

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Security Studies

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Nguyen, Nguyen Ba

**Targeted Killing: How and When Intelligence Agencies Eliminate
Their Targets, and the Impact of Emerging Technologies**

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Author: Nguyen Ba Nguyen

Supervisor: Dr. Mark Galeotti, M.A., Ph.D.

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Abstract

History has shown that assassination could be wielded as an effective weapon in the pursuit of interest, security and power. As the feudal age neared its end in Europe, nation states emerged. Despite its pragmatic usefulness, assassination was considered unfit for this new form of governance. States no longer sought to destroy one another as predicted by Thomas Hobbes, but adhered to John Locke's proposed values, which believed that states could mutually exist as rivals. In this system which favored negotiation and settlements, it was difficult for assassination to have a place. Yet at the start of the 21st century, assassination once again saw employment. As of today, it is preferably referred to as targeted killing by its employers and has become somewhat of a 'new normal.' Clearly, there must be certain permissive catalysts that allowed this to happen. This master's thesis firstly explores the ways the United States, Israel and Russia conduct their assassination/targeted killing operations to present the unique ways these states eliminate their enemies, and secondly pinpoints the permissive causes that allowed these three super and great powers of assassination to transform the international norm against assassination and turn a dishonest, immoral practice into something more acceptable and fit for the pursuit of interest, security and power. The use of technology will undoubtedly change how targeted killing operates and is perceived. Though the US, Israel and Russia are determined to partake in the race towards AI and robotics, these states will continue to have their own assassination culture even though they are developing along the same technological curve.

Key Words: targeted killing, assassination, covert operations, intelligence, emerging technologies, drones, robotics.

Declaration:

The author declares that he is the sole author of the thesis entitled “Targeted Killing: How and When Intelligence Agencies Eliminate Their Targets and the Impact of Emerging Technologies.” All the sources and literature have been properly cited and can be found in the attached list of references.

In Prague on 11 May 2018

Signature.....

Nguyen Ba Nguyen

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Introduction

A statesman has many tools at his disposal when practicing his statecraft. Disputes between countries can either be settled via peaceful means in the form of diplomacy, peace talks, negotiations, settlements, sanctions etc; or they can be solved by violent measures in the form of skirmishes, wars, and conquests. A peaceful conflict resolution measure is attractive because it prevents losses on infrastructure and lives. It is extremely complicated to peacefully satisfy both sides of a dispute, however. Due to its complex nature, peaceful measures are discarded by politicians and leaders for many reasons: it can be seen as complacent, slow, and hindering. Those who disdain peaceful dispute settlements prefer violent methods because these methods execute their vision far faster than peaceful resolutions ever could. A powerful actor might not want to waste time with lengthy negotiation with a weaker actor if he can impose his will on his opponent due to his superior military. A violent measure, if successful, can bring a swift end to a dispute. The result is a zero-sum game where the victor reaps the utility he seeks and the vanquished has to yield. The cost of launching a military campaign is high, and the cost of losing it even higher. That is why statesmen throughout the course of history have sought an alternative approach: one that balances between complacency and aggression. This is the reason why assassination has been practiced all over recorded history in virtually almost all cultures: it does not carry the staggering high cost of warfare, nor does it require one to wait in futility.

Assassination is one of the many tools available in power politics. The aim in this thesis is to first look at the ways assassination – or targeted killing if we prefer the more euphemized term – is conducted, including the sorts of operatives, weapons and machines needed, the support infrastructure required to safely insert and extract these operatives and machines, and the intelligence network involved in locating the correct targets. The second aim is to look at how assassination has become more and more permissive in the 21st century, despite its status as a pariah in international politics a few centuries earlier.

In Section I we will take a look at the history of assassination itself, examining how assassination was used for political and military purposes. We will take a look at the ascension of the Hashashin (after whom the term assassin was coined) in the late 11th and 12th centuries in Syria and Persia, to the rise of the shinobi in feudal Japan and the cold-blooded tales of the four famed hitokiri of the Bakumatsu era, to the formation of the US Office of Strategic Service and its transformation to the Central Intelligence Agency, and lastly, we end the section with the Soviet Union's KGB and its fanatical loyalty to the Communist ideals.

In Section II this thesis will delve into assassination/covert operations as the middle ground between open war and diplomacy. We seek to answer these following questions: 1) Why do states conduct assassinations instead of launching a war? What are the cost and consequences of wars? What are the constraints of war? 2) Why do states prefer assassinations over diplomacy? What if one's opponents refuse to dialogue? What to do with rogue states? What to do if one's opponent refuse all the terms on the table? 3) What are the advantages of assassination and covert operations as opposed to war and diplomacy? 4) What are the disadvantages of assassination as opposed to war and diplomacy? And lastly in question 5) we will explore the rejected utilities of assassination throughout the 17th century to the 20th century. If assassination has its own utilities, then why was it rejected by many international jurists of the 17th and 18th centuries? Why was there such a strong international condemnation against its use?

Section III picks up where Section II leaves off. This is where the research question gets tackled in detail. We will bring up what we call the super and great powers of assassination: The United States, Israel and Russia, and analyze how each of these three countries employ assassination as an instrument of their policies. The research question of this thesis is *How* and *When* do states (respectively their intelligence agencies) eliminate their targets? The research question deals with two equally important components. The *How* deals with the operational side of assassination, ie. its tactics, structure, equipment and manpower. In short, it seeks to explore how a kill is planned, executed, and completed, and demonstrate what resources one needs to possess in order to stage a high-value kill worthwhile of the pursuit of national interest. To illustrate this point, we will explore empirical cases whenever possible. The information will be taken directly from famous targeted killing operations conducted the United States, Israel and Russia. The *When* deals with the permissive catalysts of assassination. It seeks to answer one fundamental question: When can a state conduct a bespoke killing operation? Under what circumstances can it kill? The response might not be straightforward. We have stated that assassination faced strong international condemnation in the past. This means any state wishing to launch an assassination campaign must consider the diplomatic costs of actions that are considered immoral and unacceptable. Yet the United States, Israel and Russia are known to run their own targeted killing and assassination program with a degree of success. The *When* of this thesis, then, examines the way these super and great powers of assassination transformed the way the world perceived their extrajudicial killing practices, softening global disapproval, and ultimately introducing new assassination norms into the international arena.

We will take a look at the United States and its many intelligence agencies. We will explore American targeted killing operations all over the Middle East and follow the United States on its war on terror and hunt for prominent terrorist leaders. The United States banned political assassination in three executive orders in the 1970s and 1980s. As of 2018, the United States runs the world's most widespread and efficient targeted killing program via the use of unmanned drones and special forces. What caused this dramatic change? What are the processes of killing an individual, from start to finish?

Leaving the United States behind, we examine Israel and its struggle against Middle Eastern states and non-state actors. We will discuss the notorious 1972 Olympic massacre in Berlin and the subsequent Operation Wrath of God. It is also worth mentioning the current situation in the Mossad itself and Israel's many special operation units which specialize in targeted killing. How does Israel deal with Hamas, Hezbollah and the PLO? How effective are Israeli assassination campaigns? What have those assassinations cost Tel-Aviv? How did Israel, being a small country lacking diplomatic might that it is, withstand international criticism against its extrajudicial killings?

After Israel, we will discuss the Russian Federation and its presence in the First and Second Chechen War. The curious dynamics between Russian organized crime and the Russian security services will illustrate how Russia has transformed dramatically from its KGB days. How do the Russian assassination practices differ from the American ones? What did Russia do to create their own assassination norms even though Russia itself is not as powerful as norm-changer as the United States?

With these three countries analyzed, we will start to see a stark contrast in each's assassination culture. The way Israel kills Hamas and Hezbollah differs from the way the United States kills

al-Qaeda and Islamic State combatants, and likewise, Russia has its own methods in its hunt for dissidents, crime lords and Chechen militant leaders. Not only do these countries have their own preferences in the way they eliminate their targets, they have also found their own way to build the norm *for* assassination, and at the same time, dismantle the norm against it.

The last section of this thesis brings up the impact of emerging technologies on targeted killing. Advancement in science has made it easier to kill someone. Polonium offers a stealthier alternative to poison. Drones rain down destruction far better than a lone gunman ever can and contain no risk of capture. Automated weapons systems are being rigorously developed, experimented on, and will soon see widespread use on battlefields, assuming the ban of killer robots fails to prevent their proliferation. Breakthroughs in artificial intelligence promises micro-robots which can be deployed in swarms controlled by algorithms rather than human operators. These nanobots can be the size of mosquitoes and can be armed with biological agents or micro-explosives designed to either kill, cripple or immobilize their targets. Emerging technologies offer a wider range of options for intelligence agencies to choose from should they decide to neutralize their targets. Technology can empower an assassin in many ways, and even changes the ways assassination operates. The United States, for instance, has engaged in extensive intervention campaigns across the globe, gained enemies by doing so, and now it has a bloated kill list whose names add up faster than they are being crossed off. Like any rational individual, Washington has to solve a few economical equations before initiating a kill. Its drones, spies, and special forces cannot be everywhere at once, and so a target has to be carefully chosen. Risks and rewards must be evaluated. The advent of emerging technologies allows super and great powers to increase their presence, decrease the cost of a kill, and ultimately make their targeted killing operations cheaper, simpler, cleaner, and easier.

The author of this thesis is aware that there is a moral and ethical dimension to the topic of political and military assassination practices. However, the purpose here is not to discuss morals and ethics. This thesis is only concerned with the reality as it is: targeted killing exists and will continue to be used. The aim here is never to ask what is right and wrong in terms of ethics and morality. We are only interested in the *How* and the *When* of intelligence agencies eliminating their targets. The *How* encompasses the operationality of assassination, ranging from intelligence planning, insertion, retreats, operative selection, and whatever else that is necessary to ensure the tactical success of a kill. The *When* focuses on the construction of permissive circumstances that allow a kill (or kills) to happen, including the creation of norms that allow for states to pursue assassination without fear of strong international backlash. Both the *How* and the *When* are equally important for employers of assassination, and if one seeks to wield assassination as a weapon of one's policies, one must know the solutions to both questions.

Section I: History of Assassination

The word ‘Assassin’ in the English language was borrowed from the Arabic words ‘al-Hashashin’ and Persian ‘Hashaashin’, which were the terms used to indicate an Islamic sect known as the Nizari Ismailis. These Assassins roamed the eleventh and twelfth century Syria and Iran, employing tactics in asymmetric warfare, psychological warfare and decapitation strikes in order to terrorize their opponents into submission.¹ The modern-day definition of assassination varies. Simon Frankel Pratt in his article *Crossing off names: the logic of assassination* provides three definitions.² Pratt first quoted the book *The Politics of Assassination*, which defines assassination as “the deliberate, extralegal killing of an individual for political purposes.”³ A second more detailed definition, according to Pratt, can be found on a report for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, written by Kirkham, Levy and Crotty, which defines assassination as:⁴

- 1) Killing one political elite by another within the context of internal struggle;
- 2) Killing with the intent to terrorize and delegitimize ruling political elites and effect ideological or systematic change;
- 3) Killing by governments in order to suppress political challengers;
- 4) Killing to further an ideological message;
- 5) Killing by a single deranged individual disconnected from rational political goals.

Although the word assassination was borrowed from an eleventh century sect, practices in assassination dated as far back as human history itself. Indian philosopher Chanakya of the Maurya Empire in the 4th century BCE discussed assassination in detail in his *Arthashastra*, a treatise on statecraft, economy and military strategy. His student, Chandragupta Maurya, later founded the Maurya Empire and employed assassination against his enemies, most notably against Alexander the Great’s two generals: Nicanor and Philip.⁵ Assassination also saw uses in ancient China, with the most famous case being Jing Ke’s failed attempt to kill Qin Shi Huang in 227 BC.⁶ Assassins also organized into specialized groups in order to better coordinate their missions, one example being the splinter sect of the Jewish Zealots, the Sicarii, which was founded some decades after Christ in an attempt to oppose and drive the Romans from Judea.⁷ In the Middle Ages and Renaissance Europe, King Przemysl II of Poland (1296)⁸,

¹ Bernard Lewis. 2002. *The Assassins*, pgs. 18-19. Basic Books. ISBN-10: 0465004989

² Simon Frankel Pratt. 2015. *Crossing off names: the logic of military assassination*, pg. 5. Small Wars&Insurgencies. DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2014.959769

³ Havens, Murray Clark, Carl Leiden, and Karl M. Schmitt. 1970. *The Politics of Assassination*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall.

⁴ Kirkham, J., Levy, S., & Crotty, W. 1969. *Assassination and political violence*. A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

⁵ Roger Boesche. 2003. Kautliya’s Arthashastra on War and Diplomacy in Ancient India. *Journal of Military History*, vol. 67, nr. 1, pg. 9-37.

⁶ Sima Qian. 94 BC. *Records of the Grand Historian*. Biographies of Assassins.

⁷ Zealot, Judaism. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sicarii>

⁸ <https://www.polskieradio.pl/39/156/Artykul/1467421,Przemysl-II-krol-Polski-zamordowany>

William the Silent of the Netherlands (1584)⁹, Henry III (1589)¹⁰ and Henry IV (1610)¹¹ all died at the hands of assassins.

Modern history from the 19th century onwards saw widespread social, political and economic reforms. New paradigms emerged. Assassination was employed not only in the struggle between monarchs, but also propagandas by the deed. Assassinations of prominent political figures were meant to incite widespread revolution among communities. The Russian Tsar Paul I (1754 – 1801)¹² was an unpopular figure in the Russian court, leading to a conspiracy being organized against him. A group of assassins led by General Benningsen, General Yashvil and General Zubov, slew Paul I in St. Michaels' Castle and announced the ascension of Paul I's son, Alexander I, immediately thereafter. Alexander pardoned the assassins. The court doctor declared Paul I's cause of death as "apoplexy".¹³

US President Abraham Lincoln died at the hands of John Wilkes Booth, a vehement Confederate sympathizer, in 1865. Lincoln's assassination occurred near the end of the American Civil War, when the Confederate States already faced an inevitable defeat. Booth's elaborate assassination plan required him to eliminate Lincoln, and his conspirators, Lewis Powell, David Herold, and George Atzerodt to eliminate Secretary of State William Stewart and Vice President Andrew Johnson. Stewart was injured and Johnson's would-be assassin abandoned his mission. Booth's motive for the assassination was to avenge the South and to decapitate the North by killing its three most important figures.¹⁴

The year 1914 shook the world again with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who died alongside his wife in Sarajevo.¹⁵ Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb, was identified as the assassin. Princip himself was a member of a revolutionary movement called Young Bosnia, which in turn had connections to the secret military organization called Black Hand.¹⁶ Both Young Bosnia and Black Hand shared similar characteristics: they wished to remove Austria's influence from Yugoslavia and were willing to employ tyrannicide and political murders to further their goals. Princip stated during his trial. "I am a Yugoslav nationalist, aiming for the unification of all Yugoslavs, and I do not care what form of state, but it must be free from Austria."¹⁷ The assassination caused the Austro-Hungarian Empire to deliver the July Ultimatum, consisting of ten intentionally made unacceptable, to Serbia on 23 July.¹⁸ The purpose of the ultimatum was to provoke a war with Serbia, who accepted all the terms except for one: she will not allow Austria-Hungary to participate in the criminal investigation and

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-I-stadholder-of-United-Provinces-of-The-Netherlands>

¹⁰ Mark Greengrass. 1989. <https://www.historytoday.com/mark-greengrass/assassination-henry-iii-france>

¹¹ Robert J. Knech. 2010. <https://www.historytoday.com/robert-j-knecht/murder-le-roi-henri>

¹² <http://www.saint-petersburg.com/royal-family/paul-i/>

¹³ Robert Hutchinson. A Medical Adventurer. Biographical notes on Sir James Wylie, Bart. M.D., 1758-1854. pg. 1406. Online: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2102544/?page=1>

¹⁴ Kaufman John W. 2007. American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies, pg. 252. Random House.

¹⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/mwh/ir1/assassinationrev1.shtml>

¹⁶ Michael Shackelford. The Black Hand: The Secret Serbian Terrorist Society.

<http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/comment/blk-hand.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/history/yugoslavian-history-biographies/gavrilo-princip>

¹⁸ HP Wilmott. 2003. *World War I*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, pg. 27.

internal inquiry.¹⁹ This made little difference to Vienna, however. On 28 July 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, starting the First World War.

Countries Famous for Their Assassination Practices

a. Syria-Iran and the Hashashin

The origins of the Assassins can be traced back to the late eleventh century in Alamut, a region in today's Iran. The Order of the Assassins was founded by Hassan-i Sabbah, a devout follower of Nizari Ismailism. Hassan-i Sabbah's motives were both political and personal, and he found himself caught in a power struggle against not only other Muslim sects, but also crusaders from Europe.²⁰ The Order of the Assassins had a strict power structure. Sabbah himself was the Grand Headmaster of the Order and held the highest authority. Below him were the Fida'in (transl. "those who sacrifice"), who followed the Grand Headmaster's orders without questions.²¹ The missions of the Fida'in required careful planning, intelligence and cunning. They had to assume proper disguises in order to sail close to their prey. This required a thorough education in foreign languages and habits of alien cultures. Their patience and prowess can be verified by looking at the assassination of Conrad of Montferrat: Conrad was murdered in Tyre by a group of Assassins, who had disguised as Christians for months and even won the crusaders' confidence.²²

Hassan-i Sabbah had many enemies, to whom the Fida'is were more often than not the answers. Nizam ul-Mulk, vizier of the Seljuk Empire saw how dangerous the Assassins had grown and resolved to quell their uprising.²³ Alamut Fortress changed hands a few times between the years 1090-1092. Hassan-i Sabbah was almost captured once during a siege, though he ultimately gained control of Alamut later. Evidently ul-Mulk was mobilizing his forces to bear down on Alamut one last time. However, Hassan-i Sabbah had already sent one of his trusted Fida'i to Nihavand, where ul-Mulk resided.²⁴ The Fida'i masqueraded himself under the cover of an ascetic, won admittance to the Nizam's presence, and stabbed his target to death.²⁵ This spectacular murder happened in broad daylight and sent a shockwave across the region. From that moment onwards, all the powerful men of eastern Islam had to carefully cultivate their relationship with the master of Alamut, lest they earn his disfavor. Nizam al-Mulk was but first of the many assassinations Hassan-i Sabbah orchestrated throughout his years as the Grand Headmaster. His Fida'i seemed to follow his orders with a blind fanatical loyalty – they cared nothing for their lives and would murder their targets in the most crowded gatherings using the most dramatic touches. They did not poison their targets or stab them in their sleep. Publicity and notoriety were important to the Assassins, and they knew how to achieve both. By the 12th century, the Assassins had carved their name into the hearts and minds of the Islamic world by

¹⁹ 1914: Austria-Hungary Issues Ultimatum to Serbia. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/austria-hungary-issues-ultimatum-to-serbia>

²⁰ Further information based on: Laurence Lockhart. 1930. Hassan-i Sabbah and the Assassins. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 5, issue 4, pgs. 675-696.

²¹ Further information based on: Charles E. Nowell. 1947. The Old Man of the Mountain. *Speculum*, vol. 22, no. 4, pgs. 497-519.

²² *Ibid*, pg. 501.

²³ Sajuqid Operations Against Alamut. <http://www.ismaili.net/histoire/history06/history604.html>

²⁴ Nizam ul-Mulk. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nizam-al-Mulk-Seljuq-vizier>

²⁵ Charles E. Nowell. 1947. The Old Man of the Mountain, pg. 501.

chalking up an impressive kill list consisting of governors, Sunni scholars, viziers, and even the Abbasid caliph Mustarshid.²⁶

Hassan-i Sabbah's ruthless pursue of his political goals was later shared by one of his successors: Rashid al-Din Sinan, famously known as the Old Man of the Mountain (1132-1193).²⁷ Rashid al-Din received a typical Hashashin training in Alamut and was later sent to Syria to establish a branch there. He refortified Castle Masyaf, intending to use it as the power base for his operations in today's northern Syria. Rashid al-Din's emirate clashed with the forces of the sultan of Egypt, Saladin, in 1176.²⁸ At this point, the Hashashin branch in Syria had detached itself from its cradle in Alamut and had become the terror of the region. Its army of Fida'is, trained in the fine art of murder, infiltrated into every corner of the Holy Land, shaping the course of the wars which plagued Syria with daggers and poison. Together with Masyaf, the Order commanded nine forts nestled on the an-Nusariyah Mountains, forming a nigh unassailable chain of fortresses and outposts. The circumstances that led the Assassins to hostilities with Saladin started with two attempted assassinations on Saladin's life. The first attempt happened in Aleppo in 1175,²⁹ the second in the Siege of Azaz in May 1176.³⁰ The Assassins failed in both attempts and Saladin emerged unscathed, though now fueled with caution and anger.³¹ Eager for vengeance, Saladin invaded the Assassin territories in July - August 1176.³² Masyaf Castle was besieged, but never captured. Saladin's campaign against the Assassins was short-lived, and the siege on Masyaf had to be called off. The circumstance of Saladin's withdrawal is uncertain as there are many interpretations and sources. Lewis in his article *Saladin and the Assassins* cited five different sources each claiming one different reason for Saladin's retreat. He cites the Shi'i historian of Aleppo Ibn Abi Tayyi, claiming that "the main reason for Saladin's withdrawal was a dangerous Frankish advance in the Biqa".³³ Lewis also presents a different version quoted from three Muslim scholars, Imad ad-Din, Ibn Wasil and Ibn al-Athir, which claims the war between the Assassins and Saladin was interceded by Shihab ad-Din, governor of Hama, neighbor of the Assassins and Saladin's maternal uncle. Shihab ad-Din successfully mediated a peace between the master of Masyaf and sultan of Egypt.

There is one question that we ought to ask: Why did Sinan decide to assassinate Saladin in Aleppo and Azaz? The Order of the Assassins was founded on religious beliefs, but its actions were undoubtedly political in nature. Surely, the Grandmaster of the Assassins must have been aiming at certain geopolitical objectives when he decided to send his best killers to end Saladin? Gumushtugin, a political rival of Saladin ever since he replaced the Fatimids in Egypt, paid Sinan and requested an assassination on Saladin. Lewis claims this interpretation is "by no means unlikely" but can "hardly be the primary motive" for the master of Masyaf.³⁴ Sinan

²⁶ Anthony Campbell. *The Assassins of Alamut*, pg. 19. Online:

http://www.iranchamber.com/history/ismailieh/books/the_assassins_of_alamut.pdf

²⁷ James Reston. 2001. *Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade*. Doubleday, pg. 16

²⁸ *Castle Masyaf*. Institute of Ismaili Studies. <https://iis.ac.uk/library/castle-masyaf>

²⁹ Bernard Lewis. 1953. *Saladin and the Assassins*. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. University of London, vol. 15, no. 2, pgs. 239-245.

³⁰ Charles E. Nowell. 1947. *The Old Man of the Mountain*, pg. 507.

³¹ *Ibid*, pg. 508.

³² Bernard Lewis. 1953. *Saladin and the Assassins*, pg. 240.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ Bernard Lewis. 1953. *Saladin and the Assassins*, pg. 241.

himself was a man of far fetching political aims, and his Assassin Order was more than a band of sellswords. Lewis found a more believable explanation by looking at religious fundamental differences between Saladin and the Assassins: the former being a Sunni Muslim, the latter being a sect of Shia Islam. In 1171, Saladin had suppressed the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt with the aim of restoring the power of the Abbasid caliph.³⁵ The Assassins of Alamut had been at odds with the Abbasids before, and they considered each other hated enemies. With the ascension of the new Abbasid caliph in Egypt, Ismailism, of which the Order of the Assassins was a part, came under suppression. Ismaili literature was destroyed and removed from Fatimid libraries. This could have signaled Sinan that a new power had arisen and this time, it would no longer play small regional games like its precursors, but was willing to go the extra miles to reunite Islam under one banner and restore the absolute supremacy of the Sunni Caliph in Baghdad. Lewis believes this to be the primary reason that prodded Sinan to attempt on Saladin's life. This explanation implies that the Assassins were not merely killers for hire, nor were they simpletons brainwashed by hashish. They carefully chose their targets and missions and acted when it suited their political interest.

b. Japan: Shinobi and Rogue Samurai

A shinobi, or ninja, in feudal Japan was a mercenary specialized in guerilla warfare, covert operations, sabotage, infiltration and assassination. Although they do perform assassinations, the chief role of a shinobi was espionage. They disguised as peasants or travelling merchants and infiltrated enemy territories in order to provide intelligence on hostile terrain, troop movements, and structural weaknesses. Sabotage came in the form of arson, with castles, camps and supply trains being the primary targets. Assassination is perhaps the most romanticized aspect of the shinobi, and indeed there were many attempts on important figures between the 15th and 17th century. However, many of these assassinations ended in failure, examples being the attempts on the lives of the daimyos Oda Nobunaga, Takeda Shingen and Toyotomi Hideyoshi.³⁶

Much of today's knowledge about the shinobi³⁷ came from what was preserved by Iga and Koga clans. The province of Iga was the birthplace of many villages specialized in ninja training.³⁸ It is speculated that the first ninja were samurai who abandoned regular warfare and decided to focus on irregular combat and covert operations instead. Iga and Koga provinces were both surrounded by mountains and had little access to the outside world. This might have been a contributing factor to the secretive development of ninja techniques. Unlike mercenaries hired as spies or assassins, Iga and Koga clans produced professional ninja, specifically trained at a young age to fulfill their role. Their services were purchased by daimyos, or lords. Like samurai, ninja were born into their profession, and knowledge and traditions were passed down from fathers to sons. Samurai youth were trained in the arts of killing at a young age, and ninja youth were no different. They were expected to master a wide array of martial arts disciplines, as well as knowledge on survival skills, scouting techniques, herbalism and explosives. Endurance and physical prowess were equally important, and ninja-in-training had to regularly practice climbing, swimming, various methods of walking and long-distance running. Their craft

³⁵ Lyons & Jackson. 1984. Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War. Cambridge University Press, pgs. 46-47

³⁶ Steven Turnbull. 2003. Ninja AD 1460-1650. Osprey Publishing.

³⁷ Iga-ryu Museum. http://www.iganinja.jp/?page_id=837

³⁸ Ishan Tharoor. Iga and Koga: where the ninja were born. <http://world.time.com/2013/02/05/you-dont-know-ninjas-8-new-revelations-about-the-shadow-warrior/slide/where-ninjas-are-born/>

required them to assume proper disguises, so thorough education on common professions was crucial if one wanted to sail under false colors undetected.

The ninja clans of the Iga province were defeated by the powerful warlord Oda Nobunaga during the Tensho Iga War in 1581.³⁹ By this time, Oda already had most of central Japan under his iron fist and controlled all the provinces that bordered Iga, leaving the province surrounded from all sides. The Oda troops were met with little resistance. The last battle of the Tensho Iga War occurred at Kashiwara Castle, where the remaining of the Iga soldiers rallied.⁴⁰ Kashiwara Castle surrendered on 30 September 1581, ending organized Iga resistance. Survivors fled the province and arrived before Tokugawa Ieyasu, Oda's on-and-off rival and eventually the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, to whom they offered their services.

During the final years of the Tokugawa shogunate, the Bakumatsu period of the mid to late 19th century, Japan gave rise to four prominent assassins whose legends live on well until today. These assassins were dubbed 'four Hitokiri of the Bakumatsu'⁴¹, and each of them were extremely skilled with the sword, having earned the elite status within the Japanese samurai society at that time. These four samurai-turned-assassins were named Kawakami Gensai, Kirino Toshiaki, Tanaka Shinbei and Okada Izo. Of these four characters, Tanaka Shinbei is perhaps the most interesting to mention. Indeed, he killed more than any of the four hitokiri, and for this, he was rewarded with the title 'captain of assassins'.⁴² Both Tanaka and Okada worked towards the same purpose: to overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate and restore the Emperor of Japan to power. To this end, they killed politicians, governors, and regional administrators, essentially those deemed to be supporters of the shogunate and sympathizers to foreign access to Japan. All the four hitokiri either died in battle or were executed.

c. The United States, the OSS and the CIA

The Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, was founded on 13 June 1942.⁴³ Before WW II, the US Department of State, the Office of Naval Intelligence and the War Department's Military Intelligence Division.⁴⁴ In July 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt tasked William J. Donovan with creating a civilian intelligence department attached to the White House, named the Coordinator of Information, or COI, which eventually evolved into the Office of Strategic Services. During WW II, the OSS' missions included intelligence gathering by espionage, sabotage, propaganda war, providing aids for anti-Nazi resistance groups in Europe, and training anti-Japanese guerilla factions. In the Pacific theater, the OSS supported movements that resisted the occupation of the Axis powers, supplying them with arms and advisors. The Viet Minh, the Kuomintang and Mao's Red Army⁴⁵ were among the resistance movements that received OSS support. The OSS also penetrated deep behind Nazi Germany's line in order to recruit and organize anti-Germany resistance. The OSS also handled double agents, among whom is the famous German diplomat Fritz Kolbe.⁴⁶ Kolbe was

³⁹ Otta Gyuichi, J.S.A. Ellisonas. 2011. *Chronicles of Lord Nobunaga*. Brill Academic Publishers, pg. 410

⁴⁰ http://www.jcastle.info/view/Kashiwara_Castle

⁴¹ Hitokiri is translated to English as "man-cutter"

⁴² Stephen Turnbull. 2014. *The Samurai Swordsman: Master of War*. Turtle Publishing, pg. 182

⁴³ What was OSS? <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/intelligence-history/oss/art03.htm>

⁴⁴ OSS. National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/oss>

⁴⁵ See: Dixie Mission

⁴⁶ Story of Kolbe based on: Greg Bradsher. *A Time to Act: The Beginning of Fritz Kolbe Story*. 2002. Prologue Magazine, vol. 34, no. 1. National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/spring/fritz-kolbe-2.html>

dissatisfied with the Nazi regime, having never been a member of the Nazi Party himself, and plotted to wound the Reich by offering intelligence secrets. As a diplomatic courier, he had plenty of chances to carry top-grade sensitive documents in and out of Germany. Opportunities arose when Kolbe had a chance to visit Switzerland, where he contacted the British embassy in Bern. The British rejected his offer due to Britain's previous experience with the Venlo Incident, in which two MI6 officers were lured into a trap posed by Sicherheitsdienst agents claiming to be German officers who plotted to depose Hitler to discuss peace terms with the Allies.⁴⁷ This incident led Winston Churchill to ban all contacts with the Nazi opposition. Rebuffed by the British, Kolbe went to the Americans, where he was met with a slightly warmer welcome. His handler was Allen Dulles, an ambitious diplomat who aspired to be America's spymaster, a dream which he finally realized as he rose to the rank of Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. According to Bradsher's article, Kolbe provided more than 1600 documents of German correspondence between the Foreign Office and German diplomatic missions in 30 countries. These documents included data on German intelligence structure in Spain, Sweden and Switzerland; German espionage activities in the UK and the British embassy in Istanbul; and military activities in Japan and the Far East. Allen Dulles later commented. "George Wood (Kolbe's codename) was not only our best source on Germany, but undoubtedly one of the best secret agents any intelligence service has ever had."⁴⁸

OSS operatives also trained together with members of the British Special Operations Executive at Camp-X,⁴⁹ an installation designed to train covert agents all the skills necessary for clandestine operations. Trainees at Camp-X were taught sabotage techniques, subversion, intelligence gathering, lock picking, explosives, radio communications, cryptography, recruiting partisans, the art of silent killing and unarmed combat.⁵⁰ Due to the nature of their missions, OSS agents also required state-of-the art weapons and gadgets. This demand led General Donovan to fund OSS Research & Development, whose task was to modify or innovate pre-existing weapons in order to them more suitable for covert tasks. The results of this effort included 16mm Kodak cameras disguised as matchboxes, acetone delayed fuses for anti-ship mines, easily concealable 'Liberator' pistols, 'Beano' grenades that exploded on impact, compasses on the back of uniform buttons, and explosives made to look like lumps of coals.⁵¹

President Harry S. Truman terminated the OSS by signing Executive Order 9621 on 20 September 1945.⁵² For two years after WW II, the intelligence capacity of the United States was shared by the Department of State and the Department of War. Political advisor to President Truman, Clark Clifford, stated that the president "prematurely, abruptly and unwisely disbanded the OSS."⁵³ Was this criticism warranted? Let us take a look at the whole situation from the White House's point of view.⁵⁴ The war was over. The US Congress wanted

⁴⁷ S. Payne Best. *The Venlo Incident: A True Story of Double-dealing, Captivity and a Murderous Nazi Plot*. Skyhorse Publishing.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Greg Bradsher. *A Time to Act*.

