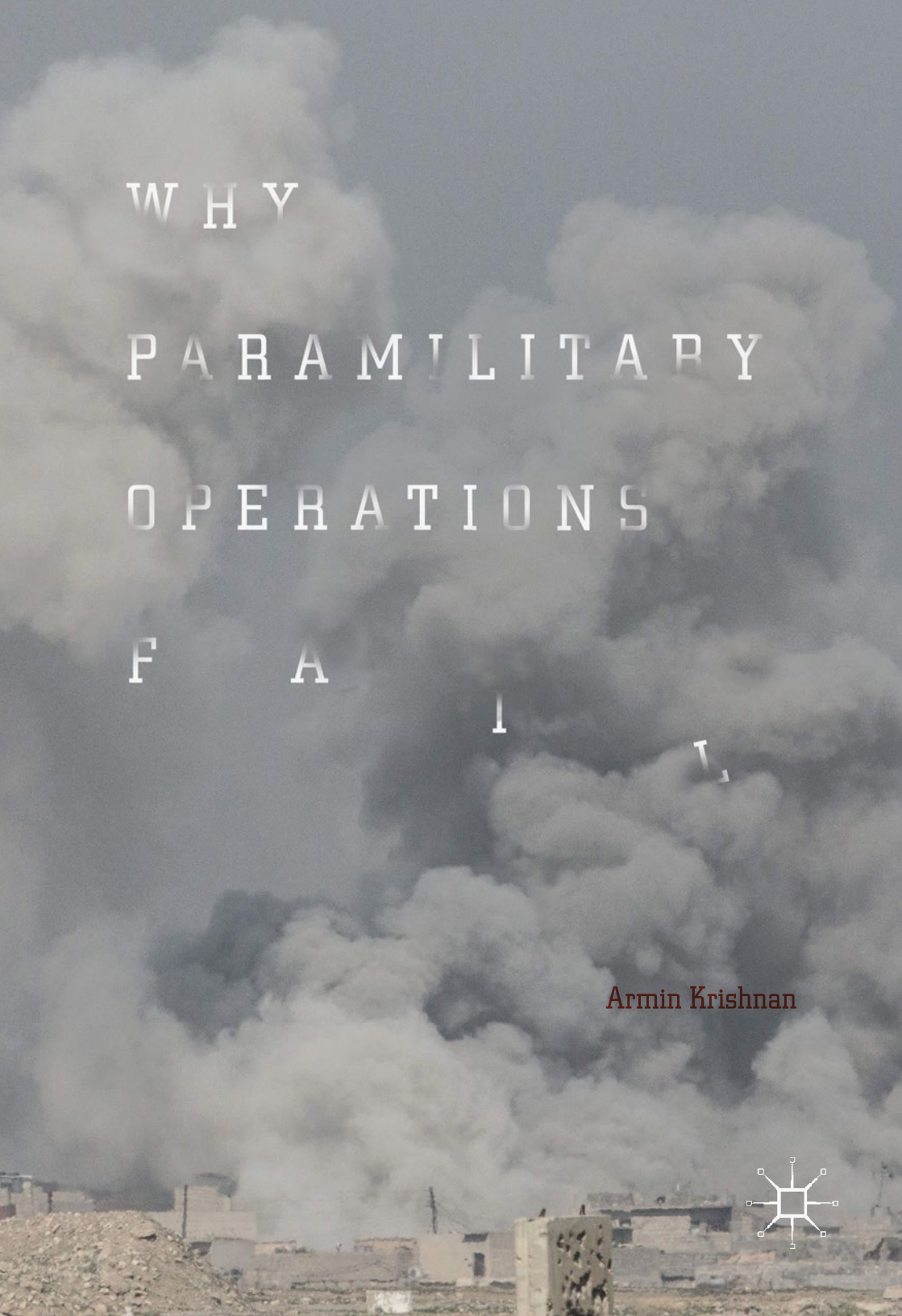

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Why Paramilitary Operations Fail

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Preface

> *Nobody believes in it. You're like, "F__k this,"…Everyone on the ground knows they are jihadis. No one on the ground believes in this mission or this effort, and they know they are just training the next generation of jihadis, so they are sabotaging it by saying, "F__k it, who cares?".* (Murphy 2016)

This is the statement of a disillusioned Green Beret, training Syrian rebels in Jordan. By now the CIA paramilitary operation (PMO) that started in 2012 to overthrow President Assad has been discontinued by President Trump after five years of trying (Sanger and Hubbard 2017). Reportedly, President Trump shut down the CIA effort to train and arm anti-Assad rebels after seeing a disturbing YouTube video (Joscelyn 2017). The video, which had already surfaced on the Internet in July 2016, showed five men from the CIA-backed Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki rebel group beheading a young boy on the back of a pickup truck (Zavadski 2016). How could things have gone so wrong? In a few years the project of 'regime change' in Syria might be entirely forgotten, as well as many of the lessons learned. Unfortunately, the aftereffects or 'blowback' might be felt for many years or decades to come. This book aims to explore why the United States finds itself in situations like in Syria, how successful US pro-insurgency PMOs or *proxy warfare* has been in the past, and how viable or relevant PMOs will be in the future.

Defenders of the covert action might point out that it was a well-intentioned effort that spun out of control because of unique and unpredictable circumstances and developments, that it could have succeeded, and that this failure says little about the general utility of PMOs as an instrument

of US foreign policy. By putting the Syrian PMO in the context of the long history of CIA/Pentagon US pro-insurgency PMOs or proxy warfare, certain patterns become apparent that indicate that this example is far from unique and that some of its negative consequences were in fact predictable. Historian John Prados has quoted Kennedy administration national security advisor McGeorge Bundy, who acknowledged: 'the dismal historical record of covert military and paramilitary operations over the last 25 years is entirely clear' (Prados 2006, 629). Prados observed that 'covert operations, especially paramilitary actions, have had minimal positive results. When relationships with target nations and populations have improved, that has happened despite, not because of, CIA covert operations' (Prados 2012, 366). Analyst Geraint Hughes has even described proxy warfare as 'anti-strategic' because '[a] state's grand strategy should involve the use of specific means (diplomatic, economic, military and covert) to achieve defined objectives, but by sponsoring proxies governments effectively abandon control over the means by which strategic goals should be attained' (Hughes 2014, 144).

The idea that one could secretly destabilize another country and derive a strategic benefit from it by providing training and weapons to an armed group is highly flawed since sponsors have typically little control over their proxies (especially when 'plausible deniability' is an important parameter of the operation) and since the interests of sponsors and proxies tend to diverge on critical issues. A particular problem that negatively impacted the success of several PMOs was the outsize role of regional partner states, which not only do not share Western values, but also which are deeply corrupted and have proven to be even more difficult to control than the paramilitary proxy forces themselves. PMOs have far too many moving parts and involve far too many actors with widely different interests and objectives under conditions of diminished accountability, which is a bad starting point for achieving desirable outcomes.

Unless there are some more fundamental changes in the US approach to supporting rebel groups, in particular the typical dependence on problematic regional allies, future US PMOs might fit the definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different outcomes. PMOs need to be approached differently in order to minimize their negative side effects. PMOs should be carried out openly and proxies should be considered contract fighters or auxiliaries rather than autonomous 'freedom fighters,' who should only be given a more limited role in a conflict with more critical roles reserved to the US military and other US agencies. Furthermore, it is argued that PMOs have paradoxically contributed to the decline of the international system and the unipolar world order, which is being replaced by

a neomedieval order consisting of institutions with overlapping claims of authority and a 'durable disorder' with ungoverned spaces in many parts of the world (Cerny 1998). Recent US attempts of policing their empire by using a 'light footprint approach' that combines SOF, intelligence, proxy forces, security contractors, cyber warfare, and drones as a new mode of intervention have up to now only resulted in more political instability around the world (Turse 2012). The mode of covert power projection through covert action and proxy warfare as perfected during the Cold War has reached its limits and now provides increasingly diminishing returns. Not only is the United States now facing more competitors in the field of 'hybrid warfare' (or the nonmilitary destabilization of countries), instability has simply become already a permanent feature in parts of the world, making covert PMOs more and more inconsequential. The temptation to use paramilitary destabilization of hostile states will certainly persist, but it will not be able to deliver favorable outcomes for sponsors, especially from a long-term perspective.

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Acknowledgments

The book was inspired by the apparent resurgence of paramilitary operations (PMOs) in Libya and Syria with the Syrian PMO in particular easily approaching the arming of the Mujahedeen during the 1980s in its scale. As the covert operation in Syria is winding down as of July 2017 it is time to reflect as to what went wrong and how this PMO compares to the many other PMOs that have been undertaken by the US government since the beginning of the Cold War. The descent of Libya into a renewed civil war and the apparent failure of the Syrian PMO have strengthened my determination to look more systematically into the reasons why paramilitary operations tend to fail or to produce outcomes that seem to damage US national security, rather than to strengthen it. The resulting book is a modest effort of identifying the issues inherent in US paramilitary operations as I see them. It is the author's belief that PMOs have rarely been worth the trouble and should be avoided as much as possible. At the very least PMOs should not be approached as covert support to autonomous armed groups, but rather as the contracting of mercenaries for producing specific outcomes or achieving specific objectives. Undoubtedly, there is still much left to be said, but this book may provide some framework for further research by others. This research would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of my colleagues at the Department of Political Science at East Carolina University. I am particularly grateful to Alethia Cook, who has kept my other teaching low and provided opportunities to me to pursue this project. I am indebted to my former colleagues at the University of Texas at El Paso and some of former students there with whom I could discuss some of the ideas contained in the book. Some of the

students there had participated in paramilitary covert operations and they shared some of their experiences with me. I want to thank Larry Valero for having brought me to the United States and to have provided me with many opportunities of expanding my knowledge in the field of intelligence. I am grateful to Andrew Long from Kansas State University, who had reviewed my paper for MPSA in 2015 and who made some good suggestions for improvement. An anonymous reviewer of the manuscript has provided good feedback, which I tried my best to incorporate. Finally, I want to thank my wife Svetlana for her encouragement over the years.

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Abbreviations

CAT	Civil Air Transport
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CT	Counterterrorism
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
DoD	US Department of Defense
DoS	US Department of State
EO	Executive Order
FAS	Federation of American Scientists
HPSCI	House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IC	Intelligence Community
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISA	Intelligence Support Activity
ISI	Inter-Service Intelligence (Pakistan)
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
KMT	Kuomintang (party)
NSC	National Security Council
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive
OPC	Office of Policy Coordination
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PAT	Principal-Agent Theory
PMC	Private Military Company
PMO	Paramilitary Operation
SAD	Special Activities Division

SALW	Small and Light Weapons
SAP	Special Access Program
SAT	Southern Air Transport
SCI	Sensitive Compartmented Information
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOG	Special Operations Group
SSCI	Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
UW	Unconventional Warfare

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CHAPTER 1

What Are Paramilitary Operations?

Paramilitary operations (PMOs), which are the manner in which to conduct proxy wars, can be best defined as 'secret war-like activities' (Johnson 2012, 481). They typically consist of providing money, training, weapons, other materials, intelligence, leadership support, and sometimes additional fighters to nonstate proxy forces that are *irregular*, such as 'specific paramilitary forces, contractors, individuals, businesses, foreign political organizations, resistance or insurgent organizations, expatriates, transnational terrorism adversaries, disillusioned transnational terrorism members, black marketers, and other social or political "undesirables"' in an effort to initiate or manipulate an (internal) armed conflict, or to achieve some other political, military, or economic objective (US DoD 2008, 1–3). According to Kennedy and Johnson administration National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy,

> a paramilitary operation is considered to be one which by its tactics and its requirements in military-type personnel, equipment and training, approximates a conventional military operation. It may be undertaken in support of an existing government friendly to the US or in support of a rebel group seeking to overthrow a government hostile to us. The US may render assistance to such operations overtly, covertly or by a combination of both methods. The small operations will often fall completely within the normal capability of one agency; the larger ones may affect State, Defense, CIA, USIA and possibly other departments and agencies. (US NSC 1961)

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As indicated in this definition, PMOs can be used in both a *pro-insurgency* context (support to revolutionary or separatist movements) and in a *counterinsurgency/counterterrorism* context (support to an allied government/host nation to suppress an insurgency).[1] Once PMOs reach a certain size, they would be typically supported by indirect nonmilitary US government activities (diplomatic pressure, propaganda, economic pressure, etc.), as well as possibly direct military intervention on behalf of a supported paramilitary group. Furthermore, PMOs may be tightly controlled by the sponsor recruiting and operationally leading indigenous fighters, or they may be *autonomous operations*, where 'the CIA would extend financial aid and a minimum of advice and guidance' so that the 'leadership [of the resistance group] would possess a degree of operational self-determination' (US NSC 1964).

Covert Action and Special Operations

It is important to distinguish PMOs that are CIA/Pentagon covert actions from 'special operations' or 'clandestine operations' undertaken by uniformed US military personnel, although there has always been some overlap. Covert action is part of what is termed more broadly 'special activities,' which are defined in Executive Order 12333 as 'activities conducted in support of national foreign policy objectives abroad which are planned and executed so that the role of the United States Government is not apparent or acknowledged publicly' (US White House 1981, Art. 3.4, Para h). Special activities include actions such as 'the training of foreign military, security, and intelligence services; the provision of intelligence materials or special support to foreign governments; field support to operational counternarcotics and counterterrorism forces of a nation; exfiltration by sea or air of a sensitive defector; or rendering inert a cache of terrorist explosives' (Daugherty 2004, 15). Covert action includes the following types of activities: propaganda, political activity, economic activity sabotage, coups, PMOs, and cyber warfare.[2] PMOs are therefore usually a specific type of covert action (unless they are part of a conventional military operation in which case proxies would only be considered to be auxiliaries). Since PMOs are 'the largest, most violent, and most dangerous covert actions,' they are undertaken less frequently than other types of covert action (Lowenthal 2013, 237). The Senate Select Committee report that investigated covert action in 1976 even suggested that 'paramilitary activities…are an anomaly, if not an aberration, of covert action' (US Senate 1976, 1:154).

