

Cold War Geopolitics in the Context of the Reality Paradigm: The Onoptic Architecture of the Domino Theory

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“My paradigm is not a paradigm of truth; it is a paradigm of reality.”

Abstract

This article reinterprets Cold War geopolitics and one of its most influential strategic assumptions, the Domino Theory, through Hakki Tan's conceptual framework of the Reality Paradigm, Onopticon and Homovictimus. In conventional accounts, the Domino Theory refers to the assumption that the communist takeover of one state would trigger a chain reaction across neighbouring countries. This article argues that the theory should also be understood as a global Onoptic regime of imposed reality: a geopolitical architecture that preconditioned how states, societies and individuals could be recognised and classified, could act, object and remain viable. In this framework, containment functioned as the geopolitical infrastructural *a priori* of the Cold War. States were risk-coded before entering diplomatic encounter; allies were rendered legible through security dependency; and domestic political fields were reorganised around anti-communist categories of loyalty, threat and internal enemy. The article examines the Commercial Import Program in South Vietnam, the Onoptic formation of United States public perception, forced legibility in the Vietnamese war zone, covert interventions in Guatemala and Chile, and the Turkish case through the Truman Doctrine, NATO membership, the Johnson Letter of 1964, right/left political violence, anti-Alevi targeting and the military coup of 12 September 1980. The central argument is that the Domino Theory did not merely seek to contain communism externally. It produced macro-Homovictimus subjects, transformed soldiers and civilians into multilayered Homovictimus figures, suppressed the geopolitical right to opacity of alternative political-economic models, and converted social values into operational infrastructures of loyalty, risk and internal-enemy formation.

Keywords: Reality Paradigm; Domino Theory; Onopticon; Homovictimus; Cold War; containment; Turkey; Johnson Letter; political violence; geopolitical opacity; ontological deprivation; Pentagon Papers.

1. Introduction: Reality Does Not Precede Power

Cold War geopolitics is often explained through the language of bipolar rivalry, ideological polarisation, military containment and deterrence. Within this conventional framework, the Domino Theory is typically understood as an exaggerated strategic assumption through which the United States interpreted Soviet and communist expansion. According to this view, the communist takeover of one state might trigger a chain reaction across neighbouring states; for that reason, the United States and its allies were compelled to prevent communist expansion in Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and the Mediterranean basin.

This article argues that such an interpretation, whilst necessary, remains insufficient. The Domino Theory cannot be reduced to foreign policy paranoia, strategic miscalculation or ideological propaganda. At a deeper level, it functioned as an architecture that preconditioned the ways in which states and societies encountered reality. In the terms of Hakki Tan's Reality Paradigm, reality does not precede power. Power does not merely interpret, represent or distort the world; more radically, it imposes the field within which subjects may encounter the world at all.

Tan's Reality Paradigm is not primarily a theory of truth, nor is it limited to the critique of ideological distortion. Rather, it asks under which imposed conditions human beings - and, at the scale of this article, states, societies and political subjects - become recognisable, capable of action, capable of objection and socially or politically viable. Onopticon, in this sense, is not merely surveillance, discipline or modulation. It names the infrastructural, institutional, technical-administrative and operational production of the field in which subjects can appear, move, speak, object and remain viable.

Within this framework, the Domino Theory appears as more than a psychological fear that the fall of one country would lead to the fall of others. It designed a pre-decisional field: it transformed maps into risk fields, made alliance a condition of recognisability, coded alternative paths of development as communist

deviation, rendered domestic opposition as the local extension of an external threat, and structured the ways in which the public in the metropole itself could perceive war. The central conceptual proposal of this article is therefore the following: the Domino Theory was the geopolitical Onopticon of the Cold War.

This argument is developed across five interrelated levels. First, containment strategy and the proliferation of Cold War pact systems are interpreted as the geopolitical infrastructural *a priori* of the period. Secondly, the article examines how the Domino Theory transformed states into geopolitical dominoes, thereby reducing the capacity of political communities to define their own realities. Thirdly, it develops the concept of the macro-Homovictim, particularly through Turkey's position within NATO and the Johnson Letter of 1964. Fourthly, it argues that the Domino Theory did not only produce target societies; it also shaped United States public perception, United States soldiers and regional populations as multilayered Homovictim subjects. Fifthly, through the cases of Guatemala, Chile, Vietnam and Turkey, the article analyses how the geopolitical right to opacity of alternative political-economic projects was suppressed, and how social values were converted into infrastructures of internal-enemy formation.

