

Fractured Gazes: Dual Perspectives and the Construction of Truth in International Relations

ANSHIN M THOMAS

Amity Institute of International Studies, AUUP

Abstract- This dissertation, "Fractured Gazes: Dual Perspectives and the Construction of Truth in International Relations", investigates the visual turn in IR, where aesthetic images, movies, soundtracks, and drone footage are actively constructing perspectival truths instead of reflecting objective reality. Based on Foucault's paradigm of power and knowledge and Mulvey's theory of the gaze, this research investigates the fractured gazes of elite voyeurism, which constructs security and heroism discourses, and subaltern gazes that expose ethical fractures and partialities. Using visual semiotics and discourse analysis, this research deconstructs five cases: the Bollywood films 'Haider' (2014) and 'Madras Café' (2013) on South Asian insurgencies, the Hollywood drone films 'Eye in the Sky' (2015) and 'Good Kill' (2014), and 'Tora! Tora! Tora!' (1970) on Pearl Harbor, to demonstrate how dual gazes aestheticize violence, manipulate emotions through soundtracks, and fracture truth into multiplicities that correspond to Butler's grievable lives and Baudrillard's hyperreality. The results contest positivist IR, encouraging a post-structuralist integration of the visual as a discursive space that maintains hegemony but also enables the possibility of resistance, with implications for policy reflexivity (e.g., drone ethics) and media ethics (balanced journalism). Through the proof of truth as "gazed into existence," this research encourages IR scholars to take up aesthetic contestation in image-dense geopolitics, opening the way for future research on AI visuals and cyber warfare.

Index Terms- Visual Turn; Fractured Gazes; Aesthetic IR; Power-Knowledge

I. INTRODUCTION

International Relations has traditionally been dominated by textual and positivist paradigms, but images, films, music, and other aesthetic forms play a vitally important role in shaping international narratives, often beneath imagined or constructed "white lies" that strategically omit certain information to serve particular interests. No objective, absolute truth exists in IR; instead, opposing gazes build perspectival truths, in which the visuals of drone

strike photography or Hollywood depictions of war submerge an ethical complexity beneath grand narratives of heroism and security. Entitled Fractured Gazes: Dual Perspectives and the Construction of Truth in International Relations, this dissertation examines how aesthetic IR represents these dynamics through the gaze philosophy: aesthetics defines political realities.

The gaze, based on the power/knowledge paradigm of Michel Foucault and the concept of "visual pleasure and narrative cinema" by Laura Mulvey, is an ideological exercise in the imposition of selective truths through an interaction where the voyeur holds primacy over the object being viewed. Here, in visual IR, it is an interaction of split gazes, the elite and subaltern gazes, as well as the textual and cinematic gazes that discriminate among visions. Filmmaker cinema and emotional soundtrack music are used to mix disparate events in the construction of an objective yet subjective story; audio music lines up emotions to make way for the imposition of various truths through manipulated sounds; and images freeze frames for the imposition of intervention truths through aesthetically pleasing pictures. Here, the imposition of truths is anomalous and dependent on the respective gazes.

There are several examples of disrupted gazes, dual perspectives, disrupted power relations, and visual IR, which correspond to the Foucauldian notions of power-knowledge, Mulvey's idea of visual pleasure, and disrupted eye contact in IR. They include advocacy on the gaze of the elite, the subaltern, the ethics of drone attacks, and geopolitical stories. They are examples of cinema's role in the construction of partial truths in IR.

Haider (2014) locates an adaptation of Hamlet in the Kashmir conflict, with its dual gazes of Indian military elite pitted against subaltern separatists,

images of detention camps, and family betrayals that rival the nationalist myth. *Madras Café* (2013) addresses Sri Lanka's civil war through the perspective of an Indian agent and negotiates between textual intelligence and cinematic drama to construct truths about assassination and intervention. *Eye in the Sky*, 2015, presents clashing gazes of elites among military personnel deliberating on a drone strike against terrorists. It brings out the ethical dimensions underlying the surfaces of security discourses, with mini-drones allowing for voyeuristic surveillance. *Good Kill*, 2014, presents a US drone pilot contending with the subaltern gaze of victims, freezing frames of violence that apply interventionist truths while disclosing the traumatized operators. *Unmanned: America's Drone Wars*, 2013, captures the very real impacts of drone strikes through victim testimonies, framing official heroism against subaltern suffering.

Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970) intersperses the Japanese and American gazes at Pearl Harbor through split narratives that demonstrate how such sets of oppositional visuals forge perspectival truths sans heroism in binary forms. These films, therefore, show the role of cinema in aesthetic IR: how the soundtracks and images align emotions with elite interests at the same time as hinting toward subaltern realities.

II. PHILOSOPHY OF THE GAZE IN VISUAL IR

"The visual turn in international relations represents a paradigm shift away from traditional text-based forms of knowledge towards recognition of the constitutive force of image, aesthetics, and spectacle." Thus, while traditional IR has been characterized by rationalism, empiricism, and an emphasis on quantifiable facts, visual IR recognizes that "images do politics," making war visible, human misery palatable, and moral taxonomy acceptable. This is in keeping with transformative, feminist, and post-structuralist IR agendas, which seek to dispel the illusion of objectivity in knowledge-creating practices. In visual IR, "images are no longer construed as reflections of political truths, but as instruments that produce, distort, and discipline truth itself."

Central to this analytical lens is the gaze, a philosophical and political concept that articulates the relationship between the subject of the gaze, the object of the gaze, and the act of gaze itself. In an effort to understand the visualization of the world of politics, this chapter turns back to the history of the gaze, tracing the origins of the concept from psychoanalysis to film theory to the politics of visualization in the work of Michel Foucault.

From Psychoanalysis to Power/Knowledge

The gaze the concept first developed within psychoanalytic theory, particularly through the works of Jacques Lacan, marks the instance at which the individual recognizes their simultaneous role as seer and seen, situated within the framework of an unregulated field of vision. According to Lacan, the gaze unsettles the subjective, leaving the observer mindful of their situatedness within the framework of visibility, which, in turn, establishes the parameters of what is visible and what is not. This complex dynamic offers the connection to world politics, wherein states, the media, and the public each gaze, observe, and surveil each other within regimes of visibility.

Michel Foucault expressly reconsiders this idea as a function of a larger notion of power/knowledge. In "Discipline and Punish", Foucault's use of the metaphor of the Panopticon illustrates the power of visibility as a technology of control, where subjects who are visible internalize the viewing eye, controlling themselves accordingly. In international politics, surveillance drones, satellite images, and telewar represent a function of contemporary Panopticons, the political machinery of visibility, where power subsumes visibility, and where exposure is a technology of governance. The eye here is neither a disembodied act of vision nor a transparent optics of knowledge.

The influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" by Laura Mulvey in 1975 introduces this concept of gaze and ideological pleasure and its relationship to gender and power. Mulvey demonstrates how there is a distinction within classical Hollywood films and cinematic theory whereby the look or gaze of male viewers is associated with action and activity, and how the

female is constructed simply to be enjoyed by the viewer's gaze, in turn determining a patriarchal framework of looking and perception. The application of this framework within international relations theory would be to produce a framework whereby "the gaze" here Western and/or militarized vision, is constructed within a framework of a subaltern gaze that is often racialized or feminized and/or dictated by geographical location and is therefore a gaze of pity or menace-laced objectification. Their headlines of "suffering" or/and "injustice" and photographs from humanitarian documentaries or even from journalistic photography serve merely to provide a product of "the gaze" to permit pleasure within a "knowing" or "caring" accomplishment without challenging these geopolitical orders.

The Duality of Gaze

Visual IR function exposes the coexistence of two asymmetric but complementary gazes: the gaze of the elite and the gaze of the subaltern. While the gaze of the elite is instrumental and disciplinary in nature, it surveils, classifies, and makes sense of global events through institutional optics. Visual IR function exposes the presence of a fractured, reactive, and frequently rendered invisible gaze of the subaltern through local testimonies, artworks, and counter-cinematics.

