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Seize the Window: Targeted Killing's Uses and Limitations in Counterterrorism Strategy

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Seize the Window: Targeted Killing's Uses and Limitations in Counterterrorism Strategy

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter One

Introduction:

The United States began a global war on terror in the wake of the 9-11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, the Pentagon, and United Airlines Flight 93. In a presidential address to the nation, President George W. Bush declared, "We will direct every resource at our command … every necessary weapon of war to the destruction and to the defeat of the global terror network.[1]" In the course of that time, the United States has employed a myriad of methods to destroy terrorist organizations ranging from conventional war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, espionage, and cyber warfare. In addition to the methods mentioned, the United States has increasingly relied on one particular strategic tool for fighting global terror; targeted killing. Targeted killing is a term that refers to the assassination of a member of a terrorist group, often a key leader or an official, with the strategic intention of destabilizing and destroying the terrorist organization.[2] The United States has used targeted killings in an effort to balance the cost and efficiency of counterterrorism tactics. With the advent of drones, targeted killing has become an even more attractive option to American policymakers and military officials because drone killings offer a very low risk of military casualties and a high success rate of "hitting" targets. In turn, there has been a drastic increase in the number of targeted

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[1]The Washington Post "President Bush Addresses the Nation", September 20,2001
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpsrv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html
[2]Jonathan Masters "Targeted Killings" *Council on Foreign Relations*
http://www.cfr.org/counterterrorism/targeted-killings/p9627

killing operations both via drone strikes and kill/capture missions.[3] The White

House estimates that between January 20, 2009 and December 31, 2015, the United

States conducted 473 targeted killing strikes outside of areas of active hostilities,

meaning places like Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. [4] Civilian organizations estimate

similar numbers of strikes but dispute the administration's numbers regarding

collateral damage.

While there are certainly ethical and legal dimensions of concern regarding

targeted killing tactics, the greatest concern from a strategic perspective is

addressing what occurs after these strikes. Once a leader has been removed from an

organization there should be a strategy in place to help capitalize on the opportunity

created by the loss of a terrorist leader and subsequent organizational

destabilization. Unfortunately, while the Obama administration has worked to refine

its targeted killing policy by improving its targeting criteria and creating a legal

framework for the practice, it has not developed processes for the aftermath of

these strikes. Rather than build on the momentum of a strike to determine what

would further undermine an organization's structure or viability, strategists move

on to identifying the next target. The absence of a clear and consolidated post-

targeted killing plan seems to be a crucial missing element of America's targeted

killing policy.

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[3] Kill/Capture Missions are a form of targeted killing in which a group of soldiers, almost always
JSOC (Joint Special Operations Command) operatives conduct raids on the homes of a terrorist
to either capture or kill the target.
Jonathan Masters "Targeted Killings" *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 2013
http://www.cfr.org/counterterrorism/targeted-killings/p9627
[4] New York Times "Obama Administration Releases Death Toll from Airstrikes" *New York* Times,
July 1, 2016 http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/07/01/world/document-airstrike-
death-toll-executive-order.html

My research attempts to fill this policy void by asking two central research questions. First, does targeted killing reduce the rates of terrorist attacks post targeted killing? Second, what can be done to further reduce terrorist attacks post targeted killing?

This chapter is structured as follows. First, I will evaluate the existing academic literatures on targeted killing, the effects of public violence on political authority and the political economic underpinnings of terrorism. Next, I present my central hypotheses. Following the hypotheses, I discuss my method of analysis, data sources, and cases.

Literature Review

To understand these questions, I examine the literature regarding targeted killing, the use of public violence, and the political economic underpinnings of terrorism. Though targeted killings are a commonly deployed tactic in counterterrorism efforts, the academic literature offers conflicting messages about its success in reducing terror attacks. Specifically, drawing upon Foucault and Wedeen, it is clear that the use of public violence can undermine the legitimacy and authority of the United States and garner more support for terrorist groups. Moreover, the literature on the political economics of terrorist groups suggests a different anti-terrorism tactic based on American provision of public goods to impoverished communities to reduce the power of terrorist groups.

The Mixed Effectiveness of Targeted Killings

Due to her extensive work on targeted killing, Jenna Jordan is perhaps one of the most prominent academic authorities on the subject. Evaluating the strategy as a whole, Jordan analyzes 298 cases of targeted killing. [5]She ultimately concludes that targeted killing yields mixed results in destroying terrorist organizations. By and large, older organizations and ideologically centric organizations tend to be the most resilient to the loss of a leader, while younger organizations are slightly more susceptible to targeted killing. Jordan further developed her argument in a subsequent piece that focused on the impact of the death of Osama Bin Laden arguing that due to the organization's large size, decades of experience and religious motivation it was unlikely to be significantly impacted by his loss.[6] Other scholars such as Stephanie Carvin, Patrick B. Johnston, and Aaron Mannes critique several of Jordan's methods and propose alternative means of measuring efficacy but by and large conclude that targeted killing should not be the primary means used to destroy terrorist groups.[7]

Johnston's study evaluates a large number of successful and unsuccessful targeted killing strikes from the mid-1970s to the present. He ultimately concludes that targeted killing strikes can be a useful component of a broader counterinsurgency strategy as it can improve a governments success rate at

[5]Jenna Jordan "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation Strikes", *Security Studies* (December, 2009), 719

[6] Jenna Jordan "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes" *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Spring 2014)

[7] Stephanie Carvin "The Trouble with Targeted Killing", *Security Studies* (August, 2012) AND Patrick B. Johnston "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns", *International Security* (Vol 47, Spring 2012) *AND* Aaron Mannes "Testing the Snake Head Strategy: Does Killing or Capturing its Leaders Reduce a Terrorist Group's Activities?", *The Journal of International Policy Solutions* (Vol 9, Spring 2008)

destroying an insurgency and reducing violence. [8] Yet he cautions that the strategy

is by no means a guarantee, as his study indicates that their use only improves

counterinsurgency outcomes by twenty-five to thirty percent.[9] This sense of limited

effectiveness is quite prevalent through the literature with various scholars

Carvin is more critical of the strategy as a whole, as well as some of the

existing scholarship. After evaluating the research on both sides of the debate, she

argues that much of the existing scholarship has attempted to make conclusions that

are far too broad given that there is still a limited consensus on measuring the

efficacy of the strategy in spite of its growing usage by many nations worldwide. She

argues that the literature and arguments against targeted killing are more effective

and compelling as they all ultimately argue that targeted killing creates far more

problems than it solves.[10] Carvin also asserts that even supporters of the tactic

acknowledge that targeted killing is a high-risk policy as it poses enormous risk to

civilians.[11] Mis-targeting by drones, collateral damage during raids or airstrikes all

pose serious threat to civilians on the ground even with the multitude of

technological developments made in recent years. Additionally, Carvin's research

indicates that no scholar believes that targeted killing is a silver bullet strategy,

capable of destroying entire terrorist organizations or bringing down the Al-Qaeda

network overnight.[12]

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[8] Johnston "Does Decapitation Work?",77
[9] Ibid
[10] Carvin "The Trouble With Targeted Killing", 536
[11] Carvin "The Trouble With Targeted Killing",552
[12] Ibid

Mannes's study evaluates the efficacy of removing the top leadership from a terrorist organization in a variety of contexts, including the repeated elimination of top level leadership within the same organization. His data also incorporates a variety of targeted killing methods and group types (religious, communist, separatist etc.) to form a comprehensive sample. Mannes's study indicates that not only is targeted killing ineffective at reducing terrorist activity but for religiously motivated groups it can serve to actually increase violence. [13] His data also indicates that killing a terrorist leader leads to more violence than arresting a leader. Mannes' ultimately concludes that not only is targeted killing ineffective at destroying terrorist organizations, it may actually be counterproductive and serve to increase violence in the aftermath of a targeted killing strike particularly when the strike is conducted against a religious group.[14]

Some scholars, such as Gal Luft, argue that consistent targeted killing practices, like those used by the Israeli government, leave terrorist organizations in a state of confusion because before a new leader can find their footing they are removed. Luft asserts that this pushes the terrorist organization from planning mode to survival mode, which reduces the threat the pose to Israeli citizens. This strategy also adds a deterrent element to those looking to climb the ranks within the terrorist group, as the trauma associated with the loss of a leader creates an environment of mistrust and suspicion within the group further reducing their effectiveness.[15] For Luft, the immediacy of the Hamas threat justifies the

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[13] Mannes "Testing the Snakehead Strategy", 40
[14] Mannes "Testing the Snakehead Strategy", 44
[15] Gal Luft "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing", *Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2003)

extraordinary measures that Israel takes to constantly eliminate their leadership which he argues also helps fuel their paranoia. The combination of a deterrent effect to the organization, potential attack reduction and organizational unrest makes targeted killing worth pursuing in Luft's opinion. Yet in sum, the literature concludes that targeted killing is not a panacea for destroying well-organized terrorist organizations.

Public Violence and Targeted Killings

Just as crucial to literature surrounding targeted killing is the broader literature surrounding the use of public violence. While some targeted killing strikes are conducted covertly, their impact is immediately public and with the increased use of drone strikes the violence surrounding targeted killing is becoming even more public. The literature on public violence argues that at a certain point public violence always shifts from a demonstration of the power of the state, and the dangers of contradicting it, to that of a bully beating down upon its citizens. This is why, as Foucault argues, most European states became powerful by eliminating punitive public spectacles and relying on their citizens disciplining themselves.[16] This has led to a transformation into Foucault's so called "carceral societies" in which obedience is both internalized in the minds of citizens and bureaucratized in state governance. As such, most European states are aware of the limited benefits of public punishment in winning legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

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[16] Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999), 18

However, in certain cases states do not need or want legitimacy they simply want compliance and public punishment can be a means of assuring it. Wedeen argues that in Syria the regime does not seek legitimacy and public displays of violence can serve as a means of creating spectacles, which can be used to create a sense of public discipline and state power.[17] As such, there are circumstances in which public violence can be useful for states that are primarily focused on ensuring the compliance of their citizens. Ensuring compliance via punitive action is effective according to Wedeen, but with targeted killing states are not always punishing their own citizens. When the United States conducts targeted killing strikes, the punitive factor is exacted on terrorist organizations thousands of miles from its shores. Wedeen's model would posit that since the US is not seeking legitimacy but merely compliance, in the form of an end to terrorist activities, the public violence would have limited negative affect. The Foucault model by contrast would argue that the punitive nature of targeted killing violence would create a detrimental affect particularly for states like Israel, which uses targeted killing on those within its own borders.

Based on a review of the literature, it appears that targeted killing should not lead to an overall reduction in terrorist attacks. Yet there is unexplored territory regarding the short-term impact of targeted killing, which if successfully built upon could help make the strategy more effective in destroying terrorist groups. In the immediate aftermath of a successful targeted killing strike, a terrorist organization undergoes a period of transition to new leadership. Capitalizing on this moment of

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[17] Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination,* 19

weakness could be a key factor in using the strategy more efficiently. To evaluate the possibilities in this area we must turn to the literature surrounding alternative methods for undercutting terrorist organizations.

One of the most prominent and effective methods is the model articulated by Eli Berman. Berman argues that a state capable of providing public goods via an efficient economy is the most effective means for preventing the growth of a terrorist group.[18] Terrorists groups gain a great deal of their local support by providing economic resources to the population. The combination of resources and social capital that these organizations provide supplants the role of the government. To evaluate his hypothesis Berman looks at three cases, Hamas, the Taliban, and the Jewish Underground, an Orthodox Jewish terrorist organization that operated in the West Bank in the 1980's.[19] Both the Taliban and Hamas arose in areas with weak local governments and capitalized on that weakness to their advantage. The Jewish Underground served as an example of a militia that overextended itself by plotting an attack that was too violent for its constituency to support, as they did not provide adequate incentive to their followers and the Israeli security services were not developed enough to stop them[20]. Each of these cases represent a radical group with a strong religious basis that use the distribution of public goods to win local support. Essentially Berman argues that when the population finds utility from supporting or even participating in the activities of these groups they are more willing to support them.

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[18] Eli Berman "Hamas, Taliban and the Jewish Underground: An Economist's View of Radical Religious Militia's" *National Bureau of Economic Research*
[19] Berman "Hamas, Taliban and the Jewish Underground", 3
[20] Berman ""Hamas, Taliban and the Jewish Underground", 28-29

Berman's research demonstrates that radical groups are more active when the government's provision of public goods is weaker. This indicates that a key means of eliminating terrorist organizations is providing improved economic opportunities and outcomes for local populations. Berman argues that if governments can provide strong, viable economic opportunities their populations will be less likely to join terrorist groups in the first place and provide powerful incentives for defection for those already involved in these organizations. Targeted aid and economic development in the immediate aftermath of targeted killing strikes may be a potent combination in weakening terrorist groups.

Hypotheses

As Jordan and many others argue there is limited to no long-term impact on terrorist organizations in the wake of targeted killing. The organizational structure and resiliency of terrorist groups serves to limit the impact of the tactic. Based on this literature I have developed two hypotheses. Firstly, I argue that if and when the US engages in targeted killing there will be no long-term effect on terrorist organization's frequency of attacks. [21] Secondly, although the existing literature does not predict a positive effect in attack reduction in the long run, I speculate that

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[21] For the purposes of this paper, long term will be defined as twelve months post targeted killing strike. The twelve-month point is long enough to be consistent with other author's studies and if the strike has a long-term impact it would be apparent at the year mark.

when the US engages in targeted killing regardless of type there will be a window of reduction in terrorist attacks in the short run.[22]

Methods

To evaluate these hypotheses, I will use a multi-method analysis combining a quantitative analysis of the frequency of terrorist attacks and a qualitative, comparative analysis of a variety of case studies of targeted killings from different terrorist groups and geographic areas. I will evaluate the frequency of terrorist attacks before and after successful targeted killing attempts using the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). While this database does have limitations, as outlined by Robert Pape in the *Washington Post* due to variations in collection methods for attacks; it is the best publicly available data for quantifying the effects of terrorist attacks. [23] As such I use the GTD to conduct a correlational analysis that captures a connection between incidents of targeted killing and its short run and long run effects on terrorist attacks. In short, there is a six-month window of opportunity with a decrease in the number of attacks committed by the organization or no attacks at all followed by a resurgence of attacks at the twelve-month mark.

I will also undertake a comparative case analysis. The comparative method is especially powerful and applicable as it can be used to evaluate how different

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[22] Short term will be defined as six months post targeted killing strike as it is far enough out from the targeted killing strike so any immediate affects have become apparent, but not so far out as to blur into long term impacts.
[23] Robert Pape, Kevin Ruby and Vincent Bauer "Government data exaggerates the increase in terrorist attacks" *The Washington Post*, July 21,2014, Monkey Cage, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/07/21/government-data-exaggerate-the-increase-in-terrorist-attacks/

conditions or causes fit together and then compare them in another setting. Scholar

Charles Ragin argues that it can be used to determine the different combinations of

conditions associated with a specific outcome.[24] As such I have selected cases from

each method of targeted killing; kill/capture, drone strikes and bombings.

Perhaps the most famous case of targeted killing was the assassination of

Osama Bin Laden by a US Navy Seal Team in 2011. Widely heralded as one of the

Obama administration's greatest victories, I will examine its impact on the Al-Qaeda

network. I will also examine the case of the assassination via drone strike of Abu

Musab al-Zarqawi, the former head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, one of the precursors of the

Islamic State. Al-Zarqawi serves as an example of a ruthless leader who won his

power through violence. While both men led within the Al-Qaeda network, they

were eliminated using different methods and led very different elements of the

organization. Bin Laden had largely withdrawn from tactical planning and was

serving as more of an ideological leader in the months leading up to his death

whereas, Al-Zarqawi was highly active in planning and orchestrating Al-Qaeda in

Iraq's numerous attacks. As such, the impacts of their loss were very different, there

was no real change in Al-Qaeda's attack strategy primarily because Al-Qaeda had

largely withdrawn from committing attacks in the wake of Bin Laden's withdrawal.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq, by contrast, was heavily impacted going from an exceptionally

active terrorist group committing dozens of attacks to virtually none for a six-month

window in the wake of Al-Zarqawi's death. Yet six months after the strike the

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[24] Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press), 14

attacks resurge with a vengeance indicating that while the loss of al-Zarqawi had an impact it was not a permanent one.

To evaluate the third method of targeted killing, air strikes, I will evaluate the case of Salah Shehadeh, the military leader of Hamas who was assassinated via a one-ton bomb dropped by the Israeli Air Force. Israel is one of the biggest proponents of targeted killing using it on an almost constant basis to eliminate leaders of Hamas. This makes it difficult to assess the impact of only one strike. However, there was a sudden, significant downturn in the number of attacks perpetrated by Hamas in the six months immediately following Shehadeh's death indicating the presence of a window in the aftermath of a strike. This is also immediately followed by a resurgence at the six-month mark demonstrating a similar pattern to the Al-Zarqawi case.

This combination of cases should provide a strong basis for a comparative analysis. The window of attack reduction seems to be present regardless of targeted killing type, which warrants further exploration and study. If this window of weakness does indeed exist, then the US needs to develop a means to capitalize upon it. As such, in my fourth chapter I will examine various methods the US might apply to this method to have a more sustained and long-term impact on these organizations. Via a thorough analysis of Eli Berman's model, which asserts the importance of economic tools for weakening terrorist organizations, I hope to discover some concrete recommendations for what the US can implement alongside targeted killing to deal a more long lasting blow to terrorist organizations. The fact of the matter is that the US is increasingly relying on targeted killing to curtail

terrorist organizations. If these strikes create a short-term window the US must develop a comprehensive strategy to best exploit them.