2. Conceptual Framework: Reality Paradigm, Onopticon and Homovictim

2.1. The Reality Paradigm: Not Truth, but the Conditions of Encounter

The central question of the Reality Paradigm is not simply "what is true?". That question remains important, but Tan's theoretical move operates at a prior level: under what conditions does the human being encounter the world? In which fields can the subject appear? Which request can be processed? Which objection can be heard? Which movement is permitted? Which body is classified as risky? Which account remains active? Which future remains open?

For this reason, the Reality Paradigm cannot be equated with ideology critique. Ideology critique often assumes that reality has been misrepresented, concealed or distorted. Tan's claim is more radical: contemporary sovereignty operates before representation, by imposing the field of encounter itself. The subject does not experience the world on a neutral ground. Rather, the world is encountered through prestructured infrastructures of recognition, classification, access, eligibility, risk and appeal.

This article applies the same logic to Cold War geopolitics. The Domino Theory was not only a doctrine through which the world was interpreted. It was an architecture through which the categories of geopolitical experience were imposed. A state could be recognised not as an independent developmental project, but as a country vulnerable to communism; a trade union could be read not as a claim for labour rights, but as a subversive risk; a student movement could appear not as a democratic mobilisation, but as the communist penetration of youth; an allied state could be recognised not primarily as a sovereign actor, but as a strategic stone that must not fall.

2.2. Onopticon: From Surveillance to Imposed Reality

Onopticon is not an advanced version of the Panopticon. The Panopticon concerns visibility and discipline; the society of control concerns modulation; surveillance capitalism concerns extraction and prediction. Onopticon operates at a different level: the imposition of the reality field in which the subject can appear, be recognised, move and object.

This distinction is crucial for the analysis of the Domino Theory. The Cold War security system did not merely watch states. It translated states, societies and political movements into recognisable risk categories. Maps became military-diplomatic risk surfaces. Countries became objects that could be held, lost, saved or allowed to fall. This transformation did not simply represent reality; it preconditioned how reality could be encountered.

The four Onoptic movements can be mapped onto the Domino Theory as follows:

Onoptic movement	Correspondence within the Domino Theory
Recognition	Southeast Asian states, Latin American states and strategic frontier countries such as Turkey are recognised as “under communist threat”, “bastions of the free world”, “neutral but suspect” or “potentially lost spaces”.
Classification	States, movements and citizens are divided into categories such as “safe/risky”, “ally/enemy”, “containable/lost” and “acceptable/suspect”.
Foreclosure of possibility	Neutrality, non-alignment, diplomacy, local political settlement, independent development and social reform are marginalised.
Imposed reality	Scenarios such as “if Vietnam falls, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan or the Pacific defence line will be endangered” are presented as natural geopolitical necessities.

The table shows that the Domino Theory did not merely observe or describe a security environment. It established the ground of action. Once this ground had been imposed, war, covert action, economic pressure or domestic security intervention could appear as the only realistic option.

2.3. Infrastructural A Priori

In classical philosophy, the *a priori* names the conditions that precede experience. In the Reality Paradigm, the infrastructural *a priori* refers to the technical-administrative, institutional and operational conditions that precede the subject’s experience. Before the subject applies, the field of application has already been structured; before the subject moves, movement has already been permitted; before the subject speaks, visibility has already been ranked; before the subject objects, the channel of objection has already been delimited.

At the level of Cold War geopolitics, containment strategy functioned as a geopolitical infrastructural *a priori*. NATO, SEATO, the Truman Doctrine, military assistance programmes, economic aid mechanisms, intelligence networks, pact systems and anti-communist security partnerships prestructured the conditions under which states encountered the international system. A country was risk-coded before speaking on the diplomatic stage; tied to a security bloc before receiving assistance; and assigned limits of movement before becoming a recognised ally.

This infrastructure was not confined to documents or speeches. It materialised in military bases, covert operation budgets, psychological warfare units, national security documents, aid programmes, intelligence reports, pact obligations and public diplomacy. In this sense, the Domino Theory was not merely a metaphor. It became a reality-processing mechanism embedded in security and information systems.

2.4. Homovictimus and the Macro-Homovictimus

Homovictimus is not simply a victim. It is the subject who is held responsible as an agent whilst being deprived of the conditions required for agency. The subject is compelled to enter the system; becomes

recognisable through that entry; is classified once recognised; is governed once classified; and is deprived of the capacity to shape its own future through that very governability.

This article extends Homovictimus to the geopolitical scale. The macro-Homovictimus is a state that is held responsible as if it were fully sovereign, whilst its military, economic, diplomatic and technical infrastructures are conditioned by external dependency. Cold War allies experienced this contradiction intensely: they were held responsible for the continuity of the system, yet when they attempted to move beyond the strategic limits of that system, the infrastructural limits of their sovereignty became visible.

