

The Onopticon: A Second-Order Analysis of How Power Pre-Structures the Encounter with Reality

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“Unless societies can govern those who rule in their name, power will cease to govern society and begin to consume it.”

— H. Tan

Abstract

This article proposes an analysis of contemporary power not only at the level of surveillance, discipline, control, exception, data extraction or ideological representation, but at the deeper level of how the conditions of the encounter with reality are structured in advance. This proposal is developed through the concepts of the Reality Paradigm and the Onopticon. The Reality Paradigm is used here not as a theory of truth or falsity, but as a name for the prior field within which something can appear as real, discussable, actionable or contestable. The Onopticon names the regime through which power organises this field by including, recognising, classifying and confronting subjects, societies or countries with a narrowed range of possible action.

Whereas the Panopticon organises visibility, the Onopticon organises the conditions under which reality is encountered. For this reason, the Onopticon is not a total theory that explains everything, but a second-order analysis of power. It examines how different causes, actors and crises are rendered visible, reasonable, necessary or weakly contestable within an already structured field of reality.

The article discusses this theoretical framework through three main case sections and one threshold-section: the Gladio/Bologna nexus in relation to the Tension Onopticon; the 11 September attacks as a constitutive threshold-section demonstrating the transition between the Tension Onopticon and the Rescue Onopticon; the 2003 Iraq intervention in relation to the Rescue Onopticon; and the current hunger crisis in Sudan in relation to the Food Onopticon. The aim is not to explain these cases through a single cause, but to show how the field of reality is structured in advance in each.

The article also distinguishes the concept of territorial Homovictimus from dependency theory by examining the figure of a country whose formal sovereignty persists, yet whose horizon of decision and vital access is narrowed by external and internal infrastructures. Finally, by discussing moments of fragility, failure and resistance within the Onopticon, the article shows that the concept does not refer to an omnipotent model of power, but to a contradictory, contestable and empirically testable analytical tool.

Keywords: Reality Paradigm, Onopticon, Political Onopticon, Tension Onopticon, Rescue Onopticon, Food Onopticon, Homovictimus, territorial Homovictimus, 11 September, securitisation, humanitarian intervention, postcolonial theory, hunger, Iraq, Sudan.

1. Introduction

Modern theories of power have shown in considerable detail how power disciplines the body, governs populations, organises visibility, modulates behaviour, extracts data and turns exception into a juridico-political technique. Foucault's analyses of discipline and biopolitics, Deleuze's concept of control society, Agamben's theory of exception, Zuboff's analysis of surveillance capitalism, Amoore's work on data-driven security and risk, and Rouvroy and Berns's discussion of algorithmic governmentality constitute central reference points in this literature (Agamben, 1998; Amoore, 2013, 2020; Deleuze, 1992; Foucault, 1977, 2007; Rouvroy & Berns, 2013; Zuboff, 2019).

This article does not seek to refute that literature. Rather, it focuses on a level that it leaves insufficiently addressed. This level is not merely the surveillance of the subject, the direction of behaviour or the distortion of truth. More fundamentally, it concerns the infrastructural, institutional and epistemic arrangement that determines in advance the reality with which the subject, society or country will be confronted.

The central question of the article is therefore the following:

Within which already structured field of reality is a person, society or country deemed capable of acting, deciding, objecting or surviving?

The theoretical answer to this question is developed around two concepts: the Reality Paradigm and the Onopticon. The Reality Paradigm refers not to a theory of truth or falsity, but to the prior field within which something can appear as real, discussable, actionable or contestable. The Onopticon names the regime through which power structures the conditions under which subjects, societies or countries are included, recognised, classified and confronted with a narrowed field of possible action.

"Pre-structuring" and "pre-processing" are used here as theoretical terms. They refer to the prior formatting, conditioning or organisation of the field in which reality will be encountered. The terms do not mean simple preparation. They mean that, before the subject acts, objects, decides or gains access to something, the relevant field of reality has already been formatted by categories, thresholds and institutional possibilities. The subject enters a world in which possible responses have already been arranged.

The aim of the article is not to turn the Onopticon into a total explanation that replaces all other causes. On the contrary, the Onopticon is positioned here as a second-order analysis. War, debt, climate, security, external intervention, markets and humanitarian architectures are important in their own right. The Onopticon does not replace these factors; it examines the field of reality within which they become meaningful, necessary, legitimate or weakly contestable.

The article proceeds through three main case sections and one threshold-section. The Gladio/Bologna nexus is discussed in terms of the Tension Onopticon, with particular attention to the production of violence and security reality. The 11 September attacks are examined as a constitutive threshold-section demonstrating the transition between the Tension Onopticon and the Rescue Onopticon. The 2003 Iraq intervention is analysed through the Rescue Onopticon, focusing on the framing of occupation as liberation and the institutional mechanisms of purge and restructuring. The hunger crisis in Sudan is examined through the Food Onopticon, in terms of the closure of food-access thresholds through war, markets, humanitarian aid and the narrowing of the territorial decision horizon.

The article is not prescriptive. It does not offer a reform programme, policy proposal or recipe for liberation. Yet this does not mean that it is value-neutral. To diagnose an imposed reality is already a critical act. The article's normative position is therefore clear: its normative energy lies not in programme, but in diagnosis.

2. Theoretical Position: From Surveillance to the Field of Reality

The Panopticon made it possible to think modern power around visibility and surveillance. In Foucault's analysis, disciplinary power works by rendering individuals visible, classifying them and normalising them (Foucault, 1977). Deleuze argues that disciplinary institutions have been displaced by more flexible, modular and continuous mechanisms of control (Deleuze, 1992). Zuboff, in turn, focuses on the extraction, prediction and modification of behavioural data under the conditions of digital capitalism (Zuboff, 2019).

The Onopticon is not simply a continuation of this line. If the fundamental question of the Panopticon is "who is seen?", the question of the Onopticon is "within which reality does one become visible, processable or decidable?" In other words, the Onopticon analyses the level of conditioning that precedes surveillance. "Onoptic", as an adjective, refers to processes, mechanisms or fields that operate according to the logic of the Onopticon. An Onoptic field of reality is therefore a field in which reality has already been organised through inclusion, recognition, classification, foreclosure and weak contestability.

This distinction also clarifies the difference between the Reality Paradigm and Foucault's notion of a regime of truth. For Foucault, a truth regime refers to the discursive, institutional and procedural mechanisms through which distinctions between true and false are produced, authorised and circulated. The Reality Paradigm, by contrast, names a more preliminary level. Before a statement can be judged true or false, a field must already have been established in which something can appear as an object of discussion, an actor can be recognised as an interlocutor and a ground of reality can be shared as the terrain of speech. Foucault analyses the production of truth; the Reality Paradigm analyses the construction of the threshold at which reality can be encountered.