⁴⁹ *History of Camp-X*. <http://www.camp-x.com/historyofcampx.html>

⁵⁰ Whitby-CampX. <https://ontariowarmemorials.blogspot.com/2012/08/whitby-camp-x.html>

⁵¹ Weapons and spy gear. CIA publications. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/intelligence-history/oss/art08.htm>

⁵² Executive Order 9621 – Termination of the Office of Strategic Services and Disposition of its Functions. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=60673>

⁵³ Clark Clifford. 1991. *Counsel to the President: A Memoir*. New York, Random House, pg. 165

⁵⁴ Based on: Michael Warner. *Savage and Liquidation: the Creation of the Central Intelligence Group*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol39no5/html/v39i5a13p.htm#rft6>

demobilization because money was needed elsewhere. OSS operatives were trained in guerrilla, commando and propaganda warfare – areas that have no use in peacetime. US politicians saw the OSS as a specialized war time agency designed for national emergencies. This meant once victory was achieved, the OSS should see a complete restructuring. The National Security Act of 1947,⁵⁵ effective as of 18 September 1947, established the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as restructured the US military.⁵⁶

Today, the Central Intelligence Agency is a principal member of the US Intelligence Community, a 16-member club consisting of United States government agencies that engage in intelligence activities to secure the national security and foreign policy of the United States. According to its own description, the CIA's purpose is to assist its Director in "collecting intelligence through human sources or other appropriate means", "correlating and evaluating intelligence related to the national security", "providing overall direction for and coordination of the collection of national intelligence outside the United States through human sources", and "performing such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security."⁵⁷ The CIA houses many subdivisions and directorates, though the one we are interested in the most is the National Clandestine Service or the Directorate of Operations as it is formally known. The Clandestine Service specialized in counter-intelligence, counter-terrorism and counter-nuclear proliferation. It conducts covert operations worldwide and collects actionable human intelligence for the US President, policymakers and military establishments. In order to succeed in these tasks, the Clandestine Service needed a powerful yet hidden fist. The Special Activities Division serves as the Clandestine Service's invisible weapon. SAD grants the US President an alternative option when he is unable to choose between overt military operations or diplomatic maneuvers. The Special Activities Division divides itself into two groups: the Special Operations Group tasked with targeted killing, raids, ambushes, and sabotage, and the Political Actions Group specialized in economic warfare, psychological warfare and propaganda.

Because this thesis revolves around assassination, let us take a closer look at the Special Operations Group and ignore the other one. Aside from killing and injuring enemies of the United States across the globe, SAD/SOG also trains and leads guerilla combatants of other countries to fight in proxy wars. HUMINT activities are managed by spy handlers, and this intelligence can serve the US president and decision makers in their policy making process or the US military establishments in combat.⁵⁸ SAD/SOG recruits its operatives from the US special forces such as the Army's Delta Force, the Navy's DEVGRU, and the Air Force 24th STS as well as other units from the Joint Special Operations Command.

Throughout the years, the National Clandestine Service and its subdivisions have left its marks on Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and many other areas of interest of the United States. The world began to gain a better understanding on SAD/SOG in the wake of 11 September 2001. SAD operatives represented the first US military presence in Afghanistan, having reached the Panjshir Valley on 26 September 2001. The SAD team was led by Gary

⁵⁵ National Security Act of 1947. CIA library. Online: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1947-07-26.pdf>

⁵⁶ The Act also created the US Air Force (independent from the Army Air Forces) and merged the Department of the Army and the Department of the Navy into the National Military Establishment.

⁵⁷ About CIA. <https://www.cia.gov/about-cia/>

⁵⁸ Based on: Steve Coll. 2004. Ghost War: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 2001. The Penguin Press.

Schroen, at that time a CIA Deputy Chief, who had scrambled together the Northern Alliance Liaison Team (callsign Jawbreaker) on 20 September 2001.⁵⁹ Jawbreaker consisted of special operations and linguistic experts. Its purpose was to link up with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance and seduce that faction with \$3 million in cash. Prior to arriving in the Panjshir Valley, Schroen was ordered by counter-terrorism chief Cofer Black. “I don’t want Bin Laden and his thugs captured, I want them dead. They must be killed. I want to see photos of their heads on pikes. I want bin Laden’s head shipped back in a box filled with dry ice. I want to be able to show bin Laden’s head to the President. I promised him I would do that.”⁶⁰

The US invasion of Afghanistan was a curious case: it strictly centered around special operations forces from all branches and required no large deployment of conventional Marine or Army troops. Initially, General Tommy Franks, then-commanding general of the Central Command, proposed an invasion plan consisting of 60,000 conventional troops and requiring additional 6 months to launch.⁶¹ Secretary of Defense to the Bush administration Donald Rumsfeld rejected this plan, demanding: “I want men on the ground now!” CIA Director George Tenet proposed sending special forces along with CIA SAD operatives.⁶² This idea materialized into reality in the Panjshir Valley, initially with the insertion of Jawbreaker led by Schroen, and later with airstrikes from strike aircraft, bombers, ships and submarines on 7 October 2001.⁶³ Three special task forces formed the backbone of the invading US army. Task Force Dagger was led by Colonel James Mulholland and centered around the 5th Special Forces Group. Dagger was assigned to northern Afghanistan and was dropped to their site by the 160th SOAR ‘Nightstalkers’.⁶⁴ Dagger’s mission was to win the “war for Afghanistan” by training the Afghan tribes, coordinating US and various ethnic groups and ultimately defeating the Taliban government. Task Force K-Bar, formed by Green Berets and Navy SEALs, operated in southern Afghanistan and was led by Navy SEAL Captain Robert Harward.⁶⁵ K-Bar’s mission was to win the “war on terrorism” by crippling al-Qaeda’s ability to operate in Afghanistan. Lastly, Task Force Sword, later renamed TF-11, was placed under direct command of the Joint Special Operations Command, assigned with eliminating and/or capturing high value Taliban and al-Qaeda targets. Leigh Neville in his book *Special Forces in the War on Terror* called Sword a “black SOF”.⁶⁶ Task Force Sword was formed by operatives from the Delta Force, Seal Team Six, and the 75th Ranger Regiment. The British Special Boat Service was attached to Sword’s structure as support in certain missions.

All three task forces were established less than a month after the 9/11 attack. The swiftness of this act can be attributed to the CIA itself: it laid the groundwork for the invasion and its

⁵⁹ J. Daniel Moore. *Review of Gary Schroen’s First In*. https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol49no4/War_on_Terror_9.htm

⁶⁰ Gary Younge. *The CIA Brings Darkness to America by Fighting in the Shadows*. Original quote by Cofer Black. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/09/cia-america-fighting-shadows>

⁶¹ Dwight John Zimmerman. 2011. *21st Century Horse Soldiers: Special Operations Forces and Operation Enduring Freedom*. DefenseMediaNetwork. <https://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/operation-enduring-freedom-the-first-49-days-4/>

⁶² Doug Stanton. 2009. *12 strong: The Declassified True Story of the Horse Soldiers*. Pocket Books, pg. 43

⁶³ *Afghanistan wakes after night of intense bombings*. 2001. <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/10/07/gen.america.under.attack/>

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Collins. 2017. https://www.army.mil/article/181582/first_to_go_green_berets_remember_earliest_mission_in_afghanistan

⁶⁵ Dwight Jon Zimmerman. 2011. <https://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/operation-enduring-freedom-the-first-49-days-6/>

⁶⁶ Leigh Neville. 2015. *Special Forces in the War on Terror*. Osprey Publishing, pg. 29.

Director George Tenet spearheaded the plan to launch a SOF-based invasion instead of a conventional military-based one. This army of special forces also swiftly reaped military successes. Kabul fell on 12 November⁶⁷ with minimal losses to the US-Northern Alliance coalition. The Taliban's last stronghold, Kandahar, was abandoned in December.⁶⁸ This marked the end of the Taliban government in Afghanistan and the beginning of a new phase. From 2002 onwards, Taliban forces resisted the US-led coalition using guerilla and insurgency tactics. The CIA would later shine again with Operation Neptune Spear⁶⁹ (to be discussed in detail in later sections), in which operatives from Seal Team Six killed Osama bin Laden, ending the decade-long hunt.

d. The Soviet Union/Russia and the KGB, FSB and SVR

The KGB, or the Committee for State Security, served as the main security agency for the Soviet Union from 1954 to 1991.⁷⁰ The KGB was treated as a military organization and therefore its activities were governed by military laws. As the Soviet Union's secret police, the KGB's functions included intelligence, counter-intelligence, protecting the Soviet government, guarding the Central Committee of the Communist Party, combating anti-Soviet dissidents, and policing Soviet citizens.

The KGB's first achievement in the field of assassination came three years after its foundation. On 12 October, Lev Rebet,⁷¹ a Ukrainian politician and anti-Communist, died in Karlplatz, Munich. Doctors and forensic examiners established the cause of death as 'heart failure'. Two years later, Stepan Bandera, leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationals – the same party of which Rebet was a high-ranking member, collapsed on a street in Munich, fell and broke his neck. An autopsy discovered traces of cyanide, leading Munich police to conclude that the poison had been self-administered, causing the victim to fall.⁷² Both deaths were considered natural causes. It was not until 1961 that more evidence surfaced, all pointing towards the KGB. Both cases came to light with the defection of Bohdan Stashynsky, a KGB officer, spy and assassin. Stashynsky killed both targets using a poison spraying gun, the latest addition to the KGB's innovative arsenal of murder. The gun was designed to spray cyanide at the victim's face to induce rapid cardiac arrest, making the victim's death look like a heart-paralysis.⁷³ Bandera's and Rebet's deaths were ordained by the highest authority in the Soviet Politburo: Alexander Shelepin,⁷⁴ Chairman of the KGB, and Nikita Krushchev.⁷⁵

The KGB once again displayed its ingenuity in the art of political killing in 1978. Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian dissident writer, a broadcaster for the BBC World Service, and a "non-person" according to communist authorities, was waiting for his bus to arrive in Waterloo Bridge on 7 September 1978. An unknown man stabbed his leg with the tip of an umbrella and vanished inside a taxi. Markov felt a sharp pain as if he were stung by a bee. The pain remained

⁶⁷ See: Fall of Kabul

⁶⁸ Luke Harding, Nicholas Watt. 2001.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/dec/08/afghanistan.lukeharding>

⁶⁹ Operation Neptune Spear. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/neptune-spear.htm>

⁷⁰ The KGB. Cold War Museum. <http://www.coldwar.org/articles/50s/kgb.asp>

⁷¹ Ihor Siundukov. 2005. <https://day.kyiv.ua/en/article/culture/herald-ukrainian-statehood>

⁷² Cloak & Dagger. TIME. <https://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,938806,00.html>

⁷³ The Man with the Poison Gun: Q&A with Serhii Plokhly. Ukrainian Research Institute. Harvard University. <http://www.huri.harvard.edu/news/news-from-huri/292-the-man-with-the-poison-gun-q-a.html>

⁷⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/25/obituaries/aleksandr-n-shelepin-76-dies-kgb-chief-under-krushchev.html>

⁷⁵ Serhii Plokhly. 2016. The Man with the Poison Gun: A Cold War Story, chapter 17. Perseus Books

for the rest of the day while he was at the BBC office for work. The pain later developed into a fever. Markov died on 11 September in St. James' Hospital, his cause of death was determined as ricin poisoning.⁷⁶ The man carrying the umbrella was identified as Francesco Giullino, an agent of the Bulgarian secret service.⁷⁷ The Bulgarians could not have arranged this murder alone. The hidden benefactor behind the scene was the KGB, who developed and assembled the poison umbrella. The KGB's alternative plans to assassinate Markov included rubbing a poisoned jelly on Markov's skin and poisoning his food. Although the KGB of the 60s used assassination sparingly, there were certain troublemakers that warranted an assassin's subtle touch, and Georgi Markov was one of them. Markov defected to Great Britain 1969 and verbally attacked Bulgarian President, Todor Zhivkov, from BBC radio broadcasts. In 1978, General Dmatar Stoyanov of the Bulgarian secret service requested Kremlin for help. KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov replied unenthusiastically. "Give the Bulgarians whatever they need, show them how to operate it and send someone to Sofia to give training. But that is all."⁷⁸ The Umbrella Murder case later went on to attain some sort of a folklore status among Cold War thriller writers, spy moviemakers and the general public.

Another high-profile target of the KGB was Sultan Ibraimovich Ibraimov, Chairman of the Kyrgyz Council of Ministers, who was killed in a rather mundane way: two shots in the head in his own bed. The full details of Ibraimov's assassination were never fully disclosed, though it is speculated that Ibraimov was killed for his advocacy for "greater Kyrgyz autonomy."⁷⁹

The KGB displayed an extreme dedication to preserve the interest of the Soviet Union, and it did not shy from the idea of murdering targets of the highest value. Prior to 1981, it had assassinated dissidents, defectors, politicians and even a prime minister, but this time, it would attempt to kill a pope in the heart of Christendom. On 13 May 1981, Pope John Paul II, born Karol Jozef Wojtyla, entered St. Peter's Square, passing a crowd of supporters. A young Turkish man levelled a Browning 9mm⁸⁰ at the popemobile and shot the pope twice in the abdomen, once in the left hand and once in the right arm.⁸¹ The assassin was immediately captured by Vatican security while fleeing the scene. His identity was later revealed as Mehmet Ali Agca, a member of the Turkish ultranationalist party Gray Wolves. His accomplices included one fellow Turkish and two Bulgarian men. John Paul II suffered severe blood loss but survived the attack. Finding the true culprit behind this assassination attempt proved difficult. It remained an unsolved mystery as investigators were unable to collect sufficient evidence to come to a final conclusion.

While in captivity, Agca spun lies and gave conflicting reports throughout his 120 interrogations, forcing Italian authorities to open up pointless investigations.⁸² In 2005, new documents were unearthed from Stasi archives, shedding new light on the matter. Evidence in

⁷⁶ Jonathan Brown. 2008. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/poison-umbrella-murder-case-is-reopened-851022.html>

⁷⁷ Richard Edwards. 2008. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2158765/Poison-tip-umbrella-assassination-of-Georgi-Markov-reinvestigated.html>

⁷⁸ Arkadi Vaksberg, transl. By Paul McGregor. Toxic Politics: The Secret History of the Kremlin's Poison Laboratory. Praeger, pg. 134

⁷⁹ Bernard A. Cook. Europe Since 1945: An Encyclopedia. Loyola University, New Orleans, pg. 758

⁸⁰ <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/17/world/europe/pope-gun-hometown-museum/index.html>

⁸¹ Pope is Shot in Car in Vatican Square. NYTimes. <https://events.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0513.html>

⁸² Sebnem Arsu. 2006. <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2006/01/12/international/europe/man-who-shot-pope-is-set-free-from-turkish-prison.html>

these documents trace the assassination attempt all the way back towards the Soviet Union. According to the article *Stasi Files Implicate KGB in Pope Shooting* on Deutsche Welle, the KGB “ordered Bulgarian colleagues to carry out the killing” and instructed the Stasi to “coordinate the operation and cover up the traces afterwards.”⁸³ Why did the Soviet Union want John Paul II dead? The pope himself was hugely popular in Poland, being a Polish national himself, and was also an anti-communist. The Soviet leadership was growing dismayed as John Paul II’s voice gained weight in a discontented Poland. Communist authorities in Poland and Russia issued a secret memorandum to Polish schoolteachers on the eve of the pope’s “pilgrimage” to Poland. It read. “The Pope is our enemy... Due to his uncommon skills and great sense of humor he is dangerous... Besides, he goes for cheap gestures in his relations with the crowd... It is based on the American presidential campaigns... In this respect all means are allowed and we cannot afford sentiments.”⁸⁴ As a faithful follower of the Communist faith, KGB chief Yuri Andropov had but one rational choice: decapitate the hostile movement by removing its spiritual and symbolic leader. According to Daniel S. Scotto’s article *Pope John Paul II, the Assassination Attempt, and the Soviet Union*,⁸⁵ the Soviet authorities proceeded with this assassination attempt as they had done with their other wet-work. They outsourced the kill to the Bulgarian DS, who then found an independent assassin in Mehmet Ali Agca. Agca’s resume was suitable for this task. Prior to this contract, he had murdered Abdi Ipekci, the editor of the centre-left newspaper Milliyet, as well as published a death threat against the pope. This was again a convenient choice, judging from the Bulgarian DS’ rationality. Agca was not supposed to survive the assassination attempt, and his extreme right-wing orientation can provide an easy camouflage to cover up the real story: Agca was an insane right-wing terrorist who embarked on a lone wolf mission to execute the pope. Even though Italy blames the Soviets for plotting the assassination,⁸⁶ it would be difficult to conclusively prove Soviet involvement in the attempt.

Throughout its existence, the KGB demonstrated to the world that it was willing to do whatever it took to preserve the reason for its existence: the Soviet state. It conducted wet-ops, stole secrets, assassinated people, all in the name of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Its dedication was codified one last time in the coup d’état of 1991.⁸⁷ Known as the August Coup, it was an attempt made by the Chairman of the KGB, Vladimir Kryuchkov, and other Soviet leaders to form the State Committee on the State of Emergency in order to overthrow the government of the Soviet Union, which the coup leaders believed to have lost its communist integrity. The conspirators planned to assault the Russian White House. KGB General Ageyev, Kryuchkov’s deputy, planned the attack with Army General Achalov. This was to be Operation Grom, or Thunder, and its centerpiece was the elite special forces units Alpha and Vympel of the Spetsnaz. The attack itself did not materialize because the men who were supposed to carry out the attack refused to storm the White House. Even if they had stormed the White House and captured it, there was no guarantee that the conspirators could win over the hearts and minds of the Soviet people and challenge Yeltsin.

⁸³ <http://www.dw.com/en/stasi-files-implicate-kgb-in-pope-shooting/a-1538173>

⁸⁴ David Remnick. 2005. *John Paul II*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/04/11/john-paul-ii>

⁸⁵ Daniel S. Scotto. 2007. *Pope John Paul II, the Assassination Attempt, and the Soviet Union*. The Gettysburg Historical Journal, vol. 6, article 7. Online:

<http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1074&context=ghj>

⁸⁶ 2006. *Soviets order pope shooting*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4767652.stm>

⁸⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Soviet-Coup-of-1991>

Following the coup, the KGB was dissolved in November 1991. Its mantle was taken by 2 agencies: the Federal Security Service, or FSB, and the Foreign Intelligence Service, or SVR. The FSB is responsible for counter-intelligence, border security, counter-terrorism and surveillance. The SVR, being an external intelligence service focusing on civilian affairs, deals with foreign intelligence activities. It works in tandem with the Main Intelligence Directorate, or GRU, its military equivalent. Assassination activities are handled by the SVR and GRU, though the FSB has also been authorized to operate targeted killing operations against terrorists.⁸⁸ As befitting a military intelligence agency, GRU commands an army of special forces known as Spetsnaz GRU, whose primary purpose is to conduct reconnaissance, direct action strikes, infiltration/insertion behind enemy lines, and assassinations when necessary. Spetsnaz troops are trained to operate independently deep inside enemy territories. Well before hostilities are scheduled to occur, Spetsnaz troops (wearing either uniform or civilian clothing) will have been deployed all over critical components of enemy infrastructure, and once in place, their missions are usually to sabotage electric grids, logistics centers, support hubs, and possible assassination of high value targets. The most visible example of this military maxim can be seen in the 2014 annexation of Crimea, in which Russia's Spetsnaz played the lead role.⁸⁹

Like the US Invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Annexation of Crimea was executed by special forces, or more specifically, the newly formed Special Operations Forces Command. The existence of the SOF Command was announced in 2013 by General Valery Gerasimov, who claims that. "Having studied the practice of the formation, training, and application of special operations forces by the leading foreign powers, the leadership of the Ministry of Defense has also begun to create such forces."⁹⁰ The SOF Command and the GRU share interesting dynamics. The GRU resents the SOF Command for causing its loss in institutional status. While the SOF Command belongs to GRU, it operates with a high degree of autonomy. The SOF Command is lauded for successfully achieving its objective without bloodshed. Its crucial contribution includes the seizing of the local parliament building, which allowed for Russia to elect Sergey Aksyonov, a Russian sympathizer, as Crimea's new Prime Minister. The SOF Command also played a key role in capturing military compounds and the command HQs of the Ukrainian Army. This was an excellently executed covert operation. It took the international community by surprise and helped impose Russia's geopolitical goal on Crimea at a minimal cost to lives, infrastructure, military equipment, and time. The entire process lasted a little under a month.⁹¹ It was the most ideal scenario for special forces units to work in: get in unseen, execute the plan and seize control before the enemy can scramble up a response.

When not covertly invading territories, the GRU, SVR and FSB also protect Russia's interest using more subtle approaches: killing people. Each agency run its own Spetsnaz unit. The GRU has the Spetsnaz-GRU, which is comparable to the US 75th Ranger Regiment. The SVR operates a Spetsnaz unit dubbed Zaslou, which is tasked with protecting Russian VIPs in embassies worldwide. The FSB handles two Spetsnaz groups: Alpha and Vypel, who main duties are anti-terror operations and protecting nuclear power plants, respectively. These roles,

⁸⁸ Peter Finn. 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/11/AR2006121101434.html>

⁸⁹ Tor Bukkvoll. 2016. U.S. Army War College. Russian Special Operations Forces in Crimea and Donbas. Online: http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/issues/summer_2016/5_bukkvoll.pdf

⁹⁰ Alexey Nikolsky. 2015. Little, Green and Polite: The Creation of Russian Special Operations Forces, pg. 125

⁹¹ Gwendolyn Sasse. 2017. Revisiting the 2014 Annexation of Crimea. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/03/15/revisiting-2014-annexation-of-crimea-pub-68423>

however, do not imply that they are strictly bound by their designated tasks and cannot be used for other purposes.

Russia of the 21st century has demonstrated that it is perfectly capable of using assassination as a weapon. Assassinating traitors/defectors like Litvinenko,⁹² Skripal⁹³ and Poteyev⁹⁴ is given. The KGB held an impressive legacy of assassination and kidnaping operations that spanned the globe⁹⁵, and this legacy carries over to its successors. Russia does not stop at assassinating traitors. The Kremlin maintains a list of the people who have done it wrong and is ever ready dispense its justice. Oleg Zhukovsky, when alive, ran VTB Bank and stood against the Kremlin when it attempted to take over that company. According to Russian official statements, news of the takeover had shocked Mr. Zhukovsky so profoundly that he tied himself into a chair, strapped a plastic bag over his head, wrote a suicide note and toppled over into his swimming pool, where he drowned.⁹⁶ The second manager from VTB Bank to die under mysterious circumstances was Alexander Funin, who was found with a bullet wound to the head. According to investigators, Funin “was examining a pistol, loaded it with rubber bullets, and accidentally squeezed the trigger. The bullet struck him in the head and the banker died.”⁹⁷ Russian intelligence is also suspected for the murder of another business man, this time the oligarch Boris Berezovsky. Berezovsky was already twice targeted by Russian assassins: once in 2003 and once in 2007.⁹⁸ He was found dead in 2013 by his body guard, his neck strung up by a rope.⁹⁹

Russian intelligence has demonstrated that it has the means and the will to exercise its long reach whenever necessary. It does not forgive traitors, and it does not shy from executing businessmen, journalists, and activists. Putin’s residency brought back the era of wet-work to the Russian intelligence community, with relatively little consequences. The British government accuses Russian FSO officer Andrey Lugovoy for murdering Litvinenko in 2006 with tea spiked with polonium-210, demanding the killer to be extradited to the UK for trial.¹⁰⁰ This demand fell on deaf ears as the Russian Prosecutor-General’s Office refuses to handover Lugovoy,¹⁰¹ citing Article 61 of the Russian constitution, which does not allow Russia’s citizens to be extradited.¹⁰² This is not a unique case. The United States has tried to impose sanctions on Russian officials for their illicit activities. In 2012, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed the “Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act”¹⁰³, which imposes a travel ban and freezing of assets of Russian officials who had a hand in the jailing and death of the Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in 2009. The Russian intelligence community absorbed

⁹² Alexander Litvinenko: Profile of Murdered Russian Spy. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-19647226>

⁹³ Sergei Skripal: the Life of a Double Agent. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/russian-spy-attack-sergei-skripal-the-life-of-a-double-agent-3z5z098xn>

⁹⁴ https://www.rbth.com/defence/2016/07/07/runaway-russian-intelligence-agent-dies-in-the-us_609709

⁹⁵ <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/conversation-long-history-kgb-retribution>

⁹⁶ Julia Latynnia. 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/20/AR2008062002596.html>

⁹⁷ <https://www.finchannel.com/index.php/business/banksandservices/20307->

⁹⁸ David Batty, Mark Oliver. 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jul/18/russia.internationalcrime>

⁹⁹ Masha Lipman. 2013. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/boris-berezovsky-an-oligarch-dies>

¹⁰⁰ 2007. UK Requests Lugovoi extradition. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6698545.stm

¹⁰¹ Reuters staff. 2007. <https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-britain-litvinenko/update-5-russia-rejects-uks-litvinenko-extradition-request-idUSL0536765420070705?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>

¹⁰² Constitution of the Russian Federation. Article 61. Online: <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-03.htm>

¹⁰³ Alex Horton 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/07/14/the-magnitsky-act-explained/?utm_term=.832ba1738f41

US sanctions the same way its country reacted to other sanctions: it soldiered on. Despite US attempts to restrict Russian assassination and espionage activities, Russian spies and assassins manage to maintain their long reach. The successful assassinations of the above-mentioned targets remind us that safety is a luxury concept for anybody who has been marked for death by the Kremlin.

Section II: Assassination as an Alternative between War and Diplomacy and the Previously Rejected Utilities of Assassination

1. Why Conduct Assassination/Covert Operations instead of Waging Wars

a. Costs of war

It is expensive to wage a war. The United States spent 4.8 trillion US Dollars in its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁰⁴ The cost of human lives must also be stressed. According to a finding by Brown University, approximately 370,000 people have been killed by direct violence in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan since 2001.¹⁰⁵ The same finding also claims that about 10 million Afghans, Iraqis and Pakistanis have either been displaced from their homes or fled to other countries as war refugees. The US war efforts in this region have turned it into a spawning pool for radicalized sects and jihadi militant groups to emerge and spread their violence.¹⁰⁶ Islamic State, for example, found the perfect breeding grounds in the Iraq warfront, which was created by the United States, and has taken deep roots in the area, exploiting the destabilization effects of war for its own benefits. In 2015, the Institute for Economics and Peace reported that about \$14 trillion was spent on war worldwide.¹⁰⁷ For comparison, the gross world product is estimated to be about \$80 trillion.¹⁰⁸ This means about 17,5% of GWP is spent on war.

Cost is one factor that makes war an unattractive option for countries with weaker military and smaller manpower. Yet there are certain times that national interest demands the elimination of an enemy or enemies. Not all nations can afford to equip hundreds of thousands of soldiers and then stomach tens of thousands of casualties, even if those costs are spent in the name of the Fatherland. Diplomacy is a laudable craft, but it alone cannot resolve all conflicts and disputes in the world. Luckily, there exists an alternative between war and diplomacy: assassination, wet-work, targeted killing, decapitation strike – does not matter how we label it, it remains an alluring option in dispute settlement. Assassins cannot conquer cities or claim lands, but they can navigate through enemy territories unseen, locate key targets and kill them. A dead troublemaker can no longer cause troubles. It is also extremely cheap to deploy assassins compared to fielding armies. This is also one similarity that assassination shares with terrorism and guerilla warfare.

b. Constraints of war¹⁰⁹

Since the foundation of international organizations in the 20th century, war has become increasingly difficult to start. Super and great powers have entangled themselves in a web of treaties, pacts, alliances that was designed to specifically prevent another world war from occurring again. Because wars are public ventures with an utmost degree of visibility and attention, it is subject to myriad international laws and rules that govern its conduct. The Hague

¹⁰⁴ <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/economic>

¹⁰⁵ <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human>

¹⁰⁶ Jessica Stern and Megan K. McBride. Terrorism after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Harvard and Brown University. Online:

<http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2013/Terrorism%20after%20the%202003%20Invasion%20of%20Iraq.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ James Stomper. 2015. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11682594/Global-cost-of-war-reaches-14-trillion-says-report.html>

¹⁰⁸ World. CIA World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>

¹⁰⁹ Partially based on: Fritz Kalshoven, Liesbeth Zegveld. Constraints of the Waging of War. ICRC. https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/Constraints-waging-war.pdf

Convention of 1899 and 1907¹¹⁰ was the first of such laws, focusing on the laws of war and war crimes. The Geneva Protocol of 1925 further expanded on previous foundation. While the Hague Convention forbade the use of “poison or poisoned weapons”, WW I introduced various chemical agents such as chlorine, mustard gas, and phosgene, which were widely employed, causing excruciating deaths. Following WW I, public opinion universally condemned chemical weapons and the participants of the Geneva Protocol agreed to ban it once and for all. At the time of the signing of the Geneva Protocol, bacterial and biological warfare remained a theory in laboratories, but these weapons were also added to the list of banned objects with foresight. Throughout the 20th century, international laws on war and war crimes evolved rapidly, further creating more constraints on the conducts of war. Article 22 of The Hague Regulations states. “The right of belligerents to adopt means of injuring the enemy is not unlimited.”¹¹¹

Not only war is constrained at legal levels, it is also constrained by nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons play an important role as custodians of global peace. The deterrence theory and the Mutually Assured Destruction doctrine prevent nuclear powers from waging wars with one another. Kenneth Waltz, in his article “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better”, argues that “nuclear weapons, responsibly used, make wars hard to start,” and “the likelihood of war decreases and deterrent and defensive capabilities increase.”¹¹² The stability-instability paradox, first posited by B. H. Liddell Hart in the book *Deterrent or Defense*,¹¹³ claims that when two countries possess nuclear weapons, the likelihood of them going into open war decreases, while the likelihood of them engaging in minor skirmishes and indirect conflicts increases. This reasoning is simple: states are rational actors and they all want to avoid a nuclear catastrophe, thus in order to settle their differences, these states prefer not to escalate minor conflicts into major conflicts. In other words, neither nuclear state wants to push a conflict past the threshold beyond which nuclear weapons are justified. Historical examples of this include the dynamics between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War: they never engaged each other directly, but fought in proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua and Afghanistan. This theory was again confirmed by Robert Rauchhaus in 2009, in the article *Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis: A Qualitative Approach*,¹¹⁴ whose conclusion claims that “nuclear weapons tend to shift intensity of disputes towards the lower end of the conflict scale.” According to Rauchhaus’ evidence, nuclear weapons do indeed increase strategic stability, and at the same time allow for more risk-taking ventures in lower-intensity conflicts. With this in mind, we can come to one conclusion: nuclear states are severely constrained. Open war no longer is a valid tool in conflict resolution. Yet in the name of national interest, disputes must be settled and conflicts resolved, one way or another.

¹¹⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex*. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/150?OpenDocument>

¹¹¹ *Convention IV respecting the laws and customs of war on lands*. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/WebART/195-200032?OpenDocument>

¹¹² Kenneth Waltz. 1981. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*. Adelphi Papers, no. 171. <http://home.sogang.ac.kr/sites/jaechun/courses/Lists/b6/Attachments/39/5.%20The%20spread%20of%20nuclear%20weapons.pdf>

¹¹³ Quoted from: B.H. Liddell Hart. 1960. *Deterrent or Defense*. London: Stevens and sons, pg. 23: “To the extent that the H bomb reduces the likelihood of full-scale war, it increases the possibility of limited war pursued by widespread local aggression.”

¹¹⁴ Robert Rauchhaus. 2009. *Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis: A Qualitative Approach*. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Online: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022002708330387>

We can see how war has been constrained over the course of the 20th century and well into the 21st. It is difficult to hide breaches in the international laws of warfare since wars are too televised, too visible, and has too many witnesses. Nuclear weapons have contributed to global peace but have also caused nuclear states to look for alternatives to war when settling their disputes. This is where clandestine/covert/assassination operations become attractive. Assassination does not suffer from these constraints. Being duplicitous in nature, assassination operations largely remain hidden from public eyes. Assassination transcends the law of war and bypasses it because it is a covert craft: its details are classified, the identity of its masterminds rarely disclosed. Moreover, an assassination is the lowest kind of intensity in the conflict intensity scale. Proxy wars and skirmishes can cause hundreds if not thousands of deaths. Assassination, whether by drones or human operatives, does sometimes result in collateral damage, but this death toll is minimal compared to a small-scale war. We can cite cases where certain extrajudicial killing operations violate international laws, but ultimately such accusations matter little, because the responsible killers remain immune to prosecution, either due to their country's protecting them, or to their ability to vanish and erase their traces. Assassination, therefore, allows for belligerents to adopt unlimited means of injuring the enemy. Poisoned weapons, chemical gases, asphyxiation, explosion, torture, are valid techniques for eliminating one's target.

c. Consequences of war

Not only does war carry a price tag and a cumbersome constraint, it also has long lasting consequences. We can take a look at Germany after WW I: the Treaty of Versailles required Germany to make reparations and pay for the damages she caused during the war.¹¹⁵ Economist John Maynard Keynes believed the terms were too harsh on Germany, and the demanded figure of \$31.4 billion¹¹⁶ was counter-productive. Germany, naturally, failed to deliver the payments as requested by France, who in turn, occupied the industrial Ruhr valley, further bottlenecking Germany's already trickling economic output. The harsh treatment of Germany caused a hyperinflation crisis in the country. Germany's economy suffered, and this sparked an outrage among the German population. This created a deep sense of resentment and hatred, which Hitler eventually exploited in his ascension to power.