Using a combination of descriptive data and comparative analysis, I hope to demonstrate a pattern of targeted killing strikes creating a six-month reduction in attacks yet followed by a resurgence at the six-month mark. This indicates that while targeted killing is an effective means of reducing attacks for a short period of time, it is not effective at permanently crippling these organizations much less destroying them. Yet there might be an opportunity to capitalize on what targeted killing does offer, which is a moment of weakness within the organization that should be exploited. Through an exploration of Berman's model, I hope to determine what policies might be most effective at enacting further damage on these groups while they are already weak. This combination of analyses will hopefully yield a comprehensive understanding of the impact of targeted killing and the policies necessary to increase its long-term efficacy.

Chapter Two

Israel and Targeted Killing

As several scholars posit, targeted killing is ineffective at destroying terrorist organizations.[25] According to Johnston, targeted killing is more useful as part of a broader counterinsurgency strategy. However, targeted killing is increasingly being used by the United States as a complete counterterrorism strategy.[26] Yet the US is not the first to country to use targeted killing to curtail terrorist activities. For decades, Israel has used "selective targeting" to eliminate Palestinian militants and terrorists.[27] While Israel's "selective targeting" programs have existed since the 1970s, the Aqsa Intifada and the subsequent uptick in violence prompted a significant increase in the use of targeted killing by the Israeli government.[28] Over the course of the past forty years, the Israeli government, namely the IDF (Israel Defense Force) and its intelligence service, Mossad, have become the largest and most experienced perpetrators of targeted killings.

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[25] Patrick B. Johnston "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns", *International Security* (Vol 47, Spring 2012) AND Aaron Mannes "Testing the Snake Head Strategy: Does Killing or Capturing its Leaders Reduce a Terrorist Group's Activities?", *The Journal of International Policy Solutions* (Vol 9, Spring 2008)
[26] Patrick B. Johnston "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns", *International Security* (Vol 47, Spring 2012)
[27] Luft, Gal. "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing." *Middle East Quarterly*, January 1, 2003. http://www.meforum.org/515/the-logic-of-israels-targeted-killing,1
[28] The Aqsa Intifada, also known as the Second Intifada began in September 2000, prompted in part by Israeli's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visiting the Temple Mount known as the Al-Aqsa mosque to Muslims. The violence lasted until February 2005 and led to the construction of the Israeli barrier in the West Bank.
BBC News "Al-Aqsa Intifada timeline" September 29,2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3677206.stm
AND
Luft, Gal. "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing." *Middle East Quarterly*, January 1, 2003. http://www.meforum.org/515/the-logic-of-israels-targeted-killing,1

Israel began using targeted killing against PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) leaders during the First Intifada in the hopes of limiting the Palestinians attacks. The first targeted killing of the intifada was the assassination of the PLO's military leader and second in command, Khalil al-Wazir in April 1988.[29] The Israeli's believed that eliminating such a senior leader and strategist would force the PLO to conduct fewer operations against Israeli forces. Unfortunately it had limited affect, as the Intifada would rage on for another five years and the Palestinians would continue to attack Israeli forces virtually unabated throughout the conflict.

While targeted killings did not quell violence or stop terrorist attacks in the First Intifada, Israel has continued to use the tactic against its other primary adversaries namely Hamas and Hezbollah. For the Israeli's, the value of targeted killing stems from its ability to both disrupt the organization while deterring individual leaders. As Luft asserts, if terrorists are being hunted constantly by security forces then their focus shifts from planning attacks to survival and self-preservation.[30] The Israeli's attempt to add to this by using a wide variety of techniques at random to maximize the potential for paranoia for their targets. The Israeli's also believe that targeted killing must be applied consistently to terrorist organizations in hopes of permanently altering their behavior. The hope here is that the loss of leaders via targeted killing creates an increase in stress, suspicion, and mistrust within the organization, which makes it harder to plan complex operations

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[29]Luft, Gal. "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing." *Middle East Quarterly*, January 1, 2003. http://www.meforum.org/515/the-logic-of-israels-targeted-killing., 2
[30] Luft, Gal. "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing.",8-9

that require extensive networks and collaboration. For the Israeli's, even the possibility of creating this type of impact on organizations that they perceive as existential threats is worth the extreme risks and loss of political capital associated with targeted killing.

While the benefits of targeted killing have been mixed for the Israeli's, the cost of them is especially high due to factors unique to Israel. In international law, targeted killing occupies a challenging grey area as assassination is illegal. While every state that uses targeted killing has to justify their actions, Israel is often especially scrutinized as their perception of an enemy is different than other nations. Israel views itself as a state under constant existential threat from Palestinians and perhaps more crucially, Palestinian terrorist groups. As such the Israeli government takes a rather broad approach to identifying enemies of the state and individuals who would likely pose a fairly limited threat in other contexts are viewed as highly dangerous threats to Israel.

A well-known example of this occurred after the Israeli's assassinated Thabit Thabit in 2000. [31]A dentist and director of the Palestinian health ministry did not fit the profile of a murderous terrorist and sparked an international conversation about the legality and validity of Israel's targeted killing policy. Assassination is illegal according to international law as is the violation of a state's sovereignty necessary to assassinate a target. Israel attempts to get around this by arguing that the pursuit of terrorists targeting their population is an act of self-defense since the Palestinian's will not pursue or arrest them. Yet this argument did not hold up to

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[31]Luft, Gal. "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing." *Middle East Quarterly*, January 1, 2003. http://www.meforum.org/515/the-logic-of-israels-targeted-killing, 4

international pressure. Even the Israeli's most fervent and powerful supporter, the United States grew frustrated with the Israeli's targeted killing policy and in 2001 stated "Israel needs to understand that targeted killings of Palestinians don't end the violence but are only inflaming an already volatile situation and making it much harder to restore calm."[32] While the Israeli's were undeterred by the United States' frustration, it is indicative of a broader challenge that targeted killing presents to Israel. As a state Israel relies upon the protection its allies provide to maintain its long-term survival. Targeted killing pulls Israel off the moral high ground and makes it exceptionally challenging for American policy makers to justify lending their support.

While much of the Israeli logic for targeting is sound, the real-world impact of their targeted killing policy has not been reflective of it. If targeted killing really did serve as a deterrent to terrorist groups planning attacks, there would be significant long term reductions in terrorist activities within Israel. Yet as the case of Salah Shehadeh indicates, while targeted killing can result in some possible short term reductions in terrorist activity, they do not last and the process of targeted killing can have very serious, even deadly consequences in the form of lost political capital, negative international attention and collateral casualties.

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[32] Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs. "08/27/2001: Daily Press Briefing Excerpts." Accessed February 10, 2017. https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rt/4697.htm.

Fig 1: Timeline of Hamas Attacks 2002-2003
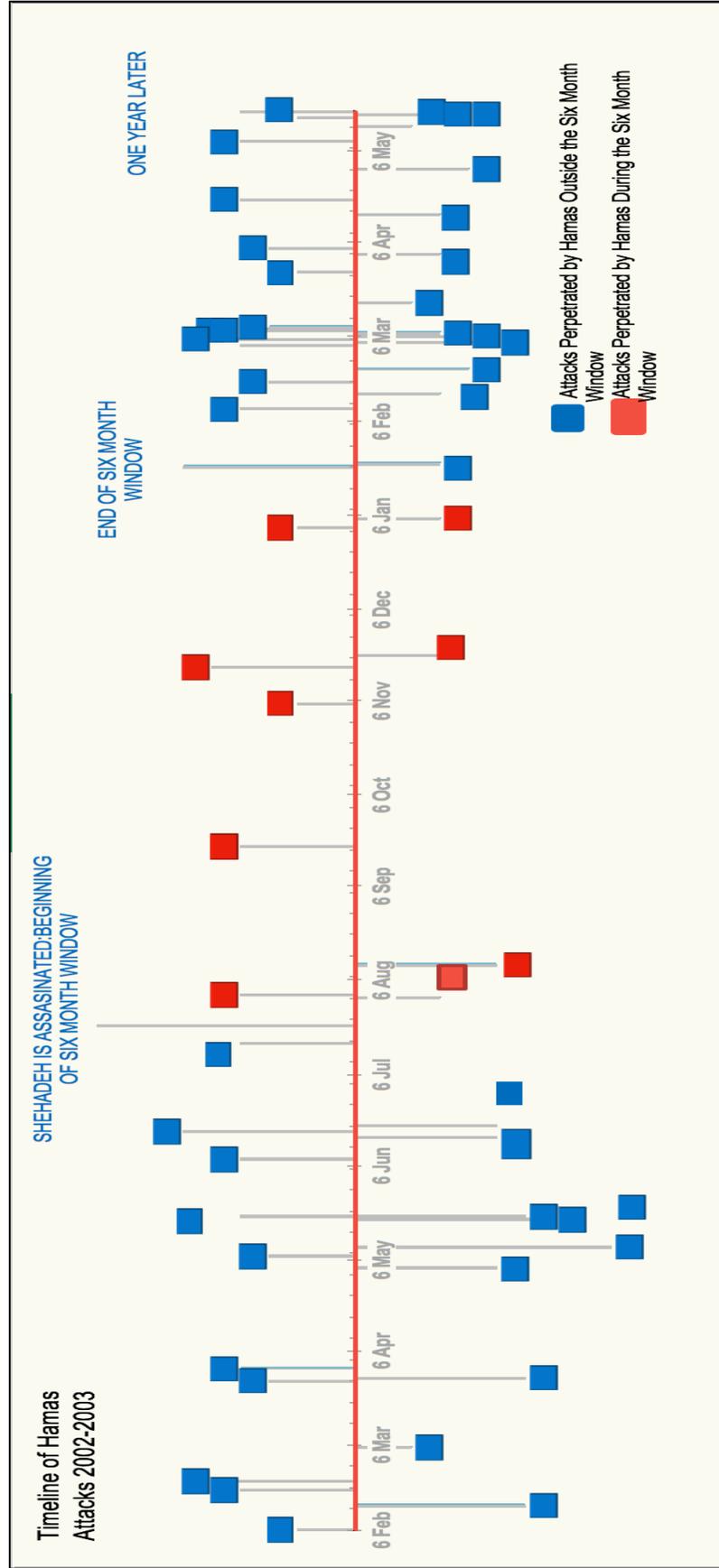
The Assassination of Salah Shehadeh

In the middle of the night on July 22 2002, an Israeli fighter jet dropped a one ton bomb on an apartment building in the middle of Gaza City, a densely populated city in the Gaza strip. Such a violent and public attack carried enormous risk of exposure and collateral damage, but to the Israeli government it was well worth it to insure the demise of one man; Salah Shehadeh, the military leader of Hamas. The attack would also kill a Hamas activist, Zahar Natzer, Shehadeh's wife Layla, his fifteen-year-old daughter Iman, and thirteen other civilians including several children. On a national scale, the operation also prompted a ten-year public investigation primarily due to the deaths of 15 civilians.[33] Yet years later Prime Minister Ariel Sharon still proclaimed the operation "one our greatest successes" but acquiesced that had he known about the eventual civilian casualties he would have postponed the operation.[34] The question then becomes what about Shehadeh made the Israeli government so desperate to eliminate him? And was all the backlash that Israel experienced worth it?

To the Israeli government, Shehadeh represented a serious existential threat as the strategist behind Hamas's deadly attacks on Israeli civilians and security personnel. Israel had initially tried the non-violent route, demanding Shehadeh's arrest from the Palestinian authority repeatedly to no avail.[35] They then moved into

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[33] June Thomas "Israel Hits and Misses" *Slate,* July 26,2002
http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:fjjGGmiBr4cJ:www.slate.com/articles
/news_and_politics/international_papers/2002/07/israel_hits_and_misses.html+Slate,+July+2
6,+2002,+Ariel+Sharon&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us
[34]June Thomas "Israel Hits and Misses" *Slate,* July 26,2002
[35]Daniel Byman "Do Targeted Killings Work",95

attempting to capture Shehadeh, which was infinitely complicated by his constant evasive tactics. Shehadeh was known for switching residents frequently and did everything possible to avoid capture. His constant movement and evasion not only prompted the Israeli's to target him for assassination but also complicated the operation to kill him as well. According to the Israeli's Special Investigation of Shehadeh's death, one of the main motivators in their decision to use the bomb that night was out of concern that Shehadeh would flee again. [36] Due to the uptick in Hamas attacks in the years prior which escalated to what the Israeli's referred to as "a situation of actual war, classified as an "armed conflict", combined with Shehadeh's tendency to flee pushed the Israeli security services to move forward with the operation even with incomplete intelligence.[37]

It is easy to see why Shehadeh was a target, he had spent years orchestrating Hamas's deadly attacks on Israeli civilians and defense forces. Hamas at the time was responsible for fifty-two attacks on Israel, killing sixteen Israeli soldiers and 220 civilians. [38] As such, Israel's ultimate goal in killing Shehadeh was not only justice for the victims of these attacks but also to permanently prevent him from planning any more. By eliminating Hamas's top military strategist, the Israelis were hoping for a permanent reduction in Hamas's ability to conduct attacks. What they got in practice was a bit different.

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[36]"Saleh Shehadeh- Special Investigatory Commission" *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs,* February 27, 2011, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/State/Law/Pages/Salah_Shehadeh-Special_Investigatory_Commission_27-Feb-2011.aspx
[37] Ibid
[38] Luft, Gal. "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing." *Middle East Quarterly*, January 1, 2003. http://www.meforum.org/515/the-logic-of-israels-targeted-killing.

Hamas was certainly deeply impacted by the sudden loss of one of their top military strategists and that is reflected in a sudden decrease in attacks perpetrated by Hamas in the immediate aftermath of Shehadeh's demise. In the six months leading up to Shehadeh's death Hamas orchestrated 21 attacks many of them military in nature, which were most likely orchestrated all or in part by Shehadeh.[39] In the six months that followed, attacks perpetrated by Hamas plummeted by almost fifty percent with the group only carrying out 11 attacks.[40] While eleven attacks are of course eleven too many, in many respects Israel got what it wanted in the short term; a marked reduction in Hamas's ability to terrorize Israelis civilians. Yet it didn't last. In the six months after the initial decrease, Hamas's attacks increased dramatically with the group claiming direct responsibility for 29 incidents including twelve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This initial downturn followed by an increase was definitely not the overall outcome the Israeli's wanted when they assassinated Shehadeh since their ultimate goal was to curtail Hamas's aggression but instead they ultimately got more aggression and violence.

What the Israeli's also did not want was a massive international backlash as a result of their operation. But due to the scope and scale of the collateral damage, the reaction was swift and overwhelmingly negative. The most vehement opposition of course came from the Palestinian authority who immediately stated that "Not only

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[39]National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=&end_yearonly=&start_year=2002&start_month=1&start_day=22&end_year=2002&end_month=7&end_day=22&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&perpetrator=399&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

[40] Ibid

will Hamas take revenge for the martyr's, but all the Palestinian people will take revenge for the blood of the martyrs". [41] Yet the international community was alarmed as well due to the violence and extreme collateral damage. The Spanish government was so alarmed that they launched their own investigation after the Israeli's first investigation petered out in 2009. A Spanish federal judge, Fernando Andreu, opened an investigation into the assassination of Shehadeh to determine if the actions of former defense minister Benjamin Ben Eliezer , the defense chief of staff Moshe Ya'alon, and the former air force chief Dan Halutz constitute war crimes.[42] The investigation came to the Spanish court as the result of a petition from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, as Spain had a reputation for investigating war criminals in Latin America and was interested in taking the case. The Spanish Court was not interested in the Israeli's decision to kill Shehadeh but rather the methods the Israelis used, namely dropping such a large bomb in a highly populated neighborhood late at night when most of the residents were at home.

The Israeli government was less than thrilled with the accusations and investigation into their security affairs. Almost immediately after the investigation was announced, Israeli officials lambasted the Spanish Court for investigating the death of a terrorist. The Israeli defense minister at the time, Ehud Barak stated "Someone who calls the assassination of a terrorist a crime against humanity lives in

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[41] Goldenberg, Suzanne. "12 Dead in Attack on Hamas." *The Guardian*, July 22, 2002, sec. World news. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jul/23/israel1.

[42] Tremlett, Giles. "Spain Investigates Claims of Israeli Crimes against Humanity in Gaza." *The Guardian*, January 29, 2009, sec. World news. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/29/spain-israel-gaza-crimes-humanity.

an upside-down world"[43] The Israeli government worked to limit and curtail the Spanish investigation and it was ultimately dropped just a few months after it began.

While the Israeli government was less than thrilled with the Spanish Court's investigation, they launched another large-scale investigation into Shehadeh's death soon after the Spanish investigation was dropped. A Special Investigatory Commission was created, which took nine years to conduct an investigation of the events surrounding Salah Shehadeh's assassination. Ultimately they concluded that there had been no wrong doing on the behalf of the Israeli government, and the overkill was primarily due to an "intelligence failure as a result of which too much weight was placed on the immediate strike on Shehadeh and too little weight was given to the possible risk to uninvolved civilians as a result of the strike".[44] For the Israeli's there were several key elements to the failure, namely the urgency to eliminate Shehadeh due to the recent escalation by Hamas, the possibility of losing Shehadeh again after chasing him for so long, the short period of time that Israeli security services had to recon the area and building Shehadeh was in and the risk that the operation would be exposed if they waited any longer or collected any more intel.[45]

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[43] "Israel Outraged by Spain's War Crimes Investigation." *The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com*. Accessed February 5, 2017. http://www.jpost.com/International/Israel-outraged-by-Spains-war-crimes-investigation.

