

Assassination as a Tool of United States Foreign Policy

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The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts

Department of Political Science

By
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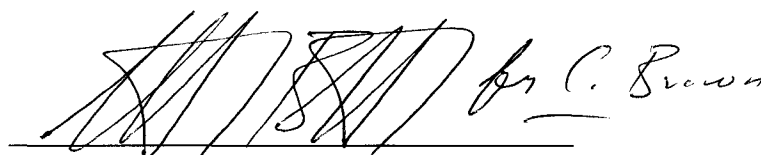
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acceptance of the thesis,

An Evaluation of Assassination as a Tool of U.S. Foreign Policy

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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Abstract

This thesis examines the efficacy of state-sponsored assassination as a tool of American foreign policy. Specifically, the project asks, has assassination furthered the strategic interests of the U.S.? Through an analysis of six assassination plots in which the U.S. was complicit this study concludes that assassination has not been a useful tool of U.S. foreign policy. As such, it should not be used as a tool to further U.S. interests against rogue regimes. The project also evaluates one of the broader assumptions pertaining to assassination, specifically the idea of leaders as “centres of gravity.” It concludes that there is little evidence to support this assumption, thus buttressing arguments made about proscribing assassination as a tool of foreign policy.

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“There is no order in the world around us, we must adapt ourselves to the requirements of chaos instead. It is hard to adapt to chaos, but it can be done.”
- Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (*Breakfast of Champions*)

Chapter One – Introduction

The 9/11 attacks were a watershed in the realm of international politics and caused a tectonic paradigm shift. That global politics has changed is readily evident, as is the fact that the planet's only superpower now views the means and strategy to ensuring its security in a different manner. The new United States doctrine of security calls for a massive assault on international terrorism, and pre-emptive strikes against rogue regimes that aid or abet terrorists and proliferate weapons of mass destruction.¹ The focus on problematic rogue regimes is hardly new, however the doctrine of pre-emption certainly breaks new ground and challenges conventional wisdom about the nature of deterrence.

The focus on rogue states and rogue leaders has also brought about the resumption of an old debate in America, over the question of state-sponsored assassinations. Proponents and opponents of employing assassination to achieve policy goals offer different arguments to support their claims and most of the literature deals with the questions of morality and legality. While these questions are important, it is perhaps more important to ask whether or not assassinating enemy leaders is an effective way to realize policy goals and further interests.

This thesis examines the efficacy of state sponsored assassination by evaluating instances of U.S.-sponsored plots and those of other states. The main focus will be on the use of assassination by the U.S., as it is today in a position of unprecedented global dominance.² In this chapter, I begin by outlining the central research questions and the

¹ *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, The White House. Document online. Accessed March 7, 2003. Available from: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nssall.html>.

² A U.S. focus is taken here because the public and academic debates are largely over whether or not the U.S. should employ assassination. In the early days of the 107th Congress, Representative Bob Barr of Georgia introduced the "Terrorism Elimination Act," which proposed the elimination of the ban on assassinations. The bill attracted no co-sponsors and went unacknowledged by the Bush Administration. Ward Thomas, "Another Tool Against Terrorism," *Boston Globe* 28 October 2001, D1. No other country

findings of the thesis. I then outline the argument. Following that, I discuss the history of the relationship between America and state-sponsored assassinations. Next, I elucidate the case for and against rescinding the ban on American involvement in the assassination of foreign leaders, in the process examining the state of public opinion in America today. I then review the existing literature on assassination. The chapter concludes with a detailed plan of the thesis.

The Research Questions

This thesis asks, has assassination been a useful policy tool in furthering the strategic interests of the U.S.? When does assassination work as a tool to further foreign policy interests? Can assassination be a useful policy tool in achieving goals vis-à-vis rogue regimes such as Iraq and North Korea?³ In the process of evaluating the selected cases, this project adds to the broader debates on assassination as it tests the assumption that proponents of assassination as a foreign policy tool make; specifically, that leaders are “centres of gravity.” This concept could also be dubbed “centre of problem,” as the idea reflects the belief that if problematic leadership is eliminated, things improve for the perpetrator.

advocating war against Iraq has introduced the possibility of legislating assassinations as a policy option. In fact White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer caused a storm when he talked about the possibility of assassinating Saddam Hussein. “One can only say the cost of a one-way ticket is substantially less than that. The cost of one bullet, the Iraqi people taking it [on] themselves, is substantially less than that, the cost of war is more than that.” He later clarified his statement saying, “Regime change is the policy in whatever form it takes.” Kelly Wallace, “Fleischer Clarifies ‘One Bullet Line’.” Document online. Accessed March 16, 2003. Available from: <http://www.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/10/01/wh.saddam/>.

³ However, the prescriptive section of this paper is not the focus – the bulk of the paper, as stated, is evaluative not prescriptive.

The Findings

Has assassination been a useful policy tool in furthering the strategic interests of the U.S.? The evaluation performed here indicates that, on the whole, assassination has not been useful in furthering the strategic interests of the United States. The examination of the U.S. cases in this study reveals that America has only significantly furthered its interests by assassinating an enemy leader once. However, that assassination – the killing of Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto – occurred during wartime and did not seek to change the leadership of a country or overhaul a political system. Rather, by killing Yamamoto the U.S. sought only to demoralize the Japanese Navy and eliminate a superb military strategist so that gains might be made in the Pacific naval war. One other case – that of Patrice Lumumba – is rated as a partial success, based upon the fact that the U.S. enjoyed relatively good relations with Lumumba's successor over time and did not need to commit an overly large amount of resources to quell internal upheaval in the Congo following the assassination.⁴

The five other U.S. cases are rated as overall failures either because:

- 1) Assassination did not, at a minimum, engender better relations or more loyalty between the U.S. and the targeted states (the Diem, Castro, and Qaddafi cases)
- 2) The U.S. was unhappy with the successor (the Trujillo and Diem cases).
- 3) The successful assassination of the target led to significantly internal upheaval in the targeted country, which necessitated the unplanned commitment of significant U.S. resources (the Trujillo case).

The overwhelming preponderance of failures indicates that assassination has rarely furthered U.S. interests significantly and is thus not a particularly useful tool of U.S. foreign policy.

⁴ The United Nations dealt with most of this. Trevor Findlay, *The Blue Helmets First War: Use of Force by the UN in the Congo 1960-1964* (Clementsport, NS: Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1999).

The findings of this investigation are summarized below in Table 1.1. and Table 1.2.

Table 1.1 – Summary of the Findings on U.S. Cases

Target	Position	Regime type	U.S Role	Tactical Outcome	Strategic Outcome
Yamamoto	Admiral	Autocracy	Direct	Success	Success
Lumumba	Head of state	Democracy	Indirect/proxy	Success	Partial success
Trujillo	Head of state	Autocracy	Indirect/proxy	Success	Failure
Diem	Head of state	Autocracy	Indirect/proxy	Success	Failure
Castro	Head of state	Autocracy	Indirect/proxy and direct	Failure	Failure
Qaddafi	Head of state	Autocracy	Direct	Failure	Failure

Table 1.2 – Summary of the Findings on Non-U.S. Cases

Target	Position	Regime Type	Perpetrator's role	Tactical Outcome	Strategic Outcome
Dollfuss	Head of State	Autocracy	Indirect/proxy	Success	Partial Success
Dudayev	Independence Leader	Democracy	Direct	Success	Failure

The Argument

This section is divided into four separate subsections. The first deals with the conditions that increase the likelihood that an assassination plot will achieve tactical success. The second deals with when assassination can be a useful tool of foreign policy. The third deals with why assassination has not been a useful tool of U.S. foreign policy. The fourth addresses the question of whether or not assassination is a useful way for the U.S. to deal with rogue leaders today.

What conditions make tactical success more likely?

It is easy to assume that democratic leaders would make for easier targets, based upon the openness of democratic societies, their toleration of dissent, and the fact that government legitimacy is not predicated on fear or coercion. In fact, the one assassination of a democratic leader that this investigation examines, Patrice Lumumba, was killed. However, many autocratic leaders were killed as well. This calls into question the argument that regime type is all that matters. For instance, Trujillo, Diem, and Dollfuss, all autocrats, were successfully targeted, thus another factor must contribute to this besides regime type. This factor is the level of personal security surrounding a leader. At the time of their deaths, Trujillo and Diem had both overestimated the degree of support they enjoyed from various parties. The killers of Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss, who had been elected democratically but ruled as an autocrat at the time of his death, were virtually unopposed by any sort of security apparatus when they committed the assassination. The missions that ended in tactical failure both involved the targeting of

leaders who prioritized their personal security. Based upon the findings of this study, the degree of security surrounding a leader appears more important than the regime type.

When can assassination be a useful tool of U.S. foreign policy?

The answer is, very rarely. The only unequivocal instance of U.S. strategic success occurred during wartime. This was the assassination of Isoroku Yamamoto, who was not a head of state. Conversely, assassination plots designed to change the leadership of states have done little to further U.S. interests and in instances of tactical failure have had little effect in terms of changing the behaviour or weakening the position of targeted leadership. The lesson is this: if the U.S. aims to further its interests through assassination, it should not expect assassination of chief executives to bring about massive overhaul of a political system and/or cause profound alterations in the behaviour of a state.

If assassination is to bring about massive change at least two conditions need to be met. History shows that these conditions are an elusive combination. First, is the presence of like-minded successor leadership. After eliminating a chief executive, the U.S. has only once found a successor with which it enjoyed generally warm relations over time. Second, the successor needs to be prepared to rule in a heavy-handed manner.

The Lumumba case met both criteria. Following the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, Mobutu Sese Seko enjoyed warm relations with the U.S. for most of his tenure and the U.S. did not need to return to Congo to engineer his ouster. Moreover, his jackbooted style of rule helped him suppress internal upheaval. However Mobutu was a tyrant, an egregious abuser of human rights and one of history's most proficient

kleptocrats. In a Cold War context, supporting such a leader was politically tenable. However today, U.S. grand strategy places heavy emphasis on the promotion of democracy. While the U.S. still supports numerous autocracies, part of the grand strategy outlined by President George W. Bush is the promotion of democracy. Thus today, even if the condition of like-minded successor leadership were met, the likelihood that the successor would have to rule in an autocratic manner calls into question the long-term efficacy of assassination and would likely be incongruent with U.S. grand strategy's explicit desire to promote democratic values and institutions.⁵

Why has assassination not been an effective way to further U.S. interests?

Arguments in support of rescinding the ban on assassination and employing targeted killing as a tool of U.S. foreign policy are predicated upon two flawed assumptions. These assumptions, whether explicitly stated or not, have underpinned every plot the U.S. has sponsored. The first assumption is that leaders are “centres of gravity.” This term means that leaders are key figures in a regime or movement. The logic is that if you eliminate the leader – or centre of gravity – then problems posed by that leader will disappear, unwanted or undesirable behaviour will change and the situation for the perpetrator will generally be better. Of the U.S. cases, only the Yamamoto case wholly supports the idea. That case involved the targeting of a charismatic military leader during war and did not seek to change the leadership of a state. Yamamoto was a centre of gravity for the Japanese Imperial Navy, not the entire state of Japan. In all other successful instances of U.S. sponsored assassination, events in

⁵ One of the stated goals in the National Security Strategy of the U.S. is to “Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy.” Ibid.

the aftermath of the assassinations show that killing leaders is unlikely to lead automatically to better relations. The Russian assassination of Jokhar Dudayev adds to the U.S. findings about the concept of leaders as centres of gravity. Despite the termination of Dudayev, Russian relations with Chechnya remain hostile, and Russian troop deployment in the breakaway republic continues. In short, no discernible gains have been made and the fight rages on, indicating that the leader was not the key to the movement or the source of all problems.

Equally instructive is the fact that counterfactual analysis on the five of the six U.S. cases and both non-U.S. cases shows that other policy options were available, and would likely have led to the same or better outcomes. There are almost always other options open and in some instances these options are less likely to bring about unintended consequences.

The second implicit assumption in arguments positing the use of assassination as a tool of foreign policy is that if assassination does not succeed tactically it still may change unwanted behaviour. The empirical record does not support this assumption. The two instances of tactical failure examined in this thesis, the attempts on Fidel Castro and Moammar Qaddafi, show that assassination has done little to change the behaviour of these leaders. Castro's anti-American rhetoric and hold on power in Cuba continue despite the attempts and, though Qaddafi's behaviour has changed, there is evidence that the imposition of United Nations sanctions brought about the change, not the assassination attempt.

What this means about using assassination against rogue leaders today

If targeting rogue leaders such as Saddam or Kim Jong-Il could be done without causing large-scale problems then assassination would be good policy. It would spare the lives of innocents, save money and rid the world of dangerous despots. The findings of this study and what is known about the security surrounding these leaders indicate that a tactically successful assassination is extremely unlikely. First, this study reveals that the degree of personal security surrounding a leader is a major factor in achieving tactical success. Both men rule police states and have well-established security apparatuses. Infiltrating such societies is difficult, and would be especially so for an American agent. Finally, soliciting the help of proxies would be an onerous task, as the surveillance apparatuses are extensive in both DPRK and Iraq.

More importantly, the findings of this study support the argument that U.S. targeting of Kim or Saddam would not necessarily further U.S. interests. The problems with potential successors in Iraq and the lack of a successor in North Korea mean that the U.S. might well have to replace the successors of either of these tyrants. There is also the possibility that the power vacuum caused by a successful assassination would precipitate sustained internal upheaval necessitating additional U.S. resource commitments. Finally, in eight of the nine cases examined here, the perpetrating state had options other than assassination that would likely have engendered the same or better outcomes. Considering all the problems that could result by killing either Kim or Saddam and the fact that there are other options available to the U.S., assassination is not a good way to achieve goals.

The State of the Public Debate

America and Assassination

American policymakers have had a tumultuous relationship with the use of assassination as a tool of foreign policy. Several U.S. presidents have ordered the assassination of enemy leaders, or have given tacit approval to operations that they hoped might eliminate foreign leaders. Despite this reality, today, “assassination has been treated like a visitor with the black plague,” and is one of the most taboo topics that can be mentioned in the White House.⁶ The United States officially renounced assassination as a tool of foreign policy in 1976. At that time America was still smarting from defeat in Vietnam and the Church Committee had just released a damning report implicating U.S. involvement in several assassination plots.⁷ The revelations of U.S. involvement in such nefarious activities sparked public outrage. In 1976, reacting to this outrage, President Gerald Ford issued Executive Order 11905, which explicitly forbade U.S. agents to kill another world leader or to be involved in the planning of a leader’s assassination. This was followed by Executive Order 12306 and then Executive Order 12333, promulgated by President Reagan.⁸ Every U.S. president has subsequently renewed the ban on assassination and involvement in assassinations. Still, it has been noted that any sitting president can secretly rescind the ban if the need is felt imperative.⁹ In the final analysis, assassination is highly dramatic; it represents a “quick fix” to the difficulties posed by

⁶ John Jacob Nutter, *The CIA’s Black Ops* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), 127.

⁷ U.S. Senate, “Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders,” *Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Press, 1975)

⁸ “Executive Order 11905,” *41st Federal Registry* (February 18, 1976), 7703; “Executive Order 12306,” *46th Federal Registry* 29 (June 1, 1981), 693; “Executive Order 12,333,” *46th Federal Registry* 59, (December 4, 1981), 941.

⁹ Nutter, 127.

problematic leaders, and thus it will always hold some appeal to policymakers at the upper echelons.

Arguments in Favour of Rescinding the Ban

Today, those who advocate rescinding the ban on assassinations make three arguments to support their case. First, they claim that America is overly reliant upon its military to achieve its policy ends. According to these observers this is bad for several reasons: first, excessive aerial bombardment does not necessarily rid problematic regimes of their insidious leadership. Second, if it survives a war, problematic leadership will invariably cause further trouble in the future (the Bosnia campaign and Operation Desert Storm are the oft-cited examples). Proponents of rescinding the ban also cite the fact that casualties – either U.S. military or the civilian populations of targeted states – are now anathema to the American public. Because the news media are quick to divulge incidents of U.S. military casualties or ‘collateral damage’, the American military machine has become constrained in its ability to act. The logic is that commercial television, which can broadcast real-time pictures of civilian death, breeds an immense degree of anti-American sentiment and thus prevents the achievement of foreign policy goals through use of America’s stunning military power.¹⁰

Proponents of rescinding the ban also make moral arguments. Philosophers from days gone by have long extolled the moral virtues of killing a tyrant. “Grecian nations give honours of the gods to those who have slain tyrants,” said Cicero, meaning that

¹⁰ Several scholars have cited American the over reliance on overt, forceful U.S. military power as a reason for rescinding the ban on assassination. The most cogent piece is Thomas Henriksen, “Covert Operations Now More Than Ever,” *Orbis* 44, no. 1 (Winter 2000), 145-156.

tyranny and oppression of a people are grounds for murder.¹¹ More recently, scholars have given tacit distinction to the targeting of dictators by saying that “randomness is the crucial feature of terrorism.”¹² By this logic, specifically targeting an individual – as opposed to trying to kill that individual by carpet-bombing a city – is within the framework of just war. At its core, this line of reasoning essentially sees total war as immoral because innocent populations or soldiers who are merely following directives are killed due to the actions of elites or autocratic leaders. This view is lucidly postulated by former Clinton advisor George Stephanopoulos who said of Saddam Hussein, “...killing him certainly seems more proportionate to his crimes and discriminate in its effect than massive bombing raids that will inevitably kill innocent civilians.”¹³ Richard Lowry offers an equally cogent argument:

Targeted killing can also be morally superior to waging all-out war. One of the reasons the Geneva Convention protects POWs is that soldiers are held blameless for state policies that they were presumably merely following, not creating. So, it’s odd to consider it unacceptable to kill Saddam, but acceptable thousands of his soldiers who may want nothing more fervently than to surrender to the nearest American. Indeed, the idea of proportionality in the law of war suggests that the means able to achieve an objective with the least destruction and killing...is always to be preferred.¹⁴

The above line of reasoning views assassination as the moral option. Others have offered a more pragmatic argument about rescinding the assassination ban in response to the U.S. war on terror. Put succinctly, proponents claim that the ban on the assassination of foreign leaders should be done away with because America now finds itself facing

¹¹ Cicero, quoted in *Ibid.*, 155.

¹² Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 113.

¹³ George Stephanopoulos, “Why We Should Kill Saddam,” *Newsweek*, 1 December 1997, 134.

¹⁴ Richard Lowry, “A View to a Kill,” *National Review* 18 June 2001, 38.

rogue regimes and asymmetrical threats.¹⁵ Accordingly, in a war against enemies who do not play by any discernible set of rules and have no regard for conventional norms of behaviour, applying rules and constraints to oneself is foolish. In short, if an enemy leader is going to provide weapons of mass destruction to terrorists that leader should be killed before American interests can be harmed.

Arguments in Favour of the Ban

Those who maintain that the U.S. must not rescind the ban on the assassination of foreign leaders have advanced a number of arguments to support their position.

First, say opponents, there are constitutional reasons. There is no need to rescind the ban on assassinations as the powers delegated to the president as Commander in Chief give him the ability to authorize an attack, even if it is likely to kill an enemy head of state. For these individuals, overt assassination in wartime is permissible.¹⁶

Second, say opponents, successful assassinations may precipitate worse conditions than existed under the assassinated leader. Although his ouster was not the result of assassination, Jacob Arbenz of Guatemala is an oft-cited example of what can happen if a competent successor leader is not in the wings. According to one observer, Arbenz's successor, Castillo Armas, did not prove more loyal to the U.S., and America ended up having to tend to Guatemala for 45 years after Arbenz was gone. Good leaders are not easy to find.¹⁷

¹⁵ See, for example Daniel Schorr, "Stop Winking at The Ban," *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 September 2001, 11.

¹⁶ Frederick P. Hitz, "Unleashing the Rogue Elephant: September 11 and Letting the CIA be the CIA," *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 25, no. 2 (2001), 774.

¹⁷ Hitz, 776.

Another argument is part pragmatic and part normative. The normative component is that assassination is immoral and runs contrary to the tenets of international law. In a moral sense, as the Church Committee said, “assassination is incompatible with American principles, international order and morality.”¹⁸ In a pragmatic sense, opponents say that even though it is a “hyper-power,” where possible, the U.S. should attempt to exercise its power through multilateral mechanisms and obey the tenets of international law – doing this will help preserve American hegemony and prevent the rise of a peer competitor.¹⁹ It is thus in the interests of the U.S. both morally and pragmatically to abide by international law and norms, according to these people.

Fourth, observers against rescinding the ban claim that it will lead to disastrous consequences. This was well summarized years ago by the Church Committee Report, which said, “it may be ourselves that we injure most if we adopt tactics more ruthless than the enemy.”²⁰ Essentially, this argument says that assassination will only bring about more assassination. Proponents cite other conflicts to back up their arguments. As Frederick Hitz says,

Assassination appears to beget more assassination if we are guided by the Israelis. Assassination has been no more successful in the struggles between the IRA and the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland, or those of the Basque separatists in Northern Spain.²¹

Finally, opponents of the ban claim it is unjust because it is impossible to know who has made, or will make judgments on which leaders are truly ‘evil’ or ‘tyrannical’ and therefore targeted. The very nature of state-sponsored assassinations requires that no

¹⁸ U.S. Senate, 258.

¹⁹ Numerous scholars have advanced these prescriptions for the preservation of hegemony. Two recent examples are, Michael Mandelbaum, “The Inadequacy of American Power,” *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5 (September/October 2002), 61-75 and G. John Ikenberry, “America’s Imperial Ambition,” *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5 (September/October 2002), 44-61.

²⁰ U.S. Senate, 259.

²¹ Hitz, 776.

paper trail exist and thus no accountability. As none is seemingly forthcoming, assassination, by its shadowy nature and top-down decision-making style, is incompatible with the tenets of democracy.²²

The Public Debate Today

If polling data since the 9/11 attacks is to be believed the American public has come full circle since the early 1980's. In one poll, 60% of those surveyed said they "could envision a scenario in which they would support assassination," only 35% said they could not. This contrasts drastically with a Gallup Poll from 1981, in which 82% of those surveyed said they "could never support political assassinations."²³ The debate on assassination has been equally acrimonious with academic circles. This literature is reviewed below.

Literature Review

The current state of the academic literature on assassination falls into two broad categories: the first category deals with the moral arguments and legality of assassination, the second with the efficacy of assassination to achieve goals.

I begin by outlining the current state of the literature on assassinations, first dealing with that which addresses moral and legal questions surrounding assassinations.

²² Ibid., 776.

²³ Both polls cited in, Abraham McLaughlin and Seth Stern, "How Far Would Americans Go in Fighting Terrorism," *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 January 2001, 2. Support is apparently greatest among those aged 18 to 24, sitting at 65%. Conversely, among those 65 and older, who remember the Church Committee and state sponsored plots, support is 56%, not as high, but by no means low either.

Moral and Legal Arguments

The topics of assassination and its legal and moral implications have long interested scholars and philosophers. Thomas Aquinas and Cicero advocated the use of assassination to remove tyrants from power.²⁴ Though it is an interesting question, my project is less concerned with legality and morality pertaining to assassination. However, this question is relevant insofar as it may affect a state's ability to carry out assassinations.

An excellent study on the role of norms in constraining state behaviour is Ward Thomas's, *The Ethics of Norms and Destruction*. Thomas, a constructivist, makes the case that norms matter.²⁵ On assassination, Thomas cites the decision not to attempt the assassination of Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War to show that entrenched norms against it led to George H.W. Bush deciding against it.²⁶ The piece is relevant insofar as it demonstrates that norms may constrain actions.

Others have examined assassination in the context of international law.²⁷ David Moon argues that international law does not prohibit assassination.²⁸ Michael Schmitt

²⁴ Bert Brandenburg, "The Legality of Assassination as an Aspect of Foreign Policy," *Virginia Journal of International Law* 27, no. 2 (2000), 655-656.

²⁵ Ward Thomas, *The Ethics of Norms and Destruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 37-42. Another work discussing the ethical questions related to assassination is Harold Zellner ed., *Assassination* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1974).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 48-59. Thomas's analysis is backed up by the fact that Air Force Chief Mike Dugan was fired following an announcement claiming that he planned to target Saddam Hussein. However, at war's end the U.S. did target Hussein. John D. Morrocco and David A. Fulghum, "USAF Developed 4700 lb Bomb In Crash Program To Attack Iraqi Military Leaders In Hardened Bunkers," *Aviation Week And Space And Technology*, 6 May 1991, 67. Another discussion of the U.S. military's role in assassinations is Paul Wilkinson, "The Role of The U.S. Military in Combating Terrorism in a Democratic Society," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8, no. 2 (1996), 1-11.

²⁷ See for example Patricia Zengel, "Assassination And The Law Of Armed Conflict", *Military Law Review* 134, no. 2 (Spring 1991), 42-48; W. Hays Parks, "Memorandum Of Law: Executive Order 12333 And Assassination," *Army Law* (December 1989), 20-33; Chris A. Anderson, "Assassination, Lawful Homicide and the Butcher of Baghdad," *Hamline Journal of Public Law and Policy* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 291-331.

²⁸ Moon cites the Hague Convention, the United Nations Charter, and the U.S. Constitution and claims all do not specifically prohibit assassination. David Moon, "Pacification By Assassination: the Legality of

reaches similar conclusions, claiming that international law implicitly disparages assassination, but does not prohibit its use explicitly.²⁹ A sub-vein of literature dealing with the morality of assassination deals almost exclusively with U.S. use of targeted killing. This vein is highly polemical and generally vituperates state involvement in assassination plots. Noam Chomsky's work is emblematic of this sub-vein.³⁰ He claims assassination has been a "deterrent to democracy."³¹ Chomsky does not take a dispassionate view of state's interests or assassination, instead preferring to make moral arguments. Work in this vein leaves gaps in the literature, as it does not address questions of utility.³²

While the legal literature is important in some ways to this project, far more important is the evaluative literature on assassination.

Assassination in Conducting U.S. Foreign Policy." Document online. Accessed 3 March 2003. Available from: <http://faculty.ils.edu/~manheimk/ns/moon2.htm>.

²⁹ Michael N. Schmitt, "State Sponsored Assassination In International And Domestic Law," *Yale Journal of International Law* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 609, 611. Others reaching this general conclusion include, Boyd Johnson, "Executive Order 12,333: The Permissibility of an American Assassination of a Foreign Leader," *Cornell International Law Journal* 25, no. 2 (Spring 1992), 401-435. Some authors however, advise against the declaration of a clear intent to assassinate a foreign leader. David Neumann and Tyll Van Geel, "Executive Order 12,333: The Risks of a Clear Declaration of Intent," *Harvard Journal of Public Policy* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1989), 433-447.

³⁰ See for example Noam Chomsky, *Rogue States: the Rule of Force in World Affairs* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), Idem, *The Washington Connection: The United States and Third World Fascism* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), Idem, *Turning the Tide* (Boston: South End Press, 1985) and Idem, *Terrorizing the Neighbourhood: American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era* (San Francisco: Pressure Drop Press, 1991)

³¹ Chomsky decries U.S. support for Mobutu following the assassination of Lumumba in *Deterring Democracy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991), 13-14. William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. and CIA Military Interventions Since WWII* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1995), 1-25. Blum's book, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 2000) asserts similar findings and generally amounts to an all out attack on the U.S. Blum alleges that the U.S. has been involved in assassination plots to kill, among others, Nehru, De Gaulle, Sukarno and Kim Koo.