A similar distinction is needed in relation to Deleuze. In the society of control, power operates through continuous modulation: individuals are adjusted through codes, data flows, access protocols and shifting thresholds (Deleuze, 1992). The Onopticon does not deny this modulation. Rather, it asks about the conditions that make modulation possible in the first place: which data will be collected, which category will count as meaningful, which threshold will permit passage and which form of adjustment will appear necessary. Modulation is a form of adjustment; the Onopticon draws the scale on which the adjustment is made.

The same applies to Zuboff's analysis of surveillance capitalism. Zuboff shows how private experience is transformed into behavioural data and then into prediction products for behavioural futures markets (Zuboff, 2019). The Onopticon moves one step earlier. It analyses the reality field that determines: first, through which categories behavioural data will be collected; second, which behaviour will count as meaningful data; third, which prediction will be coded as risk; and fourth, which possibilities will be closed on the basis of that risk. Zuboff analyses the commodification of data; the Onopticon analyses the threshold of recognition and classification that precedes datafication and renders it actionable.

The Onopticon operates through five linked operations.

The first is **compulsory inclusion**. A subject, group or country is drawn into an infrastructural, juridical, data-based, humanitarian or security field from which meaningful exit is difficult or costly. The subject is not merely classified; it is first placed inside a system in which access, legibility or the capacity to act depends on being processed.

The second is **recognition**. The subject, group or country is translated into forms that the system can understand. Identity, file, risk profile, credit score, aid registration, security category or international recognition are instruments of such recognition.

The third is **classification**. The recognised element is placed into categories such as safe/risky, suitable/unsuitable, to-be-rescued/to-be-cleansed, productive/burden or accessible/excludable.

The fourth is **foreclosure of possibility**. Foreclosure here means the narrowing or pre-emptive closing of options before the subject can fully act, object or decide. It does not refer to foreclosure in a narrow legal or psychoanalytic sense. Classification does not merely represent; it narrows the field of options. Credit refusal, prevention of border crossing, exclusion from an aid list, loss of market access or the rendering of external intervention as unavoidable all belong to this stage.

The fifth is **weak contestability**. This refers to a condition in which imposed categories can in principle be challenged, but only through procedures that are opaque, costly, ineffective or already structured by the system itself. The subject is not necessarily silenced. It may object. However, objection must often be made in the language of the system and within procedures that rarely alter the underlying classification.

At this point, the Onopticon intersects with the literature on classification, infrastructure and the state's modes of seeing (Bowker & Star, 1999; Easterling, 2014; Larkin, 2013; Mitchell, 2002; Scott, 1998). In this context, "legibility" refers to the capacity of a subject, group or country to be made visible, readable and administratively actionable within a system. The term draws on the broader literature on state classification and administrative visibility. In this article, legibility means that the subject can be processed by power because it has been translated into recognisable categories.

Yet the specific focus of the Onopticon is not merely the regulatory function of classification and infrastructure. Its focus is their role in determining the threshold at which the subject or country encounters reality.

The contemporary technological manifestations of the Onopticon make this level even more visible. Algorithmic credit scoring, automated welfare systems, platform content moderation, biometric recognition at borders, risk-based policing systems and data-driven prioritisation in migration management show that the Onopticon operates not only in war or crisis, but also in routine practices of governance. In these examples, power does not merely observe the individual; it structures in advance which service the individual may access, into which risk category they will be placed, which language of objection will be admissible and which decision will appear automatic or technical.

The strength of the Onopticon therefore does not lie in knowing everything, but in making its own form of knowledge and classification function as the measure of reality. The Onopticon may err, see incompletely or fail. Yet when it operates, it makes its own measure into the condition of the field of action.

3. Conceptual Hierarchy, Scope Conditions and Falsifiability

The concepts used in this study do not occupy the same level.

The **Reality Paradigm** is the overarching theoretical frame. It argues that power imposes not only truth, but also the conditions of the encounter with reality.

The **Onopticon** is the general name of this paradigm as a regime. It operates through inclusion, recognition, classification, access, prioritisation, risk, foreclosure of possibility and weak contestability.

The **Political Onopticon** is the specific form taken by the Onopticon in the field of politics and sovereignty. It emerges in relation to the state, citizenship, law, security, war, debt, diplomacy, food, humanitarian aid and the territorial decision horizon.

This article distinguishes three forms of the Political Onopticon.

The **Tension Onopticon** refers to the form of the Political Onopticon in which fear, ambiguous violence, internal enemies and security demand narrow the social field of decision. It does not mean that power invents every threat. It means that violence and ambiguity can reorganise the reality in which extraordinary measures appear reasonable and democratic objection appears dangerous.

The **Rescue Onopticon** refers to the form of the Political Onopticon in which intervention, occupation, sanction or restructuring is rendered intelligible as rescue, protection, liberation or transition. It does not ask only whether an intervention is justified. It asks how a reality is produced in which some actors appear as rescuers, others as enemies and others as populations to be saved.

The **Food Onopticon** refers to the form of the Political Onopticon in which access to food is narrowed through war, markets, aid, debt, climate and security infrastructures while hunger appears as natural scarcity or local incapacity. The concept does not mean that food is absent. It means that access to food has been politically and infrastructurally closed.

These distinctions are not introduced for the sake of conceptual proliferation, but in order to show, in a limited manner, the same logic of reality imposition operating across different fields.

The conceptual hierarchy can be summarised as follows:

Level	Concept	Analytical function	Main question
1	Reality Paradigm	General theoretical frame	How are the conditions of the encounter with reality structured in advance?
2	Onopticon	Regime of imposition	How are inclusion, recognition, classification and possibility processed?
3	Political Onopticon	Political-sovereign form	How are subjects, societies or countries made governable, open to rescue, risky or responsible?
4	Tension Onopticon	Security field	How does violence or ambiguity produce a reality of threat and emergency?
4	Rescue Onopticon	Intervention field	How is intervention framed as liberation, protection or transition?
4	Food Onopticon	Vital access field	How is access to food closed while hunger appears natural or inevitable?

For the Onopticon to be analytically valid, certain scope conditions must be present. The first is **compulsory inclusion**: the subject, group or country must be drawn into an infrastructural, juridical, data-based, humanitarian or security field from which it cannot easily opt out without losing access, legibility or the capacity to act. The second is **compulsory recognition**: once included, the subject can become legible only through the categories of the system. The third is **foreclosure of possibility**: classification must materially narrow the field of available options. The fourth is **weak contestability**: the imposed category must be difficult to understand, challenge, revise or refuse through effective procedures.

These conditions also specify the falsifiability of the concept. The absence of the Onopticon can be identified where these conditions are not present. First, there is no compulsory inclusion where the subject, group or country can remain outside the relevant field without losing access, legibility or the capacity to act. Second, there is no compulsory recognition where the subject can act, object or access services without being translated into the system's categories. Third, there is no foreclosure of possibility where classification does not materially narrow the field of available options. Fourth, contestability remains strong where the imposed category can be understood, challenged, revised or refused through effective procedures. In empirical research, these conditions can be tested through process-tracing, discourse analysis, institutional analysis and indicator-based coding. Where inclusion is optional, recognition is non-compulsory, classification does not foreclose possibilities and objection remains effective, the Onopticon should not be claimed.