[44] "Salah Shehadeh- Special Investigatory Commission" *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs,* February 27, 2011*,* http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/State/Law/Pages/Salah_Shehadeh-Special_Investigatory_Commission_27-Feb-2011.aspx

[45] Ibid

This sense of urgency and desperation to eliminate a target even in the face of limited intelligence is a key risk factor in targeted killing. Defense and intelligence services become so focused on seizing the opportunity at hand that other crucial risk factors are ignored, such as risk of collateral damage as evidenced in the Shehadeh case. The Israelis were so fixated on capitalizing on what they thought would be their only feasible chance to kill Shehadeh that they were willing to drop a massive bomb on an urban center and risk significant civilian casualties. With targeted killing the desperation to eliminate the target overwhelms everything else and can create a dangerous outcome.

Consequences and Conclusions

While the assassination of Shehadeh may have been a success in Ariel Sharon's eyes, it failed to accomplish its goal and cost the Israeli's immensely in collateral damage and political capital. In the report of the Special Investigatory Commission, the Israeli's asserted that the defense and security forces had learned from the mistakes that had occurred in the operation to kill Shehadeh. "Following these investigations lessons were learned and internalized by the security forces and incorporated both in writing and orally in training, lectures and regulations. Changes were also introduced accordingly in the mechanisms dealing with targeted killing operations."[46] While there were undoubtedly changes made to

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[46] "Salah Shehadeh- Special Investigatory Commission" *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs,* February 27, 2011*,* http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/State/Law/Pages/Salah_Shehadeh-Special_Investigatory_Commission_27-Feb-2011.aspx

Israel's targeting policies and operations after the Shehadeh assassination, it is

unclear if the Israeli's have really learned their lesson from the attack on Shehadeh.

To its credit, Israel has attempted to determine a legal framework for its

targeted killing program. In 2006 targeted killing was put before the Israeli

Supreme Court to establish a legal precedent for the practice. The three-justice

panel ultimately concluded that under a specific set of conditions targeted killing

does not violate international law, namely clear intelligence that the individual is

taking part in terrorist activities and that there is no other, less violent, recourse for

attacking them. [47] To the court while a civilian is afforded certain protections, those

actively taking part in terrorist activities lose them, which makes it legal for them to

be targeted. The most significant indication that Israel is attempting to learn from its

mistake with Shehadeh is that the court also ruled that Israel's security services

must make every effort to prevent collateral damage or at a minimum make it

"proportional".[48] This is a crucial lesson for the Israeli's to incorporate particularly

given the size and scope of its "selective targeting" program. While eliminating

terrorists may be at a minimum morally questionable, there is no question that

operations that also kill innocent civilians have to be avoided at all costs.

Unfortunately, there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of collateral damage

from most targeted killing methods, which further increases the hazards of using it,

particularly within highly populated areas.

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[47] "High Court: International Law Does Not Forbid Targeted Killings." *Haaretz*, December 14, 2006. http://www.haaretz.com/news/high-court-international-law-does-not-forbid-targeted-killings-1.207185.
[48] Ibid

The Israeli's continue to extensively use targeted killing as a corner stone of their security program in spite of the extensive international backlash and limited results. Perhaps most telling is that Israel assassinated one of Shehadeh's successors, Ahmed Jaabari, then head of Hamas's military wing, via a drone strike in 2012 in the hopes of crippling Hamas in the wake of a sudden increase in violence and attacks.[49] In the wake of the attacks the IDF stated that Jabaari was targeted because he "served in the upper echelon of the Hamas command and was directly responsible for executing terror attacks against the State of Israel". [50] There was significantly less international backlash in part due to the state of conflict between the two sides. The assassination of Jabaari was a part of a larger air operation to eliminate Hamas missiles and occurred in response to Hamas's air attacks on Israel. Regardless, Israel's motivation and goals were the same, kill the military commander of Hamas to prevent further attacks and to provoke fear in the rest of the organization. The IDF stated on Twitter immediately after the strike "We recommend that no Hamas operatives, whether low level or senior leaders, show their faces above ground in the days ahead," and even released footage of the assassination itself. [51] Yet just as with Shehadeh the deterrent had limited to no

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[49] "Israel Kills Head of Hamas Military, Opens Bombing Campaign on Gaza." Accessed February 6, 2017. https://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/14/249618.html.

[50] Harel, Amos, Avi Issacharoff, Gili Cohen, Allison Kaplan Sommer, and News Agencies. "Hamas Military Chief Ahmed Jabari Killed by Israeli Strike." *Haaretz*, November 14, 2012. http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/hamas-military-chief-ahmed-jabari-killed-by-israeli-strike.premium-1.477819.

[51] Kershner, Isabel, and Fares Akram. "Israeli Assault Into Gaza Kills a Hamas Leader." *The New York Times*, November 14, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/15/world/middleeast/israeli-strike-in-gaza-kills-the-military-leader-of-hamas.html.

effect. In fact, Jabaari's assassination was just the beginning of a week and a half of extreme violence between Israel and Hamas. This pattern of assassination with no concrete result is one that the Israeli's have either missed or simply failed to act upon. While their "selective targeting" program may serve as a particularly violent means of justice, it does not provide the type of concrete, long term reduction in terrorist attacks which the Israeli's say they desperately want.

As the Shehadeh case demonstrates, targeted killing is not only incapable of destroying a terrorist organization but it is also not capable of permanently reducing terrorist attacks. Even for Israel, the most experienced state at using targeted killing, it does not yield the results they seek. Despite the limited results, their program has served an inspiration to other states fighting terrorism, namely the United States who seek to exact revenge upon those who plotted against them in the hopes of preventing history from repeating itself. No operation is more reflective of this than the ten-year hunt for Osama Bin Laden.

AND Israel Defense Forces. *IDF Pinpoint Strike on Ahmed Jabari, Head of Hamas Military Wing*. Accessed February 10, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6U2ZQ0EhN4&sns=tw.

Chapter 3

United States and Targeted Killing

The hunt for Osama Bin Laden was unlike any other targeted assassination ever conducted. Part manhunt, part revenge killing and part assassination, finding Bin Laden was the American intelligence communities' obsession for more than a decade. Killing Bin Laden was not solely intended to stop future attacks but to avenge a previous one and destroy al-Qaeda's ideological father. Unlike other targeted killing's, which are perpetrated in the hopes of preventing future terrorist activity, Osama Bin Laden had largely removed himself from operational planning and was primarily a symbolic and philosophical figure. He represented the ideological heart of the al-Qaeda organization and his writings were studied by the entire organization. To the United States, however, Bin Laden was the human face of an organization that had perpetrated the worst terrorist attack on American soil since the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

The targeted killing of Bin Laden is in many ways an outlier to other cases in this study. The immense scope of the hunt for the target and the unique role he played within the terrorist organization makes Bin Laden unique. Finding Bin Laden was an exhaustive process requiring unprecedented levels of manpower and collaboration across the intelligence and defense services. It began just days after 9/11 when President Bush named Bin laden as the Prime Suspect in the 9/11 attacks and stated "I want justice. And there's an old poster out West... that says

Wanted Dead or Alive".[52] While seeking justice in the wake of an attack is consistent

with previous generations of American foreign policy, specifically seeking the death

of a single individual is not. The United States has targeted individuals within enemy

organizations in previous conflicts, namely the Phoenix Program in the Vietnam War

but had generally avoided assassination.[53] In fact, when the US intelligence

community did begin to seriously entertain the use of targeted killing as a tool, the

government pushed back. After a New York Times expose revealed that the CIA was

overstepping its investigative authority, a Senate investigative committee

discovered that the CIA had been planning and had even attempted to assassinate

foreign leaders.[54] In response to the committee's findings, President Gerald Ford

issued Executive Order 11905, which banned the US government from using

political assassination.[55] The order would be upheld for decades by Presidents from

both political parties until the attacks on 9/11.

    The events of 9/11 led to the revision of a variety of national security policies

including the US's avoidance of targeted killing. Less than a week after the 9/11

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[52] CNN "Bush: Bin Laden "Prime Suspect." *CNN*, September 17,2001.
http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/17/bush.powell.terrorism/
[53] The Phoenix Program was a counterinsurgency program run by the CIA during the War in
Vietnam in which committees created lists of Viet Cong operatives who were then arrested and
interrogated or assassinated if they resisted in the hopes of dismantling the operative structure
of the Viet Cong.
Andre R. Finlayson "A Retrospective on Counterinsurgency Operations: The Tay Ninh Provincial
Reconnaissance Unit and Its Role in the Phoenix Program" *Central Intelligence Agency,* Accessed
February 15,2017 https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-
publications/csi-studies/studies/vol51no2/a-retrospective-on-counterinsurgency-
operations.html
[54] "Targeted Killings: A Short History." *Foreign Policy*. Accessed February 15, 2017.
https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/08/13/targeted-killings-a-short-history/.
[55] "Executive Order 11905 | United States History | Britannica.com." Accessed February 16,
2017. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Executive-Order-11905.

attacks, President Bush broadened the US's use of force regulations to allow US forces "(to use) all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he (the President) determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001".[56] This served to significantly broaden the United States' ability to use lethal force against civilians. President Bush's post 9/11 national security strategy also indicated that the US was now willing to act pre-emptively to prevent terrorist actions from occurring in the future.[57] The combinations of these two elements gave the US the legal purview to pursue a variety of new security strategies, including targeted killing. While killing Bin Laden would take a decade, the framework for targeted killing as an American strategy that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11 has allowed for targeted killing to emerge as a critical element of US counterterrorism policy.

The Assassination of Osama Bin Laden

The beginning of the end for the world's most wanted man came not with a bang but with a whirr, namely four Black Hawks filled with 79 US Navy SEALS entering Pakistani airspace just after midnight on May 1, 2011.[58] The SEALS fast roped down to a compound in the quiet suburb of Abbottabad; 40 minutes later

[56] "Authorization for Use of Military Force, PL 107-40." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed February 17, 2017. http://www.cfr.org/911-impact/authorization-use-military-force-pl-107-40/p25703.
[57] "Full Text: Bush's National Security Strategy." *The New York Times*, September 20, 2002. http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/20/politics/full-text-bushs-national-security-strategy.html.
[58] Cooper, Mark Mazzetti, Helene, and Peter Baker. "Clues Gradually Led to the Location of Osama Bin Laden." *The New York Times*, May 2, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/03/world/asia/03intel.html.

Osama Bin Laden and 4 others were dead.[59] While the details of the raid were initially murky due to its classified nature, much has since been declassified. In spite of mechanical failure in one of the Black Hawk's, the SEALS were able to breach the compound's security perimeter and found Bin Laden, his body guards, and his son, Khalid, on the third floor. Moments later the SEAL ground commander radioed his confirmation back to waiting officials "Geronimo EKIA" (Enemy Killed In Action).[60] The SEAL team then seized documents from the compound and returned across the border to Jalalabad. Bin Laden's identity would then be confirmed using DNA testing and he would be buried at sea a few days later.

President Obama would address the nation just hours after the raid stating, "the death of Bin Laden marks the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat Al Qaeda."[61] Bin Laden's death prompted a national celebration and was cheered as an unprecedented success for President Obama's administration and the broader security and intelligence communities. Yet after decade of hard work what precisely did killing Osama Bin Laden do to make the world safer? Did loosing Bin Laden really have an impact on Al-Qaeda?

As previously discussed, Bin Laden was a symbol not an operational commander, particularly at the time of his death. Due in part to the massive manhunt to find and kill him and the size and scope of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, Bin

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[59] Ibid
[60] Geronimo was the code name assigned to Bin Laden.
Peter Bergen, CNN National Security. "Architect of Bin Laden Raid: The Anxious Moments." *CNN*. Accessed February 17, 2017. http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/02/politics/osama-bin-laden-raid-architect-mcraven-bergen/index.html.
[61] "Obama's Remarks on Bin Laden's Killing." *The New York Times*, May 2, 2011, sec. World / Middle East. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/middleeast/02obama-text.html.

Laden spent most of his time isolated within his compound in Abbottabad, and communicated solely through written letters which were transmitted through a single courier.[62] Of the trove of documents seized by the SEALs during the raid, only a few have been declassified but those that have reveal that Bin Laden was struggling to maintain control over Al-Qaeda's various affiliates and regional groups. In long, rambling letters from his compound, Bin Laden criticized the activities of Al-Qaeda's affiliates. In a letter to Al-Qaeda's operational manager at the time Atiyah Abd al-Rahaman, Bin Laden criticized the excessive collateral damage that many of Al-Qaeda's affiliates were inflicting in their attacks, arguing that continuing to inflict such damage would lead to an erosion of popular support for the cause.[63] Yet for all his letters, analysis of the documents indicates that Bin Laden had little if any real control over the operations of Al-Qaeda's affiliates or even Al-Qaeda Central.[64] As such when he was killed in 2011 it had virtually no impact on the operational elements of Al-Qaeda as an organization.

Assessing the impact that Bin Laden's loss had on the morale of Al-Qaeda is fairly challenging. Al-Qaeda did issue a statement a few days after Bin Laden's death congratulating "the Islamic Nation on the martyrdom of their devoted son Osama"

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[62] This courier, Sheikh Abu Ahmed was ultimately the key to finding and killing Bin Laden. Once he was identified in 2010, he led US intelligence services to Bin Laden's compound.
"Osama Bin Laden Killed: Phonecall by Courier Led US to Their Target," May 3, 2011, sec. World. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/8489078/Osama-bin-Laden-killed-phonecall-by-courier-led-US-to-their-target.html.
[63] Don Rassler et. al " Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Laden Sidelined? "*Combatting Terrorism Center*, May 3 2012
https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-ladin-sidelined
[64] https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/CTC_LtrsFromAbottabad_WEB_v2.pdf

and pledging to avenge his death.[65] Yet in reality Al-Qaeda never followed through

on their promise and six weeks after Bin Laden's death, Ayman al-Zawahiri was

officially named the new leader of al-Qaeda.[66] Al-Zawahiri had long been a close ally

of Bin Laden's and had helped develop much of Al-Qaeda's ideology and strategy so

his selection was no surprise. Some analysts argued that the length of time it took

pointed to increase divisions within Al-Qaeda as a result of the loss of Bin Laden.[67]

The increased division were likely more to do with Al-Zawahiri's rather divisive

nature than significant fractures within the organization. While Al-Zawahiri had

long been Bin Laden's closest ally, he was nowhere near as charismatic and

inspirational so it is more than likely it took some effort to consolidate his power

and cement his position at the top of Al-Qaeda's rather complex hierarchy.

Less than two months after Bin Laden's death, Al-Qaeda had a new leader

and the organization was operating as it had before Bin Laden's death. This finding

fits with Janet Jordan's analysis. She argues that when well-established terrorist

groups experience the loss of a leader, even an especially charismatic and critical

one; the loss does not lead to the destruction of the terrorist group because a leader

can be easily replaced.[68] While Bin Laden was arguably the greatest inspiration

behind al-Qaeda, the group had spent decades growing and evolving its hierarchal

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[65] "Full Statement from Al Qaeda on Osama Bin Laden's Death." Accessed February 17, 2017.
http://news.blogs.cnn.com/2011/05/06/full-statement-from-al-qaeda-on-osama-bin-ladens-death
[66] CBS/AP June, 16 2011, and 4:47 Pm. "Ayman Al-Zawahiri Named New Al Qaeda Chief."
Accessed February 17, 2017. http://www.cbsnews.com/news/ayman-al-zawahiri-named-new-al-qaeda-chief/.
[67] Ibid
[68] Jenna Jordan "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive
Decapitation Strikes" *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Spring 2014)

structures and ideology so his loss, while momentarily frustrating, had almost no

impact on the organization at all.

Operationally Al-Qaeda Central in the period before and after Bin Laden's

death was almost identical. [69] An organization that espoused a great deal

ideologically but almost nothing operationally. While its various affiliates across the

Middle East and Africa perpetrated a number of terrorist attacks, Al-Qaeda Central

was virtually dormant. Before Bin Laden's death, Al Qaeda hadn't even been

suspected of an attack since July 2008, when four gunmen killed three Turkish

police offices in the US consulate in Istanbul. [70] While Al-Qaeda didn't claim

responsibility for the attack they were the prime suspects. In the nearly three years

between that attack and Bin Laden's death Al-Qaeda perpetrated no attacks

according to the Global Terrorism Database.[71] In many ways Al-Qaeda Central was

in a state of dormancy, while many of its affiliates rapidly grew in size and strength.

As such, while killing Bin Laden was a huge national security priority for the US it

was never going to have a significant impact on Al-Qaeda Central operationally, as it

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[69] To help limit confusion I'm focusing primarily on the core of Al-Qaeda, known as Al-Qaeda
Central in this section as opposed to its many affiliates. While it is often assumed that Al-Qaeda
is all one organization, in reality it is comprised of Al-Qaeda Central and a variety of regional
affiliates such as Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Al-Qaeda in Yemen all of which are under varying degrees
of control by Al-Qaeda central.

[70] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START).
(2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved
from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200807090016

[71] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START).
(2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved
from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=2008&end_yearonly
=2011&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSel
ect0=&perpetrator=20029&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

had transitioned away from attacks and Bin Laden had lost much of his control of the organization and its network.

Domestic Political Consequences for the US

In spite of the limited impact the attack had on Al-Qaeda as an organization, it did have a significant impact on the American political climate. For President Obama, the death of Bin Laden was one of the greatest foreign policy successes of his eight years in office. Within three days of Bin Laden's death, Obama's approval rating spiked six points from 46% approval to 52% approval pushing him into the majority for the first time since early February 2010.[72] For President Obama this was a huge political win. With his run for re-election just around the corner, a boost in approval ratings was the best possible thing that could have happened for the President and his re-election team.