³² One study that examines whether assassination is ever morally justified and is not overly polemical is Haig Khatchadourian, "Is Assassination Ever Morally Justified?," *Assassination*, ed. Harold Zellner (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1974), 41-56. Khatchadourian ends his work with a series of questions to ask to determine if assassination is morally justified. The study suffers from a lack of clear-cut conclusions.

Efficacy and Impacts of Assassinations

This second vein of literature most closely approximates the questions posed in this study. As such, it is very useful in terms of providing propositions to test in this thesis. Below, review some of the major findings on studies investigating the efficacy of assassination. I then cite problems with these studies and explain why and how this project fills a gap in the literature.

Major findings of Efficacy Studies

One of the main assumptions of advocates of assassination as a tool of foreign policy is that problematic leadership represents a “centre of gravity,” that if destroyed will lead to a cessation of unwanted or undesirable behaviour. The term “centre of gravity” might also be dubbed “centre of problem.” One of the first to discuss the concept of leaders as centres of gravity was Carl von Clausewitz. In the seminal work, *On War*, Clausewitz says, “[The centre of gravity] for a national insurrection lies in the personality of the leaders and public opinion; against these points the blow must fall.”³³ Certain studies have found that leadership assassination can have decisive effects, particularly as pertains to the outbreak of war.³⁴ Others claim leadership targeting is not a good idea and rarely ends a conflict or crisis. Richard Barringer’s 1972 study, in which he evaluated ten

³³ Clausewitz was offering this prescription in the context fighting and winning wars, however, this logic underpins peacetime assassinations. Simply put, the assumption is that if you eliminate a leader, things will improve. In this regard, the logic employed by those who espouse assassination is that a problematic leader represents a “centre of problem” but throughout the paper I will use the term “centre of gravity” to refer to this idea. Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 389-390.

³⁴ For instance John Stroessinger, *Why Nations Go To War* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1982), 208-209, found that a crucial factor in going to war was leader’s personalities. Richard Barringer, *War: Patterns of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 252-254 confers with this assessment.

cases, found that in only one instance did targeting leadership result in the cessation of hostilities.³⁵

In 1970, Havens and others evaluated 10 assassinations in depth. The analysis performed centred around the impact of an assassination on political systems of targeted countries. The study did not set out to ask whether assassination served the interests of the perpetrator. The authors carefully elucidated the problems of classifying impacts of assassination and causation.³⁶ The study then went on to outline several broad categories assessing impact, from smallest degree of change to greatest degree of change. The authors identify the following categories: 1) an assassination producing no discernible change; 2) an assassination producing personnel changes; 3) an assassination producing some policy change; 4) assassinations producing systemic changes; 5) assassinations leading to social revolution 6) assassinations leading to the disappearance of a political system.³⁷ They concluded that assassinations have little impact upon political systems.³⁸ Dwaine and Elizabeth Marvick concluded that assassination enhances the position of those groups “specializing in the management of violence” in a target state.³⁹ This means that assassination is likely to entrench the position of security personnel – both internal and external. Miles Hudson’s 2000 study, *Assassination*, found that most of the time the result of assassinations was the exact opposite of what the perpetrator desired. In only

³⁵ This case was the Spanish Civil War, and hostilities ended through a coup not assassination. *Ibid.*, 253. Barringer does say that assassination can prevent the outbreak of war, but is unlikely to end a war.

³⁶ Murray Havens et al, *The Politics of Assassination* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970), 36-37

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 37-40.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 149-152.

³⁹ Dwaine and Elizabeth Marvick, “The Political Consequences of Assassination,” *Assassination and the Political Order*, ed. William Crotty (New York: Harper Row, 1971), 503-505

one of Hudson's cases did the perpetrator realize goals through assassination.⁴⁰ A study by Stephen Hosmer of the RAND Corporation uncovered similar findings.⁴¹

Another proposition that other studies have assessed is the contagion effect of an assassination. This speaks to the proposition that "assassination begets more assassination."⁴² H.L. Neiburg found this proposition to be true, in his 1971 analysis.⁴³ Franklin Ford also found this proposition to be true in his study of political murder.⁴⁴

The Problems and Gaps in the Existing Evaluative Literature

There are three main problems with the existing literature that need to be filled. First, is the lack of methodological rigour. Second, is the absence of a study of assassination's utility framed in a U.S. context. Finally, no study has asked the important questions of when assassination can work, and why it works under certain conditions and not others. These problems are reviewed in greater detail below.

⁴⁰ The only successful assassination was that of Leon Trotsky. He claims that "It is much easier to argue that Adolph Hitler or Slobodan Milosevic were responsible for the disasters they appeared to initiate. Anger against a personality is easier to arouse than it is against a political system." Miles Hudson, *Assassination* (Guildford, England: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 236-239.

⁴¹ Stephen T. Hosmer, *Operations Against Enemy Leaders* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 133. Hosmer's study was originally commissioned by the U.S. Air Force to examine the question of leadership targeting during warfare, thus many of the prescriptions centre around the possible use of airpower to kill leaders. The study examines numerous cases from a variety of states and concludes that more problems are likely to be created by killing enemy leaders. This analysis is echoed by G. Wiles Robinson, in "A Study of Political Assassinations," *Social Structure and Assassination*, ed. Doris Wilkinson (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1976), 68.

⁴² This proposition is not tested here, as the tests employed do not speak to it. This is a limitation of the argument presented.

⁴³ H.L. Neiburg, "Murder as Political Behaviour," *Assassination and the Political Order*, ed. William Crotty, 445-455. As did Ronald Ferri, *Political Violence: An Analysis of Contagion Using Assassination Data* (MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1977), abstract. A study by James Kirkham and Sheldon Levy found that greater characteristics of assassination-prone societies are very similar to those to societies beset by a high level of political unrest. James Kirkham and Sheldon Levy, *Assassination and Political Violence: A report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 200-201.

⁴⁴ Franklin L. Ford, *Political Murder: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 382-383. Ford book largely amounts to a historical study, as he provides an overview of views of assassination from the days of Job to modern times.

1) Methodological Rigour

Though there has been some work done on evaluating assassination most of it suffers from a lack of methodological rigour. No study to date has systematically applied a set of tests to a set of cases to determine whether or not assassination serves the interests of the perpetrator. The lack of methodological rigour detracts from the conclusions. Though the conclusions provide propositions to test, this needs to be done systematically and in congruence with proper social science methodology.

Hosmer's 2001 piece claims to be systematic in its evaluation, but fails to examine the selected cases by applying a set of indicators for success or failure to each.⁴⁵ Instead, Hosmer articulates propositions and supports them by detailing one or two cases. There is no discernible method of evaluation or set of indicators for success or failure.⁴⁶ Thus, his study does not account for the fact that some assassinations can be partially successful. My study's more rigorous methodology permits for a more satisfying evaluation of assassination, as all cases are evaluated by the same set of indicators. Hudson's otherwise excellent study also suffers from some methodological problems. Though he juxtaposes interests and outcomes, my study is more rigorous and employs tests that paint a more complete picture of assassination as a way to fulfill interests. By employing a greater number of tests, my study is able to back up its conclusions more completely, with a greater amount of evidence. The greater variety of tests in my study

⁴⁵ Hosmer, 2-5.

⁴⁶ For instance, Hosmer says "Direct attacks can sometimes produce harmful unintended consequences." He then cites the decisions not to target Adolph Hitler and Emperor Hirohito as evidence. However, citing cases that simply back up a statement is not a satisfying explanation. Were there not cases where assassination produced no harmful unintended consequences? The lack of systematic evaluation methods detracts slightly from this otherwise excellent work. For examples of problems discussed in this critique see *Ibid.*, 32-36.

also permits me to speak more completely to the broad arguments made about assassination.

2) The Lack of Assessment of Assassination in a U.S. context

In light of the public debate and U.S. primacy, the lack of an examination of assassination framed in a U.S. context is a major gap in the literature. Hosmer and Hudson, authors of the two major recent evaluative studies on assassination, do not focus specifically on U.S. cases, and instead examine numerous cases from other states.⁴⁷

While the work is useful, it is not framed in a U.S. context. As such, neither speaks to the public debate in the way this study does. Hosmer details numerous cases of coups and paramilitary operations not involving the U.S., electing not to focus specifically on assassination. Miles Hudson's *Assassination*, written before the 9/11 attacks, looks at assassination generally, neglecting to take a U.S. focus.

The U.S. now occupies a position of primacy on the international stage unseen since Rome.⁴⁸ As a unipolar power much of the responsibility for maintaining world order and dealing with unsavoury regimes falls upon American shoulders.⁴⁹ Thus focusing upon U.S. cases and framing the central research question in a U.S. context are worthwhile questions for investigation.

⁴⁷ Hudson looks at cases across a wide time frame, examining the assassinations of Jesus Christ, Julius Caesar, Thomas à Becket, Mahatma Gandhi, Marat, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Franz Ferdinand, Tsar Alexander II, Abraham Lincoln, Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson, Michael Collins, King Abdullah, Anwar Sadat, Yitzhak Rabin, Henrik Verwoerd, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. There is no examination of U.S.-sponsored assassinations against heads of state. Hudson, v. Hosmer examines the Yamamoto assassination, the Castro plot and the attempt on Qaddafi but also looks at numerous other covert operations. His prescriptions deal largely with the use of airpower to target leaders.

⁴⁸ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "American Primacy in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (July/August 2002), 20. While there is little debate amongst scholars concerning the fact that America sits atop the international order, there is considerable debate concerning the extent and limits of power that primacy confers upon a hegemonic power in the international system.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-27. Similar arguments are made in Michael Ignatieff, "The American Empire: The Burden," *New York Times Magazine*, 5 January 2003, 22-38.

3) Identifying conditions by asking the when's and why's

To date, no study asks the important questions pertaining to when and why assassination can succeed, both tactically and in the context of advancing the perpetrator's interests. By delineating these conditions this project makes a further contribution.

In sum, this project fills three gaps in the existing literature. First, the work to date has not employed rigorous social science methodology by testing cases systematically. Second, the work to date has not centred on the U.S.'s use of assassination. I have chosen to focus upon U.S. cases because of the preponderance of American power and the nature of current events. Third, the work to date has not asked when assassinations can work, both tactically and strategically, and why it works under certain conditions and not others.

The next section details the plan of the thesis.

Plan of the Thesis

Chapter Two deals with methodology. I begin by detailing overarching selection criteria. I then outline the universe of cases. Next, I outline the U.S. and non-U.S. cases selected and explain the rationale behind their selection. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the measures used to evaluate the cases.

Chapter Three examines instances of tactically successful U.S.-sponsored assassination plots. Chapter Four discusses instances of U.S.-sponsored plots that failed to tactically. Chapter Five, looks at assassination by other states and actors on the international stage, employing the same evaluative framework used on the U.S. cases to

judge other states experiences with assassination. Doing so provides the necessary comparative perspective in order to draw general lessons about when and why assassination succeeds or fails.

The sixth chapter, a conclusion, summarizes the arguments presented and provides an interpretation of the findings of this study. Based upon these findings I assess the potential use of assassination against rogue regimes. I then delineate some of the limitations of the arguments presented.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

The study examines seven cases of U.S. sponsored assassinations or attempts. These are: the killing of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the assassination of Raphael Trujillo, the killing of Ngo Dinh Diem and the attempts against Fidel Castro and Moammar Qaddafi. It also examines the two non-U.S. cases of assassination, the killing of Engelbert Dollfuss and the assassination of Jokhar Dudayev.

The chapter begins by detailing the criteria behind case selection. I then outline the U.S. cases and the non-U.S. cases. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the measures of success or failure and detail the process of evaluation.

Case Selection and Rationale

Before discussing the criteria for case selection a few broader issues pertaining to the universe of cases, from which I select the cases closely examined in this study, need mentioning.

Inter-state assassination

This study, because it examines assassination as a tool of foreign policy, is concerned with inter-state assassinations. This means that cases where local actors initiated plans on their own accord without any aid from a foreign state are not included here. For example, assassinations such as that of John F. Kennedy, Yitzak Rabin and Laurent Kabila are not included, because these assassinations were carried out by domestic actors and were not sponsored, aided or abetted in any way by another state.

Examining assassinations of chief executives and politically important individuals

The universe of cases listed below in table 2.1 is divided into chief executives and politically important individuals. I examine examples of plots against both types of figures, because doing so provides for a more complete picture of assassination's utility. Examining only plots against chief executives does not go far enough. Because states also periodically target actors other than a chief executive it is important to see if benefits accrue to such behaviour. There is obviously a problem with the classification of "politically important individuals." Some degree of arbitrariness must be permitted when

compiling a list of “politically important individuals,” despite the fact that this may detract slightly from the analysis.

Time frame

Political assassination has been a fact of life since ancient times. For reasons of brevity, I cannot include all instances of state-sponsored assassination here. More importantly, the international system in the years 2000 B.C., 1000 A.D., or 1750 was not the same as it is today. Thus, the universe of cases list that I have included below comprises only instances of inter-state assassination in the twentieth century. As this is a recent time period, the lessons revealed by examination of these plots are most relevant today. Though it may be interesting to discuss assassination from the days of the Roman Empire, the international system has changed considerably since that time, and the lessons learned from examining such cases are less applicable to today’s world. The universe of cases is summarized on the next page in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 – Inter-State Assassinations since 1900¹

¹ Source for universe of cases is Harris M. Lentz, *Assassinations and Executions: An Encyclopedia of Political Violence 1865-1986* (Jefferson NC: MacFarland, 1988). The only case that fits the criteria post 1986 is the assassination of Dudayev.

List of Chief Executives

Year	Location	Person
1916	Darfur	Sultan Ali Dinar
1922	Mongolia	Lama Bodo
1934	Yugoslavia	King Alexander I
1934	Austria	Engelbert Dollfuss
1943	Bulgaria	King Boris
1961	Congo	Patrice Lumumba
1961	Dominican Republic	Raphael Trujillo
1963	Vietnam	Ngo Dinh Diem
1963	Togo	Sylvanus Olympio
1964	Bhutan	Jigme P. Dorji
1978	Yemen Arab Republic	Ahmed al-Ghashmi
1978	Afghanistan	Mohammad Daud Khan
1979	Afghanistan	Hafizullah Amin

Assassinations of Politically Prominent Individuals

Year	Location	Person (position in brackets)
1923	Mongolia	Suhe Baato (head Mongolian armed forces)
1924	Mongolia	Danzan Khorlo (head Mongolian armed forces)
1930	Vietnam	Nguyen Thai Hoc (indep. movement leader)
1932	Libya	Sidi Umar Mukhtar (indep. movement leader)
1942	Czechoslovakia	Reinhold Heydrich (Reichsprotektor)
1943	Solomon Islds.	Isoruku Yamamoto (head Japanese Navy)
1943	Belarus	William Kube (Nazi commissioner Russia)
1950	Ukraine	Roman Shukeyvych (resistance leader)
1967	Bolivia	Che Guevara (revolutionary)
1969	South Vietnam	Le Minh Tri (Minister of Education)
1970	Chile	Rene Schneider (head Chilean army)
1973	Cyprus	Hussein Abad al-Chir (resistance leader)
1976	United States	Orlando Letelier (ex-foreign minister - Chile)
1996	Chechnya	Johkar Dudayev (independence leader)

Cases Evaluated in This Study

Criteria for U.S. case selection

Two main criteria were used for selecting U.S. cases from the universe of relevant assassinations listed in Table 2.1. These were: cases where U.S. involvement is generally agreed upon by scholars and the amount of information available. These criteria are discussed in greater detail below.

The first criterion used in selection was to select cases where scholars generally agree upon U.S. involvement.² The subject of assassinations by the U.S. has generated an immense amount of conspiracy theories based upon conjecture and limited evidence. In the process of selecting U.S. cases, I have chosen cases where there is a consensus on U.S. involvement in a plot amongst scholars and other observers. The term “U.S. involvement” does not necessarily mean that a U.S. government agent has committed the assassination. Plots where U.S. complicity, in the form of aiding or abetting local assassins, is agreed upon will be considered.

The second criterion was the Amount of information available.³ Because assassinations are often plotted behind closed doors or occur surreptitiously there can be problems getting enough data on certain cases. It is harder to examine plots where information is limited. Thus, the cases selected here are all chosen partly because there is ample information on the plots. Fortunately, partly due to the investigations of the

² I have tried to select cases that best serve the purpose of this inquiry. This is outlined as a selection criterion by Stephen Van Evera in *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) 78.

³ *Ibid.*, 77-79. Van Evera calls this “data richness.”

Church Committee in the mid 1970's, there is a substantial amount of data on most of the plots where scholars agree on U.S. complicity.

Criteria for the selection of non-U.S. cases

Similarly, in choosing non-U.S. cases, the main criteria are agreement amongst scholars on the involvement of the perpetrator and the amount of information available. Additionally, I have also selected cases based on how much they cases speak to the broader topic of assassination. Because no two states are the same, to answer the broader questions on assassination and to draw more general conclusions, it is important to look at other states' use of assassination. Constrained by time and space, I have attempted to select cases that touch on a number of these broader themes and questions.

The U.S. Cases Selected and Rationale for Selection

Case selection has been done under the guiding rubric of examining as many U.S. cases as possible, so as to draw the broadest conclusions possible about the American use of assassination. Seven cases have been selected, they are:

- 1) The assassination of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto of Japan.
- 2) The assassination of Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic
- 3) The assassination of Patrice Lumumba of Congo.
- 4) The assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem of Vietnam.
- 5) The plots against Fidel Castro of Cuba.
- 6) The attempt on Moammar Qaddafi of Libya.

Omissions

I have omitted three U.S. assassination schemes in which U.S. involvement is substantiated by the historical record. These include the 1916 attempt on Pancho Villa, which I have left out because there is limited information on the case.⁴ I have also declined to include the Phoenix program because it was not specifically an assassination program, but rather an anti-infrastructure program that involved many non-violent components.⁵ The assassination plot that killed Chilean General Rene Schneider has been left out because the nature of U.S. involvement in it is somewhat unclear.⁶

The rationale behind the selection of non-U.S. cases

Two non-U.S. cases have been selected based upon the same reasons as the U.S. cases and the fact that they are revealing about assassination. The cases are:

- 1) Hitler's assassination of Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss.
- 2) The Russian assassination of Chechen President Jokhar Dudayev.

Indicator Selection and Rationale

In selecting indicators to judge the success or failure of each case, I endeavour to look at things that speak not only to individual cases, but also to the broader questions posited implicitly or explicitly in the public debate on assassination.

⁴ One of the few pieces on this case is, "Historians: U.S. Plotted to Poison Villa," *Boston Globe*, 29 May 1988, 13. The plot to poison Villa was conceived by John Pershing, executed by Mexican agents in the pay of the U.S. and failed.

⁵ It is thus harder to assess whether the efficacy of the program was a result of the assassination or the many non-violent aspects of it. Dale Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War* (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1990) is an excellent study on the Phoenix program.

⁶ On this plot see Seymour Hersch, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit, 1983).

This study employs five measures to determine success or failure: 1) Did the mission achieve tactical success?, 2) Did relations improve following the assassination or attempt, 3) Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?, 4) Was there internal upheaval in the target state following the assassination?, 5) Counterfactual questions, specifically what might have happened if the target was or was not eliminated and whether the perpetrating state had other policy options open to it. These are explained in greater detail below

Measure 1) Did the mission achieve tactical success?

Evaluating tactical success is perhaps the easiest test to perform, as it is dichotomous. Simply put, the tactical success of a mission is a yes/no question. I ask was the target leader neutralized? An assassination is judged a success if the answer is yes, a failure if the answer is no.

Measures 2-4 Evaluating Whether Assassination Served the Strategic Interests of the U.S.

Measures 2 to 4 evaluate whether or not the assassination or attempts examined here served the strategic interests of the perpetrator. They are detailed in order below.

Measure 2) Did relations improve following the assassination or attempt?

This test applies to cases where better relations was a goal of the perpetrator. In examining the state of relations between the perpetrating state and the target state I seek

to evaluate whether or not relations improve following an assassination or attempt. The rationale here is that if assassination is a way to ensure relations are better then it does not necessarily have to succeed tactically. Rather, the mere threat of death may induce targeted leadership to change its behaviour to a manner more congruent with the interests of the perpetrator, and in turn, lead to warmer relations or the desired outcome.

Assessing Relations Through Bilateral Agreements Over Time

One way to assess success or failure is to look at bilateral agreements to see whether or not assassination engendered warmer relations between the perpetrator and the target country. Increased agreements generally mean that diplomacy has warmed and that ties have increased. In order to get an accurate picture of relations, I examine the total number of agreements over time. To do this I look at the number of agreements signed in the first five years after a attempt or assassination (this is dubbed “5 year period” in the case studies), then in the six to ten year period (this is dubbed the “10 year period” in the case studies) and finally in the eleven to fifteen year period (dubbed the “15 year period” in the case studies). Measurement over time is important because it provides an illustration of relations with a successor government or governments. For instance, a great number of agreements signed in if the first five years of a successor’s rule would indicate relations have warmed. However, if the six to ten-year period is marked by no agreements than this is an indication that relations have become colder. The assassination cannot be dubbed a success, as relations may have soured and the interests of America – specifically that a loyal successor be put in place – have not been achieved. A state that sponsors an assassination against an enemy leader is clearly hoping

relations with the successor will be better over time, as opposed to just for the first five years of a successor's rule.

Bilateral agreements are a useful way of measuring warmer relations, as they are a quantifiable variable. However, bilateral agreements alone do not provide a satisfying enough explanation of warmer or colder relations following an assassination attempt – more support is needed. In order to buttress my arguments about assassination's ability to foster warmer relations, I also perform some qualitative analysis. Specifically, I look at popular and elite rhetoric of both the target state and the U.S. That is not to say that rhetoric is more important than actions; it is not. However, examining rhetoric allows me to buttress arguments of success or failure, and illustrate gaps between rhetoric and actions.

If elite rhetoric indicates a warming between the target and the perpetrator and is backed up by an increase in bilateral agreements, then clearly there has been a warming of relations. If, however, an increase in bilateral agreements is accompanied by bellicose or inflammatory rhetoric on the part of the target vis-à-vis the U.S. then there may be a gap between rhetoric and action that requires explanation. To further support arguments made, I examine elite scholarly opinion on the relations between target and perpetrator.

How this evaluates the fulfillment of U.S. strategic interests

This test assesses relations following an assassination or attempt. Most of the U.S. cases examined here are from the Cold War epoch. During the Cold War the U.S. was engaged in a battle against communism. A large component of the grand strategy was to bring as many states into the U.S. camp as possible, and to prevent defections or "losses"

to the Communist Bloc. Thus, the U.S. often hoped that the assassination of certain leaders would ensure closer relations and increased loyalty to the U.S. Thus, if we find that relations improved in the aftermath of assassinations this indicates that U.S. strategic interests have been partially served.

The bigger questions and debates that this test speaks to

Leaders as “centres of gravity”

This test touches on the idea of leaders as “centres of gravity,” a concept debated by scholars and discussed in the literature review here. If a leader is the centre of gravity then relations – as measured here by the number of bilateral agreements, rhetoric and elite scholarly opinion – with the target leader’s state should improve with the removal of the problematic leader.

Assassination as a force for fostering better relations even if tactically unsuccessful

If assassination can change the behaviour of a target leader and lead to better relations with the perpetrator even if unsuccessful, then bilateral agreements should increase following an unsuccessful attempt.

Evaluating Unintended Consequences

In evaluating the unintended consequences of assassination attempts I do not claim, as others have, that assassinations will “produce no harmful or unintended consequences.”⁷ Attempting to change the regime of another state, always involves some degree of unforeseen consequences. Further, as states do not have crystal balls,

⁷ Hosmer, 9.

foreseeing harmful consequences is at minimum very hard and at maximum impossible. Moreover, the unintended consequences that assassinations produce are not necessarily all bad. Given the fact that there are always some unintended consequences, and that some of these may be harmful, it is important to assess these in the context of a cost-benefit analysis. Though an assassination may produce harmful by-products these need to be weighed against the benefits that accrue to the perpetrator. To judge an assassination as an abject failure just because it produces some unintended consequences is to make “success” impossible. Thus, when I measure unintended consequences I weigh the bad against the good and then render judgement on the mission. That said, several more specific tests are elucidated below, to help pass judgement.

Measure 3) Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

When seeking to evaluate the success or failure of an assassination attempt, it is important to examine what the successor regime looked like following the elimination of the target. If a successor espouses policies that are congruent with U.S. interests, or initiates programs that support U.S. interests then to some degree the mission has succeeded. However, if the successor proves problematic to the U.S. the mission has failed. One indicator of whether or not the successor is ‘problematic’ is whether or not the U.S. has to return to the targeted country to oust or engineer the removal of the successor. Another is if the U.S. withdraws its support from the successor. If the new leadership of a targeted state is no better than its predecessor and has to be removed by either overt or covert action then the initial mission (that which put the successor leadership in power) cannot be considered a success. Further, expending manpower

and/or resources to mount another campaign is clearly not in the interests of the U.S. as these could be used to solve other problems and further interests in other areas. If no action against successor leadership is ever needed then the mission has been a success.⁸ Given this criterion, this test only applies to missions with tactical success.

How this test measures the fulfillment of U.S. strategic interests

In assassinating an enemy leader, the U.S. clearly hoped that a successor would demonstrate more loyalty to the U.S. If the U.S. returns to depose the successor leadership then assassination cannot be said to have produced leadership, more loyal to the U.S., and has thus not served the strategic interests of the U.S.

The bigger question that this test speaks to

Leaders as "centres of gravity"

If problems with a target state are a result of the leader, eliminating the leader should resolve the trouble. If a successor is equally problematic and needs to be removed as well, then clearly the original target was not the root problem. If the perpetrator needs to return to the target state to remove the successor the idea that original target was the cause of difficulties is wrong. If the elimination of the original target does not require further action (i.e. the successor does not have to be removed) than the notion of leaders as centres of gravity is well founded.

⁸ If there is a desire to return to eliminate the successor, and this is somehow not possible due to conditions on the ground the mission will be judged a failure.

Measure 4) Was there internal upheaval in the target state following the assassination?

In assessing this test, I ask whether or not the targeted state experienced internal upheaval following a successful assassination attempt. Ideally, those who plan assassinations hope that the successor regime's assumption of power will be as "surgical" as possible. If U.S. troops have to be committed to propping up a successor then the mission cannot be called wholly successful, as an implicit aim of assassinating the original target was to bring about a government loyal to the U.S. that exercised power in a stable environment.

This test is not totally dichotomous and some degree of deduction is required to determine which missions were successful and which failed. This is because one must expect some degree of resistance and upheaval following the removal of a state's leadership. That this occurs is not necessarily incongruent with the perpetrating state's interests. For example, internal upheaval may permit the successor to purge the state of any enemy presence. What really determines failure is if the perpetrator gets more than it bargains for. That is, if a large amount of U.S. resources need to be deployed in the targeted country to quell upheaval.

How this test speaks to the fulfillment of U.S. strategic interests

In assassinating an enemy leader, the U.S. clearly hoped that the successor regime would exercise power in a stable environment. If excessive U.S. resources and time have to be diverted to quelling an internal upheaval then the goal of stability has not been met. Thus assassination cannot be said to have advanced U.S. interests.