The Homovictimus produced by the Domino Theory is not limited to the state. The South Vietnamese government and population, United States soldiers and conscripts, the populations of Laos and Cambodia, anti-war citizens in the United States, young people trapped within Turkey's right/left polarisation, and social groups coded as internal enemies can all be read, at different levels, as Homovictimus figures. This multilayered character demonstrates that an Onoptic reality does not only capture its target; it also captures perpetrators, intermediaries and subjects located within the centre.

2.5. The Right to Opacity and Ontological Deprivation

Tan's right to opacity is not merely a right to privacy. Opacity names the right of a human being, or by extension a political subject, not to be fully modelled, processed, classified or operationalised. This article transposes opacity to the geopolitical scale. Geopolitical opacity refers to the right of a state or society not to be rendered entirely calculable, governable, classifiable and operational within a hegemonic system.

The Domino Theory perceived such opacity as a threat, especially in relation to independent paths of development, resource nationalisation, land reform and anti-imperialist political projects. The incalculable example is not merely an enemy; it opens a possible field of reality for others. The "threat of the good example" is therefore central to the Domino logic. The danger is not only the spread of communism, but the visibility of a successful reality outside the hegemonic system.

Ontological deprivation names the deprivation of the subject's own field of possible being. Through war, coups and domestic security regimes, the Domino Theory targeted not only bodies, but also villages, land, family structures, neutrality, organisation, speech, objection and alternative future-making.

3. The Classical Framework of the Domino Theory

The Domino Theory emerged within the broader strategy of containment. George F. Kennan's idea of containment proposed long-term political, economic and strategic resistance to Soviet expansion, whilst NSC-68 transformed this framework into a more militarised national security programme. The Truman Doctrine constituted an early institutional threshold: by providing aid to Greece and Turkey, the United States assumed a global responsibility to resist communist expansion. In 1947, Truman requested military and economic assistance for Greece and Turkey, marking one of the symbolic beginnings of Cold War foreign policy.

The most famous articulation of the Domino Theory appears in Eisenhower's press conference of 7 April 1954. In explaining the strategic importance of Indochina, Eisenhower invoked the image of a falling domino and suggested that the fall of one country could affect others in sequence. The metaphor popularised the theory, but its function exceeded metaphor.

The creation of SEATO in 1954 was one institutional expression of the same logic. Whilst NATO represented collective defence against the Soviet threat in the Euro-Atlantic area, SEATO formed part of the pact architecture designed to contain communism in Southeast Asia. Such pact systems allowed states to enter

the international arena not primarily through autonomous political agency, but through their position within security blocs.

The Domino Theory nevertheless contained internal tensions. United States intelligence assessments in 1964 acknowledged that the loss of South Vietnam and Laos would damage United States prestige and the credibility of containment, yet they were more cautious regarding the assumption of a rapid and automatic chain collapse across the Far East. This tension matters. It shows that the Domino Theory was not merely an empirical forecast. It was a logic of imposed reality operating through prestige, deterrence, credibility and allied recognisability.

4. The Onoptic Architecture of the Domino Theory

4.1. The Country as a “Falling Domino”

The domino metaphor transforms the country from a political community into a mechanical object. The image of the falling domino displaces historical demands, class conflicts, anti-colonial struggles, identity claims and independent development projects. From the perspective of the Reality Paradigm, this is an ontological reduction. The reality of the country is reduced to the way it is recognised by the geopolitical system.

Vietnam is the central case of this reduction. The Vietnamese struggle was a complex historical process combining anti-French national liberation, peasant mobilisation, state formation, civil war and Cold War rivalry. Yet the Domino Theory frequently coded this complexity as a link in communist expansion. Vietnam thus appeared not through its historical being, but as a space that might be lost within the world system.

The same mechanism can be observed in Latin America. In Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz’s land reform and policies affecting the interests of the United Fruit Company were associated by the United States security apparatus with the risk of communist influence. In Chile, Salvador Allende’s democratically elected socialist government was perceived not only as a Chilean political development, but as a model capable of generating regional example effects. In both cases, the target country was recognised not through its reform agenda, but through its position on the hegemonic risk map.

4.2. Containment as Geopolitical Infrastructural A Priori

Containment strategy was the geopolitical infrastructural *a priori* of the Cold War. It prestructured the field in which states encountered the world. When a state received aid, entered a pact system, acquired military capacity, participated in an economic development programme or faced a diplomatic crisis, it did so within an already configured security architecture.