In contrast, the US DoD defines 'special operations' as 'operations conducted in hostile, denied, politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement,' while 'paramilitary forces' are defined as 'forces or groups distinct from the regular armed forces of any country, but resembling them in organization, equipment, training or mission' (Best and Feickert 2009, 1). Paramilitary operations are not supposed 'to involve the use of one's own uniformed military personnel as combatants' since this would amount to an act of war (Lowenthal 2013, 238). However, in practice there can be some overlap as US military and paramilitary intelligence personnel is sometimes embedded in rebel or guerrilla groups and may get into situations where they have to directly participate in hostilities.[3]

Support to paramilitary organizations can include the following: funding, training, weapons, other materials (e.g. uniforms, trucks, supplies, etc.), advice and intelligence, operational leadership, and even supplying additional fighters (mercenaries, foreign fighters). Personnel planning and implementing paramilitary operations include CIA paramilitary officers, US military personnel seconded to the CIA, contract employees (e.g. security contractors), and foreign national personnel who are engaged in military-like activities (Clark 2015, 10–11). The Pentagon typically relies on Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and its attached clandestine military units (Seal Team 6, Intelligence Support Activity, Delta Force, etc.) to provide personnel for unacknowledged or clandestine operations (also known as 'black ops'), such as PMOs.[4] Typically, indigenous paramilitary groups would have only a few CIA or SOF personnel embedded to serve as advisors and liaison to US forces or other allied forces.

There are some important legal, operational, and oversight differences between covert action and special operations. CIA covert action is governed by Title 50 of the US Code and 'special' or 'clandestine operations' of the US military are governed under Title 10 of the US Code (Wall 2011). 'Covert' refers here to the secrecy of the sponsor, while 'clandestine' refers to the secrecy of the operation itself—covert operations are expected to produce visible results, while clandestine operations are expected to remain completely secret (Kibbe 2007, 57). Whether an operation falls under Title 50 vs. Title 10 affects command authority, oversight, and budgeting with special operations generally being subject to less congressional oversight (Kibbe 2007, 57).

Table 1.1 Unconventional warfare/foreign internal defense

Unconventional Warfare	Foreign Internal Defense
Coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power: • Policy option. • Through or with indigenous force. • Subversion/ sabotage.	Improve a nation state's security apparatus: • Train, advise, and assist. • Primarily counterinsurgency-focused.
Degrade legitimacy and destabilize.	Reinforce legitimacy and stabilize.
Note: Enabled by Army special operations forces, conventional forces, and joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational capabilities.	**Note:** Collaborative with Army special operations forces, conventional forces, and joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational capabilities.

From US DoD 2014. "FM 3–18: Special Forces Operations." Department of the Army (May), pp. 3–8

More recently, it has been pointed out that special operations and covert action have become blurred in the War on Terror (Kibbe 2007). However, this overlap of special operations and covert action is nothing new. The CIA's predecessor organization OSS was a military organization operating under the command of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and specializing in espionage and covert warfare, working with guerrillas and resistance movements in occupied territories.[5] After the war, SOF and covert action capability were formally separated. In practice, the Pentagon has frequently provided equipment and personnel to CIA-run PMOs, especially in the early Cold War when the CIA clearly lacked a stand-alone paramilitary capability.[6] Sometimes the CIA and the Pentagon ran PMOs in parallel in the same theater, supporting different paramilitary groups (Table 1.1 and Diagram 1.1).[7]

Selection of Cases

For many reasons, it can be quite difficult to determine whether actually a US covert action has occurred since the activity itself may have been undertaken by an agency other than the CIA, may have been carried out by an ally or a private entity with tacit US government consent, or may have been limited to US 'nonlethal' or intelligence support. In order to clarify this important issue, the US Senate suggested in an investigative report:

Diagram 1.1 Unconventional warfare phases. (Adopted from US DoD 2014. "FM 3–18: Special Forces Operations." Department of the Army (May), pp. 3–5 to 3–7)

> If US government officials are simply told that some government intends to take a certain action and the US has played, or plays in the future, absolutely no further role in the matter, it has not engaged in covert action. If, on the other hand, US government officials instigate, facilitate and otherwise play a significant executory role in the action, even though it is carried out by entities other than the US government, their conduct approaches, if not crosses, the line into covert action. (Quoted from Hicks 2005, 253)

This means that for an activity to be characterized as a US covert action it requires that the US has instigated the activity, which may be carried out 'by entities other than the US government.' If the US role was limited to supporting partner states in carrying out a PMO, it becomes very hard to determine conclusively whether this is a US covert action or the covert action of the partner state since it may come down to little more than informal promises given to others. US support to proxy forces can be easily disguised as 'regular' military aid given to a regional partner state.[8]

It has been estimated that the CIA has conducted hundreds of covert actions during the Cold War of which 63 sought to overthrow a hostile government (Poznansky 2015, 816). This study is a systematic review of 25 PMOs that have attempted to destabilize hostile regimes by sponsoring paramilitary groups on their territory and that have been undertaken by the US government from 1949 to the present (15 Cold War PMOs and 10 post-Cold War PMOs). This review specifically excludes all PMOs that were undertaken in support of friendly governments as part of a counterinsurgency campaign,[9] or in the context of counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations, which occur more frequently.[10] There are two main reasons for limiting the scope for a review of US PMOs in this way: (1) in contrast to other types of covert action, PMOs supporting revolutionary or separatist groups are the least deniable type since they are 'noisy' activities that are often reported by the media when they do occur. Smaller-scale PMOs with much more limited goals might go completely unnoticed. (2) It is far easier to evaluate the success or failure of an operation seeking to change a government since there are observable and measurable outcomes. In contrast, PMOs undertaken in support of a counterinsurgency campaign may represent only a minor aspect of the overall effort and it therefore becomes difficult to determine how important, decisive, or successful this aspect was in relation to the campaign as a whole.

Almost all academic reviews of US covert action limit themselves to surveying CIA covert action during the Cold War or to US covert operations of earlier periods in US history.[11] This may create the wrong impression that covert action is no longer a relevant phenomenon in US foreign policy when in fact it 'continues to remain a prominent tool of statecraft' (Poznansky 2015, 816). A major reason why there is little academic analysis of post-Cold War CIA covert action is that these operations remain officially classified and little in terms of official documentation has surfaced. Scholars may have been reluctant to investigate covert operations even if they have been extensively discussed in the media because they officially never took place, or because they may still have a direct influence

on US foreign policy today. This study includes ten post-Cold War PMOs to fill the gap in the literature and to demonstrate that there is an ongoing relevance of covert action and covert warfare in particular and that present-day PMOs follow the same pattern as some of the earliest CIA covert operations in the late 1940s (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 PMOs considered for this study

Albania (1949–53)	The CIA inserted agents into Albania to create a resistance network and conduct guerrilla warfare against the communist regime under Enver Hoxha (Operation Valuable).
Ukraine (1949–53)	The CIA tried to reactivate anti-Soviet resistance groups in the Ukraine that had been active during the Second World War to conduct guerrilla warfare against the communist government.
Burma/Southern China/ Korea (1950–53)	The CIA transported paramilitary fighters from Taiwan to Burma to infiltrate into China's Yunnan Province to destabilize the communist regime (Operation PAPER), and the CIA and the Pentagon conducted PMOs against North Korea by training and inserting South Korean guerrillas into the North during the Korean War.
Guatemala (1954)	The CIA recruited and trained a few hundred mercenary troops under the command of Castillo Armas to overthrow Guatemala's President Jacobo Arbenz (Operation PBSUCCESS).
Tibet (1958–74)	The CIA trained and equipped Tibetan freedom fighters in order to force Chinese troops out of Tibet, which they had occupied in 1950.
Indonesia (1958)	The CIA attempted to overthrow Indonesian President Sukarno by sponsoring the rebel group Permesta to launch guerrilla warfare against the government (Project HAIK).
Cuba (1961)	The CIA trained and armed the Cuban exile Brigade 2506, which landed in the Bay of Pigs in April 1961 (Operation JMATE).
Congo (1960–68)	The CIA sponsored a failed assassination attempt against Patrice Lumumba, then supported rebels of the separatist government Katanga under Moise Tshombe, and eventually ended up supporting Congolese strongman Mobutu against rebel forces.
North Vietnam (1962–74)	MACV-SOG trained and inserted Vietnamese agents into North Vietnam to build a resistance network and facilitate an insurgency in the North (Project TIGER).

(*continued*)

Table 1.2 (continued)

Laos (1955–74)	The CIA trained and armed the Laotian Hmong tribes to fight against the communist insurgents Pathet Lao (which ended up taking control of the country) and to conduct cross-border raids in North Vietnam.
Iraq (1972–75)	The CIA armed and funded the Iraqi Kurds together with Iran and Israel in order to destabilize Iraq and force Iraq to make concessions in its dealings with Iran. The Kurds were abandoned after Iranian diplomatic goals were achieved.
Angola (1975–90)	The CIA trained and armed the FNLA and later UNITA in Angola to fight against the communist and Cuban/Soviet supported MPLA government (Operation IA FEATURE).
South Yemen (1979–82)	The CIA trained and armed a small group of agents from North Yemen, who were inserted into South Yemen, which was at that time allied with Cuba and the Soviet Union.
Chad (1981–82)	The CIA trained and armed Chadian resistance fighters under the command of Habre to overthrow a pro-Gaddafi government in Chad and to push Libyan troops out of Chad.
Nicaragua (1981–86)	The CIA trained and armed former members of the overthrown Somoza government (known as Contras) to destabilize the government of the socialist and pro-Soviet Sandinistas in Nicaragua.
Afghanistan (1979–89)	The CIA trained and armed (through its regional ally Pakistan) the Mujahideen to push Soviet occupation forces out of Afghanistan and to overthrow the pro-Soviet government (Operation CYCLONE).
Iraq (1992–96)	The CIA plotted a coup and a popular uprising against Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein together with the Iraqi National Congress (Project ACHILLES). Part of the plan was the arming of the oppressed Kurds and Shia groups.
Bosnia (1994–95)	The CIA and Pentagon provided weapons to Bosnian forces under Bosnian leader Alia Izetbegovic, while the US private military company MPRI was training Croatian forces.
Sudan (1996)	The CIA has provided support to the SPLA rebels under John Garang in South Sudan since 1983 and stepped up the effort in 1996 to overthrow the government in Khartoum by sending weapons and Delta Force.
Kosovo (1996–99)	The CIA trained and armed the Kosovo Liberation Army (mostly through its regional ally Germany) to weaken Serbia and eventually to support the overthrow of Serbian leader Milosevic.
Afghanistan (2001)	The CIA and the Pentagon provided funding, weapons, and SOF personnel to the Northern Alliance in order to oust the Taliban regime in the direct aftermath of 9/11 (Operation ENDURING FREEDOM).

(*continued*)

Table 1.2 (continued)

Somalia (2002–2006)	The CIA paid and otherwise supported Somali warlords to fight against jihadists in Somalia. They formed the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism, which launched a military attack on the Islamic Court Union government in 2006.
Iran (2005–2008)	The CIA has sought to overthrow the Islamic Republic in Iran by trying to work with Iranian insurgent/resistance groups, most notably the MEK. MEK fighters were brought to the US to receive training.
Libya (2011)	The CIA and State Department trained and armed the Libyan rebels that emerged in the shadow of the Arab Spring with the explicit goal to overthrow Libyan strongman Gaddafi.
Syria (2012–present)	The CIA and the Pentagon trained and armed Syrian opposition forces for the dual purpose of overthrowing President Assad and for defeating ISIS, which emerged in summer 2014 as a major threat to peace and security in the region (Operation TIMBER SYCAMORE).

Motivations for Undertaking PMOs

There are various reasons why states in general and the US government in particular have decided to undertake PMOs as opposed to relying on non-violent means for pursuing foreign policy objectives and to engaging in open warfare. What is puzzling with respect to the US conducting this relatively large number of PMOs is the question as to why the US has pursued this method of 'regime change' so frequently since the end of the Second World War despite its demonstrably poor track record in overthrowing hostile governments.

General Considerations

Andrew Mumford has argued that there are four factors that have made proxy warfare preferable to direct military interventions: (1) a state may have a vested economic or political interest in the outcome of a conflict in which it has to remain nominally neutral for political reasons; (2) support to certain paramilitary groups might be ideologically motivated in the sense of an assumed moral obligation to assist socialist brothers or to defend democracy; (3) major war is sometimes considered to have become obsolete because of the growing destructiveness of modern weapons, as well as the general perception that war is an archaic and illegitimate mode

of settling political disagreements; and (4) proxy warfare is attractive as a risk management strategy since it reduces the commitment of an intervening power in many ways, as intervention can be deniable, as resources committed are small, and as support can be withdrawn at any time at small political cost (Mumford 2013, 32–44). Similarly, Geraint Hughes has suggested the following ten possible motivations for PMOs: (1) political constraints on direct military action; (2) security; (3) casualty sensitivity; (3) ideological solidarity; (4) conflict avoidance; (5) assisting a military campaign; (6) intelligence-gathering; (7) nationalist/religious ties; (8) revenge; (9) preserving or enhancing spheres of influence; (10) greed (Hughes 2014, 20–32). Furthermore, Hughes has pointed out that PMOs may have coercive, disruptive, or transformative goals: a PMO may be aimed at coercing an opponent to take a desired course of action such as withdrawing from a conflict that has become too costly; a PMO may be aimed at merely disrupting an opponent's activities in a certain geographic area, rendering them less effective; or a PMO may be aimed at changing a country's government or changing the territory of a country by establishing a separatist state (Hughes 2014, 20–21).

The Cost Argument

A good argument can be made with respect to CIA/Pentagon PMOs that they have had appeal to presidents and lawmakers because they are perceived as a low-cost and low-risk alternative to overt military interventions, which are often unpopular, require long-term commitment, and represent a much more serious escalation than is politically desirable. PMOs are 'lean' in the sense that only very little personnel and material has to be committed in order to make some difference in a conflict. For example, the largest and some say most successful CIA PMO in history was Operation Cyclone in Afghanistan and it was a relative bargain, according to analyst Bruce Riedel: 'The total cost for the 1979–89 period was about $3 billion. But in terms of US wars, the cost was insignificant. The Vietnam War cost the United States well over $300 billion, and the Iraq War cost well over $3 trillion. From a taxpayer's perspective, there may be no other federal program in history that produced so much historic change in world politics at such a small price' (Riedel 2014, XI). What Riedel omits is the fact that the US also had to pay off some of its partners, most importantly Pakistan, which was awarded with an additional $3.2 billion in military aid, including the delivery of F-16 fighter jets (Coll 2004, 62). In

fact, there are lots of hidden cost that make PMOs much more expensive than they appear to be. Furthermore, in the political equation, cost rarely matters in the field of national security. At best, perceived low cost is only a minor motivator for PMOs.