President Obama had used the hunt for Bin Laden in campaign strategy during the 2008 presidential election. In the second presidential debate, which was focused on foreign policy, President Obama brought the hunt for Bin Laden back to the forefront, promising to make the hunt for Bin Laden his top priority for national security stating "We will kill bin Laden; we will crush Al Qaeda. That has to be our

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[72] Gallup Inc. "Obama Approval Rallies Six Points to 52% After Bin Laden Death." *Gallup.com*. Accessed February 23, 2017. http://www.gallup.com/poll/147437/Obama-Approval-Rallies-Six-Points-Bin-Laden-Death.aspx.
AND
Gallup Inc. "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama." *Gallup.com*. Accessed February 23, 2017. http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/Barack-Obama-Presidential-Job-Approval.aspx.

biggest national security priority". [73] Promising to kill Bin Laden in his campaign

was an important promise for Obama as it was for his opponent in the race, Senator

John McCain, who made similar promises that night and touted his military

experience as evidence that he would be better a targeting and killing Bin Laden

than Obama.[74] Killing Bin Laden was a central issue for the 2008 campaign as it had

been since 9/11. In polls taken in November 2001, 54% of Americans believed that

it would be better for the US if Bin Laden was killed rather than tried and captured.

Perhaps more crucially, 55% of Americans believed that the US operations in

Afghanistan would not be a success unless Bin Laden was killed or captured.[75] The

hunt for Bin Laden stayed on the radar of the American population throughout the

years that followed. In polling conducted from 2004-2006, a majority of Americans

believed that capturing or killing Bin Laden was extremely or very important. [76] The

focus that everyday Americans had on the hunt for Bin Laden made it a highly

politicized issue, which candidates on both sides used.

     As such, Bin Laden's death had significant political ramifications. Obama's

approval rating soared and perhaps most crucially, due to the inevitable variability

of approval ratings, Obama had fulfilled his campaign trail promise and eliminated

the leader of Al-Qaeda. To the American people this was a huge accomplishment and

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[73] "Transcript: The Second Presidential Debate" *New York Times*, October 7,2008
http://www.nytimes.com/elections/2008/president/debates/transcripts/second-presidential-debate.html

[74] Ibid

[75] Gallup. Inc "Majority Says Military Action Not a Success Until Bin Laden Captured."
Gallup.com. Accessed February 23, 2017. http://www.gallup.com/poll/5092/Majority-Says-Military-Action-Success-Until-bin-Laden-Captured.aspx.

[76] Gallup Inc. "Osama Bin Laden." *Gallup.com*. Accessed February 23, 2017.
http://www.gallup.com/poll/5266/Osama-bin-Laden.aspx.

one that proved very useful on the campaign trail in 2012. President Obama touted

his success in several campaign speeches. "We're taking the fight to Al-

Qaeda...Because of the extraordinary bravery of the men and women who wear this

nation's uniform and the outstanding work of our intelligence agencies, Osama Bin

Laden will never again threaten the United States"[77] In addition to the increased

security the death of Bin Laden was intended to provide to the United States, the

distinct challenge of orchestrating and decision-making for such a complex and

risky operation was touted as an example of President Obama's leadership skills and

courage .Obama's campaign highlighted this in an attack ad against his opponent

Mitt Romney. Romney had been critical of the expensive hunt for Bin Laden in the

past, which the Obama campaign brought back in the add and questioned what

Romney would have done in the same situation.[78] For President Obama, Bin Laden's

death played a crucial role in building his foreign policy and national security

credentials and likely played a significant role in his successful re-election

campaign.

Yet if Bin Laden's death had such a limited impact on Al-Qaeda operationally,

why was it so impactful to the American population? Over the years, Bin Laden had

remained a symbol of the attacks that killed so many and the hunt for him was a

means of exacting vengeance and retribution. Bin Laden was a very vocal face of Al-

Qaeda and while he was no longer actually planning or carrying out attacks, many

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[77] "Obama Broaches Bin Laden Death at Campaign Event." *Reuters*, May 11, 2011.
http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-campaign-obama-binladen-idUSTRE74A0A520110511.
[78] McGreal, Chris. "Obama Campaign Marks Bin Laden Raid Anniversary with Romney Attack
Ad." *The Guardian*, April 30, 2012, sec. US news.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/30/obama-campaign-bin-laden-death-ad.

Americans still thought that his death would serve to make Americans safer. In a

Gallup poll conducted on May 2, 2011, the day after the raid that killed bin Laden,

54% of Americans believed that his death would make the US safer from terrorist

attacks.[79] As such it did not matter all that much if Bin Laden's death had a

significant operational impact. With a majority of Americans believing that his death

would make the US safer, and 93 % of Americans approving of the raid, the Bin

Laden operation was a success politically. [80] Ultimately the US is a democracy and

the President is an elected official. While killing Bin Laden accomplished virtually

nothing in the fight to destroy Al-Qaeda, the American people believed that they

were safer with him dead and ultimately that is what counts. There was no question

that Bin Laden was the key orchestrator in the attacks on 9/11 and as such the

motivation for revenge would likely permanently exist in the US domestic

population. President Obama had the opportunity to eliminate him and did so. While

it might not have had an impact on al-Qaeda, it did have an impact on the

population, his re-election campaign and his Presidential legacy.

The Fallout: Pakistan and the US After Abbottabad

In spite of its very limited real world impact, the vast majority of political

response to the Bin Laden raid was overwhelmingly positive. Yet there was some

significant political fallout for the US in its relationship with Pakistan. Much as with

the Shehadeh case, the US did violate the sovereignty of another nation, which

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[79] Gallup Inc. "Osama Bin Laden." *Gallup.com*. Accessed February 22, 2017.
http://www.gallup.com/poll/5266/Osama-bin-Laden.aspx.
[80] Ibid

provoked some angry responses from the Pakistani government. Some of the frustration was due to embarrassment, not only had Bin Laden been found within their borders but the Pakistan military had barely responded to the SEAL team's presence in their airspace. [81] Yet the real anger came from the lack of advance warning from the US that the raid was taking place.

While the US- Pakistani relationship was, and is a challenging one, there had been some collaboration particularly in the realm of counterterrorism and as such the lack of warning before, arguably the most significant counterterrorism operation ever, created significant problems. To the Obama administration's credit, the raid to kill Bin Laden was an exceptionally well-guarded secret, yet the violation of sovereignty remained. In the days following the raid, the US attempted some damage control. John Kerry, who was then the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, flew to Islamabad to meet with General Ashfaq Kayani, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Pakistan to smooth things over and to issue a statement recognizing Pakistan as an US ally and counterterrorism partner. [82] Despite Kerry's best efforts, the US- Pakistan relationship was in tatters. Pakistan was justifiably angry at the violation of its sovereignty and the US had valid, ongoing concerns about the possibility that the Pakistani government had been aware of Bin Laden's presence within their borders particularly, since his compound was fairly close to Pakistan's military academy, which is also located in Abbottabad.

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[81] "What Pakistan Knew About the Bin Laden Raid." *Foreign Policy*. Accessed February 24, 2017. https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/13/what-pakistan-knew-about-the-bin-laden-raid-seymour-hersh/.
[82] Ibid

In the weeks that followed, both Pakistan and the US continued to struggle to mend their diplomatic relationship. The US did not apologize for its actions nor for keeping the Pakistani's in the dark but reiterated that its relationship with Pakistan was a crucial element of counterterrorism. As Kerry mentioned in his visit to Pakistan "My goal in coming here is to talk about how we manage this important relationship. I am not here to apologize for what I consider a triumph against terrorism".[83] The lack of apology combined with the US's demand that the Pakistani's return what remained of the US stealth helicopter that crashed during the raid kept tensions high. In wake of the frustrations regarding the Bin Laden raid, the Pakistani government convened a Special Commission to investigate the events surrounding the raid and Pakistan's response to it. Comprised of a retired general, a retired Inspector General of Police and a Supreme Court justice. The commission spent nearly two years conducting interviews and reviewing documents to discover how and why Bin Laden was able to remain in Pakistan undetected.[84] While their findings are interesting, more crucial to the US Pakistan relationship was the level of frustration that the report exhibited toward the US's actions surrounding the raid. [85]The report calls the Bin Laden operation the greatest humiliation suffered by

[83] "US Senator John Kerry Defends Pakistan Bin Laden Raid." *BBC News*, May 16, 2011, sec. South Asia. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-13407465.

[84] Tankel, Stephen. "Unpacking the Abbottabad Commission Report." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Accessed February 23, 2017. http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/07/16/unpacking-abbotabad-commission-report-pub-52422.

[85] Ultimately the Abbottabad report places the blame for the Pakistani government's lack of awareness to Bin Laden's presence on a variety of factors including governmental corruption, failures of collaboration between intelligence and law enforcement services and a tolerance toward militants that aren't perceived as an eminent threat toward Pakistan.
Ibid

Pakistan since East Pakistan seceded to form Bangladesh in 1971.[86] It rails against

the US for its arrogance, stating that the raid demonstrated a "contemptuous

disregard of Pakistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity in the

arrogant certainty of unmatched military might".[87] Most distressingly, the report

also refers to the raid as an act of war. This level of anger and frustration displayed

by the Pakistani government almost two full years after the raid had occurred

demonstrates the extent to which it damaged US Pakistan relations. The humiliation

that Pakistan experienced due to its lack of advance knowledge created a deep

seeded anger that was only exacerbated with time, particularly as the US refused to

apologize and seemed content to simply bask in the success of its mission while

assuming that Pakistan would eventually come around. Yet the Abbottabad

commission's report clearly demonstrates that the feelings of betrayal had failed to

dissipate even years later.

The tremendous hit that US- Pakistan relations took in the wake of the Bin

Laden raid would have been justified if his death had struck a fatal blow to al-Qaeda

but as discussed his death had virtually no real-world impact on the organization. As

such, the damage to diplomatic relations with Pakistan came without any practical

security benefits. The only real benefit the US got from its multi-billion dollar,

decade long hunt for Bin Laden was the elimination of a terrorist symbol and a

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[86] Strange, Hannah. "US Raid That Killed Bin Laden Was 'an Act of War', Says Pakistani Report,"
July 9, 2013, sec. World.
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/10169655/US-raid-that-killed-
bin-Laden-was-an-act-of-war-says-Pakistani-report.html.
AND "PAKISTAN'S BIN LADEN DOSSIER - Al Jazeera English." Accessed February 24, 2017.
http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/binladenfiles/.
[87] Ibid

significant domestic political boost. While both are positive consequences, the amount of resources and risk involved in the hunt for Bin Laden and the raid to kill him warranted real, substantial gains in the fight against Al-Qaeda. This is one of the main problems with targeted killing as a strategy, the desire for revenge, an admittedly valid one particularly in the case of Bin Laden, can overwhelm the real-world consequences and benefits of eliminating the target. Killing Bin Laden became a national obsession and a symbol of the US achieving success both in the War in Afghanistan and the War on Terror. Yet in reality it failed to get the US any closer to destroying Al-Qaeda, as the organization remained intact and just as functional as it had before, continuing to serve as the ideological motivation for its affiliates and attempting to inspire Islamic extremists worldwide.

While it is very clear that Bin Laden's death had virtually no impact on Al-Qaeda Central, it was a fairly dormant terror organization, which relied heavily on its affiliates to conduct operations and attacks. Many of those affiliates were and are extremely active and are responsible for hundreds of deadly terrorist attacks. To help limit those attacks the US, particularly under President Obama, has ramped up its use of targeted killing in the hopes of permanently disrupting these organizations and improving security outcomes. While there have been hundreds of such attacks in recent years, one in particular, the assassination of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, not only captured significant media attention but demonstrates US targeted killing policy against operational terrorist groups.

Chapter 4

The Evolution of US Targeted Killing Policy

The United States strategy in the War on Terror has evolved significantly over the past decade and a half and so has technology. The combination of the two has led to a marked increase in the use of targeted killing. As terrorist organizations have become more sophisticated and difficult to track, the sleek, achievable nature of targeted killing has become increasingly attractive for policymakers. In many ways, it was and is an ideal weapon for the United States because it has, low to no risk of casualties, is comparatively inexpensive, and yields a concrete result in the death of a terrorist. The complexity and challenge of the War on Terror made targeted killing all the more attractive. As technology developed to make targeted killing more precise and efficient, namely in the form of drones and air targeting systems, it became the US's go to strategy for eliminating terrorists.

Drone technology and the precision and low casualty numbers they offer made drone strikes attractive to both President Bush and President Obama. Bush authorized around 50 drone strikes in Yemen Pakistan and Somalia, which caused the death of 296 terrorists and 195 civilians. [88]President Obama greatly expanded the US's drone program over the course of his time in office authorizing 506 drone strikes which killed 3,040 terrorists and 391 civilians.[89] In a marked departure from his predecessor, President Obama acknowledged the existence of the US's drone program and developed a policy language and a legal framework to defend it. For

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[88] "Reflecting on Obama's Presidency." *The New York Times*. Accessed March 3, 2017. http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/01/12/reflecting-on-obamas-presidency/obamas-embrace-of-drone-strikes-will-be-a-lasting-legacy.
[89] Ibid

President Obama, drone warfare is a means of eliminating terrorists, particularly leaders in the hopes of dismantling their networks while also virtually eliminating the need for the presence of US troops on the ground. With the immense political, economic and social costs associated with troop deployments and the international challenges they present, the rationality of using drones is very clear. As President Obama remarked in a speech at the National Defense University,

> "our operation in Pakistan against Osama bin Laden cannot be the norm. The risks in that case were immense… So it is in this context that the United States has taken lethal, targeted action against al Qaeda and its associated forces, including with remotely piloted aircraft commonly referred to as drones". [90]

The trouble is even as the technology needed to target terrorists has improved, the policy surrounding how to capitalize on them has not. In spite of more than a decade of experience, the US has still not developed a comprehensive policy to exploit the short term weakness terrorist organizations experience after the death of a leader.

The US began targeting terrorists from the instant the War on Terror began. As previously discussed just weeks after 9/11, President Bush named Bin Laden and called for his capture. While Bin Laden was clearly the most high profile terrorist the US was searching for, there was a remarkable urgency in the search for other terrorist leaders. Some of this urgency was a result of the Bush administration seeking links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, which led to a very public and

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[90] "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University." *Whitehouse.gov*, May 23, 2013. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university.

very consequential mistake. On February 5,2003 then Secretary of State Colin

Powell addressed the United Nations in the hopes of bolstering support for the war

in Iraq, and stated,

> "Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab
>
> Zarqawi …Baghdad has an agent in the most senior levels of the radical
>
> organization… In 2000 this agent offered al Qaeda safe haven in the region."[91]

Secretary Powell argued in front of a global audience that al-Zarqawi was the critical

connection between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. This was news to al-

Zarqawi who had no ties to the Iraqi government whatsoever, but the US was

certain that he did and had just informed the world that he was the single most

significant terrorist threat apart from Bin Laden. The goal for the US was to have a

very tangible, dangerous threat that was linked to both Bin Laden and Saddam

Hussein to further justify the cause of going to war in Iraq.

In addition to being factually inaccurate, Secretary Powell's statements

handed al-Zarqawi prestige and power that he would never otherwise have had. As

a former Jordanian intelligence official commented in an a 2005 interview with

Mary Anne Weaver of *The Atlantic*, " They've (The Americans) blown Zarqawi so

out of proportion that of course his prestige has grown. ... Your government is

creating a self-fulfilling prophecy."[92] The prophecy of extreme violence was

absolutely accurate, al-Zarqawi used the boost that the international attention gave

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[91] CNN News "Transcript of Powell's UN Presentation." February 6, 2003,
http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/02/05/sprj.irq.powell.transcript.09/index.html?iref=mpstoryv
iew
[92] Weaver, Mary Anne. "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi." *The Atlantic*, August
2006https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-
musab-al-zarqawi/304983/.

him to cement his power as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq and escalate his violence ever further. In this case the desire for a tangible target served to give that target even more power and make him ever more difficult to catch.

Fig 2: Timeline of AQI attacks

Timeline of ZQI Attacks January 2006- June 2007

SIX MONTHS
BEFORE

ZARQAWI IS
ASSASINATED:BEGINNING
OF SIX MONTH WINDOW

ONE YEAR
AFTER

END OF SIX
MONTH
WINDOW

7 Jan 7 Feb 7 Mar 7 Apr 7 May 7 Jun 7 Jul 7 Aug 7 Sep 7 Oct 7 Nov 7 Dec 7 Jan 7 Feb 7 Mar 7 Apr 7 May

Attacks Perpetrated by AQI Outside the Six
Month Window

Attacks Perpetrated by AQI During the Six
Window

51

The Assassination of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

On a quiet evening in June 2006, two US warplanes dropped two 500 pound bombs on a small house about a mile and half outside of Hibhib, a suburb of Baghdad in northern Iraq. [93] The bombs interrupted a meeting of terrorist leaders one of whom was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Shockingly, given the extent of the damage done to the house al-Zarqawi survived the explosion and lived long enough for US soldiers to reach the house and begin providing medical treatment while al-Zarqawi attempted to flee before expiring of his injuries. Al-Zarqawi's death was a major accomplishment for US armed forces in their fight against al-Qaeda as he was the highest-ranking enemy to be eliminated since the US captured Saddam Hussein in 2003 and was known for planning exceptionally violent terrorist attacks. Yet just as in the case of Shehadeh, his death did little to seriously impact Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Al-Zarqawi was one of the most violent terrorists in recent times. Rising from humble beginnings as an orphaned high school drop out in the mining town of Zarqa, Jordan; he would in time become the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and mastermind several large-scale terrorist attacks.[94] Al-Zarqawi was radicalized while in prison and quickly became a powerful figure within jihadist circles. Unlike Bin Laden, Al-Zarqawi was not charismatic or particularly skilled at oratory or religious writing but he collaborated with someone who was, a Salafist cleric named Sheikh

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[93] Burns, John F. "Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, Leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, Is Killed in U.S. Airstrike." *The New York Times*, June 8, 2006. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/08/world/middleeast/08cnd-iraq.html.