Wars begin when you will, but do not end when you please, so wrote Niccolo Machiavelli.¹¹⁷ The consequences of war are dire. A state leader who marks his enemies carefully, and the tools to eliminate those enemies equally so, can do much to protect his national interest. A leader who behaves rashly, overestimates his country's power, initiates wars based on his overconfident judgment, will reap the dire consequences of a bad war and bear the brunt of its retaliation. Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union despite having trouble in the Western Front because Germany was overjoyed after the swift victories in the Low Countries and France. Hitler and his generals believed that the Soviet armed forces had already lost its leadership in the purges in the 1930s, leading them to remark that the Soviet Union was a 'giant with feet of clay' and its military capacity was 'no more than a joke.'¹¹⁸ It

¹¹⁵ See: Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles

¹¹⁶ Timothy W. Guinnane. 2004. Financial Vergangenheitsbewältigung: The 1953 London Debt Agreement. Economic Growth Center Discussion Paper no. 880. Yale University. Online: http://www.econ.yale.edu/growth_pdf/cdp880.pdf

¹¹⁷ See: Niccolo Machiavelli. Florentine Histories.

¹¹⁸ Dr. Jacques R. Pauwels. 2011. Hitler's failed Blitzkrieg against the Soviet Union. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/70-years-ago-december-1941-turning-point-of-world-war-ii/28059>

does not matter how close the Germans came to victory in the Eastern Front. It does not matter how effective the blitzkrieg worked in the early months of Operation Barbarossa. The invasion failed. For breaking the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Germany earned the wrath of Stalin, a person whose ruthless brutality rivaled that of Hitler himself, and the entire Soviet population. For Nazi Germany, Operation Barbarossa was the beginning of the end. This invasion caused 775,000 German casualties.¹¹⁹ Soviet factories, hidden behind the Ural Mountains, began to outproduce their German counterparts as the Wehrmacht struggled to push through Moscow, Stalingrad and Leningrad. Opportunity cost is one of the core concepts in investment economics, and if we were to apply it here, it would have been one of the most expensive opportunity cost in military history. The consequences of Operation Barbarossa were not the high one million German casualties, or the destroyed Tigers and Panthers and Stukas. This failed invasion earned Germany a powerful enemy, severely weakened Germany's military might, burdened Germany's economy, exhausted the German people, and emboldened the resistance in the Western Front. These factors all contributed to the Third Reich eventual downfall in May 1945.

This is not to say that Hitler and the Reich could have subdued the Soviet Union with covert operations alone. Assassins, special forces, spies and contract killers are highly specialized individuals, having all honed their murderous craft until they have reached mastery, but they alone cannot conquer and hold territories, nor can they pacify the populace and maintain the peace afterwards. The initial invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was spearheaded by the CIA and special forces units, true, but even they required the presence of conventional troops once Operation Anaconda launched in 2002.¹²⁰ However, it is important to keep in mind that while the costs of war are high for both the aggressor and the defender, the consequences of a lost war can be much higher than the initial costs. A targeted killing operation does not have such dramatic consequences. A failed attempt can cost you a few operatives and trigger an international scandal, but those consequences are bearable compared to what Napoleon endured.

2. Why Conduct Assassination/Covert Operations instead of Diplomacy

a. Difficult opponents

After the Cold War, much of the attention of the international community has been turned towards preventive diplomacy. According to the UN's 47th Session: An Agenda for Peace, preventive diplomacy is defined as "an action from arising between parties, to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur."¹²¹ Diplomacy seeks to prevent wars by employing non-violent measures, ranging from confident building measures, humanitarian assistance, conflict early warning, and soft power. Its ultimate aim is to preserve human lives by peacefully resolving disputes. But just like warfare, diplomacy has its own shortcomings. Diplomatic missions exist to foster diplomatic ties and communications between states. The United States, as befitting its status as the world's sole superpower, maintains a widespread web of embassies worldwide. It is much simpler to ask which countries do not have US embassies, rather than which do. Countries that do not have US embassies include Iran, Bhutan, and North Korea. Both Iran and North Korea remain geopolitically attractive to the United States, yet it has no means to directly communicate with

¹¹⁹ Alan Taylor. 2011. <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2011/07/world-war-ii-operation-barbarossa/100112/>

¹²⁰ Erik Ofgang. 2016. http://www.connecticutmag.com/history/operation-anaconda/article_904a40e8-c30a-11e6-bb22-731d1fc60365.html

¹²¹ United Nations. 1992. 47th Session: An Agenda for Peace. Online: <http://www.un-documents.net/a47-277.htm>

them. Any form of communication had to be done via a third state that maintains ties with those 2 countries. This already presents an insufficiency in the US diplomatic arsenal.

b. Consequences of failed diplomacy

Diplomacy, if succeeds, represents the best outcome in a conflict resolution process. Tony Benn said: “War is the ultimate failure of diplomacy,”¹²² and rightly so: no rational actor would consider war before exhausting all possible diplomatic means. However, like war, diplomacy sometimes fails. It is easy to blame a failed war since the damage is visible, the casualties countable and the suffering too relatable. Failed diplomacies often remain unmentioned, even though the consequences arising from such failures might be grim.

We do not need to look far into history to see some somber examples. Great Britain and France utterly failed in their diplomatic maneuvers with Germany in the 1930s, most notable in the year 1938. The sentiment of Western Europe at that time was to appease the rising Third Reich, which had been expanding its territories and building up its armies. In March 1938, German troops marched into Austria, annexing it into a “Greater Germany”. This event, known as Anschluss in German, did not trigger any major response from either Great Britain or France. British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain acknowledges in his speech in the House of Commons that the annexation of Austria is bound to have “effects that cannot be measured,” that the “immediate result must be to intensify the sense of uncertainty and insecurity in Europe,” and that “The events which are in our minds today will be the cause of regret, of sorrow, perhaps of indignation. They cannot be regarded my His Majesty’s Government with indifference or equanimity.”¹²³ Chamberlain clearly stated that Great Britain should be cautious with Germany, and his country’s defense program should be reviewed in light of the new situation.

What changes and preparation Chamberlain had come up with in March, he seemed to have forgotten it all come September. On 30 September 1938, Great Britain and France yet again appeased Germany, when Hitler demanded that the Sudetenland must be ceased to his Reich. This demand was backed by a threat of war. The Munich Agreement, lamented by the Czechs as “About us, Without us”, permitted Germany to annex a portion of Czechoslovakia, dubbed Sudetenland, which was inhabited by a majority of German speakers and housed the industrial and financial might of Czechoslovakia. The Munich Agreement, or Munich Betrayal as it is ridiculed in Czech Republic till this day, was signed by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, France Prime Minister Edouard Daladier, Reichsfuhrer Adolf Hitler and Prime Minister Benito Mussolini. The international community was overjoyed to see a war in Europe averted. Both Daladier and Chamberlain were cheered by large demonstrations when they returned home.¹²⁴ Edouard Daladier remarked: “Is it necessary that three million Frenchmen, all the youth of our universities, of our schools, of our countryside and of our factories, be sacrificed to maintain three million Germans under Czech sovereignty?”¹²⁵ It turns out about 600,000 French and 450,000 Brits would die by 1945.¹²⁶

¹²² 2014. *Letters: war is the ultimate failure of diplomacy*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letters/letters-war-is-the-ultimate-failure-of-diplomacy-9756323.html>

¹²³ <http://www.gcsehistory.org.uk/modernworld/appeasement/anschluss.htm>

¹²⁴ <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0930.html#article>

¹²⁵ Eugene Davidson. 1996. *The Unmaking of Adolf Hitler*. University of Colombia Press. pg. 198

¹²⁶ <https://ww2db.com/country/France>

We are aware that it is easy to criticize history in the luxury of hindsight, but it is the undeniable fact that the complacency of Western Europe – the perceived leaders of the world at that time – was one contributing factor that allowed Nazi Germany to grow unchecked. The German rearmament process initially started out as a clandestine operation, until it was exposed to the world by Carl von Ossietzky between 1929-1931.¹²⁷ For his efforts, Ossietzky was branded a traitor to the German nation and subjected to imprisonment until his death in 1938, three years after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Ossietzky's warning alarmed the British, who immediately responded with a military build-up of their own. The response did not go further than that. This behavior can be explained thusly: Great Britain intended to exploit anticommunist Germany as a bulwark against the emerging USSR.

Hitler, on the other hand, knew that the Western powers were willing to appease to his demands, so he freely pushed for outrageous concessions from France and Britain, knowing full well that both powers were unwilling to risk war with his powerful Reich. This leniency provided the perfect opportunity for Germany to pursue its aggressive aspirations, and to build the mightiest fighting force west of the Volga. Historians and politicians still debate to this day whether to condemn Chamberlain's appeasement policy, or to accept that both Britain and France had no alternatives and only sought to protect their own citizens and national interest. Regardless, it is clear that both Great Britain and France could have done much more regarding the German question during the two decades after WW I. The point here is not to criticize the terms written in the Treaty of Versailles, however. The treaty was signed and all the victorious parties agreed to impose their will on defeated Germany. Yet said victorious parties demonstrated a gross neglect on their duties as victors. What we want to focus on is the lack of commitment from France and Britain to enforce those terms and see to it that their victors' will remains imposed on their vanquished, ie. Germany. Although Hitler announced that he would break the Treaty of Versailles and expand his army to 500,000 soldiers (five times the amount Germany was allowed to have), and that the Luftwaffe had 800 planes in 1935, his plan for militarizing Germany had already been underway in 1933.¹²⁸ This means the Western powers had had two years to verify what had been a rumor. British intelligence on German developments in the 1930s was handled by the Military Intelligence Directorate of the War Office. Wesley K. Wark, in his book *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* writes that during Hitler's first two reigning years, the War Office painted a picture of the German army's future growth based on its current stable state.¹²⁹ Wark calls this picture flawed due to various reasons. First, the War Office placed too much confidence on Hitler's promise that the German army would not expand beyond 36 divisions. Second, British intelligence assumed too much and over-emphasized "triumph of the army over the party in the Röhm purge." Lastly, Wark states that the War Office "erred in supposing that the early period of German rearmament could be used as a good guide for the pace of future expansion."

We can clearly see that British intelligence on Germany in this period was based largely on assumptions, predictions and estimations, all of which are too vague to formulate an actionable course for policymakers. Had MI branch focused less on predictions, and been more occupied

¹²⁷ Carl von Ossietzky. Biographical. Nobel Prize.

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1935/ossietzky-bio.html

¹²⁸ Lessons Learned: Hitler's Rearmament of Germany. Council on Foreign Relations. Online video:

<https://www.cfr.org/explainer-video/lessons-learned-hitlers-rearmament-germany>

¹²⁹ Wesley K. Wark. 1985. *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939*. Cornell University Press. pgs. 85-86

with seeking actual facts, British policymakers might have enjoyed the privilege of having a clearer picture of German army developments presented before them. According the Wark, this information deficiency also extended to the British air intelligence efforts. The British Air Intelligence Directorate admitted that it did not have reliable information on all aspects of the Luftwaffe: its aircraft ranges and bomb-carrying capacities, its organizational strength, structure, armaments, and other vital characteristics.¹³⁰ We believe these insufficiencies can be addressed by putting more efforts in clandestine operations. The German betrayal of the Treaty of Versailles was in fact a clandestine op that lasted for two years. Instead of making assumptions, both the Air Intelligence and the Military Intelligence Directorates would have been better off launching clandestine and covert operations into German soil and building a network of spies and operatives specializing in human and image intelligence, as well as creating a comprehensive “kill list” for all the vital personae in the German military and political hierarchy. This mass killing program should be held in reserve in case Germany failed to avert its militaristic course and decided to fully commit to pursuing its aggressive goals, thus threatening Britain’s national interest. Alongside the kill list, Britain should have dedicated its efforts into training and equipping teams of specialists whose tasks were to execute every name on the list once given the order. It is imperative that these professional assassins be able to live off the lands and survive without logistical support from the British government. They should also be well-versed in guerilla warfare and organizing resistance efforts across the European theater once the worst-case scenario materialized.

c. Rogue states/actors

Negotiation with terrorists is not as straightforward as it first seems. While it’s true that Western governments have a standard policy of non-negotiation with terrorists, there are cases where the United Kingdom and the United States broke these principles. For example, the United Kingdom maintained a back channel with the Irish Republican Army even after the 1991 attack on Downing Street 10, which nearly wiped out the British cabinet.¹³¹ The United States under Obama’s administration negotiated with the Taliban for the release of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for five high ranking officials of the Taliban government, who had been held in Guantanamo Bay indefinitely without charges.¹³² Obama’s United States embraced the idea of negotiating with terrorists more openly. In his inauguration speech, he spoke to leaders of stateless rogue arties and non-state terror groups, assuring them that. “We will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fists.”¹³³ Obama diverged from the accepted form of foreign policies in the sense that his administration talked to North Korea and Taliban, nearly completed the historical US-Iran nuclear deal, and sent American diplomats to meet with Hamas.¹³⁴ Obama’s openness towards negotiation made himself a target for criticisms, most notably from George W. Bush, who told Israel’s parliament in March 2008. “Some seem to believe that we should negotiate with the terrorists and radicals, as if some ingenious argument will persuade them they have been wrong all the time. We have heard of this foolish delusion before. As Nazi

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Peter R. Neumann. 2007. Negotiating with Terrorists: Dirty Deals.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2007-01-01/negotiating-terrorists>

¹³² Andy Worthington. 2012. <http://www.andyworthington.co.uk/2012/03/23/the-taliban-five-and-the-forgotten-afghan-prisoners-in-guantanamo/>

¹³³ Obama’s Inaugural Speech. 2009. NY Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html>

¹³⁴ Michael Rubin. 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-high-price-of-negotiating-with-bad-guys/2014/02/14/51a0fabe-933b-11e3-84e1-27626c5ef5fb_story.html?utm_term=.2399b703a2ad

tanks crossed into Poland in 1939, an American senator declared. ‘Lord, if I could only have talked to Hitler, all of this might have been avoided.’ We have an obligation to call this what it is: the false comfort of appeasement.”¹³⁵

Rogue states and actors are labelled ‘rogue’ because they do not conform to international norms and laws, or their forms of governance fail to meet certain criteria. Because they have no need to follow the base model that has become acceptable in the West, their behavior can be difficult to predict by Western thinkers, policymakers and leaders. Like any state, rogue states and actors also pursue their own interest and seek to secure their survival. Their methods of achieving those ends, however, are often considered either too violent or too extreme.

This raises a valid concern regarding negotiating with these parties: just because they are talking does not mean they are honest about it. Rogue states secure their interest and survival via subterfuge and cheating. This makes disarmament talks difficult to enforce since they can rearm themselves in secret, thus making previous efforts (which could take years to build) worthless. A good example of this futility is the Six-Party Talks, led by the United States under George W. Bush in August 2003. The talks were launched to peacefully resolve the nuclear question in the Korean Peninsula and move towards de-nuclearizing North Korea, which had withdrawn from the NPT in April 2003.¹³⁶ In April 2009, six years into the talks, North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from all negotiations, and it would restart its nuclear enrichment program in order to enhance its deterrent capabilities.¹³⁷ These six years represented a colossal waste of time and effort. The United States was too optimistic in its hopes and overstated the DPRK’s honesty. Kissinger, when asked about the US’ dealings with the Soviet Union, states. “When talks become their own objective, they are at the mercy of the party most prepared to break them off.”¹³⁸

North Korea has demonstrated that it is willing to break treaties and play outside of international laws if such behaviors serve its national interest. This makes negotiating with the DPRK’s leadership an exercise full of uncertainties. North Korea’s behavior has been described as “irrational” by South Korean President Moon Jae-In,¹³⁹ as well as various news outlets. Though it constantly hides its intention, breaks away from signed treaties, threatens nuclear wars and arms its nuclear arsenal despite international condemnation, its conducts are by no means crazy or irrational. Its endgame is still survival: survival of the Kim dynasty, survival of its Juche ideology, and survival of its totalitarian regime in a world full of democracies. It chooses to utter bombastic words and caustic threats because it knows that is the best way to have the attention and caution from the United States, South Korea and Japan. For its own interest and survival, North Korea must rationally cheat, threaten and engage in brinkmanship, because those are the best course of action for them to take. If we accept this statement, then North Korea’s behavior no longer seems unpredictable. Instead of asking North Korea to sign treaties, we can ask what North Korean leadership wants, what we can do to hurt them the most, and what action they will take to ensure their interest and survival. This thinking also extends to other rogue state actors and non-state actors. Rogue actors like North Korea, Iran, Hamas,

¹³⁵ 2008. Obama attacks Bush over Iran Barb. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7403386.stm>

¹³⁶ North Korea’s withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. American Society of International Law. Online: <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/8/issue/2/north-koreas-withdrawal-nuclear-nonproliferation-treaty>

¹³⁷ The Six Parties Talks at a Glance. Armscontrol.org. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/6partytalks>

¹³⁸ Michael Rubin. 2015. Dancing with the Devil: The Perils of Engaging Rogue Regimes. Introduction: Why Engage? Encounter Books.

¹³⁹ Leo Byrne. 2017. <https://www.nknews.org/2017/06/north-korea-an-irrational-regime-moon/>

Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, etc. are hard to predict because they do not conform to any standardized norms in international politics. Diplomacy and negotiation alone do not guarantee anything since they have an incentive to cheat on deals and withdraw from treaties mid-way. However, with sufficient intelligence on their internal doings, we can paint a clearer picture on our own, and thereby develop our secondary plan in case they decide to go rogue on a promise. This again requires the subtle touch of intelligence agencies. Former NSA analyst John R. Schindler calls North Korea a “black hole” for US intelligence,¹⁴⁰ and rightly so: the United States has a robust network of satellites that can provide hints on certain activities north of the DMZ, but those images cannot tell the whole picture. You need to add HUMINT and SIGINT into the mix as well. Unfortunately, the US intelligence community has little means to recruit and turn North Korean diplomats, and the National Security Agency cannot tap into Pyongyang’s communications since the lines are buried underground and cell phones are virtually non-existent there.

Whether the United States’ attempt at de-nuclearizing North Korea proves to work is yet to be seen. South Korea only seriously mapped out a full scale covert operation against its northern neighbor in September 2017, shortly after North Korea had conducted its sixth nuclear test.¹⁴¹ The so-called “decapitation” unit consists of 1,000 men and was tasked with eliminating the DPRK’s top officials once given the order. The point here is to create a credible deterrence: to “make Kim Jong-Un fear for his life,” so claimed three-star general Shin Won-sik.¹⁴² Despite its grandiose objective, this decapitation unit stays woefully underfunded and inoperable, with a budget of \$310,000 (to be expanded to \$24 million in the future) and no drones or low-flying aircraft to its name. South Korea has demonstrated that it has begun to consider the prospect of launching a decapitation strike on North Korea, but its will remains questionable. An assassination campaign of this massive scale will require a concerted effort across all special forces branches of the ROK Armed Forces and certainly intelligence support from the United States. As of early 2018, the unit was considered unfit for action, therefore it has not fulfilled its purpose: to deter Kim Jong-un and make him fear for his life. The ideal time to form this decapitation unit was 2003, when North Korea withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty when the United States, South Korea, Russia, Japan, China sat together to find a peaceful resolution to the North Korean question. Was it naïve of the United States and South Korea to expect Kim Jong-il to enter the negotiation in good faith? We believe it was. South Korea wasted about fourteen years trying to engage and dialogue with its troublesome neighbor. Fourteen years it will never get back.

The formation of a decapitation unit would be an effective low-cost deterrence for one reason: much of North Korea’s spirit rests on the Kim dynasty, and Kim Jong-il demonstrated that he was paranoid for his life. If the decapitation unit had been formed in the shadows as the six-party talks progressed, it would certainly have changed Kim Jong-il’s behavior by forcing him to decide between his nuclear dream and the uncertainties of his life. Even if it had not had that effect, a functional assassination force would have offered South Korea and the US more options to work with: a plan B, so to speak. From South Korea’s side, much could be done in

¹⁴⁰ John R. Schindler. 2017. Why North Korea is a Black Hole for US Intelligence.

<http://observer.com/2017/04/north-korea-missile-test-cia/>

¹⁴¹ Jon Sharman. 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/south-korea-decapitation-unit-kim-jong-un-overthrow-north-korea-latest-a8097016.html>

¹⁴² Daniel Brown. 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.com/south-korea-decapitation-unit-take-out-kim-jong-un-2017-12>

fourteen years. A special operations command for targeted killing missions in North Korea could have been created to organize and execute the assassination efforts. An intelligence task force could have been formed to recruit HUMINT and funnel SIGINT and IMINT to the command center, and work in tandem with US intelligence agencies in order to peer through the black hole that was North Korea, with the goal of making a comprehensive kill list, locating the targets and structuring plans of attacks and escapes for field operatives. If South Korean government had demonstrated its will to commit to this course of action earlier, the Special Warfare Command of the ROK Army would have developed differently. Its purpose would have rested entirely on decapitating North Korea, including its military and political leadership, its rocket and artillery forces, and its nuclear arsenal. Its special forces units would have been specifically trained to raid Pyongyang and North Korea nuclear facilities, as well as to neutralize key high-value targets. This newly-formed decapitation unit will have to build up its equipment, structure its line of command, and organize intelligence support both at home and abroad, before it can effectively launch its mass killing campaign past the DMZ. A campaign this large and extensive will require time, resources, manpower and effort.

3. Advantages of Assassination/Targeted Killing/Covert Operations

Assassination and targeted killing, or its broader umbrella term, covert operation, are versatile tools in a statesman's arsenal. More often than not, they are conducted by the same people in the special operations forces. Henry Kissinger considered covert operations to be a means to pursue policy goals and thought of them as actions that are "in the gray area between formal diplomacy and military intervention."¹⁴³ They can enhance a country's war fighting capability by eliminating the military and political leadership of its enemies. They can secure a country's peace and security by killing potentially dangerous individuals who might pose harm to its citizens. They go where diplomacy cannot and does not venture to the point of no return like war tends to do. They can be used to enhance a state's diplomatic and warfighting capabilities. In peace, covert operations provide policy-makers with intelligence from target states, while assassination deals with defectors and enemies abroad. In war, covert operations have a wide variety of uses, including guerilla warfare, paramilitary training, sponsoring coup d'état, support resistance movements, and much more; in the same scenario, assassination can provide crucial decapitation strikes against the enemy to weaken his ability to mount a resistance. Lastly, covert operations can further a state's interest in the form of deception. For example, sometimes national interest demands a war be launched against a certain country, but there is no pretext to declare war on anyone. This is where false flag operations shine. Let us take a look at one historical example from 1931, when the Empire of Japan engineered the Mukden Incident as a casus bello for invading Manchuria.¹⁴⁴ The plan was simple: Japanese soldiers planted dynamites on a railway line operated by Japan's South Manchuria Railway and triggered an explosion so weak that it failed to damage the track, leaving the ongoing train intact. Regardless, the Imperial Japanese Army blamed Chinese dissidents for the act and responded with artillery strikes which were soon followed by an invasion. The fact that Japan lost China and the war is another matter, but we cannot deny that this covert operation served its purpose. It justified the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, which functioned as an important power base from which the Japanese Army would begin its conquest of Beijing, Shanghai and Nanking.

¹⁴³ LtC Gordon C. Bonham. 1999. Covert Action: Cold War Dinosaur or Tool for the 21st Century.

<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a443791.pdf>

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Mukden-Incident>

Sun-Tzu wrote: All warfare is based on deception,¹⁴⁵ and nothing in a statesman's arsenal can deceive as well as covert operations.

Due to its specialized nature, a targeted killing operation can be launched at a moment's notice and can execute a state leader's order faster than any other tools at his disposal. This quickness, flexibility and ruthless efficiency are the result of the assassins themselves. In the modern age, the top echelon of a state's assassins is most certainly consisted of special forces units. Special forces are better trained and better equipped than conventional warfighters and having endured the gruesome selection process prior to being admitted into their units, they also possess immense will and morale. They are trained to operate in any condition, and their versatile skillset allows them to function in circumstances that prevent a conventional army from advancing. A modern-day assassin is not only a master in the art of killing, but must also be an expert in hostage rescue, intelligence gathering, sabotage and forward reconnaissance.

Hostage rescue is an interesting issue. Here, a hostage-taker holds a human bargaining chip in order to force an authority to enter a negotiation. The hostage-taker's goal here is to compel the authority to satisfy his demands, which can come in the form of ransom, exchange of prisoners, withdrawal of troops, territorial concession, and so on. Usually, the authority will open a communication channel with the hostage-taker, though the intention varies: the dialogue can either be a genuine attempt at reaching a satisfying conclusion for both sides, or it can be a delaying tactic until such a time as the authority comes to a different solution. Should the authority have the military capacity, he can consider launching a rescue operation using his most elite troops: special forces. Such a rescue operation is usually launched when all negotiations fail and the authority deems no diplomatic solution can be reached with the abductor. Rescue operations carry extreme risks for both hostages and rescuers. Rescuers are not here to vaporize all hostiles: they have to be careful not to cause collateral damage to hostages, so their freedom in combat is restricted.

As seen in Operation Eagle Claw,¹⁴⁶ a failed rescue attempt has the potential to cause catastrophic damage, politically and militarily. A successful rescue operation, however, brings bountiful benefits to the authority: the safety of his hostages, the annihilation of his enemies and the political popularity that comes along later. One spectacular example is Operation Thunderbolt¹⁴⁷ (which Operation Eagle Claw tried to imitate) launched by Israeli special forces in 1976. On 27 June, an Air France passenger aircraft with 247 passengers and 12 crew was hijacked by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-External Operations. The hijackers demanded the release of 40 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel, and other affiliated prisoners held in other countries, in exchange for the hostages.¹⁴⁸ Operation Thunderbolt was an astounding success. It resulted in 102 out of 106 hostages rescued (other 148 non-Israeli hostages had been released and flown to Paris a few days earlier),¹⁴⁹ and one

¹⁴⁵ Sun-Tzu. *The Art of War*.

¹⁴⁶ Charles Tustin Kamps. 2006. Operation Eagle Claw: The Iran Hostage Rescue Mission. <http://www.au.af.mil/au/afri/aspj/apjinternational/apj-s/2006/3tri06/kampseng.html>

¹⁴⁷ Ben Shepard. 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/19/operation-thunderbolt-flight-139-raid-entebbe-review-saul-david>

¹⁴⁸ 1976. *Hijacking of Air France's Airbus...* Keesing's Word Events, vol. 22. <http://web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/1377-1976-08-KS-a-RCW.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Entebbe Thirty Years On. http://www.jewishtelegraph.com/enteb_1.html

dead Israeli commando. The hostage-takers took heavy casualties, with all seven hijackers dead, along with an additional 20 Ugandan soldiers.¹⁵⁰

Due to its secret nature, covert operations are undemocratic. This in itself can be an advantage, or a disadvantage, depending on how we look at it. Since this section deals with the advantages of such actions, let us examine the issue further. Whether we like it or not, there are times when one's national interest, the survival and security of one's state demand that someone somewhere must die. This puts a state leader in a dilemma. Such an extrajudicial killing operation will certainly violate domestic laws of the target country. In some cases, it will also contradict international law. Its functions are fundamentally different than almost all activities of a democratic government in the sense that it ignores all democratic values. This means the general public is excluded from participating in the decision-making process and it is extremely difficult for the public to pinpoint responsibility. A leader can use these factors to empower the interest of his state. Being undemocratic, a covert operation is free from the lengthy process of voting and all sorts of paperwork and constraints. This, coupled with the elite status of special forces, means a covert operation allows a state to exert its influence far faster and deeper than any other tools available. According to the Congressional Research Service's report to the US Congress in 1996, proponents of covert operations often cite these following arguments:¹⁵¹

1. A covert operation lets the United States to extend its influence and support its allies without acknowledging its role. This is useful when the US wishes to hide its identity and camouflage its actions so as to not alert hostile countries to begin counteract US interest.
2. A covert operation, if successful, can save money, avert wars and prevent losses of life.
3. A covert operation renders the public ignorant and allows the US to participate in sensitive actions that would not be possible with extensive public knowledge.
4. Paramilitary operations can go where conventional US forces cannot (due to international political consequences).
5. Operations spearheaded by the CIA are built on an already existing administrative structure, with experienced individuals trained for the right tasks. This is better than establishing ad hoc initiatives with untrained persons.

4. Disadvantages of Assassination/Targeted killing/Covert operations

Assassination is a dishonest practice. This alone makes it an easy target for worldwide condemnation. International jurists, such as Hugo Grotius, argued against assassination practices, calling it treacherous. Grotius believed that any other forms of killing conducted outside a battlefield will lead to a decay in international security.¹⁵² In 1976, US President Gerald R. Ford issued Executive Order 11905, which outright banned the practice of political assassination.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/4/newsid_2786000/2786967.stm

¹⁵¹ Covert Operation: An Effective Instrument of US Foreign Policy? CRS Report for Congress. Online: <http://congressionalresearch.com/96-844/document.php?study=Covert+Action+An+Effective+Instrument+of+U.S.+Foreign+Policy>

¹⁵² Eric Patterson, Teresa Casale. 2006. *Targeting Terror: The Ethical and Practical Implications of Targeted Killing*, pg. 640. International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-intelligence, vol. 18, pgs. 638-652. DOI: 10.1080/08850600590945407.

¹⁵³ <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/speeches/760110e.asp>

In their article *Targeting Terror: The Ethical and Practical Implications of Targeted Killing*, Patterson and Casale point out that criticisms against assassination (and targeted killing by extension) often bring up one issue: assassination is immoral. To these critics, assassination is politically motivated murder and stands beyond the conventions of war and the boundary of morality. The United States remains by far the most aggressive pursuer of targeted killing, but as critics have pointed out, these practices might undermine the ethical basis of its foreign policy, which emphasizes human rights and democratic values. Though we have previously established that this thesis does not concern itself with the question of morality and ethics, it is useful not to ignore the ethical dimension entirely. Even if we would like to disregard the ethical dimension, the rest of the world would not. A foreign policy, if it were to be successful in the long run, has to consider public support and approval. As Jeffrey Claburn pointed out in his article *Public constraints on assassination as an instrument of US foreign policy*, assassination is regarded as “distasteful, immoral and unacceptable.”¹⁵⁴ This means the general public is unlikely to wholeheartedly endorse an assassination operation, leading intelligence agencies to opt for the choice to override the democratic decision-making process entirely and operate ‘in the shadows’ instead. This, again, can both be an advantage and a disadvantage, with the disadvantage here being that intelligence agencies have to invest into additional measures to avoid public scrutiny, even though their actions are meant to enhance their country’s power, security and national interest.

Patterson and Casale also bring up another category of argument against assassination and targeted killing, and it revolves around pragmatic questions. First, critics argue that assassination is not practical: it has a high failure rate, does not remain secret for long, and the results are impossible to predict. Second, assassination carries its own consequences. Terrorists and rogue states are likely to respond in kind to avenge their assassinated leaders. Chalmers Johnson called the decapitation strikes launched by the US in the Middle East in 2003 “thuggish” and warned that they would only turn international opinion against the Bush administration.¹⁵⁵ Ronan Bergman echoed a similar sentiment in his article *How Israel won a War but Paid a High Moral Price*.¹⁵⁶ In summary, Bergman believed Israel’s targeted killing campaign was a “tactical victory but a strategic defeat that further marginalized and delegitimized Israel in the eyes of the world.”¹⁵⁷ The cost of Israel’s targeted killings included innocent Palestinians who died as collateral damage by the hundreds, and the thousands that survived were wounded or disabled for life. Another pragmatic issue with assassination and targeted killing was raised by Stephanie Carvin in the article *The Trouble with Targeted Killing*, in which she claims that targeted killing is an “ineffective tool for stopping terrorism,” and quotes Jenna Jordan’s argument: “the marginal utility for decapitation is actually negative.”¹⁵⁸ We can take a look at the Israeli assassination campaign between 1972 and 1974 which was launched in retaliation against the murder of Israeli athletes in the Munich Olympics of 1972. According to Brian Michael Jenkins in his 1987 paper for the RAND Corporation, the

¹⁵⁴ Jeffrey Claburn. 1994. *Public Constraints on Assassination as an Instrument of US Foreign Policy*, pg. 97. International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, volume 7, issue 1, pgs. 97-109. DOI: 10.1080/08850609408435238

¹⁵⁵ Chalmers Johnson. 2003. https://www.alternet.org/story/17202/assassins_r_us

¹⁵⁶ Ronan Bergman. 2018. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/03/how-israel-won-the-war-against-suicide-bombers-but-lost-its-moral-compass-ronen-bergman/>

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Stephanie Carvin. 2012. The Trouble with Targeted Killing. *Security Studies*, 21:3, 529-555. DOI: 10.1080/09636412.2012.706513

assassinations “may have disrupted terrorist operations but the effects were temporary... Israelis and Jews are still frequent targets of terrorists worldwide.”¹⁵⁹ In conclusion, Jenkins states that “assassination has no place in America’s arsenal.”¹⁶⁰

In the same report for the US Congress listed sub-Section 3 above, the arguments against covert operations were listed as follows:¹⁶¹

1. Covert operations easily result in deaths. They jeopardize the inherent values of the United States (democracy, human rights) the United States’ commitment to international law.
2. Covert operations are taken without informed debates in Congress. This undermines the checks and balances built into the Constitution.
3. Covert operations cannot remain secret forever and their promise of low risk, low cost and controlled results is “deceptively attractive.”
4. Covert operations undermine international law by allowing the US to interfere in the development of foreign countries against their interest.
5. Covert operations represent secret decision-making, which has no public accountability. This can damage grander goals of US national security policy.