The Cold War Mindset

The CIA and the covert arm of the Pentagon might have become trapped in the thinking spelled out in the Hoover Commission report:

> It is now clear that we are facing an implacable enemy whose avowed objective is world domination by whatever means and by whatever cost. There are no rules in such a game. Hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply. If the US is to survive, long-standing American concepts of "fair play" must be reconsidered…We must learn to subvert, sabotage and destroy our enemies by more clever, more sophisticated and more effective methods than those used against us. (Hoover Commission 1954)

The US government felt that it could not forego any advantage in the deadly conflict with the Soviet Union over world domination and that any measure, regardless how much it runs counter to moral standards, was justified for the US to persevere. In other words, the perception that the Soviets were using dirty tricks made it a necessity for the US to do the same. In today's world, there is a similar belief that the US is confronted with ruthless adversaries against whom any measure is justified, including the waging of covert wars.

The Military-Industrial Complex Argument

President Eisenhower famously warned of the 'military-industrial complex' (MIC) as a threat to American democracy. He stated that '[i]n the councils of government we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist' (quoted from Huntington 1969, 1). The MIC is sometimes also referenced as the 'iron triangle' because of the convergence of interests between the armed services, defense contractors, and Congress, which results in steadily growing military expenses and anything that can justify them, including the provoking and waging of wars. It therefore fits

that some former covert operators have suggested that PMOs are sometimes initiated by the national security bureaucracy or MIC as some sort of automated response, rather than being part of a rationally calculated and planned foreign policy (Prouty 2011, 107; Stockwell 1978, 250). Covert wars serve the bureaucratic interests of the agencies that execute them and since they involve the transfer of massive amounts of arms to proxies they are also highly beneficial to arms manufacturers and arms merchants. In particular, small and covert wars of the Cold War and post-Cold War eras have created an entire new industry of PMOs, which function as proxies for a few great powers in third world conflicts.

The Privatization of US Foreign Policy Argument

A lot of scholarly work has been done on the influence of lobbies on decision-making and law-making in US politics. It is not really surprising that there are strong foreign lobbying groups that try to influence the foreign policy of the most powerful state on earth. There are several factors favorable to foreign lobbies: Americans do not pay much attention to foreign policy, which means that US foreign policy elites can pursue their preferred policies with low risk of public opposition; the American government is susceptible to lobbying power as politicians are dependent on campaign contributions and votes; and small ideological groups among voters or the foreign policy elites can have a disproportionate influence in the absence of clear US foreign policy priorities. Scholar Lawrence Davidson has argued that '[m]ass indifference toward foreign policy matters simply magnifies the influence of well-organized factions over policy formulation in areas of interest to them. In essence, this leads to the privatization of important aspects of US foreign policy' (Davidson 2009, 143). It is quite notable that in many cases of US proxy warfare, there was hardly any major national interest at stake and that vested business and foreign interests seem to have been the main drivers for these US covert interventions.[12]

Measuring Success in PMOs

A common sense approach to determining the success of a PMO is to define success in a narrow sense: 'did the operation achieve the objectives set by the president of the United States?' and to define success broadly, 'did the CIA's paramilitary operations serve the national interests of the United States?' (Gleijeses 2016, p. 292). Unfortunately, in many cases,

researchers of US covert action have no access to presidential findings that spell out the goals set by the presidents. Goals may also change as circumstances change. More problematic is the second criterion since an analyst is forced to make assumptions about what might be or might not be the national interest. As a result, there are a variety of difficulties in terms of evaluating the success of PMOs that have been pointed out by analysts: (1) not all PMOs and their outcomes may be publicly known, making it difficult to determine an objective success rate since there may be many hidden successes or failures[13]; (2) successes are much more ambiguous and it can never be known what would have happened if no action had been taken (Treverton 1987, 174); (3) the specific objectives of an operation may not be known, which means that operations that appear to be failures may still be deemed success with respect to much more limited goals such as testing a concept or collecting intelligence in a denied territory[14]; (4) short-term successes may turn into long-term failures, but the longer the time horizon the more uncertain become claims of causality (Treverton 1987, 175); and (5) unintended negative consequences or 'blowback' may be diffuse and its impact may be hard to estimate, making it impossible to determine whether negative impacts outweigh any gains. Some analysts have cautioned that one has to understand covert operations in the historical context of the time when they were undertaken and that they may have represented the best option at this particular moment, which would make it not only unfair to judge merely in hindsight, but also might overlook the less tangible advantages gained such as lessons learned (Berger 1995). It has been argued that since PMOs are generally so cheap in terms of both treasure and blood for the sponsor (especially when compared to conventional operations) that it would not matter much if most PMOs fail as the stakes for the sponsor are so low (Gleijeses 2016, 304). There is even the argument that little would be lost in undertaking a PMO since the US government might be accused of meddling in other country's affairs regardless if this was the case or not.

For these reasons, it is very challenging to come up with a metric or framework that allows to objectively determine whether an operation amounted to a success or a failure. The Senate Report on Governmental Operations from 1976 suggests that '[t]here are two principal criteria which determine the minimum success of paramilitary operations: (1) achievement of the policy goal; (2) maintenance of deniability. If the first is not accomplished, the operation is a failure in any respect; if the second is not accomplished, the paramilitary option offers few if any advantages over the option of overt military intervention' (US Senate 1976, 1:155).

The report notes that in no case studied (out of five) 'was complete secrecy successfully preserved' (US Senate 1976, 1:155). The final assessment of the Senate report is negative: 'On balance, in these terms, the evidence points towards the failure of paramilitary activity as a technique of covert action' (US Senate 1976, 1:155).

For the purpose of this study, a PMO was deemed a success if a revolutionary or separatist group sponsored by the US government succeeded in overthrowing the government or in establishing a separatist state on the territory of the targeted state during the time when they received US paramilitary support. A PMO was deemed a failure if the paramilitary group sponsored by the US government suffered a comprehensive defeat on the battlefield or if the PMO was prematurely aborted, resulting in the later subsequent military defeat of the US proxy. However, by focusing on PMOs supporting revolutionary or separatist movements, it becomes relatively straightforward to narrowly determine the success or failure of an operation: an operation is deemed a success if a military victory is achieved that brings the US-supported group to power in part or the whole of the territory of the attacked state.

It seems that many CIA PMOs were abandoned before they ever reached the stage of major guerrilla operations because they did not achieve initial milestones or because they ran into other challenges, including changes in US policy, which resulted in these operations to be prematurely terminated. Sometimes PMOs were terminated prematurely because they were exposed, and the continuation would have caused additional embarrassment to the US government or would have incurred high domestic political costs, for example, in Indonesia (1958), in Angola (1976), and in Nicaragua (1986). It is quite probable that the CIA may have initiated many more PMOs supporting revolutionary or separatist movements than identified in this study, but it is equally probable that they remained secret exactly because they were small-scale or half-hearted attempts that never came to full fruition and therefore failed.

Blowback and Operational Success

Regardless whether an operation succeeds in achieving its operational goal and in remaining covert at the time it occurs, there is always some degree of 'blowback' that results from the problem that PMOs (or covert operations in general) have too many moving parts and are extremely difficult to control because of their inherent complexity. This results in unpredictable repercussions and negative unintended consequences. An

operation may succeed in the short term, but may produce 'blowback' in the long term, where its consequences will come back to bite the architects or sponsors of the covert action.

The term blowback appeared first in a CIA report in 1953, which warned that blowback in the sense of a break in diplomatic relations may occur if the coup in Iran failed (Abrahamian 2001, 213). Obviously, blowback in this sense did not occur since the coup succeeded. DCI William Colby referred to blowback in a 1977 Church Committee hearing in the meaning of CIA disinformation planted abroad 'blowing back' to the US and getting reported by US media in the US (Polmar and Allen 1997, 76). The term took a much broader meaning to refer to all unintended negative consequences of covert action and even of foreign policy in general. Political scientist Chalmers Johnson devoted an entire book to the phenomenon of blowback to US foreign policy. He wrote:

> Actions that generate blowback are normally kept totally secret from the American public and most of their representatives in Congress. This means when innocent civilians become victims of a retaliatory strike, they are at first unable to put into context or to understand the sequence of events that led up to it. In its most rigorous definition, blowback does not mean mere reactions to historical events but rather to clandestine operations carried out by the US government that are aimed at overthrowing foreign regimes, or seeking the execution of people the United States wants eliminated by "friendly" foreign armies, or helping launch state terrorist operations against overseas target populations. (Johnson 2004, XI)

An operation may be successful in terms of achieving its narrow goal such as overthrowing a particular regime deemed hostile to US interests by policymakers, but the success may come at substantial cost for the affected population in the target country and/or for the long-term and broader US interests, as well as in terms of repercussions for international security. In the case of 1953 coup in Iran, US covert action did lead to the establishment of a government that was both incompetent and corrupt, causing its eventual overthrow and replacement by a government hostile to the US some 25 years later.[15] One could also argue that 25 years of having a stable ally in Iran was worth the risk, or that the 25-year time period is too long to establish a causal relationship between one event and the other, or that it is unknowable of what would have happened had the US chosen a different course of action (Treverton 1987, 176–177). However, once a pattern is established that shows that similar bad outcomes occur with a certain

consistency when covert action is used, it becomes a lot harder to argue that it is all coincidence or chance rather than caused by factors inherent in the instrument of covert action itself.

It has been frequently pointed out that many US-led regime changes often resulted in the establishment of very repressive regimes that ended up killing and torturing thousands of opposition members after getting into power. This list of, in this respect, ethically problematic successes of US covert action includes Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Congo (1960–68), Indonesia (1958–65), Chile (1970–73), and Chad (1981–87) (e.g. Blum 2000). The regimes that are put in place through covert action may turn out to be more problematic than the ones they replaced, either by being incompetent or corrupted, or by turning against their former sponsors. Even Iran was far from being an unproblematic US ally under the Shah since he still nationalized the oil industry (as Mossadegh tried to do) and pushed through OPEC for higher oil prices, resulting in the energy crises of the 1970s (Pollack 2005, 106–110).

In addition, there can be many more subtle forms of blowback that occur irrespective of operational success or failure because of the very nature of PMOs. This mostly concerns war crimes committed by proxy forces that reflect badly on the sponsor and illegal activities such as arms trafficking and drug trafficking that are generally harmful to international peace and security (Hughes 2014, 50–51). A particular aspect of blowback is the so-called disposal problem: people who have been trained by the US and US allies in the dark arts of secret warfare may use their skills against US interests. As the analysis further below will show, this kind of blowback is very likely to happen in the context of PMOs and it can greatly diminish any conceivable advantages that can be gained through the paramilitary destabilization of a hostile regime by supporting armed groups that share little common ground with the US and that are in practice very difficult to control. Even in the best of circumstances PMOs seem to create more problems than they can solve, as will be discussed in later chapters.

Notes

1. The Church Committee report identified three different objectives of PMOs: (1) 'subversion of a hostile government'; (2) 'support to friendly governments'; and (3) 'unconventional adjunct support to a larger war effort.' See US Senate 1976, I:154–155.

2. See Lowenthal 2013, 237; Lowenthal does not specifically include cyber warfare in his typology, but Ransom Clark does. See Clark 2015, 9.
3. A recent example of embedding US personnel as fighters in paramilitary formations is Syria, where 300 US special operators were deployed in fall 2016 to train and advise Syrian opposition groups. They were also expected 'to conduct raids, free hostages, gather intelligence and capture [Islamic State] leaders.' See Scarborough 2016.
4. JSOC is a branch of Special Operations Command (SOCOM), which conducts both 'white' (acknowledged or official) operations such as training militaries of friendly states and 'black' (unacknowledged or officially denied) operations such as special reconnaissance or 'kill or capture' operations in countries where the US military is not officially present. See Kibbe 2007, 59–60.
5. The OSS included a Special Operations branch, which was conducting both paramilitary and commando type operations around the world. See Berger 1995.
6. William Blum has noted several instances where 'the CIA was acting in direct military opposition to another arm of the US government' such as Costa Rica in 1955 and Burma in 1970. See William Blum. 2004. *Killing Hope: US Military and C.I.A. Interventions Since World War II*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 159 and footnote 26. A more recent example of competing CIA and Pentagon PMOs is Syria. See Bulos 2016.
7. It is not unusual that the US government supports paramilitary groups in the context of a counterinsurgency campaign as it has been done in South Vietnam in the Strategic Hamlet program. More recently, the CIA has sponsored militias or paramilitary groups in Afghanistan such as the Khost Protection Force (KPF) to fight the Taliban and the Haqqani as part of the ongoing US effort to stabilize the Afghan government. See Raghavan 2015.
8. It seems that a lot of US covert action has been outsourced to partner states since the late 1970s in which case it is hard to prove US involvement.
9. It remains highly controversial, but it has been stated in reputable literature that the US has sponsored paramilitary groups to carry out targeted killings of terrorists, insurgents, and drug lords, which is sometimes described as 'death squad' activity. Examples include US support to paramilitary groups in El Salvador in 1981, Reagan's authorization to train and arm Lebanese 'hitmen' to go after Hezbollah in 1983, the CIA support to the vigilante groups Los Pepes that systematically killed members of the Medellin Cartel in the early 1990s, and more recently the Shia 'wolf brigades' supported by JSOC to systematically hunt down Sunni insurgents in Iraq.

10. Important contributions to the limited academic literature on the history of US covert action includes: John Prados. 2006. *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee; Stephen F. Knott. 1996. *Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; James Callanan. 2010. *Covert Action in the Cold War: US Policy, Intelligence and CIA Operations*. London: J.B. Tauris & Co.; John Ranelagh. 1986. *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA: From Wild Bill Donovan to William Casey*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
11. John F. Kennedy stated to Allen Dulles in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs PMO: 'Your successes are unheralded – your failures are trumpeted,' indicating that public perceptions of covert operations are usually biased towards failure. See Dulles 2006, 39.
12. It has been widely acknowledged that both the coup in Iran in 1953 and the PMO in Guatemala in 1954 were driven by economic interests. Even in the most recent PMO in Syria, there were influential business and foreign interests involved. It is not just about a Saudi-Qatari-Turkish pipeline project that was at stake but also a project by Israeli company Genie Energy to develop gas on the Golan heights at the border to Syria, which remains legally a Syrian territory. Genie Energy has on its advisory board Dick Cheney, Rupert Murdoch, James Woolsey, Larry Summers, and Bill Richardson, and it has major US investors, including Goldman Sachs.
13. Geraint Hughes suggests that PMOs can have *coercive*, *disruptive*, and *transformative goals*. A coercive goal could be to dissuade an opponent from taking certain action (e.g. sponsoring a terrorist group), and a disruptive goal could be to weaken an opponent so that the opponent's actions are less effective. In here only transformative goals such as overthrowing a government are considered. Hughes, *My Enemy's Enemy*, 20–21. Other limited goals for a PMO could be to use a paramilitary group for intelligence collection or for testing operational concepts, as was the case in the early Cold War CIA PMOs.
14. This was actually argued in a CIA paper relating to the support of Cuban saboteurs and insurgents in the early 1960s (Operation Mongoose). CIA, 'A Reappraisal of Autonomous Operations,' Secret Memo, 3 June 1964.
15. In a strange twist, Iran has moved to sue the US government for the 1953 coup after official documents confirming the CIA role in the coup had been released in 2013 with the objective to recover $2 billion in frozen Iranian assets. It seems that international legal action can be added as another form of blowback that the US government has to consider before it initiates covert action.