The bigger debate that this test speaks to

Leaders as “centres of gravity.”

If problems are the result of the presence of problematic leadership then when a leader is eliminated there should not be a significant amount of internal upheaval following an assassination. Though some internal upheaval can be expected it should not be long lasting if the leader is the “centre of gravity” and the key to the existence of a group or movement. If there is prolonged internal upheaval after a leader’s death, this indicates that a movement or a group has continued to exist and that the leader was not a centre of gravity, or the key to the group or movement’s survival.

Measure 5) Counterfactual Questions

The fifth measure employed seeks answers to counterfactual questions, specifically: What might have happened if the U.S. did, or did not, eliminate the targeted leader? Was assassination the only option, or best option, available to U.S. policymakers? When evaluating the various operations undertaken it is critical to ask whether they were absolutely necessary. Doing so illustrates the strengths or flaws in the logic employed by those who ordered or were complicit with assassination plots.

The bigger question and debate this test speaks to

Is assassination a better way to deal with problematic leadership than overt war or diplomacy? By asking what might have happened had the perpetrator killed the target in a failed attempt, or had not killed the target in a successful attempt this study goes to the heart of the debate on assassination. If other policy options would have likely led to the

same outcomes or created better situations, then assassination's utility is called into question.

Conclusion

To make broad statements it is important to examine as many cases as possible. The main criteria for selection are general agreement upon the perpetrator and the availability of source material on the cases. In selecting other states cases I am constrained by space available here. Thus I have attempted to pick cases that speak to broader questions on assassination. The next chapter examines U.S.-sponsored assassination plots that achieved tactical success.

Chapter 3 – Cases of Tactical Success: The Assassinations Yamamoto, Lumumba, Trujillo, and Diem

Introduction

This chapter details four cases where U.S.-sponsored assassination plots achieved tactical success. The assassination of Admiral Isoroku is the only U.S. sponsored case that is rated as wholly successful by this investigation. The case is also one carried out in wartime by the U.S. and not against an enemy head of state. The rationale and policy goals underpinning this assassination were limited, as the U.S. sought only to change the course of the naval war in the Pacific theatre, not to overhaul a country's leadership. The assassination of Patrice Lumumba is rated as a partial success. This is due to the fact that the U.S. did not have to devote an overly large amount of resources to the Congo following the assassination, and the fact that America did not have to return to the Congo to overthrow Lumumba's successor Mobutu. The assassination is not rated as wholly successful because relations with Mobutu were periodically strained and because of the fact that the U.S. might have had other options open to it than assassination.

The second half of the chapter examines two cases that are rated by this investigation as strategic failures. I argue that the Trujillo case was a failure due to the fact that Trujillo's successors did not prove to be more amenable to U.S. interests. Second, the internal upheaval in the Dominican Republic necessitated a large U.S. resource commitment, indicating that Trujillo's successors did not exercise power in a more stable environment. These facts and the reality that other policy options besides assassination were open to the U.S. mean that it impossible to say that the assassination significantly furthered U.S. interests. I then argue that the Diem case was a failure based upon the fact that the U.S. had to engineer the ouster of Diem's successor, the

assassination resulted in growing U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and did not create conditions that helped the U.S. better prosecute the Vietnam War. Moreover, the U.S. also had other options in terms of dealing with Diem.

I begin by discussing the Yamamoto case and then evaluate the Lumumba assassination, the Trujillo assassination, and end with the Diem case.

The Assassination of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, 1943

The Yamamoto assassination helped achieve U.S. policy goals in the Pacific theatre in World War II. It did not harm future relations with Japan and did not impede U.S. actions in the Pacific theatre. By taking out the Japanese Navy's centre of gravity, the U.S. laid the groundwork for eventual victory in the Pacific. The case is instructive about when assassination can further strategic interests, and attests to the ability of assassination to achieve limited aims.

I begin by detailing the rationale and policy goals of the assassination. I then briefly detail the plot. Next, I evaluate the case. I conclude by detailing what this plot says about the broader debate on assassination

Rationale and Policy Goals

On December 7, 1941, Japan launched a massive assault on the U.S. naval base in Pearl Harbor.¹ The mastermind behind this attack was the much-revered Japanese

¹ On the attack on Pearl Harbour see George MacGregor Waller, *Pearl Harbour: Roosevelt and the Coming of War* (Boston: Heath, 1965). On U.S.-Japanese relations prior to the attack see Abraham Ben-Zvi, *The Illusion of Deterrence: The Roosevelt Presidency and the Origins of the Pacific War* (Boulder: Westview, 1987).

Admiral, Isoroku Yamamoto.² The surprise attack, launched before talks between the U.S. and Japan had concluded, left an indelible imprint upon the collective American psyche. By orchestrating the Pearl Harbour attack, Yamamoto ensured himself a special place in the annals of American history.³ It is possible to deductively surmise that revenge was a motive for killing Yamamoto, but President Roosevelt, who ordered the targeting of Yamamoto's airplane, took that secret to his grave if indeed it was the chief rationale.⁴

A more probable reason for killing Yamamoto was that he was a brilliant war strategist. At the beginning of the war in the Pacific, the U.S. commander, Admiral Nimitz, said that Yamamoto "was the biggest danger he faced."⁵ But, the death of Yamamoto was useful in a broader strategic sense as well. He was highly respected in Japan, especially so in Japanese naval circles.⁶ Thus the hope was that by killing Yamamoto the U.S. would eliminate a brilliant strategist and pave the way to securing victory in the Naval war in the Pacific.

The Plot

² For a short bio on Yamamoto see, Naval Historical Centre, *Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto 1884-1943*. Document online, Accessed 10 March 2003. Available from: <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-for/japan/japrs-xz/i-yamto.htm>

³ Edwin Hoyt, *Yamamoto: The Man Who Planned the Attack on Pearl Harbour* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 132-133.

⁴ John Condon. "Bringing Down Yamamoto." *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 1 November 1990, 86-90.

⁵ Hoyt, *Yamamoto*, 249.

⁶ As one observer says, "Neither the disaster at Midway nor the shock of the retreat at Guadalcanal shook the confidence of the Imperial Navy or the Japanese people in Yamamoto's leadership. He was still the object of fanatical loyalty." John Deane Potter, *Yamamoto: The Man Who Menaced America* (New York: Viking, 1965), 301.

In the spring and summer of 1943, Japan was in the midst of a heavy fight for supremacy in the Pacific theatre.⁷ As a seasoned warrior, Yamamoto knew the value of morale and thought his predecessor had been remiss in not visiting the troops stationed on the front lines at Rabaul in the South Pacific.⁸ Thus he decided to pay the troops a visit and a communiqué was sent out by the Japanese Navy to all concerned parties detailing Yamamoto's itinerary. Elements within the Imperial Navy were appalled by this development and feared that the U.S. had broken the coding system used. Despite repeated warnings, Yamamoto and his Chief of Staff departed on April 18, 1943.⁹ Shortly after its departure, Yamamoto's plane was ambushed by American fighters that eliminated his fighter escort and then shot down his plane, killing him in the process.¹⁰

Assessing the Assassination

Was the Assassination a Tactical Success?

Yes, the assassination achieved tactical success via a direct attack by U.S. forces on Yamamoto's plane.

Did relations improve following the assassination?

This test is less applicable to this case, as it does not speak to the goals of the assassination. The U.S. did not hope Yamamoto's death would bring about warmer

⁷ Battles took place the Bismarck Sea in March and Yamamoto order the "I Operation" to eliminate Southwest Pacific enemy airfields on April 7. Paul S. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy 1941-1945* (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1978), 267.

⁸ Stanley Falk, "The Ambush of Admiral Yamamoto," *Navy* 6 (Apr. 1963), 32-34..

⁹ Hiroyuki Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral* (New York: Kodansha America, 1982), 372.

¹⁰ Burke Davis, *Get Yamamoto* (New York: Random House, 1969), 1. Earlier in the war Yamamoto had told a friend that he sensed he would not live to see the end of the war. Edwin Hoyt, *Three Military Leaders: Togo, Yamamoto, Yamashita* (New York: Kodansha International, 1993), 113.

relations. Instead the hope was that gains would accrue to the U.S. campaign in the Pacific theatre. This goal was met

Yamamoto's death was a crushing blow to the Japanese Navy. As one expert says:

Had he lived, the Japanese naval war effort would have been pursued far more vigorously than it was after April 1943. Yamamoto knew the deficiencies of his aircraft and the improved version of the Zero fighter, which was a far closer match for the Grumman F6F, would have been rushed into production. Also, his staff had made a plan for a carrier attack on the Panama Canal. After his death, however, Japan's naval stance became defensive. Yamamoto was the only Japanese naval commander with any cogent plans for the prosecution of war.¹¹

Stephen Hosmer cites this case as "the only successful U.S.-conducted or — orchestrated elimination of a major enemy leader."¹² Shortly thereafter, perhaps because he was such a skilled strategist or maybe because his death damaged morale, Japan's resistance in the Pacific theatre started to wilt.¹³ By taking out a popular military leader and skilled war planner the U.S. improved its position in the Pacific theatre and the Japanese Naval campaign was hindered. U.S. goals were met and interests were fulfilled. For this reason the assassination is judged a success.

Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

The death of Yamamoto did not bring about leadership that was stronger or more committed to prosecuting the Naval War in the Pacific theatre. In light of this, the assassination is judged a success.

¹¹ Hoyt, *Three Military Leaders*, 114. Hoyt's analysis is backed up by the fact that Japan suffered heavy losses in the next three Pacific theatre naval battles at Kula Gulf, Kolombangara and the disaster at Vella Gulf. Dull, 274-279.

¹² Hosmer, 40.

¹³ Agawa, 372-374.

Were there any unintended consequences in terms of upheaval in the Pacific Theatre or Japan?

Rather than spurring greater resistance or creating a surge in anti-American sentiment, the death of Yamamoto was a psychological blow to the Japanese. In a micro-sense the death of Yamamoto did not hinder American ability to act in the Pacific theatre, in fact it increased it.¹⁴ Because this assassination did not harden the resolve of the Japanese Navy or lead to a tougher fight for the U.S. in the Pacific theatre, it is judged to have furthered U.S. interests and is thus a success.

¹⁴ Dull 274-298.

Counterfactual Questions

What if the U.S. had not killed Yamamoto? In this case, the interest of the U.S. was to further its campaign in the Pacific by eliminating a brilliant tactician who was also a source of morale. Expert opinion and the events following Yamamoto's death indicate that it was a major blow to the Japanese war effort and that policy goals were realized.¹⁵ The U.S. eventually acquired and used atomic weapons against Japan, thus it would probably have won the war in spite of Yamamoto. That fact does not detract from the benefits that accrued to the U.S. naval effort in the Pacific theatre. In this, the killing of Yamamoto must be seen as a policy victory and is thus judged a success.

What this reveals about assassinations

What does this case reveal about conditions necessary for tactical success?

This case represents the only example of U.S. personnel successfully carrying out an assassination. That it occurred in wartime and with the help of excellent intelligence data – the intercepted cable transmission – are important factors.

What does this case reveal about the idea of leaders as “centres of gravity”?

Yamamoto's death and the subsequent American victory in the Pacific conflict present a problem for those who posit that assassinations have little affect on outcomes.¹⁶ Yamamoto was a critical figure to the Japanese naval campaign in the Pacific, and his death was followed by several battle defeats for the Japanese Navy. Expert opinion

¹⁵ See footnote 14. The U.S. won several battles decisively following his death.

¹⁶ Murray Havens et al, 149, make this claim. For another example of this argument see Barringer, 253.

indicates that Yamamoto was a revered figure and a source of excellent military wisdom. His death was by no means the only reason for American victory, as American possession of the A-bomb would have forced any sensible foe without atomic weapons to capitulate. However, despite the certainty of an eventual American victory over Japan, subsequent battles and the eventual defeat of the Japanese Navy demonstrate that by taking out Yamamoto benefits accrued to the American campaign. This assassination shows that in some cases brilliant leaders can represent a “centre of gravity.” While Yamamoto was not the key to his country’s survival, he was perhaps the key factor in the navy’s continued prosecution of war in the Pacific.

Assassination, in this case, achieved the limited aims the prosecutors set out – specifically, it eliminated a brilliant strategist and changed paved the way for naval victory in the Pacific. Unlike plots against heads of state, the U.S. did not seek to change the political landscape of a country via assassination. Instead the assassination did what it was supposed to – damage the morale of the Imperial Navy and pave the road to U.S. naval supremacy in the Pacific.

The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba – Congo, 1961

On January 17, 1961, Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected leader of the former Belgian colony of Congo was put on a plane to the Katanga region, which was controlled by his enemy Moise Tshombe. Upon arrival Lumumba was killed.¹⁷ In this section, I argue that the killing of Lumumba and eventual ascension of Mobutu was

¹⁷ Jonathon Kwitny, *Endless Enemies* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1984), 69-71. A fuller account of Lumumba’s demise is Ludo De Vite, *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba*, trans. Ann Wright and Renee Ferby (New York: Verso, 2001). De Vite also implicates the Belgian government in Lumumba’s demise. However, whether they were complicit does not mean that this case is not worth examining here, as the U.S. also wished Lumumba’s removal and actively sought it.

partially successful at furthering U.S. interests.¹⁸ First, Mobutu periodically enjoyed warm relations with the U.S. Second, despite some upheaval and the necessity of some U.S. resource commitment, the internal upheaval did not necessitate a massive commitment of U.S. resources. However, I argue that the removal of Lumumba was not necessary and that the U.S. could have achieved its goals through other means. Finally, this case partially calls into question the idea of leaders as centres of gravity, as Lumumba's followers continued to fight following his death.

Below I examine the rationale that underpinned the U.S. desire to remove and tacitly support the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. I then detail the plot of the assassination. I then apply the indicators of success or failure to this case. I conclude by discussing what this case says about the broader debates on assassination.

Rationale and Policy Goals

Patrice Lumumba, who was elected PM of Congo in May 1960 worried U.S. policymakers for several reasons. First, he had a tenuous hold on power. In the election that brought him to high office his party only managed to capture 35 of 137 seats in Parliament, hardly a landslide victory.¹⁹ Lumumba knew, prior to the election, that a resounding majority was likely to prove elusive for any party. Thus a considerable amount of bargaining and compromise had to take place; the bottom line was that

¹⁸ Mobutu did not officially "ascend" to the Presidency until 1965, but was in a situation of de facto power sharing with President Kasavubu, as Mobutu controlled large tracts of the army. He later dispensed with Kasavubu in 1965. Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant* (Washington: The American University Press, 1993), 11.

¹⁹ For a list and brief biography of the key players in Lumumba's government see Thomas Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1972), 105-117.

coalitions with disparate interests were necessary to ascend to power. This reality forced Lumumba to ally himself with certain groups that the U.S. was concerned about.²⁰

Moreover, U.S. policymakers were worried about the stability of the country and the Lumumba regime. The thinking, in a familiar pattern, was that if the government could not ensure stability it would be ousted from power and replaced by communists. American policymakers thought their worries had been vindicated as rioting, looting, and general disarray marred independence in the Congo.²¹ Then, on July 11, 1960, Moïse Tshombe, leader of the Luanda tribe, declared the mineral-rich province of Katanga that he controlled independent. Lumumba proclaimed this unacceptable but there was little he could do. He attempted to solicit UN support and when this failed, he threatened to seek the support of the USSR to quell the dissent.²² This final action incurred the ire of U.S. policymakers. At this juncture there was an intense amount of cable traffic between Washington and the U.S. embassy in Congo. Allen Dulles, then CIA director, thought that Lumumba, “threatened the world.”²³

Further doubts existed about where Lumumba stood on the political spectrum. Shortly after he assumed power he proclaimed that Congo would have a neutralist foreign policy and began to reveal that he was in favour of Pan-Africanism. U.S. embassy reports said at the time: “Lumumba is an opportunist not a communist. His final decision as to what camp he will belong to will not be made by him but imposed on him by outside forces.”²⁴ U.S. Ambassador Claire Timberlake called for a coup against Lumumba in

²⁰ Kwitny, 54.

²¹ Howard M. Epstein, *Revolt in the Congo 1960-64* (New York: Facts on File, 1965), 5-25.

²² In response Nikita Khrushchev said that, “The people of the Congo want to establish genuine order, to expel colonials. The colonial people fighting for their freedom have our sympathies.” *Ibid.*, 16.

²³ Kwitny, 57. Dulles also once described Lumumba as “Castro or worse.”

²⁴ Madeleine Kalb, *The Congo Cables* (New York: MacMillan, 1982), 61.

August 1960. To summarize the goals, the U.S. hoped to gain an ally and prevent the spread of communism and ensure that the ally exercised power in a stable environment.²⁵

The Plot

There were two plots to kill Patrice Lumumba. The first involved direct U.S. attempts to poison him. The second attempt, which was ultimately successful, employed the use proxy groups.

Act 1: The U.S. tries to poison Lumumba.

In his campaign speeches in 1960, John F. Kennedy linked the situation in Cuba to the one in Congo. He claimed that the Eisenhower Administration was not doing enough vis-à-vis the Soviet threat. Though the Administration had been following the situation in Congo for some time, Kennedy's speeches infuriated some Administration members and increased the pressure to act.²⁶

In mid-August of 1960, CIA scientists found a way to poison cigars for Fidel Castro. At around the same time, a similar type of poison was developed for Lumumba. When a CIA scientist arrived in Leopoldville in late September he told station chief Larry Devlin that he had been instructed to see if it was possible to slip poison into anything that Lumumba might ingest (food, a drink, etc.).²⁷ Devlin later told the Church Committee that he had "an emotional reaction of great surprise" when told about this plan. He said, "I must have pointed out that this wasn't a common tactic....Never in my

²⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?* (Boston: University Press of America, 1991), 70-71.

²⁶ Havens et al , 127-130. For more info on the plan and rationale see, Thomas Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), 265-306.

²⁷ Kalb, 129.

training had I ever heard of such references to such methods...I looked upon it [the plan] as a pretty wild scheme professionally.”²⁸

Despite his doubts Devlin found an agent who was willing to attempt the mission. After an October 7, 1960 meeting with the agent Devlin was seemingly behind the plan. However, on October 17 Devlin reported that his agent had been unable to “penetrate Lumumba’s entourage.” He then recommended that Lumumba be liquidated by a sniper’s bullet. This too failed to materialize, largely because Washington was unreceptive to the idea.²⁹

Act 2: The CIA supports domestic opponents

Prior to scrapping the poisoning plan, on October 6, 1960, Devlin was told that the CIA planned to arm and train anti-Lumumba groups. This decision, and the poisoning plot, came after President Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba as Prime Minister on September 5, 1960.³⁰ Both plots appear to have stemmed from the belief Lumumba “was almost as dangerous in opposition as in office.”³¹ In light of this fear, Mobutu arrested Lumumba on September 12, 1960. However, at the behest of the UN mission in Congo, Lumumba was given sanctuary at UN headquarters in Congo. It was at the headquarters that the CIA poison plot was to occur.³²

Lumumba made a foolish decision to sneak out of the UN mission on November 27, 1960. Devlin aided Mobutu in setting up roadblocks to look for Lumumba. He was

²⁸ Devlin quoted in *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁹ Devlin quoted in *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁰ Kasavubu announced he was revoking the appointment of Lumumba and setting up a new government under Joseph Ileo. As a result of the ensuing problems the U.N. closed the airports. Catherine Hoskins, *The Congo: A Chronology of Events January 1960-December 1961* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 5.

³¹ Nutter, 113.

³² Kwitny, 67-68

quickly discovered and handed over to Mobutu.³³ On January 13, 1961, a pro-Lumumba army mutiny drove Mobutu to act. He decided to deliver Lumumba to his enemies and sent for a plane that would take him to the Katanga province and his arch-nemesis Moïse Tshombe. The plane ride marked the end for Lumumba. Though the Church Committee found that the CIA was not complicit in the death of Lumumba, Larry Devlin claimed he “quite clearly knew” of the decision to send Lumumba to Katanga and the implications of it.³⁴ He went further, saying that “...once we learned he had been sent to Katanga (we knew) his goose was cooked, because Tshombe hated him and looked on him as a danger and a rival.”³⁵

Assessing the Assassination

Was the Assassination a Tactical Success?

The assassination was achieved tactical success. It was carried out by proxy forces against a leader from a weak democracy.

Did relations improve following the assassination?

Five-year period

During the first five years after Lumumba’s death the U.S. and Congo signed twenty-three bilateral agreements. Of these, twenty pertained to trade in agricultural

³³ Hoskins, 8.

³⁴ Kalb, 192.

³⁵ Devlin said this to the Church Committee in 1975. U.S. Senate, 50n.

commodities, two to investment guarantees and one to military assistance to the Congolese government.³⁶ Indicating that relations warmed in this period

Ten-year period

During the six to ten year period following Lumumba's death twelve agreements were signed, representing a decrease. Eight of the agreements pertained to trade in agricultural commodities, one to air transport, one to remote satellite data and one to the establishment of a Peace Corps program. In 1971, just after Mobutu consolidated his hold on power, the U.S. and Congo reached another agreement on military assistance, showing that relations were warm.³⁷ This period, ending in 1971, saw fighting in the Congo, as Mobutu tried to consolidate his hold on power, the fact that a war was taking place between Mobutu and rebel forces partially explains the decrease in bilateral agreements during this period.

Fifteen-year period

In the early phases of the eleven to fifteen year period following Lumumba's death the U.S. and Mobutu agreed to another military assistance deal.³⁸ There were two other minor agreements related to agricultural commodity imports signed during this period and one agreement on satellite data exchange.³⁹ This represents a significant decrease that needs some explanation.

³⁶ Igor Kavass, *United States Treaty Index, 1776-1990, Consolidation Vol. 3, 1998 Revision, TIAS 4722 to TIAS 7987* (Buffalo: William Hein, 1998) 47, 79, 98-99, 103, 111, 119, 129, 161-162, 167, 176, 184, 202, 204, 213-214, 231, 249, 261, 284.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 311, 345, 360, 362, 392, 425, 429, 473, 477, 537, 554.

³⁸ The deal was concluded 7 February 1972. *Ibid.*, 580.

³⁹ Igor Kavass, *United States Treaty Index, 1776-1990, Consolidation Vol. 3 1998, TIAS 7988 – TIAS 8400* (Buffalo: William Hein, 1998), 34, 96, 140.

Elite scholarly opinion indicates that Mobutu was a friend for the initial years following Lumumba's death.⁴⁰ In return for military and economic aid, he supported U.S. positions in international forums and created a liberal investment climate in Zaire.⁴¹ However in the early 1970's he sought warmer relations with Russia. He became involved in the non-aligned movement, visited China in 1973 and North Korea in 1974. While these developments worried the U.S., there was considerable consternation in Washington when, in 1975, Mobutu expelled U.S. Ambassador Deane Hinton.⁴² Under President Jimmy Carter, the U.S. and Zaire experienced a tumultuous relationship, in large part because of Carter's preoccupation with human rights (and Mobutu's dismal record in that area). This changed when Ronald Reagan took power, as he was very impressed with Mobutu's anti-communist initiatives.⁴³ Under the administration of George H.W. Bush, amicable relations continued: Bush, at one point praising Mobutu as "one of Africa's most experienced statesmen" for his role in negotiating the short-lived ceasefire in Angola in the early 1990s.⁴⁴ Mobutu and the Clinton Administration were not allies. This is due in part, to the post-Cold War context, wherein the U.S. sought to undermine Islamic extremism in Sudan. Mobutu was an ally of Sudan and an enemy of Clinton era U.S. allies such as Uganda and Rwanda.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Rhetoric also backs this up. Kennedy said to Mobutu "General if it hadn't been for you the whole thing would have collapsed and the Communists would have taken over." After this conversation Mobutu asked for a private plane as a gift and got it. Kelly, 2.

⁴¹ Schatzberg, 63. He also spoke out against various Soviet actions, for example, condemning the 1968 Soviet incursion into Czechoslovakia in the presence of the new Soviet Ambassador to Zaire.

⁴² Ibid., 64-65. Mobutu's justification for expelling Hinton was that the CIA was plotting a coup against him. There is, however, no reliable evidence of this.

⁴³ Ibid., 66-67. Mobutu made a habit of expelling Soviet diplomats from Kinshasa. He also sent troops to fight leftists in Angola. Kelly, 237.

⁴⁴ George H.W. Bush, quoted in Ibid., 70.

⁴⁵ Tom Turner, "Is the End in Sight," *Conflict Watch*. Document online. Accessed on 25 December 2002. Available at: http://www.selfdetermine.org/crisiswatch/0208congo_body.htm

After Lumumba's death, Congo did not defect to the Communist Bloc and generally enjoyed good relations with the U.S. In this regard, the relationship was a success and served U.S. strategic interests. However, there were periodic problems due to Mobutu's flirtations with the Soviets and evinced by the expulsion of Ambassador Deane Hinton. Thus the case is judged is one of partial success.

Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

Mobutu did not solidly seize power until 1965, but as a army commander he was constantly in contact with the CIA, particularly Kinshasa station chief Lawrence Devlin.⁴⁶ It was clear to close observers of the Congo's political scene that the CIA "was at least involved" in Mobutu's seizure of power.⁴⁷ As the U.S. never had to return to the Congo to dislodge Mobutu on this dimension this measure is could be deemed a success.

Were there any unintended consequences in terms of internal upheaval in the Congo?

Following the assassination, there was a pro-Lumumba rebel uprising, which required the attention and resources of the U.S.⁴⁸ However, as stated several times, the fact that instability followed an assassination is not unexpected, nor unprecedented. Nor is instability and the fact that it required some U.S. attention, sufficient grounds to judge the assassination of Lumumba a failure in this context. By 1970, Mobutu had a firm grip on power and the uprising led by Lumumba's ally Antoine Gizenga had been quelled.

⁴⁶ Kelly, 62.

⁴⁷ Stephen R. Weissman, "CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences," *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1979), 273.

⁴⁸ Most initial military action was carried out by the United Nations and not the U.S. Findlay, 1-35.

Furthermore, the nature of the U.S. resources deployed in the late 1960s to fight the rebels in Northeastern Congo makes it hard to judge this variable unfavourably. The fighting in Northeast Congo was largely done by Cuban exiles on the American side and Cubans loyal to Castro on the rebel side. In a Cuban versus Cuban proxy war, the U.S. was fortunate not to have to commit an overly large amount of its own troops to the short war.⁴⁹ On this dimension the assassination could be considered a success⁵⁰

Counterfactual Questions

Was it Necessary to Kill Lumumba? The main goal in removing Lumumba was to prevent a communist takeover in Congo. As with the case of Raphael Trujillo, the important question to ask is whether the targeted leader would have fallen from power. If so, would that leader have been succeeded by communists?

Lumumba was, as the U.S. embassy stated, an opportunist. In a position such as his, leading a country as poor as his, opportunism is a natural reaction. Lumumba did not totally shut the Soviets out, even in the beginning of his tenure as PM. However, he never

⁴⁹ In this proxy war, Che Guevara encountered Laurent Kabila the future ruler of post-Mobutu Zaire. Guevara scorned Kabila's ability to fight and command troops. Chris McGreal, "Congo's 'Saviour' has brought only bloodshed," *The Guardian*, 17 January 2001, A12.