4. Method, Case Selection and Second-Order Analysis

This article is neither a quantitative study nor a full historical case analysis. It is a theoretical-conceptual article. The case sections are not selected to prove the concept, but to show how the concept can be applied across different fields.

The article proceeds through three main case sections and one threshold-section. Gladio/Bologna, Iraq and Sudan are the main case sections through which three different forms of the Political Onopticon are demonstrated. 11 September is added not as a fourth equivalent case, but as a constitutive threshold-section showing the transition between the Tension Onopticon and the Rescue Onopticon.

A **threshold-section** is not used here as an independent case type. It is an analytical category that names the theoretical function of a historically specific event in making visible the transition between two forms of the Onopticon. It is related to the notions of the critical case and critical juncture in case-study literature, yet the aim here is not to establish causal explanation in the strict sense. The aim is to show the mechanism through which an Onoptic transition is rendered visible (Eckstein, 1975; Gerring, 2007; Seawright & Gerring, 2008).

This distinction is important. The 11 September attacks are not treated in this article as an event produced by the Onopticon. Rather, they are treated as a historical threshold after which security, war, enemy, intervention and objection were reprocessed in an Onoptic manner. For this reason, the article does not discuss the perpetrators of the 11 September attacks, their chain of command or the detailed history of intelligence failures. The analysis focuses on the field of reality established after the attacks and on which options were rendered possible, impossible or illegitimate.

The Gladio/Bologna nexus operates in Europe, in the context of the Cold War, through clandestine security networks, neo-fascist violence and debates over structures outside democratic oversight. 11 September appears as the threshold at which the global security reality of the twenty-first century was reframed. Iraq 2003 shows the transfer of the post-11 September security reality into a target country through open military intervention, occupation and institutional restructuring. Sudan, in the context of

the 2020s, operates through civil war, displacement, food markets, humanitarian architecture and vital access thresholds.

This structure shows that the Onopticon cannot be reduced to a single type of case. Gladio/Bologna makes visible the production of security reality through violence; 11 September makes visible the global pre-framing of that security reality; Iraq shows the transformation of this pre-frame into a regime of intervention and institutional purge; Sudan shows the closure of vital access thresholds within war, markets and humanitarian architecture.

The cases in this article are not presented as full historical case studies or as a completed comparative research design. Gladio/Bologna, Iraq and Sudan are used as theory-building comparative case sections. 11 September is positioned as a threshold-section that makes the historical transition between these sections visible. This choice does not replace empirical depth; rather, it provides an analytical starting point for observing how the Onopticon may operate across different fields.

The claim of the article is therefore not to explain the entire causal history of the cases in question. Its more limited claim is that a similar second-order mechanism can be traced across different periods, geographies, actors and fields of crisis. In this sense, the expression “most-different systems design” is used here not in a strictly statistical or variable-based comparative sense, but as a theory-building logic of selection. The cases are selected not to prove the concept definitively, but to propose traceable mechanisms for future process-tracing, archival work, discourse analysis, institutional analysis and field research.

Positioning the Onopticon as a second-order analysis does not exclude first-order causes. First-order analysis examines the material, historical, economic, military and institutional causes of war, hunger, intervention or security crisis. Second-order analysis asks within which field of reality these causes become visible, reasonable, necessary, rescuing or weakly contestable.

The relationship between these two levels is not merely one of juxtaposition; it is dialectical. First-order causes cannot produce political effect without a second-order field of reality, because these causes must appear reasonable, necessary, urgent or legitimate. Yet the second-order field of reality is not independent of first-order material causes; it is constantly fed, tested and reconstituted by them.

The relationship between first-order causes and the second-order field of reality can be examined, in empirical process-tracing, through three stages. The first is **pre-framing**: a crisis, threat, people, country or access problem is rendered visible within certain categories before a fully institutional decision is taken. The second is **institutional crystallisation**: these categories become decisions, orders, laws, aid protocols, security classifications or administrative arrangements. The third is **feedback**: institutionalised decisions reproduce, harden or destabilise the field of reality initially established.

Pre-framing refers to the prior discursive and institutional arrangement through which a crisis, threat, population or country becomes visible in a particular way before decisive action is taken. Institutional crystallisation refers to the moment when discursive categories become embedded in laws, orders, protocols, agencies or administrative procedures. Feedback refers to the process through which institutionalised decisions reproduce, harden or destabilise the field of reality that initially made them possible.

This distinction does not entirely eliminate the chicken-and-egg relation between the first and second levels; it renders it analytically traceable. In Iraq, the language of rescue and security functioned as pre-framing; the CPA orders were the institutional crystallisation of that frame; and post-occupation violence, resistance and state-capacity crisis both reproduced and destabilised that field of reality. In Sudan, war and displacement formed the pre-frame; IPC classifications, aid protocols and access permis-

sions produced the field of institutional crystallisation; and the populations that humanitarian aid did or did not reach demonstrated the feedback effects of this reality.

Onopticon analysis therefore does not draw an absolute boundary between material causes and epistemic processing of reality. It follows them as levels that co-constitute, reinforce and at times disrupt one another in process.

5. Territorial Homovictimus and Its Difference from Dependency Theory

Homovictimus names the subject who is treated as responsible while the infrastructural conditions of meaningful agency have already been narrowed. It is not simply a victim. It is a paradoxical figure: responsible as an agent, but deprived of the full conditions of agency. The concept therefore combines vulnerability, responsibility and constrained action.

Territorial Homovictimus refers to a formally sovereign country whose real decision horizon is narrowed by external and internal infrastructures while it continues to be held responsible as though it possessed full agency. The concept does not mean a passive or helpless country. It means a country that still acts and decides, but under conditions in which many options have already been closed by debt, security dependency, food systems, energy, data, diplomacy or aid architectures.

This concept is in dialogue with classical dependency theories, but it is not identical with them. Dependency theory examines centre-periphery relations, structural inequality and dependent forms of development in the world economy (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Frank, 1966; Wallerstein, 1974). Territorial Homovictimus focuses instead on the following question:

How do these relations of dependency pre-narrow the country's reality of decision-making, and which options are effectively foreclosed while the country continues to be held responsible as though it were fully sovereign?

This distinction is not merely semantic. For example, a country's dependence on grain imports, external debt servicing or security assistance falls within the scope of dependency theory. Yet if this dependency makes the country's inability to feed its population appear as an internal capacity deficit, subordinates the agricultural budget to debt servicing, ties access to food aid to the priority lists of external institutions and forecloses alternative policy options as unrealistic, then the level of territorial Homovictimus emerges.

Dependency theory explains structural position. Territorial Homovictimus analyses how this structural position processes the decision horizon and reconstitutes the appearance of responsibility. The concept therefore does not replace dependency theory; it carries its economic-structural analysis into the level of reality imposition.

