulate decisions from their consequences. The specific function of the discourse of absolute evil is not to replace these, but to translate them into the form of moral necessity: interest appears as duty, institutional continuity as necessity, technological distance as precision. The Onopticon is the joining of this discourse with decision capacity.

Conclusion: A new Hitler, or a judgement withheld?

The question "has a new Hitler appeared?" is not wrong but directive. While drawing attention to the magnitude of the threat, to delay and to the possibility of a new Munich, it pushes into the background the order that constructs the analogy. The real question is who is able to define another as Hitler, which options that definition closes, and which violence it shields from its consequences.

To use the analogy and to convert it into binding reality for others are not the same thing. Binding definitional power concentrates in those actors at whose intersection global representational reach, institutional platforms of speech and the capacity for military execution meet. This essay confines itself to identifying the mechanism; the distribution of that capacity among actors requires separate comparative research.

But the question must also turn upon the essay itself. An analysis that seeks to remove Hitler from the position of political measure may, by placing him once more at the centre, feed the very privilege of being the measure. The way out is not to decide how closely new enemies resemble Hitler, but to investigate in whom the authority to draw the analogy resides, and which consequences it leaves without force.

The problem here is no longer whether civilian death is seen. The problem is which decision the death that is seen can return to. Where reality carries no corrective force over the decision, there is

knowledge but no judgement. For a political decision to be immune from its consequences is not merely a distribution of responsibility; it is the abolition of reality's claim upon the decision.

Civilian death can be seen, known and condemned; and yet it may be unable to pass judgement on the decision that caused it.

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1. The name Onopticon is derived from the Greek *ón* (ὄν, “being”; genitive *ontos*) joined to *optikón* (“of or pertaining to seeing”). Bentham's Panopticon (“all-seeing”) names an architecture that organises visibility; the Onopticon names the organisation not of seeing, but of the reality within which one comes to be seen. If the question of the Panopticon is “who is seen?”, the question of the Onopticon is “within which reality does one become visible, processable or decidable?” (Tan, 2026).

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