However, these gazes are also not mutually exclusive. Rather, these gazes represent a convergence and refraction of one another. During a crisis, including the reporting of a humanitarian crisis and war, the subaltern gaze disrupts the visibility of the elite. For instance, the juxtaposition of victim narratives and the insertion of personal photographs defies the very smooth discursiveness that the military elite embodies in documentaries on drone wars.

The Gaze is both epistemic and ethical. The act of Gazing is itself constitutive of an ethical relation between the Gazer and the Gazed upon. This is argued by Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Pain of Others," where she critiques the anaesthetising function of repetitive imagery of pain, where the viewing of such imagery purportedly awakens empathy, but actually serves to normalise its

opposite, i.e., anaesthetisation. The function of such imagery is particularly problematic in IR, where, through the image of the crying refugee child, the bombing's aftermath, or the 'beautiful' music of destruction on film, the viewer is actually taken up in what is itself a problematic ethical act of viewing, where the issue becomes not what is viewed but under what conditions of viewing.

Aesthetic scholars of international relations, such as Bleiker and Callahan, extend this argument to demonstrate how the significance of visual and affective practices influences international meaning-making. The gaze both functions as a tool of narrative and a means of politics; it contains scripts of victimhood and heroism to support the geopolitical imagination. In this regard, the gaze not only establishes visual domains but entire regimes of truth within the epistemology of world politics.

Truth as Multiplicity

In a world so saturated by images, from social media feeds to satellite data, the gaze is fractured into competing vantage points. For post-structural IR, this fracture is to be embraced as a productive condition rather than a defect. Truth is rendered perspectival, dependent upon who sees, through which technologies, and what becomes visible or invisible in the act of seeing. Such an idea of fractured gazes undermines the positivist aspiration toward objectivity in global politics with a model of visual contestation, where plural realities coexist. These fractures also evoke the idea of Judith Butler's frames of recognition: what is rendered visible as grief, violence, or justice depends on framing mechanisms that decide whose lives are grievable, whose deaths are justified, and whose truths hold authority. Viewed this way, visual IR becomes a terrain of struggle over representational sovereignty, that is, the power to define reality through images.

III. CONSTRUCTING REALITIES THROUGH VISUAL NARRATIVES

"The building of reality is, at its most fundamental level, one of mediated seeing." These words from Mark Learmonth encapsulate the understanding that pictures, movies, photographs, and maps are more than mere projections of political reality; they

constitute such reality into existence. Visualizing the turn that IR takes, one sees that “representation” itself takes on an “ontological” status, whereby what appears is what is, that is, what exists.

Such a visual politics of representation is predicated on Foucault’s concept of the power/knowledge nexus, where the process of viewing conditions the object of observation as much as it is conditioned by it. The gaze, whether state, media, military, or public, is essentially a dispositive that negotiates the truth of some discourses while effacing others. The role of visuals becomes strategic to the production of truth. For example, drone images determine the truth of law, photo images constitute morality, and cinematic images aestheticize violence to make it marketable. In the visual politics of representation, power is no longer an agency associated with surveillance but with its circulation.

Narratives, Semiotics, and the Construction of Truth
Visual narratives are deeply endowed with semiotic encoding and decoding. The camera frame selects; the soundtrack directs emotional response, while montage sequences meanings into intelligible order. Viewers interpret these layered sign systems within pre-existing ideological frameworks, meaning that every image already carries with it the residues of politics, emotion, and ethics.

Drawing from Roland Barthes' concept of the "studium" and "punctum," the puncturing emotional element of an image, an innocent civilian crying in the background to military action, injects affective authenticity into otherwise strategic frames. Meanwhile, the studium normalizes the political reading: the narrative of national defense, humanitarian intervention, or counterterrorism. In combination, they can create a seamless illusion of truth even when the visual grammar is itself exclusionary.