Homovictimus also differs from theories of vulnerability. Butler's work on precariousness and grievability shows that human life is constitutively dependent on others and unequally exposed to injury, loss and political abandonment (Butler, 2004, 2009). Homovictimus is not a denial of this insight. It names a specific political form of vulnerability: vulnerability that is not merely ontological, but infrastructurally produced. The subject is made vulnerable through access systems, security categories, debt relations, aid protocols, data infrastructures or market thresholds; yet the same subject is addressed as a responsible agent. Homovictimus therefore names the paradoxical conjunction of narrowed agency and intensified responsibility.

This is also why Homovictimus should not be treated as a figure of pure passivity. Its tragedy is not the absence of agency, but the fact that agency is demanded under conditions already narrowed by

infrastructures that precede it. This distinction is central to the article's later discussion of counter-Onoptic agency.

6. The Tension Onopticon: The Gladio/Bologna Nexus

The Tension Onopticon analyses situations in which society is led to regard extraordinary intervention as reasonable through internal threat, ambiguous violence and the demand for security. The concept does not explain every act of violence as a clandestine state operation. More narrowly, it asks how violence transforms the social field of reality.

The Gladio/Bologna nexus is a limited but instructive case section in this respect. The European Parliament's 1990 resolution on Gladio made politically visible the existence, in some European countries, of secret "stay-behind" networks outside democratic oversight, as well as their opaque status (European Parliament, 1990). The bombing of Bologna railway station on 2 August 1980 stands at the centre of debates on the strategy of tension in Italy. The attack killed 85 people and injured more than 200; neo-fascist Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari members Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro were convicted in connection with the attack (Cento Bull, 2007; Ferraresi, 1996; Ganser, 2005).

The Bologna bombing did not remain merely a matter of political memory or theoretical interpretation; it was also addressed within Italian judicial processes. The convictions of neo-fascist NAR members in relation to the attack show that Bologna must be discussed not only as an unresolved event, but also as an instance of political violence that produced judicial outcomes. At the same time, possible state-level misdirection, cover-up and intelligence connections surrounding the attack have long been debated in Italy. For this reason, Bologna enables analysis of the reality field produced by violence, ambiguity, security demand and structures outside democratic oversight, rather than requiring a claim about a single, proven command chain.

This article does not claim that the Bologna bombing can be explained through one definitive chain of command. Such a claim would exceed the evidentiary level of this study. The analytical question is more limited:

How does ambiguous violence transform the security reality of society?

Attacks such as Bologna do not produce only physical destruction. They also create a security field in which society experiences itself as fragile, under threat and unprotectable by ordinary law. Within such a field, hard security policies, the existence of clandestine structures or extraordinary measures may appear more reasonable.

6.1. Relation to Securitisation, Moral Panic and Shock

The Tension Onopticon is in dialogue with the Copenhagen School's theory of securitisation, but it is not identical with it. Securitisation theory examines how an issue is removed from the sphere of ordinary politics and constructed as an existential threat, thereby legitimising extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998; Wæver, 1995). This approach is important for the Tension Onopticon, because it explains how categories such as internal enemy, terrorism, communism, disorder or chaos become attached to extraordinary intervention through the language of security.

Yet the Tension Onopticon adds two further levels to securitisation theory.

First, it focuses not only on discursive securitisation, but on the capacity of violence and ambiguity to produce reality. It examines not only the speech act through which a threat is securitised, but also the ways in which ambiguous violence, provocation, fear and repeated attacks shape social perception in advance.

Second, it examines the field of reality that emerges as a result of securitisation. The issue is not merely whether a threat has been declared. The more fundamental question is this: under what conditions does society begin to regard ordinary law as inadequate, clandestine security structures as necessary, hard intervention as reasonable and democratic objection as dangerous?

The Tension Onopticon must also be distinguished from moral panic and shock-based accounts of crisis. Cohen's concept of moral panic explains how perceived social threats are amplified through media, discourse and public anxiety (Cohen, 1972). Klein's shock doctrine analyses how crises are used as opportunities to impose policies that might otherwise face resistance (Klein, 2007). The Tension Onopticon differs from both. It does not focus only on the inflation of perception or the opportunistic use of crisis. It asks how violence and ambiguity build a field of reality that narrows the decision horizon of society and determines in advance which options will appear reasonable, dangerous or irresponsible.

The Tension Onopticon therefore does not replace securitisation theory, moral panic or shock-based explanations. It extends these debates at the level of violence, ambiguity and the imposition of a field of reality.

6.2. Alternative Explanations and the Contribution of the Onopticon

The Bologna and Gladio nexus cannot be explained by the Onopticon alone. Cold War polarisation, anti-communism, neo-fascist movements, factions within the Italian state, the NATO context and internal political conflict all constitute primary explanatory levels.

The contribution of the Onopticon is not to replace these factors. Its contribution lies in showing how violence produces a security reality and which political options appear reasonable, dangerous or unrealistic within that reality. Cold War polarisation explains why anti-communist threat perception mattered; the Tension Onopticon explains how that threat perception became a field in which secrecy, exceptional security and democratic suspicion could be made to appear necessary. The Tension Onopticon analyses how violence narrows the social decision horizon before asking who the perpetrator was.

7. 11 September: The Onoptic Transition from Tension to Rescue

The 11 September attacks are examined here not as an independent and complete historical case analysis, but as a constitutive threshold-section demonstrating the transition between the Tension Onopticon and the Rescue Onopticon. This section does not enter into debates over the perpetrators, chain of command or alternative explanations of the attacks. Its analytical question is narrower: within what reality were security, war, enemy, intervention and objection reprocessed after 11 September?

At the first-order level, 11 September consisted of large-scale terrorist attacks carried out by al-Qaeda. The 9/11 Commission Report examines the attacks in relation to al-Qaeda's organisation, Osama bin Laden's strategy and the planning of attacks against the United States (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004). From the perspective of the Onopticon, however, what is decisive is the second-order security reality established after the attacks. Within this reality, the threat did not remain limited to a particular organisation; states, networks and actors that supported, sheltered, tolerated or were deemed insufficiently opposed to it were also incorporated into the field of risk. Security thereby ceased to be merely a matter of responding to an attack and became a global regime of recognition and classification.

George W. Bush's address to Congress on 20 September 2001 is one of the clearest examples of this pre-framing. The formula "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" placed states, institutions and actors across the world into a binary regime of recognition in which the space of neutrality was narrowed (Bush, 2001). The same speech stated that the war would begin with al-Qaeda but would

not end there. This expression produced a security reality in which the threat expanded from a single organisation to terrorist networks with global reach and the governments that supported them.