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CHAPTER 2

A Short History of US Paramilitary Operations

PMOs have a long history that some have traced back to Elizabeth I fighting Catholic Spain by supporting Protestant forces or to Lawrence of Arabia and the British support to the Arab Revolt of 1916 (Godson 2001, 158–159). They have been refined during the Second World War by the British and the Americans when dozens of such operations were carried out in occupied countries in Europe and Asia.[1] The experiences gained in this period encouraged peacetime PMOs during the Cold War in all parts of the world. The chapter shall provide some historical context and give some details about specific major PMOs that will become important in the discussion in the subsequent chapters. Another purpose of the chapter is to trace the evolution of CIA PMOs from early operations in Eastern Europe in the late 1940s to more recent PMOs in Libya and Syria. The discussed operations are grouped historical periods or eras.

Early Cold War Operations in Europe and Asia (1949–53)

The Soviets were able to take control of much of Eastern Europe in the years 1945 to 1948, which was a major factor for the beginning of the Cold War. The US diplomat George Kennan was the first US official to identify the Soviet Union as an aggressive power that had to be contained (Kennan 1947). Kennan's containment strategy became the American grand strategy for the rest of the Cold War. Early on, the British and the

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Americans were trying to not only defensively contain Soviet control of Eastern Europe but to take offensive action aimed at rolling back Soviet expansion (Grose 2000). This meant working with the anti-communist resistance groups that had sprung up during the Second World War and that they hoped could be reactivated or empowered to resist and overthrow the communist governments that had been set up in Eastern Europe with Soviet help. Although the CIA was given only a vague mandate for covert action, it soon created its covert operations branch named Office of Policy Coordination (OPC). From 1948 the OPC ran operations aimed at supporting resistance movements behind the 'iron curtain' in Eastern Europe (Treverton 1987, 39). By the early 1950s, the CIA in collaboration with NATO also set up 'secret armies' or incipient guerrilla organizations with communications gear and weapons caches across Western Europe as so-called stay behind organizations (Ganser 2004, 46). Their purpose was to wage unconventional warfare (UW) against Soviet occupation forces in the event that the Soviet forces would overrun key NATO countries.[2] The OPC inserted small paramilitary teams in Ukraine, Albania, and the Soviet Union from October 1949 to the early 1950s (Clark 2015, 62). Some of these operations intended an actual overthrow of communist regimes.

Ukraine

The Germans created an entire Waffen SS division 'Galicia' composed of Ukrainians and led by German officers to fight against the Soviets during the Second World War (Prados 2006, 70). These pro-Nazi formations numbering over 100,000 fighters were spread across Eastern Europe. After the German defeat two main Eastern European resistance organizations were formed, the Ukrainian OUN/UPA and the Russian NTS. The OUN carried on with guerrilla warfare long after the formal end of the Second World War. The Ukrainian exile leaders included fascists, such as former Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera. In 1945, the Soviets consolidated their control in Ukraine, forcing nationalist resistance groups more and more abroad, as their fight increasingly became hopeless. The British Foreign Office was apparently not aware of the bleak reality of the Ukrainian resistance and made plans in 1949 to foment a rebellion in the Ukraine (Dorril 2001, 242). They began training Ukrainian émigrés at a secret training facility in London and the first agents were inserted in July 1949 (Dorril 2001, 242). Since 1948 the Americans became interested in attempting a rollback in the Ukraine in collaboration with the British. The CIA was working with Ukrainian émigrés

in Munich and advised to render assistance to dissidents in Ukraine (Ruffner 1998).[3] The CIA began inserting agents in September 1949 to collect information about the Ukrainian resistance and to peek behind the Iron Curtain. According to analyst D.H. Berger, the OPC determined in 1950 that an overthrow of communist rule in Ukraine would require a tremendous and possibly overt support, which the American government was unwilling to risk (Berger 1995). The American interest in the British operation was lukewarm and the effort remained small. British aircraft sent agents by parachute from Cyprus and the Americans inserted agents from West Germany and Greece. However, OUN guerrillas had been offered amnesty by the Soviets in the 1950s, which resulted in thousands of them handing in their weapons (Dorril 2001, 243). After a number of failed agent insertions, the operation was finally ended in 1953. However, the CIA continued to work with the Ukrainian nationalists (Ruffner 1998, 42). It seems that British and American intelligence missed the short time window after the war to effectively utilize the Ukrainian resistance. By the time the agent insertions began, much of the Ukrainian resistance had been already neutralized by the Soviets.

Albania

Operation VALUABLE began in 1947 with the objective of fomenting an uprising against the pro-Soviet Hoxha regime (Dorril 2001, 363). In 1948, the British suggested Albania as a target for rolling back communism in Eastern Europe as an experiment for determining whether further rollback was possible (Grose 2000, 155). The British had an intelligence network in the Balkans and the American OPC provided funding and logistics for creating a PMO aimed at overthrowing the Albanian government. The first step taken by the CIA was to establish an Albanian government in exile, the Albanian National Committee, which could unify the opposition and take over the government after the revolution (Berger 1995). The National Committee for a Free Albania (NCFA) was set up by the OPC as a political front organization for the resistance movement (Lulushi 2014, 57–72). The British recruited from Albanian refugees, who were trained by the OPC, and then inserted hundreds of agents in two-man teams by parachute into Albania. The Albanian exiles formed Kompania 4000, which was initially trained at a military barracks at Karlsfeld near Munich (Grose 2000, 161). Every guerrilla group in Albania was equipped with a heavy radio transmitter to keep contact with a British

radio base in Corfu (Dorril 2001, 385). The American-led operation was named BG FIEND/OBUPUS. The whole operation suffered from numerous mishaps, outright treason by Kim Philby, and the strength of the communist security apparatus (Lulushi 2014, 397). A critical factor in the failure, however, was the penetration of Albanian émigré organizations by communist intelligence services (Berger 1995). The inserted agents were typically picked up by Albanian security forces, who seemed informed about drop zones and drop times.[4] The planned Albanian uprising never took off and the operation was terminated in 1953 or two years after the first agent insertions. According to a study by D.H. Berger, the objective of Operation Valuable Fiend was not actually to unseat Hoxha, but rather to determine the feasibility of such an undertaking and the degree effort that would be required if directed against other states in the Soviet orbit (Berger 1995).

Burma/Southern China, and Korea (1950–53)

As the Truman administration was concerned about communism spreading in Southeast Asia after the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the CIA suggested to assist the KMT in their continuing fight on mainland China (Scott 2010, 76–77). Before any specific plan was implemented, North Korea invaded the South in June 1950. After China entered the Korean War in November 1950, the Truman administration authorized covert action that centered on an invasion of OPC-backed remaining KMT forces from Burma into Southern China codenamed Operation PAPER (McCoy 2003, 165–166). Meanwhile, the Truman administration was fighting a major land war on the Korean Peninsula, sending over 320,000 US soldiers. The US Army inserted Korean agents through the Korean Liaison Office (KLO) by air, land, or sea into the North to collect intelligence and later to conduct guerrilla operations. Known under the name 'Attrition Section' and later the 'Miscellaneous Group 8086th Army Unit,' US personnel provided training and equipment to Korean agents. Operating from islands on the western coast of Korea, the South Korean guerrillas were infiltrated to conduct sabotage and subversion operations (Harclerode 2002, 176–177). The US-led Korean guerrillas assassinated hundreds of North Korean officials, attacked warehouses, and destroyed bridges in the North (Harclerode 2002, 178). As the Korean War stalemated in early 1951, the US tried to apply additional pressure on China by assisting a KMT-led insurgency within China. The OPC worked with KMT commander Li Mi and his

force of 4000 men (also known as the 93rd Division), who were trying to retake the lost Chinese Yunnan Province (McCoy 2003, 169). The campaign that began in June 1951 was a failure and the KMT forces had to retreat back to Burma, where they plundered from the local population. Regardless, the OPC intensified their efforts, airlifting more KMT soldiers and vast quantities of weapons and munitions from Taiwan to the town of Mong Hsat near the Chinese border to create a guerrilla army of 12,000. These KMT forces launched an invasion in August 1952 in the hope of sparking an uprising against the communists in the Yunnan Province, but they were again beaten by superior Chinese communist forces. At this point, the US support to the KMT in Burma was cut off, which prompted the KMT forces to take control of parts of Burma (McCoy 2003, 172–173). The situation became a huge embarrassment for the US and it was negotiated to remove the remaining KMT forces from Burma. CIA planes flew 1925 KMT troops back to Taiwan in November and December 1953 (Robbins 1990, 66).

The Golden Age of Covert Operations (1953–61)

President Eisenhower hoped that covert action would be a much more cost-effective tool for containing communism (Clark 2015, 77). The Dulles brothers, with John Foster at the helm of the State Department and Allan running the CIA, were powerful advocates of covert action. The CIA achieved an early success in the field of covert action through the overthrow of President Mohammad Mossaddegh in Iran in 1953 (Operation TPAJAX), which was primarily enabled by the use of orchestrated protests, terrorism, and a military coup by General Fazlollah Zahedi, which installed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as the king of Iran (Prados 2006, 97–107). Emboldened by this success, the CIA was moving on to conduct a paramilitary operation in Guatemala.

Guatemala (1954)

Operation PB SUCCESS stands out as one of the stunning successes of CIA covert action, as it clearly achieved its immediate objective of overthrowing the government of Guatemala with small resources (at an estimated cost of $20 million) and within a short time span (about five months) (Ranelagh 1986, 266). The covert action is widely considered as have been driven by US commercial interest (the United Fruit Company),

rather than any genuine concern about Soviet influence in Latin America.[5] President Arbenz wanted to carry out a land reform that would have resulted in financial losses to the United Fruit Company (Prados 2006, 108–109). The CIA sponsored a disgruntled Guatemalan officer with the name Castillo Armas to lead a 'liberation movement' against President Jacobo Arbenz. Like an earlier CIA covert action in Iran, there was great emphasis on psychological warfare. The CIA plan envisioned five stages: (1) staffing and assessment for the operation; (2) a preliminary conditioning of the target through discrediting the Arbenz government and the initial delivery of weapons to the guerrillas; (3) 75 days of build-up for the attack and softening of the target; (4) 25 days before attack maximum economic pressure was to be applied, including a rumor and sabotage campaign; and (5) the attack itself or showdown (Prados 2006, 111–112). The CIA hired several hundred mercenaries who were operating out of bases in Honduras and also supplied 30 Second World War-era bombers flown by American pilots from bases in Nicaragua, Honduras, and the Canal Zone. The CIA supplied over 433 tons of weapons and equipment to the guerrillas using US Air Force C-124 cargo planes (Prados 2006, 113). The operation succeeded primarily by using psychological warfare and diplomatic pressure against the Arbenz government, which resulted in Arbenz fleeing the country before it ever came to any major battle between the Armas-led mercenaries and the Guatemalan army.[6]

Tibet (1958–74)

The communist government of China claimed that Tibet was part of China and occupied the country in 1950. The CIA started operations ST CIRCUS and ST BARNUM to train and airlift Tibetan freedom fighters for the purpose of resisting the Chinese occupation. Tibetans were smuggled out of Tibet to fly from India on unmarked planes via Taiwan to Saipan, where they would train (Prados 2006, 189). Tibetan resistance fighters were recruited from refugees in the neighboring countries Nepal and India. From 1959 some of the Tibetans were brought to the US to be trained in guerrilla warfare (Knaus 1999, 155). The CIA planned for five groups numbering 700 each to be trained in the US. The Tibetan fighters were then brought to Taiwan and infiltrated back into Tibet. The guerrilla force of 14,000 fighters became known as the National Volunteer Defense Army (NVDA) and they managed to liberate the Dalai Lama in 1959. This year also marked the peak of CIA weapons deliveries to the Tibetan

guerrillas. After 1959 the Chinese pushed back and the guerrillas suffered high casualties (Prados 2006, 189–199). The shootdown of Gary Francis Powers' U-2 on 1 May 1960 resulted in President Eisenhower halting all flights into communist territories, which included supply flights into Tibet (Knaus 1999, 241). The CIA realized that they needed a base of operations near Tibet and built a base in Mustang, Nepal, about 25 miles from the Tibetan border (Knaus 1999, 246). Operations were coordinated with the Indians, who also recruited Tibetan guerrillas into their paramilitary Special Frontier Force, which guarded the Indian border to Tibet (Knaus 1999, 271). A CIA program review from 1963 noted that activities in Tibet and China were 'not especially productive.' CIA support to the NVDA continued throughout the 1960s, although it became increasingly clear that there were little chances of success. By early 1969 the new Nixon administration decided that a rapprochement with China was critical for reaching a solution in the Vietnam War and the Tibetan operation was quietly abandoned.[7] Former CIA officer and author John Kenneth Knaus noted that the operation suffered from many challenges such as the inability of the Tibetan guerrillas to establish bases inside Tibet, their inability to operate as guerrillas given their need to move with families and herds, and the vastly superior military capabilities of the Chinese (Knaus 1999, 321–322). John Prados has claimed that Washington knew from the beginning that the PMO in Tibet could not succeed in more than harassing the Chinese, especially since the US government made little other efforts to support Tibetan nationhood in the international arena (Prados 2006, 203).

Indonesia (1958)

After failing to remove Sukarno from power as president of Indonesia through manipulating Indonesian elections in 1955, the CIA opted for a range of dirty tricks to discredit Sukarno and force him out of office.[8] Sukarno had been moving closer to the Soviet Union and a CIA-sponsored rebellion by the rebel group Permesta on Sumatra represented an opportunity to unseat him. In November 1957, $10 million were approved for Project HAIK, which involved mercenaries from various countries and indigenous Indonesian rebels (Prados 2006, 169–170). The headquarters for the operation was established in nearby Singapore and it was planned to train and arm several tens of thousands of fighters, who were to be supported by a rebel Air Force, consisting of 15 B-26 bombers (Blum 2004,

102). The CIA shipped weapons for 8000 fighters to Sumatra in December 1957 and carried out bombing missions in support of the rebels. Permesta launched guerrilla warfare on several islands, but was not strong enough to challenge the government in Jakarta. The rebels declared a new government in February 1958 and Indonesia was in the middle of a civil war. Sukarno subsequently launched an invasion of Sumatra and the rebels were unable to resist the much better equipped and trained Indonesian military. On 18 May 1958, an American B-26 was brought down and the pilot was captured at which point Eisenhower ended the PMO (Prados 2006, 178). The Permesta rebel group collapsed within a few months and the last remaining rebels surrendered after being promised an amnesty in 1961. This PMO had from the beginning very little prospects of success, as any support that the CIA could provide was limited by the requirement of maintaining plausible deniability.