⁵⁰ The internal upheaval following the Lumumba assassination was not necessarily incongruent with U.S. interests. However, the problems following the demise of Mobutu have certainly been problematic. In May of 1997, after an attack led by his archrival Laurent Kabila and backed by Rwandan army forces, Mobutu fled Zaire. The state has since descended into chaos and the war, claiming over 2.5 million lives. Moreover, due to Mobutu's kleptocratic leadership, the country is bankrupt and hope is bleak. While there was little U.S. resource commitment following the assassination of Lumumba, it is clearly going to be needed (from some source) as a result of Mobutu's tyranny. Ibid. An excellent, if dated, analysis of the problems wrought by Mobutu on Zaire and Zaire on the world community is Jonathan Kapstein, *Zaire: Continuing World Headache*, (Braamfontein, South Africa: South African Institute for International Affairs, 1980), 1-14.

showed any love for communist dogma or governance.⁵¹ He was a nationalist, but that is different than being a communist.⁵²

Even if one assumes Lumumba to be “pro-Soviet” that did not necessarily equate to hostility towards America. There is little evidence to support the notion, held by U.S. policymakers that Lumumba was, as Allen Dulles once said, “another Castro,” and destined to lead Congo into the Communist camp. Even if Lumumba had done this, the U.S. was able to engage other African countries sympathetic to communism. For instance, in pro-communist Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah, the U.S. was able to engage in trade that was beneficial to both countries.⁵³ The analogy of Ghana is also instructive in terms of Soviet military posturing. After the pro-communist Nkrumah’s overthrow, the Soviets did not make any military manoeuvres in Ghana, this despite the fact that eight Soviet citizens were killed during the anti-Nkrumah coup.⁵⁴ It is an inferential leap to say, unequivocally, that the Soviets would not have moved into Congo or successfully destabilized Lumumba, but other similar examples of potential Soviet expansionism did not result in Soviet military deployments or attempts to overthrow the governments in power.

If we assume that Lumumba was leaning towards the USSR and that he sought Soviet influence it is not certain that U.S. intervention would have been the best policy.

⁵¹ Interestingly on April 26, 1962 Allen Dulles, CIA Director, admitted that the U.S. had “overrated the Soviet danger in the Congo.” Kelly, 247.

⁵² Rene Lemarchand, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 145-167. Lumumba’s views on Africa and Congo are readily available in Patrice Lumumba, *Congo, My Country* (New York: Praeger, 1962). Throughout the book he stresses the need for true independence and the avoidance of a return to colonial rule.

⁵³ The U.S. Ghanaian relationship was not just one of trade; other bilateral programs took place as well. Kenneth Heger, “Race Relations in the United States and American Cultural and Information Programs in Ghana 1957-1966,” *Prologue* (Winter 1999). Document online. Accessed 9 March 2003. Available from: http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/winter_1999_us_and_ghana_1957_1966_1.html

⁵⁴ Kwitny, 61.

The analogous case is Nigeria, where, in the face of a massive civil war between 1967 and 1970, the U.S. did not intervene.⁵⁵ Communist forces might have emerged victorious and gained control of Nigeria's massive oil and gas reserves. However, instead of taking sides the U.S. simply provided humanitarian assistance. By the war's end the U.S. had endeared itself to Nigeria, and was able to tap into the oil and gas available.⁵⁶

Lumumba was a nationalist and wanted Congolese affairs to be decided by the Congolese – perhaps naively, he believed this could be achieved. Nonetheless, it was the U.S. who initially spurred on the parties who caused trouble for Lumumba. Incipient democracy is never particularly stable, but at that time there was not much reason to believe that Lumumba was going to be succeeded by communists or become one himself.

On the whole, though it is difficult to argue that Lumumba had to go, it is clear that the U.S. had an easier relationship with Mobutu. The Congo's descent into chaos post-Mobutu does indicate that a strong ruler can preserve stability in a country with many ethnic groups and some hostile neighbours. Yes, Lumumba became a martyr and a symbol for all that is immoral about American foreign policy, however, the ascension of Mobutu gave the U.S. a trustworthy, if morally repugnant, ally.

Were there other policy options other than assassination? Appeasing Lumumba through favourable trade agreements and or other such measures was never tried. Lumumba never enjoyed a moment of stability from the time the Congo became an independent country.⁵⁷ Perhaps the U.S. could have curried favour with Lumumba if they had helped ensure a peaceful transfer of power and aided the nascent democracy. This

⁵⁵ Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe, *The Biafra War: Nigeria and the Aftermath* (Lewiston NY: E. Mellon Press, 1990), 3-4.

⁵⁶ Kwitny, 63-65.

⁵⁷ Havens et al, 133. According to these scholars, this is largely because the U.S., Belgians and Congolese never made any real preparations for independence.

was never discussed, as the U.S. assumed Lumumba's nationalism and desire for a truly independent Congo would quickly lead to a communist takeover.⁵⁸ U.S. thinking can be called presumptuous, given that Lumumba desire was for an African federation.⁵⁹ Perhaps if the U.S. had not been assuming and adopted a more conciliatory posture Lumumba would have been a U.S. ally.⁶⁰

The assassination of Lumumba may not have been a necessity, however, the U.S. did acquire a loyal ally in Mobutu. Still, support for dictators has caused U.S. policymakers some problems. There is also no doubt that Mobutu's rule bankrupted an already poor country and led to upheaval following his demise. Despite acquiring a loyal ally, the U.S. supported a despot who plunged a country into despair.⁶¹ For these reasons, on this dimension, it is impossible to rate this test as a total success.

What This Reveals About Assassinations

What does this case reveal about conditions necessary for tactical success?

The assassination supports arguments made about proxies have a greater chance of success and that leaders lacking in extensive personal security apparatuses are more susceptible to assassination.

⁵⁸ However, as Richard Bissell, the CIA's operations chief said, "...he [the President] regarded Lumumba as I did and a lot of other people did: as a mad dog who was doing nothing constructive and potentially most destructive, and he wanted the problem dealt with." John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA* (Boulder: Westview, 1986), 342. See also De Vite, 48-49.

⁵⁹ Colin Legum, foreword in Patrice Lumumba *Congo, My Country* (New York: Praeger, 1962), xxvii.

⁶⁰ Interestingly the U.S. viewed Lumumba as an opportunist, but never tried to appease him.

⁶¹ Sanford Ungar sums up the U.S.'s dilemma with Mobutu succinctly, saying "The vexing issue for American policymakers is that having helped build Mobutu such a behemoth, the U.S. has nowhere else to turn. Ungar quoted in Kelly, 243.

What does this case reveal about the idea of leaders as “centres of gravity”?

Proponents of employing assassination as a tool of foreign policy assume that leaders are “centers of gravity,” and that, if you remove the leader, you remove the problem.

The case of Lumumba partially supports arguments about leaders as centres of gravity and partially calls this notion into question. Relations grew warmer between the U.S. and Congo following the assassination, and the U.S. did not have to take action to remove Mobutu, both facts support the notion that by removing Lumumba the U.S. solved its problems. However, the upheaval following Lumumba’s death indicates that elements that supported him continued to resist after his death, meaning that his presence was not necessary to the survival and continued resolve of his support base.

The Assassination of Raphael Trujillo – Dominican Republic, 1961

The assassination of Raphael Trujillo did not advance U.S. interests significantly, and is thus judged a failure. The Trujillo assassination was a failure for several reasons. First, in eliminating Trujillo the United States did not enjoy warm relations with successors Juan Bosch and the subsequent military junta. Second, the Dominican Republic experienced internal upheaval shortly following Trujillo’s ouster, and quelling the upheaval necessitated a greater commitment of U.S. resources. Finally the Trujillo assassination, based largely on the belief that Trujillo would fall and be replaced by communists, was predicated on flawed assumptions about the political situation in the Dominican Republic.

Considering that Trujillo was anti-communist, an ardent supporter of U.S. foreign policy and had friends in the U.S. government it is seemingly bizarre that U.S. officials felt he had to be removed from power. Below, I outline the rationale for the targeting of Trujillo and examine some of the policy goals advanced by American officials. I then evaluate the case and detail what it reveals about the broader debates on assassination.

Rationale and Policy Goals

Relations between Trujillo and the U.S. began to deteriorate in the late 1950's.⁶² There was considerable outrage at the kidnapping and murder of a Trujillo opponent, Professor Jesus de Galindez of Columbia University in 1956. Following that, in 1958, Vice President Richard Nixon's tour of several Latin American capitals was met with massive anti-American demonstrations. U.S. policymakers saw these demonstrations as a manifestation of outrage at U.S. support for Latin American dictatorships. Finally, in 1959, Fidel Castro's forces ousted Fulgencio Batista's dictatorial regime in Cuba. In the eyes of U.S. policymakers, Batista and right-wing dictators like him suppressed the poor and thus engendered an environment ripe for communist exploitation.⁶³

⁶² A short account of Trujillo's rule of the Dominican Republic is A. Terry Rambo, "The Dominican Republic," *Political Systems in Latin America*, ed. Martin Needler (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand Co., 1964), 165-168 and 172-176. The brutality of his dictatorship is documented in Howard Wiarda, *Dictatorship and Development: The Methods of Control in Trujillo's Dominican Republic* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1968). The U.S. had long been involved in Dominican politics. William Javier Nelson, *Almost a Territory* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1990). It is also important to remember that the U.S. had placed Trujillo in power in 1930. G. Pope Atkins and Larman Wilson, *The United States and the Trujillo Regime* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972) 28-46.

⁶³ Jerome Slater, *Intervention and Negotiation: The United States and the Dominican Revolution* (New York: Harper Row, 1970), 6-7. President Eisenhower's acceptance of NSC-68 did not draw distinctions between central and peripheral threats and worried about the possible implications of Communist victories anywhere. These views were the basis of the famous "domino theory" that Eisenhower outlined. Ray Takeyh, *The Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 5.

External events were compounded by internal happenings in the Dominican Republic, where by late 1959, Trujillo began to lose his grip on power.⁶⁴ The Eisenhower Administration, using historical analogy as a basis for policy formulation likened the state of the Dominican Republic to the last days of Batista. The prevailing sentiment was, “Batista is to Castro as Trujillo is to ---.”⁶⁵ Washington wanted to play a role in filling in the blank, and thus it was decided that Trujillo had to go and a decent successor had to be found.

In early 1960, Trujillo committed an egregious error by attempting to assassinate his archrival Romulo Betancourt, the President of Venezuela, by car bomb. The attempt was a fiasco and quickly Trujillo’s cover was blown. Speaking about Trujillo, Betancourt told a U.S. official, “If you don’t eliminate him we will invade.”⁶⁶ Subsequently, the Organization of American States imposed sanctions on the Dominican Republic, including a collective severing of diplomatic relations and an embargo.⁶⁷

The Plot

On January 12, 1961, Washington approved a limited supply of arms and other material to dissidents inside the Dominican Republic. On the final day of the Eisenhower

⁶⁴ Havens et al., 140-141.

⁶⁵ Robert Crassweller, *Trujillo; Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York: McMillan, 1966), 371. On the role of historical analogy in the making of foreign policy see, Yuen Foong Khong, “Seduction By Analogy in Vietnam,” *American Foreign Policy – Theoretical Essays*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (New York: Longman, 2002), 506-516.

⁶⁶ Bernard Diederich, *Trujillo: The Death of the Goat* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978), 44.

⁶⁷ Slater, 8. The U.S., until the embargo, had been an instrumental in sustaining the Dominican Republic export economy. In fact America had a hand in establishing this sector. Claudio Vedovato, *Politics, Foreign Trade and Economic Development: As Study of the Dominican Republic* (Surry Hills, Australia: Provident House, 1986), 54-77. The U.S., under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS), greatly reduced its purchases of Dominican sugar and thus crippled the country’s economy at a time when it was already in decline. Abraham F. Lowenthal, *The Dominican Intervention*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 9-11.

Administration, Consul General Henry Dearborn informed U.S. officials that the dissidents were “delighted with the decision to deliver the exotic equipment.”⁶⁸

Several months later, on May 30, 1961, the dissidents waited for Trujillo’s car to pass them en route to a house with his mistress. The dissidents drew their vehicle up to Trujillo’s and killed both him and his chauffeur in the subsequent gun battle.⁶⁹

Assessing the Assassination

Was the Assassination a Tactical Success?

The assassination was a tactical success. It involved indirect U.S. involvement against an autocratic regime.

Did relations improve following the assassination?

Five-year period

Following Trujillo’s death the U.S. signed several agreements with the new governments. The first agreement, signed May 2, 1962, established the Peace Corps program in the Dominican Republic.⁷⁰ Shortly thereafter, another agreement pertaining to meteorological cooperation surrounding weather stations was signed, followed by agreements in telecommunications and agriculture.⁷¹ The U.S. entered into six agreements with the various rulers of the Dominican Republic, in the first three years

⁶⁸ Ibid., 56.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 115-122. Atkins and Wilson, *United States and the Trujillo Regime*, 124. In the aftermath of the Trujillo assassination twenty-six men and women who had actually associated with the dissidents or were perceived to have aided them were killed by supporters of Trujillo. G. Pope Atkins and Larman Wilson, *The Dominican Republic and the United States – From Imperialism to Transnationalism*. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 122-124.

⁷⁰ Igor I. Kavass, ed., *United States Treaty Index, 1776-1990, Consolidation: TIAS 4722 to TIAS 7987* (Buffalo, NY: William S Hein and Co., 1998), 65.

⁷¹ Ibid., 99, 119.

following Trujillo's death. Perhaps most instructive is a military assistance agreement the U.S. signed on March 8, 1962. The agreement was not put into effect until June of 1964, well after Bosch's fall from power in a coup in September 1963.⁷² This speaks to the fact that the U.S. did not like Bosch and wanted to avoid undermining his overthrow by providing military help in the form of weapons and training.

In 1964, the two countries also put into effect smaller agreements on cooperative mapping and radio operations.⁷³ In 1965 and 1966 two more agricultural agreements were signed and the meteorological cooperation program was extended.⁷⁴ Eleven agreements were signed in the five-year period.

Ten-year period

The Dominican Revolution began in April 1965, and the U.S. contributed troops to the country. From late 1966 to April 1968, the U.S. and the Dominican Republic did not sign any bilateral treaties. Then the two countries signed two minor agreements on agricultural commodities and meteorological information sharing.⁷⁵ At the same time, on April 15, 1969, the Agricultural Agreement of April 1968 was amended and extended; it was again extended in 1969.⁷⁶ Two other treaties on agriculture and meat imports were signed in March of 1970. More treaties on agricultural commodities and meat imports were signed on April 1, 1971 and March 11, 1971 respectively.⁷⁷ The trend of good

⁷² Ibid., 189.

⁷³ Ibid., 204 and 206.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 228 and 311.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 421, 427 and 435.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 475.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 510 and 511.

relations continued throughout the early 1970's with agreements on air transport services and three agreements on agricultural commodities and meat imports.

More notable is the military assistance agreement entered into in March of 1972. This agreement, "Deposits Under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1971" restructured Dominican debts incurred through the purchase of U.S. military equipment.⁷⁸ Fifteen total agreements were signed with the Dominican Republic during this period, representing an increase from the five-year period. This increase occurred in spite of the Dominican Revolution and the tumult that accompanied it, indicating that relations were improved when Balaguer began another term in office.

Fifteen-year period

Shortly after the ten year anniversary of Trujillo's death, in the summer of 1974, the U.S. and the Dominican Republic signed another military assistance agreement related to the payment to the U.S. of net proceeds from the sale of defence articles furnished under the military assistance program that began following Trujillo's demise.⁷⁹

Two other smaller scale agreements related to meat imports and agricultural commodities were signed just after the ten-year anniversary of Trujillo's death indicating that relations remained warm.⁸⁰ Another trade agreement on meat imports was signed on June 29, 1976.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid., 568.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 690.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 78.

⁸¹ Ibid., 80.

On October 1, 1975, the U.S. agreed to assist in financing the Dominican health sector by signing a loan agreement for that purpose.⁸² Other loans were granted during this period, including two to the agricultural sector in October of 1974 and on March 29, 1976. Finally, technical help and services related to airport facilities were agreed to and signed on May 28, 1976.⁸³

Eight total agreements were signed during this period, ten to fifteen years after the death of Trujillo. This does represent a decrease from the previous time period of five to ten years. It is thus important to consult elite scholarly opinion to find an explanation for this.

Rhetoric and scholarly opinion paint a negative picture of relations in the immediate years after the demise of Trujillo. The left-leaning policies of Juan Bosch bothered American policymakers and they withdrew their support from him, which led to a military coup.⁸⁴ The junta that succeeded Bosch, led by Donny Reid Cabral, proved problematic as well. Reid's attempts at reforming the army angered certain officers and helped pave the way for a violent conflict in 1965.⁸⁵ In 1966, Joaquin Balaguer was elected president. U.S. relations with Balaguer were good over time, owing largely to his ability to provide stability to the Dominican Republic, due to a support base in the military.⁸⁶

Relations over time between the U.S. and Dominican Republic improved, particularly with the Balaguer government. Still, the aftermath of Trujillo's rule was

⁸² Ibid., 78.

⁸³ Ibid., 159.

⁸⁴ U.S. policymakers were particularly angry with Bosch's cuts to the National Police Funds program, which they saw as undermining their attempts to train the Dominican police. John Barlow Martin, *Overtaken by Events* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1966), 358.

⁸⁵ Atkins and Wilson, *Dominican Republic and the United States*, 133.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 151.

marked by problems with the Bosch government's leftist policies and by the Reid junta's problematic rule, which led to revolution. On this dimension, the case is judged a partial success, as relations eventually grew better but initially were rocky.

Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

The aftermath of the Trujillo assassination demonstrates the difficulty in finding leadership suitable to both a country's domestic constituents and the interests of a perpetrating state. Initially, Joaquin Balaguer, who had been Trujillo's puppet president, took over governing the country. Shortly after his ascension to power, the U.S. decided that Balaguer should step down in favour of seven-man Council of State.⁸⁷ The ensuing elections pitted Juan Bosch against Viriato Fiallo. Bosch, a prominent member of the anti-Trujillo camp and friend of Romulo Betancourt, was the eventual winner.⁸⁸ His victory was heralded as a great watershed in hemispheric politics – Bosch was even invited to Washington for an official visit and meeting with President Kennedy.⁸⁹

Quickly, however, Bosch fell from grace with the Kennedy Administration. In large part this was due to the reports of U.S. Ambassador John Barlow Martin, who considered Bosch's party "too doctrinaire, too ideological."⁹⁰ Martin also did not like the man, calling him "emotionally unstable" and "vain, arrogant and erratic."⁹¹ Martin was

⁸⁷ Slater, 10. The Council of State was to be a transitional body ruling until the scheduled elections of December 1962.

⁸⁸ Slater, 11.

⁸⁹ Juan Bosch, *The Unfinished Experiment* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 165-66.

⁹⁰ Martin, 206.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

particularly dismayed by Bosch's leftist reforms and his nationalism, which, according to Martin were indications that Bosch was perhaps a "deep-cover Communist."⁹²

Martin's reports and the persistent attacks on Bosch emanating from Dominican right-wingers and U.S. business interests, quickly led to a withdrawal of U.S. support for Bosch. With U.S. support on the wane, Bosch was vulnerable to a coup, and on September 25, 1963, he was overthrown by a group of officers.⁹³ Washington was angered with the coup, because the military did not rule in congruence with the Dominican constitution. Initially, little was done about the matter. The U.S. later tried to force the junta to return to constitutional rule by withdrawing economic assistance and severing diplomatic relations. Shortly however, the junta discovered that "leftist guerrillas" were plotting in the hills. The U.S. quickly restored ties with junta and its pro-American leader, Donny Reid Cabral.⁹⁴

The government headed by Reid quickly became unpopular in the Dominican, due in part to its austerity measures and its authoritarian methods. Even the army was angry with Reid, as he attempted to eradicate a military smuggling racket and purge Trujillo supporters.⁹⁵ Finally Reid demonstrated an obvious intention to cancel elections scheduled for the fall of 1965. These developments proved too much for the country and in April 1965, the Dominican Revolution began.⁹⁶ It began as a military coup to oust

⁹² Ibid., 347.

⁹³ Slater, 14.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 16-17.

⁹⁵ Martin, 54-65.

⁹⁶ U.S. officials were aware of the growing discontent with Reid and thought a coup was in the works, but did not think it would occur before June 1. Haynes Johnson, *Fulbright the Dissenter* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1968), 201.

Reid, and gained popular support in the subsequent months.⁹⁷ This was not in the U.S. interest because both stability and democracy were goals.

It was widely believed that Juan Bosch was behind the overthrow of Reid. Because of this, and the fact that Bosch planned to return to power, the U.S. sided with the military and against Bosch supporters, known as “constitutionalists.”⁹⁸ Though the revolution did not initially spread much beyond Santo Domingo, U.S. officials were deeply fearful that they would face a Communist takeover if they did not intervene.⁹⁹

Finally, the elimination of Trujillo was supposed to usher in liberal democratic reforms. However, as the U.S. turned its back on the democratically elected Bosch and the revolutionaries, it served to retrench “a corrupt, reactionary, military oligarchy.”¹⁰⁰ In the context of U.S. strategic interests the various successors indicate that the mission did not alleviate concerns about the situation in the Dominican Republic. Thus, on this dimension, the strategic interests were not significantly furthered by the assassination of Trujillo.

Were there any unintended consequences in terms of internal upheaval in the Dominican Republic?

On April 28 1965, after a plea by the U.S. embassy, the 82nd Airborne arrived at San Isidro.¹⁰¹ During the subsequent revolution the U.S. had to commit forces to stabilize

⁹⁷ For a fuller discussion of the Dominican Crisis see The Hammarskjold Forum, *The Dominican Crisis 1965 ; Background Paper and Proceedings* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1967).

⁹⁸ Slater., 25-27.

⁹⁹ The Johnson Administration was determined to avoid another Cuba. University Publications of America, *The Lyndon Johnson Security Files 1963-1969: Latin America*. Document online. Accessed 13 January 2003. Available from: http://www.lexisnexis.com/academic/guides/area_studies/nsf/lbjlatin.htm.

¹⁰⁰ Senator William Fulbright, “The Situation in the Dominican Republic,” Speech in the U.S. Senate, 15 September 1965, *Congressional Record* (Washington: U.S. Government Press, 1965), 23859.

¹⁰¹ A report by Georgetown University’s Centre For Strategic Studies claims that by that time any serious threat to foreign nationals was over, disorder was confined to the city of Santo Domingo, and the reasons

the Dominican Republic.¹⁰² At its highest level the commitment of U.S. personnel reached a significant level of 23,000.¹⁰³ It is important to recall that the U.S. was concerned about the stability of Trujillo and this was part of the rationale behind his demise. Because the Trujillo assassination did not contribute to the stability and because the eventual upheaval necessitated the deployment of a sizeable amount of U.S. resources to restore stability, it must be judged a failure on this dimension.

Counterfactual Questions

Was it necessary to kill Trujillo? The main goal behind the removal of Trujillo was to prevent a communist takeover due to collective revulsion towards his rule. There is little doubt that Trujillo was a hated man by the time of his death. As is the case with many thuggish rulers, Trujillo's methods ensured that he always had to keep a close eye on his personal security and that of his regime. Thus, there is little doubt that U.S. policymakers had reason to believe that Trujillo might be toppled. However, the real fear was that Communist forces would succeed Trujillo. This conclusion was reached through the use of analogy (that of Cuba) and not by looking at real facts. Most notably, a CIA investigation begun at the behest of Ambassador Martin found that there existed only a "small number of Communists in Dominican public life." Further, Martin claimed that, "communism could count on not more than one hundred well-trained, fully committed

for U.S. landings were ineptly explained to the public. Moreover the report concludes that U.S. actions had four objectives: 1) the protection of American and foreign lives, 2) the halting of violence, 3) the prevention of a Communist seizure of power, and 4) the opening of an option to the Dominican people to choose their leaders in a free election. The Centre for Strategic Studies, *Dominican Action – 1965; Intervention or Cooperation* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1966), viii-ix.

¹⁰² President Johnson claimed initially that forces were committed solely for the protection of American lives. Two days later, on 30 April 1965 he said that communists were seeking to gain control of the Republic. Theodore Draper, *The Dominican Revolt* (New York : Commentary, 1968), 80-81.

¹⁰³ Atkins and Wilson, *United States and the Dominican Republic*, 135.

and fully disciplined Dominicans.”¹⁰⁴ This comment makes a communist takeover seem like an unlikely possibility had Trujillo stayed on. Moreover, it seems as though the Soviets were not impressed by Trujillo, as the emissaries he sent to Moscow prior to his death were virtually ignored by Khrushchev.¹⁰⁵

Were there policy options other than assassination available? A cursory glance at the situation surrounding Trujillo’s last years in power indicates that little else had worked. He had stepped up his internal repression due to threats from exiles, and answered the embargo by legalizing the Dominican Communist Party and denouncing the U.S. in radio broadcasts.¹⁰⁶ These responses indicate he was obdurate and unwilling to compromise. The U.S. would likely have prevailed in a direct military campaign, however Trujillo had a decent fighting force. His men had become battle hardened by fighting against raids from Dominican expatriates in the late 1950s.¹⁰⁷ In light of these realities, assassination was an attractive policy. However, that doesn’t mean that the rationale and goals underpinning the killing of Trujillo – specifically, that he would be replaced by communists due to his heavy-handed rule – were correct. The U.S.’s own ambassador figured differently. Besides, countenancing the removal of Trujillo, created a situation of instability – the very thing the U.S. feared would occur if Trujillo remained in power. Thus, on this dimension the assassination is judged a failure.

¹⁰⁴ Martin, 129.

¹⁰⁵ Atkins and Wilson, *United States and the Dominican Republic*, 116.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

¹⁰⁷ Following WW II the U.S. refused to respond to some of Trujillo’s requests for weapons and thus he developed his own system of supply and constructed several factories to build weapons. He also sought the advice of former Luftwaffe veterans and built a small but effective airforce. His navy operated 33 vessels and the army had 12,000 regular soldiers. Atkins and Wilson, *United States and the Trujillo Regime*, 1-97.

What this Reveals About Assassinations

What does this case reveal about conditions necessary for tactical success?

This case shows that proxy forces are more likely to neutralize a target leader, a finding supported by many other cases in this study. The case also shows that personal security surrounding a leader is more important than regime type in terms of the likelihood of achieving tactical success. Trujillo was a dictator who had mercilessly stamped out enemies and opposition.¹⁰⁸ However, at the time of his assassination, Raphael Trujillo was becoming complacent about his security, particularly as it pertained to U.S. threats. As Diederich states, around the time of his demise:

Trujillo overestimated his ability to purchase influence in Washington with his enormous slush fund of secret contributions to congressmen and lobbyists. Some apologists of the right wing still took up Trujillo's defence on the Senate floor...but the Eisenhower Administration and finally severed the umbilical cord, and Trujillo was no longer "our son-of-a-bitch."¹⁰⁹

The fact that Trujillo was becoming lax about his security negates any arguments about regime type.

What does this case reveal about the idea of leaders as "centres of gravity"?