This pre-framing was rapidly transformed into institutional crystallisation. The Authorization for Use of Military Force made possible the use of force against countries, organisations and persons that planned, authorised, committed, aided or harboured those responsible for the 11 September attacks (Authorization for Use of Military Force, 2001). The USA PATRIOT Act expanded law-enforcement, intelligence, financial monitoring and investigative capacities in the name of counter-terrorism (USA PATRIOT Act, 2001). The Homeland Security Act of 2002 provided the basis for reorganising numerous federal bodies within a new security architecture (Homeland Security Act, 2002).

This triad – the AUMF, the PATRIOT Act and Homeland Security – shows the movement of the Onopticon from discourse to law, from law to institution, and from institution to the reality of intervention. After 11 September, security was no longer merely a feeling or policy preference; it became a juridical and administrative infrastructure. Within this infrastructure, some possibilities opened while others closed: preventive war, extraordinary detention regimes, expanded surveillance powers, border and no-fly security lists, the category of enemy combatant and the idea of the country open to intervention became more reasonable and more practicable.

This field of reality was not confined to United States domestic politics. NATO's invocation of Article 5 for the first time after 11 September, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1368's description of the attacks as a threat to international peace and security, show how the event moved from national trauma to global security reality (NATO, 2001; United Nations Security Council, 2001). 11 September thus reprocessed the security reality not only within the American state, but also within international law, alliance politics and the global architecture of intervention.

For this reason, 11 September is a critical threshold for understanding the transition between the Tension Onopticon and the Rescue Onopticon. The attack produced fear, fragility and security demand; this field of tension was subsequently reconstituted in fields of intervention such as Afghanistan and Iraq through the language of rescue, liberation, regime change and preventive war. Violence produced a security reality; security reality became law and institution; law and institution made new interventions possible.

7.1. Alternative Explanations and the Contribution of the Onopticon

The 11 September attacks can be analysed through several first-order explanatory frames, including al-Qaeda's organisation, United States foreign policy, intelligence failures, radicalisation processes, Middle Eastern geopolitics and the development of global jihadist networks. These explanations are necessary and are not replaced by the Onopticon.

The contribution of the Onopticon is different. The Onopticon does not examine why the attacks occurred; it examines which security reality was constructed after the attacks. How was the world classified within this reality? Which states, groups and individuals were placed within the field of risk? Which juridical and institutional options became possible? Which forms of objection were weakened by accusations of undermining national security, sympathising with terrorism or lacking realism?

In this sense, 11 September is not merely a traumatic event for the Onopticon, but a historical threshold at which the security reality of the twenty-first century was reprocessed on a global scale. What the Onopticon shows here is not the attack itself, but how the fields of security, law, war and intervention were reconstructed after the attack.

8. The Rescue Onopticon: Iraq 2003

The Rescue Onopticon refers to the form of the Political Onopticon in which intervention, occupation, sanction or restructuring is rendered intelligible as rescue, protection, liberation or transition. The term does not ask only whether an intervention is justified. It asks how a reality is produced in which some actors appear as rescuers, others as enemies and others as populations to be saved.

The Rescue Onopticon operating in Iraq did not emerge in a vacuum. The global pre-frame upon which it was built was the security reality established after 11 September. 11 September placed the world into a new security paradigm named the war on terror; the formula “either you are with us or with the terrorists” placed states and actors into a compulsory field of recognition and classification. The Iraq intervention would not have possessed the same political legibility without this field of reality.

Iraq 2003 should therefore be read not only as an intervention concerning Iraq, but also as the transfer of the post-11 September security reality into a target country. The discourses of liberating the Iraqi people, removing the regime, preventing the risk of weapons of mass destruction and democratising the region became more reasonable within the logic of preventive war and global security after 11 September. The Rescue Onopticon here translates security discourse into the internal field of reality of the target country: a people to be rescued, a regime to be cleansed, institutions to be dismantled and a state to be rebuilt.

The 2003 Iraq intervention is a strong example in this respect. President George W. Bush presented the intervention as disarming Iraq, freeing the Iraqi people and protecting the world from danger (Bush, 2003). This discourse framed the intervention not merely as military occupation, but as the rescue of Iraqi society from its own regime.

Within this field of reality, Iraqi society became visible not as a whole, but as a set of classified elements: a people to be rescued, a regime to be removed, remnants of the old order, collaborators, resisters, terrorists and actors suitable for democratic transition. These classifications were not merely discursive; they affected the rebuilding of the state, de-Ba’athification, security architecture and the order of political representation after the occupation.

In Iraq, the Rescue Onopticon must not be understood merely as a discursive frame. The language of freeing the Iraqi people established the moral legibility of occupation, while post-occupation institutional arrangements turned this legibility into material reality.

At this point, the first two orders of the Coalition Provisional Authority are especially important. CPA Order No. 1, titled “De-Ba’athification of Iraqi Society”, aimed to eliminate the structures of the Ba’ath Party and remove its senior cadres from positions of authority (Coalition Provisional Authority, 2003a). CPA Order No. 2, titled “Dissolution of Entities”, provided for the dissolution of numerous institutional structures, including Iraq’s military, security and intelligence bodies (Coalition Provisional Authority, 2003b).

These orders demonstrate the institutional-material operation of the Rescue Onopticon. The language of rescue did not remain confined to the discourse of freeing the Iraqi people; it became a practical regime of classification concerning who counted as a remnant of the old order, who could be purged, which institution constituted a threat, which security structure was legitimate and which actor could be recognised within the new political order. De-Ba’athification, the dissolution of the army and security institutions, interim governing mechanisms, new orders of representation and processes of economic restructuring effectively reconstituted Iraq’s post-occupation reality of decision.

The material consequences of these classifications were extensive. De-Ba’athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army affected hundreds of thousands of soldiers, officials and party-affiliated personnel,

contributing to the collapse of state capacity, the erosion of institutional continuity and the emergence of resistance dynamics in the post-occupation order (Dodge, 2012; Pfiffner, 2010). The point is not that these consequences can be reduced to Onoptic classification alone, but that classification became materially operative: it did not merely name the old order; it dismantled institutions and narrowed the future political field.

For this reason, the Iraq case cannot be reduced to Bush's speech. The speech is one moment in the establishment of the field of reality; the Onoptic operation is completed when this discourse materialises in post-occupation institutions, security arrangements, purge mechanisms and economic restructuring. Framing occupation as liberation is not merely a matter of representation, but a practical regime of classification concerning which actor is legitimate, which institution is disposable, which violence is the cost of transition and which external presence counts as order-making.

8.1. Relation to Humanitarian Intervention, R2P and Necropolitics

The Rescue Onopticon is directly related to the literature on humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect. The R2P framework argues that when a state fails to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, the international community may assume responsibility (ICISS, 2001). The literature on humanitarian intervention discusses the moral, legal and political limits of military intervention.

The Rescue Onopticon does not reject this literature at the juridical or normative level. Its question is different. Within which field of reality does an intervention become visible as protection, rescue, democratisation, defence of civilians or liberation from a regime? Who, within the target society, is constituted as the subject to be rescued, the enemy to be cleansed, the legitimate representative, the remnant of the old order or the morally suspect actor because they object to intervention?