5. The Rejected Utilities of Assassination and its Resurgence in the 2000s

Assassination, if we are to focus solely on its pragmatic side, clearly has its own utilities in war and peace. Why then, was assassination banned and rejected throughout the 17th century till today? The topic of assassination was touched upon in the 17th and 18th century scholars and jurists such as Alberico Gentili, Hugo Grotius, and Vattel. Alberico Gentili condemned assassination and rejected the idea of killing one state leader so that many others may live because a proliferation of such thinking would result in injustice and dishonor.¹⁶² Vattel and Rousseau both agreed that the use of poisoners and assassins were against customary and natural laws.¹⁶³ The United States further codified the conducts of war in the 1863 Lieber Code, which stated. “Civilized nations would look with horror upon offers or rewards for the assassination of enemies as a relapse into barbarism.”¹⁶⁴ The Hague Regulations of 1907 further prohibited the use of assassination under international law.¹⁶⁵ Traditionally, it was illegal to target heads of states during peace or war. The traditional premises also said only heads of states had the rights to wage wars.

This provided us with the first explanation as to why assassination was rejected despite its utilities. We believe it has to do with state leaders’ self-preservation and survival. Political and military assassination are decapitation in nature. The targets were often kings, emperors,

¹⁵⁹ Brian Michael Jenkins. 1987. Should Our Arsenal Against Terrorism Include Assassination? Online: <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2008/P7303.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ <http://congressionalresearch.com/96-844/document.php?study=Covert+Action+An+Effective+Instrument+of+U.S.+Foreign+Policy>

¹⁶² Daniel B. Pickard. Legalizing Assassination? Terrorism, the CIA and International Law, pg. 14. Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law, vol. 30, no. 1. Online: <http://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1372&context=gjicl>

¹⁶³ Daniel B. Pickard. Legalizing Assassination? pg. 16.

¹⁶⁴ Daniel B. Pickard. Legalizing Assassination? pg. 17.

¹⁶⁵ Article 23b of the Hague Convention of 1907. Quote: “It is especially forbidden...to kill or wound treacherously individuals belonging to the hostile nation or army.” <https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~lberes/assaspol.html>

generals, and so on. So long as assassination remained the norm, state leaders were not safe. It was rational for them to enforce the norm against practices that specifically designed to harm them. Before then, assassins were deterred from killing monarchs by the severity of the punishments, as seen in the gruesome manners in which failed assassins were executed (Balthasar Gerard, who killed William the Silent, for example, had his hand burned off with red hot iron, his flesh torn off from his bones in six different places, and was disemboweled alive).¹⁶⁶ With a touch of cynicism, we can deduce one possible reason as to why it was better for state leaders to settle their differences via warfare instead of assassination. For rational monarchs, it was better to let the farmers, peasants and the rest of the population die in the fields than to be wary of, and be killed by an assassin's dagger.

The second reason for the rejection of assassination was the way European nations rearranged themselves in the aftermath of the 30 years war in 1648. The Westphalian Peace was considered to be the beginning of an international system that emphasizes a state's rights over its own sovereignty.¹⁶⁷ From this point onwards, Europe was slowly transitioning from the Hobbesian system, which said that states were only interested in their own survival and saw one another as enemies to be annihilated, to the Lockean system, which acknowledged that states could go to war, but as rivals instead of enemies, and there could always be negotiations and settlements after conflicts.¹⁶⁸ From this perspective, it was in the benefit of sovereign states to be perceived as trustworthy and just in order for any cooperation and negotiation to occur. A state employing assassination and other treacherous means would quickly become an outcast in the international arena. States would like to settle their differences via diplomatic and military means, and such negotiations eventually required heads of states talking directly or indirectly. A state leader assassinating another state leader would make little sense as it would undoubtedly create an immediate antagonism that prevented any further talk.

Despite international condemnation for three centuries, the norm against assassination has changed. The United States routinely employs targeted killing in its War on Terror, or rather the War on Terror would not have been possible without targeted killing. Israel can be considered the forerunner of modern assassination campaigns and continues to run one of the world's most prolific killing system. Tel-Aviv uses assassination as deterrence, vengeance, and a war-fighting tactic. Russia echoes its KGB days in its murder of dissidents abroad as well as the way it deals with its internal troublemakers. With the advent of technology and suitable targets, it can be argued that the world of today is much more permissive of assassination than the world of Grotius and Gentili. In Section III, we will examine the three super and great powers of assassination, ie. The United States, Israel and Russia, and explore the *How* and the *When* of targeted killing introduced earlier (how they do it, why they do it, when they do it, and under what circumstances they can do it), and whenever possible, provide empirical cases to study their conducts, operations and tactics. We will also take a look at the unique way each country normalizes assassination and makes it acceptable in the 21st century. After all, if

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.executedtoday.com/2013/07/14/1584-balthasar-gerard-william-the-silent/>

¹⁶⁷ Stephane Beaulac. The Westphalian Model in Defining International Law: Challenging the Myth. Introduction. Australian Journal of Legal History. Online: <http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AJLH/2004/9.html>

¹⁶⁸ Locke and IR. <http://my.ilstu.edu/~jawebbe/POS%20151/locke.htm>

assassination is to be an effective instrument of one's foreign policy, one must first find a way to justify its use.

Section III: Modern States and Assassination: How do States Kill their Enemies? When and Under What Circumstances Can They Do It?

Humanity has gone from sticks and stones to swords and daggers to muskets and cannons to polonium-210 and missile-carrying drones and semtex and nerve agents. An assassin now has a wide range of options to finish his target. He has more weapons at his disposal and more means to hide his actions. He can be anywhere in the world in less than 24 hours, and in some cases, he does not need to leave his chair at all. Though technology has given assassins more options to deliver death to their targets, the motives behind their kills remain the same. They can be religion, politics, revenge, money, military, and so on. In this section, we are going to take a look at the way modern states conduct a kill and the way they laid the foundation to ensure acceptable lifespans of their targeted killing campaigns. Though there are many countries in the world that employ assassination, we are only interested in super and great powers of assassination. These assassination powers are as follows: The United States, the Russian Federation, and the State of Israel.

In this thesis, we have mentioned assassination and targeted killing in tandem without providing a thorough definition for the terms. William C. Banks and Peter Raven-Hansen in their article *Targeted Killing and Assassination: the US Legal Framework* admits that there are different interpretations for targeted killing and assassination, citing quotes from various authors, who claim that assassination is “murder and therefore unlawful,” or “assassination is not always murder,”; while others prefer to use the term assassination neutrally to include lawful killing.¹⁶⁹ In the same article, Banks and Raven-Hansen provide their own definition of assassination. In their words, assassination is unlawful killing, and targeted killing is lawful under US laws. It is then crucial to tell when a premediated killing of an individual (which is understood as targeted killing) is legal, and when it is illegal assassination. The answer depends on which legal framework we are operating with. Is the state at war or peace? To answer this question, we will cite from a monograph written by US Army MAJ Matthew J. Machon, titled *Targeted Killing as an Element of US Foreign Policy in the War on Terror*.¹⁷⁰ According to Machon, under the American law of armed conflict, much of killing is lawful, but killing by treacherous means is unlawful, thereby constituting as assassination. Under Article 37 of the Geneva Conventions, treacherous and perfidious acts are defined as “acts inviting confidence of an adversary to lead them to believe that they are entitled to, or are obliged to accord, protection under the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, with the intent to betray that confidence.”¹⁷¹ This means for wartime killing to be considered an act of assassination (illegal), it must be accomplished through treachery. If the law of war is not violated, it is legal killing. Peacetime assassination is defined by Machon as an act of murder of a “specifically targeted individual for political purposes.”¹⁷² Banks and Raven-Hansen explored the theme further by stressing that peacetime killing is legal under the criminal law framework. In this scenario, judicial killing (capital punishments) are legal if the pre-conditions and constitutional procedures have been

¹⁶⁹ William C. Banks. Peter Raven-Hansen. Targeted Killing and Assassination: the US Legal Framework. University of Pennsylvania. Online:

<https://www.law.upenn.edu/institutes/cerl/conferences/targetedkilling/papers/BanksRavenHansenLegalFramework.pdf>

¹⁷⁰ MAJ Matthew M. Machon. *Targeted Killing as an Element of US Foreign Policy in the War on Terror*. School of Advanced Military Studies. Fort Leavenworth. Online: <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/machon.pdf>

¹⁷¹ ICRC. Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/WebART/470-750046?OpenDocument>

¹⁷² Machon, pg. 14.

met. Extra-judicial killing sanction by governments would be legal if pursued in “self-defense or defense of others.”¹⁷³

In short, targeted killing is a term that has been developed most rigorously under the Bush and Obama administrations in order to justify the use of lethal force against enemies of the United States under domestic and international law.¹⁷⁴ The term ‘assassination’ itself has gained a pejorative connotation associated with the murder of Archduke Ferdinand, US Presidents Abraham Lincoln and J. F. Kennedy, Julius Caesar, and so on. According to Patterson and Casale, international attempts to condemn assassination probably started during the Thirty Years War¹⁷⁵ and was gradually developed and codified into international law today. Even though assassination is banned and held in contempt, the need for executing one’s target outside of battlefields remains. War is a costly venture and diplomacy cannot settle all differences. Hence, all the attempts to rewrite, reframe and euphemize assassination into targeted killing. Whatever the justification the United States uses matters little to this thesis. We think the differences between assassination and targeted killing are largely pedantic, philosophical, and outright unnecessary. A kill is a kill, no matter what justification one uses. This sentiment is echoed by Jeremy Scahill in his book *The Assassination Complex*, where he writes. “Congress has avoided legislating or even defining the term ‘assassination’. This has allowed proponents of the drone wars to rebrand assassinations with more palatable characterizations, such as the term du jour, ‘targeted killings’.”¹⁷⁶

However, we acknowledge that transforming assassination into targeted killing does serve one pragmatic purpose, and that is it allows for great powers of assassination to execute their enemies while avoiding international scrutiny (to a certain degree). If the world abhors assassination and tolerates targeted killing, so be it. In this section, we will explore both targeted killing and assassination equally. The United States and Israel are both known to operate targeted killing campaigns extensively, while Russia has fewer qualms regarding assassination. We believe we ought to bring up both issues in order to provide an insight into the way modern states use these two forms of deaths – and the construction of the permissive norm thereof – to secure their interest, security and power.

Simon Frankel Pratt in his article *The Logic of Military Assassination* identifies 7 purposes of assassination in warfare. 1) To reduce the enemy’s political capabilities by decapitating his political leaders, speakers, motivators, activists, lawyers, and prominent figures. 2) To reduce the enemy’s military capabilities by decapitating his generals, officers, field commanders and intelligence assets. 3) Deterrence by inspiring a sense of fear into the enemy and punish his wrongdoings against us. 4) Incapacitate the enemy by eliminating his military assets. 5) Annihilate the enemy by wiping him out completely. 6) To support our political negotiations in case our enemy’s faction is splintered into “doves” and “hawks”; in this case, weakening the radical hawks can empower the doves, whose interest aligns with us more. 7) To boost our morale by serving justice to our enemy.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Banks, Raven-Hansen, pg. 671

¹⁷⁴ Jonathan Masters. 2013. *Targeted Killings*. <https://www.cfr.org/background/targeted-killings>

¹⁷⁵ Patterson, Casale. *Targeting Terror*, pg. 639

¹⁷⁶ Jeremy Scahill. 2017. *The Assassination Complex*. Chapter: The Drone Legacy, pg. 1. Simon & Schuster. ISBN-10: 1501144146

¹⁷⁷ Based on: Simon Frankel Pratt. 2015. *The Logic of Military Assassination*. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*. 26:1, 3-24, pgs. 8-9. DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2014.959769

While assassination has its practical purposes, and assassins and spies have been romanticized in countless movies, novels, and games as something akin to super soldiers, this does not mean assassination is an all-powerful instrument of foreign and internal policies. Any state wishing to use assassination to its advantage must consider both the diplomatic cost of conducting a practice that is considered controversial, cowardly, and duplicitous under current international law and the gains from which it might benefit. Not all states have the capacity to wield assassination to the point of systematically implementing it into its arsenal of weapons for foreign and internal policies. In order to kill any target anywhere in the world, a state must invest a significant portion of its resources into training and equipping its special forces, expanding its intelligence and surveillance network, and purchasing the means to transport and extract its operatives to and out of foreign lands. We are interested the United States, Israel and Russia, specifically in how and when they kill their targets, under what conditions, and what the cost and benefits of assassination are for each case. Whenever possible, we will also exemplary assassination operations conducted by each country to illustrate the previously mentioned details (how to kill, and who to kill; when to kill, and under what conditions).

1. The United States

The United States is the world's sole superpower. It is an economic, military and technological colossus. It is also the world's most prolific death-dealer. No country in the world has the ability to project force so far away from its shore the way the United States does. Its fleet of aircraft carriers, destroyers and submarines can deliver drone strikes or cruise missiles anywhere in the world, and its special forces are trained to infiltrate hostile environments to kill, disrupt, damage and observe their enemies. These operations are supported by the enormous intelligence capabilities of the intelligence community of the United States, consisting of 16 agencies¹⁷⁸ working together to provide policy makers with a clear picture regarding the inner working of relevant states. In our case, we are concerned with the process of making a kill list/plan: who to kill, what threat they pose, how to prioritize each target, where they are, how to get there, and how to safely extract. Under the Obama administration, this kill list is known as the Disposition Matrix, which provides comprehensive information for locating, capturing, and killing enemies of the United States. The Disposition Matrix has become a codified administrative process, exactly as its creator, counter-terrorism advisor John O. Brennan, intended.¹⁷⁹ According to Miller in his article for the Washington Post, the Disposition Matrix and the institutionalization of cataloguing premediated targets “represent a shift that is as psychological as it is strategic.”¹⁸⁰ Before 2001, the United States shuddered at the thought of targeted killing. Now Miller believes that targeted killing “has become so routine that the Obama administration has spent much of the past year codifying and streamlining the processes that sustain it.”¹⁸¹

Unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, dominate the US targeted killing program as the most efficient assassins. The now-retired General Atomics MQ-1 Predator and the operational MQ-9 Reaper were designed to accomplish missions that are deemed too “dull, dirty and dangerous”

¹⁷⁸ US Intelligence Agencies. <https://www.intelligencecareers.gov/icmembers.html>

¹⁷⁹ Brian Bennett, David S. Cloud. 2012. *Obama's Counter-terrorism Advisor Defends Drone Strikes*. <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/apr/30/world/la-fg-brennan-drones-20120501>

¹⁸⁰ Greg Miller. 2012. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/plan-for-hunting-terrorists-signals-us-intends-to-keep-adding-names-to-kill-lists/2012/10/23/4789b2ae-18b3-11e2-a55c-39408f8b6a4b_story.html?utm_term=.c59cf8b8d8d4

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

for humans.¹⁸² Captain Tice of the USAF, in his article *Unmanned Aerial Vehicles*, calls these UAVs a “force-multiplier”¹⁸³ of the United States military, stressing the need for the US to look for more force multipliers in the 1990s to respond to the “decreasing in size of US armed forces without a corresponding decrease in US commitment worldwide.” Tice provides a list of utilities UAVs can bring to the table, ranging from surveillance roles for Army artillery, to over-the-horizon targeting for naval bombardment, to reconnaissance for US Marine Corps. Nowhere did he mention the lethal aspect of drones and this is understandable. The article was written in 1991, a time when drones were expected to perform aerial reconnaissance roles, to be the eyes in the sky. The first fighter aircraft in WW I were meant to make photographic reconnaissance runs, but it did not take long before pilots started to arm themselves with grenades, pistols and carbines. It also did not take long for the US military to strap a pair of AGM-114 Hellfire missiles to their drones and send them Afghanistan to wreak havoc on Taliban vehicles and bunkers.

The versatility and utility offered by UAVs are tough to beat. They fly over any terrain, carry no risks to their operator, and have enough firepower to destroy most military targets. These inherent values of UAVs fit the requirements of a democratic power like the United States perfectly. Military campaigns of democracies depend on public support, and the public is unlikely to approve of a military action that results in high casualties. If we take a look at the perspective of cost-analysis, we can see the attraction of drone warfare. As Professor Wayne McLean of the Australian National University said: “Drones are cheap, soldiers are not.”¹⁸⁴ The US Air Force reported a price tag of \$64 million for a combat-air-patrol unit (CAP) consisting of four units,¹⁸⁵ making an average per unit cost of \$16 million. This is extremely cheap if we compare to, say the price of an F-35 Lightning, which came in at a price tag of \$91 million per unit and costs \$16,500 per an hour of flight.¹⁸⁶ According to a report by the Center of Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, each serviceman deployed in Afghanistan in 2014 cost the US government \$2,1 million, representing an increase in comparison to the average cost of \$1,3 million to deploy one serviceman between 2008-2013.¹⁸⁷ This is not the whole picture, however. Advancements in medical and trauma care help save soldiers from severe injuries. According to the paper *Medical Costs of War in 2035*, the United States has seen more military personnel surviving fatal wounds that would have previously killed them, with 7.5 military wounded service member per 1 fatality in Afghanistan; compared to 3.2 in Vietnam and 2.3 in WW II.¹⁸⁸ We can see that surviving veterans require long-term medical care, ranging from PTSD treatment, bionic limbs attachment, amputation and rehabilitation, brain injury care, and polytrauma therapies. According to a research paper by Linda J. Bilmes of Harvard Kennedy School, the total costs of medical care and health benefits already allocated but not yet

¹⁸² CAPT Brian P. Tice, USAF. 1991. *Unmanned Aerial Vehicles*. Airpower Journal. <https://web.archive.org/web/20090724015052/http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj91/spr91/4spr91.htm>

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Wayne McLean. 2014. <https://theconversation.com/drones-are-cheap-soldiers-are-not-a-cost-benefit-analysis-of-war-27924>

¹⁸⁵ US Air Force. MQ-9 Reaper. <http://www.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/104470/mq-9-reaper/>

¹⁸⁶ Department of Defense. Selected Acquisition Report: F-35. 2010. <https://fas.org/man/eprint/F-35-SAR.pdf>

¹⁸⁷ Todd Harrison. *Chaos and Uncertainty: the FY 2014 Defense Budget and Beyond*. CSBA. <http://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/Analysis-of-the-FY-2014-Defense-Budget.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ James Geiling, Jopseph Rosen, Ryan Edwards. *Medical Costs of War in 2035: Long-term Care Challenges for Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan*. Online: http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/~redwards/Papers/1_CostsofWar_7-12-11.pdf

distributed to injured veterans are estimated to be \$836 billion.¹⁸⁹ These factors, coupled with the US democratic and human rights values which prevent policymakers from absorbing high casualties, mean US military planners have to find other modes of operation. There are other factors that drive Washington towards drones, but we believe cost play a central role. Through out the arms race of the Cold War, both the US and the USSR were aware of the payoff between military spending and domestic economic growth, ie. gun-vs-butter model in macroeconomics.¹⁹⁰ The USSR's overspending on weapons strained its economy and the US used this to its advantage. In a speech made in 2004, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin-Laden claims that his grand strategy was not to damage America with the initial attacks, but to bleed the US to "the point of bankruptcy."¹⁹¹ Bearing this in mind, we can see that drones (and cruise missiles and other remotely controlled weaponry such as LAWS) are the exact tools US policymakers need at the moment. They alleviate the perils of spending too much on guns, reduce combat risks for US troops, and make targeted killing operations easier to initiate and accomplish.

We have talked about drones and showered them with praises. This does not mean they are all-powerful and a one-size-fits-all solution to every problem. They are advantageous because they are cheap and risk-free. The best carrier, executioner and escape artist, however, remains Man, or more specifically, human operatives trained to kill. Since 2001, drones and cruise missiles have erased names off Obama's Disposition Matrix with unprecedented efficiency. Yet up until May 2011, the crown jewel of the kill list – Osama bin Laden – remained out of America's reach. The fact that bin Laden survived for so long and eluded all previous attempts from the US-led coalition to apprehend him, spoke volume. It bolstered Al-Qaeda's confidence and helped its propaganda. At this point, bin Laden had become a symbol around which terrorists gather to pledge their loyalty. Although Al-Qaeda had flattened and decentralized its command structure¹⁹² (as an adaptive survival strategy following the invasion of Afghanistan), bin Laden still was a powerful icon representing the audacity and the ability to harm America and the West where it hurt the most. That meant in the eyes of US policymakers, bin Laden had to die. His death would demonstrate that the United States was committed to combating terrorists and had the means to reach anywhere in the world. It would be less of a practical victory and more of a symbolic one, but it was a victory the United States needed. Operation Neptune Spear – led by the CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command and handled by Navy SEAL Team Six – was the culmination of a decade-long manhunt that spanned Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The killing of bin Laden is a fascinating story. He had been on the FBI's Top Ten Wanted Fugitives list since 1999 for his role in the bombings of US embassies in Kenya in 1988.¹⁹³ He upgraded his status from a top wanted man to America's enemy number one following the September 11 attack in 2001. The US-led invasion of Afghanistan disrupted al-Qaeda's activities, and the Taliban government crumbled in November after suffering defeats Taloqan, Herat and Kabul. In December, US forces made a blunder at the Battle of Tora Bora, resulting in the escape of bin Laden. How this happened is up to debate and blame.¹⁹⁴ Cofer Black,

¹⁸⁹ Linda J. Bilmes. *The Financial Legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan*. Harvard Kennedy School, pg. 8. Online: <https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/workingpapers/citation.aspx?PubId=8956>

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/08/guns-butter.asp>

¹⁹¹ Brian Whitaker 2004. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/nov/03/usa.alqaida>

¹⁹² Nicole Hutchinson. 2010. *Al-Qaeda: Study of Decentralized Organization*. Stevens Institute of Technology. Online: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b6dd/35eba393b84fbc847e5375724bac2a359cef.pdf>

¹⁹³ 1999. <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/08/us/national-news-briefs-fbi-list-adds-fugitive-and-terror-suspect.html>

¹⁹⁴ Gordon Corera. 2011. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-14190032>

Director of the CIA at the time, blames on a reluctance of risk American troops, a decision which led him to later lament. “When you compare that [the risk to US forces] to a war that went on for 10 years with American and British troops fighting, in hindsight you can say... it would have been well worth it.”¹⁹⁵ Richard Clarke, White House counter-terrorism adviser argues that this was a result of “military incompetence,” claiming that the people responsible for bin Laden’s capture had the information, time and people, but decided not to do it because they did not think “it was their mission.”¹⁹⁶ Regardless, bin Laden evaded capture and escaped to Pakistan, where he remained for the next 10 years, publishing audio and videotapes via the internet and news outlets.

In order to kill someone, you first need intelligence. You need to know where he is, what the location looks like, how to get there, and how to get back. That is what intelligence officers of the United States had to do after the debacle at Tora Bora. They were back to square one, and they needed to pinpoint bin Laden’s location. The first meaningful piece of information came from al-Qaeda detainees at Guantanamo Bay, who revealed the nom de guerre of bin Laden’s courier as Abu Ahmad al-Kuwaiti.¹⁹⁷ It was not until 2007 that the CIA learned about his real name: Saeed Ahmed.¹⁹⁸ From there, it was a matter of surveillance: tracking phone calls, emails and other forms of electronic communication. The National Security Service deployed its surveillance network and waited. In the summer of 2010, Kuwaiti/Ahmed made a mistake: he called under NSA monitoring. In July 2010, Pakistani agents working the United States spotted his vehicle, wrote down its license plate, and tracked it to a private compound in Abbottabad.¹⁹⁹ CIA intelligence analysts concluded that the compound was designed for bin Laden.²⁰⁰ From there, it was a matter of planning the raid. From the onset, it was obvious that it would be a kill mission. According to Reuters, the SEALs responsible for executing the operation knew bin Laden would likely be killed, rather than captured.²⁰¹ The task of approaching bin Laden fell on the Naval Special Development Warfare Group, also known as SEAL Team Six. The SEALs flew to Abbottabad on 2 helicopters from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment of the US Army. It took the team 38 minutes to complete the raid.²⁰² The signal Geronimo (codename for bin Laden) E-KIA (enemy killed in action) no doubt sent a wave of relief on everyone sitting in the White House Situation room watching the operation live. The 10-year long hunt was over.

The killing of bin Laden has many implications. Betsy Jose in her article *Bin Laden’s Targeted Killing and Emerging Norms* believes that while Operation Neptune Spear itself violated international law, the response from the international community following bin Laden’s death was largely positive.²⁰³ For example, in 2002 when the CIA fired a missile from a Predator

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Eyder Peralta. 2014. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/12/09/369646177/torture-report-did-harsh-interrogations-help-catch-osama-bin-laden>

¹⁹⁸ Mark Bowden. 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/12/death-osama-bin-laden-us>

¹⁹⁹ Mark Mazzeti, Helene Cooper, Peter Baker. 2011.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/03/world/asia/03intel.html?pagewanted=2&partner=rss&emc=rss>

²⁰⁰ Mark Mazzeti, Helene Cooper. 2001. https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/02reconstruct-capture-osama-bin-laden.html?_r=1

²⁰¹ Mark Hosenball 2011. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-binladen-kill/u-s-commandos-knew-bin-laden-likely-would-die-idUSTRE74151S20110502>

²⁰² Mile Allen. 2011. <https://www.politico.com/story/2011/05/exclusive-raid-yields-trove-of-data-054151>

²⁰³ Betsy Jose. *Bin Laden’s Targeted Killing and Emerging Norms*. Critical Studies on Terrorism, 10:1, 44-66. DOI: 10.1080/17539153.2016.1221662

UAV above Yemeni airspace on a vehicle carrying six al-Qaeda terrorists (among whom were the suspected planners of the bombing of the USS Cole) and killed everyone inside, the Swedish foreign minister at that time, Anna Lindh, labelled the attack “a summary execution that violates human rights”.²⁰⁴ This sentiment took a 180° change in 2011 following bin Laden’s death, with Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt tweeting. “A world without bin Laden is a better world. His hatred was a threat to us all.”²⁰⁵ With these polarizing statements illustrated, Jose then claims that the international community’s sentiment regarding targeted killing changed following Neptune Spear’s success. Before that, targeted killing faced strong condemnation, with opponents calling it a violation of human rights and national sovereignty. Yet after 2011, similar practices enjoyed less opposition. The question whether or not the United States violated Pakistan’s sovereignty when it launched the targeted killing operation against bin Laden is up to debate. On one hand, Pakistan accuses the United States of breaching Pakistani sovereignty when it conducted a military operation on Pakistani soil.²⁰⁶ On the other, the United States and its allies strongly believed that bin Laden must have had support from Pakistan in order to hide in plain sight for so long.^{207 208}

We are not interested in the legality of the raid, but rather in whether or not this targeted killing operation successfully enhanced American power and interest. In 2016, five years after bin Laden’s death, Senior Adviser to the RAND President Brian Michael Jenkins made a commentary in which he agrees that “decapitation efforts have had negative impact on terrorist organizations but not a decisive effect.”²⁰⁹ Jenkins would go on to claim that al-Qaeda has become less of a threat as it used to be, and bin Laden’s death certainly contributed to that. The terror organization lost its charismatic leader, and while the replacement al-Zawahiri has demonstrated that he has the capacity to lead, he cannot match his predecessor in moral authority and abilities to inspire followers. Al-Qaeda’s devaluation can be proven by empirical evidences: there have been no directed attacks against the United States since 2011, despite many jihadists vowing revenge. Yet the void left behind by al-Qaeda has been filled by the Islamic State, which commands a substantial number of Western nationals in its ranks and has been launching attacks all over Europe, including Paris,²¹⁰ Brussels,²¹¹ Nice,²¹² and Berlin.²¹³ This led Jenkins to conclude that al-Qaeda was “hurt by the demise of its charismatic leader,” but the world is “probably not a safer place because of it.”²¹⁴

It would be naïve to think that the death of one man, no matter how terrible he is, can somehow make the world a safer place. We would argue that the purpose of assassination and targeted

²⁰⁴ Roland Otto. *Targeted Killings and International Law: With Special Regards to Human Rights*. Springer Heidelberg, pg. 4. ISBN 978-3-642-24857-3

²⁰⁵ Valentina Pop. 2011. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/32248>

²⁰⁶ Owen Bowcott. 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/05/osama-bin-laden-pakistan-us-sovereignty>

²⁰⁷ David Cameron: “The fact that bin Laden was living in a large house in a populated area suggests he must have had a support network in Pakistan.” Quoted from: Nicolas Watt. 2011.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/03/osama-bin-laden-pakistan-america?intcmp=239>

²⁰⁸ 2011. <https://nypost.com/2011/05/03/cia-director-leon-panetta-feared-pakistan-might-alert-bin-laden-of-raid/>

²⁰⁹ Brian Michael Jenkins. 2016. The RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/blog/2016/05/five-years-after-the-death-of-osama-bin-laden-is-the.html>

²¹⁰ Paris September 2015 attack. 137 deaths.

²¹¹ Brussels March 2016 bombing. 35 deaths.

²¹² Nice July 2016 attack. 86 deaths.

²¹³ Berlin December 2016 attack. 12 deaths.

²¹⁴ Ibid. Brian Michael Jenkins. 2016.

killing is never and will never be to make the world a safer place. Like war, it is simply a “continuation of politics.”²¹⁵ According to Clausewitz, war is “an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfill our will.”²¹⁶ What does assassination, or targeted killing, compel our opponent to do, then? Political assassination and targeted killing are never conducted for the sake of killing. The United States launches targeted killing operations against terrorist targets because it believes these operations should positively affect its interest, security, and power. We could argue that collateral damage and civilian deaths would not matter to US military planners so long as these deaths remain ‘small enough’ in order not to trigger an adverse domestic and international condemnation, which in turn adversely affect the United States’ pursuit of interest, security, and power via targeted killing. The United States is not an omnipotent, all-powerful evil-slayer of the world. It is not responsible for making this world a safer and better place. We feel the simplest way to explain how targeted killing helps advances US foreign policies is to cite works of political realists, such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Morgenthau. From this perspective, the United States is an actor – more precisely a hegemon – in an anarchic world full of other actors, and they all seek self-preservation via the pursue of interest and power.²¹⁷ Do American targeted killings make the world a safer place? No. Does it matter? Certainly not. What the United States should focus on is ask: “Does this make America safe?” We believe this to be a pragmatic approach that eliminates all the philosophical, ethical and morality debates, and re-centers the spotlight on national interest and power, which are the end goals of all political struggles according to realism.

With that in mind, what can we say about bin Laden’s death in terms of American interest? According to Jose’s article, it has had an enormous positive effect on US foreign policies. It normalized (to a degree) the practice of targeted killing, making such practices less abhorrent. We say ‘to a degree’ because there exists opposition to this new norm. Opponents of targeted killing are usually human rights activists, of whom Human Rights Watch is the most vocal suppressor of the emergence of targeted killing norm.²¹⁸ However, ultimately such resistance matters little. “The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must,”²¹⁹ so was Athens’ response to Melos as recorded by Thucydides in his book *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and it can be applied here. Human Rights Watch is weak, the United States is strong. Will getting praises from human rights and anti-war activists suddenly make the United States safe and less prone to terrorist attacks? No! The United States cannot secure its power and interest by getting approvals from the international community. Targeted killing is here to stay and has become a major component of American counter-terrorism effort. This means the United States should enjoy major benefits from the normalization of targeted killing. In this sense, the killing of bin Laden did positively contribute to Washington’s interest and power. While Operation Neptune Spear was executed by human operatives, there is an increasing number of targeted killings being delegated to UAVs. We have mentioned the utility and versatility of drones compared to warfighters: cheaper, less risky, less domestic opposition, and lower chances of causing catastrophic political debacles. This means Washington can now deploy one of its counter-terrorism components using a much better tool for the task, while enjoying fewer

²¹⁵ Cited from Carl von Clausewitz: *On War*.

²¹⁶ Carl von Clausewitz. 1832. *On War*. Book I, chapter 1.

²¹⁷ Based on: Political Realism: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism-intl-relations/>

²¹⁸ Betsy Jose. 2017. *Not completely the new normal: How HRW tried to suppress the targeted killing norms*. *Contemporary security policy*, 38:2, 237-259. DOI: 10.1080/13523260.2017.1334856

²¹⁹ Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Chapter XVII. Online: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/melian.htm>

criticisms from the international community. This should be regarded as a major victory. Couple that with all the benefits a dead bin Laden entails, we can see that the price tag of Neptune Spear is minimal compared to what the United States has gained.