[94] "Profile: Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed March 2, 2017. http://www.cfr.org/iraq/profile-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/p9866.

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.[95] Al-Zarqawi's skills were in tactics and training.

Among a multitude of attacks perpetrated throughout the region, al-Zarqawi was

perhaps best known for his role in the hotel bombings in Amman in 2005, a suicide

attack in Basra, Iraq, and most infamously the beheading of Nicholas Berg, an

American contractor. al-Zarqawi's attacks were violent, and drew enormous

amounts of negative attention to al-Qaeda in Iraq prompting Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin

Laden's right hand, to urge al-Zarqawi to reduce the extreme violence of his attacks

to prevent negative media attention. In a letter to Zarqawi, al-Zawahiri stated,

> "we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma (the
>
> whole Islamic community) … And we can kill captives by bullet. That would
>
> achieve that which is sought after without exposing ourselves to the
>
> questions and answering to doubts. We don't need this."[96]

With even his own allies questioning the extreme nature of his terrorist acts it is not

surprise that al-Zarqawi was a US target aside from his "connections" to Saddam

Hussein. Yet his death did little to permanently stop the type of violence that he had

created.

In the six months before al-Zarqawi died , Al-Qaeda in Iraq was responsible

for four terrorist attacks including a massive suicide bombing at a Shi'a mosque

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[95] Weaver, Mary Anne. "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi." *The Atlantic*, August 2006. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/.
[96] "Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi (English Translation) | Combating Terrorism Center at West Point." Accessed March 2, 2017. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2.

which killed over ninety people and wounded another 160.[97] On June 6, al-Zarqawi

was killed by an American airstrike, just a few days later his organization

perpetrates an attack, another suicide bombing this time in a market in downtown

Baghdad and then absolutely no attacks for six months.[98] The market bombing was

likely planned before al-Zarqawi was killed, or was hastily put together as a means

of revenge immediately after his death.

The Effects of Targeted Killing

More fascinating however is the lack of AQI attacks in the six months that

followed. For six months one of the most ruthless and violent terrorist organizations

was almost completely dormant. If Al-Qaeda in Iraq never perpetrated another

attack or was dormant for years, it would be fairly safe to conclude that the loss of

al-Zarqawi was a fatal blow for the organization. Yet after the six-month window, al-

Qaeda in Iraq came roaring back. From January to June 2007, al-Qaeda in Iraq

[97] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=&end_yearonly=&start_year=2006&start_month=1&start_day=6&end_year=2006&end_month=6&end_day=6&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&perpetrator=20030&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

AND National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200604070001

[98] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=overtime&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_year=2006&start_month=6&start_day=6&end_year=2006&end_month=12&end_day=6&dtp2=all&perpetrator=20030

AND National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200606110001

perpetrated twelve attacks including a massive car bomb explosion in the Sadriyah

market in Baghdad which killed 127 people and wounded 148 more.[99] If anything

after its six-month dormancy al-Qaeda in Iraq was stronger and more violent than

ever.

This six-month period of weakness followed by a violent return is identical to

what Hamas experienced after the death of Salma Shehadeh. With Shehadeh there

was a precipitous downturn in attacks for the six months following his death and

here with Zarqawi, al-Qaeda in Iraq perpetrated almost no attacks during the six-

month window as evidenced by the Global Terrorism Database. The Global

Terrorism Database does have limitations, particularly regarding its collection

methods which Robert Pape, Kevin Ruby and Vincent Bauer outlined in an article for

the Washington Post in 2014. They argue that the shifts in collection methods,

namely that the organization had one set of collection methods from 1970 through

1998, which were then changed in 2008 and in 2011, had a significant impact on the

data collected.[100]Of particular concern to them is the significant uptick in suicide

attacks the database reported on in recent years, which makes it appear as if there's

[99] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=&end_yearonly=&start_year=2006&start_month=12&start_day=6&end_year=2007&end_month=6&end_day=6&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&perpetrator=20030&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
AND National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200704180001

[100] "Government Data Exaggerate the Increase in Terrorist Attacks." *Washington Post*. Accessed March 9, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/07/21/government-data-exaggerate-the-increase-in-terrorist-attacks/.

been a sudden rapid increase in suicide attacks, when in reality the GTD is now just

pulling information from a wider range of sources.[101] The Global Terrorism

Database team by contrast argues that their data and that of Pape and his team, who

advocate that researchers should use their database CPOST's Suicide Attack

Database or SAD, is remarkably similar with a correlation of .94 for 2003 thorough

2011.[102] More crucially, they argue that the shifts in their data collection methods

have improved their data and the increasing availability of information via the 24

hour news cycle and the internet has helped to expand and improve their data

rather than weaken it.[103]

Ultimately while the GTD has limitations, for the purposes of this research it

serves an important purpose, as the six month window of weakness experienced by

terrorist groups appears to be consistent across terrorist organizations, method of

targeted killing, and age of organization. If the number of attacks GTD reports is

slightly higher in data collected after 2011 it has limited, if any, impact on the results

of this research which indicates that in the immediate aftermath of a successful

targeted killing there is a six month window of weakness during which terrorist

groups perpetrate few to no attacks. This gap could have been the perfect

opportunity for security forces in Israel and Iraq to capitalize on their weakness to

strike a more coordinated and comprehensive blow to these organizations before

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[101] Ibid
[102] "The Challenges of Collecting Terrorism Data." *Washington Post.* Accessed March 10, 2017.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/08/06/the-challenges-of-
collecting-terrorism-data/.
[103] Ibid

they returned to full strength. As the other pattern seen in all cases of targeted killing is they almost always do.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq was no exception to this rule. Just days after al-Zarqawi was assassinated, AQI named a new leader, Abu Hamza al-Mujahir also known as Abu Ayyub al Masri. [104]This indicates that not only was AQI prepared for the loss of al-Zarqawi but it still took al-Masri time to establish a strong hold over the organization and bring it back to operational capacity. The six-month dormancy in attacks is the direct result of this period of adjustment and transition. As is the case with any form of leadership change, there is a period of time in which the organization and the leader are still learning to work together. This window of weakness that the loss of a terrorist leader, such as Zarqawi, creates should be capitalized on by policy makers and security forces. Instead, all too often they move on to hunting for the next target and leave the organization to rebuild and grow ever more dangerous.

The Wasted Window and the Rise of ISIS

For Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the focus on targeting at the expense of capitalizing on Zarqawi's loss allowed the group to grow and mutate into something new. Al-Qaeda in Iraq would eventually become ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Just four months after Zarqawi died, Al-Qaeda in Iraq rebranded itself as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). Zarqawi's replacement, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, knew the group needed a fresh start, its violent nature had pushed them outside of the mainstream jihadi

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[104] BBC News "Al Qaeda In Iraq names new head" June 12, 2006
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5073092.stm

networks to the point that Sunni Tribesman had begun killing AQI members.[105] The rebranding was designed to help win back local support and strengthen the organization. Al-Masri had been selected by Ayman al-Zawahiri to take over for Zarqawi after his death, which was fairly unsurprising as Al-Masri had worked with Zarqawi and helped with the planning several of AQI's attacks. [106] While Al-Masri was the leader of ISI from tactical perspective, the religious leader or emir was Abu Omar al-Baghdadi.[107] There was a great deal of confusion over their leadership early on due to the organizations exceptionally secretive nature. The US military even claimed that Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was fictitious, simply a paid actor reading statements that were actually from al-Masri.[108] The confusion surrounding leadership of ISI seemed to work in its favor as ISI was an exceptionally dangerous terrorist organization under Al-Masri and Omar al Baghdadi.

Al-Masri and Omar al-Baghdadi would remain the leaders of ISI until 2010. Under their leadership ISI would perpetrate 113 attacks killing hundreds of people throughout Iraq. [109] Yet in spite of the organizations productivity, there was

[105]"ISIS: Timeline of the Rise of the Islamic State." *Time*. Accessed March 10, 2017. http://time.com/4030714/isis-timeline-islamic-state/.
[106] "US and Iraqi Forces Kill Al Masri and Baghdadi, Al Qaeda in Iraq's Top Two Leaders." *FDD's Long War Journal*. Accessed March 10, 2017. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/04/al_qaeda_in_iraqs_to.php.
[107]Omar al-Baghdadi is not related to the current leader of ISIS Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Their shared last name simply means "one from Baghdad"
[108] "US and Iraqi Forces Kill Al Masri and Baghdadi, Al Qaeda in Iraq's Top Two Leaders." *FDD's Long War Journal*. Accessed March 10, 2017. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/04/al_qaeda_in_iraqs_to.php

[109]National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=&end_yearonly=&start_year=2006&start_month=1&start_day=&end_year=2010&end_month=4&end_day=&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&perpetrator=20225&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

significant frustration on the part of al-Qaeda central regarding al-Masri's

leadership. Al-Qaeda's central leadership believed that al-Masri had declared the

Islamic state too quickly before it was well established or organized. Bin Laden

harbored ongoing concerns about the brutal nature of ISI, particularly regarding its

treatment of the Sunni tribes who were brutally attacked when they joined other

rival, militant groups.[110] Yet despite his misgivings Bin Laden maintained his

support of ISI.

Ultimately Bin Laden's concerns about the leadership of ASI disappeared

when both Al-Masri and Omar al-Baghdadi were killed in a US airstrike in April

2010.[111] Just as with Al-Zarqawi's death, their loss did virtually nothing to weaken

ISI or curb the organizations growth. Al-Masri and Omar Al-Baghdadi were replaced

by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi just a few months later. Born in 1971 in Samarra, Iraq, Abu

Bakr al–Baghdadi was a well educated Islamic scholar known for his extreme and

stringent views. He also studied the work of the Muslim Brotherhood in graduate

school and had grown frustrated with their lack of activity for the jihad. More

importantly, he also had experience in running militant groups as he founded the

Jamaat Jaysh Ahl-Jamaah (Army of the People of the Sunna and Communal

Solidarity) in 2003 in response to the US's invasion of Iraq. [112] Much like Zarqawi,

Baghdadi had also been imprisoned for a period of time, which served to help

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[110] William McCants *The Isis Apocalypse: The History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016),44-45

[111] "US and Iraqi Forces Kill Al Masri and Baghdadi, Al Qaeda in Iraq's Top Two Leaders." *FDD's Long War Journal*. Accessed March 10, 2017.
http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/04/al_qaeda_in_iraqs_to.php.

[112] "Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi." *Counter Extremism Project*, February 24, 2016.
https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi.

develop his extremist beliefs and develop a network that he would come to use for terrorist activities years later. Baghdadi was arrested by the US and imprisoned at Camp Bucca for ten months in 2004, where he met Hajj Bakr, a former Colonel in the Iraqi army who would become Baghdadi's second in command, along with a variety of others many of whom would play key roles in Baghdadi's organization.[113] Yet unlike Zarqawi who had focused primarily on terrorist activities, Baghdadi was significantly more ambitious.

In 2010 when Al-Baghdadi initially took command over ISI, a caliphate was not looking especially likely. The US military had recently joined forces with a variety of Sunni tribes and began to aggressively target ISI with some success.[114] The combination of new alliances with the US troop surge had a significant impact on the insurgency, including ISI. As US forces began to withdraw from Iraq they believed that the war was won and that ISI and similar organizations had been permanently hampered. Unfortunately, they had significantly underestimated ISI and its ability to play on the fears of Sunni's. After the US's departure, the Iraqi prime minister at the time, Nouri al Maliki began pushing Sunnis out of the government and began favoring the Shia increasing tensions between the two groups and sparking frustration in many Sunnis who saw the various Sunni

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[113] Fisher, Ian. "In Rise of ISIS, No Single Missed Key but Many Strands of Blame." *The New York Times*, November 18, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/world/middleeast/in-rise-of-isis-no-single-missed-key-but-many-strands-of-blame.html.

[114] This is often referred to as "The Sunni Awakening". US and Iraqi military officials began courting various Sunni tribes and supplying them with weapons in hopes of quelling the insurgency. It was a key element of the new COIN strategy the US employed after the surge in 2008. Ibid AND Arango, Tim, and Kareem Fahim. "Iraq Again Uses Sunni Tribesmen in Militant War." *The New York Times*, January 19, 2014.
https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/20/world/middleeast/iraq-again-uses-sunni-tribesmen-in-militant-war.html.

insurgency groups including ISI as possible solutions to their increasing

disenfranchisement. Better still for ISI's fortunes was the spark of civil war in Syria.

The Syrian Civil War and the chaos it created proved to be a fertile breeding

ground for ISI. Another Al-Qaeda affiliate was already operational in Syria known as

al-Nusra or the Nusra front. Baghdadi pushed for a merger between the two groups

and declared the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in April

2013.[115] While this prompted a great deal of squabbling and internal politicking

between al-Baghdadi, the leaders of al Nusra and Zawahiri, the merger between the

two groups would hold in part due to the power that al-Baghdadi's organization

had. ISIS would become extraordinarily lethal very quickly conquering huge

swatches of territory. By December 2013, ISIS had taken control of Fallujah and

parts of Ramadi and in short order would capture Raqqa and declare it the capital of

their new caliphate.[116] ISIS has continued to grow and escalate in the years since

and has rapidly become the most dangerous terrorist organization in the world. In

addition to its activities in the Middle East, it has inspired attacks and bombings

worldwide. ISIS has sparked an increase in global terrorism that its original founder,

al-Zarqawi never could have imagined.

No one could have predicted the astronomic rise of ISIS. The confluence of

factors that allowed it to become so successful so quickly; the Syrian Civil War, the

increase of sectarian tensions in Iraq, not to mention Al-Baghdadi's ambition and

ability to generate followers. However, given the extremely violent nature of AQI, it

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[115] "Timeline: Rise and Spread of the Islamic State." *Wilson Center*, July 5, 2016.
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-rise-and-spread-the-islamic-state.

[116] Ibid

was easy to predict even in 2006, when al-Zarqawi was killed that the organization wouldn't simply disappear. Capitalizing on the weakness the organization experienced in the immediate aftermath of al-Zarqawi's death would have been strategically prudent even before ISIS was a concept. Ultimately, both US and Iraqi policymakers missed the opportunity to truly strike a fatal blow to the organization by merely focusing on the next target. As discussed, US forces killed the next AQI then ISI leaders by airstrike just a few years later and just as before their loss had no real impact on the group. If anything, their loss made it easier for al-Baghdadi to facilitate his rise to power within the organization.

The hyper-focus on targeting that US policymakers had in 2006, which persists into the present day, allowed them to miss critical opportunities to strike a more permanent blow which could at the very least have done more damage to AQI and at best prevented the nightmare that ISIS has become. The rise of ISIS serves as an extreme example of what can occur when targeted killing is used without regard for its short and long term impacts. There is significant evidence that targeted killing has very little long term impact on a terrorist organization and is almost useless at destroying a terrorist organization completely. Therefore, the six-month reduction in attacks that follows a successful targeting must be used more productively if the US, Israel or any other users of targeted killing wants to have a significant long term impact on a terrorist organization. The question then becomes what policies can and should be used during this window to have the most significant impact on terrorist organizations?

Chapter 5

Six Month Solutions:

The cases of al-Zarqawi and Shehadeh indicate, that with operational terrorist groups there is a six-month window in the immediate aftermath of the elimination of a target during which attacks sharply decrease. Rather than serving to destroy the terrorist organization or even having a long-term impact on its operational capacity, targeted killing seems to have exclusively short term affects. Rationally this makes a great deal of sense as ultimately even if an individual leader is especially influential or charismatic, as was the case with Osama bin Laden, the organization only experiences a short period of weakness before returning to strength. As a long-term solution for destroying a terrorist organization it is almost completely ineffective, but it does appear to have uses as a short-term solution. Yet the six-month window is only useful if policymakers capitalize on it to create significant long-term damage to the terrorist organization. There are two pathways to destroying an organization. The first is to destroy the elements that already exist, which in the case of terrorist groups are the operatives and leaders within the organization. The second is to destroy the roots of the organization, namely the elements that allow the group to grow and thrive, which in the case of the terrorist groups are elements that allow terrorists to recruit new members and grow. Both sides of the equation can be improved upon in a six-month window of weakness.

Economics and Terrorism:

Destroying the roots of terrorism is an extremely complex notion and scholars have a variety of theories and policies that they believe could have an

impact at preventing existing terror groups from growing and new ones from

forming. Yet an area that many agree upon is the crucial role that economics play in

terrorist recruitment. One scholar has developed a strong framework for

understanding how economics intersects with terrorist recruitment. Eli Berman

argues that a state capable of providing public goods such as schools, roads and

other infrastructure via a strong and efficient economy is the most potent means for

preventing the growth of terrorist's groups. [117] While the ties between schools and

ending terrorism might seem distant, in reality they are intrinsically connected.

Terrorist groups prey on chaos and states that cannot provide basic social services

push their population to turn to any entity that can provide them, which is usually

the group itself.