In this respect, the Rescue Onopticon translates the normative question of humanitarian intervention literature into a second-order question of reality. The question is not merely "is the intervention justified?" The question is also: how are the categories that make the intervention appear justified, necessary or unavoidable produced?

Authors such as Chandler, Douzinas and Chomsky draw attention to the imperial, liberal or hegemonic functions of the language of intervention (Chandler, 2006; Chomsky, 1999; Douzinas, 2007). The Rescue Onopticon learns from these critiques, but turns its focus specifically to the reprocessing of the internal field of reality of the target country. External intervention is thus examined not only as force applied from outside, but also as a reality architecture that reconstitutes the categories of enemy, rescuer, representative and objection inside the target country.

The Rescue Onopticon is also in dialogue with Mbembe's concept of necropolitics. Necropolitics discusses forms of power concerning who may live and who may be exposed to death (Mbembe, 2003). The Rescue Onopticon learns from this discussion, but shifts its focus from sovereignty over death to the field of reality within which violence becomes visible as rescue, protection or the cost of transition. In this respect, the Rescue Onopticon examines not only the death-producing capacity of necropolitical violence, but also the language of liberation through which such death and destruction are rendered meaningful.

8.2. Relation to Postcolonial Theory: Fanon, Said and Spivak

The Rescue Onopticon is also directly connected to postcolonial theory. Fanon's analysis of colonial violence shows that colonial order is not merely an economic or military form of domination; it is also a world-ordering force that reconstitutes the body, space, language, self-perception and political possibilities of the colonised society (Fanon, 1963). In this respect, Fanon is close to the central question of

the Onopticon: power does not merely dominate; it also shapes the world with which the dominated encounter.

Said's analysis of Orientalism shows that the East is not merely represented, but constituted as a governable object within Western practices of knowledge, literature, academia and administration (Said, 1978). This point is important for the Onopticon. The Onopticon moves beyond representation by asking within which field of reality the represented object is made recognisable, open to intervention or constructed as an object of rescue. The Rescue Onopticon can therefore examine how orientalist regimes of representation are reprocessed within contemporary languages of intervention, security, democracy, human rights and humanitarian protection.

Spivak's question "Can the subaltern speak?" is connected to the weak-contestability dimension of the Onopticon (Spivak, 1988). Within an Onoptic field of reality, the problem is not only that the subaltern is silenced; rather, their voice often becomes audible only within pre-determined categories of recognition. Objection is possible, but whether it is considered meaningful, legitimate or processable depends on the field of representation and classification established by power.

For this reason, the Onopticon does not replace postcolonial theory. It learns from Fanon's analysis of colonial violence, Said's critique of representation and knowledge, and Spivak's question of subalternity and representation. Yet it turns its focus to the following second-order question: within which field of reality is the postcolonial subject, society or country rendered recognisable, constructed as an object of rescue, governable, silenced or responsible?

Within this framework, territorial Homovictim analyses not only the economic or military dependency of the postcolonial state, but also the external regimes of knowledge, security, aid, debt, representation and intervention within which it is deemed capable of decision even when exercising its own sovereignty. Thus, in a postcolonial context, the Onopticon shows that colonial and postcolonial power process not only resources, but also the conditions of the encounter with reality.

8.3. Alternative Explanations and the Contribution of the Onopticon

The Iraq War has been analysed through many frames, including realist foreign policy, oil geopolitics, American hegemonic strategy, intelligence failures, the post-11 September security regime and violations of international law. These explanations are necessary.

The Rescue Onopticon shows an additional level: rather than focusing on the causes of war, it analyses the moral, political and institutional reality within which war became possible. Oil geopolitics, for example, may explain economic interest; it does not by itself explain why that interest had to be articulated through the language of freeing the Iraqi people, removing tyranny and protecting the world from danger. The Rescue Onopticon examines the field of moral-political reality within which material interests could appear as liberation, protection or transition.

The constitution of the Iraqi people as a subject to be rescued, the regime as an enemy to be cleansed and occupation as the cost of transition lies at the centre of Onoptic reality processing.

9. The Food Onopticon: Its Difference from Sen's Entitlement Approach

The Food Onopticon refers to the form of the Political Onopticon in which access to food is narrowed through war, markets, aid, debt, climate and security infrastructures while hunger appears as natural scarcity or local incapacity. The concept does not mean that food is absent. It means that access to food has been politically and infrastructurally closed.

The Food Onopticon argues that hunger arises not only from the absence of food, but from the closure of the conditions of access to food. This idea is directly connected to Amartya Sen's entitlement approach.

Sen showed that famines cannot be explained only by shortages in total food supply; they may also result from the collapse of people's entitlements to obtain food, their exchange possibilities, income and market access (Sen, 1981).

The Food Onopticon does not merely repeat this approach. It extends it in three directions.

First, it considers the collapse of access entitlement on which Sen focuses together with infrastructural processes such as war, debt, humanitarian architecture, supply chains, climate inequality and security regimes.

Second, it examines how loss of access appears as natural scarcity, local insufficiency, drought disaster, tribal conflict or humanitarian need. It thus links the economic question of access to the ontological and political question of visibility.

Third, it connects the individual level to the territorial level. Hunger is not only the collapse of a household's entitlement to obtain food; it is also the prior structuring of a country's capacity to produce, distribute, store and import food, and to determine agricultural policy.

The central claim of the Food Onopticon is therefore the following:

Hunger is, before the absence of food, the closure of the reality of access to food.

This sentence is not a metaphor, but an analytical distinction. Food may physically exist; yet when the routes to field, road, market, price, security, aid list and territorial decision horizon are closed, food becomes socially inaccessible.

10. Sudan: A High-Intensity Case Section of the Food Onopticon

Sudan concretely demonstrates the operation of the Food Onopticon. The hunger crisis in Sudan cannot be explained merely by reduced production or natural scarcity. Access to food is being closed through war, displacement, market collapse, the dependence of humanitarian corridors on security conditions and the narrowing of the territorial decision horizon.

According to the IPC's September 2025 analysis, approximately 21.2 million people in Sudan, around 45 per cent of the population, are experiencing IPC Phase 3 or above acute food insecurity. Within this group, 6.3 million people are in IPC Phase 4 Emergency and 375,000 people are in IPC Phase 5 Catastrophe. El Fasher and Kadugli have been classified as being under famine conditions (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2025).

In the Sudanese hunger crisis, the closure of access to food cannot be explained through an abstract category of war. The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces directly affects not only the military field, but also agricultural production, internal trade, market access, humanitarian corridors and the survival conditions of displaced populations. Actors such as WFP, UNICEF, ICRC and local humanitarian partners are key carriers of the aid architecture; yet this aid architecture depends on security permissions, access corridors, registration systems, logistical capacity and the shifting nature of conflict lines. In Sudan, humanitarian aid is therefore not merely a mechanism that enables access to food; it is also a new field of classification that determines who is reachable, who is unreachable, who is prioritised and who remains unregistered.