For example, drone strike videos and military films often juxtapose humanitarian visuals-aid packages, smiling soldiers, with frames of precision targeting, which visually narrate moral warfare. The semiotic layering legitimates aggression as an ethical necessity, embedding the viewer's moral acceptance into the cinematic syntax. In this sense, visual

semiotics performs politics; it does not describe geopolitics but actively enacts it.

The visual field in IR represents an area that prospers based on tensions between the competing gazes. The elite gaze establishes the world with its institutions, such as the military, states, and hegemonic media. The visibility orders are established in these structures. The subaltern gaze, on the other hand, aims to restore its agency through counter-images. The visual field in this context turns out to be fractured.

Examples such as Bollywood film *Haider* (2014) and *Madras Café* (2013) illustrate how the struggle between gazes produces non-symmetrical truths. In *Haider*, the gaze of the militated elite constructs Kashmir as a nation’s security zone, but the subaltern cinematic gaze historicizes it as a space of individual loss and philosophical questioning. The use of illumination and dark areas in *Madras Café* translates the globally constructed Sri Lankan Civil War into a geopolitical conspiracy drama, emphasizing intelligence activities but ignoring the voices of the Tamil civilians, explaining how the framing device favors certain gazes as objectives. These aesthetic devices not only dramatize conflict but materialize power-it is not the event that defines reality, but how it is cinematographically narrated. The subaltern gaze comes into being as an interruption necessary, a refusal of closure that reveals the instability of the elite lens.

Fragmented Truths

When these narratives cross each other, truth itself becomes fractured. Visual IR resists any single ontology of reality and instead discloses truth as multiplicities, as fractured knowledges. The binary vision of elite versus subaltern or producer versus viewer is, instead, what is constitutive of meaning. Visual narratives are not about hiding truth in favor of appearance but are the very fabric through which this imbrication happens.

Such broken realities resonate with the idea of the “hyperreal,” as proposed by Jean Baudrillard, a realm wherein representation leads and supersedes the real. An increasing role for the hyperreal has become apparent in international interventions, humanitarian interventions, and the discourse of security as the

mediated world of the political imagination, wherein the image of pain, crisis, or victory establishes the metaphysics of the event itself.

IV. AESTHETIC IR AND THE SUBMERSION OF TRUTH

Aesthetic International Relations challenges the canonical views in the field of positivistic IR by illustrating the inclusion of the visual and the sensory images, films, scores, and maps that lie the complex ethical truth under the narratives that allocate power and security through aesthetics as the generator of selective truths wherein the elite gaze overshadows the subaltern view to establish subjective interpretations into objective facts through the power/knowledge model by Foucault and the male gaze model by Mulvey.

IR visions work through the "aesthetic turn," in which images and media are no longer merely illustrating an event but increasingly produce political reality through the management of the visible and the sayable. Iconic images like those of Abu Ghraib involve an aesthetic coupling with discursivity or "facts," enabling affective and circuit-making effects that entwine technology, politics, and affect. Immersion is achieved when films and videos couple emotions with the interests of elites, freezing images of violence to legitimize actions in the name of humanitarianism, effacing victimhood in videos of drone strikes.

Gaze as Power Mechanism

In aesthetic IR, the gaze has an ideological role where elite voyeurism, military surveillance, or cinematic heroism imposes truth upon subaltern suffering. The concept of power/knowledge, encapsulated in Foucault's principles, also takes place through divided gazes, textual intelligence versus cinematic drama, such as *Madras Café* (2013). The concept of visual pleasure, initiated in Mulvey's principles, also takes place in aesthetically positive pictures where moral complexity dissolves through divided heroism in movies such as *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970). In addition, the divisibility of reality and fiction also occurs through cinematic narrative.

Soundtracks and mini-drones enhance the submersion experience with an emotional sync for selective truths, voyeuristically monitoring their targets while humanizing their operators in *Eye in the Sky* (2015), *Good Kill* (2014) undermines the same with the traumas in the drone operators' gaze, opposing victim images with interventionist myths. Haider (2014) further exemplifies the double gazes in Kashmir, with Indian elite gazes contrasting with the subaltern gazes in the separatist movement in images of the detention camps, opposing nationalist myths with images of familial betrayals.