Berman looked at several examples of terrorist groups in his paper, namely

the Taliban and Hamas.[118] Though Hamas operates in Palestine and the Taliban

operates in Afghanistan they have several crucial similarities. Both arose in areas

with weak local government. In turn, the groups responded to state weakness by

providing public goods like security and other social services. They were also both

formed as affiliates of respected non-violent religious groups. Hamas originated as

an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Taliban was originally an offshoot of

the Jamiat Ulama-E-Islam (JUI).[119]Most crucially both have evolved over time to

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[117] Eli Berman "Hamas, Taliban and the Jewish Underground: An Economist's View of Radical
Religious Militia's" *National Bureau of Economic Research*
[118] Ibid
[119]Jamiat Ulama-E-Islam is a Sunni political party in Pakistan with 13 seats in its national
assembly.
"Jamiat Ulama-E-Islam Seat Distribution" *National Assembly of Pakistan, March*
16,2017http://www.na.gov.pk/en/members_listing.php?party=105

become the most significant provider of social services to the populations where they are based. As such not only are these populations dependent on these groups but that dependency leads to support and loyalty towards them as well. This combination of dependency and loyalty creates widespread support from the population toward these groups.

Despite the support the social services engender amongst local populations it still seems deeply counterintuitive that local populations can maintain their support when these groups create such violence and widespread chaos. Yet in reality even if these populations have mixed feelings about the actions the groups undertake ultimately they maintain their support, at least in public settings to insure that the group continues to provide them with the social services that they so desperately need. In many ways, it is a transactional relationship, in exchange for schools and healthcare, terrorist groups get support which gives them power. Melanie Cammet examines this in the context of Hezbollah in her paper on the subject. She argues that sectarian groups like Hezbollah use social services as a means of acquiring political power. [120]For an intra-state group like Hezbollah, which continues to seek seats within Lebanon's government, the social services they provide to the entire population motivates people to vote for Hezbollah in elections, which translates into direct political power. [121] Hezbollah has a remarkably sophisticated and well-developed system of providing aid. The group builds and funds schools, hospitals,

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[120] Melanie Cammet *Compassionate Communalism,* 22-23
[121] Ibid

dispensaries and even microfinance initiatives.[122] These services generate a deep sense of loyalty and trust amongst the Lebanese people and helps insure their continued support of the group. Ultimately because Lebanon's government has been unable to provide social services on a similar scale to the population, Hezbollah has been able to fill the gap and gain immense political power.

These are not small investments. For example, scholars at the Center for Strategic and International Studies estimate that Hamas spends somewhere between 50-70 million dollars a year on their social and welfare programs.[123] For Palestinians, who have limited access to state based resources due to the Arab-Israeli conflict, this type of infrastructure investment is a dream come true. There is also a sense of comfort, trust, and familiarity with the group that is very difficult to replicate with outside or non-Palestinian charity groups that work in the same region. Yet getting a desperate population to accept charity in exchange for support is fairly simple compared to the sacrifices required to get members from within that population to join the group and perpetrate the acts of violence themselves.

This element of terrorist recruitment, getting ordinary, rational people to give up their lives and risk everything to serve the organization has been extensively studied by scholars in a variety of fields. While there are a multitude of motivating factors, Berman models terrorist recruitment as an economic problem. This seems a bit strange but ultimately joining a terrorist group requires a sacrifice of time and resources and as such requires an incentive to join. Berman argues that most people

[122] Augustus R. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 109
[123] "Terrorism and Charity: Defining Hamas" *World Policy Blog,* August 8, 2014
http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2014/08/08/terrorism-and-charity-defining-hamas

join these groups for the tangible and intangible benefits they can provide.[124] Apart

from the monetary compensation for participating in the group, the intangible

benefits are crucial as well. These come in the form of social benefits of joining the

group, essentially being a part of a strong community and the religious benefits that

the groups claim to provide. These benefits are what motivate individuals to join the

group but Berman's research indicates that low wage earners are more willing to

make the sacrifices for the benefits these groups provide which demonstrates the

importance of economic development.[125] Most importantly, Berman's model

predicts that increased availability of public goods and resources will make terrorist

groups less dependent on club goods which in turn decreases their influence.[126]

Ultimately what Berman's work indicates is that economic development in the form

of increased access to social services and improved economic opportunity can serve

as a valuable means of limiting the influence of terrorist groups and perhaps even

prevent people from joining them in the first place.

Economic development is challenging worldwide yet the natural resources

present in the Middle East give the region a unique advantage. Despite this

significant advantage many nations continued to struggle with economic

development. Despite these strong indicators that economic development is a

powerful means of limiting terrorist groups very few states have made this

connection, preferring to invest the vast majority of their funds in security and

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[124] Eli Berman "Hamas, Taliban and the Jewish Underground: An Economist's View of Radical
Religious Militia's" *National Bureau of Economic Research*
http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic436657.files/Berman_30oct07.pdf
[125] Ibid
[126] Ibid

defense rather than in human development projects. For example, in Eaterly's

article, The Political Economy of Growth without Development" he maintains that

Pakistan serves as strong example of this phenomenon. In spite of its fairly strong

economic growth, Pakistan still struggles to provide even the most basic of services

to its population. Pakistan has grown into a fairly wealthy nation with GDP of 271

billion in 2015 placing it squarely in the top fifty or so wealthiest nations

worldwide.[127] Yet it lags far behind its peers developmentally. In his study of

Pakistan's economy, William Easterly discovered that while Pakistan grew much

more than other countries with similar incomes it made the same if not less

progress developmentally. [128]

Part of this stems from ongoing geopolitical instability and security issues

but a far more significant element is the extremely lopsided investment policies that

the Pakistani government has pursued. In spite of the significant growth it has

experienced Pakistan is only spending two dollars per-capita on health care yet has

continued to spend significant amounts on its security apparatus. In fact, Easterly

notes that the Pakistani government spends 3.3 % more of its GDP on defense than

other countries of its income level. [129]Ultimately the connection between economic

development and defense hasn't yet occurred in Pakistan or anywhere else in the

region and as such terrorist groups continue to take advantage of the weakness that

governments leave behind.

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[127] "GDP Ranking" *The World Bank,* February 1, 2017
http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf
[128] William Easterly "The Political Economy of Growth without Development: A Case Study of
Pakistan" in *In Search of Prosperity: Analytic Narratives on Economic Growth,* ed. Dani Rodrick
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 451-452
[129] Ibid, 447

It is clear that economic development is a crucial means of reducing the power of terrorist groups. Existing groups, like Hamas, provide social services and buy their way into the hearts and minds of the population. Most crucially for the future of terrorism, lack of economic opportunity pushes people to join terrorist organizations. As such, a key element of any counterterrorism efforts must be targeted economic aid. While economic development can be a slow process, the six-month window in the wake of a targeted killing should a be sufficient to at least begin aid and infrastructure projects in regions most dependent on social services from terrorist groups. Providing base level supplies such as food and healthcare, which can be done very quickly could at minimum disrupt the terrorist groups social services networks and give these communities other sources of assistance.

Yet simply providing social services in regions affected by terrorism is not enough, as the existing community is unlikely to trust external help, particularly if offered by US military forces. One of the key draws of the social assistance that extremist groups provide is that it is grounded in local culture and the local faith which makes the community more comfortable using the services. As a woman in a Hamas dental clinic in the Gaza strip commented, "It's safer to come to an Islamic place where you can find a doctor who's not only a good dentist but a good Muslim. You're putting yourself in God's hands"[130] This sense of connection to a local provider is by no means solely a regional matter.

In their extensive studies on the developing world, Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo found that that in the remote Udaipur District of India, the vast

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[130] Murphy, Kim. "Hamas Victory Is Built on Social Work." *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 2006. http://articles.latimes.com/2006/mar/02/world/fg-charity2.

majority of poor people shun the free public health system. Half of the population

visits private facilities and the remainder go to traditional healers.[131] The private

facilities are typically staffed by doctors with limited training but the vast majority

of even the most impoverished in the region continue to use their services. Banerjee

and Duflo ultimately concluded that the population rejects the public health system

in part because it is not especially functional in the region and in part due to local

beliefs.[132] This illustrates the importance of providing functioning public health

services and the importance of integrating those services into the population.

Perhaps the most crucial element of Banerjee and Duflo's study is their

finding regarding how to convince local populations that are wary of external aid to

embrace the assistance of outsiders. Banerjee and Duflo were puzzled that many

areas in the developing world often have inexpensive health solutions available to

them yet still did not take advantage of the benefits available. For example, chlorine

to purify water, bed nets to prevent malaria, and immunizations for various life

threatening disease are often underutilized by the very populations that need

them.[133] Ultimately the lack of demand stems from a local focus on cures rather than

prevention. Poor families do not want to spend money unless it is absolutely

necessary. As such, in their minds preventive measures aren't worth the money as

they aren't critical. For instance, in India extremely poor households spend roughly

6% of their monthly budget on health care. Furthermore, 8% of households in

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[131] Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* (New York: Public Affairs,2011), 51
[132] Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* ,52 and 60-61
[133] Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* 48-49

Udaipur spend more than 5000 rupees or 228 USD a month, more than 10 times the average budget for a family there. [134] As such it is clear that families are willing to spend on healthcare but only if they absolutely have to do so. Preventative healthcare services are simply low on the priority list.

Yet preventative healthcare is absolutely crucial. Not only can it dramatically improve quality of life, but in the long term it can reduce the cost of healthcare. Banerjee and Duflo explored means of motivating and encouraging these populations to take advantage of the preventative health options available to them. One of the most crucial of these preventative solutions is immunizations. To improve immunization outcomes, namely to get more parents to not only bring their children in to get immunized but also to bring them back a few weeks later for the second shot in the course, Banerjee and Duflo convinced one of the immunization providers in Udaipur India to try an experiment. Instead of just opening their clinics and offering free immunizations to the community the group would also provide a series of incentives to motivate parents to bring their children in for their shots. For bringing their kids in for the initial shot parents received 2 pounds of dal, a dried bean, which is a staple of the area and for returning and finishing the course families received a set of steel plates.[135] The incentives might seem small but they worked incredibly well, immunization rates increased seven fold from 6% to 38%.[136] While 38% is still far below the ideal numbers necessary for herd immunity, it is a

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[134]Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*,50
[135]Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*,62-63
[136] Ibid

remarkable improvement and will have a significant impact on the children who received vaccinations who wouldn't have otherwise. On a broader scale, the success of the incentives program demonstrates that people can be persuaded to participate in health care programs even those they are initially wary off.

Banerjee and Duflo's findings demonstrate the value that incentives can provide. Yet the types of incentives are also critical. As they remark in their book on the subject. "The key challenge is to design "nudges" (incentives) tailored to the environment of developing countries".[137] The success of the program in India is due in part to the nature of the incentives used, namely that they were in the form of region staples and practical items that the families could use.

These lessons offer important implications for the six-month window as well. Using the six-month window to provide targeted economic aid with incentives could be a powerful means of disrupting the hold terrorist groups have over social services in these regions.   Communities that have strong connections to the aid that the terrorist groups provide would be exceptionally difficult to convert away from them; however, providing incentives along with higher quality goods and services would likely serve as a powerful deterrent. Terrorist groups derive much of their support and power from the social services they provide. As such usurping them while the organization is weak could prove to be a powerful means of eroding their strength and legitimacy.

Social assistance programs in regions dominated by terrorist groups are by no means new. A variety of NGO's have attempted to provide assistance to these

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[137] Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*,65

areas. One example that's garnered a great deal of media attention is the work of the

Central Asia Institute (CAI), which was documented by Greg Mortenson and David

Oleir Relin in their book *Three Cups of Tea*. While Mortenson's various misdeeds

and mismanagement of the organization and its funding have brought challenging

PR issues to the organization, the work that CAI and organizations like it do to bring

about concrete change in areas most affected by terrorism and violence is admirable

and important.[138] CAI has worked for the past twenty years building 190 schools in

Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan.[139] It also provides support for teachers,

vocational training, literacy programs, scholarship and public health programs at

the community level. This type of development at a community level not only gives

educational opportunities to children living within them but also prevents the

development of schools sponsored by terrorist organizations.

Yet getting students to attend the new schools once they are built can prove a

challenge as well. This is a worldwide issue as many developing countries struggle

with high rates of absenteeism in the schools they had worked so hard to construct

and staff. One solution proposed in the late 1990s was conditional cash transfers.

Santiago Levy, a former economics professor then a deputy minister of Finance in

Mexico proposed PROGRESA, which offered money to poor families if their children

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[138] Greg Mortenson was accused of fabricating his personal narrative regarding his early experiences in Afghanistan in the early chapters of the book and taking money from the charity. He was removed from his position as CEO in the wake of the allegations and retired from the organization all together in 2014. CAI continues to operate independently of Mortenson and has continued to provide educational support and opportunities in the region.
"'Three Cups of Tea' author Greg Mortenson to Retire from Charity." Accessed March 17, 2017. http://www.cbsnews.com/news/three-cups-of-tea-author-greg-mortenson-to-retire-from-charity/.
[139] "CAI Projects in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan." *Central Asia Institute*. Accessed March 17, 2017. https://centralasiainstitute.org/caiprojects/.

regularly attended school and provided them with preventative healthcare.[140]

Families received additional money for sending their children on to secondary

school and additional money for sending their daughters to school who tend to be

sent less often than their sons.[141] The program was remarkably successful

particularly in improving secondary school attendance and spread quickly

throughout Latin America and even into the United States. Much like the incentive

program used to encourage families in rural India to vaccinate their children,

conditional cash transfers provide additional, external motivation for families. They

also serve to help reduce the opportunity cost of sending children to school by

compensating for wages the children may otherwise be earning. Just as with

incentives for healthcare, conditional cash transfers could also serve as a crucial

means of motivating families to send their children to schools constructed by US

forces or international NGO's.

Schools are a particularly critical element of aid programs as they are often

one of the primary tools terrorist organizations use to not only earn the support of

the population, but also indoctrinate the next generation into the beliefs and values

of the group. In addition to the schools they've built both Hamas and Hezbollah have

also designed curriculums to go with them, which heavily feature their ideology. For

instance, the textbooks designed by Hamas which are used by 55,000 schoolchildren

do not recognize modern Israel as a state, refer to the Torah and Talmud as

fabrication and describe the Zionist movement as a racist movement designed to

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[140] Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* 78-79
[141] Ibid

drive all Arabs out of Middle East.[142] While there are a multitude of sides to the Arab-Israeli conflict, teaching impressionable school children only one, fairly extreme point of view serves only to push the conflict into the next generation. Not to mention the possibility that constant, long term exposure to such views will make strong supporters out of the students and will most likely lead to at least a few of them joining the group. As such the presence of alternatives, namely schools that focus on academics without dogma or doctrine is an absolutely crucial means of not only undercutting support for terrorist organizations but preventing their future growth.

Paying people to vaccinate their children or send them to school may seem counterintuitive but the combination of strong connections to the groups that provide these social services and discomfort surrounding preventative services and accepting external assistance makes them a valuable solution. Ultimately communities that are the most connected to the terrorist groups are both the most valuable and the most difficult to remove them from the sway of these organizations. As such the incentive programs could be a crucial means of usurping their power as they would create a real motivation for communities to embrace the aid even if it comes from external sources. While NGO's can be exceptionally productive and useful in their own right, incorporating the work they do into counterterrorism strategy could be an important means of improving outcomes.

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[142] Akram, Fares, and Jodi Rudoren. "To Shape Young Palestinians, Hamas Creates Its Own Textbooks." *The New York Times*, November 3, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/04/world/middleeast/to-shape-young-palestinians-hamas-creates-its-own-textbooks.html.

Providing social services builds trust within the local community, which is a key element of the US's approach to COIN and counterterrorism. Security and intelligence forces would also be best equipped to know which communities are most dependent on resources from terrorist groups and stand to benefit the most from the investment in during the six-month window.

Although US forces often struggle to gain the trust of the local population, the logistical power of the US military is extraordinary. In addition to entire military command structures devoted to logistics such as the US Army Material Command and the Marine Corps Logistics Command there is also the Defense Logistics Agency, which provides the majority of the military's logistical support. With 34 billion dollars of services and goods provided each year in 28 different countries, the DLA is uniquely positioned and prepared to undertake targeted economic aid in the Middle East. [143] As challenging as the decade and half of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan has been, it has at minimum uniquely positioned US forces to have an outsized impact with such a program. So much of the infrastructure necessary to create it is already in position within the region. With the rise of ISIS, the US has even begun planning to create a permanent network of bases in the region, with large scale hubs in cities like Erbil and smaller installations in more rural areas.[144]

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[143] "DLA at a Glance" *Defense Logistics Agency,* Accessed March 23, 2017
http://www.dla.mil/AtaGlance.aspx
[144] Mazzetti, Mark, and Eric Schmitt. "Pentagon Seeks to Knit Foreign Bases Into ISIS-Foiling Network." *The New York Times*, December 10, 2015.
https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/11/us/politics/pentagon-seeks-string-of-overseas-bases-to-contain-isis.html.

The global network of bases along with its extraordinary logistical capabilities perfectly position the US to provide high quality aid in the regions that need it most.

The logistical power of the military is unmatched which combined with assistance from NGO's like CAI could prove to be a powerful combination in providing targeted aid and development to these regions. Ultimately one of the key elements of destroying terrorist groups is eroding their base of support, which is reliant on a local population's desperation. Whether it is dependence on the charity the organization provides or the opportunities that joining the group can give an individual, any form of aid that can eliminate that desperation and provide an alternative will serve to erode the recruiting power and popular support of terrorist groups. Using the six-month window to provide targeted economic aid to the communities most dependent on terrorist groups will serve to not only improve the lives of the people within them but seriously damage the long-term prospects of terrorist groups.