Atkins and Wilson claim that, "Trujillism did not end with the demise of Trujillo."¹¹⁰ They cite the brief power struggle that occurred in November of 1961 following Trujillo's death. In attempt to ensure Trujillo's brothers did not acquire power,

¹⁰⁸ In fact, when discussing the brutal methods employed by Trujillo Senator Johnston of South Carolina, praised Trujillo's style saying that his government was "anti-Communist to the core. More so than I have ever seen." *New York Times*, 20 December 1963, A9.

¹⁰⁹ Diederich, 40.

¹¹⁰ Atkins and Wilson, *United States and the Dominican Republic*, 120.

the U.S. eight naval vessels with 1800 marines aboard.¹¹¹ The Trujillo brothers eventually fled the country, but clearly Trujillo's camp continued to fight on after his death. This indicates that Trujillo was not a "centre of gravity." His supporters fought on after his death. Moreover the elimination of Trujillo did not eliminate the problems the Dominican Republic posed for the U.S. Trujillo's initial successors were not discernibly more loyal to the U.S. and worried policymakers in Washington. Trujillo was clearly not the only problem in the Dominican.

The Assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem – Vietnam, 1963

On November 2, 1963, Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu were shot following a military coup. The death of Diem marked the end of his nine-year rule of Vietnam and signalled the end of a tempestuous relationship with the United States and his regime.¹¹² Historian Arthur Schlesinger tells us that the death of Diem was deeply troubling to President John F. Kennedy.¹¹³ The Pentagon Papers say: "...we had not appreciated the degree of hatred of the Ngo family among the generals, nor their fear that if the brothers survived the coup they would somehow stage a comeback."¹¹⁴ Despite this, the U.S. does bear some responsibility for the death of Diem since Washington sought his removal. As assassination brought this about, it is worthwhile to see if U.S. interests were furthered as a result.

¹¹¹ *New York Times*, 20 November 1961, A6.

¹¹² Ann L. Hollick, *U.S. Involvement in the Overthrow of Diem, 1963* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 24.

¹¹³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days; John F. Kennedy in The White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 997.

¹¹⁴ *The Pentagon Papers, The Defence Department History of the United States Decision Making on Vietnam: The Senate Gavel Edition* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 270.

The death of Diem cannot be viewed as substantially advancing the interests of America. Diem's death essentially marked the beginning of an increased U.S. presence in the domestic political life of South Vietnam. Further, following the assassination the U.S. had to engineer the ouster of his successor.

Below I examine the rationale and policy goals behind the overthrow of Diem and his subsequent death. I then examine the assassination plot. Following that, I evaluate the assassination in the context of the fulfillment of U.S. strategic interests. I conclude by detailing what this case reveals about assassination.

Rationale and Policy Goals

As early as September of 1960, U.S. officials had begun to wonder about the stability of Diem's regime.¹¹⁵ At that time the U.S. Ambassador to Saigon, Elbridge Durbrow, cabled Washington cautioning, "If Diem's position in country continues to deteriorate as a result of a failure to adopt proper political, psychological, economic and security measures it may be necessary for U.S. to begin considering alternative leaders to achieve our objectives."¹¹⁶ By 1962, U.S. officials were recommending Diem's removal.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Kennedy's Ambassador to Vietnam, Frederick Nolting felt that Diem himself had strong points, but that he was bad at running a government. Specifically, Nolting said that, "Diem was not a good administrator...He was inept in the handling of public relations...He found it difficult, if not impossible to delegate authority." Frederick Nolting, *From Trust to Tragedy: The Political Memoirs of Frederick Nolting, Kennedy's Ambassador to Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 2.

¹¹⁶ "CIA Judgements on President Johnson's Decision To 'Go Big' in Vietnam," *Centre for the Study of Intelligence*. Document online. Accessed 28 December 2002. Available from: www.cia.gov/csi/books/vietnam/epis2.html

¹¹⁷ Joseph Mendenhall, "Memorandum for Edward Rice: Vietnam Assessments and Recommendations, August, 1962," *FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 2 Vietnam* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 598.

Diem's problem, according to U.S. officials, was his inability to govern South Vietnam effectively. U.S. policymakers feared that his autocratic, uncompromising style was earning him many enemies, and they demanded reforms.¹¹⁸ None were forthcoming and things progressively deteriorated. Discontent amongst Vietnam's Buddhist population was particularly irksome to U.S. policymakers, who feared that Diem's domestic troubles were undermining his ability to fight the real enemy, the Vietcong.¹¹⁹

In late August of 1963, forces loyal to Diem's erratic brother Nhu embarked upon a massive campaign against Buddhists, ransacking Buddhist temples and killing monks. This "decided the issue for the United States."¹²⁰ Diem did not express disapproval for his brother's actions and massive protests erupted. The U.S., fearing chaos and disorder, quickly became involved in plotting Diem's demise with the Vietnamese army (ARVN).¹²¹

Domestic dissent, Diem's inability to control his brother Nhu, coupled with the Diem regime's obdurate unwillingness to enact more democratic reforms led U.S. officials to believe that the regime was compromising South Vietnam's ability to prosecute the Vietnam War, thereby undermining U.S. abilities to achieve victory. Thus,

¹¹⁸ Ambassador Durbrow feared that unless Diem reformed his government he would be overthrown. When he broached the subject in a meeting with Diem, Diem replied that it would be "most difficult" to implement reforms while the government faced internal rebellion. George C. Herring *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 70. It is worth noting that some members of the U.S. military were against Durbrow's support for reform. William Colby, *Honourable Men* (Pracger: New York, 1978), 160.

¹¹⁹ Hollick, 1-2.

¹²⁰ *The Pentagon Papers*, 203. Senator Frank Church reflecting U.S. opinion on the Buddhist massacres, remarked that "such grisly scenes have not been witnessed since the Christian martyrs walked hand in hand into the Roman arenas." Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam 1941-1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 119-120.

¹²¹ The anti-Diem camp's case was buttressed by reports – to this day unsubstantiated – that Diem's brother Nhu had established secret contact with Hanoi to strike a political deal. Gary R. Hess, *Vietnam and the United States, Origins and Legacy of War* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 75.

U.S. policymakers became fixated upon expediting Diem's removal from the political landscape of South Vietnam.¹²²

The Plot

After several months of vacillation and dithering on the part of ARVN generals, the coup against Diem took place on November 1, 1963.¹²³ U.S. contacts with plotting generals were recorded between October 28 and November 1, with a great spike in contact on November 1.¹²⁴ By late afternoon on November 1, Diem and his brother Nhu realized that they had been outwitted by the generals and sought support from U.S. officials, particularly Ambassador Lodge. Lodge essentially said there was little he could do, but that he would attempt to ensure their personal safety.¹²⁵ Diem's dealings with the generals during the late afternoon and early evening did little to endear him to his captors.¹²⁶ Around 8 pm, Diem and his brother escaped from the palace to Cholon, a suburb of Saigon. Once the generals learned where Diem was they dispatched several vehicles and a professional assassin to apprehend him. Once apprehended, the senior officer at the scene permitted the murder of Diem and his brother.

Assessing the Assassination

Did the mission achieve tactical success?

¹²² U.S. discovery that Diem had exaggerated the gains made by the Strategic Hamlet Program, further solidified arguments of those who claimed he was an ineffective ruler. George C. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 65-66.

¹²³ Hollick, 21.

¹²⁴ *The Pentagon Papers*, 259-260.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 267-268.

¹²⁶ Diem made excessive demands and at one point hung up the phone on General Minh. Roger Hilsman, *To Move A Nation* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 520.

The assassination did achieve tactical success. It involved indirect U.S. involvement against an autocratic leader.

Did relations improve following the assassination?

U.S. forces continued to prosecute the Vietnam War for twelve years following the death of Diem. Thus, bilateral relations, weapons transfers, economic and other assistance continued to flow into Vietnam. This means that, in this case bilateral agreements may not paint the true picture of U.S./Vietnamese relations following Diem's death. As a result, it is important to look at elite scholarly opinion on relations between the U.S. and Diem's successors. Nonetheless, here is how the total numbers look over the time periods:

Five-year period

In the five-year period following Diem's death the U.S and Vietnam signed 32 bilateral agreements.¹²⁷

Ten-year period

During the five to ten year period 49, bilateral agreements were signed, owing, at least in part, to U.S. escalation in Vietnam.¹²⁸

Fifteen-year period

During the ten to fifteen year period, 14 bilateral agreements were signed.¹²⁹

Scholars do not judge the Diem assassination kindly. Herring says that after the assassination "pacification went backwards."¹³⁰ U.S. officials just wanted "any

¹²⁷ See Igor Kavass, *United States Treaty Index Vol. 9*, 2001 ed. (Buffalo: William S. Hein, 2001) 355-357.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 357-359.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 359.

government which would continue to fight,” and though that did happen, the junta that succeeded Diem, headed by General Duong Van Minh, was too independent of the U.S. Specifically, American policymakers found Minh’s approach to the Buddhist factions overly conciliatory and worried about his receptivity to international pressures to create a federation of neutral Indochina states.¹³¹ U.S. relations with Minh were so bad that Washington supported a coup for his overthrow in January of 1964. General Nguyen Khanh, who espoused a military solution to the crisis, replaced him. However, Khanh’s ascension meant that more military assets were brought into Vietnam and the U.S. commitment grew larger and larger.¹³² As Hess says, “In the aftermath of Diem’s overthrow, both North Vietnam and the United States interpreted events in the South in ways that pointed each toward greater military escalation.”¹³³

Relations with Diem’s successors were not discernibly better or more beneficial to the U.S. than they were with Diem. After Diem, the U.S. commitment in Vietnam only grew, and drew the country further and further into the quagmire.¹³⁴ Nor did assassination prevent the eventual defeat of South Vietnam by communists. For this reason this assassination receives a failing grade on this measure

¹³⁰ Herring, *LBJ*, 66.

¹³¹ Two leaders the U.S. disliked, Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia and Charles de Gaulle, backed these plans. U.S. officials were deeply concerned about a neutral Vietnam, one told Minh: “Nothing is further from our mind.” Hess, 77.

¹³² Johnson decided to escalate bombing after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964. Herring, *America’s Longest War*, 120.

¹³³ Hess, 78.

¹³⁴ Arthur Schlesinger points out that prior to Diem’s death Vietnam was not an all consuming, major issue. He goes on to point out that Diem’s death ushered in greater U.S. commitment. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy 1941-1966* (London: Houghton-Mifflin, 1967), 33-34.

Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

Following the assassination of Diem, General Duong Van Minh became the leader of South Vietnam.¹³⁵ However, it was quickly discovered that Minh was not capable of running the country or prosecuting the war. He was overthrown in a coup on January 30, 1964.¹³⁶ Thus, the Diem's removal, partially predicated the fact that he was unable to effectively run the country, did not lead to better conditions in the eyes of U.S. policymakers. Quickly, South Vietnam's political stability was added to the list of problems the U.S. faced in Indochina. A staff study based upon the Pentagon Papers says it all:

By encouraging the overthrow of the Diem government the United States bears a large responsibility for the ensuing political chaos. The weight of this responsibility, in turn, drew the United States ever more deeply in the struggle in Vietnam.¹³⁷

In the Diem case, U.S. government documents tell us that policymakers in Washington did expend time and energy worrying about Diem's successors and the political stability of South Vietnam. The assassination did not bring about more stable leadership. General Minh was no more loyal to America, than Diem. Thus the only judgement that can be made is that on this dimension the Diem assassination did not further U.S. interests.

¹³⁵ Minh worried the U.S. from the start. Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares* (New York: MacMillan, 1972), 297.

¹³⁶ William Westmoreland later observed that it would have been difficult for any successor to last long in power. William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City NJ: Praeger, 1976), 63.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

Were there any unintended consequences in terms of internal upheaval in Vietnam following the assassination?

The U.S. was able to ally itself with domestic opposition to Diem prior to his assassination. This, coupled with the massive assistance the U.S. gave to South Vietnam, ensured that the theatre remained operable to the U.S. Moreover, the fact that large tracts of the Vietnamese population were less than enamoured with Ngo Dinh Diem meant that the U.S. did not risk a popular outcry when it was discovered that they had aided in his ouster and death.¹³⁸ For these reasons, on this dimension, the mission is judged a success.

Counterfactual Questions

Were there other policy options open to the U.S. other than assassination? The desire to remove Diem stemmed from a belief that he was incapable of governing South Vietnam properly and that this was undermining his ability to prosecute the war. As stated, neither goal was realized. Other means to achieving this were considered for a time. Robert McNamara initially endorsed the application of “selective pressures.” Specifically, cuts to aid money given to the regime.¹³⁹ For a few weeks these pressures were implemented, however, it appears as though McNamara overestimated the ability of this measure to change Diem’s behaviour. Roger Hilsman claims that Vietnamese actors concluded that these pressures were a withdrawal of support, and essentially gave the coup a green light.¹⁴⁰ Though it is impossible to know if Diem had designs on reclaiming his former position in Vietnamese political life, we do know that any prospects of this occurring were slim. Those who took part in the military coup obviously thought

¹³⁸ George Kahin, “Political Polarization in South Vietnam: U.S. Policy in the post-Diem Period,” *Pacific Affairs* 52 (Winter 1979-1980), 647-651.

¹³⁹ Herring, *America’s Longest War*, 102.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

differently about Diem's return to Vietnam following his exile.¹⁴¹ Ordinary Vietnamese, Americans and the army disliked Diem, thus if he intended to return he would have had little backing or support for any bid to return to power. Based upon this fact, his death appears superfluous – exiling Diem, which was the desire of American policymakers, would have been sufficient. But Americans made the grave error of talking to plotters and encouraging the coup through withdrawing support of Diem and are thus somewhat responsible for Diem's death.

What this reveals about assassinations

What does this case reveal about the conditions that may lead to tactical success?

Diem was most certainly an autocrat. Though he was “elected” in 1955, his defeat of Bao Dai was the result of a rigged election.¹⁴² This seemingly undermines arguments that democratic leaders are easier to target than autocrats, clearly something else was at play. However, despite Diem's oppressive tactics, he made enemies in the wrong places – specifically within the ranks of the ARVN. By angering the army he placed himself in a precarious position vis-à-vis his security, however, alienating his benefactor – the U.S. government – must be viewed as his greatest mistake.¹⁴³ Diem's colossal blunders and miscalculations caused his overthrow and eventual death. The scale of these mistakes makes any arguments about regime type irrelevant in this case. His security was compromised by his own actions.

¹⁴¹ *The Pentagon Papers*, 270.

¹⁴² Diem secured 98.2% of the vote, winning 605,000 votes from the 405,000 registered voters in Saigon. Herring, *America's Longest War*, 55.

¹⁴³ Hollick, 1-9.

In the process of being ousted from power, fatal consequences befell Diem. In this Diem's assassination, speaks to the fact that military coups or kidnappings can result in the death of the targeted leader. The Church Committee found no evidence of Kennedy or any U.S. official directly calling for the assassination of Diem.¹⁴⁴ However, by promoting a coup, U.S. officials bear some of the responsibility for Diem's death.

What does this case reveal about the idea of leaders as "centres of gravity"?

As evinced by the growing U.S. involvement in the domestic politics of South Vietnam, Diem was clearly not a "centre of gravity" or the root of all America's problems in Vietnam. The assassination of Diem also reveals much about the potential problems a perpetrator will face with successors. The U.S. had trouble with Minh and had to engineer his ouster. Even when General Khanh replaced Minh and the war escalated, few gains were realized. In this case, killing the target did not bring much in terms of future gains or better relations. The U.S. perceived Diem as the problem when in fact the problems with the Vietnam War were of a much greater scope.

Conclusion

This chapter has evaluated four cases of tactically successful American-sponsored assassinations. The Yamamoto assassination was a success, because by killing Yamamoto the U.S. helped its naval campaign in the Pacific theatre. Unlike many other assassinations, this case did not produce undesirable, unintended consequences. The other case, the assassination of Lumumba, is rated as a partial success, because the eventual installation of Mobutu meant that Congo did not fall into the communist camp. However,

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Senate, 1-22.

relations were periodically strained between the U.S. and Mobutu. U.S. policymakers might have brought about the same outcomes with other policies such as appeasement, because there is evidence that Lumumba was not looking to take Congo into the Soviet orbit. Other instances of instability in Africa, such as the Nigeria case, did not lead to communist takeovers. This indicates that the threat was exaggerated and that Lumumba's removal may not have been necessary. . The assassination of Trujillo initially led to the emergence of leaders who were not discernibly more loyal or towed positions more congruent with U.S. interests. It also led to an eventual internal upheaval that saw the deployment of significant U.S. troops to quell fighting. The Diem case led to increasing U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and the successor leadership was no more loyal or better at prosecuting the war than Diem. The findings of this chapter are detailed below in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Results Summary of U.S. Cases of Tactical Success

Case	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5
Yamamoto	Success	Success	Success	Success	Success
Lumumba	Success	Partial Success	Success	Success	Failure
Trujillo	Success	Partial Success	Failure	Failure	Failure
Diem	Success	Failure	Failure	Success	Failure

Measure 1: Did the mission achieve tactical success?

Measure 2: Did relations improve the assassination if that was the goal? If improved relations were not a goal of the mission, were the goals met?

Measure 3: Did the mission have any unintended consequences in terms of the effects it had upon successor leadership in the targeted country?

Measure 4: Did the targeted country experience internal upheaval following the assassination?

Measure 5: Counterfactual questions.

The next chapter details instances of assassinating not significantly advancing the strategic interests of the U.S. The cases are examined using the same set of indicators and evaluative framework as those in this chapter.

Chapter 4 – Cases of Tactical Failure: The Attempts on Castro and Qaddafi

Introduction

This chapter details cases where assassination did not significantly advance U.S. interests. I argue that both cases were strategic failures, as neither caused either leader to change their behaviour to a manner more congruent with U.S. interests.

I begin with the Castro case, and then evaluate the attempt on Qaddafi. Each case begins with a short introduction followed by an outline of the underpinning rationale and policy goals. I then evaluate the assassinations based upon the tests. Each case concludes with a section entitled “What this reveals about assassinations,” wherein I discuss what each case reveals about the bigger issues related to the general debate on assassinations.

The Plots Against Fidel Castro – 1960-65

In 1959, when Fidel Castro and his band of revolutionaries ended the reign of Fulgencia Batista’s dictatorial regime, myriad groups in the U.S. instantly wanted Castro removed.¹ Castro’s battle against Batista wreaked havoc on U.S. business interests and those of the Cuban elite. The mafia feared for their Cuban casinos and the drug and prostitution rings that were woven into the fabric of these gambling operations.² However, far more important and pressing reasons for removing Castro were embedded in the logic of the Cold War. Cuba, located 90 miles from U.S. soil, was a fabulous opportunity for communists to establish a beachhead in the U.S. sphere of influence and

¹ On the Cuban Revolution see Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2001), Marifei Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Thomas M. Leonard, *Castro and the Cuban Revolution* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).

² Peter D. Scott, *The Inspector General’s Report: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1-3.

undertake programs designed to undermine U.S. interests. Thus, as soon as Castro took power in Cuba schemes for bringing about his demise were put into motion by the Eisenhower Administration.³

The plots against Castro ranged from the conventional to the fantastic. Certain initiatives appear as though they are taken directly from the silver screen or a spy novel.⁴ The assassination plots against Castro are the only example of the U.S. stating unequivocally that it countenanced the killing of a foreign leader (in this case on multiple occasions). It is thus a very important case to examine. The Church Committee unearthed evidence of at least eight plots to kill Castro between 1960 and 1965.⁵ This contrasts with Castro's own reports. He claims the CIA has been involved with twenty-four attempts on his life.⁶

The plots that targeted Fidel Castro between 1960 and 1965 have proven to be an egregious policy failure in the context of advancing U.S. interests. While a case can be made that it was desirable to remove Castro, the failure of the assassination plots has not improved U.S. relations with Cuba and have not discernibly changed Castro's behaviour. There also ample evidence to support the notion that other policy options, specifically containment and isolation would have worked better.

³ Warren Hinckle and William Turner, *This Fish Is Red – The Story of the Secret War Against Castro* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), vi.

⁴ It is rumoured that Ian Fleming was actually consulted by the CIA to help devise a plan to eliminate Castro Doug Moench, *The Big Book of Conspiracies* (New York: Paradox Press, 1995), 104-106.

⁵ U.S. Senate, 71.

⁶ Castro sent a letter to Senator George McGovern in August of 1975 outlining these allegations. The CIA drafted a 14-page response in which it stated that "the files reviewed indicate that the CIA had no involvement with 15 of the 24 cases. In the remaining nine cases the CIA had operational relationships with the individuals mentioned but not for the purposes of assassination." The Church Committee did not find any evidence of CIA involvement in the supposed plots that Castro outlined in his letter to McGovern. Here, I examine only the plots in which the Church Committee found evidence of U.S. involvement. *Ibid.*, 71.

Below, I examine the rationale and policy goals behind the attempts on Fidel Castro between 1960 and 1965. I then examine the tactical side of the plots and detail the extent of U.S. involvement in them. I conclude this section by evaluating the case in the context of interest fulfillment.⁷

Rationale and Policy Goals

Like many of the other U.S. cases examined in this study, the desire to liquidate Fidel Castro stemmed from the nature of Cold War hysteria. U.S. leaders believed that a worldwide communist revolution could overrun capitalist societies and destroy the Western democratic model.⁸ They held an unwavering belief in the “domino theory”; the idea that if one state in a region “went communist” then all others around it would as well – falling like dominos in a line.⁹

In short, Cuba gave the Soviets a piece of territory in the U.S. sphere of influence. It was thought that this would permit them to spread communist revolution and

⁷ For purposes of evaluation the eight attempts on Castro are looked at as one case. This is done to preserve the integrity of the overall evaluative section of this project and to ensure that the data set is not overly skewed towards failure.

⁸ The fear of Castro and communists in America’s neighbourhood was great, and in fact was a main issue in the 1960 presidential race between Kennedy and Nixon. Kennedy used Cuba to attack Nixon, claiming that Eisenhower and Nixon had been soft on Cuba. As soon as he assumed the mantle of the presidency, Kennedy began to work on the “Cuban Problem” by examining the option of using Cuban exiles to attack the island and start a revolt against Castro. Mark J. White, *The Kennedys and Cuba: The Declassified Document History* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 4. Displaying his trademark brash style, Castro described the two candidates as “beardless, ignorant kids.” William B. Breuer, *Vendetta!: Fidel Castro and The Kennedy Brothers* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 98.

⁹ For a broader overview of the domino theory, and a refutation of it see Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder, *Dominoes and Bandwagons; Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Eurasian Rimland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). This view also reflects the concept of ‘bandwagoning’. Broadly, the concept that a state will form an alliance with a menacing, more powerful neighbour to ensure its own security. It is worth noting that ‘bandwagoning’ has been shown to be a less likely occurrence in alliance formation than ‘balancing’. On balancing and bandwagoning, and the propensity of states to balance rather than bandwagon see Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

undermine the U.S. interests in America's backyard. By assassinating Castro U.S. policymakers hoped that they might topple the socialist regime in Cuba.

*The Plots*¹⁰

The Botulin Cigars

A scheme to contaminate a box of Castro's favourite cigars with botulin was recorded by Dr. Edward Gunn, CIA Operations Division, Office of Medical Services, on August 16, 1960. The cigars would have killed anyone who put one in their mouth to die within a few hours. Gunn actually carried out the orders he received. It appears as though delivery of the cigars was a problem.¹¹

Enlisting the Heavies to 'Whack' Castro

When Castro assumed power, the U.S. sought out angry member of the mafia, who, allegedly feared for their Cuban gambling operations. Having made contact with crime boss Sam Giancana, the CIA outlined a plan for, "a typical gangland-style killing in which Castro would be gunned down." However, this was "flatly opposed" by

¹⁰ In my examination of the plots to kill Castro, I only evaluate the plots specifically designed to kill him. There were others designed to 'discredit him' in the eyes of the Cuban people. These too make for an interesting read. Among the various schemes employed were: 1) Contaminating the air at a radio station where Castro broadcast his speeches with an LSD like chemical to make Castro appear insane. 2) Treating a box of Castro's favourite cigars with a chemical intended to produce "temporary personality disorientation." 3) Dumping "thallium powder into Castro's shoes when they were put out (in front of his hotel room) at night to be shined, during a trip he made outside Cuba." Castro was to appear on the David Susskind Show and the thallium powder would have caused his beard to fall out. A beardless Castro, supposedly would have no credibility with the Cuban people. For a variety of tactical and operational reasons, none of these plans ever came to fruition. See J.S. Earman, *CIA Inspector General's Report on Plots to Assassinate Castro* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Press, 1967), 1-14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

Giancana because recruiting assassins for such a scheme was impossible given the low chances of escape and survival.¹²

Sammy G's Scam, Take One

Rather than a gangland-style shooting Giancana proposed poisoning Castro. The poison selected had to be “stable, safe, soluble undetectable, not immediately acting and with a firmly predictable end result.”¹³ Giancana arranged for the pills to be delivered to a man named Juan Orta, who supposedly worked in Castro's office.¹⁴ However, Orta had lost his position in Castro's office well before the plot was set to begin.

Sammy G's Scam, Take Two

Following the failure of Orta to deliver the lethal pills to Castro, Johnny Roselli, the link between the CIA and the mob, told the CIA that mob boss Santos Trafficante knew of a man named Tony Varona who would help poison Castro. The plan apparently failed when Castro ceased to patronize a restaurant he regularly frequented.¹⁵

ZRRIFLE and the Need for Executive Action

The key agent in this operation was a man known as QJWIN, who had been recruited by the CIA to assassinate Patrice Lumumba in the Congo.¹⁶ According to CIA documents the “original reasons for employing QJWIN no longer existed” as of June

¹² Ibid., 24.

¹³ Ibid., 24.

¹⁴ Ibid., 26

¹⁵ Ibid., 29-32.

¹⁶ Ibid., 37.

1963. Apparently this American agent was unable to get close enough to Castro to kill him.¹⁷

The Skin Diving Suit

The CIA, knowing Castro was a diving enthusiast, decided that they would poison a diving suit by dusting it with a fungus that would produce a disabling chronic skin disease (Madura foot disease) and by contaminating the breathing apparatus with tubercule bacteria.¹⁸ After the deadly gift was prepared, the plan was overtaken by events. John Donovan, the emissary who was supposed to give Castro the poisoned diving suit had already given Castro a skin diving suit on his own initiative.”¹⁹

The Exploding Sea Shell

Sometime in 1963, Desmond Fitzgerald, an employee of the Agency, originated a scheme for rigging a seashell with explosives. Alas, the scheme was impractical for several reasons and operational difficulties. The plan was thus quickly shelved.²⁰

Project AMLASH and Rolando Cubela

The CIA first contacted Rolando Cubela on March 9, 1961. At that time, he was the second in command of a group of leftists known as the Directorio Revolucionario 13 de Marzo (DR), the group had been created in 1956 to overthrow Batista.²¹ At the end of the revolution, Cubela plainly told Castro he was unhappy with his share of power and

¹⁷ Ibid., 39.

¹⁸ Ibid., 71-75.

¹⁹ Ibid., 75.

²⁰ Ibid., 76-77.