Congo (1960–68)

CIA activities in Africa in the 1960s were prompted by a wave of decolonization and the fear that newly independent states could turn to communism. The US government's role in Congo during that period has been complex and subject to much criticism, although the covert operations have been acknowledged as having been successful, at least in the short term (Weissman 2014, p. 14). Congo was at the time the CIA's largest PMO (Robarge 2014, 1). US involvement began in June 1960 when Congo declared independence from Belgium and the socialist Patrice Lumumba became the country's first prime minister. In July 1960, the mineral-rich province of Katanga announced that it would secede from Congo, which was a move backed by the former colonial power Belgium. The US supported the Belgian intervention in Congo since they considered Lumumba to be a socialist. They even cooperated with the Belgians on assassinating Lumumba, which was one of the few CIA assassination plots later investigated and confirmed by the Church Committee investigation.[9] The CIA's technical director Sidney Gottlieb was tasked with developing a poison that could be used for this purpose, which he personally delivered to Congo (Prados 2006, 277). In the end, Lumumba was captured and executed by Congolese soldiers under orders of Katangan leader Moise Tshombe on behalf of the Belgians before the CIA's plot could succeed (De Witte 2001, 71). The Belgian troops were soon replaced by UN peacekeepers after protests over their extremely violent conduct (Blum

2004, 157). In a strange twist, the US government switched support to the new government of Congo after the killing of Lumumba. Newly discovered documents show that the CIA's PMO in Congo in the early 1960s was massive: an estimated $90 to $150 million current dollars was spent, not taking into account services and equipment provided for free by the Pentagon (Weissman 2014). The PMO in Congo continued, but from then on focused on providing support to the new government of President Kasavubu against pro-communist rebels, who had set up a new government in Stanleyville. The CIA was relying on mercenaries that included Americans, Cuban exiles, Rhodesians, and South Africans, who conducted operations against insurgents in the eastern part of Congo. The US sent 100 to 200 military and technical personnel to assist government troops (Blum 2004, 160). The rebel stronghold in Stanleyville fell in late 1964 after an attack by 500 Belgian paratroopers airlifted by CIA planes, who were sent to rescue the foreigners. The CIA later assisted the new Congolese leader Mobutu in cracking down on insurgents and mutineers, who then received weapons and other supports from the Chinese and Cubans. In order to interdict these arms shipments, the CIA conducted maritime operations on Lake Tanganyika with a flotilla of boats. The CIA also created the Congolese Air Force from scratch by providing aircraft and contracted pilot trainers. By 1967, the CIA was handing over the equipment to the Congolese and phased out operations, which was completed in late 1968 (Robarge 2014, 6). The case of the Congo PMO is unusual in the respect that its objective changed after 1961 from supporting Katangan separatists to the support of a unified Congo government.

Cuba (1961)

Soon after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Cuban leader Fidel Castro was considered a communist and a threat to US interests. The Eisenhower administration stopped trade with Cuba in 1960 and launched covert operations to overthrow Castro, including attempts of assassinating him (US Senate 1975, 72). Many anti-Castro Cubans had fled the island to Miami and hoped to return to Cuba with the help of the US. The CIA was recruiting Cuban exiles in Miami and training them mostly in 'Camp Trax' in Guatemala. The Cuban exiles adopted the unit designation Brigade 2506 in memory of their first training casualty Carlos Rodriguez, who was recruit number 2506 (Prados 2006, 237). The brigade was subdivided into six mini-battalions, representing different military specializations.

Furthermore, the CIA purchased boats and aircraft for logistical support and for harassing the Cuban government. The Cuba rebel force consisted of 16 B-26 bombers and 8 C-46 and 6 C-54 cargo planes (Prados 2006, 238). The plan was to covertly land Brigade 2506 at the Bay of Pigs from where they would infiltrate Cuba and build a broad resistance movement against Castro. The operation carried over from the Eisenhower administration to the Kennedy administration. On 17 April 1961, the 1400-strong Cuban Brigade 2506 attempted a landing at the Bay of Pigs, which failed as Castro's forces were already waiting for them. The plan had been betrayed by traitors within the Cuban community in the US (Marchetti and Marks 1974, 306–307). Kennedy refused to provide air cover through the US military for the Cuban exiles and they subsequently surrendered after three days of fighting. Castro's forces had killed 114 Cuban exiles and captured 1214 on 19 April 1961 (Prados 2006, 263). The Bay of Pigs invasion became a major embarrassment for the US. This failure also stands out in the history of PMOs because it was the first time that the American public became aware of the practice of covert operations conducted by the CIA.

Vietnam Era: Laos and North Vietnam (1962–75)

In the early 1960s, the US expanded its commitment to South Vietnam, which eventually resulted in large-scale US paramilitary operations across Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia), both in a counterinsurgency and pro-insurgency context. The two biggest pro-insurgency operations took place in North Vietnam and in Laos. The operations extended over a decade and involved tens of thousands of paramilitary forces. The CIA transformed from being a spy agency into a major paramilitary organization that could wage 'secret wars' on behalf of the US government.[10]

North Vietnam (1964–72)

JFK had inherited the conflict in Vietnam from the Eisenhower administration, which had been covertly supporting the government of South Vietnam since 1955. JFK wanted to take the conflict to North Vietnam instead of merely trying to defend the South (Shultz 1999). During the Kennedy administration, the responsibility for larger PMOs was handed to the Pentagon in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs debacle (Shultz 1999, 7).

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara wanted a symmetrical response to the guerrilla warfare threat in the South by inserting commandoes in the North to engage in espionage, sabotage, and assassination (Shultz 1999, 7). Furthermore, the CIA was tasked with creating an insurgency in the North. Later DCI William Colby was put in charge of Project TIGER, which recruited, trained, equipped, and air-dropped South Vietnamese agents into North Vietnam (Blum 2004, 340–341). The CIA launched over 36 operations in three years to insert agent teams from the sea and the air, but was unable to produce any significant results. Over 200 Project TIGER agents were lost (Blum 2004, 340–341). In 1964, the operations were transferred to MACV SOG, which continued the effort for many more years with a similar lack of success. The primary problem was that the North Vietnamese were usually able to identify the agents and to systematically capture any agent, who was sent into their country. President Johnson shut down the effort in 1968 (Shultz 1999, 331). Between 1970 and 1972, the CIA conducted a few raids from Laos into North Vietnam with Vietnamese volunteers, but they also failed to have any strategic impact.

Laos (1955–74)

The CIA became involved in Laotian politics in the mid-1950s, as it aimed to neutralize the communist Pathet Lao, which had won seats in the National Assembly. The CIA supported multiple coups in Laos and also created the *Armee Clandestine* under the leadership of General Vang Pao, consisting of Meo or Hmong tribesmen, who were meant to fight the Pathet Lao insurgency with little or no support from the government in Vientiane in 1961. Christened Operation MOMENTUM, it became the first time that the CIA got to run its own secret war lasting over a decade (Kurlantzick 2016, 14). By the mid-1960s, the *Armee Clandestine* reached the size of 30,000 guerrilla fighters, who were trained and armed by 10,000 Special Forces and CIA personnel (Ranelagh 1986, 425). Most of the training of the Hmong took place in Thailand. The CIA managed all the logistics, including transporting troops and supplies across the country with no more than 50 officers in the field (Marchetti and Marks 1974, 244). For this purpose, the CIA built the Long Tieng airbase, which was the biggest airport in Laos at the time. The cost of the operation was estimated at $20 to $30 million per year (Marchetti and Marks 1974, 244). In addition, American Special Forces were embedded into the *Armee Clandestine* and also conducted cross-border raids into North Vietnam,

while the US Air Force was dropping more bombs on Laos than they had on Germany and Japan during the Second World War (Kurlantzick 2016, 8). The war remained officially unacknowledged until 1969 (Kurlantzick 2016, 181). Operations were scaled back after the Paris Peace Accord of 1973. Long Tieng was eventually overrun two years later and the Pathet Lao won the war against the Hmong, who were at least partially able to obtain asylum in the US. In 1975, the capital Vientiane fell to the Pathet Lao and over 40,000 Hmong fled to Thailand (Kurlantzick 2016, 234). The Hmong were decisively defeated on the battlefield and lost 100,000 people during the war (Lloyd-George 2011). Analyst Tyrone Groh has suggested that the Hmong lacked the ability to operate more complex weapons systems, which could have leveled the playing field. They were highly dependent on US airpower, which was only available to a limited extent (Groh 2010, 93). DCI Helms in contrast argued that 'paramilitary programs that the agency operated in Laos…were the most successful ever mounted' because it had tied up 70,000 North Vietnamese soldiers, who were not available for combat in South Vietnam (quoted from Kurlantzick 2016, 245–246).

Iraq

In the early 1970s Iran under the Shah was a close US ally, while Iraq was considered to be a Soviet client state as a result of the Baathist revolution of 1968 and a formal friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in 1972. The new socialist government in Baghdad immediately started a campaign to suppress a Kurdish insurrection and after a year the war ended in 1970, due to Soviet pressure, with a negotiated settlement that gave the Kurds led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani autonomy and representation. The Kurds were still not satisfied with the situation and they continued to receive military support from Iran, which saw Iraq as a threat and which wanted to use the Kurds as a means for exerting pressure on its neighbor regarding the control of the Shatt al-Arab River at the border (Gunter 1992, 7). The Kurds were distrustful of Iranian intentions, but were more trusting as it concerned US intentions. As a result, the Nixon administration provided guarantees and material to the Kurds, mostly as a favor to the Shah (Gunter 1992, 8). Other considerations were to limit Soviet influence in the Middle East and to tie down Iraqi forces so that they could not be used against Israel. From 1972 to 1975, the CIA provided overall $16 million in cash and weapons to the Kurds (about $72 million in today's

dollars) (Wise 1991). Israel and Britain also contributed to the Kurdish insurgency, while Iran supported it by cross-border artillery fire (Wise 1991). During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the US and Israel discouraged a Kurdish offensive since it was in their view unlikely to succeed. All foreign support to the Kurds was abruptly cut off after the Algiers Accord of 1975, which settled the issue of the Shatt al-Arab. The consequence was that the Kurdish insurgency got crushed by the Iraqis. The Congressional Pike Report suggested that 'the President, Dr. Kissinger and the (shah) hoped that our clients would not prevail. They preferred instead that the insurgents simply continue a level of hostilities sufficient to sap the resources of (Iraq)' (quoted from Wise 1991). In short, the US government was never sincere about supporting Kurdish independence, which made it easy for them to terminate the operation once Iran accomplished its foreign policy goal.

The Resurgence of PMOs After Vietnam (1975–88)

As the war was winding down in Southeast Asia in the early 1970s, CIA PMOs were scaled back substantially over this decade, as was the overall CIA HUMINT and covert operations capability.[11] By the mid-1970s, the CIA was shaken by the Church and Pike committees that subjected it to much greater scrutiny and criticism than the agency had ever faced before. The agency only attempted three new and smaller PMOs in the remainder of the decade (Angola, South Yemen, and Afghanistan). The eventual resurgence of PMOs resulted from the election of Ronald Reagan and his promise to roll back communism around the world. As a result, the CIA conducted at least five large PMOs during the Reagan years (two in Africa, one in the Middle East, one in Central Asia, and one in Latin America). An important trend of the Reagan era was the growing privatization of covert operations as a means of evading oversight and of raising funds for controversial operations.

Angola (1975–90)

In 1974, there was a coup in Portugal, which resulted in releasing Angola into independence a year later. Three rebel movements were competing for control of the country: MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA. The MPLA was a socialist group, which immediately asked for assistance from Cuba and the Soviet Union (Hughes 2014, 62). In order to counter the communist

forces in Angola, the CIA decided to train and arm the FNLA, while the South Africans were supporting UNITA. Christened Operation IA FEATURE, the CIA sent about a hundred mercenaries and many planeloads of weapons to Angola, but the effort was half-hearted: most of the weapons supplied were old and the FNLA was not able to match the much better trained and supported MPLA. By January 1976, the FNLA had to confront 12,000 Cuban advisors (Mumford 2013, 50). The CIA stepped up the effort by sending $32 million in financial aid to FNLA and $16 million in weapons (Mumford 2013, 50). At the peak of the operation, the CIA had 83 officers in the Angolan task force, which was led by later CIA critic John Stockwell. The CIA formed questionable alliances with Mobutu, the South African Apartheid regime, and mercenaries, which ultimately became a political problem back in the US. When Colby requested additional funds for supporting the FNLA in January 1976, the timing was particularly bad: the Church Committee had just uncovered MKULTRA and CIA assassination plots. Congress subsequently denied additional funding (Ranelagh 1986, 609). The support to rebels in Angola was renewed by the Reagan administration in 1981 and continued until 1988. UNITA became the first liberation movement to be armed with Stinger missiles in early 1986 (Clark 2015, 142). This PMO clearly failed in terms of securing the victory of the CIA-supported groups and the conflict dragged on until 2002 when former CIA proxy UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi was killed.

South Yemen (1979–82)

After the decolonization in 1963, Yemen split into South Yemen and North Yemen in 1967. South Yemen became increasingly socialist in the 1970s. It invited Cuban and Soviet military advisors after fighting broke out against the North in 1972. The CIA estimated that by 1977 there were 350 Soviet and 350 Cuban military advisors in Yemen (Brehony 2011, 83). The US saw South Yemen as a potential threat to their ally Saudi Arabia. CIA Deputy Director Frank Carlucci urged President Carter to start a PMO in Yemen (Woodward 1986, A1). CIA supporters of the PMO wanted to use it for establishing closer ties with Saudi intelligence. The CIA went ahead to support North Yemen through Saudi Arabia, also with additional assistance from Britain (Curtis 2010, 158). The US trained 30 South Yemeni exiles in Saudi Arabia to be inserted back into their country so that they would destabilize the government in the South.