These data and actor relations show that hunger in Sudan is not only a risk, but a high-intensity closure of access. Five thresholds are narrowed simultaneously:

Indicator of the Food Onopticon	Closure in Sudan	Intensity
Production threshold	Farmers' access to land, seed, fuel and secure production areas is interrupted by war	High
Security threshold	Conflict lines, siege, displacement, severed roads and security threats	High
Market threshold	Disruption of local markets, price increases, currency depreciation and collapse of purchasing power	High
Aid threshold	Humanitarian aid becomes dependent on security conditions, corridors, registration systems and access permissions	High
Territorial decision threshold	The capacity of the state and de facto centres of power to feed the population is narrowed within war, diplomacy, debt and external aid networks	High

The Sudan case shows that the Food Onopticon is not merely an explanatory label, but can be rendered a codable object of research. Hunger here is not only the body's lack of nutrition. It is the closure of the routes leading to field, market, aid and security.

10.1. Alternative Explanations and the Contribution of the Onopticon

Hunger in Sudan can be explained through civil war, state capacity, climate vulnerability, economic collapse, displacement, humanitarian financing and regional power struggles. None of these factors is invalidated by the concept of the Onopticon.

The contribution of the Food Onopticon is to show how these factors together produce a closure in the reality of access. It analyses hunger not as food absence or merely as humanitarian crisis, but as the simultaneous closure of the thresholds of production, market, aid, security and territorial decision horizon. Climate vulnerability, for example, is often presented as natural disaster; yet the fact that societies contributing least to global emissions often experience the severest consequences of climate crisis shows that vulnerability itself is historically and structurally produced. The Food Onopticon makes visible how such inequality is rendered as natural scarcity, local insufficiency or humanitarian need.

It thereby diagnoses the field of reality that makes hunger appear as natural scarcity while the routes of access are politically and infrastructurally narrowed.

11. Comparative Coding of the Onopticon across Case Sections

The following table summarises how the main movements of the Onopticon appear across the case sections. The table is not offered as a complete empirical coding instrument, but as a conceptual bridge between the theoretical framework and future operationalisation.

Case section	Compulsory inclusion	Recognition/classification	Foreclosure of possibility	Weak contestability
Gladio/Bologna	Society is drawn into a security field shaped by violence and fear	Public order, internal enemy, subversion, emergency	Ordinary democratic options appear insufficient; secrecy and exceptional security appear more reasonable	Objection risks appearing naïve, dangerous or indifferent to security
11 September	States and actors are drawn into a global war-on-terror field	With us/with terrorists; ally/risk; supporter/harboured/enemy	AUMF, PATRIOT Act, Homeland Security and preventive war widen the field of extraordinary action	Objection may be framed as weakening security, lacking realism or sympathising with terror
Iraq 2003	Iraq is drawn into the post-11 September security and intervention field	People to be rescued; regime to be removed; institutions to be purged	Occupation, de-Ba'athification, dissolution of entities and state restructuring become practicable	Opposition is often processed as defence of the old regime, insurgency or threat to transition
Sudan	Populations and territories are drawn into war, aid, market and IPC fields	Reachable/unreachable; priority/unregistered; Phase 3/4/5	Access to production, market, aid and territorial decision is narrowed	Objection is weakened by security constraints, technical categories, aid protocols and emergency temporality

This table also clarifies the difference between the Onopticon and mere classification. Classification alone is not sufficient. The Onopticon is present only where inclusion is difficult to avoid, recognition becomes compulsory, classification narrows possibilities and objection becomes weak or costly.

The comparative coding also prepares the transition to the next section. If the Onopticon can operate across different fields, then its forms may also interact. The following section therefore examines how the Food Onopticon and the Rescue Onopticon may produce or intensify one another.

12. The Interaction between the Food Onopticon and the Rescue Onopticon

The Food Onopticon and the Rescue Onopticon are distinct forms; yet in some situations they produce or deepen one another.

In the first direction, a food crisis may become the moral ground for external intervention or a discourse of rescue. When a country is coded as a country that cannot feed its own people, external aid, intervention, safe zones, sanctions or institutional restructuring may appear more legitimate.

In the second direction, intervention, sanctions or war carried out in the name of rescue may fragment the food system. The closure of ports, collapse of agricultural infrastructure, division of markets, dependence of humanitarian corridors on security regimes and weakening of local production may further close the reality of access to food.

Hunger is therefore not always only a humanitarian crisis. In some situations, it may be the ground of a call for rescue; in others, it may be the result of intervention, sanctions or war carried out in the name of rescue.

13. The Fragility of the Onopticon: Failure, Resistance and Moments of Breakdown

The Onopticon is not a closed model of power that knows everything, determines everything or succeeds in all cases. Its strength lies in turning its own mode of classification and recognition into the measure of reality; yet this measure is not always stable. Onoptic fields of reality may be fractured by objection, scandal, judicial process, data disclosure, resistance or their own internal contradictions.

To discuss moments of Onoptic failure is therefore not a weakness of the concept, but part of its strength. A concept must be able to show not only where it operates, but where it stumbles.

In the Gladio/Bologna nexus, judicial processes produced a counter-reality that prevented the field of ambiguity from closing absolutely. The convictions related to the Bologna bombing prevented the violence from remaining entirely within an unlimited field of speculation about unknown perpetrators. Yet the same process did not completely eliminate questions about state-level connections, cover-up mechanisms and intelligence debates surrounding the event. This demonstrates the fragility of the Onopticon: judicial reality may stabilise certain narratives, but unresolved questions may persist in social memory and political debate.

The post-11 September security Onopticon did not operate in a closed and seamless manner either. Although the PATRIOT Act, the AUMF, the Homeland Security architecture and the language of the global war on terror produced an extensive security reality, this field of reality was continuously contested through legal struggles, civil-liberties critiques, anti-war movements, Guantanamo debates, the Abu Ghraib scandal and disclosures concerning surveillance regimes. This shows that the Onopticon is powerful but fragile. The reality field established in the name of security began to crack as the exception, torture, unlawful detention and mass surveillance that it produced became visible.

In Iraq, the Rescue Onopticon attempted to frame occupation through the language of liberation and transition. However, the Abu Ghraib scandal created a serious fracture in the rescue narrative of the occupation (Hersh, 2004). The visibility of prison, torture and humiliation at the hands of the occupying power weakened the moral ground of the rescuer reality. Similarly, post-occupation resistance, sectarian violence and the collapse of state capacity showed that the rescue narrative was constantly in conflict with material realities on the ground. This failure does not mean that the Onopticon did not operate; on the contrary, it shows that Onoptic fields of reality must be constantly re-established.