For this reason, NATO and SEATO were not merely defence alliances. They were infrastructures of recognition. Which state would count as a reliable ally? Which state would be treated as a suspect space? Which domestic political movement would be read as the extension of an external threat? Which development policy would be acceptable, and which would be coded as a gateway to communism? Such questions were prestructured through pact systems, assistance regimes and security partnerships.

The term “pactomania” is useful here. It refers not simply to the multiplication of security pacts during the Cold War, but to the way in which these pacts prestructured the conditions under which states could encounter the international order. Pactomania rendered geopolitical reality recognisable and processable through alliance architecture.

4.3. Not Narrowing, but Imposition

Onopticon does not merely narrow a field of choice; it imposes its own operational truth as the only viable field of reality. The Domino Theory did not simply reduce the options available to target or allied states. More radically, it pre-defined which options could count as realistic, legitimate, secure or rational.

The distinction is crucial. Telling a country not to choose a particular policy is not the same as binding the entire field within which that country encounters the world to one operational truth. Within the Domino logic, alternative development, neutrality, non-alignment, resource nationalisation, strong trade unions or land reform were frequently assessed not in their own terms, but through the risk of communist expansion. Thus options were not merely reduced; the legitimate field of reality was reconstructed.

4.4. Economic Imposition: The CIP in Vietnam

The Onoptic architecture of the Domino Theory did not operate only through military intervention or coups. Economic assistance regimes also functioned as mechanisms of imposed reality. The Commercial Import Program, also known as the Commodity Import Program (CIP), in South Vietnam is significant in this regard. Through United States-supported import mechanisms, the programme channelled resources into the South Vietnamese economy and produced a new field of dependency around import licences, access to foreign exchange, consumer goods, bureaucratic privilege and urban middle-class support.

On the surface, the CIP appeared as an economic aid and stabilisation programme. From the perspective of the Reality Paradigm, however, it raises a deeper question: under what conditions was the South Vietnamese economy made viable? To what extent could importers, bureaucrats, military authorities and the urban middle class operate outside the fields of foreign exchange, licensing and consumption recognised by the system? The aid regime did not merely reduce economic options; it attached the economic viability of the country to a United States-centred security-economic architecture.

Programmes such as the CIP therefore linked economic dependency to political recognisability. The state became legible and classifiable within the aid regime. The flow of assistance was associated with political loyalty. Economic viability became dependent upon the security architecture. Economic reality ceased to be a neutral question of market or development technique and became an Onoptic field of encounter.

4.5. The Onoptic Formation of United States Public Perception

The Domino Theory did not only impose a field of reality upon target states or allied governments. It also preconditioned how United States citizens, voters, soldiers' families, journalists and decision-makers encountered Vietnam. Concrete historical dynamics - Vietnamese nationalism, anti-colonialism, Buddhist-political tensions, peasant mobilisation, the French colonial legacy and the legitimacy crisis of the South Vietnamese state - were rendered secondary. In their place, a binary was installed: either the United States stops communism, or the entire region shifts towards the Moscow-Beijing axis.

At this point, the Domino Theory performed an Onoptic function for the United States public. The public did not encounter Vietnam directly, but through a pre-established security scenario. Within that scenario, war appeared not as aggression but as defence; intervention not as domination but as deterrence; occupation not as occupation but as the protection of the free world. The material and human costs of war were thus inserted into an already established language of necessity.

This helps explain why anti-war objections could, for a considerable period, be coded as unrealistic, soft on communism or inattentive to national security. When objection is directed not merely against events but against the imposed field of reality itself, the system can classify it as irrational or dangerous.

5. Macro-Homovictimus: The Agency Paradox of the Allied State

5.1. Responsibility and Dependency in the Protected State

The alliances organised around the Domino Theory transformed the states protected by the United States into macro-Homovictimus subjects. Such states were treated as responsible actors within the system. They were expected to resist communism, regulate their domestic political fields, comply with pact obligations and remain faithful to the geopolitical line. Yet their military equipment, economic resources, diplomatic manoeuvrability and security infrastructures were often shaped by external dependency.

This paradox makes the concept of Homovictimus operative at the macro level. The allied state is obliged to act as a sovereign agent, but the infrastructure of its sovereignty is not fully its own. It is held responsible as an agent whilst being deprived of the conditions required for agency.

5.2. Turkey's Strategic Recognition: The Truman Doctrine and NATO

Turkey is one of the clearest cases of this macro-Homovictimus position. The Truman Doctrine of 1947 placed Turkey, together with Greece, at the centre of early United States Cold War security architecture. Turkey's strategic recognition was shaped by Soviet pressure, the Straits question and Eastern Mediterranean security. Its accession to NATO in 1952 institutionalised that recognition.