So far, we have explored the utility of targeted killing in the pursue of interest and power, but how does the United States kill its target? Barrack Obama, while he was President of the United States, chose the drone to be his weapon of choice, and vested the military and the CIA with the power to hunt down whoever his administration wanted dead. The process of handing out the death sentence was and is secretive and does not require trials. According to Jeremy Scahill's book,²²⁰ the kill process began with electronic and human intelligence acquisition. First, US intelligence gathered information on potential targets based on government watchlists and the work of intelligence, military and law enforcement agencies. The suspect was then given a portrait which details their latent threat, resulting in a format nicknamed "a baseball card." Second, US intelligence personnel pools together operational information on the suspect and put everything into a "target information folder," which was then delivered to the higher chain of command for action. On average, the president took about 58 days to send the suspect to the executioner's block. If the target was marked for death, the CIA or US military had 60 days to execute the target.

A more detailed version can be found in the 3rd article of the Drone Papers published by The Intercept, which claims to have obtained classified military documents detailing the decision-making process behind the drone strikes. According to Cora Currier, author of article no. 3 The Kill Chain of the Drone Papers, the approval of an attack requires two parts: 1) From 'Developing a target' to 'Authorization of a target'; 2) From 'Authorizing' to 'Actioning'.²²¹ JSOC's Task Force 48-4, working alongside other intelligence agencies, was responsible for creating the case against an individual, resulting in a portrait of the target, which ended up in "higher echelons" and eventually the president's desk. The intelligence package would then go through two of the nine US Unified Combatant Commands – US Central Command for targets in the Middle East and US African Command for African targets – and then to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, followed by the Secretary of Defense. Top advisers known as the Principals Committee of the National Security Council reviewed the target before sending their name to the president. An illustration of this process can be found in Figure 2 of this thesis. While Obama approved each target, he did not approve each strike. After the target had been approved, the JSOC had 60 days to finish the execution.

The actual strike had to be green-lit by Geographic Combatant Command, plus the ambassador and the CIA station chief where the target lived. Striking down a US citizen is also possible, just with more paperwork involved. Anwar al Awlaki, an Islamic imam linked to al-Qaeda and the first American citizen to be assassinated by his own government without trial since the Civil War,²²² required an extensive process involving lawyers and reviews at different levels, as well as a chain of command to monitor the actual airstrike from beginning to end.²²³ Note the

²²⁰ The following information is based on: Jeremy Scahill. The Assassination Complex. Chapter: The Drone Legacy. How the President Authorizes Targets for Assassination, pg. 8-9.

²²¹ The information of the following 2 paragraphs is based on: Cora Currier. 2015. The Kill Chain. The Drone Papers. The Intercept. Online: <https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/the-kill-chain/?comments=1#comments>

²²² Scott Shane. 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/magazine/the-lessons-of-anwar-al-awlaki.html>

²²³ Based on: Lt. Cl. T. McCurley. 2015. Hunter-Killer. Penguin Random House. ISBN-10: 0451474872

warning sign “One Disagrees = STOP” in Figure 1. This means the actual strike required the OK from everyone involved in the ‘Authorization to Use Military Force’ process.

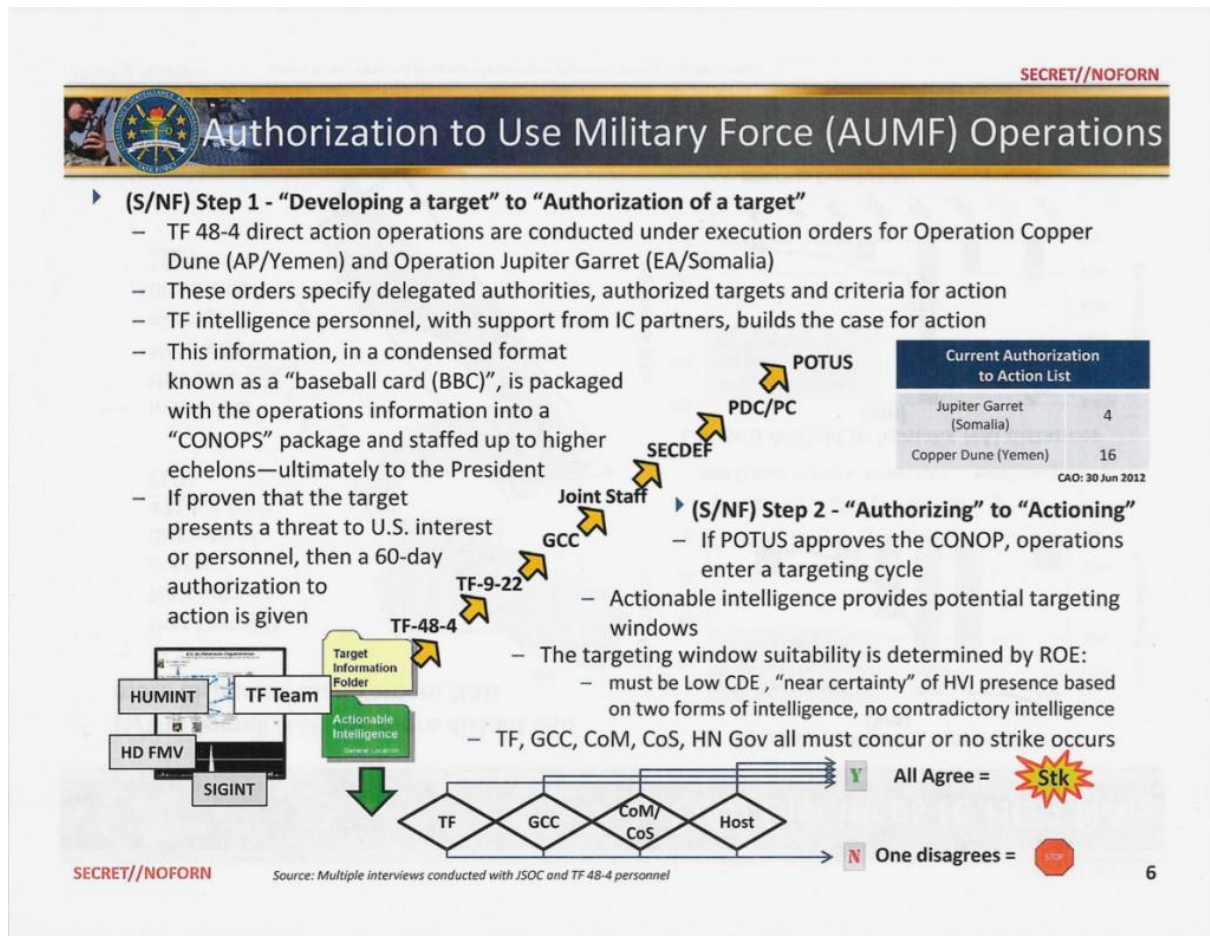


Figure 1: May 2013 Pentagon’s executive summary.²²⁴ GCC: Geographic Combatant Command; SECDEF: Secretary of Defense; PDC/PC: Principals’ Deputies Committee/Principals Committee; CoM: Chief of Mission; CoS: Chief of Station

²²⁴ Original presentation: <https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/14/small-footprint-operations-5-13/#page-1>

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

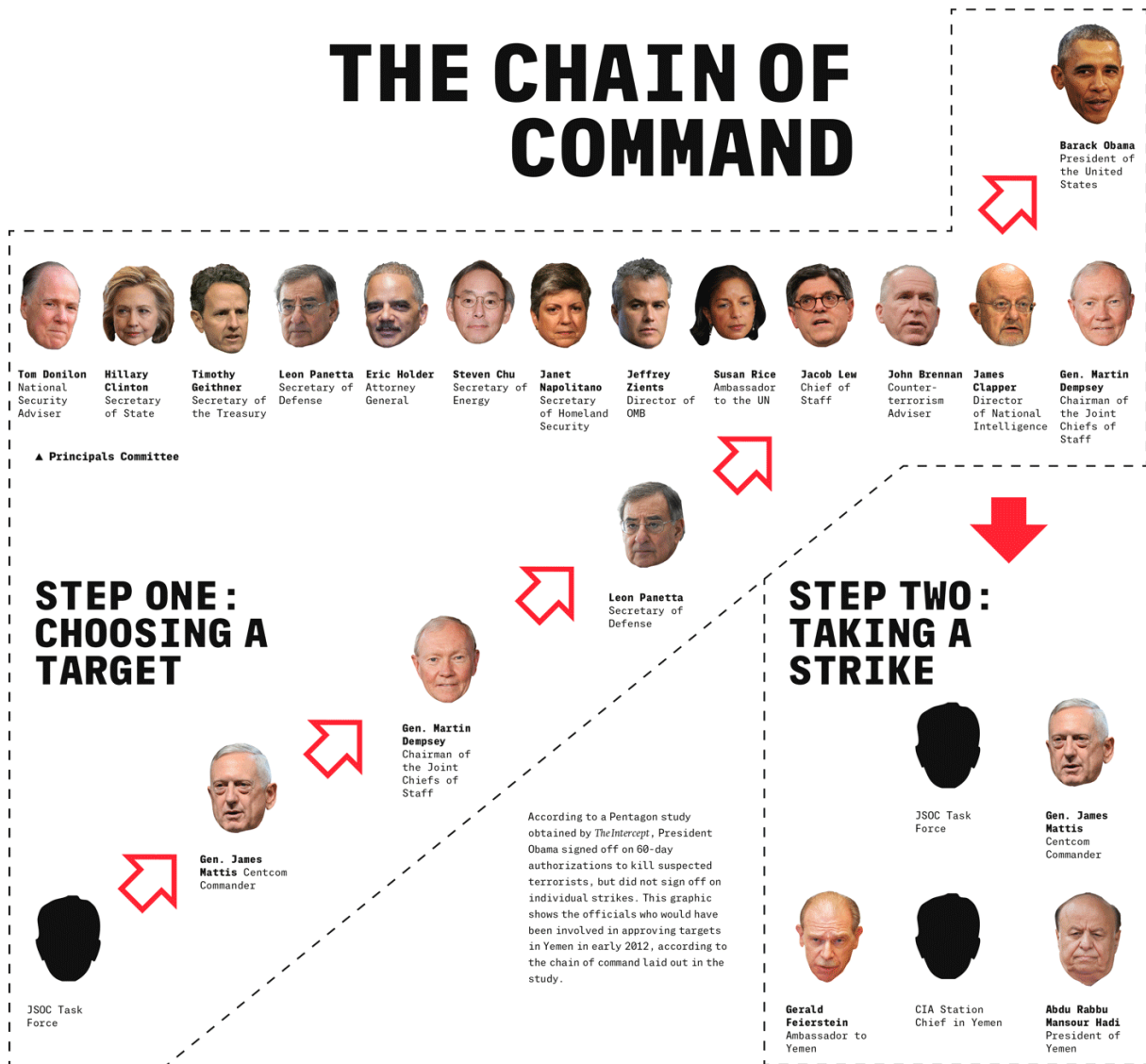


Figure 2: The Chain of Command of the 2-Step Killing Process.²²⁵

The United States operates two drone fleets: one run by the military and one run by the Central Intelligence Agency. Military drones are responsible for killing targets in war zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq, while CIA drones roam elsewhere in the world. A good example of this division of labor can be seen in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area, where the military is limited within the borders of Afghanistan, while the CIA handles the tribal areas of Pakistan.²²⁶ How has targeted killing contributed to US interest and security? Does targeted killing work? We have established that we are not concerned with ethics, therefore civilian deaths are only problematic if they trigger an international condemnation that works against US targeted killing programs. So far, no such things have occurred. It is safe to say that collateral damage (or the ‘oops factor’²²⁷ as the US military puts it) caused by drone and cruise missile strikes is within

²²⁵ Original illustration made by The Intercept. Online: <https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/the-kill-chain/?comments=1#comments>

²²⁶ Greg Bruno. 2010. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/us-drone-activities-pakistan>

²²⁷ Sarah Holewinski. 2013. <https://civiliansinconflict.org/publications/policy/constitutional-counterterrorism-implications-targeted-killing/>

acceptable limits. It is evident that al-Qaeda has scattered²²⁸ since the United States initiated a widespread hunt for its leadership. Targeted killing can cause a leadership attrition to a terrorist group by sniping off its strong leaders, leaving it with fewer experienced personnel. According to Daniel Byman of Georgetown University, the biggest impact of targeted killing “is in what terrorists do not do.”²²⁹ To put it simply, targeted killing causes opportunity cost to terrorists. Because they have to spend time and effort on hiding, evading, and moving to avoid missiles, they cannot effectively organize and inspire their militants into action. They are prohibited from using telephones and must rely on the Hashashin-era methods of communications, significantly delaying their messages. Missiles also discourage terrorists from gathering in large groups, making their recruitment and propaganda efforts much more difficult. Fear of drones causes fear of intelligence leakage. Leaders often purge their own ranks to find moles and traitors, causing internal strife within the group and reducing its combat capabilities.

The success of an assassination depends on many factors, and intelligence is what ultimately determines the operation’s precision and efficiency. As we have stressed many times, in order to kill someone, we need to know who we are killing and where he is located. This means it is not enough for the United States to build better drones and to train more special operation forces. It must match its ability to kill with its ability to gather intelligence. Targeted killing without intelligence is a pointless massacre. As the United States invests into UAVs and lethal autonomous weapons and expands its targeted killing arsenal, it must proportionally divert resources into strengthening its intelligence capabilities in order to effectively eliminate its targets while keeping the ‘oops factor’ at an acceptable level.

The US targeted killing campaign has been used exclusively in the War on Terror, with its targets being terrorists or supporters of terrorist organizations. But terrorists are not the only enemy Washington has to deal with, nor are they the only threat American citizens face. This begs the question: if the United States has successfully normalized targeted killing after 2001, and the international community has shown less opposition to targeted killing after bin Laden’s death in 2011, can we expect Washington to add this practice into its arsenal of weapons to be employed in its foreign policy? Let us take a look at the War of Drugs. So far, UAVs have been used to monitor and track traffickers in Mexico and other parts of South America²³⁰, but is it possible that one day we will see the US deploy its hunter-killers south to decapitate drug cartels the same way terrorist organizations are being eliminated now? Of course, there exists a huge wall that separates terrorists from drug lords in the minds of Americans and the world. The word ‘terrorism’ has become heavily securitized. Uttering terrorism means invoking ‘national security’, ‘existential threat’, and ‘terror’. The securitization of terrorism allows for a disproportionate amount of resources, attention, time and effort to be allocated to combating it. Because terrorism has become an extraordinary threat, extraordinary measures are therefore sanctioned in the fight against terrorism. Assassination and targeted killing are both controversial topics – the former more so than the latter – and this tells us that in order for either to become an effective tool of foreign policy, their targets must first be securitized into an existential threat posing extreme dangers to the relevant state. After all, securitization can be considered an effective political strategy precisely because securitized subjects receive more

²²⁸ Daniel L. Byman. 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/06/29/judging-al-qaidas-record-part-ii-why-has-al-qaida-declined/>

²²⁹ Micah Zenko. 2012. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/ask-experts-do-targeted-killings-work>

²³⁰ Alejandro Sanchez. 2016. Online: <https://sustainablesecurity.org/2016/02/15/drones-in-the-war-on-drugs-from-surveillance-to-smuggling/>

attention and resources than un-securitized subjects. From this perspective, political leader can solve current policy issues that are relevant to his administration by successfully securitizing said issues. Assassination and targeted killing are extraordinary measures, therefore can only be used against extraordinary enemies. In the event that those enemies are not ‘extraordinary’ enough to warrant assassination, yet national interest or the current administration still demand their deaths, a certain rhetoric must be painted. This is where securitization comes in. To conclude, we believe that the proliferation of targeted killing is only limited by Washington’s ability to turn its enemies into existential threats. Whether or not targeted killing will be employed to dispense death sentences to drug cartels, organized crimes, and all sorts of individuals around the world depends on firstly on how the American public *perceives* and *fears* these groups, and secondly on the possession of the right technology to execute these groups in difficult environs (metropolises or jungles). This technological implication shall be discussed in details in Section IV. Regardless, the United States has successfully wrapped the dreaded term ‘assassination’ under a new blanket, calling it ‘targeted killing’, and has turned it into an effective component of its foreign policy – a component that enhances both its war-fighting capabilities as well as its diplomatic prowess.

Summary: How the US transformed the norms of assassination.

The United States officially banned political assassination in 1976 with President Gerald R. Ford’s Executive Order 11905.²³¹ The Bush administration criticized Israel for its targeted killing practices during the Second Intifada in the months prior to the September 11 attack.²³² How, then, did such a staunch critic of assassination transformed extrajudicial murder into a rigorous system with its own kill list and whose kills are even available on the internet? The answer is complex, but we believe we can pinpoint three permissive catalysts.

First, this stems from the unique nature of the threat the United States has faced since 2001. The attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon were the first time a foreign enemy managed to harm the United States in its heartland. The Empire of Japan in all its might only managed to reach Hawaii, a mere outlying naval base. The 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor resulted in 2,335 American deaths,²³³ and the US’ response was anything but meek. It culminated in the total destruction of the Imperial Japanese Navy and the annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These atomic bombings alone resulted in about 200,000 deaths, most of which were civilians.²³⁴ In contrast, a total of 2,977 people died in New York City, Washington and Pennsylvania on 11 September 2001.²³⁵ The total economic cost is estimated to be in the range of \$200 billion.²³⁶ Though there is no consensus on the total cost of the 1941 attack, we can deduce that the \$200 billion figure should far outstrip whatever property damage the Pacific Fleet suffered at Pearl Harbor, given that ‘only’ 3 battleships were damaged beyond repair.²³⁷ Then numbers are clear: the September 11 attack harmed the US more than Pearl Harbor did. It happened right in the

²³¹ Sec. 5, g) No employee of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, political assassination. Online: <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/speeches/760110e.asp>

²³² Jane Perlez. 2001. *US Officials Criticizes ‘Targeted Killing’*. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2001-08-28/news/0108280257_1_militant-palestinian-faction-palestinian-people-palestinian-authority

²³³ <https://visitpearlharbor.org/faqs/how-many-people-died-at-pearl-harbor-during-the-attack/>

²³⁴ Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Atomic Archive.

http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/MED/med_chp10.shtml

²³⁵ <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/27/us/september-11-anniversary-fast-facts/index.html>

²³⁶ *How much did the 9/11 terrorist attack cost America?* <http://www.iags.org/costof911.html>

²³⁷ The American Fleet Damage at Pearl Harbor. <https://visitpearlharbor.org/american-fleet-damaged-pearl-harbor/>

country's capital and its largest metropolis. The power of broadcasting and the internet meant the horrors were visible across all states. With these disparities in mind, should the US' commitment to its War on Terror be of any shock to us? Of course not. Washington had shown that it was willing to use the most drastic measure at the time (the atomic bomb) to resolve a retaliatory war. The War on Terror should not come of as a surprise to anyone who had learned from US history. Terrorism represents the kind of threat that has spawned all sorts of discourses and debates around it, but rhetoric is not the main focus here. The Bush administration's War on Terror capitalized on the exceptionality of terrorism – its threats, its evil – in order to deploy exceptional measures in the fight against it. Unlike Japan, al-Qaeda was not something one could destroy with nuclear weapons, even if worldwide nuclear taboo had not existed. For every target, there is a suitable weapon. And the United States found its perfect weapon in precise, targeted assassination, and the deployment of special forces in lieu of the conventional military (as seen in the early months of the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001).

The second permissive catalyst that allowed the United States to conveniently kill people worldwide has to do with rhetoric and the careful construction of euphemisms. Or more specifically, the metamorphosis of assassination into targeted killing. The justification for targeted killing involves several clever maneuvers in the legal systems and public discourses. The Bush administration considered terrorists to be unlawful combatants, therefore subjected to elimination and arrest, and denied the rights of POW treatment if captured.²³⁸ After 2001, the United States found itself in an awkward situation. Its former Presidents Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan all had banned assassination not in one, but three executive orders.²³⁹ Yet targeted assassination had been proven by Israel to work, at least in the tactical time-frame. It was the weapon the Pentagon would choose in its war against terrorists, except it was illegal. Naturally, the United States could not backpedal on its early commitments, but with careful discursive constructions, it was able to wrap assassination in a prettier, more acceptable and accessible package, and called it targeted killing. In short, the targeted killing-assassination debate is a muddy territory that requires a certain level of mental gymnastics. From the pragmatic point of view, however, this transformation is an equally important component of the War on Terror, as it justified (to an extent) the use of surgical hits on and the assassination of terrorist commanders, leaders and foot soldiers.

The third permissive catalyst is the advancement of technology. We have touched upon this when we discussed the utilities of UAVs. They contain no risk to soldier lives, are faster to deploy and just as lethal as a fighter craft, and cost less.²⁴⁰ These factors make killing easier: easier to start, easier to execute, and easier on the mental health of the killers. Would the United States develop such a widespread and rigorous targeted killing program if they had not mastered the drone (and other remote-killing) technology? We can say that the answer is negative. Without drones and cruise missiles, each terrorist leader would require a similar treatment to the one bin Laden had. This means a team of 20-30 special forces operatives²⁴¹ on the same calibre of the SEALs (of which there are not many), plus the intelligence and support

²³⁸ Gabriella Plum, Philip Heymann. 2010. Law and Policy of Targeted Killing, pg. 156. Harvard National Security Journal, volume 1. Online:

<https://www.law.upenn.edu/institutes/cehl/conferences/targetedkilling/papers/BlumHeymannLawPolicy.pdf>

²³⁹ See Executive Orders: 11905 (Ford); 12036 (Carter); 1233 (Reagan).

²⁴⁰ Phil for Humanity. 2013. *The Pros and Cons of Drones*. <https://www.philforhumanity.com/Drones.html>

²⁴¹ Mark Mardell. 2012. *Osama Bin Laden's Death: How It Happened*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-13257330>

infrastructure to ensure their insertion and escape. As powerful as the United States Special Operations Command is, it cannot be everywhere at once. Without disposable, remote-controlled killing machines, the US would have to pick its targets more frugally and chose where to invest its limited resources equally so. Such operations contain extreme risks to the operatives, who themselves are considered the best the US Armed Forces have to offer. A failure will not only result in the survival of the target, but also in the loss of American lives. The United States would lose its citizens, while the arm forces would lose its best soldiers. Would the American public support a decade, two-decade long campaign that contains such costs? Unlikely. Drones have not only changed the way assassination was conducted, but also partially helped the United States normalize its assassination practices, turning them from something that was regarded as reprehensible, unacceptable and morally wrong, into a suitable weapon in the war against terrorists. Without the drone technology, Obama's Disposition Matrix would have been a very short shopping list indeed.

2. The State of Israel²⁴²

Israel is a small country surrounded by Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. It has no allies nearby, and its neighbors are less than friendly. "If someone comes to kill you, rise up and kill him first," the Talmud says, and this line resonates with Israel's policies ever since its foundation in 1948.²⁴³ The Jewish people of Israel are willing to pursue every measure and use every weapon – even the most aggressive and questionable ones – to protect their nation from harm. The responsibility to protect the State of Israel falls on its intelligence community and armed forces, and though they have a vast arsenal to choose from, there is one that they have relied upon to fight the most serious threats: assassination has been used beyond counting in Israel's brief history, ranging from pursuing pure revenge on the murderers of Jewish athletes who were killed in the 1972 Olympic in Munich, to pre-empting its foreign threats, to deterring its enemies from attacking its citizens, to decapitating the grey matter of its enemies by killing their scientists, and so on.

Ruthless. Remorseless. Aggressive. Those are perhaps the correct adjectives to describe the Israeli intelligence community and its special forces. Unlike the United States which shows a degree of concern over how the international community perceives its actions, Israel displays fewer qualms and has shown that it is willing and able to withstand international criticism for its forceful actions. Though targeted killing itself was legalized by the Supreme Court in 2006,²⁴⁴ this does not mean Israel had not been targeting and assassinating individuals abroad prior. In fact, since WW II, Israel has claimed more successful assassination than any other Western state, boasting an impressive kill list of 2,300 individuals.²⁴⁵ According to Bergman in his book *Rise and Kill First*, leaders of Israel, when faced with grave dangers to national security, have placed their trust in the use of clandestine operations, with "assassination the method of choice."²⁴⁶ Israel's reliance on assassination and pre-emption was not a random

²⁴² Partially based on: Ronan Bergman. 2018. *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassination*. Random House. ISBN-10: 1400069718

²⁴³ Richard Cavendish. 1998. <https://www.historytoday.com/richard-cavendish/foundation-state-israel>

²⁴⁴ Scott Wilson. 2006. *Israeli high court backs military on its policy of targeted killing*.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/14/AR2006121400430.html>

²⁴⁵ Shelbie Bostedt. 2018. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/09/how-far-is-too-far-for-israels-targeted-killings/>

²⁴⁶ Bergman. *Rise and Kill First*. Prologue.

happenstance, but rather traces its roots back to its strategic culture,²⁴⁷ one that has been shaped by the Zionist movement, by the trauma of the Holocaust, by the siege mentality of a country surrounded by hostile nations, by Israel's lack of strategic depth, by the belief shared by Israeli leaders and citizens alike that their country constantly faces total annihilation – though unlike the Holocaust, they will not be caught with their guards down again. These factors combined forced Israel to build a formidable military supported by one of the most effective intelligence community in the world. The military's special forces and the Mossad and Aman's intelligence have in turn developed a fearsome and highly specialized assassination machine in history. This machine exists to protect Israel, to deter potential adversaries from attacking, and ultimately to ensure that something like the Holocaust will never happen again.

This siege mentality and Holocaust complex have led Israel's leaders to develop their own survival strategy. Because Israel is tiny (barely bigger than New Jersey),²⁴⁸ it cannot afford to fight a war at its doors because it has no strategic depth to separate the front lines from its core industrial area, capital city, population centers and military production facilities. Israel's national security strategy has no place for the concept of losing.²⁴⁹ It cannot afford to lose a single war. In a sense, Israel has come to embrace what Sun Tzu wrote more than 2,500 years ago: the best way to win a war is not to fight it in the first place.²⁵⁰ This can be achieved by maintaining a credible deterrent threat backed by nuclear weapons, armed forces, and even assassins. If all else fail and war is inevitable, Israel will strike hard and fast to seek a decisive victory. The battle(s) will begin on Israel's terms, ideally before its adversary has a chance to realize what is happening. This strategic doctrine can also be translated into Israel's assassination doctrine. Throughout their history, Israeli intelligence services have demonstrated that they can and will kill any individual who threatens Israel's security, and have left an unspoken message behind these kills: *A life living on Israel's bad grace is a terrible life.* Blunders such as the Lillehammer affair,²⁵¹ in which Mossad operatives mistakenly identified an innocent Moroccan writer as a high-ranking member of the Black September terrorist group and shot him dead, also serves to enhance Israel's cold-blooded reputation, which in turn works in favour of Israel's deterrent posture. To strike home the ruthlessness of the Israeli assassination machine, Bergman claims Israel's leaders have agreed that for the sake of killing the target, it is “legal and moral to endanger the lives of innocent civilians who may happen to find themselves in the line of fire.”²⁵² These collateral damages are simply a necessary evil, a price to pay for the greater good of the State of Israel.

The Munich massacre and Operation Wrath of God. The Israeli delegation arrived in the summer of 1972 in Munich, West Germany to participate in the 1972 Olympics, which started on 26 August. Eleven members of the delegation were kidnapped and killed on 5 and 6 September. The attackers were identified as members of the Black September organization, a Palestinian terrorist group, and their demand was the release of 234 Palestinian prisoners held

²⁴⁷ Rafal Kopec. 2016. The Determinants of Israeli Strategic Culture. Review of Nationalities, pg. 136-145. DOI: 10.1515/pn-2016-0008. Online: https://depot.ceon.pl/bitstream/handle/123456789/13207/The_Determinants_of_the_Israeli_Strategic_Culture.pdf?sequence=1

²⁴⁸ http://iris.org.il/sizemaps/new_jersey.htm

²⁴⁹ Based on: <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/doctrine/>

²⁵⁰ Paraphrase from: Sun Tzu. Art of War. “Supreme excellence is to subdue your enemy without fighting.”

²⁵¹ Ron Sokolnik. 2017. <http://jewishcurrents.org/july-21-the-lillehammer-affair/>

²⁵² Bergman. Rise and Kill First. Prologue.

in Israeli jails.²⁵³ On 5 September, following news of the kidnapping, erstwhile Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, appealed to the world to save the athletes, but she also stated. “If we should give in, then no Israeli anywhere in the world can feel that his life is safe. It’s blackmail of the worst kind.”²⁵⁴ Meir refused to comply to the terrorists’ demands, knowing that this decision might cost the 11 athletes their lives. This is because more was at stake: bowing before hostage-takers’ demand would only create future incentives for more attacks against Israelis. At the time of the crisis, the elite Sayeret Matkal, the IDF’s answer to the Delta Forces and the Special Air Service, was ready fly to Germany to assist the German authorities in the hostage-rescue operation.²⁵⁵ Because the Sayeret Matkal was a military unit, its operatives could not enter German soil without proper authorization. The Unit was nevertheless put on alert. Its men had civilian clothes on and their weapons packed, waiting for the call to take off that never came. The Germans had declined Israel’s offer to help. At that time, the Unit’s platoon commander, Muki Betser, thought the Germans had an elite counter-terrorism task force of their own. They had no such things. In fact, the Germans did not even have a tactical sniper team. The regular Munich police department was handling the hostage crisis and found itself utterly unprepared to deal with the situation (and it was this embarrassing failure that led to the formation of the GSG-9 in 1973).²⁵⁶ West German police officers failed to rescue the Israeli athletes but managed to kill five of the eight attackers and capture the surviving three.

Prime Minister Golda Meir erupted in fury at the ill news and her response was swift. 48 hours after the massacre, on 8 September, Israeli fighter jets bombed PLO bases in Lebanon and Syria, killing 200 fighters plus 11 civilians.²⁵⁷ This was but the first out of many retaliations in the long-lasting vengeance pursued by Israel against all perpetrators of the massacre. On 12 September, Golda Meir grieved with the families of the slain athletes and her words to them were: “I’ve decided to pursue each and every one of them. Not one of the people involved in anyway will be walking around on this earth for much longer... we will chase them till the last.”²⁵⁸ To the Knesset, the legislative branch of Israel, she said. “We have no choice but to strike terrorist organizations wherever we can reach them. That is our obligation to ourselves and to peace.”²⁵⁹ Meir’s statements can be considered a formal declaration that marked Israel’s transition to a policy in its national security: one that systematically employed assassination. Israel had assassinated people before, but from 1972 onwards, assassination would become embedded into Israel’s broader strategy. The first order of business was to wipe out Black September, but the momentum would not stop there. Black September’s destruction was a matter of deterrence and vengeance, a pragmatic and personal quest for Israel.

By 12 September 1972, Israel had already resolved to take matters into her own hands and was laying the foundation for Wrath of God. A few days before her statement to the Knesset, Prime

²⁵³<https://web.archive.org/web/20120316084844/http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/olympics-massacre-munich--the-real-story-524011.html>

²⁵⁴ Courtney Farrell. 2010. *The Terror at the Munich Olympics*, pg. 58. ABDO Publishing.

²⁵⁵ Michael Rubner. Book Review. <http://www.mepc.org/massacre-munich-manhunt-killers-behind-1972-olympics-massacre>

²⁵⁶ Matthias von Hein. 2017. <http://www.dw.com/en/1972-munich-olympics-massacre-an-avoidable-catastrophe/a-40405813>

²⁵⁷ Avery Plaw. 2008. *Targeted Terrorists: A License to Kill?* Chapter: Beginning of Systematic Terrorist Killing, Munich 1972. Ashgate Publishing.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ 1972. *39 Statements to the Knesset by Prime Minister Meir*.