Security Solutions

While economic aid and development is a crucial element of undermining support for terrorist groups, there is still another issue to consider. If a terrorist organization's network remains intact, then the group will continue to pose a threat. As such, a key means of exploiting the six-month window is exacting permanent damage on the organization's structure. While targeted killing is a key element of counterterrorism strategy and has been used with increasing frequency both by the US and its allies abroad, it is by no means the only tool used to help weaken and ultimately destroy terrorist organizations. Nations fighting terrorism worldwide use

military operations, diplomacy, financial disruption and a plethora of intelligence analysis in the hopes of preventing future attacks and ideally destroying the terrorist groups themselves. The six-month window in the wake of successful targeted killing presents an opportunity to use a combination of methods to exact more permanent damage on these organizations. The ultimate goal of counterterrorism is not to weaken terrorist groups for a short period of time but to permanently disrupt and destroy the organizations and in doing so keep people safer.

The six-month window in the wake of a successful targeted killing strike presents a valuable opportunity to use some of these techniques to create more significant long term damage to terrorist groups. The short-term weakness in the aftermath of targeted strike is a pattern that has been observed by practitioners on the ground. In a conversation with Major Nathaniel Davis, who was company commander of Delta Company, 1st Battalion 22nd Infantry during their deployment to Baghdad during the Iraqi surge, he discussed various tactical techniques used to attempt to capitalize on successful targeted strikes or raids.[145] The first, and one of the most successful, is deception operations in the aftermath of a successful raid.[146] If the raid is fairly covert it is often possible for forces to usurp their websites and social media accounts. This can serve a multitude of purposes both for intelligence gathering, as visitors and members of the groups online networks can be traced, and for tactical purposes as well. If two members of the same terrorist group both

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[145] *United States Military Academy* "Major Nathaniel Davis", Last Accessed April 6, 2017http://www.usma.edu/dmi/_layouts/wpFacultyBios/DisplayBio.aspx?ID=1b8bcc3e-03fd-446e-ae71-6dae7dcd3568&List=9ee64eb6-5a14-49f7-b152-f25612f490ed
[146] Interview with Major Nathaniel Davis, November 12, 2016

publicly claim their right to rule online, it can create significant infighting thereby disrupting the networks cohesion and operational capacity. For tactical operations, co-opted social media accounts can also be used as a means of laying traps by creating false meeting locations or sharing details of operations before they occur. Major Davis's primary focus in response to successful targeting raids was to build momentum through follow up operations, which ranged from co-opting social media accounts to tracking the broader terrorist network. The ultimate goal was to capitalize on the momentary weakness in the hopes of crippling the organization.[147]

The most frequently used technique in concert with targeted killing was the extension of targeting killings to other in-network members. Ultimately one of the most effective ways to permanently hamper a terrorist organization is to eliminate as much of its leadership structure as possible as quickly as possible. As such the six-month window presents a natural opportunity to either arrest or eliminate other members of the terrorist organization while the group is already weakened by the initial strike. The case studies indicate that in the six months that follow a successful targeted strike, terrorist organizations are significantly weakened, with limited to no ability to conduct terrorist attacks. This creates a valuable opportunity to create further damage by targeting other members of the same network in hopes of creating a cascade effect. While almost any organization can easily and quickly recover from the loss of a single leader; recovering from the loss of multiple leaders in a short period of time is much more challenging.

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[147] Ibid

Janet Jordan's research indicates that organization type has a significant effect on how crippled the group remains post-targeted killing strikes. Younger and smaller organizations are much more likely to be impacted by targeted strike as are ideologically motivated groups.[148] Younger organizations with undeveloped hierarchies that are reliant on a handful of key leaders are obviously much more susceptible to both an individual strike but perhaps even more vulnerable to multiple strikes in a short period of time. Older organizations with well-developed hierarchy's or those that are religiously based are better equipped to survive the removal of leader.[149] While Jordan's data set is remarkably comprehensive with over five hundred different strikes, it doesn't account for the repeated targeting of multiple leaders within the same network. Yet logically structures that are more susceptible to the loss of one leader would be even more susceptible to the loss of multiple leaders, particularly in short time frame. Older organizations with stronger hierarchal systems and larger leadership networks are more resilient but would likely be easier to target in a multiple strike attack due to their larger size and the increased amount of intelligence typically available.

The six-month window in the wake of a successful targeted killing strike presents a perfect opportunity to exact a much larger impact on a terrorist organization than a single targeted strike. Ultimately, the loss of one leader creates six months of weakness but the organization inevitably regenerates in part due to the presence of a hierarchy. As such eliminating significant sections of the network

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[148] Jenna Jordan "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes" *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Spring 2014), 734
[149] Ibid

makes it increasingly likely that the network will collapse. Yet a key element of such a strategy is doing so in a short period of time. As evidenced by the Shehadeh and Zarqawi cases, when a leader is eliminated he is often replaced fairly quickly. The only way to exact a significant, long term impact is via multiple repeated strikes, to essentially eliminate more leaders than the organization can replace. For older organizations, this is obviously more challenging as they have the personnel and resources to replace larger numbers of leaders as they're eliminated. Yet ultimately every organization has its limits and if enough leaders are eliminated or arrested then the network will collapse.

Repeated targeting in the hopes of eliminating the vast majority of terrorist networks is already used with some frequency by the US in its fight against various terrorist groups. While these cases have primarily focused on strikes that were fairly isolated in nature mostly due to their fairly high profile, most targeting is done on a nearly continuous basis. Targeted killing programs have been designed, particularly within the Obama administration, to eliminate as many threats from a network as quickly as possible. It seems as if policy makers are aware that targeted killing is somewhat limited in its ability to exact significant, long term damage on terrorist groups. As Colonel Jen Easterly remarked, "Lethal action is inherently a short term solution." [150] As such having a long-term impact requires near constant targeting. Proponents of the practice, like Colonel Easterly, point to successful

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[150] Colonel Jen Easterly (Ret.) served in the US army in HUMINT and Military Intelligence until she was selected by President Obama to serve as Senior Director for Counterterrorism on the National Security Council. One of her principal responsibilities was the approval of all targeted killing operations before presenting them to the President.
Interview with Colonel Jen Easterly, Sunday April 2, 2017

instances of whole network targeting as clear evidence that the technique can have a significant impact. One such example is the targeting of Al-Qaeda in Iraq's network in the wake of Al-Zarqawi's assassination when it became known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).[151] As previously discussed the assassination of al-Zarqawi was a major accomplishment for US forces in Iraq at the time. In the years that followed his death, the United States was able to arrest or kill the vast majority of Al-Qaeda in Iraq's network. This was a critical accomplishment for the US, in order to withdraw its forces from Iraq AQI now known as ISI had to be under control.

The campaign to eradicate AQI relied on the US's intelligence and special operations capacity, the Iraqi forces and the surge of US forces that began in 2007.[152] With additional resources and a renewed focus, coalition forces had extraordinary success in eliminating the AQI network. In the month of October 2007 alone, special operations forces conducted near daily raids resulting in the death or arrest of 45 AQI leaders. [153]This type of sustained pressure on the organization prevented it from regenerating its hierarchy and conducting operations. Yet the key to success with the AQI network was coalition forces ability to sustain this level of targeting. As AQI's leadership was pushed out of urban areas and into more rural spaces. US and Coalition forces followed, putting significant resources into the fight against AQI and launching another operation to further incapacitate AQI. Known as

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[151] Much of the media and the US armed forces continued to refer to ISI as AQI. For the purposes of simplicity, I've continued to use AQI as a means of distinguishing the group from the ISIS that exists today.

[153] These daily raids were conducted by Task Force 88, a well-known but classified special operations group that has long been at the forefront of counterterrorism operations "Targeting Al Qaeda in Iraq's Network." *FDD's Long War Journal*. Accessed April 6, 2017. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/11/targeting_al_qaeda_i_1.php.

Operation Phantom Phoenix, Iraqi and US forces combined forces to eliminate the al-Qaeda networks through a serious of raids, arrests and assassination of key leaders. [154] By January 2008, US forces had arrested or eliminated 92 AQI leaders while also capturing 351 weapons caches and various other safe houses used by the group. [155] The elimination of leaders was a crucial component to dramatically reducing the operational capacity of AQI but so was the capture of weaponry and safe houses. Ultimately the combination of leadership targeting, loss of resources and loss of territory proved almost insurmountable for the group, which by the time that US forces left Iraq seemed virtually incapacitated with just a few hundred members left and almost no operational capacity. [156]

Yet as the rebirth of ISIS in recent years indicate, a critical component of the initial destruction of AQI came from the Iraqi government's stability and functionality at the time. From the absolute chaos that followed the ousting of Saddam Hussein, when US forces left Iraq it seemed as if the government in Iraq led by then President Nouri al-Maliki seemed to be stable and sectarian violence had significantly decreased when US forces left in 2011. [157]When Maliki began fostering sectarian tensions after the US's departure, the group began to regain adherents. Maliki gave jobs and leadership roles to his Shia allies instead of to the Sunni's and failed to reward the tribes that had helped Maliki and the coalition weaken AQI and

[154] "Al Qaeda in Iraq's Shrinking Area of Operations." *FDD's Long War Journal.* Accessed April 7, 2017. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/01/al_qaeda_in_iraqs_sh.php.
[155] Ibid
[156] Fisher, Ian. "In Rise of ISIS, No Single Missed Key but Many Strands of Blame." *The New York Times*, November 18, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/world/middleeast/in-rise-of-isis-no-single-missed-key-but-many-strands-of-blame.html.
[157] Benjamin Isakhan, ed., *The Legacy of Iraq* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt16r0j1w, 12

the insurgency in the first place.[158] To the vast majority of Sunnis it seemed as if the Sunnis were being pushed out of governance and many of them began to turn back toward the insurgent groups they had once abandoned. Ultimately the rapid devolution of the Iraqi government in the wake of the US forces departure served as rocket fuel for ISIS's resurgence.

The case of AQI/ISIS's destruction and resurgence demonstrates the multifaceted nature of counterterrorism. While the successful elimination of al-Zarqawi did create short term weakness in the organization, what ultimately made the difference in driving out AQI was continuous tactical targeting combined with the elimination of safe havens and capturing of resources. While terrorist groups can survive the loss of a single leader, the loss of a multitude of leaders, supplies, and territory creates an insurmountable cascade affect. To add insult to injury, the renewed stability of the Iraqi government at the time likely served as a powerful deterrent to new recruits joining the organization. Before the departure of US troops, it seemed as if AQI and groups like it were on the losing side and the government was the way of the future. When the government began enflaming tensions that calculus shifted and many Sunnis began turning back to AQI. This serves as a cautionary tale for counterterrorism practitioners, the stability and strength of the local government is a key factor in the successful, permanent eradication of terrorist networks. It points out the importance of economic development programs to shore up local governments and to deter local folks from looking to terrorist groups for the provision of social service. Without this strategy,

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[158] Ibid

even the most comprehensive efforts to permanently eradicate terrorist groups will fail as the underlying causes of e frustration with a corrupt government remain.

Ultimately targeted killing is only successful as a part of a broader counterterrorism strategy. Successful strikes create a window of opportunity during which a variety of other measures can be employed to truly eliminate the organization. From targeted economic aid and development programs to help alleviate the desperation that motivates people to join the organizations while strengthening local governments, to continuous network targeting to eliminate large numbers of a group's leader structures, and operations that target a groups resources or territory, the six-month window provides a chance do use the other tools in the counterterrorism toolbox with greater affect. Yet targeted killing alone has none of these long term affects, in reality none of these strategies do in isolation. Successful counterterrorism requires a combination of techniques used in concert with one another to have permanent effects. Yet as targeted killing grows increasingly popular and as it becomes easier due to improved targeting technology, the US and its counterterrorism partners cannot become overly reliant on it. Targeted killing alone is not a counterterrorism strategy and the rapid increase in its use in the past few years indicates that it is perhaps being perceived or even used as one. All three cases, Bin Laden, Zarqawi and Shehadeh indicate that targeted killing alone is virtually useless as a long-term counterterrorism strategy. Yet the US's work with AQI in Iraq demonstrates that targeted killing can be useful as a piece of an effective counterterrorism strategy when paired with other tools.

Ultimately to take advantage of the benefits that targeted killing can offer, it must be

used as a tool instead of the solution to war on terror.

Chapter 6

Lessons from Terror

All of the cases evaluated thus far have demonstrated that targeted killing is most effective as a short-term tool within a broader counterterrorism strategy. Ultimately for the vast majority of terrorist groups, the loss of an individual leader has little to no long-term effect on the group itself or its ability to conduct operations. Yet each of the cases evaluated demonstrate the different consequences that targeted killing can have. Each involved the elimination of a unique leader from a specific organization with its own characteristics and offers specific lessons on the costs and benefits of targeted killing strategy.

In many ways Al-Zarqawi serves as a textbook case of targeted killing used on a operational terrorist group. Al- Zarqawi was a ruthless, powerful leader and a key mastermind behind many violent, terrorist attacks. As such, the US had hoped that eliminating him would serves to strike a potentially lethal blow to an increasingly dangerous terrorist organization in AQI. Instead, as the aftermath of the Zarqawi's assassination demonstrates, operational terrorist groups are affected by the loss of their leader but only for a short period of time, during which the organization was almost completely dormant. In spite of Zarqawi's prominent position with AQI and the ruthlessness with which he led the organization, AQI was back to full strength just six month after his death. While AQI was still fairly new when Zarqawi died, it had developed to the point that it was not especially phased by the loss of its leader and chief strategist. This should not have been much of a surprise to policymakers. If a group is capable of conducting attacks with the scope

and scale that AQI had been perpetrating under Zarqawi, then logically their hierarchy is developed beyond relying on a single leader.

While it is very clear that Al-Zarqawi's death had a limited impact on AQI, the events that followed demonstrated the importance of capitalizing on the short term window that targeted killing has on organizations. As previously discussed, shortly after the death of Zarqawi, AQI reinvented itself as the Islamic State of Syria and the Levant, better known as ISIS. While the group would be severely weakened for a time during the surge of US forces in Iraq from 2008-2010, upon their departure it would return with a vengeance. These two phenomena demonstrate several importance lessons for future policy makers. The first, and arguably most crucial, is the importance of follow up in the immediate aftermath of a successful targeted killing strike. The US's follow up targeting strategy was successful at beating the group back from a well-organized, prolific terrorist network to what seemed like a splintering organization on the brink of collapse. Yet the underlying tensions and sectarian conflict that motivated much of the growth of AQI remained, and without the presence of US coalition forces holding the different sides inline, fell apart quickly. This speaks to the importance of pursuing more than just continuous targeting during the six month window and embracing strategies such as targeted economic aid to help address the underlying causes of terrorist strength.

The case of Shehadeh, the military leader of Hamas killed by Israel in 2002 demonstrates that operational terrorist groups can also be affected by the loss of a key strategist for a short period of time but much like the loss of Zarqawi it had little to no effect on the organization. In the immediate aftermath of Shehadeh's death,

Hamas's attacks decreased only to re-emerge with a vengeance six months later. Ultimately the loss of Shehadeh had a very limited impact on an organization as well developed and organized as Hamas. Shehadeh was not the highest ranking member of Hamas, but served as the primary military leader and strategist. This is a position within Hamas that Israel has targeted repeatedly with no real success. It is easy to see why Israel would focus its efforts on the military leadership of Hamas in its attempts to make its citizens safer, as the military arm of Hamas carries out the majority of the groups attacks. Yet Israel's repeated targeting of the same role within Hamas has proven futile at destroying the organization, or even significantly reducing its attacks in the long term. Ultimately Israel's reliance on targeted killing and other kinetic counterterrorism techniques to the exclusion of all others is one of the great limits of their counterterrorism strategy. As evidenced by the Israeli's limited success at permanently debilitating Hamas, the one pronged strategy based solely on security solutions is deeply flawed at best and, at worst, completely ineffective. While both the US and Israel have struggled with their respective counterterrorism strategies, the US, to its credit, has at least attempted to use a wider variety of methods such as targeted aid, infrastructure improvements and governmental assistance in the hopes of improving outcomes.