This external recognition also affected the domestic political field. Turkey was no longer only a country with its own internal political plurality. It became a strategic frontier state that must not fall within the Western security architecture. This position generated a domestic question: if Turkey is a stone that must not fall, who inside Turkey might make that fall possible? External security logic was thereby translated into internal-enemy logic.

5.3. The Johnson Letter: Sovereignty as Appearance and Infrastructural Dependency

One of the most significant events revealing Turkey's macro-Homovictimus position was the Johnson Letter of 1964. During the Cyprus crisis, when Turkey considered military intervention in response to attacks on the Turkish Cypriot community, President Lyndon B. Johnson's letter to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü exposed the limits of Turkey's sovereign allied position within NATO. The letter warned Turkey regarding the use of United States-supplied military equipment in Cyprus and raised questions about NATO guarantees in the event of a possible Soviet response.

The episode reveals the contradiction embedded in Turkey's Cold War position. Turkey sought to respond to a security crisis as a sovereign state. Yet the limits of its agency became visible through military dependency, alliance dependency and diplomatic guarantees conditioned from outside. This is the precise condition of the macro-Homovictimus: responsibility exists, but agency is limited; sovereignty appears, but dependency operates at the infrastructural level.

The Johnson Letter also contributed to the rise of anti-American sentiment in Turkey. From the perspective of the Reality Paradigm, however, its deeper significance lies in the reality fracture it produced. Turkey encountered its position within the Western alliance not merely as a protective umbrella, but as an infrastructure that could delimit its field of action.

5.4. Multilayered Homovictimus: State, Soldier and Regional Population

The Homovictimus produced by the Domino Theory is not singular. It appears across different scales, positions and regimes of responsibility. A multilayered reading of Homovictimus is therefore necessary.

The first layer is the target or allied state. The South Vietnamese government was recognised as a bastion of the free world; yet that recognition trapped it within the war reality imposed by the United States. Its capacity to determine its own future, seek neutrality, conduct negotiations on its own terms or exit the war was severely limited. Nevertheless, the South Vietnamese state and population were presented as anti-communist subjects choosing their own destiny.

The second layer consists of United States soldiers and conscripts. Young men sent to Vietnam under the fear that the fall of one domino would bring war closer to home were held responsible as if they possessed the agency to stop the threat. Yet they had not constructed the reality field in which the war appeared necessary. Through the draft system, they became legible through categories of age, health, class, race, education and citizenship, and were incorporated into the war machine. United States soldiers were therefore not only perpetrators; they were also Homovictim subjects drawn into the Onoptic reality of war.

The third layer consists of the populations of Laos and Cambodia. Under the protective rhetoric of the Domino Theory, these societies became objects of secret wars, bombing campaigns and destabilisation. Interventions conducted in the name of stopping communism defined regional populations as objects to be saved whilst exposing them to death, displacement and ecological destruction.

The fourth layer concerns young people and social groups trapped within Turkey's right/left conflict. A right-wing youth could be drawn into a paramilitary reality in the name of saving the nation; a left-wing youth could be registered and prosecuted as an anarchist; an Alevi citizen could be coded as the social base of the leftist threat; a Kurdish citizen could be filtered through the category of separatism. These subjects were not affected equally, and the asymmetries of power were substantial. Yet all were, in different ways, detached from their plurality and inserted into an imposed security reality.

6. Geopolitical Opacity and the “Threat of the Good Example”

6.1. The Geopolitical Scale of the Right to Opacity

In this article, the right to opacity is extended to the capacity of states and societies not to be rendered entirely calculable, governable and operational within a hegemonic system. This extension prevents the concept from being reduced to individual privacy. Geopolitical opacity is the refusal of a country to surrender its resources, institutions, development strategy and social future entirely to the processable categories of the hegemonic centre.

The Domino Theory perceived this opacity as a threat. A successful model outside the system does not only alter the direction of one country; it expands the horizon of possibility for other societies. The “good example” can therefore be more threatening than the declared enemy. An enemy can be contained; a successful alternative can transform the field of the possible.

6.2. Guatemala and Chile

In Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz's land reform and pursuit of economic autonomy became unacceptable in relation to United States interests and Cold War security perceptions. The CIA-supported PBSUCCESS operation can be read not only as regime change, but as the suppression of an alternative developmental reality. A reformist state attempting to build a different future through its people and resources was recognised by the hegemonic system as a communist penetration risk, and its legitimacy was eroded.