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/mfadocuments/yearbook1/pages/39%20statement%20to%20the%20knesset%20by%20prime%20minister%20meir.asp>

Minister Golda Meir had created a secret gathering, the aptly-named Committee X, to discuss Israel's response. Committee X was chaired by Meir herself and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. General Aharon Yariv became the new counter-terrorism advisor, while Mossad Director Zvi Zamir handled the actual operations with the help of his senior agent, Mike Harrari, who was tasked with building the covert action squads.²⁶⁰ The Committee determined that in order to safeguard Israel and deter further attacks, it was not enough to execute everyone who had had a hand in the Olympics Massacre. Their deaths must be visible in dramatic fashions and must serve as a message for potential would-be enemies. The last straw that broke the camel's back came a month later. On 29 October 1972, Lufthansa Flight 615 was hijacked by Palestinian terrorists who held close ties with the Black September group. The hijackers demanded the release of the three surviving attackers of the Munich massacre from West German custody. They diverted the plane from Beirut to Zagreb, where the handing-over would take place. West Germany was reeling from the massacre one month earlier, the failure of German police still a fresh reminder. It had not had the time to develop a counter-terrorism unit for this kind of situation (again another catalyst for the formation of the GSG-9), so the authorities' option was limited to one choice: comply. Indeed, the three surviving members of Black September boarded the plane, and landed a few hours later in Tripoli, where they received a hero's welcome.²⁶¹ No hostages were harmed during the ordeal. Allegations accusing West Germany of making a deal with the terrorists emerged shortly after. The "efficiency" of the West German authorities in the way they released the prisoners came under Israel's microscope. The 1999 Oscar-winning documentary *One Day In September*²⁶² supported the theory that West Germany authorities set-up the hijacking of the Flight 615 (and the subsequent release of prisoners) in collusion with the terrorists in exchange for promises of no further attacks against Germany. This hypothesis is confirmed by Jamal al-Gashey, one of the three surviving perpetrators of the Munich massacre, and by Ulrich Wegener, a German counter-terrorism expert and the founding father of GSG-9.²⁶³

Saying Israel was disappointed with West Germany would be a colossal understatement. Prime Minister Golda Meir expressed her ire on the following day. "We have been depressed since yesterday, aggrieved and I would say insulted, that the human spirit, so weak and helpless, has surrendered to brutal force."²⁶⁴ At this point, Operation Wrath of God had been well underway. 13 days prior to the hijacking, on 16 October 1972, Palestinian Liberation Organization representative in Italy, Abdel Wael Zwaiter, was shot twelve times in Rome by Mossad agents.²⁶⁵ West Germany's conciliatory posture during the Flight 615 hostage crisis only strengthened Israel's resolve: she could not rely on anyone but herself in this lonely crusade. Mahmoud Hamshari, PLO representative in Paris, was the next target. Wrath of God explosive experts planted a bomb in his telephone, which exploded when Mossad operatives confirmed he was ripe for receiving the blast.²⁶⁶ On 6 April 1973, Basil al-Kubaisi, Professor of International Law at the American University of Lebanon, was gunned down by Mossad

²⁶⁰ Alexander B. Calahan. 1995. *Countering Terrorism: The Israeli Response to the 1972 Munich Massacre and the Development of Independent Covert Action Teams*. Chapter 3. <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/calahan.htm>

²⁶¹ <http://www.zeit.de/1972/44/terroristen-befreit>

²⁶² Kevin McDonald. 1999. *One Day in October*. BBC Films.

²⁶³ Jason Burke. 2001. *Bonn faked hijacks to free killers*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/mar/26/jasonburke.theobserver1>

²⁶⁴ Yael Greenfeter. 2010. *Israel in Shock as Munich Killers Freed*. <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5134761>

²⁶⁵ 2001. *An Eye for an Eye*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/an-eye-for-an-eye-20-11-2001/>

²⁶⁶ Mahmoud Hamshari. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mahmoud-Hamshari>

assassins from the Caesarea department.²⁶⁷ That was Friday. The following Monday, Israeli speedboats deposited commandos of the special operations units Sayeret Matkal, Shayetet 13, and Sayeret Tzanhanim on one of Beirut's beaches. Among the commandos were Ehud Barak, Israel's future prime minister, and his deputy, Muki Betser. Their targets were Abu Youssef, Yasser Arafat's deputy; Kamal Adwan, PLO chief of operations against Israel and the West; and Kamal Nasser, PLO spokesman.²⁶⁸ All three men resided in a heavily fortified area of Lebanon, and thus were beyond the reach of Mossad's traditional methods. This operation is known under the name Spring of Youth and was a sub-operation under the over-arching Wrath of God campaign. The assassins successfully killed all three targets before fleeing to safety via speedboats. In a letter to the United Nations Security Council,²⁶⁹ the ambassador-representative of Lebanon claimed that "2 Lebanese policemen, 2 Lebanese civilians, 3 Syrian labourers, 4 Palestinians and an Italian woman" were killed during the raid. Following Spring of Youth, more attacks conducted by Mossad followed, spanning Athens, Rome and Paris, all accomplished with explosives. This ruthless efficiency served to build a myth surrounding Israel's intelligence arms: they could reach anywhere in the world and no enemies of theirs were safe.

The myth of Mossad's infallibility was somewhat shaken following a famous blunder. Aside from the three surviving perpetrators of the Munich massacre (who had gone into hiding after their release from West Germany), the most attractive target for Israel was Ali Hassan Salameh, nicknamed the Red Prince. Salameh was the head of Force 17, a special operations unit of the PLO, as well as the chief of operations of Black September. Israeli intelligence believed Salameh to be the mastermind behind the Munich massacre, and was determined to track him down and kill him at all costs. Mossad believed Salameh was living in the tiny Norwegian village Lillehammer. On the summer of 1973, a team of Mossad agents arrived in Lillehammer, where they were joined by their ground commander, the great spy and assassin Michael Harrari.²⁷⁰ There, they identified an Arab-looking man named Bouchikhi and compared his appearance against the photograph of Salameh. It was a match. On 21 July 1973, Mossad agents shot Bouchikhi and then drove away before the local police could catch up.

The Israelis realized they had murdered the wrong man one day too late.²⁷¹ Norwegian authorities arrested six Mossad operatives. Mossad's operational commander Michael Harrari escaped to Sweden using a yacht.²⁷² The Lillehammer affair dealt a crippling blow to Mossad's intelligence network in Europe. Norwegian police interrogated the captured Israelis, who divulged information on Mossad safe houses, operational methods, and provided conclusive evidence that the State of Israel was assassinating Palestinians on European soil. This intelligence was quickly shared with other European police counterparts, prompting raids on

²⁶⁷ Matti Friedman. 2010.

https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2010/02/19/behind_the_myth_of_the_mossad.html

²⁶⁸ Yaron Druckman. 2014. *Barak in drag: the daring operation to kill Arafat's deputy*.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4509923,00.html>

²⁶⁹ UNSC. Letter dated 11 April 1973 from the permanent representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council. Online:

http://dag.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/73004/S_10911-EN.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

²⁷⁰ Patrick Cockburn. 1997. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/norway-reopens-mossad-case-of-mistaken-identity-1296317.html>

²⁷¹ Doug Melgren. 2000. *Norway solves riddle of Mossad killing*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/mar/02/israel>

²⁷² 2013. <http://israelspy.com/beta/mossad-hit-teams-big-mistake-40-years-ago-wrong-man-killed-in-norway-new-reflections/>

Mossad safe houses, which in turn contained more information on Israel's targeted assassination program. Under intense international pressure, Prime Minister Golda Meir had to halt Operation Wrath of God.²⁷³ It took five years for the operation to re-commence again, this time under new Prime Minister Menechem Begin.

Once again Mossad demonstrated its relentless fury by resuming the hunt on the Red Prince as if nothing had happened. Salameh's luck ran out in November 1978, when he met a British charity worker Erika Chambers. Salameh took a liking to Chambers and took her to various events, during which he unintentionally divulged his daily routine.²⁷⁴ On 22 January 1979 Erika Chambers, parked her Volkswagen on the Rue Verdun, knowing that Salameh would pass by later. She observed the street from a vantage point, pretending to paint. Salameh's convoy approached some hours later. As the convoy neared her car, Chambers pressed a remote-control device as she had been instructed by Mossad agents and detonated the plastic explosives rigged inside the Volkswagen. Eight people were killed, including four bystanders. Salameh survived the initial blast but died on the operating table after enduring great pain. Salameh's assassination was the last confirmed kill of Operation Wrath of God, though the hunt would continue for many years afterwards. After all, the three surviving perpetrators of the Munich massacre were still at large and they must face Israel's justice. We can be sure that at least one perpetrator, Jamal al-Gashey, managed to elude Mossad's grasp and lived well into 1999, when he provided an interview for the documentary *One Day in September*.²⁷⁵ The remaining two characters, Adnan al-Gashey and Mohammed Safady, had more ambiguous fates. Author Aaron Klein in his book *Striking Back: The 1972 Munich Olympics Massacre and Israel's Deadly Response* claims that Adnan died of heart failure in 1978-1979 and Safady was killed by Christian Phalangists in Lebanon as a gesture to Mossad. PLO veteran Tawfiq Tirawi during a conversation with Klein, however, confirms that Safady was alive.²⁷⁶

Israeli Targeted Killing Today. Operation Wrath of God undoubtedly propelled the Israeli intelligence community to international fame. The message was heard loud and clear. *'Israel does not forgive, and Israel does not forget.'* Most major intelligence agencies across the world have dabbled in covert/ clandestine operations like assassination to a certain degree, though Mossad is perhaps the only one to unabashedly flaunts its murderous mastery. The CIA treated targeted killing the same way *The Godfather's* Don Corleone treated his ablest assassin, Luca Brasi: "gingerly like handling a dynamite."²⁷⁷ To the CIA, assassination/targeted killing is like a useful subject who has done his country a great service but will never deserve a seat in the royal feast. If we want to continue this dramatic comparison, perhaps we can say that Mossad regards assassination the same way a samurai regards his battle-worn katana: always there when he needs it, always up to the task, ever there by his side, ever there to strike down his foes.

Indeed, Ronan Bergman, an author specialized on classified intelligence materials, once states. "This emphasis [on assassination] is because of Israel's existential fears. This is not policy –

²⁷³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Operation-Wrath-of-God>

²⁷⁴ Noam Shalev. 2006. *The Hunt for Black September*.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/this_world/4627388.stm

²⁷⁵ Naomi Pfefferman. 2001. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2001-03-04/news/0103040508_1_hostage-crisis-jamal-al-gashey-mossad

²⁷⁶ Aaron Klein. 2007. *Striking Back: the 1972 Munich Olympics Massacre and Israel's Deadly Response*, pgs. 223-226. Random House. ISBN 978-0-8129-7463-8

²⁷⁷ Mario Puzo. *The Godfather*, pg. 16. Online: http://www.kkoworld.com/kitablar/Mario_Puzo-The_Godfather_eng.pdf

it's mindset, the feeling that the Mossad is the final frontier for defending the national security of the State of Israel.”²⁷⁸ This sharply contrasts with Jeremy Scahill's statement regarding the US targeted killing program in *The Assassination Complex*, in which he writes. “Drones are a tool, not a policy. The policy is assassination.”²⁷⁹ The differences in the way Israel and the United States – two countries that have much in common – regard assassination can be attributed to various factors. First, the United States does not face existential threat: it shares a border with a friendly neighbor to the north and had a lukewarm relationship with another neighbor to the south. Second, it arguably possesses the best location out of any country in the world: its flanks are protected by two of the world's largest oceans, making it extremely difficult for its enemies to land on its shores, while on the other hand it can project its powers west and east at once. Third, its hard power remains the most powerful: its navy cruises the world unchallenged and its nuclear arsenal can flatten any enemy to a parking lot in less than 24 hours. With such enormous geographical advantages and military disparity, it simply does not need to emphasize subterfuge, deceit and dishonourable murders. Israel, on the other hand, is surrounded by hostile Arab states, and has no allies nearby. It maintains an unspoken nuclear deterrent threat,²⁸⁰ though that guarantee remains fragile. Who is to say its enemies will not develop nuclear capabilities of their own. Iran certainly has the potential to do so, if only it has the political will. Syria in 2007 was already constructing a reactor similar to North Korea's Yongbyon facility, though Israel's Operation Outside the Box made sure that reactor never saw the light of day again.²⁸¹ With Iran and North Korea collaborating on ballistic missile technology²⁸² in order to produce better IRBMs²⁸³, Israel's tiny dimension seems to have shrunk to the point of becoming insignificant. That is why intelligence, special operations, assassination, and pre-emptive strikes are so important. Intelligence keeps Israel's leaders updated on the development of their enemies. Assassination wipes out hostile nuclear and rocket scientists, terrorists, and whoever else endangers the lives and security of the people of Israel. And pre-emptive bombings make sure the Arab neighbors stay nuclear-free.

The view that Israel should not be squeamish in its assassination campaigns is shared by Steven R. David in his debate *Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing*. David claims that “Israel should be open and unapologetic in its pursuit of targeted killing.”²⁸⁴ According to David, being squeamish and evading responsibility when the world knows of Israel's involvement serves no purpose. This sort of behavior undermines Tel-Aviv's legitimacy, further enhancing the perception that it has something to hide. Although David acknowledges that targeted killing is a legitimate and moral response to terrorist attacks, he nevertheless believes that targeted killing is an “unsavory practice in an unsavory time.”²⁸⁵ Yes, indeed Israel would like to reach some

²⁷⁸ Matti Friedman. 2010.

https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2010/02/19/behind_the_myth_of_the_mossad.html

²⁷⁹ Jeremy Scahill. *The Assassination Complex*. Chapter: The Drone Legacy.

²⁸⁰ Note: Israel is not a member of the NPT, though it is known to possess nuclear weapons.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>

²⁸¹ 2011. IAEA: *Syria tried to build nuclear reactor*. <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4062001,00.html>

²⁸² Samuel Ramani. 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/a-closer-look-at-iran-and-north-koreas-missile-cooperation/>

²⁸³ Musudan BM-25 Missile. <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/musudan/>

²⁸⁴ Steven R. David. 2003. *Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing*, pg. 126. *Ethics & International Affairs*, 17, no. 1, 111-126. Online: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ethics-and-international-affairs/article/israels-policy-of-targeted-killing/93772E248A5DD41B099F31A22657C39D>

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

sorts of a political settlement with various terrorist organizations. Alas, Israel is only a small country stuck in a precarious situation in an imperfect world, and until such a conflict resolution can be made, targeted killing remains dependable, because it is a bespoke attack without the intention of killing more than necessary.

We have discussed Wrath of God in details, but the 21st century has rolled by. Many think of the United States when they hear ‘targeted killing’, but it was Israel that first began to employ such practices extensively and systematically. It all started with the rise of the Second Intifada in 2000, in which Palestinian suicide bombers escalated their attacks.²⁸⁶ These attacks in turn prompted Shin Bet, Israel’s international security service, to adopt a new modus operandi: more emphasis on counter-insurgency, more intelligence operations deep in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, and switching from a defensive mindset to taking the offense against terrorists. The Second Intifada coincides with Avi Dichter’s ascension to Shin Bet’s directorship.²⁸⁷ As a former commando of the legendary Sayeret Matkal, Dichter took a more hardline stance compared to his predecessor. During that time, Israel’s Prime Minister was none other than Dichter’s former commander in the Unit, Ehud Barak, a veteran of Operations Spring of Youth, Wrath of God, and Thunderbolt. This dynamics undoubtedly shaped Israel’s ruthless response against Fatah, Hamas and Islamic jihadists during the Second Intifada and beyond.

In August 2001, the Bush administration criticized “Israel’s policy of pinpoint killing of Palestinians”, claiming that Israel was responsible for worsening the Middle East conflict and urging a stop to what it dubbed “the humiliation of the Palestinian people.”²⁸⁸ That, however, was 28 August, exactly two weeks before 11 September. Nine days later on 20 September, then President George W. Bush declared his ‘war on terror’ in a joint session of Congress and American people.²⁸⁹ The rest was history. The US modeled its targeted killing in the early 2000s after Israeli practices,²⁹⁰ and since then, targeted killing has become a new normal for both states. As opposed to the US, however, Israel has a little more of wiggle-room as far as legality is concerned. It can be argued that Israel remains at war with Palestine, so the use of force is permissible in certain areas that fall under Palestinian territories, because it is legitimate for combatants to kill other combatants in times of conflict. A little bit of wiggle-room means just that – a small advantage. This does not imply Israel is immune to criticism. Still, it allows Tel-Aviv to build a stronger case for their targeted killing campaign than it does Washington. The United States routinely assassinates people in countries it is not at war with, in some cases even in its allies’ territories, such as Pakistan (the killing of bin Laden) where they create a deep sense injustice and resentment among the affected population.

Does Israel’s targeted killing work? According to Daniel L. Byman, counterterrorism expert of Georgetown University, the answer is yes. In 2006,²⁹¹ Byman states that after the Second Intifada broke out, Israel stepped up its targeted killing program and killed more than 200 Palestinian terrorists. In Byman’s words, targeted killing operated in tandem with enhanced border security, improved intelligence and military operations reduced “Israeli deaths from a

²⁸⁶ 2004. Israel’s Targeted Killing. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3556809.stm

²⁸⁷ The Gatekeepers. *Avi Dichter 2000-2005*. <http://www.thegatekeepersfilm.com/dichter-en.html>

²⁸⁸ http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2001-08-28/news/0108280257_1_militant-palestinian-faction-palestinian-people-palestinian-authority

²⁸⁹ 2001. *Adress to a Joint Session of Congress and American People*. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

²⁹⁰ Alex de Waal. 2015. <https://bostonreview.net/blog/alex-de-waal-assassinating-terrorists-does-not-work>

²⁹¹ Daniel L. Byman. 2006. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/targeted-killing-american-style/>

high of 172 in 2002 to less than 40 in 2005.”²⁹² This sentiment is echoed by Ophir Phalk nine years later in his article *Measuring the Effectiveness of Israel’s Targeted Killing Program*. Phalk gathered the numbers and results of targeted killing conducted by Israel in the territories between 2000-2009 from LexisNexis and Google Scholar, as well as sources governmental and non-governmental agencies, and his own communications with other researchers. Phalk’s data on targeted killing was collected from the publications of: the Israel Security Agency, the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, the International Policy Institute for Counterterrorism, B’tselem, and more.²⁹³ Phalk’s statistics confirm that there is an inverse ratio between Israel’s targeted killings and suicide bombing fatalities. In other words, the numbers tell us that the frequency and lethality Palestinian suicide bombings decreased over time (from a peak of 60 attacks in 2002 to zero in 2009)²⁹⁴ as Israel increased its targeted killing efforts (refer to Figure 3 for a graph).

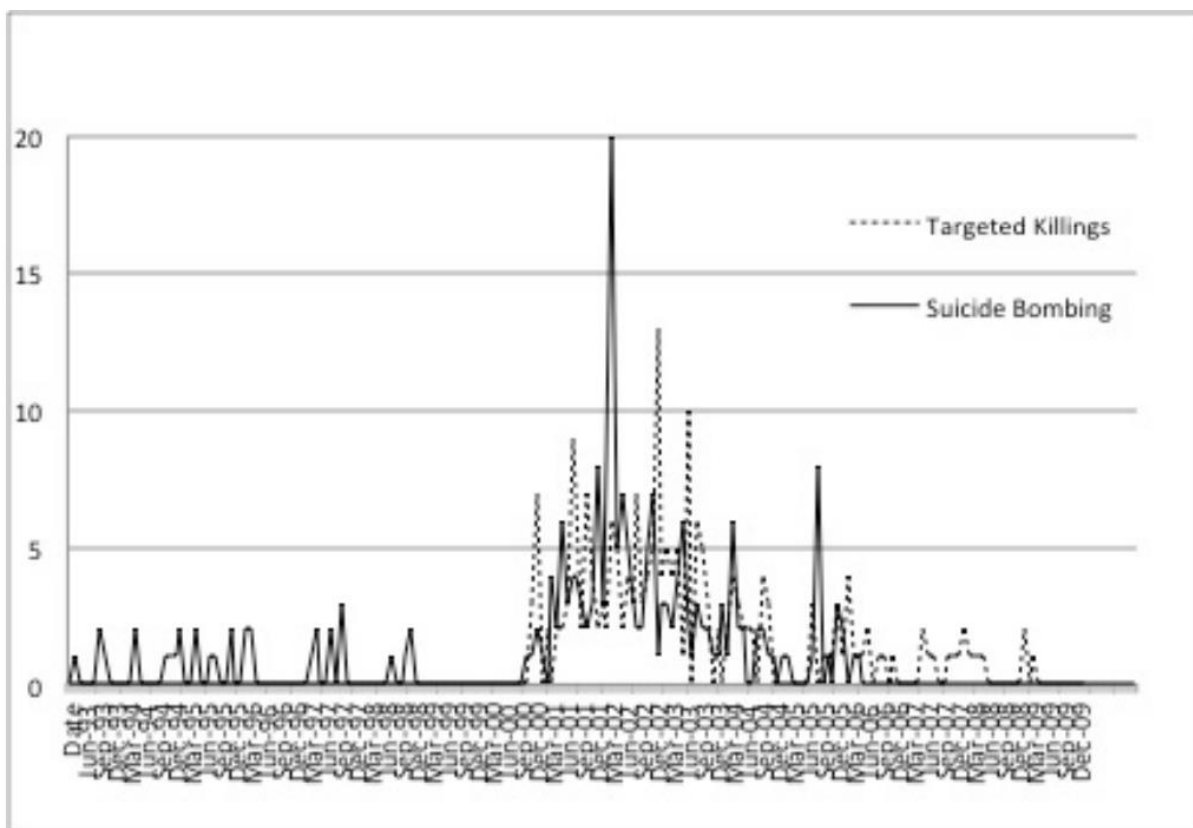


Figure 3: Comparison of Targeted Killings and Suicide Bombings.²⁹⁵

Finally, Phalk acknowledges that targeted killing is incapable of fostering peace and ending conflicts. However, the numbers indicate that suicide bombing fatalities did decrease in correspond to Israel’s increase in targeted killings. Thus, in short terms, Israel’s targeted killing policy did serve its purpose. It was “effective in mitigating suicide terror attacks generated from the Territories in general and from Gaza most specifically.”²⁹⁶ It achieved tactical and strategic

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ophir Falk. 2015. *Measuring the Effectiveness of Israel’s Targeted Killing Campaign*, pg. 8. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 9, Issue 1.

²⁹⁴ Ophir Falk. 2015. *Measuring the Effectiveness of Israel’s Targeted Killing Campaign*, pg. 18.

²⁹⁵ Phalk. 2015. *Measuring the Effectiveness of Israel’s Targeted Killing Campaign*, pg. 12.

²⁹⁶ Phalk. 2015. *Measuring the Effectiveness of Israel’s Targeted Killing Campaign*, pg. 21.

successes. Tactically it accurately eliminated targets deemed dangerous to Israel. Strategically it played a key factor in reducing or stopping fatalities from suicide bombings.

Israel's assassinations in the 21st century. We would like to end this Israel subsection with a famous case that demonstrates the Mossad's cunning at a tactical level, yet also illustrates its own failure from a strategic perspective. The year was 2010. Mahmoud al-Mabhouh²⁹⁷ landed in Dubai on 19 January. He had been on Israel's kill list for smuggling arms from Iran to Gaza for Hamas to use.²⁹⁸ All in all, Mabhouh was not a prime target, but he was marked a dead man anyway. His death was pre-determined on 15 January, during a meeting involving Meir Dagan, Mossad's Director and "Holiday", the head of Caesarea, Mossad's own assassination department. Mabhouh had to die, but not everyone agreed that his death was worth the risks and cost of the actual assassination. In short, the Mossad had bigger fish to fry. According to Bergman, however, Dagan and other Mossad officials were confident of their previous successes, and so they went forward with the operation anyway. Caesarea operatives arrived in Dubai on 18 January using fake passports from Great Britain, Ireland, France, Germany and Australia. Dubai was a perfect place to kill Mabhouh because the Mossad deemed the place to have the weakest intelligence and police department and an impressive number of tourists and businessmen – perfect for covers. This underestimation of Dubai's police would later haunt them. Al-Mabhouh was ambushed in his room on 19 January. Mossad – more specifically Caesarea operatives – injected suxamethonium chloride into his neck using an instrument that operates on ultrasound waves so as to not break the skin. The assassins waited for the paralysis to take over as their target lay on the floor, perfectly aware of his surroundings but unable to move a muscle. Upon confirming his death, they put his body to bed and removed all traces of their presence before leaving the hotel room. They thought they had outsmarted Dubai and thereby the world. They did not.

The problem Mossad operatives face when travelling outside of Israel is that Israeli passports are useless for getting into Arab countries. CIA assassins can carry passports issued by the US State Department. The Mossad counterfeits passport copies of less suspicious countries. So, these documents had to be meticulously made and could not be used repeatedly, as doing so would endanger the mission and the operatives' lives. Meir Dagan had a tendency to rush technicians and bully them into producing papers as soon as possible, a decision that, according to Bergman, was "bold leadership until it went horribly wrong."²⁹⁹ Dagan let Caesarea assassins use the same identities four times in Dubai, allowing the Dubai police to narrow down the list of suspects by checking the names of everyone who had arrived before al-Mabhouh and left shortly after he died. Then it was simple to thin down the list by cross-checking the names against those who had also arrived the previous three times in the same window as al-Mabhouh. The Dubai police collected the whole story from fragmented CCTV cameras, held a press conference in which they issued an arrest warrant of Meir Dagan himself, and put the video on the internet for the world to watch.³⁰⁰ The countries whose passports Israel had forged were not

²⁹⁷ Based on: Ronan Bergman. 2018. Rise and Kill First. Chapter: An Impressive Tactical Success, A Disastrous Strategic Failure.

²⁹⁸ Wafa Isa. 2010. *Al Mabhouh Killed Hours After Arrival*.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20100820015917/http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=%2F20100201%2FNATIONAL%2F701319829%2F1133%2FFOREIGN>

²⁹⁹ Ronan Bergman. Rise and Kill First. Chapter: An Impressive Tactical Success, A Disastrous Strategic Failure.

³⁰⁰ Al-Mabhouh Assassination. Online video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d9KDysPbZ0>

happy about it. They had collaborated with Israel before, but allowing their citizens – fictions citizens, to be sure – to be dragged into an assassination plot and an international scandal? That was out of line. Great Britain expelled an Israeli diplomat after the fiasco,³⁰¹ with Ireland³⁰² and Australia³⁰³ soon following suit. Dagan was blamed for the embarrassing result and was urged to resign.³⁰⁴

The international outcry did little to affect Israel's mood. The Israelis treated the harsh condemnation their country received from the world stage the same way they treated the criticisms of Israel's targeted killings: they did not care. The world's contempt instilled a stronger sense of patriotism among Israelis. It bound the Israeli society closer together. Jews with dual-citizenships offered their passports to the Mossad for future usage. This sense of solidarity can be explained quite simply. Yes, we can argue that Israel's dependence on targeted killing has harmed its image worldwide. We can say that Israel has paid a high moral price in its relentless pursue of terrorists and whoever else deemed dangerous to its security. Ultimately, though, none of that would have mattered to David before he went to fight Goliath. Israel is a country of limited means under constant threats. Getting approval from European countries sounds nice and all, but such a thing will not make Israel any safer. International praises are near useless for a country whose biggest trauma is the Holocaust, whose enemies desire its annihilation, and which has learned the lesson of powerlessness. Winning Nobel Peace prizes do not save Israeli lives; winning wars and killing terrorists do.

Summary: How Israel transformed the norms of assassination.

Israel was the first to systematically implement assassination into its wider scope of foreign and counter-terrorism policies. Israel is too small to change the international norms like the United States, but it enjoys the advantage of being some sort of an 'outlier' in the international arena. This creates an 'us-against-the-world' mindset that allows for the Israelis to withstand international criticisms more effectively than the United States – the country often regarded as the world's policeman – can. Israel is with exceptional geopolitical challenges and everything it does is exceptional. A great many things Israel does cannot be considered international norms and not all states can afford to follow the Israeli model.

We have established earlier in Section II that while assassination had its own utilities in the pursuit of national interest, it had nevertheless been condemned by all of Europe by the time the Age of Enlightenment rolled by. We attribute this disdain towards assassination to three factors. 1) The change from the Hobbesian system to the Lockean system: States no longer viewed one another as enemies to be annihilated, but rather as rivals who could be negotiated with post-conflict. Since assassination was treacherous and painted its employers as untrustworthy, it was therefore disdained since states wished to maintain good manners for future negotiation and settlement. 2) State leaders seek their own self-interest. Assassination is decapitation in nature, thus implying state leaders are the most vulnerable targets. This became

³⁰¹ Jeremy Bowen. 2010. *Expulsion of Diplomats Sends a Strong Signal to Israel*. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8583041.stm

³⁰² Mary Fitzgerald. 2010. *Forged Passport Inquirt Urges Expulsion of Israeli*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20110210134534/http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/frontpage/2010/0602/1224271678155.html>

³⁰³ Philip Hudson. 2010. <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/israeli-diplomat-to-be-kicked-out-of-australia-over-passport-forgery-row/news-story/5245f605e0a86296658ebbc26d3e5455?nk=6cd55579d88f65320ac701f25e8cc92d-1524523582>

³⁰⁴ Al-Jazeera. 2010. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/02/201021875613810292.html>

unacceptable to many rational kings and emperors. 3) Assassination is viewed by many to be morally wrong.

Point 1 is the most crucial to explaining the way Israel transformed its assassination norms. Since the majority of Israeli targets are terrorists (with the exception of nuclear scientists of hostile states) and terrorists are non-state actors, assassination can be acceptably inserted into Tel-Aviv's rhetoric. Furthermore, Israel has been stressing that it does not negotiate with terrorists, as we can see in the outrage against the West German negotiation with the hijackers of Lufthansa Flight 615, and in Defense Minister Rabin's statement. "PLO is a terrorist organization with whom there is no point in even deluding ourselves into thinking we can negotiate with."³⁰⁵ Israel is surrounded by non-state enemies with whom it does not see the need to negotiate. Why, then, should it refrain from exceptional measures like assassination if it does not concern itself with adverse effects assassination brings, ie. worsening relationships and making future negotiations difficult?

The unique nature of the threat in which Israel has found itself and the pre-emptive mindset that stems from the Holocaust provided the catalyst for change. Indeed, we can argue that it was the Munich Massacre that forced the Israelis to turn to drastic measures. Since Operation Wrath of God, Israeli has placed its faith on assassination and this faith is unlikely to be shaken. According to Bergman in an interview with PBS, the Israeli leadership believe they can use targeted killing and the intelligence services to "stop history, rather to turn to compromise, political discourse and statesmanship."³⁰⁶ The exceptional nature of terrorism has been debated over and over in the scholarly literature,³⁰⁷ and we believe this exceptionality has made it possible for Israel (and many other states) to sanction exceptional means in the fight against terrorists. Even though there is a greater amount of people dying by car crash per year, the casualties by terrorism still trigger a much more powerful fear, anxiety and outrage in the population. This means terrorists are viewed as some of the vilest forms of criminals, making their annihilation that much simpler to justify using the right rhetoric and speech-acts. Assassination is exactly what Israel needs to fuel its 'mowing the lawn' tactic. It reduces the enemies' capabilities and keeps their number well-maintained.³⁰⁸

Another crucial factor that contributed to Israel's normalization of targeted killing has to do with the change in its leadership in the early 2000s. The prime minister between 1999-2001, during the Palestinian Second Intifada, was Ehud Barak, a living legend even among the Israeli special forces community for having distinguished himself in the rescue Operations Isotope and Thunderbolt, the 1973 raid on Lebanon, and Operation Wrath of God. Ehud Barak's fight against terrorism and insurgency during the Second Intifada was aided by his former subordinate in the Sayeret Matkal, Avi Dichter, the then Director of Shin Bet, Israel's internal

³⁰⁵ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 1985. 89 Interview with Defense Minister Rabin on Israel Television. <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook7/Pages/89%20Interview%20with%20Defense%20Minister%20Rabin%20on%20Israel.aspx>

³⁰⁶ *The Inside Story of Israel's Campaign of Assassination*. PBS. Original quote: "So, the story is of a great many, many, many tactical successes of the intelligence community, but yet a strategic failure..." <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/the-inside-story-of-israels-campaign-of-assassination>

³⁰⁷ See examples: Richard Jackson. 2009. *The Study of Terrorism after 11 September 2001*. DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-9299.2009.00177.

Faculty of Law. University of Oslo. 2017. *The State of Emergency and Terrorism*. Online: https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/57608/8015_HUMR5200.pdf?sequence=1

³⁰⁸ David M. Weinberg. 2014. <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/KNOW-COMMENT-Mowing-the-grass-in-Gaza-and-beyond-363290>

security agency. For a better illustration of this relationship, let us imagine how different Washington's policies would be if the US President and CIA Director both served in the Delta Force.

3. The Russian Federation

Russia has had a long history with assassination. Like Israel, it has very few qualms about murdering its enemies at home and abroad. The dreaded KGB collapsed along with its 2-day reign in the final days of the Soviet Union, but its successor, the internal FSB and the external SVR, have always been keen to make their parents proud. Russia has utilized assassination to support its war efforts during the First and Second Chechen Wars.³⁰⁹ Among the high-profile targets executed by Russia in the First Chechen War, Dzhokar Dudayev, a former Soviet Air Force General and the then Chechen leader, stands out the most. He – or rather the phone that was pressed against his ear – was blown up by two guided missiles after his phone call had been tracked by a Russian reconnaissance aircraft.³¹⁰ Then Russia began to pay closer attention to the Chechen leadership, designing a bespoke operation to each person deemed interesting enough to guarantee a spot on the kill list. The methods were as colorful as they were creative: car bombs, special operations, laser-guided missiles and so on.