Aesthetic IR challenges absolute truths in asserting how visuals fix perspectival narratives within power relationships, from war movies in Hollywood cinema to activist footage in, for example, *Unmanned: America's Drone Wars* (2013). This aesthetic regime of fragmentation splits the sensible, circumscribing discourse, which requires reflexivity in its gaze upon geopolitics.

V. FRACTURED GAZE IN PRACTICE THROUGH VISUAL LENS

This chapter applies the theoretical lens of fractured gazes to an empirical study of visual culture, tracking dual gazes within world politics via film narratives, drone videos, and iconic images. Drawing on Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge, and Mulvey's notion of the gaze, our analysis of selected images and films will critically examine how elite gazes construct a selective reality, and subaltern counter-gazes challenge them. Case examples will include a study of selected images related to South Asian conflicts and drone strikes, and will show what role visual culture plays in constructing subjective reality as factual reality in IR.

The Methodology used is visual semiotics (decoding, framing, and sound), as well as discourse analysis, to examine the exercise of power relations. Five major cases have been used to demonstrate the disrupted gaze in each category: Haider (2014) and *Madras Café* (2013) in disputes about the civil and military in South Asia; *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) in oppositional war epistemologies; and *Eye in the Sky* (2015), *Good Kill* (2014), and *Unmanned: America's Drone Wars* (2013) in drone ethics.

Elite and Suburban Gazes in South Asian Cinema
South Asian cinema is an exemplification of fragmented gazes in the context of postcolonial international relations, wherein the top-down military view intersects with the notion of subaltern pain.

In 'Haider', Vishal Bhardwaj transplants Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' to the context of the Kashmiri insurgency, juxtaposing the emblematic Indian army's elite gaze in fortified camps and surveillance footage with the subaltern gaze of secessionist families. Semiotically, the detention center visuals inspire "visual pleasure" in terms of aesthetically framed shots of barbed wires and valleys hidden in mists, frozen images looping to legitimize counterinsurgency as a heroic imperative. However, double gaze subverts this unity: Close shots of tortured limbs and family treachery merge subaltern disturbance in a viewer's emotion through haunting music tracks (such as Rabindra-Sangeet layers), implicitly problematizing the national legend. Foucauldian power becomes apparent in discourse analysis: elite gazes naturalize "security" in the complete effacement of civilian sufferings; subaltern interventions decode the inchoate selectivity of the gaze.

By extension, in 'Madras Cafe', the struggle in Sri Lanka's civil war is explored via the textual gaze of an Indian RAW agent, rendered by declassified dossiers and maps. The framing by elites, through the use of grim images of assassinations, cultivates a discourse of interventionist truth, which satisfies voyeuristic cravings for a rapid-paced plot. The subaltern gaze can be detected in Tamil refugee stories and spectacular moments, which use slow-motion killings to humanize the characters, shunning binary oppositions for heroism. This further gets subverted by a soundscape that combines military-minded scores with a profound use of Tamil melodies, which manipulate affect to decode partial truths.

Drone Warfare: Voyeuristic Surveillance and Ethical Splits

Drone attacks are the exemplars of a fractured gaze in the modern era. The distant gaze of the operators imposes a "precision" truth through their images, in conflict with the subaltern

'Eye in the Sky' analyses the deliberations of the elite during the surveillance operation in Nairobi, using mini-drones to create voyeuristic closeness, with thermal images and live pan-and-scan action, Mulveying the targets as "objectified other". The elite experience of surveillance permits access to an objective reality, which is available to all of us, as we momentarily lay our pictures on top of theirs to pursue our surveillance aims." After all, "surveillance aims to gather so much information that we can predict the target's next move!" Of course, "the final objective of surveillance is to kill." Through two competing visions, there are rifts within the discourse, as an innocent child's act of buying bread upends the framing, requiring "ethical reflexivity".