Fighting was sporadic and continued in South Yemen until March 1982 when a small CIA paramilitary team was captured during an attempt to blow up a bridge (Woodward 1986). The prisoners were tortured until they admitted their connection to the CIA (Blum 2000, 150). In a trial in Aden, it was alleged by the prosecution that they had received training by the CIA. Three of them received a 15-year prison sentence and ten of them received a death sentence in late March 1982 (Woodward 1986, A46). The Reagan administration decided at this point to end support to South Yemenese rebels. The Saudis subsequently made peace with the regime in Aden. Later, in 1986 a civil war broke out in the South, which lasted only a few months, and in 1990 the country was reunified. The PMO in Yemen was fairly small and amounted to little more than harassment—it failed to achieve any conceivable foreign policy goal other than strengthening US-Saudi cooperation in covert operations. Furthermore, the operation was publicly exposed and became an embarrassment for US foreign policy and the Reagan administration.

Chad (1981–87)

When Chad was under military rule from 1975 to 1978 and unable to defeat the rebels, the military leader Felix Malloum formed a coalition with rebel leader Hissene Habré. In 1979, civil war broke out when Habré succeeded in a coup that ousted Malloum. The Organization of African Union (OAU) intervened and 4000 Libyan peacekeepers were invited by a new transitional government to defeat the rebels, who were led by Habré. The Reagan administration took the view that it was better to replace the current pro-Libyan government with a government that was hostile to Gaddafi (Daugherty 2004, 209). The CIA trained and armed the Chadian opposition, led by Habré in neighboring Sudan. The operation cost hundreds of millions of dollars and was successful in terms of helping Habré to regain control of the government in June 1982 (Wright 1983, 17). When Habré's situation worsened in 1983, the CIA sent another $10 million worth of weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and vehicles to Chad. The conflict became known as the 'Toyota War' because of the use of large numbers of Toyota 'Hilux' and 'Land Cruisers' that were converted into 'technicals' by the CIA-supported Chadian forces (Wilde 1984).[12] In 1987 the US provided $25 million worth of equipment to Habré, including 'three C-130 aircraft, ammunition, Redeye man-portable surface-to-air missiles, grenade launchers, rifles, and four-wheel-drive

vehicles' (Hancock and Wexler 2014, 429). In March 1987, Habré's military successfully attacked the Libyan base at Ouadi Doum in northern Chad, which triggered a hasty Libyan retreat from Chad (James 1987, 21). The fruits of victory did not last long as Habré himself was overthrown by his former ally Idriss Deby in 1990.

Nicaragua (1981–88)

The popular revolution against US-supported dictator Anastasio Somoza brought into power the socialist Sandinista regime in 1979. The Sandinistas sought assistance from the Soviet Union and Cuba. The Cubans provided substantial economic assistance and sent a few hundred military advisors to Nicaragua to help the Sandinistas in the fight against the so-called Contras. The Reagan administration believed that the Sandinista government represented a larger threat to Latin America and needed to be overthrown in order to contain communist expansion in Latin America.[13] NSDD-17 from 4 January 1982 authorized the CIA to 'support democratic forces in Nicaragua.' Initial support was small and amounted to only a few million dollars and was capped in the 1984 budget at $24 million (Walsh 1997, 18). Congress cut funding in 1984, but the Reagan administration considered it only a temporary setback and secretly continued their support to the Contras until Congress would resume funding. As a result, operational control shifted from the CIA to the NSC, while the PMO was effectively privatized. NSC staffer Oliver North was running the Contra operation codenamed ironically 'Project Democracy.' Funding for the Contras came initially from foreign governments and private donors (Wroe 1991, 17). Later, North entangled this operation with another illegal operation, namely the arms for hostages deal with Iran by using profits generated by arms sales with Iran for funding the Contras. This led in November 1986 to the infamous Iran-Contra scandal after a plane with an American was shot down over Nicaragua with American cargo pusher Eugene Hasenfus getting captured by the Sandinistas (Prados 2006, 564). The NSC went into cover-up mode, laying low and destroying all documents related to the operations, but it was too late: several official investigations began and uncovered serious wrongdoing on part of the Reagan administration.[14] The civil war continued until 1989 when the Contras, facing defeat, agreed to demobilize.

Afghanistan (1979–89)

The CIA covert action in Afghanistan was conceived by President Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, who saw an opportunity of luring the Soviets into a trap as a payback for Vietnam (Riedel 2014, 149).[15] In July 1979, Carter issued a presidential 'finding' that authorized covert operations in Afghanistan, six months prior to the Soviet invasion (Coll 2005, 46). The CIA began subsequently with the training of insurgents and the destabilization of Afghanistan. Hafizullah Amin, who had previously replaced the assassinated Nur Mohammad Taraki in October 1979, was considered incompetent by the Soviets as he was losing control over the countryside. In order to prevent the collapse of an allied government at its doorstep, the Soviets sent Special Forces on 24 December 1979 to assassinate Amin, followed by 85,000 soldiers of the Soviet 40th Army (Rodman 1994, 212–213). Operation CYCLONE became in terms of money expended the biggest PMO in CIA history, lasting over ten years (Crile 2003, 5). Initially fairly small, the CIA stepped up its effort in Afghanistan several times. The CIA effectively subcontracted the operation to assist the Afghan rebels, who were known as 'Mujahedeen,' to Pakistan's military intelligence service ISI since Pakistan President Zia ul-Haq had demanded full operational control (Cooley 2002, 42). The CIA procured hundreds of thousands of old Enfield rifles from Pakistan and Egypt, which were eventually supplemented with Chinese-made and Soviet-made AK-47s, RPG-7s, 60mm mortars from black market sources in China and Poland, tens of thousands of rifles, machine guns, and hundred million bullets from Turkey (Coll 2005, 66). According to Pakistan's ISI General Mohammad Yousaf, who was in charge of ISI's Afghan Bureau from 1983 to 1987, 'some 80,000 Mujahideen were trained; hundreds of thousands of tons of arms and ammunition were distributed, several billion dollars were spent on this immense logistic exercise and ISI teams regularly entered Afghanistan alongside the Mujahideen' (Yousaf and Adkin 1992, 4). In March 1985, President Reagan signed NSDD-166, which effectively changed the US policy goal in Afghanistan from bleeding the Soviets to defeating them (Rodman 1994, 337). It marked a further escalation of the conflict that was stalemating at the time because of the weakness of the Mujahedeen and a change of tactics by the Soviets, most importantly greater reliance on air power. The US introduced the Stinger missile in September 1986, which substantially increased the economic burden of the war for the

Soviets (Rodman 1994, 339). By early 1987, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev announced the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, which was completed in February 1989.

The Clinton Era: Iraq and the Balkans (1993–2000)

There were no notable PMOs during the George H.W. Bush administration, which was suffering from the direct fallout from Iran-Contra. Furthermore, the end of the Cold War resulted in the termination of the great majority of covert operations as the primary rationale for conducting covert operations (containing communism) had disappeared (Daugherty 2004, 216). President Clinton had said that he did not favor the instrument of covert action and therefore made little use of it (Daugherty 2004, 48). This reportedly led to an atrophying of the CIA's paramilitary capability (Johnson 2012, 492). However, several PMOs were carried out in the Clinton era. It marked the growth of the State Department as a player in PMOs, sometimes in direct competition with the CIA, and it continued the Reagan-era trend of the privatization of PMOs.[16]

Iraq (1992–96)

Saddam Hussein was a US client during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88), who became an enemy after the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The Gulf War of 1991 succeeded in forcing Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, but failed in terms of removing Saddam from power. The CIA worked together with the Iraqi National Congress (INC), which had been founded by Ahmed Chalabi in 1992. The INC tried to join the Kurds, Shiites, and Sunni into a united front against the Hussein regime. The CIA hoped by working with the resistance in exile to carry out a coup in Iraq and replace the government with a new INC government, but this plan never gained any traction, as the INC lacked contacts to high-level regime members in Iraq. The alternative was to organize another uprising that could overthrow Saddam. The Kurds, who had conducted a failed uprising in 1991, were the best hope. CIA officer Robert Baer was tasked with evaluating the chances for both the coup and the uprising in 1995 (Baer 2003, 278–319). The plan he proposed was named Project ACHILLES and combined both coup and uprising (Prados 2006, 602). The plan for the uprising failed, as various Iraqi paramilitary groups pulled out and the plan for the coup failed when Saddam discovered it. The Iraqi general, who had been approached

by the CIA, subsequently fled to Syria. However, dozens of members of the Iraqi resistance were executed in August 1996 (Wise 1996). While Saddam cracked down on the opposition, the Iraqi army was attacking the Kurds with a large force during the same month. According to UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter, the CIA came up with a new plan to overthrow Saddam in early 1996, which involved UNSCOM (Scott 2005). The CIA hoped that the weapons inspectors could be used to trigger a crisis as a pretext for US military strikes that targeted Saddam and trigger an uprising led by the Iraqi National Accord. The plan was discovered by Iraq's Mukhabarat and Saddam rounded up 800 suspected plotters, who were tortured and executed (Scott 2005). The CIA not only failed to remove Saddam from power, but it's covert operations also weakened the CIA's ability to collect intelligence in Iraq, as their most valuable human sources were lost in the crackdowns (Fedarko 1996). As a result, the CIA was unable to provide accurate information on Iraqi WMD capabilities in the early 2000s, especially after the UN arms inspectors had been expelled in 1998.[17]

Bosnia (1994–95)

The indirect and covert US intervention in the Yugoslavian civil war has received very little attention, as it was overshadowed by the very ostensible failure of the UN peacekeeping operation that was taking place at the same time. The CIA influenced the outcome of the war by secretly arming and training the Bosnian and Croat armies during the years 1994 and 1995.[18] It was at the time widely reported in the press that there were Iranian arms shipments to Bosnian Muslims in contravention of a UN arms embargo that were seemingly tolerated by the US government (Jehl 1995). Intelligence expert Richard Aldrich claimed that '[a]rms purchased by Iran and Turkey with the financial backing of Saudi Arabia made their way by night from the Middle East. Initially aircraft from Iran Air were used, but as the volume increased they were joined by a mysterious fleet of black C-130 aircraft' (Aldrich 2002).[19] According to journalist Mark Curtis, this CIA plan of supplying Muslims and Croats was called Operation CLOVER and had a $5 million budget (Curtis 2010, 211). The Germans also provided through its foreign intelligence service BND weapons to the Muslims in Bosnia, sometimes hidden in food packages (Schindler 2007, 178). Furthermore, the Croats received military training and advice through the American PMC MPRI. Officially, MPRI was limited to classroom education that covered the transitioning of the Croat military

to democracy and human rights. It has been argued by analyst Peter W. Singer and others that MPRI was instrumental in preparing two offensives of the Croatian army (operations Flash and Storm) in May and August 1995, which were a turning point in the war (Singer 2003, 5). At the same time, NATO was also conducting air strikes against Serbian forces under the pretext of enforcing compliance to UN SCR 816 that declared a 'no-fly zone' over Bosnia. The Bosnia war eventually ended in November 1995 through the Dayton Peace Agreement. This PMO can be considered a success since the US-backed groups were able to achieve independence from Serbia, which was a US foreign policy goal.

Sudan (1996)

Sudan was released into independence in 1956 and underwent its first civil war from 1956 to 1964. A series of incompetent democratic governments resulted in a coup by Jafaar Nimeiri in 1969, which moved Sudan in the direction of Islamic fundamentalism and further internal strife. In the 1980s, Nimeri formed an alliance with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and imposed Sharia law on the Christian and animist South (Randal 1985, A20). The Sudanese commander sent by Khartoum to quell a rebellion in the South, John Garang, a graduate of a company commander course at Fort Benning, Georgia, ended up leading the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). In 1993 the State Department put Sudan on the list of state sponsors of terrorism and between 1994 and 1996 the Islamist regime in Khartoum hosted the Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden. At that time, bin Laden was already wanted by the US for his connections to the first WTC bombing of 1993. The US government put pressure on Sudan to expel bin Laden while also providing military assistance to Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda, which used the material for supporting rebels in South Sudan. Altogether $20 million in US military equipment was sent to the three 'frontline states' (HRW 1998, Ch. 6). The military aid was described as 'nonlethal' and included radios, uniforms, and tents, but there seems to have been a more direct US role in this proxy conflict. According to the Federation of American Scientists, 'several Operational Detachments-Alpha (also called A-Teams) of the US army were operating in support of the SPLA' (Pike 2000). After the East African embassy bombings, an alleged chemical factory in Khartoum was attacked by cruise missiles in 1998 (Coll 2005, 411). In 2001 the US made another attempt to carve out a state in southern Sudan by authorizing $3 million in aid delivered by the private military company

Dyncorp (Wettering 2003, 568). The US continued to support the independence of South Sudan after the end of the civil war in 2002, which eventually resulted in the establishment of the state of South Sudan in 2005. The overall US effort could be seen as a success if South Sudan had not turned into a failed state shortly after gaining independence.

Kosovo (1996–2000)

In an effort to oust Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, the CIA supported a paramilitary group that called itself Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in 1996 to 2000. The KLA carried out guerrilla and terrorist attacks in southern Serbia, which triggered an aggressive and indiscriminate counterinsurgency campaign by Serbian forces. The German BND was selecting and training KLA fighters from its offices in Tirana and Rome (Burghardt 2008). They supplied weapons from old East German stockpiles and also black uniforms while training was conducted by German Special Forces in the remote Mirdita Mountains in northern Albania. A British official met with KLA leaders on 30 July 1998, which resulted in the deployment of members of the SAS in early 1999 to Albania to train KLA fighters (Curtis 2010, 241). In March 1999, NATO intervened in the conflict, launching Operation Allied Force, which conducted a 78-day bombing campaign with the undeclared but obvious goal of overthrowing Milosevic. During the air campaign US SOF deployed in Albania together with CIA paramilitary officers to assist the KLA. They contributed to the relative success of the bombing by providing targeting information on the ground and helping with battle damage assessment (Priest 1999). Milosevic survived the NATO intervention, but was eventually ousted by the US-supported 'bulldozer revolution' of 2000.[20] Kosovo was under UN administration after 1999 and became independent in 2008. The PMO succeeded primarily due to the NATO air campaign that resulted in a withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo.

The War on Terror: Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran, Libya, and Syria (2001–17)

It has been frequently noted that paramilitary dramatically expanded after their contraction in the 1990s following the 9/11 attacks (Johnson 2012, 489). 'The gloves came off' and the CIA was 'unleashed,' in the words of CIA officer Cofer Black (US Congress 2002). The CIA was tasked to

carry out a global shadow war against al Qaeda. The Bush administration made paramilitary operations an important aspect in their overthrow of the Taliban in 2001/2002, their covert war in Somalia against Al Shabab, and in destabilizing the fundamentalist government in Iran. The US military began to theorize about 'hybrid warfare,' which combined conventional and unconventional strategies as practiced in Afghanistan and later in Libya (2011) and Syria (since 2012).