In Sudan, IPC classifications have a double operation. On the one hand, they turn hunger into a measurable, classifiable and prioritisable object within the humanitarian architecture. In this sense, they operate as an Onoptic instrument: hunger is recognised through technical categories such as Phase 3, Phase 4 and Phase 5. Yet the same classification also renders hunger visible, thereby producing international attention, calls for aid and political responsibility. The IPC therefore does not merely manage hunger; it also contributes to making hunger undeniable. The Sudan case shows that Onoptic instruments may sometimes strengthen imposed reality, while at other times disrupting its claim to naturalness.

The fragility of the Onopticon does not arise only from internal systemic contradictions, scandals, leaked documents or technical classification errors. Forms of agency that emerge from below may also strain the Onoptic field of reality. Homovictimus is not merely the passive object of a processed reality; it often seeks to rename its position, reject the imposed category, produce alternative testimony, create local networks of solidarity, open channels of survival outside aid and legal systems, or reverse the language of the system against itself.

Such agency does not directly abolish the Onopticon, but it can crack the field of weak contestability. The voice of the subaltern does not come from an entirely external, pure and unmediated position. It often has to speak from within the categories of recognition, aid, law, media or data produced by the system. Yet this compulsory translation does not mean the absence of agency.

Counter-Onoptic agency refers to practices through which subjects, groups or countries attempt to fracture, reverse, rename or contest the imposed reality field from within its own categories or at its margins. This does not mean full liberation from the Onopticon. It means partial resistance inside constrained conditions: testimony, legal struggle, alternative naming, local solidarity, refusal, evasion or the reversal of imposed categories.

Onopticon theory should therefore not construct Homovictimus as a figure of absolute passivity. The tragedy of Homovictimus is not that it has no agency, but that it is held responsible as an agent while the conditions of its agency have already been narrowed. Resistance also emerges within this narrowed field: sometimes through testimony, sometimes through documents, sometimes through local organisation, sometimes through flight, sometimes through legal struggle, and sometimes through a new naming that rejects the imposed identity.

These examples show that the Onopticon is not a closed mechanism of fate. Onoptic fields of reality are powerful, but fragile. They classify, but their classifications are contestable. They organise visibility, but they may produce unexpected visibilities. They close the field of reality, but events, documents, scandals, court decisions or humanitarian data may disrupt this closure.

The task of the Reality Paradigm is therefore not only to show imposition. It is also to show that imposition is not absolute, that it operates through its own contradictions and that it is therefore analytically traceable.

14. Normative Position: Diagnosis, Problematisation and Reflexivity

This article is not prescriptive, but it does not conceal its normative position. To diagnose an imposed reality is already a critical act. In this sense, the study is in dialogue with the Frankfurt School's understanding of critical theory and with Foucault's practice of problematisation.

Horkheimer's distinction between traditional and critical theory shows that knowledge may have a function not only of explanation, but also of rendering social forms of domination visible (Horkheimer, 1937). Habermas's work on knowledge and interest also discusses the relation between knowledge and technical, practical and emancipatory interests (Habermas, 1971). This line explains why Onopticon analysis is not merely descriptive: to show that the field of reality has been structured in advance is to weaken the claim that it is natural and unavoidable.

Foucault's understanding of problematisation moves this critique to a more careful point. Problematisation examines why a phenomenon becomes a problem, through which forms of knowledge it is thought, and within which relations of power it is rendered governable (Foucault, 1984). In this respect, Onopticon analysis asks, before the question "what is the solution?", the following question: under which conditions was this reality constituted as a matter of problem, threat, crisis, rescue, hunger or order?

Yet this diagnosis cannot present itself as an innocent or external gaze. To name the Onopticon is also an act of classification. Onopticon theory must therefore acknowledge that its own conceptual intervention is also a reality-producing practice. To say "Onopticon" is to place certain events within a particular analytical frame. This frame may be explanatory, but it must remain falsifiable, contestable and limited.

The normative status of this article is therefore threefold.

First, it is **diagnostic**. It does not accept imposed fields of reality as natural.

Second, it is **problematising**. It asks under which conditions a reality appears possible, reasonable or necessary.

Third, it is **reflexive**. It acknowledges that its own concepts may also produce classificatory and reality-constituting effects.

For this reason, the article deliberately refrains from offering solutions. The absence of a solution proposal does not indicate normative indifference. The aim is not to determine under which conditions exit is possible, but first to analyse within which reality the very idea of exit appears possible or impossible.

15. Conclusion: From the Onopticon to a Research Programme

The argument can now be restated without returning to the opening formulations as mere repetition. The four scope conditions identified in Section 3 — compulsory inclusion, compulsory recognition, foreclosure of possibility and weak contestability — appear differently across the case sections. In Gladio/Bologna, they appear through violence, ambiguity and the narrowing of the security horizon. In 11 September, they appear through global war-on-terror classification and institutional crystallisation. In Iraq, they appear through the translation of security into rescue, purge and reconstruction. In Sudan, they appear through the closure of production, market, aid, security and territorial decision thresholds.

The central contribution of the study is therefore its positioning of the Onopticon not as a total explanation, but as a second-order analysis. The Onopticon does not explain all the causes of war, debt, hunger, external intervention or security crisis. It examines the field of reality within which these phenomena become reasonable, necessary, rescuing, unavoidable or weakly contestable.

The concept of territorial Homovictimus must also be understood in this context. A country may remain formally sovereign; yet when the thresholds of decision, security, food, aid, debt and market access are

structured in advance, the actual content of sovereignty is narrowed. The country decides, but the world of decision is no longer entirely its own.

In a postcolonial context, this question becomes even more pronounced. A society or country is not merely represented; it is placed within a field of reality in which it can be recognised, governed, constructed as an object of rescue, assisted or held responsible. The second-order contribution of the Onopticon is to make this act of placement visible.

The central question of the Reality Paradigm is therefore not a replacement for the classical question of who governs. That question remains important. Yet the case sections show that another question must be asked first:

Within which reality are subjects, societies or countries rendered governable, open to rescue, exposed to hunger or responsible?

This question promises no solution. Yet it prevents imposed reality from appearing natural. The critical function of the Reality Paradigm begins here.

This article may also be read as the beginning of a research programme. The Onopticon can be tested across different fields: algorithmic welfare systems, border technologies, migration databases, climate adaptation finance, sanctions regimes, platform moderation, credit scoring, health prioritisation systems, food-aid architectures and disaster management are all possible areas of investigation.

This programme may proceed through different methods. Process-tracing, discourse analysis, institutional analysis, infrastructural mapping, examination of data-classification regimes, comparative case studies and indicator-based coding are among these methods. In each case, the researcher should return to the same four questions:

Who or what is compulsorily included?

Through which categories is recognition imposed?

Which possibility is foreclosed?

Under what conditions is objection weakened?

These questions render the Onopticon empirically traceable. The Reality Paradigm thereby becomes not only a philosophical claim, but a theoretical programme that opens contemporary power to investigation across different fields.

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