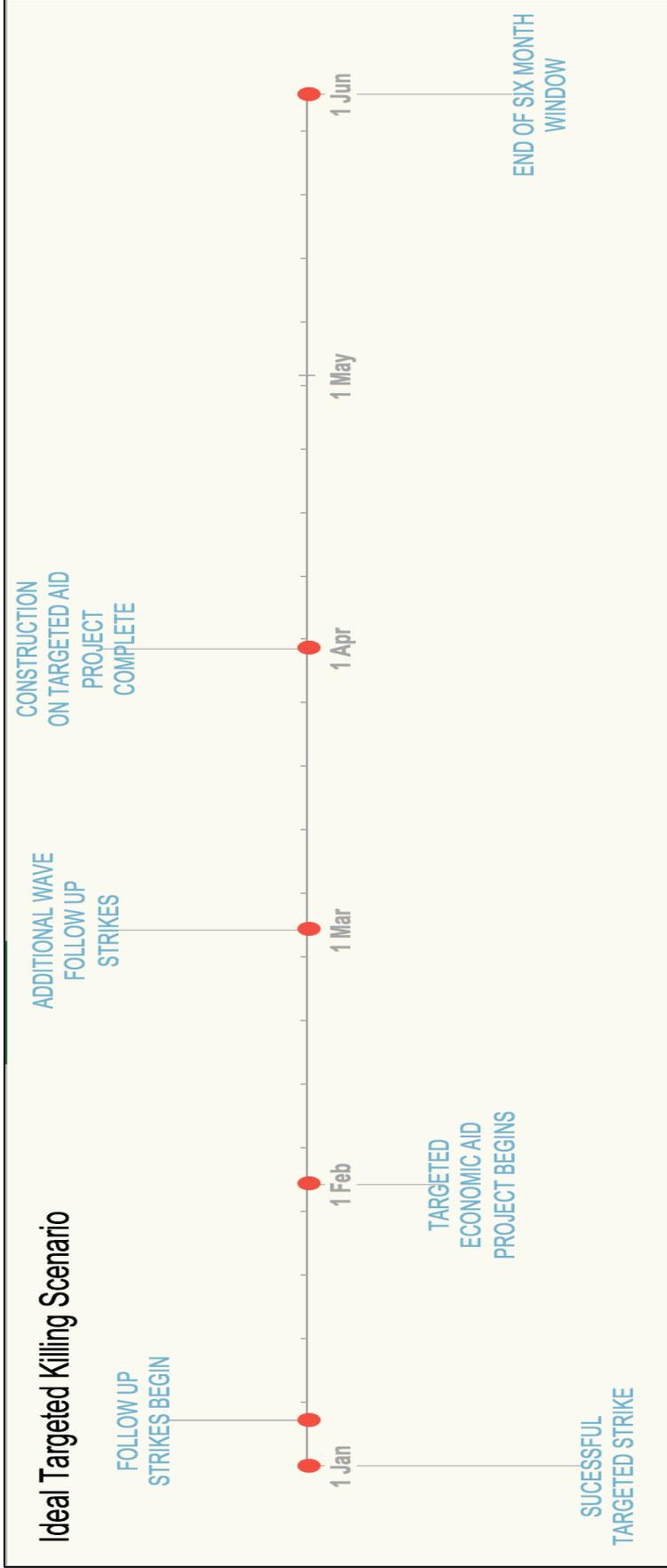Yet the US has also pursued targeting at the expense of results and nowhere is this more apparent than the hunt for Osama Bin Laden. The US spent a full decade and billions of dollars hunting for Bin Laden but received almost no concrete security gains for doing so. If anything, the US's position in the region took a hit due to the damage the secret nature of the raid did to the US's relationship with

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Pakistan. Yet while the motivation to assassinate Bin Laden was primarily security based, namely a desire to exact revenge on Bin Laden for the 9/11 attacks and prevent any similar attacks in the future, the outcome was very different. The primary gains from the Bin Laden assassination were symbolic. In the US, the primary symbol of terrorist evil and the mastermind behind one of the darkest days in American history was eliminated, prompting widespread joy and celebration. This translated into very real domestic political gains for President Obama which were ultimately the only positive byproducts of the elimination of Bin Laden. Ultimately Al-Qaeda wasn't affected by the loss of Bin Laden because by the time he was assassinated Bin Laden was no longer an operational leader, merely a symbol of the ideology he espoused. While Bin Laden was certainly a powerful symbol and loomed large in the Al-Qaeda doctrine, the organization had evolved beyond relying on him to hold the organization together. By the time of Bin Laden's death, Al-Qaeda had syndicates in a variety of countries throughout the region and a well-developed hierarchy and network connecting them. As such the loss of Bin Laden had virtually no impact on the actual day to day operations of the organization. The assassination of Osama Bin Laden serves as a cautionary tale to future policymakers that eliminating a symbol, even an exceptionally prominent one only creates symbolic gains.

The three cases evaluated over the course of this study demonstrate the benefits and limitations of targeted killing. A successful targeted killing results in a six month reduction in terrorist attacks but it does not last. Despite the limited results, both the US and Israel continue to rely heavily on targeted killing at the

expense of exploring other, potentially more effective counterterrorism techniques. None of the cases explored in this paper resulted in permanent gains against terrorist groups. The crucial lesson that all three cases teach is the danger of looking to targeted killing as a panacea for terrorism. Targeted killing can be an effective tool, so long as it's not the only tool being used.

Fig 3: Ideal Targeted Killing Scenario

Ideal Targeted Killing Scenario

FOLLOW UP STRIKES BEGIN

ADDITIONAL WAVE FOLLOW UP STRIKES

CONSTRUCTION ON TARGETED AID PROJECT COMPLETE

1 Jan   1 Feb   1 Mar   1 Apr   1 May   1 Jun

SUCESSFUL TARGETED STRIKE

TARGETED ECONOMIC AID PROJECT BEGINS

END OF SIX MONTH WINDOW

The Ideal Scenario: How should policy makers use targeted killing?

It is clear that targeted killing is ineffective as a long-term solution for terrorism but it could be an efficient means of creating a short period of weakness that other techniques can exploit for long term gains. The question then becomes how to use it most effectively to boost not only the benefits of a successful strike but the benefits of the other techniques used as well. In an ideal scenario, targeted killing would be used as a piece of a broader counterterrorism strategy as opposed to being used in isolation. Instead of merely designing a strike around a single opportunity to eliminate a target, the decision to eliminate a target would also be partnered with continuous targeting operations and targeted economic aid projects.

In the ideal targeted killing policy scenario, the initial strike is quickly followed up by additional strikes based on the intelligence available at the time of targeting or intelligence gathered in the wake of the strike. In the immediate aftermath of a leader's demise, even the most well developed organization experiences a transitional period as a new leader is identified and positioned. For continuous targeting purposes this can be exceptionally useful, as various moves within the organization and bids for power can be tracked. In certain cases, the number two within a hierarchy is often well known and his transition to power can be a critical opportunity to eliminate him as well. In terms of timing within the six-month window, follow up strikes should be an ongoing process but primarily concentrated early on in the window when the organization is primarily focused on regrouping and selecting a new leader. This transitional period may actually be the tipping point at which the organization is most vulnerable as a new leader has yet to

be installed and therefore there is no single point of command. Perhaps more importantly, the absence of a leader even in the most well-established of hierarchies can result in infighting and competition amongst the ranks which could prove to be an especially productive point for follow up strikes.

The timing of targeted aid projects within the window is also crucial. As most larger scale projects, such as the construction of a new school, take significant amounts of time, they need to be started as early as possible to allow them to be productive before the terrorist group re-asserts itself. Yet the first few weeks following a successful targeted killing strike are when retribution attacks and preplanned operations, such as the attack that occurred just days after Zarqawi's death, are most likely which would put such targeted aid projects at risk.[159] As such waiting until after the initial period and the possibility of additional violence it brings could be a wise choice. Targeted aid projects need a sustained period of security and stability for construction, so beginning them as early in the window as possible without compromising safety is crucial to their ability to be successful. The presence of security forces in the region, along with ongoing strikes on surviving leadership may serve as a means of protecting the project while it is under construction or at a minimum serve to distract the group from targeting the project while it remains vulnerable.

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[159] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200606110001

Ultimately targeted killing is most potent as a means of creating a window that can be exploited through follow up attacks and targeted economic aid projects. Starting the follow up strikes as soon as possible in the wake of successful attack and sustaining them throughout the window helps maintain a sense of pressure on the organization. Adding targeted aid projects to the equation as quickly and prudently as possible further erodes the groups support. The combination of the two within the six-month timeframe can serve to create long term damage to a terrorist organization as both their basis of support and operations is weakened in a very short period of time.

In an ideal scenario, each targeted strike would be designed to maximize the possibility of follow up strikes and designed to facilitate the development of targeted aid projects in the immediate aftermath. With the volatile and fast paced nature of intelligence gathering this might not always be a possibility, however it is absolutely crucial for policy makers to incorporate more of these tools into their targeting strategy and cost benefit analysis. Whenever possible policymakers should seek opportunities for targeting that allow them to compound the effects on terrorist groups by exploiting the window of weakness that targeted killing can create. While there may be moments when the opportunity to eliminate a single leader regardless of the possibility of follow up are necessary, by and large policymakers should focus whenever possible on creating targeting schemes that can be used as a part of a broader strategy against an organization. If the goal of a targeted killing strike is to have a long-term impact on the terrorist organization, the only means of doing so is using it as a piece of comprehensive strategy.

Areas for Future Research

While this paper does present a comprehensive comparative analysis of three different cases of targeted killing and articulates a hypothesis for improving the efficiency of the practice, there are a variety of avenues of future study that are not addressed. To conclusively demonstrate that the six-month window applies in every incidence and type of targeted killing strike beyond those conducted in the past two decades against terrorist leaders in the Middle East, additional cases must be assessed. This projected is limited by the relatively small number of cases it evaluates. An important avenue for future research is evaluating more cases from a wider variety of geographic locations, organizations and group type. Exploring cases of targeted killing from the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Latin America for instance could add valuable data to the study.

Yet given that the vast majority of counterterrorism and targeted killing operations are currently taking place in the Middle East the cases used in this paper still provide value. It would also be fascinating to move beyond a comparative analysis and into a more quantitative one. Applying the GTD analysis used on the cases in this paper to a larger data set, such as the one created by Jenna Jordan in her research on the subject, would not only provide additional evidence for the six-month window but could indicate if there's any variability in the length of the window with a wider range of groups from different locations. [160] A wider range of cases would allow for more comprehensive study of the window and demonstrate if it can be in anyway impacted as a result of the condition of the group or target

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[160] Jenna Jordan "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes" *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Spring 2014)

method. While it appears as if the six-month window of decrease in attacks is fairly

consistent, based on the cases evaluated in this paper, it might be affected by other

elements that fall outside of these three cases.

Another avenue for future research is determining when, in the course of the

six month window, a terrorist group is at its weakest point. This is a crucial juncture

within the window for strategic purposes. When the group is at its most

dysfunctional, it is also most vulnerable to further attack. As such pinpointing that

timeframe within the window could be incredibly valuable to policymakers trying to

plan follow up strikes or determine when to commence a targeted aid project. The

most vulnerable point presents the best opportunity for policymakers to convert the

short-term gains of a successful strike into long term strategic benefits against a

terrorist group.

It would also be fascinating to determine if this point of maximum

vulnerability varies by organizational structures or group type. Terrorist groups

that are more well developed are already less vulnerable to targeted strike, which

might translate into their weakest point occurring earlier in the window than a less

developed terrorist organization.[161] While it is fairly clear that a window of

weakness exists after a successful strike regardless of organization type, the

weakest point may vary as a result of a stronger or weaker hierarchy. It is also

possible that a terrorist groups weakest point may have little to do with their

organizational structure. It may simply occur either directly before they have named

a new leader while infighting is occurring or immediately after a new leader has

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[161] Ibid

been chosen but has yet to completely gain control of the group. Determining when in the leadership selection cycle a terrorist group is at its most vulnerable could prove exceptionally useful to strategists as they plan various follow up strikes.

Conclusion

While there is a great deal of research yet to be done on the short and long term impacts of targeted killing, the cases of Shehadeh, Al-Zarqawi and Bin Laden serve as crucial examples of both the benefits and limitations of targeted killing. A successful targeted killing strike does create a six month decrease in terrorist attacks but that window is only useful if it is exploited by policy makers. Ultimately targeted killing is most useful as part of a broader counterterrorism strategy that incorporates other crucial tools of counterterrorism such as targeted economic aid projects, government and security support and network targeting practices. Yet all too often the simplicity and efficiency of targeted killing lures policy makers away from these solutions and towards an overreliance on targeting alone. While improvements in targeting technology, intelligence gathering and drones has made targeting easier and more effective, overreliance on a single strategy is both dangerous and counterproductive.

Terrorism is a complex problem which demands comprehensive and nuanced solutions. While using a multifaceted approach may be less appealing than the immediate gratification that targeted killing provides, it is the only way to have a significant impact on terrorist groups. Ultimately the root causes of terrorism, economic desperation, political disenfranchisement and sectarian conflict cannot be solved by the elimination of an individual or even entire terrorist groups. As such

focusing on eliminating terrorist leadership without addressing what motivated

people to follow them only serves to create a vicious cycle of violence.

Counterterrorism strategists must maintain perspective and use targeted killing as a

single tool within a much broader toolbox to create substantive, permanent change

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Appendix: Data on Attacks Perpetrated Before and After Targeted Killing
All data is from Global Terrorism Database

AQI Attacks January 2006-June 2007

Date	Attack Description
1/7/06	**Six Months Before**
1/9/06	2 AQI Suicide bombers attack the Iraqi Interior Ministry in Baghdad
2/22/06	AQI detonates a bomb inside a Shia Holy Shrine
4/7/06	3 AQI suicide bombers attack a Mosque
6/3/06	AQI kills Russian Diplomat and kidnaps 4 others in Baghdad
6/7/06	**Start of Six Month Window: Al Zarqawi is killed by US Bombing**
6/11/06	AQI is suspected of bombing a market in Baghdad
1/7/07	**End of Six Month window**
1/27/07	AQI abducts and assassinates Saied Hussein al Alwani
3/16/07	AQI commits three separate Bombings in Albu Issa, Amriyat al Fallujah and Ramadi
3/22/07	AQI suspected of bombing near a conference where UN Sec. General was Speaking
3/23/07	AQI suspected of attempting to assassinate Salam al-Zawaba'I (Iraq Deputy Prime Minister)
4/12/07	AQI Suicide bomber attacks café in Baghdad
4/18/07	AQI bombs Sadriyah market in Baghdad
5/19/07	AQI members raid Hamid Shifi Village in Iraq
6/1/07	AQI suicide bomber blows up a safe house in Baqouba, Iraq
6/2/07	AQI bombs the Sarha Bridge in Baghdad
6/7/07	**One Year After**

Hamas Attacks February 2002-July 2003

Date	Attack Description
2/22/02	**Six Months Before Shehadeh's Death**
2/6/02	Hamas Raid on Settlement
2/14/02	Hamas bombs a tank in the West Bank
2/19/02	Hamas ambushes a checkpoint in the West Bank
3/5/02	Hamas fires 2 rockets into Sederot, Israel
3/7/02	Hamas militant attacks settlement in Gaza
3/27/02	Hamas suicide bomber attacks Netanya, Israel
3/28/02	Hamas gunman attacks West Bank Settlement
3/31/02	Hamas suicide bombing in Haifa
5/3/02	Hamas kills IDF officer in West Bank
5/7/02	Hamas suicide bomber attacks Rishon Israel
5/10/02	Hamas bombs a bank in Beersheba, Israel
5/19/02	Hamas suicide bomber attacks a market in Netanya, Israel
5/20/02	Hamas suicide bomber blows up market in Netanya
5/20/02	Hamas suicide bomber attacks bus stop in Northern Israel
6/8/02	Hamas bombs Rafah in the West Bank
6/8/02	Hamas militants kill 3 in the West Bank
6/15/02	Hamas militant fires on IDF in Gaza Strip
6/17/02	Hamas suicide bomber attacks bus in Jerusalem
6/19/02	Hamas suicide bomber attacks settlement in Jerusalem
7/16/02	Hamas militants attack bus in the West Bank
7/22/02	**Beginning of Six Month Window**
7/31/02	Hamas bombs Hebrew University in Jerusalem
8/1/02	Hamas suicide bomber attacks bus in Rafah Settlements
8/11/02	Hamas gunman fire on Gaza Settlement
9/19/02	Hamas Suicide bomber attacks bus in Tel Aviv
11/5/02	Hamas militant attacks Rafiah Yam, Gaza Strip
11/17/02	Hamas militants attack IDF
11/21/02	Hamas suicide bomber attacks bus in Jerusalem
1/2/03	Hamas RPG attack in Rafah
1/5/03	Hamas suicide bombers attack Tel Aviv

1/22/03	**End of Six Month Window**
1/23/03	Hamas Gunman kill three civilians in Hebron
2/10/03	IDF thwart Hamas attack on the West Bank
2/15/03	Hamas blows up a tank in the Gaza Strip
2/19/03	Hamas launches 4 Short ranges missiles into Gaza Strip
2/23/03	Hamas fires three rockets into Sderot, Israel
3/3/03	Hamas fires 3 more rockets into Sderot, Israel
3/4/03	Hamas fires five mortar shells into Gaza Strip
3/5/03	Hamas suicide bomber blows up a bus in Haifa, Israel
3/6/03	Hamas fires 5 rockets into Sderot, Israel
3/8/03	Hamas fires mortars at Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip
3/7/03	2 Hamas militants are killed on their way into the West Bank with a bomb
3/9/03	Hamas fires 4 Qassam rockets into Sderot, Israel
3/17/03	Hamas fires rockets into Sderot, Israel
3/27/03	Hamas fires 3 Wassam rockets into Sderot, Israel
4/2/03	Hamas blows up a n Israeli tank in Rafah, Palestine
4/4/03	Hamas fires an Al-Battar rocket at an Israeli tank in the Gaza Strip
4/15/03	Hamas militant fires on Israeli workers in the Gaza Strip
4/20/03	Hamas fires mortars into Sederot
4/30/03	Hamas suicide bomber attacks Tel Aviv café
5/9/03	Hamas fires 6 rockets into Sderot, Israel
5/14/03	Hamas fires 3 rockets into Sderot, Israel
5/17/03	Hamas suicide bomber attacks Hebron, Palestine
5/18/03	Hamas Suicide bomber blew up a bus in Jerusalem
5/18/03	Hamas suicide bomber blew up a road block at Dahiya el-Barid
5/19/03	Hamas suicide bomber attacked the Gaza Strip
5/23/03	Hamas blew up a bus in the Netzarim settlement in Gaza
5/27/03	Hamas fires 4 mortars into Sderot, Israel
6/8/03	3 Hamas militants fire on IDF base near the Gaza Strip border
6/11/03	Hamas suicide bomber attacks Jerusalem
7/22/03	**One Year Later**