Afghanistan (2001)

Following 9/11 the George W. Bush government demanded from the Taliban government in Afghanistan to turn over their guest Osama bin Laden, which they refused to do (Rashid 2001, 219). This resulted in a military attack by the US on Afghanistan with the objectives to capture Osama bin Laden and to unseat his Taliban allies. The American strategy heavily relied on the use of proxy forces, SOF, and airpower, which was successful at least in the short run. About 115 CIA paramilitary officers and 300 SOF entered Afghanistan in October 2001 (Rashid 2009, 74). They were working closely together with the so-called Northern Alliance, a group of insurgents that had been previously led by the famous warlord Ahmed Shah Massoud, who was assassinated two days prior to 9/11. The CIA 'rented' Afghan warlords by dispensing tens of millions of dollars in cash to them (Woodward 2002). American SOF sometimes followed the Northern Alliance on horseback into battle while calling in precision airstrikes that destroyed Taliban forces in the field. In late 2001, al Qaeda was pinned down at the Tora Bora cave complex, which was pounded with heavy ordnance and surrounded by SOF. This apparently did not prevent the escape of Osama bin Laden, who had been the main objective.[21] The US installed Hamid Karzai as interim president of the transitional Afghan government and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was brought in under a UN mandate to establish security across the country. The whole war to overthrow the Taliban had only cost a paltry $17 billion from October 2001 to May 2002 (Rashid 2009, 134).

Somalia (2002–2006)

The civil war in Somalia began in 1988 when the Siad Barre government was trying to suppress various rebel groups. By 1991, the Barre government had collapsed and this resulted in a humanitarian disaster. UN

peacekeepers were dispatched to relieve the local population and to restore order, which led to the Battle of Mogadishu in October 1993 and the subsequent withdrawal of US troops from Somalia, leaving behind a failed state. After 9/11 there was growing concern about the al Qaeda presence in Somalia. In 2002, the CIA made contact with Somali warlords and paid them to hunt down and kill al Qaeda terrorists, which later became the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism (ARPCT). It appears that Somali warlords only had been paid the modest sums of $100,000 to $150,000 a month. They were in opposition to the Islamic Court Union, which emerged as the main governing body in Somalia and which also led to the emergence of the affiliated Islamic militant group Al Shabab. A private entrepreneur from Virginia, Michele Ballarin, pitched a plan to train and arm warlords in Somalia, which was not implemented (Mazzetti 2013). The ARPCT was defeated during the Second Battle of Mogadishu in May 2006. The US government then changed its approach by using Ethiopia as a proxy for an attack on the ICU in December 2006. Supported by US AC-130 gunships and US SOF on the ground, the Ethiopian army successfully dislodged the ICU in Mogadishu, installing the exiled Transitional Federal Government (TFG) (Axe 2015, p. 95). US SOF have since conducted numerous operations in Somalia against Al Shabab leaders, such as a raid by Navy SEALs that killed Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan in September 2009 (Gettleman and Schmitt 2009). Al Shabab remains entrenched in smaller parts of Somalia and warlords are still a factor in Somali politics. The Obama administration therefore used a 'dual-track' approach, dealing with both the official government and the warlords, which has also undermined the legitimacy of the government and strengthened the Islamic militants. As of 2017, the civil war in Somalia continues.

Iran (2005–2008)

Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the resulting Iranian hostage crisis, the relations between the US and Iran have been extremely strained. After Iran began to revive its Shah-era nuclear program in the 1990s, it was increasingly described as a 'rogue state' by US policymakers. The George W. Bush administration called Iran part of an Axis of Evil in 2002 and was contemplating a military attack on Iran after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It has been reported that there was a presidential finding that considered regime change as an option for preventing a nuclear-armed

Iran. In 2007 the administration requested $400 million from Congress for supporting minority Iranian opposition and dissident groups in an effort to destabilize the country (Hersh 2008). According to Seymour Hersh, the CIA covert operations ran parallel to a Pentagon-led clandestine operation that was targeting 'high-value targets' in Iran (Hersh 2008). Among the violent resistance groups in Iran that have received US support is Jundallah, which is a group with ties to al Qaeda, Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK), which is another radical Islamic group, and the Kurdish separatist group Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK). Although it has been officially denied by the US government, some government insiders have confirmed US support to Iranian separatists (Lowther and Freeman 2007). Hersh claims that from 2005 members of the MEK were brought to the US to train on Department of Energy land in Nevada. According to an account by an anonymous official quoted by Hersh, the training included communications, cryptography, small unit tactics, and weapons training and was discontinued some time before President Obama took office (Hersh 2012). It seems that the PMO did not actually go very far since there has not been any uprising against the Iranian government. However, there have been some high-profile assassinations and bombings in Iran since 2005 that have been attributed to the MEK, including the assassination of four nuclear scientists and the bombings of a gas pipeline, a missile base, and steel factories (Pitney 2012).[22] The covert war against Iran shifted increasingly to cyber warfare and economic warfare (crippling sanctions) during the Obama administration. Despite this, the US has not gotten any closer to the goal of overthrowing the regime.

Libya (2011–present)

The Arab Spring of 2011 resulted in an uprising in Libya, which soon became an insurgency against Libya's strongman Muammar Gaddafi (Kilcullen 2013, 200–201). In response to the unfolding civil war the UN adopted UN SCR 1973, which established a 'no-fly zone' in Libya that was meant to protect Libyan civilians from attacks by Gaddafi forces. However, NATO used the resolution to attack Gaddafi forces, regardless whether they were threatening civilians, flying over 26,000 sorties in Libya of which 10,000 were strike missions and destroying 6000 military targets (NATO 2011). NATO's war against Gaddafi also had an important paramilitary component, as NATO was working closely with the rebel forces on the ground. In March 2011, President Obama signed a 'finding' for a

covert action (codenamed Operation ZERO FOOTPRINT) to overthrow Gaddafi, which included supplying weapons to anti-Gaddafi forces (Telegraph 2011). According to analyst Stephen Weissman, 'Britain, France, Qatar, and the UAE in particular furnished significant aid to the insurgents with the approval of the United States and complicity of NATO. Much of this support was not officially acknowledged until after the war' (Weissman 2014, p. 681). The State Department approved the shipment of 7000 machine guns, 8 million rounds of ammunition, and rocket launchers to the Libyan rebels in spring 2011 (Solomon and Shapiro 2015). France openly announced that they air-dropped light arms, including RPGs, to rebels during the war, and Britain also provided them with equipment such as body armor (Rayment 2011). French, British, and Qatari intelligence and military personnel were on the ground and coordinating the rebel operations with NATO air strikes (Weissman 2016, 682). British and French SOF were operating alongside the rebels during the war. A small SAS unit trying to make contact with the Libyan rebels had been captured near Benghazi by the Libyan military even two weeks before the NATO bombing started (Chulov et al. 2011). It also seems well established that NATO played an important role in finding and killing Gaddafi in October 2011, which ended the war (Harding 2011).

Syria (2011–present)

The Arab Spring also resulted in civil unrest in Syria, as there was a lot of discontent with the Assad regime due to failed economic and political reforms, as well as continuation of brutality and corruption after Bashir Assad's father Hafez al-Assad's death in 2000 (Erlich 2014, 73–74). Mass protests in April 2011 escalated and turned violent, resulting in hundreds of deaths. By July 2011, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) was formed by former officers of the Syrian armed forces, which conducted an insurgency against the Assad government. By 2013 there were over 100,000 rebels fighting the government (Farmer and Sherlock 2013). The opposition forces have received international support from many countries early on. Qatar funded the rebellion with $3 billion in the first two years and supplied vast amounts of weapons through cargo flights into Turkey (Fielding-Smith and Khalaf 2013). More funding was provided by Saudi Arabia, while Turkey allowed the FSA to operate from Turkish territory. After Russia and China blocked a UN resolution for a 'no-fly zone' in Syria, the US was investigating covert means of helping the FSA (Black and Borger

2012). In August 2012, it was reported that President Obama had signed a secret finding that authorized support to the FSA to oust Assad (Hosenball 2012). As early as June 2012, the CIA was making contact with the FSA, helping them with setting up supply routes along the Turkish-Syrian border. About 1500 FSA fighters received intensive training from US Marine Corps personnel in Saudi Arabia by 2013 (Mohammed 2013). In Jordan, 3000 more FSA fighters received training by US and Jordanian military advisers (Luck 2013). In addition, there have been diplomatic efforts to make the case for an international intervention in Syria on behalf of the opposition. The Obama administration tried to justify a military attack on the Assad regime on the basis that Syrian government forces had used chemical weapons on civilians. This was again blocked by Russia, which threatened to intervene on behalf of Assad. From early 2014 the radical ISIS group emerged as a major military power in eastern Syria and northern Iraq, occupying almost a third of Syria and Iraq. The US launched an air campaign against ISIS in August 2014 and Russia decided to formally intervene in September 2015, also in an effort to defeat radical groups. In late 2015, the US military formed Division 30 (also known as 'New Syrian Army'), which was intended to reach an overall strength of 5400 US-trained rebels, supported by a US military operations center in Jordan (Ryan and Miller 2015). According to news reports, the CIA had spent $500 million on training and arming Syrian opposition forces by October 2015 without any ostensible success (Economist 2015). The current situation in Syria is extremely complex as numerous countries have overtly or covertly intervened on both sides. As of the time of writing, the Trump administration has ended the covert war in Syria, leaving the Syrian rebels to their own devices.

Notes

1. For an excellent and concise overview of OSS PMOs during the Second World War see Clark 2015, 39–56.
2. This effort is known as Operation GLADIO, which originally referred to the Italian branch of the secret armies. GLADIO was a paramilitary program that was led by the CIA in cooperation with intelligence services of respective NATO countries. The program was active until at least 1990 when it was first publicly disclosed by Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti in 1990. GLADIO remains controversial to the present day because of its apparent connections to a few terrorist attacks committed by

right-wing groups associated with the GLADIO network. Daniele Ganser has suggested that the terrorism was part of a 'strategy of tension,' but there is no strong evidence to support the claim.

3. The OPC favored supporting the NTS over the OUN since Bandera was considered to be anti-American, which meant that Anglo-American cooperation on the Ukraine was difficult. See Prados 2006, 73.
4. The OPC staff even proposed a full-scale invasion of Albania with thousands of men by ship and aircraft, which seemed preposterous to the CIA's Richard Bissell, who would later head the CIA's Directorate of Operations. See Dorril 2001, 400.
5. CIA historian Nick Cullather claimed that United Fruit tried to manipulate US foreign policy after the Guatemalan government made law to improve the rights of laborers. After a failed effort to put pressure on the US embassy to declare such a law discriminatory against United Fruit (a major employer in Guatemala), they enlisted 'Edward Bernays, the "father of modern public relations," to direct 'a campaign to persuade Congress and administration officials that attacks on the company were proof of Communist complicity.' See Cullather 2006, 16.
6. CIA documents have shown that the agency was prepared to use a range of 'dirty tricks,' including the assassination of Guatemalan officials. The CIA even prepared an assassination manual titled 'A Study of Assassination' in January 1954 that contained practical advice of how to go about assassination. According to Cullather, the CIA selected and trained some assassin and prepared 'hit lists.' See Cullather 2006, 137–142.
7. According to John Knaus, the Tibet issue was never debated in the negotiations with China and was certainly not part of Chinese demands. See Knaus 1999, 309.
8. The CIA spread rumors that Sukarno was being blackmailed by female Soviet spy and even produced a porno that showed an actor with a Sukarno face mask to discredit him. See Blum 2004, 101–102.
9. A detailed account proving the culpability of Belgium and the US in Lumumba's assassination can be found in Ludo De Witte. 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. London: Verso.
10. Analyst Joshua Kurlantzick suggested that this PMO had a lasting impact and that the 'Laos war became an archetype for agency paramilitary operations – and a new way for the president to unilaterally declare war and then secretly order massive attacks, often using aerial weaponry.' See Kurlantzick 2016, 18. In his view, the CIA became lastingly militarized and an integral part of the American war machine with the war in Laos having become a blueprint for CIA paramilitary operations that combine paramilitary proxy forces with US airpower.

11. DCI Stansfield Turner announced a major staff cut for the Directorate of Operations in October 1979 (known as the 'Halloween massacre'), which marked a shift away from HUMINT and covert operations to technology. Altogether 820 positions were eliminated in two years, mostly through normal attrition or through transfer into other departments in the agency. See Ranelagh 1986, p. 790, n. 13.
12. The Toyota pick-up trucks became a trademark for CIA PMOs. The CIA supplied Toyota trucks to the Mujahideen before switching to the use of mules, which were more versatile. The Toyota pick-ups were a feature of the Libyan and Syrian civil wars. In fact, when ISIS was showcasing hundreds of new Toyota land cruisers in a parade in Ramadi a request in the Senate discovered that the vehicles had been originally supplied by the State Department to the Free Syrian Army. See Snyder 2014.
13. The Carter administration, which had initially approved a $75 million aid package to the new Nicaraguan government, became alarmed when the Sandinistas began to provide weapons and training to Communist guerrillas in El Salvador in the middle of 1980. President Carter suspended the aid to Nicaragua before leaving office. His successor, Ronald Reagan, was also wary to avoid a crisis in Central America, but a Communist offensive in El Salvador in January 1981 made a response necessary. See Rodman 1994, 231–235.
14. Eleven US government officials and other individuals connected to Iran-Contra were convicted for felonies, mostly related to false statements and perjury before Congress, including Clair George (CIA), Thomas Clines (CIA), Richard Secord (Air Force), Robert McFarlane (National Security Advisor), and Elliot Abrams (State Department). Most of them were subsequently pardoned by President George H.W. Bush.
15. Geraint Hughes has argued that '[t]here is little to substantiate Brzezinski's subsequent claim that the administration's intention was to provoke the USSR and to suck it into a debilitating insurgency; unlike IAFEATURE in Angola in 1975, covert US assistance to the Afghan rebels did not force the Soviets to intervene.' See Hughes 2014, 115.
16. The CIA had accused the State Department in 1995 to have undertaken an illegal covert action to support the Bosnian Muslims. See Hicks 2005.
17. If the Bush administration would not have had a strong policy preference to invade Iraq with an inclination to ignore intelligence that did not fit their agenda, one could potentially argue that the failed uprising in Iraq was responsible for one of the greatest US foreign policy blunders, namely the Iraq War.
18. A Senate investigation looking into the matter determined that 'the Committee found no tangible evidence that US military forces or the CIA provided material support or training to Croatia or to the Bosnian

Muslims.' See US Senate 1996. This claim seems dubious in the light of newer research carried out by Dutch intelligence expert Cees Wiebes, who found evidence of direct US support to Bosnian Muslims. See Aldrich 2002.