²¹ Ibid., 77.

with the course of the revolution. Americans sought Cubela's help in killing Castro, however to no avail. By March 1, 1966 Cubela and his group had been arrested in Havana and "charged with crimes against the integrity and stability of the nation by having planned the assassination of Fidel Castro."²² By March 11, 1966 Cubela had been sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Assessing the Assassination Attempts

Was the assassination a tactical success?

The plots against Castro, attempted by both proxy groups and by direct targeting by U.S. forces, all failed to achieve tactical success.

Did relations improve following the assassination attempts?

There have not been any bilateral agreements between the U.S. and Cuba and rhetoric on both has almost constantly been hostile.²³ In light of this, it is virtually impossible to say that repeated assassination attempts have weakened Castro.²⁴ U.S. Cuban relations have been strained since Castro came to power in 1959. The first round of U.S. sanctions against Cuba came in September of 1960, in response to the nationalization of U.S. assets. A total embargo was imposed following the Bay of Pigs in

²² Ibid., 106.

²³ Castro has denounced the United States and its system throughout his career. In one interview he juxtaposed the situation in Cuba with the situation in America, "...in the United States there is drug addiction, gambling, prostitution, unemployment, racial discrimination, extreme poverty and sexual exploitation of children, all of which make up an inseparable part of U.S. capitalist society. Such problems do not exist in Cuba. Patricia Sethi, "Interview with Fidel Castro," *Intercontinental Press*, 30 April 1984, 31.

²⁴ However, Castro has said that his presence is no threat to America, "My entire rejection of the U.S. imperialist structure – a rejection now shared by tens of millions throughout Latin America – poses very little threat to the stability of the capitalist system in the United States...The reality is we cannot export revolution and the United States cannot prevent it." Ibid.

December of 1961. In the mid 1970's there were hints of a rapprochement, when in 1975 Henry Kissinger said "We are prepared to move in a new direction in policy...because there is no virtue in perpetual antagonism."²⁵

Declassified CIA documents reveal that certain high placed Cuban sources wanted to explore the possibility of opening up a dialogue with the U.S. under the rubric of baseball.²⁶ Despite this possibility, "Baseball diplomacy" did not produce any tangible indications of a rapprochement. The warming of rhetoric and potential for better relations was tempered when Cuba sent troops to fight in Angola in 1975. President Ford denounced the move.²⁷ Although President Carter allowed civilian travel to Cuba there is little to indicate a great warming of relations took place.²⁸ In the eighties and 1990's the cold relations continued, culminating with the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, which punished any companies doing business with Cuba.²⁹ Recently, George W. Bush has stated that the embargo will continue until Castro enacts reforms.³⁰

²⁵ *Toward Improved U.S.-Cuba Relations, Report of a Special Study Mission to Cuba 10-15 February 1977* (Washington: U.S. Government Press, 1978), 71.

²⁶ Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn wrote a letter saying that he had a high placed source in Cuba who wanted to explore the possibility of 'Baseball diplomacy' on 14 January 1975. See Bowie K. Kuhn, "Letter from Bowie Kuhn to Henry Kissinger." CIA declassified document online. Accessed 24 December 2002. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB12/docs/01-01.htm>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Carter approved talks and a delegation was sent to Cuba on 25 April 1977. Wayne S. Smith, *The Closest of Enemies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 101-127.

²⁹ On the Helms-Burton Act aka The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996 see "The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996," *U.S. Department of State*. Government document online. Accessed 24 December 2002. Available from: <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/us-cuba/libertad.htm>. In addition, Castro's verbal support for Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, angered Washington. Doug Jenness, ed., "Cuba's Cooperation with Nicaragua," *Fidel Castro: Speeches 1984-1985* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1985), 82-107.

³⁰ In a speech commemorating Cuban Independence Day, Bush said "The sanctions our government enforces against the Castro regime are not just a policy tool; they're a moral statement. My administration will oppose any attempt to weaken sanctions against Cuba's government until the regime -- (applause) -- and I will fight such attempts until this regime frees its political prisoners, holds democratic, free elections, and allows for free speech. The policy of our government is not merely to isolate Castro, but to actively support those working to bring about democratic change in Cuba. And that is why we will support legislation like the Cuban Solidarity Act, and the Cuban Internal Opposition Assistance Act. History tells us that forcing change upon repressive regimes requires patience. But history also proves, from Poland to

This is a broad overview of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Fidel Castro. There is no evidence that the assassination attempts from the period examined have brought about warmer relations. Nor have the attempts persuaded Castro to behave in a manner more congruent with U.S. interests. For instance, following the attempts he established warmer relations with the USSR, sent troops to fight American backed forces in Angola and today enjoys warm relations with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (who has few friends in the Bush Administration).³¹ He remains in power to this day; the assassinations have not undermined his regime.³² Castro has managed to get good political mileage out of things like the assassination attempts and the embargo, by telling the Cuban people that all problems are the fault of the U.S..³³ For these reasons it clear

South Africa, that patience and courage and resolve can eventually cause oppressive governments to fear and then to fall." George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President in Recognition of Cuban Independence Day," 18 May 2001. Speech online. Accessed 13 March 2003. Available from: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010518-7.html> Bush also ordered a strengthening of sanctions against Cuba on 13 July 2001. "Bush Announces Strengthening of Measures Dealing With Cuba," *Washington File* 13 July 2001. Document online. Accessed 13 March 2001. Available from: <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/us-cuba/bush13.htm>

³¹ An excellent account of Cuba-Soviet relations is Yuri Pavlov, *Soviet-Cuban Alliance: 1959-1991* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1993). Today, however, Cuba is shifting the focus of its foreign policy back to Latin America, due to the end of the USSR. Juan M. De Aguila, "Where Have all the Comrades Gone," *Cuba and the United States: Will the Cold War in the Caribbean End?*, eds. Joseph Tulchin and Rafael Hernandez (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), 64. On Cuba in Angola see Daniel Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 1993). For an example of the friendship between Chavez and Castro see, "Chavez Strikes Out Castro," *BBC News Online* 19 November 1999. Document online. Accessed 24 December 2002. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/528376.stm> . In the article Chavez states, "Cuba and Venezuela have deepened their friendship (following a friendly baseball game)."

³² In fact a CIA assessment in 1997 said that there was no near-term threat to Castro's power. Director George Tenet was quoted as saying "Fidel Castro appears healthy for a man of 70, and his political position seems secure. Unless he suffers a health crisis, he is likely to be in power a year from now." A CIA report in 1996 also claimed the prospects for Castro's overthrow were slim, "A successful coup or assassination would require luck and secrecy, making the chances very great that we would have little, if any, warning." Jim Wolf, "CIA sees no near-term threat to Castro's power," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 5 December 1997, A15.

³³ As one observer says, "In 33 years, nothing has worked to remove Castro. It seems that every time the United States wants to punish a country for having non-democratic governments, or imposing restrictions that violate human rights, it imposes sanctions usually in the form of an embargo. The sudden lack of trade weakens the country's economy. The people suffer and it would seem the discontent would work against the ruler. This has not happened in Cuba. Instead the people depend on Castro." Elizabeth Davis, "Cuban Embargo Not Good Enough This Time," *The Daily Beacon*, 26 February 1996, A20. As a result of hardline U.S. policies Castro has also been able to, as one observer put it, "renew his claim to victimhood, and

that in this case assassination has not brought about warmer relations, or discernibly changed Castro's behaviour. We cannot say that the attempts on Castro furthered U.S. interests, thus, on this dimension the assassination was a failure.³⁴

Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

Due to the fact that no attempt ever achieved tactical success, this test is inapplicable to this case.

Were there any unintended consequences in terms of internal upheaval in the Cuba following the assassination?

Due to the that the attempts examined have all failed tactically it is impossible to measure this variable – as it is designed to measure the problems that can be caused by a successful attempt and what occurs in a targeted state following such a development.

Counterfactual Questions

What if the CIA had killed Castro? The rationale behind removing Castro was to eradicate communism in Cuba and to prevent its spread throughout the U.S. sphere of influence.

The evidence available indicates that Castro's personal popularity and prestige were indispensable to the Cuban Revolution in its embryonic stages, prior to the Bay of

reinforce many of his favourite nationalist arguments." Philip Peters, "A Policy Towards Cuba That Serves U.S. Interests," *CATO Policy Analysis*, 2 November 2000, 1.

³⁴ It is impossible to tell whether or not the assassination attempts caused Castro to change his mind about certain decisions he was going to make. I have not been able to access primary documents that might demonstrate that due to the attempts he decided not to take certain courses of action. However, rhetoric and some actions such as sending troops to Angola indicate that Castro's position vis-à-vis the U.S. has not substantially moderated.

Pigs in the spring of 1961.³⁵ The Revolution was not well institutionalized and the government apparatus was not well developed. Moreover, Castro was essential to controlling tensions and jealousies amongst his principal lieutenants: his brother Raul who headed the armed forces; Che Guevara, the director of industrial development; and Nunez Jimenez, the director of agrarian reform.³⁶ In the first two years CIA research reports claimed, “There could be a falling out among them (the lieutenants) at Castro’s funeral. There would almost certainly be a struggle for power among them afterward.”³⁷ The CIA assessment is backed up by Guevara’s departure in 1965 and preceded by his gradual loss of power in the Cuban government.³⁸ In light of these observations it appears as though the U.S. might have gained strategic advantage by killing Castro in the early years. He was immensely popular and a key figure in the Revolution, though the Revolution might have taken place without him, it is fair to say his presence was crucial.³⁹ However, no attempts on Castro took place during this time period.

Were there other policy options open? Given Castro’s own rhetoric, there is little to believe he is looking to export the revolution.⁴⁰ The U.S. has tried other options with Cuba, including the embargo option and the paramilitary option.⁴¹ These have both failed to bring about Castro’s demise. Cuba is a tiny, economically weak island. It is hardly a place from which a worldwide revolution is going to be launched. The situation today

³⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, *Research Report – Latin America V.3 1946-1976* (Washington DC: Universal Publications of America, 1982), 12-13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁸ “Cuba Timeline of Events,” *Centre for International Policy*.

³⁹ Smith, 13-42.

⁴⁰ See footnote 79.

⁴¹ Peter Kornbluh, *Bay of Pigs Declassified: The Secret CIA report on the Invasion of Cuba* (New York: The New Press, 1998) is an excellent account of the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

might not be much different if the U.S. had just left Castro in power, and told him that any attempts to spread the revolution beyond the Cuban borders would be met with force.

An argument for ignoring Castro can also be made based upon the nature of the end of the Soviet Union and the end of communism in the East Bloc. In both cases the systems fell apart by themselves, and without U.S. military intervention or leadership assassination.⁴² Socialist societies, with internal problems resulting from inefficient economies, have proven that they can crumble as a result of their own policies. There is little reason to believe that if the U.S. had just ignored Castro, he would eventually have had to change his ways, and in fact he has begun to enact some market reforms due to the loss of Soviet aid.⁴³ For these reasons, on this dimension, the assassination attempts are judged a failure, because they have not dislodged Castro, changed behaviour or muted his anti-American rhetoric.

What this reveals about assassinations

What does this case reveal about the conditions that may lead to tactical success?

The case shows that U.S. government employees are unlikely to neutralize a targeted leader. Moreover, even proxies will have some trouble achieving tactical success against a leader who has an extensive personal security apparatus

Is a tactically unsuccessful attempt likely to change the behaviour of problematic leadership?

⁴² Many works have cited the role of internal factors as the main cause for the fall of communism. Fred Coleman, *The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), David Satter, *Age of Delirium: The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1996).

⁴³ Peters, 2.

The claim that assassination can somehow bring about a change in behaviour if tactical success is not realized is called into question here, as evinced by Castro's continued commitment to Communism and anti-American rhetoric. Nor did Castro's relations with the Soviets weaken until the demise of the Soviet Union.

The Attempt on Moammar Qaddafi – Libya, 1986

To the chagrin of most Western states, particularly the U.S. and Britain, since a 1969 coup that resulted in the overthrow of King Idris, Colonel Moammar Qaddafi has ruled Libya.⁴⁴ In the 1980's, after years of frustration with Qaddafi's regime, several actions, including the deaths of two American servicemen in a Berlin discotheque, prompted elements within the U.S. government to authorize the bombing of targets that Qaddafi and his family inhabited.⁴⁵

The attempt to eliminate Moammar Qaddafi also represents a failure of assassination to advance the interests of the United States. It certainly did not change Qaddafi's behaviour and all indications point to the fact that other means, such as sanctions, may have done so. Following the assassination attempt, Qaddafi struck back by engineering the bombing of Pan-American Airlines flight 103 over Lockerbie,

⁴⁴ Martin Sicker, *The Making of a Pariah State: The Adventurous Politics of Muammar Qaddafi* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 15-25.

⁴⁵ Seymour Hersch, "Target Qaddafi," *New York Times Magazine*, 22 February 1987, 17. A short account of the oil embargo is provided in Dirk Vandewal, *Libya Since Independence: Oil and State-Building* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 74-81. The U.S. also accused Libya of two complicity in two bomb attacks at Rome and Vienna airports on 27 December 1985. Around this time Qaddafi was also raising eyebrows by saying things like, "the world sympathizes with Jews because they faced massacres, but now the Arabs are paying the price for Hitler's fault." Later he went further, accusing the U.S of "hating us because we are Arabs" and saying that the United States had "turned us [Arabs] into terrorists and given us the legitimacy to be so and act as terrorists." That same year Qaddafi gave Louis Farrakhan \$5 million to "struggle to establish an independent state." Guy Arnold, *The Maverick State: Qaddafi and the New World Order* (New York: Cassell, 1996), 96.

supporting the argument that assassination did not change his behaviour to a manner more congruent with U.S. interests

Below, I examine the rationale and policy goals behind the attempt on Qaddafi's life. Following that, I detail the plot. I then apply the selected indicators of success or failure to the case. I conclude by elucidating what this reveals about assassination.

Rationale and Policy Goals

At the time of the attempt on his life, Qaddafi virtually defined the idea of 'problematic leadership'. Among his many professed goals anathema to U.S. policymakers were the elimination of Israel, Arab unity and the removal of Western influence in the Middle East and North Africa. Compounding these goals were his actions, including among other things, his role in the 1973 oil embargo, extensive arms purchases from the Soviet bloc, widespread support of terrorism, particularly Palestinian terrorism, merger attempts with neighbours in pursuit of Arab Unity, and the aforementioned bombing in Berlin.⁴⁶ In short, Qaddafi was hardly considered by the Reagan Administration to be the apotheosis of leadership.⁴⁷ The hope was that by eliminating Qaddafi the U.S. would rid the world of a sponsor of terrorism and a problematic leader. If successful, the Reagan Administration hoped Qaddafi could be

⁴⁶ For more info on the Lockerbie bombing and aftermath see Rodney Wallis, *Lockerbie: The Story and The Lessons* (New York : Praeger, 2001).

⁴⁷ Prior to the attack on Qaddafi's compound, in December of 1985, Reagan said, "Qaddafi and other Libyan officials have publicly admitted that the Libyan Government has abetted and supported the notorious Abu Nidal terrorist group which was directly responsible for the Rome and Vienna attacks. Qaddafi called them 'heroic actions' and I call them criminal outrages by an outlaw regime. By providing material support to terrorist groups which attack U.S. citizens, Libya has engaged in armed aggression against the United States under the established principals of international law, just as if it had used its own armed forces." Arnold, 96. There is, however, some debate over the amount of time that the U.S. and Libya have been enemies. Other experts maintain that the U.S. and Libya have been antagonistic to one another for over two hundred years. Talal Belrhiti, "The Terrorism Problem in Libyan-American Relations: Past and Future," *The Middle East Institute*. Document online. Accessed 8 January 2003. Available from: www.mideasti.org/html/b-belrhiti043002.htm.

replaced with leadership more congruent with U.S. interests, specifically that terrorism against U.S. targets would decline, and a friendly government would take power in Libya.

The Plot

On April 14, 1986, fourteen American warplanes left England destined for Tripoli, Libya. Their target was Colonel Moammar Qaddafi, Libyan strongman par excellence. The direct targeting by overt military means marked an unprecedented peacetime mission for the U.S. military.⁴⁸ The U.S. attack, known as “Operation El Dorado Canyon” did not kill Qaddafi, but supposedly did kill one of his daughters, injured his wife and two of his sons, and reportedly left him psychologically shaken. In addition, the munitions destroyed much of his compound.⁴⁹

Assessing the Assassination

Did the mission achieve tactical success?

The mission, which involved direct military targeting of an autocrat, did not achieve tactical success.

⁴⁸ The raid also involved an attack on other targets around Tripoli and Benghazi. The Reagan Administration described the raid as a justified retaliation to the attacks in Berlin and other Libyan terrorist actions. The non-aligned movement condemned U.S. actions as unprovoked aggression. Ronald Bruce St. John, *Qaddafi's World Design: Libyan Foreign Policy 1969-1987* (London: Saqi Books, 1987), 84.

⁴⁹ Joseph Stanick, “Swift and Effective Retribution: The U.S. Sixth Fleet and the Confrontation With Qaddafi,” *The U.S. Navy and The Modern World Series*, No. 3 (Washington DC: Naval Historical Centre, 1996), 49-50.

Did the assassination attempt change Qaddafi's behaviour?

Because this is a case of tactical failure, the investigation will look for evidence that the attempt changed behaviour (had a deterrent effect).

In the weeks following the attempt, there was a spike in terrorist activity that targeted Americans.⁵⁰ Rhetoric emanating from Libya broadcast outfits called for Arabs to attack American people and their assets. In July of 1986, nine Libyan nationals were arrested for planning the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Benin.

From August 1986 to 1988, the number of Libyan initiated plots declined and Qaddafi's rhetoric in support of terrorist groups also muted.⁵¹ Still, it is difficult to assess whether the drop in incidents perpetrated by Libya was due to the deterrent effect of the assassination, or the reduced capabilities brought on by the imposition of European Economic Community sanctions imposed prior to the April 15th raid.

Whatever the initial effect of the raid, Qaddafi did eventually strike back at his enemies. Qaddafi and other Libyan nationals were involved in the December 1988 destruction of Pan Am flight 103, which killed 270 people, including 189 Americans.⁵² This figure far exceeds the number that were killed in the Berlin discotheque bombing which supposedly provided partial justification for Operation El Dorado Canyon. This indicates that the assassination did not deter terrorist activity and thus cannot be said to have realized its goals.

⁵⁰ One analysis counted 18 events in the second half of April, 1986. Hosmer, 28.

⁵¹ Stanick, 49.

⁵² Hosmer, 30. As of March 12 2003, reports are that Libya, the U.S. and Britain are close to reaching a deal on compensation for the families of victims of the Pan Am bombing. Reports indicate that the deal will include dropping UN sanctions against Libya and the payment of \$10 million to each of the victims' families. "Lockerbie Bombing Deal Said Reached," *Reuters*, 11 March 2003. Document online. Accessed 13 March 2003. Available from: <http://reuters.com/newsArticle.jhtml?type=topNews&storyID=2364455>.

Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

As this is a case of a failed assassination attempt, this test is inapplicable.

Were there any unintended consequences in terms of internal upheaval in the Vietnam following the assassination?

As this is a case of a failed assassination attempt, this test is inapplicable.

Counterfactual Questions

What if the U.S. had killed Qaddafi? The goal behind removing Qaddafi was to eliminate a sponsor of terror and a vociferous anti-American leader.⁵³ The most obvious answer to this question is that if the bombs dropped during Operation El Dorado Canyon had killed Qaddafi the Lockerbie bombing would not have occurred and 270 people would still be alive. Based upon this, killing Qaddafi would have been a resounding success. However, had Qaddafi died finding a suitable successor would have been an onerous task. Libya has long been a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism and Qaddafi has taken pains to ensure that these groups are suppressed.⁵⁴ As recently as 1996, Qaddafi's troops attacked fundamentalist rebels in various regions around Libya.⁵⁵ Feeling a threat from fundamentalist Islam, Libya was one of the first states to condemn the 9/11 attacks and, almost immediately, sent intelligence experts to meetings with senior U.S.

⁵³ Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 366.

⁵⁴ For instance, a group known as the Sanusiya formed an Islamic brotherhood, which Qaddafi banned in 1980. It is ironic that Qaddafi, long known in the West, as a fundamentalist has felt the need to ban such groups. James Bruce, "As Khadafy Celebrates 27 Years, His Fundamentalist Challenge Grows." Document online. Accessed 8 January 2003. Available from: www.pollux.com/defenseweb/1996/sept96/libya!.htm.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

officials.⁵⁶ Certainly the sanctions imposed upon Libya are part of the reason for this. However, Qaddafi's domestic Islamist challenge indicates that had he been killed there might now be a fundamentalist government in Libya, with positions far less congruent with the West than those of Qaddafi. Given this reality, it is hard to say that by killing Qaddafi benefits would have accrued in the long term. In fact, things might be considerably worse than they are presently.

What if the U.S. had not attempted the assassination? It seems as though U.S. policymakers foreswore assassination against Qaddafi after it was learned that he was involved in the Lockerbie bombing. Instead they took the matter to the UN Security Council, which imposed sanctions in 1991 and 1992. Quite clearly, assassination was not the only option open to America. The sanctions regime has proven effective against Qaddafi, and his behaviour has changed.⁵⁷ Qaddafi turned over the Pan Am suspect only after the imposition of UN sanctions.⁵⁸ In fact, the entire dialogue on compensating the victims of flight 103 has been predicated upon removing these sanctions from Libya.⁵⁹ Whereas Qaddafi endorsed terrorism following the assassination attempt, he has altered his behaviour as a result of the isolation and economic hardships caused by sanctions.

⁵⁶ William Lewis, "The War On Terrorism: The Libya Case," *The Atlantic Council of the United States Bulletin* 13, no. 3 (2001), 2.

⁵⁷ Qaddafi's rhetoric has also changed. Recently Qaddafi said that "It is no longer acceptable or reasonable to say that the Jew should be thrown in to the sea...as far as Libya is concerned we find ourselves today in one trench fighting one common enemy [fundamentalism] with America." Scott Anderson, "The Makeover," *New York Times Magazine*, 19 January 2003, 30. The Libyan economy has been hurt by sanctions. Annual growth rates of total and per capita GDP have been declining since 1992. Mansour El-Kikhia, *Libya's Qaddafi* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1997), 96.

⁵⁸ As one observer says, "Over time it appears the sanctions have had an effect on Libya and it appears, on Qaddafi himself...sanctions were a significant element in the long multifaceted campaign to persuade Qaddafi to curtail his support for terrorism." David Tucker, "Pan Am Flight 103 – The Verdict is in," *Ashbrook Centre for Public Affairs*, January 2001. Document online. Accessed on 13 March 2003. Available from: <http://www.ashbrook.org/publicat/oped/tucker/01/verdict.html>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

What this reveals about assassinations

What does this case reveal about the tactical side of assassination?

The case illustrates the difficulty of eliminating a leader who prioritizes personal security. Like Saddam Hussein, Qaddafi rarely sleeps in the same quarters two nights in a row, making it hard to locate him.⁶⁰ The attempt also supports arguments about the inability of U.S. forces to successfully target enemy leaders.

What does this case reveal about assassination's ability to achieve goals if tactically unsuccessful?

Following the attempt on Qaddafi, he plotted the successful bombing of Pan Am flight 103. Based upon this, his behaviour can hardly be said to have changed for the better. While it has changed, there is much reason to believe that this is due to diplomatic isolation and the imposition of sanctions.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the U.S. has not substantially furthered its interests through use of assassination. The Castro attempts have had little discernible effect on Castro's behaviour and other policies were open to America.. Finally the attempt on Moammar Qaddafi did not alter his behaviour as evinced by his support for the bombing of Pan Am flight 103. In this case, an embargo imposed by the international community seems to have brought about the realization of the U.S.'s goal of forcing Qaddafi to cease sponsoring terrorism, indicating that better policy options were available. The findings of this chapter are summarized in Table 4.1 on the next page.

⁶⁰ Brian Davis, *Qaddafi, Terrorism, and the Origins of the U.S. Attack on Libya* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 122.

Table 4.1 Results Summary of U.S.Cases of Tactical Failure

Case	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5
Castro	Failure	Failure	N/A	N/A	Failure
Qaddafi	Failure	Failure	N/A	N/A	Failure

Measure 1: Did the mission achieve tactical success?

Measure 2: Did relations improve the assassination if that was the goal? If improved relations were not a goal of the mission, were the goals met?

Measure 3: Did the mission have any unintended consequences in terms of the effects it had upon successor leadership in the targeted country?

Measure 4: Did the targeted country experience internal upheaval following the assassination?

Measure 5: Counterfactual questions.

The next chapter examines other states experiences with assassination. The rationale in doing this is to see if there are lessons to be learned and if other actors have had better experiences employing assassination to further their strategic interests.

Chapter 5 – Non-U.S. Cases of Assassination

Introduction

In order to ascertain the conditions that lead to a successful or failed use of assassination as a tool of foreign policy it is crucial to examine other states experiences. In this chapter, I examine and evaluate two other cases of assassination, the case of Engelbert Dollfuss, Austrian Chancellor, and the case of Jokhar Dudayev, Chechen President. I argue that the assassination of Engelbert Dollfuss represents a partial success. This is due to the fact that the Nazis improved their prospects in Austria by removing a leader who had banned their party. The successor leadership brought the Nazi party back to the Austrian scene, though it did not lead to the immediate realization of the broader policy goal of union between Austria and Germany. However, because the Nazis would likely have achieved their policy goals despite Dollfuss's presence, I argue that

assassination was not the only option available. I argue that the assassination of Jokhar Dudayev was a failure. I base this claim upon the fact that successor leadership has proven equally problematic, the Chechen theatre is still extremely chaotic and dangerous for Russians, and finally, the killing of Dudayev has calcified the resolve of the Chechen rebels.

The cases examined in this chapter will be evaluated based upon the same criteria, and in the same manner as the U.S. cases examined in the preceding chapters. I begin with the Dollfuss case and then evaluate the Dudayev assassination.

The Assassination of Engelbert Dollfuss -- Austria, 1934

Engelbert Dollfuss became Chancellor of Austria in 1932.⁶¹ His sojourn at the helm of that state proved to be a brief one, as he died on July 25, 1934.⁶² It was a tumultuous period in Austrian and European history, with Hitler on the rise and the Nazi war machine girding for battle. In 1933, in response to growing domestic unrest and parliamentary crisis, Dollfuss abolished democracy in Austria and declared that he would rule by decree.⁶³ This manoeuvre, designed to preserve his power, did not even succeed in preserving his life.

Below, I detail the rationale and policy goals behind the Nazi assassination of Dollfuss. I then examine the plot and attempt to extrapolate lessons about the tactical side

⁶¹ For biographical literature on Dollfuss see J.D. Gregory, *Dollfuss and His Times* (London: Hutchison, 1935) and Gordon Brook-Sheperd, *Dollfuss* (London: McMillan, 1961).

⁶² Francois Broche, *Assassinat Du Chancelier Dollfuss* (Paris: Editions Balland, 1977), 218.

⁶³ Gordon Brook-Sheppard, *Prelude to Infamy: The Story of Chancellor Dollfuss of Austria* (New York: Ivan Obolensky, 1961), 93.

of assassination that it reveals. Following that, I evaluate the assassination in the context of Nazi interests.