'Good Kill' shows us into the fractured interiority of the drone pilot, counterpointing cockpit surveillance against imagined subaltern gazes. Ethan Hawke's operator freezes "successful" strikes in high-definition glory: euphoric, slow-motion explosions to please the elite voyeur. But flashbacks to victim funerals impose ethical weight. It is all semiotics of the gaze: split-screens juxtapose sterile HUD displays against blood-splattered aftermaths, drone soundscapes evoke trauma. Such duality negates the positivist IR by showing how visuals both enable remote killing and constrain it via operator PTSD. Anomalous imposition of truths is exposed.

'Unmanned: America's Drone Wars' (2013), a documentary, emphasizes these fictions by injecting reality with testimonial power, shattering elite heroism with subaltern survivor testimonies from a Pakistani tribe. Elite gazes, in declassified attack videos and Pentagon presentations, offer a precision of detail by pixelated imagery, Mulveying victims into "militants." But subaltern gazes prevail through unprocessed footage of destroyed wedding guests, child body partlessness, and grieving mothers' confrontation of the camerawork, subverting surveillance by enacting "eye contact." Hand-held POV and mournful cries of "Subhanallah" affect and reveal discursive ruptures, where "collateral" erases structural violence. Foucault's knowledge of resistance manifests, subverting semiotic policies of victimization, corroborating the reflexivity of visual IR.

Oppositional Gazes in Pacific Theatre Cinema
'Tora! Tora! Tora!' further expands fractured gazes to historical fault lines within the Indo-Pacific, intercutting between Japanese and United States viewpoints on Pearl Harbor to deconstruct heroic oppositions

Co-directed with Japanese and American filmmakers, split-screen action and bilingual dialogue register double gazes: the strategic arrogance of U.S. elite radar and carrier decks, signified by crisp intelligence surveillance, incongruously matched with Japanese imperial gazes through detailed Zero fighter preparations and Emperor deliberations positioning the attack as an honorable fate. As evidenced in the explosive attack scenes at Pearl Harbor, the aesthetically symmetrical bombs register the visual pleasure of freezing an apocalyptic moment into symmetrical destruction. "Subaltern fractures" shatter the binary: intertwined bombers and regretting admirals "humanize the enemy" through a melancholic soundtrack opposed to jubilant brasses. Foucauldian reversal emerges through discourse analysis: more than one power/knowledge has dominated, while oppositional visuals produce perspectival truths that limit postwar narratives of absolute Allied triumphs. Schiff's conflict also foreshadows the two-way gaze in U.S.-China relations concerning hedging in the Indo-Pacific region, where cinematic history shows the function of visuals in fixing aberrant truths.

This is made possible by the affirmation of fractured gazes as practice rather than abstractions, wherein the visuals, far from representing IR, constitute IR truths, and power is not equally distributed. The documentary feature in *Unmanned* helps to add to the credence in a way that fiction and reality meet. There is a bias towards cinema as an interpreter, yet the linkage to events helps to emphasize the urgency in visual IR studies.

VI. IMPLICATIONS AND REFLEXIVITY

The fractured gazes revealed in this dissertation subvert IR's positivist base, in which visuals are no longer neutral records but become active agents in truth-making. In Foucault's power-knowledge relation, the elite gaze in films such as *Eye in the Sky*

and *Good Kill* enact interventionist narratives through voyeuristic drone-camera footage, situating subaltern suffering as collateral damage. This demonstrates how visual IR sustains hegemony: maps and mini-drone camera feeds, like Mulvey's male gaze, objectify the Global South, correlating emotions through soundtracks to underpin security rationalities.

However, the dual gaze breaks down this hegemony. The conflicting Indian military and Kashmiri separatist gazes of Haider's films, or the Pearl Harbor split-screens of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* has revealed perspectival truths as contingent. Theoretically, this posits a post-positivist turn: IR needs to incorporate visual semiotics as a foundational approach, considering images not as evidence but as discursive sites. Functionalist and intergovernmentalism approaches fail here, as visuals short-circuit textual deliberations, facilitating multi-level governance through affective, non-rational pathways.