In Chile, Salvador Allende's democratically elected socialist government similarly claimed geopolitical opacity. Copper nationalisation, socialist reform and the possibility of democratic transformation produced a model capable of regional example effects. United States covert action and relationships with domestic

opposition actors can therefore be interpreted as interventions against the model's capacity to remain unprocessable within the hegemonic order.

What was suppressed in these cases was not merely left ideology. It was a political-economic mode of existence that could not be fully calculated, categorised and governed by the hegemonic system. Coups, sabotage, economic pressure and intelligence operations thus produced ontological deprivation. Societies were deprived of the infrastructural capacity to build their own futures, articulate objections and imagine alternative realities.

7. The Translation of Domino Logic into Domestic Security Reality in Turkey

7.1. Anti-Communism and Compulsory Recognition

In Turkey, Domino logic operated throughout the Cold War as an anti-communist domestic security reality. Leftist movements, trade unions, student organisations, socialist parties, anti-imperialist intellectuals, Alevi neighbourhoods and Kurdish claims were associated, to varying degrees, with communism, separatism or internal threat. Citizens became recognised not through their own speech, but through the names assigned to them by the security paradigm.

This compulsory recognition divided the political field into the acceptable and the suspect. Social justice could be associated with communist risk; trade union struggle with economic sabotage; university mobilisation with the corruption of youth; Alevi politicisation with the social base of the leftist threat; Kurdish claims with separatism. Domestic politics in Turkey therefore became a field of encounter prestructured by the geopolitical Onopticon of the Cold War.

7.2. Right/Left Violence: The Destruction of Social Encounter

Political violence in Turkey during the 1970s cannot be understood merely as a conflict between two ideological camps. It transformed the social architecture through which people encountered one another. The student appeared not as a student but as rightist or leftist; the worker not as a labouring subject demanding rights, but as a communist agitator; the nationalist youth not merely as a political actor, but as a security body mobilised to save the state; the Alevi citizen not as an equal citizen, but as the alleged social ground of the leftist threat.

The violent practices of both right-wing and left-wing organisations require separate analysis. Armed actions by leftist organisations, internal fragmentation and vanguardist revolutionary strategies formed part of the spiral of violence. However, a symmetrical narrative risks concealing the asymmetries of power. The state security apparatus, anti-communist discourse, nationalist paramilitary networks, impunity and political alliances provided, at particular moments, more structural opportunities for right-wing violence. The aim here is therefore not to construct a narrative of absolute innocence for any camp, but to identify the imposed field of reality within which violence was produced.

7.3. The Operationalisation of Values: Homeland, Nation, Religion, Family and Flag

One of the deepest effects of Domino logic in Turkey was the transformation of values capable of holding society together into infrastructures of domestic security. Homeland was transformed from a shared space of life into a filter of loyalty. Nation was reimagined less as a plural ground of citizenship than as a homogeneous security body. Religion could become an anti-communist technology of classification rather than a field of ethical depth. Family could become a disciplinary space for depoliticising youth. The flag could cease to function as a shared symbol and become an operational test of acceptable citizenship.

This form of exploitation is deeper than overt repression. The subject who supports exclusion or violence may experience himself not as repressive, but as patriotic, religious, moral or protective of the family. Imposed reality therefore functions not only through external coercion, but also through internalised moral categories. The subject may mistake Onoptic reality for the language of conscience.

7.4. Maraş, Alevism and the Sectarianisation of the Internal Enemy

The Maraş Massacre of 1978 is a critical case demonstrating how right/left violence in Turkey intersected with sectarian and ethnic coding. The targeting of Alevi citizens and social groups associated with the left shows that the internal-enemy category was constructed not only ideologically, but also through sectarian and identity-based markers.

From the perspective of the Reality Paradigm, Maraş represents the collapse of social encounter. Neighbourliness, citizenship and human relationality were fragmented through filters such as “us/them”, “Muslim/communist”, “Sunni/Alevi” and “national/anti-national”. People no longer appeared in their plurality, but through risk categories suitable for the production of violence.

7.5. The Coup of 12 September: The Institutional Closure of Onoptic Domestic Security Reality

The military coup of 12 September 1980 presented itself as an intervention to end anarchy. From the perspective of the Reality Paradigm, however, it appears not only as an attempt to suppress violence, but as an institutional operation that reconstructed the field of social encounter. The coup produced a language of state arbitration that equated right and left violence; yet in practice, it radically weakened society’s capacity for political agency. Trade unions, associations, parties, student organisations, the press and universities were repressed. The cost of becoming a political subject was intensified.