Rationale and Policy Goals

An Austrian by birth, Hitler had long dreamt of achieving “Anschluss” – union between Austria and Germany, under the banner of one German speaking state – despite the fact that it had been explicitly forbidden under the Treaty of Versailles.⁶⁴ The idea resonated with many Austrians and unofficial plebiscites held in the provinces in the 1920’s indicated that many Austrians supported the idea. When he came to power in 1933, Hitler began flooding Austria with pro-unification propaganda.⁶⁵ Dollfuss, who at the time was Chancellor, was obdurately opposed to union with Germany. Hitler was further angered when, in 1933, Dollfuss banned the Austrian Nazi Party, sending them underground.⁶⁶ Hitler therefore had two specific aims in killing Dollfuss. First was to remove a roadblock to “Anschluss.” Second, he wanted the Nazi party to once again become a legitimate political force in Austria.⁶⁷

The Plot

⁶⁴ The Treaty of Versailles said: “Germany acknowledges and will respect strictly the independence of Austria, within the frontiers which may be fixed in a Treaty between that State and the Principal Allied and Associated Powers; she agrees this independence shall be inalienable, except with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations.” Margaret Ball, *Post-War German-Austrian Relations: The Anschluss Movement 1918-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 21.

⁶⁵ Hitler also tried to get the National Socialists in Austria to wage a terror campaign inside Austria, while Germany applied economic pressure. Gottfried Karl-Kinderman, *Hitler’s Defeat in Austria 1933-1934* (Boulder: Westview, 1988), 18.

⁶⁶ Dollfuss’s battle against Nazism also necessitated a struggle against Social Democrats. Thus Dollfuss’s Christian Social Party gradually became more dominated by its right wing. Dollfuss believed that he could save Austria’s independence by fighting the Nazis on the Right and the Social Democrats on the Left. Alfred D. Low, *The Anschluss Movement 1931-38 and the Great Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 64-65.

⁶⁷ Chen Ching-chih, “Austria’s Anschluss is a lesson for Taiwan,” *Taipei Times*, 15 May 2001, 8.

As stated, the putsch against Dollfuss was a long time in the making. The plan was originally designed to take place on July 24, 1934. Nazi agents, dressed as Austrian Army soldiers were supposed to slip into a Cabinet meeting and take the entire Cabinet hostage, including Dollfuss.⁶⁸ However, due to perfidious elements within the perpetrating group, the plan was betrayed and the Cabinet meeting postponed until noon the following day. Strangely, neither Dollfuss nor any other member of the Cabinet was notified that an abortive coup had occurred.⁶⁹

The next day, at precisely the time the ceremonial guards of the Chancellery were to be relieved by a new cadre, the perpetrators, disguised as Austrian Army soldiers, entered the Chancellery along with the relief detachment. They quickly found Dollfuss in his first floor office and when he ran they shot him.⁷⁰

Assessing the Assassination

Did the mission achieve tactical success?

The mission, which involved proxy forces targeting an autocrat, achieved tactical success.

Did relations improve following the assassination?

5 year period

Following Dollfuss's death the Nazis and Austrians signed the Austro-German Agreement, whereby Germany agreed not to intervene in Austria. In return, Austria lifted

⁶⁸ Brook-Shepherd, *Prelude to Infamy*, 235-243.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 243-244.

⁷⁰ Jurgen Gehl, *Austria, Germany and the Anschluss, 1931-38* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 97-98. The very next day, an Austrian border patrol captured a German courier who was carrying details about the plan and putsch – the Nazis' cover was instantly blown.

the ban on the Nazi Party, which allowed the Nazis to again exist as a legitimate political force.⁷¹ The stated goal of Dollfuss's successor, Schuschnigg, was to "embark on the course of appeasement in order to save Austrian independence," which meant avoiding "everything which would give Germany a pretext for intervention."⁷² Judging from this statement and the fact that Schuschnigg actually did appease Germany through the signing of the Austro-German Agreement it is clear that Germany made gains in terms of its relations with Austria following the death of Dollfuss. Nazi interests were thus somewhat furthered by the assassination of Dollfuss.

Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

The Nazi's coup against Dollfuss was designed to oust his government and put in place one that could be coerced into Anschluss.⁷³ This did not immediately occur. In fact, Hitler had to wait until 1938 to achieve Anschluss. Still, the removal of Dollfuss ushered in the rule of Schuschnigg, who agreed to let the Nazi Party install a "representative" in Vienna.⁷⁴ By removing Dollfuss, Hitler got rid of a man who would not negotiate; he was replaced by a man who was willing to do so. In this regard, and because the Nazi party again became a legitimate political force in Austria, the assassination must be judged a partial success in the context of this test.

⁷¹ In 1936, the Austro-German Agreement was signed whereby Germany agreed not to intervene in Austria and Austria permitted Austrian Nazis to enter the government. Broche, 218.

⁷² Gehl, 105. Schuschnigg believed in Pan-Germanism, but not in the idea that "Greater Germany should be governed by Prussia."

⁷³ In fact, when Anschluss finally did occur in 1938 Schuschnigg said, "We submit to force." Gerald Stourzh, "From Reich to Republic," *Austria 1938-1988: Anschluss and the Fifty Years*, ed. William Wright (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press 1995), 30.

⁷⁴ For greater details on how Germany subjugated Austria see Gunter Bischof, "Historical Relations," *Unequal Partners: A Comparative Analysis of Relations Between Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany and Between Canada and the United States*, eds. Harald Von Riehoff and Hanspeter Neuhold (Boulder: Westview, 1993), 77-79.

Were there any unintended consequences in terms of internal upheaval in Austria following the assassination?

There was no significant internal upheaval following this assassination, and there is no evidence that it spurred the Austrians to resist German aggression more forcefully. For these reasons, on this dimension the assassination is judged a success.

Counterfactual Questions

What if Dollfuss had not been killed? Were there other options open?

The goals of the Dollfuss assassination were twofold. On a smaller scale, Hitler sought to renew the legitimacy of the Nazi party in Austria. On a larger scale, he hoped the elimination of Dollfuss would lead to Anschluss. The larger goal was not immediately realized. Had Dollfuss not been killed, it is likely that his ban on the Nazi party would have continued for a time. However, it is easy to doubt what effect this would have had on the prospects for Anschluss. In the early stages of WW II, the Nazi military machine rolled through Europe with relative ease. So awesome was the Nazi's might that it difficult to say Germany could not have rolled over Austria or coerced the country into Anschluss rather easily even if Dollfuss had been alive. The Nazis had policy options, and later exercised one of these by coercing Austria in to Anschluss. The assassination represented one of Hitler's earliest policy failures, despite the fact that limited gains were realized.⁷⁵ It is judged a partial success on this dimension because Hitler did not achieve both policy goals.

⁷⁵ Hitler had committed a blunder on the domestic policy side with his failed putsch in 1923. However, this represented one of his first foreign policy blunders. Gehl, 101.

What this reveals about assassinations

What does this case reveal about the conditions that may lead to tactical success?

The Dollfuss case supports arguments that levels of personal security are more important than regime type. Though he was an autocrat who ruled by decree, Dollfuss' security services failed to stop the assassins who sought to kill him. The case supports arguments made about the employment of proxy forces as a way to make tactical success more likely.

What does this case reveal about the idea of leaders as “centres of gravity”?

Based upon Dollfuss's stated opposition to the presence of the Nazi party on the Austrian political scene, and its subsequent re-emergence following his death, this case indicates that the leader may have been the “centre of gravity” and that his elimination brought about policy gains for the Nazis, specifically their re-emergence as a legitimate actor on the political scene in Austria. However, the killing did not lead to immediate Anschluss. This is the only case of a head of state's assassination examined in this study that partially supports the idea that a leader is a “centre of gravity.”

The Assassination of Jokhar Dudayev – Chechnya, 1996

The Caucasus region has been called Russia's “Wild West.”⁷⁶ If this description is accurate the autonomous republic of Chechnya is probably the wildest of this wild area.

⁷⁶ Robert Kaplan, “Where Europe Vanishes,” *Atlantic Monthly*, May 2000, 67.

In 1722, the first Russian incursion into the Caucasus occurred under Peter the Great.⁷⁷ Since that time, Russian and later Soviet forces have periodically entered Chechnya to quell internal upheavals. In 1991, Chechnya declared itself independent. Shortly thereafter, Jokhar Dudayev was elected as Chechnya's president.⁷⁸ His tenure was short and marked by war, as Russian troops began battling Chechen rebels in December of 1994.⁷⁹

Below, I detail the rationale and policy goals of the Russian assassination of Dudayev. Next, I evaluate the plot and elucidate the lessons it reveals about the tactical side of assassinations. Finally, I evaluate the assassination in the context of Russian interests.

Rationale and Policy Goals

Russian secret services had been trying to kill Dudayev for some time before his death. Dudayev claimed that they had attempted all manner of schemes, from giving his bodyguard a knife with a transmitter in it, to placing bugs in his car.⁸⁰ The Russian

⁷⁷ PBS, "Greetings From Grozny." Document online. Accessed 8 January 2003. Available from: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/chechnya/timeline2.html>

⁷⁸ Some claim that Dudayev benefited in the election as a result of his military service. This, some observers say, raised his profile in Chechnya. Dudayev was one of the few Chechens who volunteered to serve in the Soviet military. He was a renowned bomber pilot and attained the rank of Major General before the age of fifty. His outstanding military career raised his profile in Chechnya and the nationalists chose him as their candidate for the election of 27 October 1991. After being elected Dudayev immediately angered Russian policymakers by threatening to blow up nuclear power plants if Russia did not leave Chechnya alone and by establishing a Chechen armed force. Victor A. Kremenyuk, *Conflict in and Around Russia: Nation Building in Difficult Times* (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1994), 25-27.

⁷⁹ Yeltsin said there was a need to "disarm illegally armed formations." The origins of the war in Chechnya are well documented in John Dunlop, *Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-23.

⁸⁰ Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 318-323. Prior to his death, at what would be his last press conference, Dudayev said, "The main plan is to kill Dudayev." Dudayev's aura of immortality was somewhat well earned and the Russian press often asked why the FSB or the Army had not killed him. Failure to kill Dudayev engendered conspiracy theories about high ranking Russian officials and their "secret dealings" with Dudayev. Sebastian Smith, *Allah's Mountains: Politics and War in the Russian Caucasus* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 230.

rationale assumed that if the leadership of the rebel nation were eliminated the Russians could pacify the Chechen people and crush the drive for Chechen independence.⁸¹

The Plot

Several approaches to killing Dudayev were considered; among these were the deployment of elite special forces to catch him if his location could be fixed, and the use of an undercover assassin. It was eventually decided that neither of these strategies would work and that the best way to eliminate Dudayev was from the air.⁸² On April 21, 1996 Dudayev pulled his vehicle off the road near the village of Gekhi-Chu, thirty kilometres southwest of Grozny, to make a call on his cellular phone. It would prove to be his last phone call, as a Russian missile fired from a helicopter homed in on the signal Dudayev's phone was emitting. A piece of shrapnel penetrated the back of his head and he died shortly thereafter.⁸³

Assessing the Assassination

Did the mission achieve tactical success?

The mission, which consisted of direct military targeting, achieved tactical success.

Did relations improve following the assassination?

⁸¹ This is a deductive statement, but one that can be made. Clearly there was an assumption that if Dudayev died the rebels would stop fighting, Russia would win or peace would ensue.

⁸² Smith, 230.

⁸³ Malcolm Gray, "Fatal Phone Call for Moscow's Nemesis," *MacLean's*, 29 April 1996, 30.

There is little evidence to suggest that Russian-Chechen relations have grown stronger as a result of Dudayev's death. Though the Russians and Chechens engaged in peace negotiations and concluded an accord in the May of 1996, the deal fell apart in August of 1999 with renewed violence in Chechnya.⁸⁴ Currently, the prospects for better relations have been hampered by the rise in fundamentalism.⁸⁵

Were there unintended consequences in terms of the effects the assassination had upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

Following Dudayev's removal from the scene, Boris Yeltsin won the Russian presidential election on July 9, 1996.⁸⁶ However, assassinating Dudayev did little to advance Russian interests in the Caucasus. Shortly after Dudayev's death Chechen fighters became "determined to abide by their constitution and united in their desire not to let Russia exploit any internal differences."⁸⁷ The rebel commanders also

⁸⁴ Sophia Lambroschini, "1999 in Review: In Chechnya the War Resumes," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Document online. Accessed 12 March 2003. Available from: <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1999/12/F.RU.991230160056.html>.

⁸⁵ A group of experts concluded the following in January of 2000: "...the influence of radical Muslim fundamentalism from external sources was a negative development, acting in opposition to the moderate Sufi Islam more common to Chechnya...as the inability of Aslan Maskhadov and his administration to bring order to Chechnya after the end of the "first" Chechen war of 1994-96. The Chechen president proved irresolute in the fight against Islamic fundamentalism, itself often a cover for organized banditry." Carnegie Endowment for Peace, "Ethnicity and Nation-Building," 21 January 2000. Document online. Accessed 2 March 2003. Available from: <http://www.carnegie.ru/english/Pr/2000/pr00-2101.htm>. There is history of fundamentalism in Chechnya, but if war drags on experts claim it will continue to radicalize the fighters. Chechen expert Thomas de Waal says, "the longer Russia does not offer any political compromise with the radical bit of the population, the more they will turn to radicals in the Middle East. So in that sense, Chechnya is posing a greater and greater threat." Valentinas Mite, "Chechnya: Experts Play Down Links With International Terrorism," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Document online. Accessed 10 March 2003. Available from: <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2003/02/04022003161928.asp>. The trend in Chechnya seems to be toward fundamentalism. In February of 1999, President Maskhadov introduced Islamic law by Presidential decree. He also ordered the creation of a new constitution based on the Koran. Anna Mateeva, *The North Caucasus: Russia's Fragile Borderland* (London: Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1999), 94.

⁸⁶ The definitive work on the Chechen war claims that Yeltsin's victory was a result of elite backing and political apathy amongst Russian. Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russia Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 13-14.

⁸⁷ Gaal and de Waal, 324.

countenanced the succession of Dudayev's vice president Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, who retained power until losing the Chechen presidential election in January 1997.⁸⁸

In 1997, Chechens elected Aslan Maskhadov as their leader. At the same time, they changed Grozny's name to 'Jokhar' in honour of Dudayev.⁸⁹ This latter fact indicates that Dudayev became somewhat of a martyr after his death. From a Russian perspective there is little to suggest that Maskhadov has been a better leader than Dudayev.⁹⁰ He has not been able to control hardline elements within the rebel movement despite the institution of Islamic law (sharia) to preserve order.⁹¹ Judgement - failure

Were there any unintended consequences in terms of internal upheaval in Chechnya following the assassination?

Dudayev's death must be seen as a failure in the context of this test, as Russian troops have maintained a presence in Chechnya for the majority of the time since his assassination. Russia's re-entry into Chechnya began less than a week after Yeltsin's victory in the 1996 presidential election, when Russian paratroopers and bombers attempted to eliminate what remained of the rebel leadership. The operation failed and it emboldened the Chechens to retake Grozny later in 1996. In turn, this brought about the

⁸⁸ Hosmer, 23.

⁸⁹ PBS, "1997-Present: War With Russia II." Document online. Accessed on 8 January 2003. Available from: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/chechnya/timeline8.html>

⁹⁰ He has vowed to press on for independence saying, "that question was, I believe, decided in 1991. There can be no question of Chechnya's independence." Chris Hunter, "Chechnya Holds Democratic Elections." Document online. Accessed 1 March 2003. Available from: <http://www.isar.org/isar/archive/ST/chechelect46.html>

⁹¹ Russia alleges that Maskhadov is involved with terrorists and countenanced the 1999 invasion of Dagestan by warlord Shamil Basayev. See Ibid. The Kremlin also alleges that Maskhadov was instrumental in the planning of the seizure of a Moscow theatre in October 2002. Fareed Zakaria, "No White Hats in Moscow," *Newsweek*, 2 November 2002, 40.

withdrawal of Russian troops in the fall of 1996.⁹² The settlement postponed discussions of full-scale Chechen independence until 2001, however it was a de facto recognition of Chechnya's autonomy.⁹³

Subsequently, in August of 1999, Russian troops returned to Chechnya to eliminate a 'terrorist threat' following bombings of two apartment complexes in Moscow. Thus began the Second Chechen War.⁹⁴ The conflict has since become a guerrilla war of attrition, pitting Russian conscripts against the Chechen resistance. It is, by many accounts, a humanitarian disaster of epic proportions, and in Grozny kidnapping is flourishing business.⁹⁵ To this day rebels continue to inflict losses upon the Russian Army and there is no foreseeable end in sight.⁹⁶

Worse yet, the conflict may spread to other areas in the Caucasus. In 2001 and 2002 Russia began to pressure Georgia to do more to oust Chechen fighters from Georgia's Pankisi Gorge.⁹⁷ According to some experts, there is potential for an explosion in Muslim Tatarstan in Dagestan.⁹⁸ Regardless of this potential, acts of terror continue both in Grozny and on Russian soil. Not only has Russia had to redeploy troops in Chechnya, but it has also had to deal with security issues at home perpetrated by disaffected Chechens.⁹⁹

⁹² Gaal and de Waal, 329-361.

⁹³ PBS, "1994-1996 War With Russia," Document online. Accessed 8 January 2003. Available from: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/chechnya/timeline7.html>

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Background Notes: Russia* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Press, 2000). There is, however, no conclusive proof that the perpetrators of these bombings were Chechens.

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Welcome to Hell: Arbitrary Detention, Torture and Extortion in Chechnya* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2000), 1.

⁹⁶ It is estimated that reconstruction of Chechnya will cost several billion dollars. Paul Starobin, "Life is Horrible," *Business Week*, 16 December 2002, 52

⁹⁷ "Strange Bangs," *The Economist* 2 December 2000, 51

⁹⁸ Tatars signed an autonomy pact with Moscow in 1994, but Tatar nationalism is growing. Rajan Menon, "Russia's Ruinous Chechen War," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 2 (January/February 2000), 32-45.

⁹⁹ For example the Moscow theatre siege in October and the bombing of the Kremlin backed government's headquarters on December 27, 2002. Maskhadov has denied involvement in both plots, despite Russian

In short the killing of Dudayev has not mollified Russian worries in Chechnya or the Caucasus. Chaos still reigns in Chechnya, and Russia continues to expend time and energy attempting to suppress it.¹⁰⁰ Judgement – failure

Counterfactual Questions

What if Dudayev had not been killed? The main goal underpinning the Dudayev assassination was to pacify the Chechen drive for independence. This was clearly not realized. In fact, little would be different today if Dudayev had not been killed. There would be one less martyr for the resistance. It is likely that for many Chechens Dudayev's death was one more act of Russian aggression against their nation. Along with forced deportations under Stalin and the brutal campaigns launched in the 1800's by General Alexander Yermolov, the Dudayev assassination will likely live on in the Chechen collective conscience.¹⁰¹ Such historical memories can sometimes serve to undermine the resolution of conflict.

Were there other policy options open to Russia? Following Dudayev's death, the Russians and Chechens signed a peace accord May of 1996.¹⁰² Lieven claims that Dudayev's death was a precursor to peace because he had a history of being a bad

accusations to the contrary. "Russian Prosecutor Calls For Firing of Chechen Security Chiefs After Bombing," *Canadian Press Newswire*, 29 December 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Islamic radicals from Saudi Arabia have brought the hardline Wahhabi brand of Islam to the Caucasus and it is catching on. For an excellent overview of Islam in the Caucasus see, Yavus Akmadov and Stephen Bowers, "Islam in the North Caucasus," *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 26, no. 3 (1999), 569-588.

¹⁰¹ PBS, "Greetings From Grozny." Document online. Accessed 8 January 2003. Available from: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/chechnya/timeline3.html>

¹⁰² Much of the Russian public favoured this option. At the end of March 1996, 52% of Russians advocated total withdrawal from Chechnya. At the same time 57% supported peace talks between Russia and Dudayev, with only 28% opposing talks. Lieven, 139-140.

negotiator and a sullied relationship with Russian peace envoy Alexander Lebed.¹⁰³

Dudayev's death also made it easier for the Russians to admit defeat. Death of their nemesis gave Russian leaders a tool for face saving.¹⁰⁴ However, Lieven was writing prior to the Russian return to Chechnya in 1999. Dudayev's death may have led to peace in the short term, but not in the medium or long terms.

Dudayev's death may have been a necessary precursor to peace, but not a long lasting peace. The assassination should thus be viewed as a failure in the context of this test. Perhaps the real Russian error was the immediate betrayal of the Chechens and the peace accord; this could have been pursued more honestly.¹⁰⁵ As a result, on this dimension this assassination is judged a failure

What this reveals about assassinations

What does this case reveal about the conditions that may lead to tactical success?

The case is one of overt assassination that succeeded tactically carried out during a period of defacto war.¹⁰⁶ Though Dudayev was normally careful about his personal security, the fact that he was hit by a missile that homed in on his cellular phone signal shows that he was not being over cautious at the time of his death.

What does this case reveal about the idea of leaders as "centres of gravity"?

¹⁰³ Ibid., 140.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 140-141.

¹⁰⁵ Dudayev was killed on 26 April 1996, twenty-five days after combat operations were "terminated." Stasys Knezys, *The War in Chechnya* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 267-304. The fact that Russia continued military action after combat was supposedly over, clearly bred more distrust on the part of the Chechens vis-à-vis the Russians. See footnote 29 as well.

¹⁰⁶ Though peace accords had been signed three weeks prior to Dudayev's death, Russian troops continued involvement in operations indicates that peace was, at best, very tenuous. See previous footnote.

This case is an excellent refutation of arguments made about leaders as centres of gravity that, if removed, will cause problems to abate. The Dudayev assassination did not lead to substantially better relations between Russia and Chechnya in the long term, led to Dudayev becoming a martyr, calcified Chechen resolve to continue the fight for independence, and finally has not discernibly done anything to advance Russian policy interests in Chechnya. Though Russia destroyed its nemesis, new individuals have taken his place.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have evaluated the assassinations of Engelbert Dollfuss and Jokhar Dudayev. Based upon the evaluative framework the Dollfuss assassination has been judged a partial success and the Dudayev case a failure. Dollfuss's removal led to the re-emergence of Nazis as a legitimate political force in Austria. While it did not immediately lead to Anschluss, it did bring about leadership that behaved in manner more congruent with Nazi interests. Assassination was, however, not the only policy option open to the Nazi. Given the strength of the Nazi military and its performance in the early years of WWII, it is likely that Hitler would have been able to overrun Austria easily or coerce the country into Anschluss through threatening posturing. Perhaps other displays of Nazi power would have led to Anschluss without a single bullet being fired. Unlike the Dollfuss case, the assassination of Jokhar Dudayev has not furthered the interests of the perpetrator. Dudayev's death has not bred warmer relations or ended the hostilities in Chechnya. Instead it has made a martyr out of him.

These cases touch on the broader issue of leaders as centres of gravity. One case partially supports this notion and one does not. Dudayev was clearly not a centre of gravity, as demonstrated by the continuation of fighting in Chechnya. Conversely, Dollfuss's death led to the Nazis achievement of some of their goals, specifically the re-emergence of their party in Austria. It did not, however, lead to immediate Anschluss. The results from this chapter are summarized in Table 5.1 on the next page.

Table 5.1 Results Summary of Non-U.S.Cases

Case	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5
Dollfuss	Success	Partial Success	Partial Success	Success	Failure
Dudayev	Success	Failure	Failure	Failure	Failure

Measure 1: Did the mission achieve tactical success?

Measure 2: Did relations improve the assassination if that was the goal? If improved relations were not a goal of the mission, were the goals met?

Measure 3: Did the mission have any unintended consequences in terms of the effects it had upon successor leadership in the targeted country?

Measure 4: Did the targeted country experience internal upheaval following the assassination?

Measure 5: Counterfactual questions.

The next chapter is a summary and interpretation of the findings of this study, wherein the arguments are summarized, and conditions for the successful use of assassination as a tool of foreign policy are delineated. The chapter also details policy prescriptions

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Introduction

The evaluation performed here demonstrates that assassination has not been a useful tool of U.S. foreign policy. Only one out of seven U.S. cases amounts to a success and five of seven are rated failures. Below, I outline and summarize the findings and delineate the conditions that contribute to both tactical and strategic success of assassination. The findings are summarized in Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 below:

Table 6.1 – Summary of the Findings on U.S. Cases

Target	Position	Regime type	U.S Role	Tactical Outcome	Strategic Outcome
Yamamoto	Admiral	Autocracy	Direct	Success	Success
Lumumba	Head of state	Democracy	Indirect/proxy	Success	Partial success
Trujillo	Head of state	Autocracy	Indirect/proxy	Success	Failure
Diem	Head of state	Autocracy	Indirect/proxy	Success	Failure
Castro	Head of state	Autocracy	Indirect/proxy and direct	Failure	Failure
Qaddafi	Head of state	Autocracy	Direct	Failure	Failure

Table 6.2 – Summary of the Findings on Non-U.S. Cases

Target	Position	Regime Type	Perpetrator's role	Tactical Outcome	Strategic Outcome
Dollfuss	Head of State	Autocracy	Indirect/proxy	Success	Partial Success
Dudayev	Independence Leader	Democracy	Direct	Success	Failure

Conditions Leading to Tactical Success or Failure

Conventional wisdom is that autocratic leaders are harder to assassinate, based upon the closed nature of their regimes and the priority placed on rooting out dissenters. However, three out of the five autocrats that the U.S. targeted were killed, indicating the regime type is not the sole, or most powerful factor at play. Though the one democrat the U.S. targeted was killed, it is still impossible to say that democratic leaders are more vulnerable based upon one case. All the leaders that the U.S. plots successfully targeted suffered from either overestimating the degree of support they had or breakdowns in their personal security structure. Yamamoto was killed as a result of his foolhardy decision to proceed with visiting his troops even after his staff thought the U.S. had intercepted cable transmissions containing his itinerary. Diem and Trujillo both overestimated the degree of support they had from the U.S. and from certain elements within their own countries. Lumumba, who was a democratically elected leader, had a tenure in office marked by a great degree of internal upheaval, and a wide array of competing factions jockeying for power.

Arguments about regime type being the determining factor in the likelihood of tactical success are not substantiated by this investigation. The key seems to be the extent of personal security, and the degree of support a leader enjoys.

Can assassination bring about warmer relations if that is the goal? If tactically unsuccessful, can assassination change unwanted behaviour?

The findings of this study indicate that assassination is unlikely to bring about warmer relations with the targeted state, if that is the goal. In the two instances of tactical

failure, the cases of Castro and Qaddafi, the attempts have had no discernible effect in terms of changing behaviour. The Qaddafi case demonstrates that assassination may lead targeted leadership to take drastic retaliatory action, as evinced by the bombing of Pan Am flight 103. In instances of tactical success, two cases brought about a partial improvement in relations over time. However, relations were periodically rocky with Mobutu and the successors of Trujillo.

Why is assassination unlikely to change behaviour or breed better relations?

Assassination of an enemy leader is a dramatic step. The concept is partly predicated upon the assumption that a successor leader will espouse positions more congruent with the interests of the perpetrator. In the cases Diem and Dudayev, this assumption is called into question. Predicting behaviour of successors is very hard. Proponents of assassination assume, wrongly, that this is possible. Even if, initially, relations improve this can change in the long term. Examples detailed in this study include Pinochet and Mobutu. The U.S initially supported both men. However, the actions of these men, specifically Mobutu's expulsion of U.S. Ambassador Deane Hinton and Pinochet unwillingness to enact democratic and human rights reforms, led to a breakdown of relations at certain junctures during their tenures in power. Assassination is clearly not a panacea for engendering warmer relations.