Policy, Media, and Ethical Interventions

In international politics, these findings require reflexive engagements. Those using drone gazes, as in *'Unmanned'*, risk ethical submersion, where heroic operator stories conceal civilian suffering. The implications include South Asian international politics, where *'Madras Café's'* framing of the Sri Lankan civil war challenges Indian diplomacy to examine the cinematic roots of public support for intervention, resisting elite textual intelligence with subaltern visual testimony.

Media professionals are challenged to break the fractured gaze. Ethical media production would combine elite and subaltern perspectives, as in *'Tora! Tora! Tora!'*, promoting empathy rather than binary heroism. For MUN conferences and parliamentary debates, crucial sites for IR education, the inclusion of visual analysis would teach delegates to read power in footage, improving civil-military discussions on energy security and tensions in the Indo-Pacific region. This ultimately limits the "acceptable" truth: states must scrutinize visual propaganda, while NGOs promote subaltern gazes to resist the normalcy of drone strikes. These findings prompt IR to engage in aesthetic reflexivity, in which

fractured gazes simultaneously obscure and reveal emancipatory possibilities.

VII. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has shed light on the visual turn in International Relations as a radical break with positivist orthodoxy, showing how aesthetic formats images, films, soundtracks, and drone footage, produce perspectival truths with fractured gazes. Based on Foucault's power/knowledge relation and Mulvey's visual pleasure, "Fractured Gazes" has shown that there is no single, objective truth that rules IR; rather, the elite gaze enforces disciplinary truths of security and heroism, but these are subverted by subaltern counter-gazes, which fracture truth into multiplicities. From the dual gazes of Bollywood in 'Haider' (2014) and 'Madras Café' (2013) on South Asian conflicts, to the ethical splits of Hollywood in drone films like 'Eye in the Sky' (2015) and 'Good Kill' (2014), and the counter-war epistemologies of 'Tora! Tora! Tora!' (1970), the visual turn in IR appears not as representation but as a constitutive practice.

Empirically, these case studies reveal the ambivalence of the gaze, where elite scopophilia arrests interventionist discourses in aesthetically gratifying montages, harmonizing emotions through soundtracks, to consecrate violence, and subaltern disruptions, in the form of victim narratives in 'Unmanned: America's Drone Wars' (2013) or chilling detention camp imagery, compel ethical reflexivity. Semiotic analysis and discourse studies demonstrate the circulation of power not merely through text but through visual semiotics, where "studium" normalizes geopolitics and "punctum" troubles hegemony. This fissured ontology subverts binary truths, resonating with Butler's grievable lives and Baudrillard's hyperreal, situating visual IR as a site of struggle over representation in the Indo-Pacific, energy security discourse, and civil-military relations.

Theoretically, fractured gazes subvert the rationalist bases of IR, resonating with post-structuralist, feminist, and aesthetic discourses that celebrate images as producers of politics. Elite gazes reproduce Global North hegemony, objectifying the subaltern as

racialized suffering, but subaltern refractions, as in the insurgency stories of Kashmir or the split-screen of Pearl Harbor, require multi-level governance that goes beyond functionalism or intergovernmentalism. Affective circuits bypass deliberation, making images essential to grasping the politics of contemporary crises such as drone ethics and South Asian diaspora politics.

In practice, these findings call for reflexive intervention. IR scholars need to examine drone surveillance and cinematic propaganda to counter ethical submersion; media professionals need to promote subaltern gazes to achieve well-rounded storytelling; and IR educators, especially in MUN scenarios and parliamentary sessions, can employ visual semiotics to facilitate well-rounded debates on Indo-Pacific hedging and energy geopolitics. By interpreting gazes, actors resist perspectival hegemony, thus unlocking emancipatory potential. In conclusion, visual IR research demands a paradigm shift: truth is not found but gazed into existence. To adopt fractured gazes is to empower IR scholars to live in an image-drenched world, where aesthetics both disciplines and subverts power. Future research can explore this in the realm of AI-generated images or social media in cyber warfare, thus continuing the promise of the visual turn.

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