This is the classical condition of Homovictimus. The citizen is held responsible as a choosing agent, whilst the conditions of choosing, organising, speaking and objecting are narrowed. The subject is told: you chose. Yet the field of options, modes of recognition, channels of appeal and conditions of life have already been structured.

8. The Collapse of Operational Ontology: Vietnam and the Failure of the Domino Theory

The failure of the Domino Theory is often explained through military defeat in Vietnam, the misreading of local nationalism, United States overextension or the miscalculation of regional dynamics. These explanations are important. The Reality Paradigm, however, suggests a deeper conclusion: the Domino Theory collapsed because it attempted to substitute operational ontology for being.

United States policymakers frequently apprehended Vietnam and the wider Asian region through data, military calculations, risk maps and economic assistance mechanisms as decision infrastructures. Yet Vietnamese society did not fit into this model. Its anti-colonial memory, peasant mobilisation, nationalism, ideological commitment, local war practices and historical durability exceeded the operational categories imposed upon it. Operational truths failed to contain historical being.

What collapsed in Vietnam, therefore, was not only a military strategy. What collapsed was an ontology that believed reality could be governed entirely through operational models. Tan’s manifesto line - the human is not decision infrastructure - becomes valid at the geopolitical level. Peoples, states and social movements are not decision infrastructures. The Onoptic ambition of the Domino Theory failed precisely where it reduced being to model.

8.1. Forced Legibility and the Ontological Deprivation of the Vietnamese Peasant

In the Vietnamese war zone, remaining invisible did not always guarantee safety; becoming visible could equally mean becoming a target. A villager, refugee, draft evader, local official, alleged Viet Cong sympathiser or citizen connected to United States-supported security systems entered a regime of recognition. Once recognised, the subject was classified; once classified, he or she became governable, displaceable or eliminable.

The tragedy of Homovictimus appears precisely here: survival requires legibility, but legibility does not guarantee protection. It may produce exposure. For the Vietnamese peasant, the fields of land, village, family, neutrality, subsistence and local belonging were reconstructed through categories such as Viet Cong, United States, bombing, village evacuation, strategic hamlet programmes, security screening and suspect classification. This is the concrete form of ontological deprivation in the war zone.

Chemical warfare and ecological destruction were also part of this ontological deprivation. Herbicides such as Agent Orange did not only produce health damage; they also damaged the relation between body, land, agriculture, intergenerational continuity and local lifeworld. The violence of the Domino Theory should therefore be understood not merely as immediate death or injury, but as the alienation of human beings from their bodies, lands and futures.

9. The Crisis of Contestability and the Pentagon Papers

The Onoptic character of the Domino Theory is visible not only in the closure of options available to target societies or allied states, but also in the weakening of contestability within the United States itself. Although anti-war movements grew over time, the domino reality was deeply embedded in decision-making and public discourse during the earlier stages of the war. Within that field, critics could be coded as soft on communism, detached from reality, harmful to troop morale or inattentive to national security.

The Pentagon Papers were therefore not merely an archival event exposing the decision-making processes behind the Vietnam War. They were a rupture in Onoptic reality. The documents made visible the distance between official justifications, internal assessments and public discourse. This visibility renders the Domino Theory researchable as an imposed reality that remained, for a long period, difficult to contest.

From the perspective of Tan's criterion of weak contestability, the Pentagon Papers are crucial. Objection is not merely the expression of disagreement. Effective objection requires access to the logic of decision, visibility into how classification has been produced, the circulation of alternative knowledge, and the capacity to fracture the imposed field of reality. Before the disclosure of the Pentagon Papers, these conditions were limited; the leak opened a crack in the infrastructural closure of the domino reality.

10. Researchability: Testing the Domino Theory as an Onoptic Case

Tan's three criteria for making Onopticon researchable - compulsory recognition, foreclosure of possibility and weak contestability - offer a research programme for the Domino Theory. This approach moves the theory beyond historical narrative and makes it a case for comparative studies of infrastructural justice and geopolitical imposition.

Tan's criterion	Domino Theory context	Research question
Compulsory recognition	States are forced into categories such as “communist”, “free world”, “neutral but suspect” or “potentially lost space”.	How were non-aligned states subjected to compulsory recognition during the Cold War?
Foreclosure of possibility	Neutrality, negotiation, non-alignment and independent development are marginalised.	How did the Domino Theory weaken alternative foreign policy options within the United States and allied states?
Weak contestability	Anti-war movements and advocates of neutrality are coded as unrealistic or soft on communism.	How did the domino reality become difficult to contest in decision-making processes prior to the Pentagon Papers?