Does assassination lead to unintended consequences in terms of the effects it has upon successor leadership of the targeted country or group?

On this dimension, three of the four U.S. cases rated failures. In two cases, those of Trujillo and Diem, the U.S. was unsatisfied with the successors. The Dudayev case

buttresses these arguments. By many accounts Dudayev has become a martyr in death and Russia has not had a discernibly better time with any of his successors. Even in the case of partial success, such as the Dollfuss example, all policy goals may not be immediately achieved; recall that Hitler had to wait four more years to realize the goal of Anschluss.

Why can assassination have unintended effects upon successor leadership?

Proponents of assassination as a tool of foreign policy implicitly assume that successors will be more loyal or more supportive of the perpetrator's policies than their predecessors. Like the previous test, this assumes that behaviour can be predicted. This is not supported by the findings of this study.

Is assassination of a leader likely to cause internal upheaval in a targeted state?

The initial hypothesis of this investigation was that assassinating enemy leader would cause internal upheaval, as a result of the creation of a power vacuum. However, this is a specious argument. In only one case, the Trujillo assassination, did assassination lead to significant internal upheaval. The argument can be made that the Dudayev case did not stop the upheaval in Chechnya, as war continues. It did, however, lead to a short-lasting peace, and the internal tumult that resumed after Dudayev's death cannot be wholly attributed to his assassination, as Russian troops continued combat-style operations and attempted to capture the remaining elements of the rebel leadership.

Counterfactual Questions

The findings of this investigation reveal that there are almost always alternate or better policy options open to states other than assassination. In only one case out of eight, that of Yamamoto, was assassination the best policy. This case is slightly anomalous as it targeted a military leader and was not designed to affect the leadership structure of another state. In all other instances, even the largely successful Dollfuss case, there is no reason to believe a plot had to be concocted to eliminate the target. The policy goal of Anschluss would likely have been realized whether or not Dollfuss was alive. Assassination has obvious appeal to policymakers as it represents a “quick fix” to a problem. However, the more costly and painstaking approaches of diplomacy or warfare have served the U.S. interests far better than assassination.

Conditions conducive to strategically successful assassinations

This section identifies two conditions that are conducive to the strategic success of assassination, specifically the presence of like-minded successor leadership that is prepared to rule in an autocratic manner. Next, I identify when assassination may be a useful policy tool for the U.S.

The presence of like-minded leadership that is prepared to act tough

The necessity of the presence of leadership that believes in positions similar to those of the U.S. is obvious. Naturally the perpetrator hopes this will occur. However, successor leadership must also be prepared to act tough vis-à-vis domestic opponents or

outside powers. Assassinating a state leader invariably involves the creation of a power vacuum for a time. This necessitates the successor leadership fighting off challenges to power. In three of the four cases where a target head of state was killed, the U.S. did not need to devote an overly large amount of resources to quelling internal upheaval in the targeted country. In two cases the successor leadership was autocratic (General Minh and Mobutu).

This has major implications today. The U.S. now considers the promotion of democracy to be in its interest. Assassination, because of the power vacuum it creates, requires a successor to act tough and rule autocratically to fend off challenges to power. Given this, the use of assassination against heads of state is called into question today, as it is incongruent with the promotion of democracy.

When can assassination be a useful tool to the U.S.?

Assassination may be of some use against military targets and for limited aims during war. There is no dispute about the legality of killing an enemy military leader in war, and this removes potential international backlash and negates moral arguments. If the commander is neutralized this may, if we are to believe the findings of the Yamamoto case, affect enemy morale if the commander is revered and/or affect the ability of an enemy to prosecute battle campaigns. Though we should be cautious about extolling the virtues of targeting an enemy military leader due to the findings of one case, it is an option American policymakers should retain. The next subsection deals addresses the findings of the question about leaders as centres of gravity.

Leaders as Centres of Gravity

The main assumption behind targeting enemy leadership is that leaders are centres of gravity and that if the leader is removed a better situation for the perpetrator will result. My study has shown that this assumption is not universally true. First, targeting a leader is unlikely to lead to warmer relations with the successor, as the, Diem and Dudayev cases reveal, and may lead to better, but less than desirable successors, as the Trujillo and Lumumba cases partially reveal. Second, problems with a target country are frequently larger than the leadership alone. Thus, successors may not behave in a better manner than their predecessors. Finally, if a leader is eliminated his movement or supporters may continue to fight causing internal upheaval as seen in the Lumumba and Trujillo cases. There is a possibility that assassination may calcify their resolve as evinced in the Dudayev case.

The claim that leaders are centres of gravity is false not because the opposite is true, but because the evidence on this question is mixed. The next subsection deals with the implications of this study for the policy and academic debates on assassination.

Implications of this study for the policy academic debates

In the context of the public debate today, this study has much to say to those who advocate assassination as a tool against rogue regimes. This study has shown that assassination has not been a good policy for advancing American interests. Proponents who claim that targeted killings save the lives of innocents who live under the rule of

tyrants are not necessarily wrong in their assessment. However, they ignore the fact that eliminating a leader is unlikely to solve existing problems. Moreover, new, unintended problems may be borne as a result of assassination.

The assumption behind arguments advocating assassination against problematic leaders is that if the U.S. terminates leaders, problems will, for the most part, disappear. The logic is that leaders are centres of gravity. This study has shown that this is not always the case. Problems often persist after the death of leaders. Assassination is not a panacea.

This study has major implications for the academic literature as well. If assassinating heads of state is not a useful endeavour and does not fulfil interests, then the moral and legal literature is less important. While it may be interesting to debate whether international and/or American law prohibits assassination, it is less important given that this policy is not likely to fulfill interests. Likewise, the moral arguments about whether assassination is incongruent with the tenets of democracy are less relevant. In short, states ought to avoid employing assassination because it rarely advances broader interests, not because it is immoral or illegal.

The next section outlines several policy prescriptions pertaining to American use of assassination against rogue states

Policy Prescriptions

Saddam Hussein and Kim Jong-Il are two of the world's most problematic and dangerous leaders. If assassinating either man could solve the problems that they pose for U.S. and global security, it would be a fabulous way to achieve policy ends. First,

assassination would spare innocent civilian lives, as a war with either of these countries both known to harbour weapons of mass destruction would surely result in massive casualties. Moreover, the cost of waging war is rarely cheap and assassination would save a large sum of money that could be better spent elsewhere.¹ Second, the evidence indicates both of these men are duplicitous negotiators who feel no obligation to abide by international agreements.² In short, warfare is costly and diplomacy requires putting faith in known liars. Assassination seems a perfect fit.

The problem is that all the evidence points to the fact that assassination is unlikely to achieve tactical success in either case. Moreover, if it did, it is likely that the U.S. would be forced to expend immense energy and resources during the post assassination period due to the problems with successors. Finally, if an attempt failed there is no reason to believe that either of the megalomaniacs in question would not have their resolve strengthened.

In the next section, I detail the tactical problems associated with assassinating Saddam. I then examine what might happen if he could be removed via assassination. Following that, I look at the tactical difficulties associated with killing Kim and then examine the problems that might result if such an operation did succeed.

¹ On Iraq's WMD program see, The Wisconsin Project, "Iraq Watch – WMD Profiles." Document online. Accessed January 14, 2003. Available from: <http://www.iraqwatch.org/wmd/index.html>.

On North Korea's see, Federation of American Scientists, "North Korea: Special Weapons Program." Document online. Accessed January 14, 2003. Available from: <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/>

² Iraq has violated UN resolutions since 1991. "Wisconsin Project, Iraq Watch -- UN Documents." Document online. Accessed January 14, 2003. Available from: <http://www.iraqwatch.org/un/index.html#UNSCR>. DPRK has violated the Agreed Framework by declaring it has been actively seeking nuclear weapons since the 1994 Agreed Framework. David Albright and Kevin O'Neill, "The North Korean Nuclear Program: Unresolved Issues," *Institute for Science and International Security*. Document online. Accessed on January 14, 2003. Available from: <http://www.isis-online.org/publications/dprk/fs060694.html>

Problems Associated With Assassinating Saddam Hussein

One of the central findings of this study is that assassinating leaders with a high degree of personal security is very hard. In the cases examined, the only U.S. sponsored plots that succeeded occurred when these leaders overestimated the degree of support they had or were lax about their personal security. This problem does not plague Saddam. The opposite is true. There are four factors that indicate tactical success would be hard to achieve, they are: locating Saddam, his personal paranoia, his protection, and the historical record. The discussion below outlines the tactical impediments to assassinating Saddam.

Locating Saddam

Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq, a.k.a., The Anointed One, Glorious Leader, Direct Descendant of the Prophet, Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, Commander of the Armies of Iraq, Doctor of Iraqi Law, and Great Uncle of the Iraqi People, is a hard man to track down.³ Saddam never sleeps in his eight palaces, instead preferring to use secret hideaways or a tent, and often changing locations several times in the course of a night.⁴ Further, he often sleeps and holds meetings in civilian homes that are taken over suddenly.⁵ For this reason, his former intelligence chief claims, coalition bombs never fell within ten kilometres of Saddam during the Gulf War.⁶ Locating Saddam is clearly not an easy task. Other factors add to the problems of assassinating him as well.

³ List of Saddam's titles from Mark Bowden, "Tales of the Tyrant," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 2000, 35.

⁴ Johanna McGeary et al., "Inside Saddam's World," *Time*, September 28, 2002, 26.

⁵ William Arkin, "Baghdad: The Urban Sanctuary in Desert Storm," *Airpower Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1997), 5-7.

⁶ *Frontline*, interview with Wafiq al-Samarra'i, 2 May 2002.

Saddam's Personal Paranoia

In addition to the difficulties of locating Saddam, his rise to power has been brutal and thus he is deeply paranoid about his own security.⁷ Noted scholar Kenneth Pollack tells us that Saddam is almost always armed and wearing a bulletproof vest. Further, he employs body-doubles for public events, making it hard for would be assassins to establish if the target is actually him. Paranoia also leads him to take pains to ensure he is safe against poisoning, using the son of his personal chef as a food taster.⁸ His staff tests the pools in each of his palaces every hour for poisons.⁹ Finally, those being brought to see him are reportedly forced to shower and apply harsh disinfectants to their skin before seeing him.¹⁰

Saddam's personal paranoia is revealed by his travel arrangements. He travels in a large caravan of armed cars, and always uses exact duplicate caravans that head to other destinations as decoys. Within his chosen caravan he always decides which car he will travel in at the very last moment, and he usually drives the vehicle himself. Throughout the journey he normally alters the order procession of the cars in his motorcade several times. This ensures assassins cannot target one car. At times of extreme danger he has been known to commandeer taxicabs, or other civilian vehicles.¹¹

In short, Saddam has had to worry about his personal security for a long time. Being a brutal Sunni dictator in a majority Shi'ite land has endeared him to few

⁷ A chilling account of Saddam's rise to power and initial purge of the Ba'ath Party is provided by Kanan Makiya in *Republic of Fear* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and by Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 1-46.

⁸ Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm* (New York: Random House, 2002), 285.

⁹ Bowden, 36.

¹⁰ Pollack, 286.

¹¹ He did this during Desert Storm. *Ibid.*, 286

domestically. This has been compounded by a constant threat from foreign enemies. At this juncture, Saddam's paranoia ensures that security around him is extremely tight. The difficulty of locating Saddam, coupled with his paranoia and the security that it creates around him, make it difficult to advocate assassination as a way of dealing with Saddam. A closer look at his security services reinforces this point

Saddam's Protection

"Saddam's security makes the Secret Service's wall around the [U.S.] president seem like rice paper."¹² This reality is very much in keeping with the findings of this study. Saddam, like Castro, is aware that the U.S. desires his removal. Thus, he takes extreme pains with personal security. In the last year and a half, due largely to the 9/11 attacks, which Saddam thought he would be instantly blamed for, he has increased his personal security.

The inner circle of guards, al-Himaya, is made up exclusively of close relatives from his birthplace Tikrit. The second circle of guards is the Murafiqoun who are either blood relatives or come from old, close families friendly to Hussein. This group deals with personal security of the entire Hussein family and their loyalty is unwavering. The outermost circle is the Special Security Organization (SSO) run by his trusted son Qusay.¹³ The SSO deals with internal security and intelligence. So powerful is this organization that Iraq soldiers call its members "The Masters." According to Iraq

¹² Ibid., 285.

¹³ Ibid., 287. David Isenberg, "Inside Saddam's Security Network," *Asia Times*, 6 September 2002, provides a more detailed overview of the forces protecting Saddam. Document online. Accessed 23 March 2003. Available from: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/DI06Ak01.html.

opposition groups, Saddam has one of these watchdogs observing the move of every corps commander in the Iraqi Army at all times making a military coup unlikely.¹⁴

It Has Been Tried and Everyone Has Failed

Israel, Syria, Iran and the U.S. have all tried to topple Saddam at one time or another through covert action.¹⁵ This record speaks for itself.¹⁶

What if We Tried to Kill Saddam and Failed?

One of the important findings of this study is that assassination, when it fails, rarely changes the behaviour of enemy leaders. In fact, in certain cases, particularly those of Castro and Qaddafi, assassination has led to more anti-U.S. rhetoric and, in the Qaddafi instance, actions. Since the end of the Gulf War, sanctions, the occasional military strike, and several coup attempts have failed to deter Saddam from pursuing his WMD programs.¹⁷ Given his mischievous record and survival of many assassination attempts, there is no reason to believe that another attempt would change his behaviour if it failed, particularly one sponsored or perpetrated by his nemesis the U.S. Finally, Saddam might be able to use an attempted assassination to portray himself as a victim of American aggression, as Fidel Castro has done. Though he is a brutal dictator this might give him a political weapon at home and in certain parts of the Arab world.

The next section deals with potential problems that might result if Saddam could be killed

¹⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵ Karsh and Rautsi, 43-45.

¹⁶ Pollack, 286.

¹⁷ The Wisconsin Project, "Iraq Watch – WMD Profiles" Document online. Accessed 14 January 2003. Available from: <http://www.iraqwatch.org/wmd/index.html>.

Even if Saddam were killed there are problems with potential successors

Another central finding of this study is that successor leaders may not behave in a manner congruent with the aims and goals of the perpetrating state. Only in the case of Mobutu was America content with the initial successor leadership of a targeted state, and even in that case, there were periodic problems with the relationship.

Assassination involves predicting the behaviour of successors. The preponderance of U.S. cases evaluated here, show that the U.S. did not enjoy warmer relations over time with successors. A description of the alternative leadership in Iraq attests to the fact that the U.S. might well have trouble with Saddam's successors. Moreover, the power vacuum created by Saddam's assassination or the real possibility of infighting amongst successors of Saddam might spark internal upheaval, as it did in the Dominican Republic following the death of Trujillo. Below problems with potential successors are detailed.

The Composition of the Iraqi National Congress

The Iraqi opposition is deeply divided and fractious. The main faction is the Iraqi National Congress (INC). This group, led by Ahmad Chalabi is based in London and receives aid from the U.S. The INC, an umbrella organization, represents the Constitutional Monarchy Movement led by the exiled Iraqi royal family; the INA, a group of Iraqi military officials who have defected and now live outside Iraq; and the Supreme Council of the Islamic revolution in Iraq, a Shi'ite group based in Iran. Also within the INC's ranks are certain Kurdish groups.¹⁸ Alas the INC has proven slightly

¹⁸ "Opposing Saddam," *Jim Lehrer News Hour*. Transcript Online. Accessed 14 January 2003. Available from: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/july-dec02/opposition_8-8.html.

problematic and worries certain U.S. observers because many of the groups in it have authoritarian tendencies, little regard for democracy and immensely divergent points of view.¹⁹ U.S. officials also believe there is also a very real possibility that Kurdish elements within the INC, specifically the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) will seek outright independence if Saddam is ousted, thus creating problems within the INC and with Turkey.²⁰ Finally, the INC has within its ranks a worrisome force in the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iran (SCIRI). It is essentially a militant Iraqi Shi'ite organization that has attacked American interests in the past, is avowedly violent, and has refused to attend U.S. sponsored meetings in the past. SCIRI could prove to be a force for great unrest within any INC government.²¹ One final fact about the INC is worth noting. Simply put, it is a London-based group, and its upper echelon has not lived in Iraq for some time is, according to some, out of touch with life in Iraq.²²

The INC has a history of infighting

The INC nearly fell apart in the mid-1990's when the KDP and PUK started squabbling over territory. Alarminglly the PUK sought support from Iran and the KDP from the Iraqi government. This and other infighting led to the defeat of the INC offensive in 1995 and the eventual end of the 1996 efforts to oust Saddam via a military

¹⁹ Kenneth Katzman, "U.S. Efforts to Change the Iraqi Regime," *Congressional Report Series*. Document online. Accessed 14 January 2002. Available from: http://www.iraqresearch.com/RL31339_1/html/rl31339_5.html, 2.

²⁰ Ibid. 3

²¹ Ibid., 4

²² "Saddam's Would-be Successors," *The Economist*, 21 December 2002, 57.

coup.²³ In late December 2002, a coalition of Iraqi opposition groups met in London to discuss prospects for a post-Saddam Iraq. The meetings went well, according to some observers, but by no means does that mean that all will work out that way. Observers at the meetings indicated that certain elements were deeply troubled by what they perceive to be an overly large U.S. involvement in Iraqi affairs. The question of how much U.S. involvement was necessary in a post Saddam Iraq caused some tension. However, according to some U.S. officials, part of the problem is the fact that different branches of the U.S. government have reached out to different sections of the opposition, exacerbating the infighting and division.²⁴

Whatever the causal mechanism of these divisions, there is little doubt that they exist and would be problematic if Saddam could be assassinated. In the context of this study, the inherent divisions within the Iraqi opposition mean that finding successor leadership will be difficult and, if fighting occurs, the theatre could descend into chaos. The fact that, the fractious and divided opposition has already proven itself capable of violent infighting compounds the lack of a reasonably competent successor.

Conclusion

In short, Saddam is unpredictable, dangerous, and has no regard for human rights. His reckless actions have caused great suffering to the Iraqi people and his neighbours. However, the conditions in which he exercises power make assassination highly unlikely to succeed. Even if it could work, the internal situation in Iraq and lack of a successor mean that Iraq might descend into chaos, thus still posing a security problem in the

²³ Ibid., 3-4. On the coup collapse see, Jim Hoagland, "How CIA's Secret War On Saddam Collapsed," *Washington Post*, 26 June 1997.

²⁴ Elizabeth Rubine, "Fast Friends," *New Republic*, 30 December 2002, 15-16.

Middle East, thereby undermining U.S. interests. Despite the fact that it would spare many casualties and cost far less money than other options that might lead to his ouster, an American sponsored assassination of Saddam is not a wise idea or sound policy given the likely possibilities. The next section examines the potential problems associated with assassinating Kim Jong-II.

Problems Associated With Assassinating Kim Jong-II

Like Saddam, Kim rules a police state with a well-developed security and surveillance complex. The evidence uncovered in this study indicates that an assassination against Kim would be highly unlikely to succeed due to his preoccupation with personal security. If success were possible, the assassination might not advance the position of the U.S., as the lack of a successor makes assassination a bad proposition.

Top U.S. officials do not publicly discuss assassinating Kim Jong-II as a policy option. In fact on January 14, 2003, President Bush plainly stated that dialogue was the key to resolving the tense situation touched off by North Korea revelations about its pursuit of nuclear weapons and violation of the Agreed Framework.²⁵ However, Bush's willingness to talk does not mean that it is not worth examining the tactical and strategic possibilities associated with such an operation. Moreover, North Korea has been on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism since 1988. It has also sold weapons to terrorist groups and broken agreements with Japan and South Korea.²⁶ Unfortunately, like the case

²⁵ David Stout, "Bush Shows Impatience With Iraq But Optimism With North Korea," *New York Times*. Document online. Accessed 14 January 2003. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/14/international/14CND-PREX.html>

²⁶ Balbina Hwang, "North Korea Deserves to Remain on the U.S. List of State Sponsors of Terrorism," *The Heritage Foundation*. Document online. Accessed 15 January 2003. Available from: <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/BG1503.cfm>

of Saddam, there are problems with assassinating Kim as well, notably the degree of social control in the country.

North Korea is one of the planet's most controlled societies

DPRK, also known as 'The Hermit Kingdom', has been essentially shut off from the outside world for over half a century. During this period, a system of social control and surveillance has developed that far surpasses anything any other totalitarian society has ever created. Massive propaganda, the absence of dissent and an incredibly sycophantic press are reinforced with large police and public security forces. The regime has established security ratings for all individuals, who are divided into three broad groups and fifty-one subcategories.²⁷ The propaganda machine promotes party ideology, but more importantly, warns of the intentions of foreigners, particularly Americans, Japanese and South Koreans. Social control and propaganda are reinforced by an extensive system of informants.

The domestic situation in North Korea makes the state virtually inoperable to any foreign assassin. After infiltrating DPRK, a foreigner without Korean features would be noticed and probably arrested making the prospect of assassination highly unlikely. Besides, U.S. personnel have only once successfully targeted an enemy leader, and that occurred during war. Recruiting a domestic assassin is virtually impossible, because of

²⁷ Library of Congress, "North Korea: A Country Study" Document online. Accessed 15 January 2003. Available from: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kp0159](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kp0159).

extensive social control because of the indoctrination programs and informant networks.²⁸

Assassination would have been tried by now if it was possible

In April of 1999, a high ranking North Korean General was arrested for “plotting the assassination of Kim Jong-Il.” While one can never be sure of reports that emerge from DPRK, if this did occur, it is instructive. What can be said is this: since the rule of Kim Il Sung, if assassination or overthrow of this bizarre regime had been possible it would have been tried sometime ago.²⁹ Currently, Kim Jong-Il has the most elaborate security apparatus of any leader on the planet. His personal cadre of bodyguards trains for up to ten years before entering into service and undergoes a rigid screening process that begins when they enter high school.³⁰

Even if Kim could be killed it is unlikely the situation would greatly improve. The next section details problems with potential successors.

Even if the U.S. could kill Kim would the situation improve?

Past U.S. assassination attempts indicate that the answer is no. DPRK does not fit with any of the conditions previously outlined that are conducive to tactical success, but more importantly it doesn't have any of the characteristics that are conducive to furthering strategic interests. This study found one key to be the presence of like-minded

²⁸ In addition to compulsory primary and secondary education, North Korean children receive “Social education” starting at a young age. This takes place outside the classroom and begins at an early age. Ibid., [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kp0058](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kp0058)

²⁹ Balbina Y Hwang, interview by author, 15 January 2003. Ms. Hwang is an expert on DPRK working at Georgetown University and The Heritage Foundation in Washington DC.

³⁰ Ibid.

successor leadership. This is not identifiable in DPRK. Second, this study found that in order to avoid substantial internal upheaval the successor leadership in DPRK would have to rule autocratically. DPRK is already ruled autocratically, this calls into question the idea of targeting Kim.

The Lack of Successor Leadership

Unlike Iraq, where an opposition exists and has dealt with the U.S., there are no dissident movements within North Korea. The total absence of opposition to Kim Jong-Il is attributable to programs of social control and indoctrination, an extensive security apparatus and the involvement of the governing party in all aspects of life.³¹ Putsches that occurred in the past were brutally suppressed, culminating in the imprisonment of perpetrators' entire villages.³² In short, unlike Iraq where there are reasons to be sceptical of the opposition's ability to govern, there is no opposition whatsoever in North Korea.³³

Thus, even if assassination were possible, the successor leadership would be impossible to find and would likely consist of hardline military types.³⁴ Kim Jong-Il is one of the world's most brutal dictators, however, it is unlikely that a better individual or group could be found were he to die.

³¹ Ibid.

³² North Korea has sent entire villages to slave labour camps. John Larkin, "Slave Labour Exposed," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 December 2002, 14-15.

³³ Balbina Hwang, interview by author.

³⁴ Ibid. Kim's power base is the military. Thomas Omestad, "Man of Mystery," *U.S. News and World Report* 13 January 2003. Document online. Accessed on 13 January 2003. Available from: www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/030113/usnews/13korea.htm

Conclusion

Among top-level U.S. policymakers, assassinating Kim Jong-Il is never publicly discussed because it is virtually tactically impossible and there is no successor leadership in North Korea. Thus, if Kim were assassinated there is no reason to believe that the U.S. would significantly advance its interests. In fact, the consequences of such an act of aggression might calcify the hold of hardliners and could worsen the situation, given that the successor regime would likely come from the ranks of the military. Given the findings of this study, specifically the inability of assassinations to foster warmer relations with targeted states and the circumstances in which Kim exercises his power, killing him is a bad idea.

Limitations of the Arguments Presented

This section details four main limitations of the argument presented. Though there are certainly others that could have been outlined, four notable limitations are listed below.

Does assassination beget more assassination?

I have not addressed this question in this paper. Part of the reason is that the tests employed did not really speak to it, and this represents a further methodological limitation. However, if assassination is not a useful tool of statecraft, then whether or not it will beget more assassinations is less important. If efficacy is low, as my study claims, then it is irrational to employ this tool, and thus whether assassination begets more assassinations is a less relevant question.

Number of Cases

I have examined only nine cases of state sponsored assassination in this project. That is a fraction of the litany of cases available. Because I sought to answer a central question that had a U.S. focus, my research had to go into depth and I was forced to forsake breadth. The argument would benefit from a greater array of cases, particularly more from other states.

The Lack of a Post-Cold War U.S. Case

Another charge against this study is that it does not analyze a post Cold War assassination attempt by the U.S. Because most of the cases analyzed occurred during the Cold War their ratings are low because the presence of a peer competitor. Further, today the absence of a peer competitor means that the likelihood of success might be different, because of the current unprecedented primacy of the U.S.

Counterfactual Questions

In assessing whether or not failed attempts have changed the behaviour of targeted leaders I have not accounted for decisions not taken. Perhaps the attempts on Castro persuaded him not to engage in certain behaviour. This might also be true for Qaddafi.

Conclusion

Assassination has not been a useful tool of U.S. foreign policy. When it has advanced U.S. interests, the successor leadership installed has been autocratic and has

ruled in an iron-fisted manner. In the context of current U.S. grand strategy, which extols the benefits of the spread of democracy, assassination is unlikely to be of great use given this fact. Moreover, because assassinating autocratic rulers is likely to fail, assassination of current U.S. enemies is unlikely to occur.

Leadership assassination is at best a risky tool of statecraft. One obvious reason is the difficulty of finding suitable successor leadership. Another is the fact that assassination is unlikely to bring about better relations if it fails if the targeted leadership survives.

Those who claim that assassination is a speedy, cheap and easy solution to problematic leadership make specious arguments that ignore history. The central assumption of these arguments, specifically that leaders represent centres of gravity, is not supported by the findings of this thesis. Currently such arguments may possess some saliency, due to a battle against worldwide terror and the rogue regimes that support it. However, policymakers must beware that assassination has proven ineffective historically. Though both warfare and diplomacy can be slow moving and costly, the “quick fix” that assassination provides often backfires and explodes in the face of the perpetrator.

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