Chechens aside, Russia also has a history of targeting dissidents and troublemakers abroad. As displayed in the cases of Litvinenko, Skripal, and Kara-Murza,³¹¹ poison is also another favored tool of Russian assassins. Like Israel, Russia does not forget and does not forgive. In 2010, President Vladimir Putin, while on TV, promised that. “Traitors will kick the bucket, trust me. Those people betrayed their friends, their brothers in arms. Whatever they got in exchange for it, those 30 pieces of silver they were given, they will choke on them.”³¹² Russia has demonstrated by both words and deeds that it will not hesitate to kill, and international law be damned. It wants its defectors, dissidents and enemies to live the constant fear of expecting a bullet to fly through their skulls. Former KGB officer, Viktor Makarov expressed his fear during one interview following Litvinenko's death. “They will try to shoot me in the back of the head, or they might use poison,” he said. “They never forget.”³¹³ Skripal had lived in terror of Russia's revenge before he was poisoned in March 2018,³¹⁴ and so do many others who the Kremlin marked as traitors.

The Masters of Fear. Like its counterparts in Israel, the Russian intelligence community knows exactly how to weaponize fear, wearing its dreaded reputation like a suit of armor. This is evidenced by one event that has become an immortalized testimony to the KGB's (and the Russian intelligence community's) no-nonsense approach. It was 1986 in Beirut, and three Soviet diplomats had been kidnapped by Islamic terrorists (said to hail from various branches

³⁰⁹ Matthew A. Morehouse. 2015. *The Claws of the Bear: Russia's Targeted Killing Program*, pg. 272. *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 28:269-298. DOI: 10.1080/13518046.2015.1030231

³¹⁰ Eric Margolis. 2010. *Time to Set the Chechen Free*.

https://web.archive.org/web/20120105203129/http://www.ericmargolis.com/political_commentaries/time-to-set-the-chechen-free.aspx

³¹¹ Elias Groll. 2018. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/09/a-brief-history-of-attempted-russian-assassinations-by-poison/>

³¹² Shehab Khan. 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-traitors-kick-bucket-sergei-skripal-latest-video-30-pieces-silver-a8243206.html>

³¹³ Brian Brady. 2010. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-spy-who-was-sent-into-the-cold-2029214.html>

³¹⁴ Dan Lomas. 2018. <https://theconversation.com/sergei-skripal-and-the-long-history-of-assassination-attempts-abroad-93021>

of the Hezbollah organization) during what is now called the Lebanese hostage crisis.³¹⁵ Among the captured were also American and Western European diplomats. The US tried to free its hostages by setting up an elaborate plan, and we dare argue much too elaborate in comparison to the Russian ways. In short, it involved setting up a secret arms sale with Iran (which was subject to an arms embargo at the time), using Israel as an intermediary (which was responsible for funnelling the US weapons to Iran, receive another US resupply, and then pay the US), and ultimately using Israeli money to fund the Contras in Nicaragua in a proxy-war and pressuring the Iranian government to negotiate for the release of the American hostages.³¹⁶ The whole thing ended in the Iran-Contra scandal that shamed the Reagan administration.³¹⁷

How did the Soviets do it? They had a simpler plan. The KGB abducted one Lebanese man who was confirmed to be a close relative to a prominent leader of the Hezbollah.³¹⁸ They castrated him and delivered his testicles to the Hezbollah, before shooting the man in the head with a bullet. The KGB then made it clear that they knew all about the whereabouts of the Hezbollah leader's relatives, and that he should be expecting more such deliveries if the Soviet diplomats were not freed immediately. They were freed immediately. Never again was a Soviet citizen kidnapped in Lebanon. Ben Morris, an Israeli historian, spoke of the KGB's efficiency, saying. "This is the way the Soviets operate. They do things - they don't talk. And this is the language the Hezbollah understand."³¹⁹ To the Russian intelligence community, this was the language that the Hezbollah understood in 1986, and the language that ISIS and every other extremist terror group, every defector and traitor to the Motherland, and every enemy of Russia understand just as perfectly in 2018. This love for intimidation is not restricted to the Russian intelligence community, however. It is embraced by all branches of the Russian government and armed forces. In 2017, Russia enacted a war drill in which it attacked 3 fictional states modelled after Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.³²⁰ France and Germany quickly called Russia out on its "strategy of intimidation."³²¹

The assassins employed by the Russian intelligence community undoubtedly have the capability to stage their kills in such ways that draw fewer headlines. Given the massive attention that the Litvinenko and Skripal cases received, this was not the case. We believe the fear and the alarm that these assassinations elicit are exactly how the Kremlin intended. There is an old saying in Chinese: 杀一儆百, which can be translated as "Punish one to teach one hundred". This is the maxim that was employed by countless Chinese emperors, the Mafia, and pretty much all organized crime organization around the world. This maxim works just as well for Russia under Putin's guidance. The elaborate poisonings all over the United Kingdom have become the Kremlin's signature. These assassinations leave no doubt that they are Russia's revenge. Like the Israelis during Wrath of God, the Russians too would like to leave a message: "Don't be traitors. Don't cross us. We will kill you just as you start to think you are safe."

³¹⁵ Dyole McManus. 1989. http://articles.latimes.com/1989-08-02/news/mn-571_1_hostage-crisis

³¹⁶ https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/iran-contra-affairs.php

³¹⁷ National Security Archive. 2006. The Iran-Contra Affair 20 Years On. Online: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB210/index.htm>

³¹⁸ 1986. <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1986/01/06/Kidnapped-Soviets-released-through-castration/2113505371600/>

³¹⁹ Eugene Girin. 2014. <https://www.chroniclesmagazine.org/how-to-deal-with-hostage-takers-soviet-lessons/>

³²⁰ Andrew Rettman. 2017. Russian War Game to Intimidate NATO Allies. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/139016>

³²¹ Andrew Rettman. 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-zapad-drills-france-germany-denounce/28722103.html>

*Contract Killers and Political Assassins. The Russian Way.*³²² From the 1990s until today, financiers, bankers, entrepreneurs and criminal leaders whose activities and interests clashed with those of their competitors have been assassinated by hitmen hailing from Russia. The collapse of the Soviet Union and its intelligence machine provided a fertile pool from which professional contract killers could be recruited. Ex-KGB, OMON and GRU officers, Afghan war veterans, and retired Spetsnaz operatives were in need of jobs and their skillsets were in high demand. They had killed people for their country before. This time they get to do the same, only the pay was better.

Another specialty Russia has is the murder cases of journalists. These cases often remain unsolved. The most notable case is the death of Dmitry Kholodov, who was investigating organized crime connections in the military³²³ and planning to expose the full extent of the corruption to the State Duma. Before he could deliver his speech, a briefcase was delivered to his office with the promise of containing documents exposing corruption in the armed forces within. Unbeknownst to him, the luggage was booby-trapped.³²⁴ Kholodov's death sparked public and official attention because it implied the order must have come from the military's highest hierarchy. Initially Defense Minister Pavel Grachev was the prime suspect as he was the person Kholodov had criticized the most. Grachev maintained his innocence, stressing the obvious fact that his GRU (Main Intelligence Directorate) operatives would have been much more discreet. It took Russian investigators more than three years to begin their arrest. The charges were astounding. Kholodov's assassins hailed from the 45th Airborne Spetsnaz Reconnaissance Regiment. Among the charged were the 45th's commander, Colonel Pavel Popovskikh; three officers of the special task force of the 45th; one businessman; one deputy director of a private security organization; and a former 45th Spetsnaz officer.³²⁵ Their arrest brought the case to light: the murder was ordered by Defense Minister (and a former Airborne Forces commander) Pavel Grachev. Another high-profile kill happened in 2005, where the former FSB chief, General Anatoly Trofimov, and his wife were gunned down in Moscow. There were speculations that the murder was business-related, making it a contract killing. Alexander Litvinenko, a former FSB officer, believed it was more political than anything else. "In today's Russia, not one businessman under any circumstances would raise their hand against a general of the FSB," he said.³²⁶

The audacity of the assassinations in the mid-1990s and by extension the early 2000s provided ample fuel for the suspicions regarding the existence of a secret society of assassins formed by the military itself, or some sorts of an organized form of death-squads made of the crème-de-la-crème of Russian security services and special forces. In 1994, reporters mentioned a GRU spetsnaz base where "they allegedly train either killers or heavies to eliminate criminal high-ups against whom the law and the militia are powerless."³²⁷ Former KGB and GRU officers did not refrain from taking the law into their own hands. In the 1990s, a so-called Feliks group began to emerge with the goal of engaging on vigilante activities in the name of the Russian

³²² Based on: Graham H. Turbiville, Jr. 2005. *Russian Special Forces: Issues of Loyalty, Corruption and the Fight against Terror*. Joint Special Operations University, pg. 14-21. JSOU Pamphlet 05-1. Online:

http://www.socom.mil/JSOU/JSOUPublications/JSOU05-1PturbivilleRussianSF_final.pdf

³²³ Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/data/people/dmitry-kholodov/index.php>

³²⁴ Graham H. Turbiville. 2005. *Russian Special Forces*, pg. 16.

³²⁵ Ibid. pg. 17.

³²⁶ 2005. *Slain Russian Officer's Wife Dies*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4432813.stm>

³²⁷ Burbyga, Yakov. Pavel Grachev. See ref. 152 of the following link: http://groups.uni-paderborn.de/kowag/geoeconomics/d_rmiu_0202.htm

state. Members of the Feliks group ranged from the ranks of major to colonel, having served in either the armed forces or the security services. Their targets included officials judged “to be either corrupt or Western lackeys.”³²⁸

One example of an ex-special-police-turned-hitman was the notorious Alexander Solonik, dubbed the Superkiller by the Russian Mob.³²⁹ Solonik served in the Soviet Army before enlisting to the OMON special police department. Even by OMON’s standards, Solonik was considered extremely violent, especially towards suspects, and that was enough to earn him an expulsion. Solonik’s career as a contract killer flourished in the early years of the 1990s, when he worked the Kurgan criminal organization, dispatching their rivals with efficiency, earning him the respect of the Russian underworld and the attention of the Russian law enforcement agencies.³³⁰

Although Solonik was its most famous hitman, the Kurgan group did not lack for skilled ‘cleaners’ as its employees usually hailed from the former KGB and other Russian military branches. The story of Solonik and the Kurgans provides a curious illustration for the dynamics between the Russian secret services and the Russian criminal organizations. Alexander Litvinenko, before he was poisoned in 2006, wrote the book *Blowing Up Russia: The Secret Plot to Bring Back KGB Terror*, whose chapter 8 is dedicated to “freelance operations groups” set up by the FSB.³³¹ The Kurgan brigade liquidates underworld bosses as instructed by the Presidential Security Service (SBP) and the FSB.³³² The Kurgans, in the mid-1990s, found themselves in direct confrontation with the Koptev criminal organization, whose leader was Vasily Naumov, a secret agent of the MVD³³³ (Ministry of Internal Affairs). The Kurgans were assassinating key leaders of the Koptev organization, and as a response, Naumov presented a list of Kurgan members to the 12th Section of the Moscow City Police. This presented a difficult situation for the FSB as it neither wants the Kurgan brigade – its valuable asset in crime-killing - to be destroyed, nor does it want to be tangled in a cascade of information leak and a damning scandal. Using its intelligence prowess, the FSB provided the Kurgans what they needed to know about Naumov and how to kill him. In 1997, Kurgan gunmen shot Naumov as he was waiting for his Moscow Police contact. The Kurgans’ demise firstly came in the form of Korzhakov – their key supporter in the SBP – being dismissed, and secondly in a contract issued by the MVD, which demanded the Kurgans’ destruction. The contract was sponsored and paid by another blood-rival of the Kurgans, the Bauman group. Somehow the Kurgans had also earned the wrath of Sergei Butorin,³³⁴ the usurper-turned-king of the Orekhov group, which by this point operated a corps of cleaners consisting of former special operations officers from the Main Intelligence Directorate, the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Russian Airborne Troops. Butorin’s group was known to run effective assassination schedules on the same level as state secret services, and the goal here was to force the Kurgans away from Moscow and make them

³²⁸ Graham H. Turbiville. 2005. *Russian Special Forces*, pg. 1.

³²⁹ Pravda. 2003. *The Life and Death of Russian Killer Number One*.

<http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/24-01-2003/20886-0/>

³³⁰ Patrick Jackson. 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4801971.stm>

³³¹ Alexander Litvinenko. 2007. *Blowing Up Russia: The Secret Plot to Bring Back KGB Terror*. Chapter 8. Encounter Books.

³³² Independent. 2007. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/litvinenkos-russia-exclusive-the-book-putin-banned-433150.html>

³³³ Alexander Litvinenko. 2007. *Blowing Up Russia*, pg. 278.

³³⁴ <https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2011/09/06/gangster-osya-butorin-finally-sent-down-good-news-all-round/>

retreat to and regroup in Greece. Litvinenko attributed the FSB or the GRU for causing an information leak that alerted the Kurgan leaders of the hunt,³³⁵ as evidenced by the Kurgan founders' – Kogilov, Ignatov, Neliubin – failure to show up to meet with Solonik in his villa (where Butorin planned to kill them). Butorin's right-hand man, Sasha the Soldier, personally knew Solonik, and convinced the superkiller to enter a car. On the way, the Soldier strangled Solonik from the rear seat and left his body to be discovered by the Russian police the next day, on 3 February 1997.

The reign of Boris Yeltsin in 1991-1999 is often called the “wild nineties”. The world's largest sovereignty broke apart and found itself scrambling to maintain order and coherence. There seemed to be no rules and no limits. The Soviet Union, the almighty arbiter of properties, laws and rights, existed no longer. Russia found itself lacking of state authority and Russian organized crime fed on that void, quickly exploding all over sectors and activities, gobbling up oil, natural gas and mineral industries, as well as conquering telecommunications and transforming smuggling routes into supply and logistics chains.³³⁶ This led Yeltsin to declare in 1994 that Russia was “the biggest mafia state in the world, the superpower of crime.”³³⁷ Russian oligarchs relied on organized crime for various reasons. First, they were left on their devices as the Russian police was underpaid and undermanned to enforce the wellbeing of the Russian people and their property rights. Second, crime could either be their business strategy, their way of doing business, or an effective tool in negotiations. Third, Yeltsin's Russia was inefficient at settling disputes and maintaining laws, while organized crime was relentless in the pursue and imposing its version of justice. As the KGB, the world's largest intelligence agency, fragmented into the FSB and the SVR, thousands of its officers left the state to join the organized crime network. Not only did this reinforcement increased the amount of security Russian organized crime can provide its clients, it also gave organized crime a piece of the KGB cake, including its assets, intelligence, know-hows and so on.

Unlike the ex-spies who deferred to Russian mobsters to earn a living, Colonel Valery Radchikov of the GRU found his calling in the Russian Fund for the Afghan War Invalids. In 1994, the Fund's first manager, Likhodei, blew up as he neared his apartment block, his death splitting the Fund into two factions.³³⁸ The Fund was now managed by two individuals, Col. Valery Radchikov and Sergei Trakhirov (Likhodei's friend and successor), each heading his own faction. In 1995, Radchikov miraculously survived an assassination attempt in which he was shot by six bullets. One year later, his rival in the Fund, Trakhirov, was blown to pieces along with 12 other people, including Likhodei's widow, mother and uncle. The bombing happened during Trakhirov's memorial service at Kovyakovskoye Cemetery.³³⁹ Radchikov came under the police's microscope as he had the most plausible motive for wanting his rival dead.³⁴⁰ During Radchikov's times at the Afghan Fund, about \$200 million had ‘disappeared’ from the coffer.³⁴¹ Embezzling money was the norm in Russia, but this was an unprecedented extent. During the trial, Radchikov maintained his innocence and stressed he had nothing to do

³³⁵ Alexander Litvinenko. 2007. *Blowing Up Russia*, pg. 280.

³³⁶ Organized Crime in Russia. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/organized-crime-russia>

³³⁷ 2012. *Hess Oil's Russian Mob Problems*. <https://www.ire.org/resource-center/stories/25937/>

³³⁸ Gordon Bowers. 2015. *Conspiracy of Silence*. Chapter 22. John Blake Publishing.

³³⁹ Michael Specter 1996. <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/11/11/world/cemetery-bomb-in-moscow-kills-13-at-ceremony.html>

³⁴⁰ 1997. <https://jamestown.org/program/afghan-war-hero-charged-over-massacre/>

³⁴¹ *Litvinenko's Russia*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/litvinenkos-russia-exclusive-the-book-putin-banned-433150.html>

with the terrorist attack. Eventually, Radchikov and his co-conspirators were set free due to lack of evidence. In 2000, the Public Prosecutor's Office requested the case be reopened, but was turned down by the Supreme Court. In 2001, Valery Radchikov conveniently crashed his car into a lorry and died outside Moscow.³⁴² Radchikov was a main player in this whole story and his death closed the bloody saga: a grand total of 37 deaths and 62 injuries.³⁴³ And not a single criminal in jail. The allegations are clear: Alexander Litvinenko believed the string-pullers behind Rachikov was the Russian mob. The Afghan Fund was useful for organized crime because it provided ample opportunities for money laundering. Russian mobsters would 'donate' into various charities for veterans and invalids or 'invest' into the Fund itself, producing money fit to be circulated in the legal economy.

The marriage between the Russian secret services and the mob was one borne out of convenience and pragmatism more than anything else. According to a telegram leaked from the US Embassy, Spain detailed a "Strategy to Combat the Russian Mafia" in 2010" and provided an assessment on the Eurasian mafia to US officials in Madrid.³⁴⁴ Spain's National Court Prosecutor Jose Grinda Gonzalez provided a structured handout in which he alleged that "one cannot differentiate the activities of the government and OC [organized crime] groups."³⁴⁵ Grinda also supports Litvinenko's thesis that the Russian intelligence and security services, namely the FSB, SVR and GRU, control organized crime. In essence, the gangsters and the crime-lords have integrated into the state structure, working together with the official authorities to turn the wheels of the Russian Federation. According to Grinda's investigations and conclusions, the fundamental difference between Russian organized crime and terrorist groups is that organized crime does not seek to replace the state itself, nor does it wish for any drastic political changes. Organized crime thrives better as a complement to the state structure. This unlikely symbiosis provides the government with more options: it can use organized crime to organized crime groups to do "whatever the government cannot acceptably do as a government."³⁴⁶ This included rogue arms deals, gunning down disobedient crime bosses, illegal trafficking, cybercrimes, and whatever else too dirty for the government to be associated with.

Russia's Targeted Killing in the 21st Century. We have illustrated the way Russia used assassination to handle its own internal issues, ranging from executing troublesome businessmen to crime bosses, to intimidating potential dissidents. But Russia's ambitions need not be limited there. Like the United States, Russia uses targeted killing to complement its foreign policies and war-fighting capabilities. The Second Chechen War spanned 10 years, from 1999 to 2009,³⁴⁷ and it was here that the Kremlin had the chance to experiment, implement and model a surgical assassination program fit for 21st century warfare.

The most prominent example of a high-profile/high-value kill is probably the assassination of Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, who was killed on 13 February 2004 when a bomb tore his SUV apart

³⁴² Ian Traynor. 2001. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/feb/01/russia.iantraynor>

³⁴³ Ibid. Litvinenko's Russia Independent.

³⁴⁴ Public Library of US Diplomacy. *Spain Details its Strategy to Combat the Russian Mafia*. Wikileaks. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10MADRID154_a.html

³⁴⁵ Ibid, 4C.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 8 S//NF.

³⁴⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18190473>

in Doha, Qatar.³⁴⁸ The explosion caused an international commotion. Three Russian citizens were arrested by the Qatari authorities.³⁴⁹ One of them was Alexander Fetisov, First Secretary of the Russian Embassy, who claimed diplomatic immunity and was released. The two other agents were not so fortunate. The evidences were stacking against them: there were bomb-making materials in their place of residence, witnesses and the Qatari police have their cell-phone traffics.³⁵⁰ The agents provided a detailed confession because they thought their country had abandoned them, or perhaps they knew their most realistic chance of survival was to cooperate. Contrary to the agents' belief, the Kremlin was far from giving up on them. Russian politicians advocated for military measures to force the Qataris to release their people. The Kremlin's plans included raining dummy missiles on Doha, with the implication of launching real ones if the Qataris did not compel. Another plan proposed a rescue operation using special forces, which would certainly trigger a diplomatic crisis between Russia and the United States given the concentration of US forces in the small peninsula. Despite their grand threats, the Kremlin did not act on them and the Russians' trial proceeded. The Qatari court accused the Russian leadership of planning the murder of Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev and sentenced both assassins to life imprisonment.³⁵¹ This verdict strained the diplomatic relationship between Russia and Qatar. In December 2004, Qatar, in a gesture of goodwill towards Russia, agreed to extradite the assassins to Moscow, where they were supposed to serve out their life sentence. In February 2005, an official of the Russian prisons authority admitted that he had no knowledge of the assassins' identities and that "they were not being held in any of his jail."³⁵² The official further stated that the identities of these agents were "unclear" and that the Qatari sentence was "irrelevant" in Russia. The audacity with which Russia executed this operation – in the most dramatic manner possible amid the eyes of sensitive US military installations – suggested the Kremlin had done little to change its Cold War practices. It was the same unrelenting boldness that had made the KGB respected and feared. This, coupled with a touch of Russian disregard towards international and local laws, means Moscow will continue to brandish assassination as a multi-purpose tool that can serve its politics, diplomacy, and war, and no matter amount of international condemnation can make President Putin hesitant.

Has the Russian targeted killing program in the 2000s been effective? According to Matthew A. Morehouse the answer is no. In his article *The Claws of the Bear: Russia's Targeted Killing Program*, Morehouse concluded that "targeted killings had no significant impact, and at worst, they led to increases in number and severity of militant operations."³⁵³

³⁴⁸ 2004. *Top Chechen Separatist Dies in Qatar Bomb Blast*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/feb/14/chechnya.nickpatonwalsh>

³⁴⁹ Andrew McGregor. 2004. *The Assassination of Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev: Implications for the War on Terrorism*. Terrorism Monitor, vol. 2, issue 14. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-assassination-of-zelimkhan-yandarbiyev-implications-for-the-war-on-terrorism-2/>

³⁵⁰ Andrew McGregor. 2004. *The Assassination of Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev*. Chapter: A Trial of Two Agents.

³⁵¹ 2004. *Russia behind Chechen murder*. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3852697.stm

³⁵² Sarah Ransford. 2015. *Convicted Russian agents 'missing'*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4275147.stm>

³⁵³ Matthew A. Morehouse. 2015. *The Claws of the Bear: Russia's Targeted Killing Program*, pg. 269.

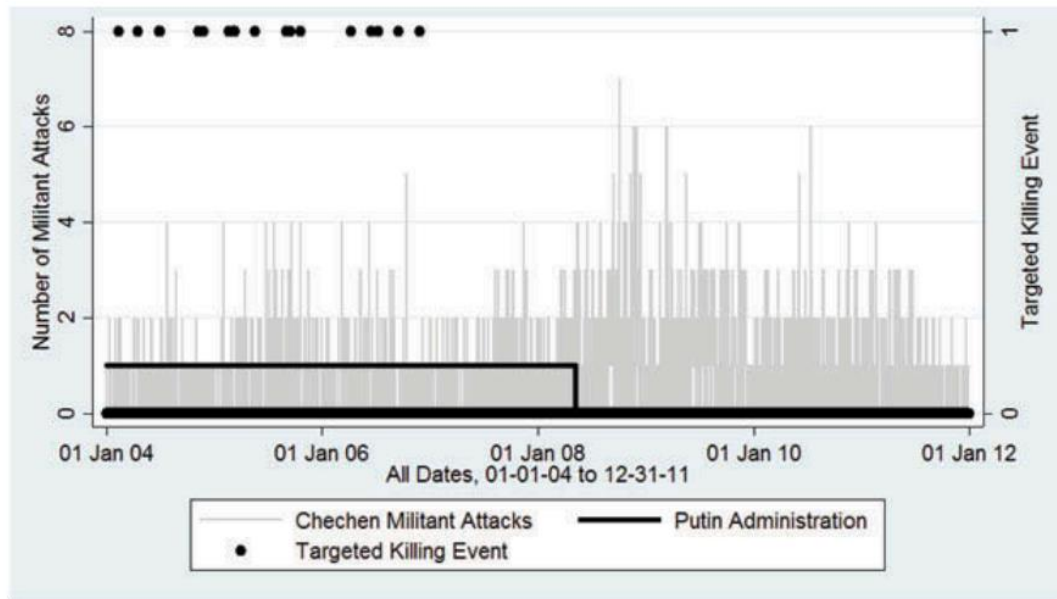


Figure 4: Chechen militant attacks in relations with targeted killing events between 2004-2011³⁵⁴

According to Morehouse’s research (summarized in Figure 4), the killing of Chechen militant commanders did not have “a statistically significant relationship with subsequent number of Chechen militant attacks at any lag period or time frame.” High-value targeted killing of top-level Chechen leaders also did not manage to decrease Chechen militant operations. Interestingly, however, Morehouse points out that both the number and the lethality of Chechen militant attacks were lower under the Putin administration. Morehouse attributes this achievement to the way Putin oversaw the deployment of Russian forces in Chechnya and the way he handled Russian counter-terrorism policies. The article also finds out some “disparate outcomes”³⁵⁵ during the tenures of Putin and Medvedev, suggesting differences in the way these individuals commanded Russia’s security policies. In the end, Morehouse declares that Moscow’s targeted killing program was unable to stifle the Chechen militant operations, and that further research should focus on the disparities between the Putin and Medvedev administrations, the influence of weather and harsh winters, or the results of socio-economic programs on violent patterns.

Summary: How Russia Transformed the Norms of Assassination.

Russia, like Israel, is not a norm-changer. Its assassination practices in the 21st century differ little from what we already know from the Soviet Cold War operations. The murder of Alexander Litvinenko in 2006 shares many characteristics with the murder of Georgi Markov (the Umbrella Case) in 1978. Both were killed by covert operations that had enough wiggle room for Russia/the Soviet Union to denounce their involvement, but still left enough details that served as a warning for future enemies. Both assassinations happened in the United Kingdom. In both cases, human operatives were used as the weapon carrier.

The only normative change we have found here is the transformation of its internal security practices. Whereas the Soviet Union vested its internal security policies in its Committee for

³⁵⁴ Picture from: Matthew A. Morehouse. 2015. *The Claws of the Bear: Russia’s Targeted Killing Program*, pg. 287.

³⁵⁵ Morehouse. 2015. *The Claws of the Bear*, pg. 297.

State Security, the Russian Federation of the 1990s onwards depended on a much more decentralized system that focused on delegations, contracts, and supervision. The breaking of the KGB provided a fertile ground for Russian organized crime to prosper, and organized crime, in turn, complemented the young Russian state, filling the void in security, law enforcement, and economics sectors. Russian security services have demonstrated that they are capable of using organized crime as allies. The FSB in the past used various gangs – the most famous of which being the Kurgans – to do its wet-work. This included eliminating businessmen whose activities put them in direct confrontation with the state, killing crime lords that were too difficult to handle, to smuggling and trafficking weapons in rogue operations. This is a departure from the way the KGB handled its covert operations.

Unlike the United States which has normalized its targeted killing practices and turned them into a ‘new normal’, the Russian state routinely denies all allegations against its assassination practices. This trait is also shared by the Soviet Union, whose direct involvement in the killings of Gergi Markov and Lev Rebet was not conclusively proven until the defections of various KGB officers. The normative change in the way Russia today handled its assassination policies implies one clear advantage over the old practices. By delegating dirty tasks to organized crime, the Russian state enjoys a degree of deniability. Since organized crime is illegal, it is acceptable for them to employ illegal methods such as extrajudicial killing. This means whatever harsh criticisms that befall assassination cases involving Russian organized crime, Moscow can simply shrug everything aside and continue its policies as usual.

From this perspective, Russia did not manage to transform assassination in to an acceptable measure like the United states did. But it has found a way to maximize its deniability in order to evade international condemnation. This does not mean organized crime represents the Russian security services and vice versa. While organized crime is useful for dispatching enemies at home, it is not the chosen weapon to use against enemies abroad, as we can observe in the assassination of Litvinenko and Skripal, the former being killed by an officer of the Federal Protective Service.³⁵⁶ This demonstrates that even though organized crime can be convenient at times, the Russian state cannot entrust sensitive operations such as killing defectors in countries it has poor relationships with to killers for hire. The only option for the Russian security services then, is to deploy their own operatives. Paradoxically, the use of these professional state-trained assassins has had no result on protecting Russia’s deniability, and instead has sparked an international outrage against Russia’s impunity.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ 2016. *Litvinenko Suspects Andrey Lugovoi and Dmitry Kovtun*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-35370621>

³⁵⁷ 2018. *Spy Poisoning: Russian Diplomats Expelled Across US And Europe*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43545565>

Section IV: Emerging Technologies: Their Impact on the Future Practices of Assassination

Out of all three previously mentioned states, technology played the role of the permissive catalyst in only in the case of the United States. For Israel and Russia, assassination was along the line of ‘business as usual’, and better weapons technology implies that they will be able to kill more effectively and more often. While much has been said about the relationship between technology and warfare, there is little debate on the relationship between technology and assassination. In this last Section, we will take a look at new technologies being developed and analyze their potential application in assassination programs in the world of tomorrow.

Lethal Autonomous Weapons: autonomous drones and insect-sized robots

Unlike UAVs which require human operatives controlling them, lethal autonomous weapons (LAWS) are designed to operate independently. LAWS can function in all sorts of environments, including air, ground, water and space. These so called killer robots have generated much controversies and will continue to do so as the technology develops to the point of giving machines a near-human autonomy, including targeting and killing with little or no human oversight. At the moment, prototypes of LAWS are being developed by the US Department of State’s DARPA, Boeing’s Phantom Works division, Lockheed Martin’s Skunkworks, and Great Britain’s BAE Systems; Russia is also developing its own AI-powered missile that can make its own decision,³⁵⁸ as well as drones, unmanned vehicle and military robots; while Israel is known to developing robots “as small as flies” that can “identify and exterminate” terrorist leaders.³⁵⁹ Lethal robots have been described as the third revolution of warfare, after gunpowder and nuclear weapons.³⁶⁰

From the military perspective, the advantages are clear at both strategic and tactical levels. Like UAVs, lethal robots excel at being a force multiplier and perhaps can be a force-replacer. This means a LAWS employer need not increase the size of his standing army in order to have more battlefield presence. With the help of LAWS, battlefields could extend beyond its usual range as combat robots can reach areas that were previous inaccessible for warfighters. Like existing UAVs, LAWS will further reduce the risks of combat, decrease the costs of war, and enable their employer to apply force with fewer repercussions. Criticisms against LAWS are usually based on legal and moral grounds. In 2015, an open letter called for a ban on “offensive autonomous weapons” in order to pre-emptively prevent an AI arms race across the globe was addressed at the opening of the International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence, bearing the signatures of Stephen Hawking (a renowned physicist of the University of Cambridge), Steve Wozniak (cofounder of Apple), Elon Musk (founder of Tesla and Space-X), and an impressive 3963 AI/Robotics researchers.³⁶¹ Since most criticisms against lethal robots are built around moral and legal reasons, we need not discuss them (unless it is practical to do so). However, there is one statement from this open letter that is of particular interest to us. In the

³⁵⁸ Dom Galeon, Kristin Houser. 2017. <https://futurism.com/russia-is-building-an-ai-powered-missile-that-can-think-for-itself/>

³⁵⁹ Udi Shaham 2017. <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Kara-I-wasnt-revealing-state-secrets-about-the-robots-482616>

³⁶⁰ 2017. *Killer robots: experts warn of third revolution in warfare*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-40995835>

³⁶¹ *Autonomous Weapons: An Open Letter from AI&Robotics Researchers*. Full list of signatories. <https://futureoflife.org/awos-signatories/>

second paragraph of the letter, it states that autonomous weapons are ideal for “assassination, destabilizing nations, subduing populations and selectively killing a particular ethnic group.”³⁶²

Since lethal autonomous weapons can do everything a an MQ-9 Reaper can – except much better – they should not only be able to take on the Reaper’s mandated assassination tasks, but also improve upon them. As the lethality and the technology of LAWS increase, so too will the power and utility of assassination as a weapon become. Since the US, Israel and Russia are employing assassination as instruments of their policies, their pursuit of national interest should improve proportionally with the advancement of the systems that are designed to selectively kill individuals.