This framework produces two methodological implications. First, the claim that the Domino Theory was Onoptic need not remain a purely conceptual assertion. It can be tested through archival documents, decision memoranda, public discourse, pact obligations, aid programmes and the suppression or marginalisation of anti-war objections. Secondly, cases such as Turkey, Vietnam, Guatemala, Chile and the Non-Aligned Movement can be compared through the same criteria.

11. Discussion

This article advances five main contributions.

First, the Domino Theory should be understood less as a strategic forecast than as a regime of imposed reality. It recognised countries and societies not primarily through their historical contexts, but through binaries of fall/containment, risk/loyalty, ally/enemy and acceptable/suspect.

Secondly, containment strategy functioned as the geopolitical infrastructural *a priori* of the Cold War. States' foreign policy, economic development, military capacity and domestic security fields were prestructured through pacts and aid regimes before specific encounters occurred.

Thirdly, the Domino Theory produced Homovictimus not only at the individual level, but also at the macro level. Allied states were held responsible as sovereign actors, whilst the conditions of their agency were structured by external security and economic infrastructures. Turkey's experience of the Johnson Letter is a striking example of this paradox.

Fourthly, the Domino Theory produced a multilayered Onoptic reality that captured not only targets, but also perpetrators and intermediary subjects. The South Vietnamese population, United States soldiers, civilians in Laos and Cambodia, anti-war citizens in the United States, and social groups caught within Turkey's domestic security categories were affected by different layers of the same imposed reality, though not symmetrically and not with equal vulnerability.

Fifthly, the failure of the Domino Theory was not only military or strategic, but ontological. What collapsed in Vietnam was an attempt to reduce historical and social being to operational models. Human beings, peoples and states are not decision infrastructures.

This analysis does not reduce all historical processes to the will of the United States or NATO. Turkey's state tradition, centralised bureaucratic structure, nationalism, religious-conservative mobilisation, class conflicts,

urbanisation, sectarian tensions and the Kurdish question were all independent determinants. Yet Cold War geopolitics provided these domestic dynamics with international legitimacy, material capacity and strategic language. The most balanced conclusion is therefore this: the Onoptic domestic security reality in Turkey was neither wholly imported nor wholly indigenous; it was co-produced by Cold War geopolitics and Turkey's own state-society history.

12. Conclusion

In its classical sense, the Domino Theory names the assumption that communism would spread through a chain reaction. Read through the Reality Paradigm, however, it performed a deeper function: it compelled states, societies and individuals to encounter the world within a pre-imposed security reality. In this sense, the Domino Theory was the geopolitical Onopticon of the Cold War.

The Turkish case is a historically dense example of this process. Turkey's strategic position within the Western bloc, the centrality of anti-communism in domestic politics, right/left violence, anti-Alevi attacks, the securitisation of the Kurdish question, the conversion of values into tests of loyalty, and the military coup of 12 September demonstrate how Domino logic was translated into domestic security reality.

The heaviest legacy of the Domino Theory lies not only in wars, coups, massacres or torture. Its deeper legacy is the habituation of societies to perceiving one another through imposed security categories rather than through shared human existence. Such habituation can survive the formal end of the Cold War under other names. Once a field of reality has been organised through security categories, people begin to encounter neighbours, children, teachers, workers, Alevis, Kurds, leftists, rightists and dissidents not first as human beings, but as risks.

The Reality Paradigm is therefore valuable not only for interpreting the past, but also for interrogating the present. It compels us to ask a question prior to "who is telling the truth?": through which imposed field of reality am I encountering the world? Unless this question is asked, the historical form of the Domino Theory may disappear whilst its Onoptic inheritance continues to operate through new concepts, new pacts, new security regimes and new categories of internal enemy.

Methodological Note and Limitations

This article is a theoretical-interpretive study. It seeks to reconceptualise the Domino Theory through the Reality Paradigm. Its empirical claims are supported through selected historical cases; the study nevertheless carries four areas for further strengthening and deepening. First, the CIP and broader aid regimes in Vietnam require more systematic engagement with United States archival documents, FRUS records, USAID materials and economic history scholarship. Secondly, the Pentagon Papers should be examined through detailed discourse and document analysis in order to trace how the domino reality was formed within decision-making processes. Thirdly, the anti-communist security language of Turkey between 1960 and 1980 should be deepened through newspaper archives, National Security Council records, court files and oral history. Fourthly, claims concerning counter-guerrilla and special warfare structures should be handled cautiously through court records, parliamentary proceedings, declassified documents and comparative archival sources, rather than through secondary literature alone.

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