Autonomous and Semi-Autonomous Drones. Examples of these weapons include the Northrop Grumman XB-47 and the Boeing X-45 being developed as part of DARPA’s Joint-Unmanned Combat Air Systems (J-UCAS), to be delivered to the US Navy and the US Air Force, respectively.³⁶³ The XB-47 demonstrated its autonomous mid-air refueling capability in 2015.³⁶⁴ Once all experimentations have been tested, the XB-47 models will likely retire and become museum exhibits, while the data learned from their testing phase will serve as the foundation for the next generation of unmanned combat aircraft. Both the Northrop Grumman XB-47 and the Boeing X-45 are designed with a high degree of autonomy in mind, though the application of lethal force rests in the decision of human operators. These drones specifically target inaccessible, denied enemy domains that pose extreme dangers to the armed forces. They are described as a ‘first day of the war’ force enabler, a suitable weapon for launching pre-emptive destruction and electronic neutralization of hostile air defense systems. DAPRA also notes that as the campaign progresses, J-UCAS drones will continue their vigil by tracking and eliminating high-value and time sensitive targets.³⁶⁵ The United States is not the only country developing next-generation drones. The British BAE Systems unveiled its Corax UAV technology showcase in 2006,³⁶⁶ demonstrating its use in intelligence, reconnaissance, and target tracking, though there was no information on weaponry. The Taranis, Corax’ more offensive brother, took flight in 2013,³⁶⁷ and its most promising features include supersonic flight³⁶⁸ and the ability to deliver payloads to another continent with a high level of autonomy.³⁶⁹

Insect-sized Robots. Minister Ayoub Kara of Israel stated in an interview in 2017 that Israel was developing miniature robots that could be sent to Gaza and kill the all the heads of Hamas.³⁷⁰ According to Kara, these robots “cannot be destroyed” and can “only destroy.”³⁷¹ Kara’s comment was ridiculed by his pro-Hezbollah rivals, with the al-Ahkbar papers based in

³⁶² Autonomous Weapons: An Open Letter from AI&Robotics Researchers. <https://futureoflife.org/open-letter-autonomous-weapons/>

³⁶³ J-UCAS Overview. DARPA. http://archive.darpa.mil/j-ucas/J-UCAS_Overview.htm

³⁶⁴ Kelsey D. Atherton. 2015. <https://www.popsci.com/look-autonomous-drone-eat-fuel-sky>

³⁶⁵ J-UCAS Overview. DARPA.

³⁶⁶ Tim Mahon. 2006. <http://spacenews.com/uk-bae-systems-divulge-details-six-uav-programs/>

³⁶⁷ Craig Hoyle. 2013. <https://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/unmanned-taranis-has-flown-mod-reveals-392177/>

³⁶⁸ Gimpiel Andy. 2016. <https://www.cadincadout.com/british-taranis-military-drone-went-supersonic/>

³⁶⁹ Taranis UCAV Demonstrator. <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/taranis/>

³⁷⁰ Ilana Curriel. 2017. *Minister discusses eliminating Hamas with robots.*

<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4927434,00.html>

³⁷¹ Ibid.

Beirut mocking him as “minister of science fiction.”³⁷² Was that derision justified? To be fair, the technology to construct a microrobot the size of a penny already exists, case in point being the Harvard-built RoboBee.³⁷³ RoboBee has a wingspan of 3 centimeters and weighs less than one-tenth of a gram. According to the Wyss Institute at Harvard, RoboBee can accomplish missions such as search-and-rescue operations, environmental monitoring, and crop pollination. The microrobot also demonstrated its ability to fly on water and take-off therein,³⁷⁴ promising the capability to operate in a wide variety of environs, including delving inside pipes and navigating waterways. Though RoboBee is a civilian project and its features include benevolent functions (rescues, disaster reliefs, water and pipe inspection, pollination, and tracking insects for scientific purposes, etc.) it does not take much for a creative mind to turn it into a potentially deadly weapon. Take pollination, for instance. Bees pollinate plants by carrying pollen from a male part to a female part of a plant. Now let us take a look at the Skripal case. An unidentified suspect smeared Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, with the novichok nerve agent on 4 March 2018, leaving both in critical conditions.³⁷⁵ Since RoboBee can pollinate plants, it is only a matter of replacing pollen with nerve agent. A bee on average weighs 90 milligrams (compared to RoboBee’s 80 mg) and can carry an average load of 25-40 milligrams³⁷⁶ (compared to RoboBee’s 40 mg load),³⁷⁷ we can see that the microrobot is more than up to the task of delivering toxic agents to unexpected targets. In fact, it does not take much to kill with nerve agent. VX gas, for example, needs only 10mg to be lethal on skin contact³⁷⁸. As powerful as VX is, the Novichok nerve agent is said to be eight times more potent.³⁷⁹ With this information, we can deduce that the technology to weaponize insect-sized robots is already here, and Israel’s claim does not sound too farfetched. The main issue is not practical, but legal: chemical weapons are banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention³⁸⁰ (of which Israel is a signatory but non-ratified party), and the use of poison is banned by the 1925 Geneva Protocol.³⁸¹ However, that did not stop Mossad agents from assassinating targets using chemical and poisonous agents, case in point being the attempt on Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal in 1997 and the execution of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh.³⁸²

³⁷² Dov Lieber, Sue Surkes. 2017. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/pro-hezbollah-paper-mocks-israeli-science-fiction-minister-over-killer-robot-claims/>

³⁷³ *Autonomous Flying Microrobots*. Wyss Institute, Harvard University.

<https://wyss.harvard.edu/technology/autonomous-flying-microrobots-robobees/>

³⁷⁴ Brandie Weikle. 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/insect-robot-sky-sea-1.4369096>

³⁷⁵ 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43377856>

³⁷⁶ Celia Davis, Ted Hooper, J.D&B.D Yates, Mark L. Winston, R. E. Snodgrass, Thomas D. Seeley. *Module 6 Honeybee Behavior*. <https://modulenotes.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/module-6-study-notes.pdf>

³⁷⁷ E Farrell Helbling, Sawyer Buckminster Fuller, Robert J Wood. 2015. *Altitude Estimation and Control of an Insect-Scale Robot with On-board Control Sensor*. Quote “the maximum payload carried by the robot during hovering flight was 40 mg”. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Harvard-RoboBee-is-an-80-mg-flapping-wing-MAV-that-has-demonstrated-controlled-flight_fig1_286544474

³⁷⁸ Justin McCurry. 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/24/what-is-vx-nerve-agent-killed-kim-jong-nam-north-korea>

³⁷⁹ Andrew Griffin. 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/novichok-nerve-agent-what-is-it-russian-spy-poisoning-sergei-skripal-a8252426.html>

³⁸⁰ CWC at a Glance. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/cwcglance>

³⁸¹ 1925 Geneva Protocol. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/bio/1925-geneva-protocol/>

³⁸² Dr. Elias Akleh. 2013. *Israel’s history of chemical weapons use*. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/israels-history-of-chemical-weapons-use/5352003>

The United States' Targeted Killing: How Technology Might Change the Norms and Practices

21st century assassination, like 21st century warfare, will depend on technology to evolve. The United States commands the most powerful military in the world and has had more than a century of constant practices, from the First World War to the Second, from the Korean War to the Vietnam War, from Operation Desert Storm to the Invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The only way to become a master of anything is to constantly train and improve one's skills, and the United States has had plenty of both. This implies that the United States will continue to spearhead the revolution of warfare and assassination practices, and through its superiority in technology and research, will be among the first to set the standard norms for the application of LAWS in the future.

The pursuit of total domination in warfare. How will killer robots contribute to the US' pursuit of assassination and (warfare in general)? One of the grandest ambitions posited by the US military leadership at the dawn of the 21st century was a concept called 'Full Spectrum Dominance'.³⁸³ It seeks to solve a fundamental problem that plagues the US Armed Forces when intervening abroad: their adversaries know how to exploit the environment to asymmetrically engage US forces. As the US' capacity to intervene grows, so too will the varieties of environments in which it must engage. Full Spectrum Dominance is defined by the Department of Defense as. "The cumulative effect of dominance in the air, land, maritime, and space domains, electromagnetic spectrum, and information environment (which includes cyberspace) that permits the conduct of joint operations without effective opposition or prohibitive interference."³⁸⁴ According to this reasoning, the Pentagon here envisioned a future United States that is capable of dominating all dimensions of battlespace, wielding an overwhelming superiority in diverse masteries such as aerial, land, naval, psychological and cyber warfare. This can be extended to targeted killing as well, precisely because targeted killing has become an inseparable component of the US warfighting capabilities. We can deduce one thing: in order for targeted killing to develop along the line of the DoD's 21st century military doctrine, it must be supported by technologies that facilitate the application of force in a wide array of environments.

LAWS are the exact component Full Spectrum Dominance needs. As a democracy, the United States could not face high casualty rates. LAWS could alleviate that problem. As technology develop and the economy of scale explode with mass-production, LAWs can be easily assembled and shipped off to the armed forces' inventory, ready to be deployed anywhere in the world. These killer robots can also come in a plethora of shapes, sizes and functions. They can resemble bees and hawks – small enough to fit through a window – and come with the same agility and speed of the animals by which they are inspired. DARPA's Program Manager, Mark Mircire, said that micro UAV of the future should have the flying capabilities of birds of prey and flying insects, citing that goshawks can "fly very fast through a dense forest without smacking into a tree."³⁸⁵ The same can be said about insects, which can dart through jungle and

³⁸³ Major Robert D. Miller. 1998. *Unmanned Aerial Vehicles: Improving Warfighting Capabilities in the Urban Environment*, pg. 1. School of Advanced Warfighting. Online:

<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a529092.pdf>

³⁸⁴ DOD Dictionary of Military Assorted Terms, pg. 96. Online:

<http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf?ver=2018-05-02-174746-340>

³⁸⁵ Peter Shadboldt. 2015. *Robo-wings: military drones that mimic hawks and insects.*

<https://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/14/tech/mci-drone-robohawk-robotfly/index.html>

forested environments with ease. One hurdle that micro-bots will have to overcome is finding a way to overcome the legal barrier, or more specifically the worldwide denunciation of chemical weapons and poisonous substances. The most obvious way to apply lethal force via micro-bots is through the injection or spray of toxic agents. The United States, being the world's policeman and law enforcer, would find it difficult to violate century-long international agreement and proliferate the use of deadly chemical gases via swarms of microdrones. This means the United States must find ways to circumnavigate this law or must find more creative ways to eliminate its targets using these mini drones. One such method is turning the vehicle into a bullet. The structure of the micro-drone would need to mimic a rocket, equipped with explosive materials. Once detonated, the blast would propel the craft forward, making it deadly warhead. This application is more in line with what the United States can acceptably do. The United States Air Force confirmed that it had plans for miniaturized munitions,³⁸⁶ whose tiny payloads would serve specific, precision-sensitive missions. Crippling a truck by puncturing its tires, for example, could prevent a dangerous individual from carrying out his action. A well-aimed shot through the eye, neck, and back of the head could be eliminate a high-value target hidden in a guarded compound. Given the tiny dimension and weight of these mini drones, once the technological barrier has been breached, it does not take much to field massive fleets of these killers.

Cost analysis. Let us look at the cost of running a targeted killing mission using current Reaper drones. A single MQ-9 Reaper costs the US military about \$12,5³⁸⁷ to \$16 million. It comes equipped with four AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, each with a price tag of roughly \$115,000.³⁸⁸ This means for every drone hit on an enemy combatant, the United States must pay \$115,000 for the missile alone, not including the operational cost of the drone itself. We have established that this cost is much preferable to the deployment of tactical fighters or special forces, but what if we can do better? The British SAS experimented with Aerovironment's WASP micro air vehicle in 2006 Afghanistan, where the craft was used to help eliminate enemy snipers.³⁸⁹ Another notable product from Aerovironment is the Switchblade suicide drone, its only lethal craft on sale. According to Motley Fool's analysis based on contract sales and units built for the US Army, the Switchblade should cost around \$70,200 per unit.³⁹⁰ This represents a cheaper alternative to a Hellfire missile. Naturally this analysis only revolves around remote-controlled drones, which are by no means fully or highly autonomous like the showpieces described above, but they illustrate an important evolutionary curve of the development of military robots, and that is the drone technology will continue to improve, opening new ways to dominate battlespaces, driving down cost-per-kill, and making targeted killing easier.

War on Drugs: A New Extension of the US Targeted Killing Norms? The United States have undoubtedly demonstrated its command over desert and arid areas like the Middle East and North Africa. But the ambition of the full-spectrum dominance is not limited there. It seeks to dominate just as well in jungle and urban areas – areas where current drones' efficiency decline,

³⁸⁶ Wired staff. 2007. <https://www.wired.com/2007/01/military-builds-robotic-insects/>

³⁸⁷ <http://nation.time.com/2012/11/06/12548710-60/>

³⁸⁸ Chief Financial Officer. 2016. *Program Acquisition Cost by Weapon System*, 5-8. US Department of Defense. http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/documents/defbudget/FY2017/FY2017_Weapons.pdf#page=58

³⁸⁹ Jurgen Altmann. 2008. *Military Uses of Technology – Too Much Complexity for International Security?* pg. 67. Wiley Periodicals, vol. 14, no. 1. Online: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/cplx.20226>

³⁹⁰ Rich Smith. 2016. <https://www.fool.com/investing/general/2016/05/11/aerovironment-will-upgrade-the-switchblade.aspx>

but also areas where US enemies operate. Metropolises are a nightmare in which to operate a drone because of electrical interference, electric wires overhanging, buildings blocking views, laundry obstructing vision, and the potential of high collateral damage, and so on. A Reaper drone is simply too visible for it to get closer to a city to lock in on target. Yet with the arrival of smaller, hand-held drones like the ones offered by Aerovironment, or the futuristic bee-sized robots, the previously mentioned difficulties may no longer cause much trouble.

The war on drugs, first mentioned by President Richard Nixon in 1971, in which he called drug use “America’s public enemy number one.”³⁹¹ The war on drugs never achieved the same popularity that the War on Terror did. Neither did it receive the same amount of attention and support. The statistics, however, paint a different picture. One common example that is frequently used to illustrate the irrational fear of terrorism is car crash: one is more likely to die in a road accident than to be killed by a terrorist, yet terrorism invoke more fear than car crash stories. According to the US Centers for Disease Control, in 2016, about 63,632 American citizens died of drug overdose, outnumbering the 37,757 motor vehicles fatalities of 2015.³⁹² Since this is a thesis on assassination, and one cannot realistically wage an assassination campaign on car accidents, we will have to build our case on the already existing war on drugs.

The historical pretext already exists in the case of the US invasion of Panama, dubbed Operation Just Cause, which sought to depose General Manuel Noriega and put him on trial for drug trafficking, racketeering and money laundering.³⁹³ President George H. W. Bush justified the use of force in Panama by presenting four reasons, one of which was “to combat drug trafficking”.³⁹⁴ Could the United States afford another operation on the scale of Just Cause, meaning the deployment of 27,000 troops, including special forces?³⁹⁵ The United States, like any democracy, has become casualty averse. It reserves the deployment of its warfighters in the most important military campaigns that somehow affect its national interest the most. Yet with the advent of unmanned technology, this needs not be the case. As UAVs and LAWS catch up with human performance, Washington could pursue its national interest abroad relatively risk-free (as far as casualties are concerned), and no longer has to fear the spectre of weighing the mission’s success against the risk of American lives. In this sense, capabilities will quickly transform into action, or more succinctly, what ‘we can do’ will turn into ‘what we will do’. As we have seen in the case of UAVs transforming targeted killing, it does not take much for the United States to transform its implied capability to kill into its political will to kill.

Thus, we would like to end this subsection on the United States’ targeted killing practices using 21st century technologies with one final remark. If the first generation of drones is any indication, future drones will make war and killing an even easier business. The United States, as befitting its lone superpower status, has a great many interests abroad – among which is the execution of its enemies at a moment’s notice – and would like to fulfil as many of these interests as possible. LAWS and advanced UAVs allow the US to do just that. As the world’s

³⁹¹ Richard Nixon. 1971. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3047>

³⁹² http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/causes_of_death

³⁹³ Larry Rohter. 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/11/us/noriega-sentenced-to-40-years-in-jail-on-drug-charges.html>

³⁹⁴ A transcript of Bush’s address on the decision to use force in Panama. 1989. <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/21/world/fighting-panama-president-transcript-bush-s-address-decision-use-force-panama.html>

³⁹⁵ Ronald H. Cole. *Operation Just Cause*, pgs. 37-38. Joint History Office. Online: http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/History/Monographs/Just_Cause.pdf

policeman and the leader of the democratic world, the United States cannot afford certain luxuries that norms outliers like Russia and Israel enjoy. Before it undertakes drastic actions, the US must justify those actions before its domestic audience and before the international community. It justified the War on Terror and it found a way to normalize targeted killing. With the right technology specifically designed to ease murder, it is not difficult to imagine that Washington will find a way to justify the use of such weapons against another enemy in its grand pursuit of national interest and security.

Israel's Targeted Killing: How Technology Might Change the Norms and Practices

Chemical weapons and mini drones. As noted in the earlier subsection, Mossad operatives are known to have used poisonous substances to eliminate their targets, despite Israel being a signatory country of the CWC. Israel, however, has not ratified the CWC, stating that its behavior will not change unless Egypt signs the CWC and ratifies it as well.³⁹⁶ Israel has demonstrated its interest in developing and applying insect-sized robots to assassinate Hamas, Hezbollah and other militant jihadist leaders, and the most obvious weapons for these miniaturized robots will most likely come in the forms of nerve agents or fast-acting poisons. This means as far as its assassination capability is concerned, it is in Israel's best interest not to ratify the CWC because doing so implies that Israel consents to be bound by the CWC's terms. Doing so would deprive Israel's micro drones of their natural weapon, as the use of such substances is prohibited by the CWC.

The international-criticism-vs-national-interest balance. Israel enjoys a certain privilege as an outlier of international norms. It can withstand international condemnation more effectively than the United States can due to various reasons: its population continues to strongly support its government and its government in turn shrug off international criticisms because it has more immediate concerns to deal with. A research conducted by Haifa University in 2014 revealed that 85 per cent of Jewish Israelis are either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with Prime Minister Netanyahu.³⁹⁷ While Israel's targeted killing of Hamas' political and spiritual leaders has been found to be "rather effective" by Avi Kober in the article *Targeted Killing During the Second Intifada: The Quest for Effectiveness*,³⁹⁸ more and more Palestinian civilians were killed as collateral damage, resulting in a host of worldwide criticisms raining down on Tel-Aviv. We have argued that such criticisms matter little to Israel so long as they do not prove detrimental to Israel's security and interest. But is there a way for Israel to have its cake and eat it too? Is there a way to assassinate its enemies with more precision that leave little room for collateral damage?

Killer robots to alleviate criticisms against Israel? The State of Israel continues to be among the world's leaders in artificial intelligence (AI) research.³⁹⁹ Any autonomous robots of the future will have to incorporate a great deal of AI so as to be able to operate independently and

³⁹⁶ David Cole-Hamilton. Ehud Keinan. 2016. <https://theconversation.com/why-ratifying-the-chemical-weapons-convention-is-in-israels-best-interest-63889>

³⁹⁷ William Booth, Ruth Eglash. 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/israelis-support-netanyahu-and-gaza-war-despite-rising-deaths-on-both-sides/2014/07/29/0d562c44-1748-11e4-9349-84d4a85be981_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ba76f382ce49

³⁹⁸ Avi Kober. 2007. *Targeted Killing During the Second Intifada: The Quest for Effectiveness*, Conclusion. Journal of Conflict Studies, vol. 27, no. 1. Online: <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/8292/9353>

³⁹⁹ Mark Minevich. 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2017/12/05/these-seven-countries-are-in-a-race-to-rule-the-world-with-ai/2/>

select their targets. AI is already changing the Israeli Defense Force operate in ways it never envisioned.⁴⁰⁰ The IDF's decision-making process shows an increased reliance on technologies such as machine learning and its more complex subset, deep learning⁴⁰¹ (the use of artificial neural networks to accurately perform in tasks such as speech recognition, language translation and object detection).⁴⁰² With this information, we can bring up a defensive case⁴⁰³ for killer robots with regards to Israel's pursuit of targeted killing. Science fiction often portrays the common theme of robots going rogue, rebelling against their human creators and murdering discriminately. Does this portrayal have any merit? Our current computers have an impressive track record. Machines are programmed to perform a certain set of criteria. Would an airplane's autopilot suddenly 'change' its mind and decide to dive into the ocean? We would even argue that AI is much better at adhering to international humanitarian laws than humans are. Humans make mistakes in war all the time. Israel, for instance, mistook a school for an enemy target and shelled it, killing 10 in 2014.⁴⁰⁴ Humans are bad at making decisions in crises and combat situations. Robots, on the other hand, have no fear, are never scared and do not act out of their emotions. They can process a vast amount of information in a short amount of time in order to apply the most appropriate response. Military robots such as LAWS will not make the use of force perfect, but they are specifically designed to reduce mistakes and enhance precision, and to reduce the intensity of destruction. LAWS, therefore, can make targeted killing more humane and surgical to alleviate the cost of collateral damage.

A possible norm-changer for Israel: humanization of targeted killing. So far, Israel has found a way to internally normalize its targeted killing practices using the securitization of terrorism argument, which is built on the bedrock of the Holocaust trauma and Israel's unique geopolitical challenges. This is a unique situation for Israel. With the right technology to make targeted killing more precise, Israel can bypass the ghost of collateral damage in its decapitation campaign and present a more plausible and humane case for its targeted killing program before the world. Granted, a weapon can only be as humane as the government wants it to be, and the AI and robotics technologies can be all too easily misused, but that is not the fault of the weapon itself, but rather of the government and the decision makers. Israel is on the path of developing the weapon that could help kill Hamas, Hezbollah leaders and whoever else deemed dangerous to the security of its people with even more precision than ever before. In short, it can have the cake and eat it too, if only it has the will to enforce the correct use.

Russia's Targeted Killing: How Technology Might Change the Norms and Practices

In 2017, President Vladimir Putin stated that "whoever becomes the leader in this sphere [artificial intelligence] will be the ruler of the world."⁴⁰⁵ Russia is also a competitor in the race towards killer robots and artificial intelligence, and has been operating the Foundation for Advanced Studies – the Russian response to the Pentagon's DARPA – since 2012.⁴⁰⁶ New types of weaponry expected to roll out include AI-powered missiles developed by the Tactical

⁴⁰⁰ Yaakov Lappin. 2017. <https://www.jns.org/artificial-intelligence-shaping-the-idf-in-ways-never-imagined-2/>

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Deep Learning. <https://developer.nvidia.com/deep-learning>

⁴⁰³ Based on: Rosa Brooks. 2015. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/18/in-defense-of-killer-robots/>

⁴⁰⁴ 2014. *US Appalled at Disgraceful Israeli Shelling of Gaza UN School.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/03/us-appalled-disgraceful-israeli-shelling-gaza-un-school>

⁴⁰⁵ James Vincent. 2017. <https://www.theverge.com/2017/9/4/16251226/russia-ai-putin-rule-the-world>

⁴⁰⁶ Samuel Bendett. 2018. <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2018/04/russia-races-forward-ai-development/147178/>

Missiles Corporation, and a type of autonomous combat drone (able to recognize targets and make their own decisions) built by the famed arms manufacturer Kalashnikov.⁴⁰⁷

Russia's targeted killing and technology. We have not been able to find any evidence that can tell us that Russia's assassination/targeted killing norms will change with technology. In this case, it is likely that the Kremlin will pursue its targeted killing as before in a 'business-as-usual' manner. Better technology will make killing operations easier at a tactical level. This means Russia can kill more of its enemies in a more efficient and covert manner (whenever deniability is needed). There will continue to be a silent understanding between Russian intelligence and Russian organized crime, the former using the latter to perform various wet-work that are considered dirty and dangerous. Better technology will change the ways these dirty jobs are conducted, but not the relationship between the official authority and organized crime.

The fear-factor-versus-sovereignty-infringement balance. Unlike Israel, Russia's targeted killing program abroad is plagued not by the humanitarian question, but rather by its blatant transgression of sovereignty. The worldwide response to Russian intelligence's latest work – the Skripal case – prove that there is a high diplomatic cost for Moscow's provocation. We have stated that Russia could have killed Skripal and Litvinenko using more covert methods that maximized deniability but opted not to do so. One plausible explanation can be found in the Kremlin's desire to use fear as a weapon in order to deter future defectors or to remind existing defectors to keep their mouths shut. Deterrence only works if it is visible, and if Russian decision-makers decide that it is in the best interest of Russia to enact more dramatic attacks like Skripal's and Litvinenko's, then they must consider the cost of such actions and weigh the pros and cons carefully. Technology has the potential to make a kill more covert and humane, but those values are detrimental to the Kremlin's pursuit of fear and deterrence. In this case, again, we fail to see how better technology will bring changes to this practice.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

In this thesis we sought to explore the questions of *How* and *When* intelligence agencies eliminate their targets using targeted killing, while bringing emerging technologies into the mix. The research question is divided into two equally important parts. 1) How do intelligence agencies kill their targets, using what methods, what kind of organizational and intelligence structure is needed? To demonstrate this question in ways that is the most understandable, we bring up various empirical cases of assassination and targeted killing operations pursued by superpowers of intelligence and assassination worldwide, and present detailed accounts of the ways in which these operations were conducted. 2) When do states eliminate their targets, under what circumstances? We say states instead of intelligence agencies because this question required the construction of a permissive groundwork that can only be pursued by states because they are international actors. This means the construction of certain norms that somehow softened the international condemnation against assassination and make it possible for states (and their intelligence agencies) to employ assassination as an acceptable weapon in their pursuit of interest and security. Both the *How* and the *When* are equally important. One cannot exist without the other. Having the *How* (the explicit capability to kill, the tactics, the infrastructure, the special forces, etc.) but not the *When* (the ability to kill without evoking mass international condemnation) is useless because international actors would not the high risks that entail an assassination. And vice versa, having the *When* but not the *How* implies that assassination is a regular practice worldwide, but one has no means to pursue such practices because one lacks the infrastructure; this leaves one's state vulnerable to hostile assassins. To bring the satisfying answers to both the question of *How* and *When* states and intelligence agencies eliminate their targets, we bring up three countries that can be considered today's super and great powers of assassination. Those are the United States, Israel and Russia. We looked at the ways these countries conduct their targeted killing and assassination programs at an operational level and gave details about how a kill was run from beginning to end in order to better understanding such practices. Each of these three countries is not only unique in the ways it eliminates its targets but also in the ways it normalizes its assassination practices.

It is worthwhile to stress that assassination does not bring peace. As far as instruments of statecraft go, it is rather limited in its ambition. It has no far-arching vision and does not seek to deliver promises of a better world. Israel comes up with an apt term for it, and it is called 'mowing the grass'. On its own, assassination is not able to resolve a conflict. Yet it is still a useful tool under the right condition and circumstances and remains the chosen weapon of certain states. It is a terrible weapon to be directed against terrible enemies. The Hashashins have been labelled as 'the first terrorists', but this term is misleading and could not be further from the truth. The Hashashin did not indiscriminately kill their targets and avoided murdering innocent civilians. They knew how to effectively employ terror as a weapon, true, but then again, so do today's Russia and Israel. The Hashashin of Persia withstood the onslaught of the Seljuq Empire and systematically murdered its highest hierarchy, culminating with the slaughter of its vizier, causing the great empire to disintegrate. The Hashashins of Syria, on the other hand, held Saladin's forces at bay and challenged the Crusaders, and were only defeated by the Mongol Horde. Both cases illustrated a good deal of clever political maneuvers and cunning and serve as a great reminder that assassination could be effectively employed for political purposes. Modern day targeted killing programs could do much to learn from the Hashashins' successes. Assassination does not make peace, but it does enhance a one's security,

interest and power. And depending on who we ask, those three values are the guiding principles for which state leaders should strive.

If we disregard all ethical and legal implications, we can reveal certain pragmatic utilities that assassination brings to the political and military table. Yet these utilities were questioned during the late 16th and early 17th centuries, resulting in many international jurists and scholars condemning assassination as either immoral or unjust. One explanation can be found in the ways European states organized themselves following the Peace of Westphalia. European states were slowly transitioning from a Hobbesian system to a Lockean one. States were no longer enemies to be annihilated, but rivals to be competed with. Using dishonest practices like assassination would quickly turn one into a public enemy. Yet assassination/targeted killing has seen an increase in application at the beginning of the 21st century, starting with Israel and followed by the United States, which triggered a bandwagon effect of sorts with the United Kingdom, France and even Canada onboard, each with its own targeted killing program. Clearly, there must be a reason why the international perception of assassination changed so rapidly.

This leads us to the heart of the thesis. The United States, being the world leader and enforcer of laws, was challenged by a state-less enemy who masterfully wielded subterfuge and asymmetric warfare to strike where it hurt the most. What weapon could Washington possibly use in the fight against this new enemy? It could try to bring the entire might of its conventional forces to bear on the mountains of Afghanistan. It would cost them dear, in resources, effort, and lives. Was there a better option? Israel, for example, had been faring rather well against the Palestinian uprising in since September 2000, and Washington could learn much from studying this case. Perhaps a new warfighting model could be exported to the fight against al-Qaeda, too. Problem was, however, the Bush administration itself had criticized the tactics employed by the Israelis in the fight against Palestine. Even if it had not done so, past US presidents had ensured that assassination practices – the kinds employed by Israel during the Second Intifada – remained banned in their executive orders. Still, the attractiveness offered by assassination-by-drones was impossible to resist. It was up to President George W. Bush to find a way to justify the use of surgical hits by drones and cruise missiles before the US domestic audience and before the international community. It did not take much to muster domestic support, considering how fresh the horror of the Twin Towers was branded into America's hearts and minds. The international audience was a tougher crowd, and we can argue that President Bush never managed to win that fight. It was only until President Obama's tenure that targeted killing truly became a norm. This shift in worldwide perception of targeted killing came after the execution of Osama bin Laden, whose death was considered a case for celebration in the West, even though the same practices on different terrorist leaders had been criticized before by the same countries that were congratulating the United States. Armed with the capability to kill and the permission to kill, the Obama administration outlined a through plan for a new targeted killing campaign for the second decade of the 21st century. The use of euphemisms was also an important factor during both Bush's and Obama's presidency. Assassination became targeted killing; a kill list became the Disposition Matrix; and so on. Assassination had become a new normal, and the United States was the vanguard that brought such drastic changes to the world.

The State of Israel was no stranger to assassinating its enemies abroad. Even to this day, Operation Wrath of God remains a monument to Israel's ruthlessness. It was more than a quest for vengeance. It was Israel showing its allies and enemies it was not powerless and it would hunt its enemies no matter where they were in world. Israel's domestic population stood

vehemently behind their government, and this solidarity gave the government a much-needed support to withstand international criticisms. The way Israel justified and normalized assassination was much simpler than the way the United States did it. After all, Israel was an outlier of international norms and had no ambitions of becoming a world leader or policeman. It did not have to find a way to excuse its actions before the world (unless it was pragmatic to do so, of course). The only thing it needed was to justify its actions before itself and before its people. The justification was first and foremost built on the Zionist identity and the grim reminder of the Holocaust, which created the mindset that drove the State Israel into taking drastic actions in order to pre-empt any threat. In a system of Lockean-style of nation states, it is in a state's best interest to be perceived as a party that can be reasoned and negotiated with. War is acceptable only to the point of successfully imposing one's will on one's enemy, not to the point of completely annihilating him. Yet Israel has always maintained a posture of non-negotiation with terrorists, who themselves are non-state actors. Assassination was discouraged because such an act would paint its employer as someone untrustworthy and not to be negotiated with. Since Israel does not wish to negotiate with terrorists, nor does it wish to trade, establish diplomatic links, or cooperate, or do any sort of state-to-state businesses with terrorists, why should it apply the Lockean model to such actors? In the case of combating terrorism, it could be argued that Israel would not have to face the kind of repercussions that would certainly haunt the states bound by the Lockean values if they were to assassinate one another. In the eyes of Tel-Aviv, terrorists were the sorts of enemies it needs not negotiate with. The dynamics between the State of Israel and Hamas and Hezbollah were in some ways reverted back to the Hobbesian model, in which Israel viewed terrorists as targets to be annihilated, leaving little room (if any at all) for concessions, negotiations and settlements, and vice versa. With this justification established, it was only a matter setting up the tactical infrastructure needed to support a rigorous targeted killing campaign. Today, Israel has achieved that goal and continues to put its faith on special operations and targeted killing to safeguard its interest and security. This mindset is unlikely to change and can possibly consolidate even further with the arrival of better technologies to kill.

Russia, like Israel, is not considered a traditional norm changer. It inherited the murderous prowess of the Soviet Union via the former officers of the dissolved KGB and the non-dissolved GRU. However, the intelligence machine of the Russian Federation no longer matched the KGB at the height of its power. Many of KGB officers either defected to the West or went to the private sector, where they founded their own organized crime network or were employed by such organizations. The Russian government was flexible in choosing their allies and formed a functioning alliance with organized crime. This opened new doors and new possibilities. Organized crime could do the extremes in the pursuit of their interest, a thing which a government could ill afford. It was convenient and pragmatic to use organized crime whenever the interest of Russian government and the interest Russian organized crime align. After all, such measures would achieve the same ends, but the methods ensured that the Kremlin stayed stain-free. In this sense, Russia did not transform the norms of assassination in any noticeable way, but it did find a way to pursue assassination without the need to bloody its hands.

Technology continues to play an important part in military and targeted killing operations. The race towards AI and robotics has kicked into high gear. We argue that now is the best time to be an assassin. Whereas assassins of old faced the risk of being captured and brutally tortured, modern day assassins have the choice to kill their targets and then drive home for dinner with their families at 5 PM. What does this mean for future applications of assassination/targeted

killing? If UAVs taught us anything, it is that assassination will see an even lower barrier to entry. The United States is now among the biggest employer of targeted killing, and this should have an effect in the behavior of other states. The bandwagon effect of the use of drones is already here, and as more and more states start to followed the world's policeman, assassination might become even more proliferated and accepted.

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