19. Press reports suggested that despite a NATO-policed UN arms embargo American C-130 planes were delivering weapons to the Bosnians through the airport at Visoka. See Eagar 1995.
20. The 'bulldozer revolution' was the first of the 'color revolutions' that were supported by the US government. The protest movement Optor!, which is credited with organizing the revolution, had received several million dollars from the US through USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the International Republican Institute. See Cohen 2000.
21. According to Ahmed Rashid, the Afghan commanders used by the US had been bribed by al Qaeda to allow them to escape to Pakistan. 'Between six hundred and eight hundred Arabs were escorted out of Tora Bora by Pashtun guides from the Pakistani side of the border, at an average cost of $1,200 each.' See Rashid 2009, 98.
22. Journalist Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman have argued in their book *Spies Against Armageddon* that the assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists were planned by the Israeli Mossad with the objective of sending a message to Iran and other nations 'that working for the nuclear program was dangerous.' See Raviv and Melman 2014, 14.

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CHAPTER 3

Conducting Paramilitary Operations

The way the US government has conducted PMOs has changed over time, but many aspects and challenges have remained the same in over 70 years of covert operations. This chapter will go into more details regarding practical necessities and operational practices that have been developed to deal with specific challenges. In particular, the chapter will look at the following issues: the collaboration with partner states, the logistics of PMOs, the personnel used in PMOs, and financial operations related to PMOs. This will provide some more context to the discussion of the inherent flaws in PMOs in later chapters. In particular, it will be pointed out here that PMOs typically involve partner nations—it is rare that the US government is undertaking a PMO entirely on its own. While partners in PMOs can provide numerous benefits, their involvement also creates many problems and risks.

Foreign Partners in Covert Action

The role of partner states in CIA covert operations is often overlooked in the literature, although it is rather obvious that PMOs usually cannot be undertaken without the help of regional partners. Furthermore, many CIA PMOs have also been joint operations, where one or more partners provided substantial support and resources to a generally CIA-led operation. There is also the complicated issue of the shared funding of PMOs, which does raise fundamental questions about who is actually in charge, or

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in control of an operation. Several states may run PMOs on the same side in the same theater in parallel, making it very hard to attribute, who is responsible for various developments or events.

There are three main reasons why partner nations are often needed in PMOs: (1) operational necessities, (2) greater deniability, and (3) diminished democratic accountability of operations. As it concerns operational necessities, PMOs always require some staging area within a region from where operations can be launched. A regional ally has more local knowledge and is in a better position to assist in the selection and training of proxy fighters. Some allies may even make it part of an agreement with the US to retain control over a PMO launched from their country.[1] As it concerns the second reason, it clearly reduces risk of public exposure if no or only very few US personnel is located within a war zone, which makes it less likely that they get captured or killed. PMOs that are particularly sensitive because of the nature of the forces supported or because of the concern over escalation tend to be subcontracted in a large part to partner nations. Finally, by outsourcing an operation to partner government, the White House can avoid accountability since critical aspects of it would be handled by a foreign government and would be outside of the oversight capability and authority of Congress. In addition, partner governments might be able to operate with far less legal and political restrictions.[2] It seems that the CIA sometimes deliberately granted more operational control to partner services (e.g. to ISI in Afghanistan) to sidestep legal issues such as human rights violations by proxies or their association with terrorism.[3]

Regional and Strategic Partners

US partner nations in PMOs can be either strategic partners, which means that they collaborate on operations outside of their own region, sometime running their own operations in parallel to US operations, or they are mere regional partners that assume some supportive role in a US-run PMO because of their geographic proximity to the target state (Table 3.1).

Intelligence Liaisons

The academic literature on intelligence liaison focuses to a large extent on intelligence collection and intelligence sharing rather than on joint covert operations. The CIA relies massively on its liaison relationships with for-

Table 3.1 Strategic and regional partners

	Strategic partners	*Regional partners*
Albania (1949–53)	Britain	Germany (bases)
Ukraine (1949–53)	Britain	Germany (bases)
Burma/Southern China (1950–52)	Taiwan	Burma (staging area)
Guatemala (1954)	–	Honduras (bases, staging area) Nicaragua (bases) Panama (logistics)
Tibet (1958–74)	–	India (bases, staging area) Nepal (bases, staging area)
Indonesia (1958)	Britain Australia	Singapore (logistics)
Cuba (1961)	–	Honduras (logistics)
Congo (1960–68)	Belgium	Katanga (staging area, bases)
North Vietnam (1962–74)	–	South Vietnam (bases, logistics, troops) Thailand (bases) Laos (bases)
Laos (1955–74)	–	Thailand (bases)
Iraq (1972–75)	Britain, Israel	Iran (bases)
Angola (1975–90)	South Africa	–
South Yemen (1979–82)	Saudi Arabia	–
Chad (1981–82)	France	–
Nicaragua (1981–86)	Israel	Honduras (bases) Panama (logistics) El Salvador (bases, logistics)
Afghanistan (1979–89)	Britain Israel Saudi Arabia China	Pakistan (bases, logistics) Egypt (logistics)
Iraq (1992–96)	–	Saudi Arabia (logistics)
Bosnia (1994–95)	–	Germany (logistics) Croatia (bases, logistics)
Sudan (1996)	–	Ethiopia (logistics) Eritrea (logistics) Uganda (logistics)
Kosovo (1996–2000)	Germany, Britain	
Afghanistan (2001)	Britain	Pakistan (logistics)
Somalia (2002–2006)	–	–
Iran (2005–2008)	Israel	–

(*continued*)

Table 3.1 (continued)

	Strategic partners	*Regional partners*
Libya (2011)	France Britain	–
Syria (2011–present)	Israel Saudi Arabia Qatar	Jordan (bases, staging area) Turkey (logistics)

eign intelligence services and militaries to manage and conduct PMOs. This practice makes it necessary to look more closely at how these liaison relationships work in practice, which will become more important in later chapters that discuss the pitfalls of such an approach. Researcher Richard Aldrich has suggested that

> [i]ntelligence alliances are among the most closely guarded secrets of clandestine agencies. Inside large alliances, these organizations behave remarkably like states, with their own treaties, embassies, and emissaries. Such intelligence groupings are more common than most realize, and most Western agencies enjoy treaty relations with dozens of foreign equivalents, setting out rights, permissions, and, most importantly, their place in the hierarchy of intelligence powers. (Aldrich 2002, 50)

Intelligence liaisons tend to be hierarchical with the US at the top of all liaison relationships because of its international standing and resources and they tend to function on a quid pro quo basis: partners expect some form of compensation for their assistance to US intelligence, either in the intelligence field or in terms of political favors (Sims 2006, 197). The CIA has intelligence liaisons with a large number of foreign services, which it uses in a variety of ways, including the sharing of intelligence, joint operations, joint manning of facilities, and the provision of operational support. In return, the CIA or US government might provide financial incentives, weapons and equipment, intelligence, training and other support to its partners in exchange for their cooperation.

Partners in US PMOs may contribute the following: cross-border bases from where paramilitary forces can operate or from where they can be resupplied, 'sanitized' weapons and equipment for paramilitary forces, the training of paramilitary forces, intelligence support to paramilitary

forces, financial support to paramilitary forces, partner state personnel embedded in paramilitary forces, or even direct military support to paramilitary forces, including operational leadership. The CIA has maintained close liaison relationships in the area of covert operations with these foreign intelligence services:

British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS): The British SIS played an important role in the creation of both the OSS and the CIA, which means that it has exercised a significant and lasting influence on how American intelligence organizations approach covert operations. SIS has conducted several joint PMOs with the CIA in the early Cold War, most notably in Albania and Ukraine. Britain has a 'special' intelligence relationship with the US due to the close intelligence cooperation during the Second World War and due to the fact that US and British strategic interests in different world regions often overlap, with Britain being the former global hegemon and the US being the current global hegemon. In the early Cold War, Britain initiated several covert operations that were either taken over by the CIA or that inspired CIA operations in parallel to them.[4] Britain was an important contributor to Operation CYCLONE with SAS personnel training the Mujahedeen in Pakistan (Curtis 2010, 141–149).[5] More recently, Britain has contributed to a large extent to the NATO intervention and PMO in Libya in 2011 (UK Parliament 2016, Q317).

German Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND): The BND grew out of Organization Gehlen, which was the first West German intelligence service. It had been set up by the US military in 1945 to spy eastwards under American direction (Ranelagh 1986, 137). While the Gehlen Org was to officially remain under the control of the German government, it was fully financed by the Americans, was to carry out American orders, and share all its results with the Americans (Müller and Müller 2002, 64). W. Germany provided bases and training areas for some of the early US PMOs (Albania and Ukraine), and the BND contributed also to later US covert operations, most notably in Angola during the 1970s and in Afghanistan in the 1980s.[6] The BND of the unified Germany served as a US proxy in the Balkans during the 1990s, both in the Bosnia and in the Kosovo conflicts (Deliso 2007, 8, 39).[7]

Israeli Secret Intelligence Service (ISIS or Mossad): The liaison between the CIA and Mossad started in the early 1950s as a result of an initiative by CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton (Kahana 2001, 410). Mossad was able to provide important information on the Soviet Union and also Soviet material that they had captured during the 1967 and 1973 wars. Mossad also contributed to some US covert actions. It is known that Israel supported Kurdish insurgents (together with the US and Iran) during the First Iraqi-Kurdish War (1972–75) and that Israel has conducted a covert war, jointly with CIA and NSA against Iran since the early 2000s.[8] However, the best evidence for cooperation in this area comes from the Israeli role in the Iran-Contra scandal. In the mid-1980s, Israel provided arms (TOW and Hawk missiles) to be shipped to Iran in exchange for hostages (Wroe 1991, 7–8). Israel provided Soviet-manufactured arms captured in their wars that the CIA delivered to the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan in exchange for a discount on the sale of F-16s (Harclerode 2002, 534). Israel also assisted the CIA regime change effort in Syria. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported, '[t]he Israeli army is in regular communication with rebel groups and its assistance includes undisclosed payments to commanders that help pay salaries of fighters and buy ammunition and weapons' in addition to occasional cross-border military strikes (Jones et al. 2017).

Pakistan's Interservices Intelligence (ISI): The CIA has a long-standing relationship with Pakistan since the 1950s when it allowed CIA U-2 operations from an air base near Peshawar in return for covert military aid of $500 million a year (Rashid 2009, 36–37; Riedel 2014, 13). The CIA entered a close liaison with Pakistan's military ISI in the late 1970s because of the need to manage Mujahedeen insurgency from a neighboring country during the time of Soviet occupation. The Carter administration promised Pakistan's president Zia ul-Haq $3.2 billion for Pakistan's assistance in the PMO, of which half was to be transferred in cash and the other half in high-tech weapons over a six-year period. Pakistan's assistance was indeed extensive. The CIA delivered weapons and funds to ISI, which it then distributed to the Mujahedeen as they saw fit. Despite good counterterrorism cooperation between the US and Pakistan, post-9/11 relations have since 2011 become very strained due to the CIA's covert drone war and the Abbottabad raid that infringed on Pakistani sovereignty (Lowenthal 2015, 489).

Saudi General Intelligence Presidency (GIP): Previously known as General Intelligence Directorate (GID), GIP has been a close partner in many US covert operations, dating back to the 1970s. The CIA cooperated with Saudi intelligence in Yemen (1979–82), Afghanistan (1980s), and more recently in Syria (2011-present). The cooperation grew out of an initiative by French foreign intelligence chief Count Alexandre de Marenches. He had suggested to Saudi Prince Turki an international anticommunist alliance in 1976. According to Turki, 'His idea was…since our American friends were off the playing field [due to the Watergate scandal], as it were, and could not launch undercover operations at this critical time, we should get together a group of like-minded countries to try and keep the Communists out of Africa with money, arms, soldiers – any sort of skullduggery. Calling it the "Safari Club" was a sort of joke by Marenches, but the aim was deadly serious' (Lacey 2009, 66). The Safari Club included France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Iran and it acted as a covert arm of US foreign policy. US-Saudi cooperation in covert operations expanded massively in the 1980s because of the Afghanistan War. The role of Saudi Arabia has been to provide bases, logistics, and funding to US-led covert operations. The Saudis have possibly acted as US proxies when they sponsored jihadists or Islamic fighters in the Balkans and in Chechnya in the 1990s (Powelson 2003, 302).

Logistics

Running PMOs is mostly a logistical task: material has to be procured, bases of operations have to be set up in theater, foreign personnel has to be trained, and material and personnel has to be transported into theater and also within the theater. Resupplying and sustaining a larger fighting force in the field can be very challenging, especially if it has to be accomplished under conditions of plausible deniability. Documents from the Iran-Contra scandal by Oliver North give some good idea of what material and how much is needed just to sustain some 10,000 guerrillas in Nicaragua. Following is North's expenditure estimate for February 1985 to May 1985 to give an idea of the logistics in PMOs:

Contra Resupply Operation

The declassified Iran-Contra documents give great insights into the logistics of PMOs. In a memorandum from May 1985, Oliver North gave an overview of expenses related to arming the Contras in Nicaragua. North was planning for a force of 25,000 guerrillas (with the goal of growing them to 35,000 to 40,000 if additional funds of $15 million to $20 million were provided) and detailing $17 million in expenses to equip and support them.

Main Cost Items Included:

- $12.3 million in weapons and ammunition transported by sealift and airlift, including:
  - 5000 G-3 rifles
  - Approx. 16 million small caliber rounds
  - 30,000 hand grenades
  - 5000 M-79 grenades and 80 M-79 launchers
  - 1500 RPG-7 rockets and 80 RPG-7 launchers
  - 10 Soviet SA-7 surface-to-air missiles
  - 400 anti-tank mines
  - 10,000 C-4 explosive charges and detonators
- $2.5 million for the upkeep of bases and training camps in Honduras and Costa Rica
- $1.3 million for boots, uniforms, radios, and military gear
- $600,000 for political activity in Nicaragua, including $50,000 for an attack on a munitions depot in Managua
- $250,000 for air and sea transportation
- $186,000 for the acquisition of two small transport aircraft

See Oliver North Memorandum for Robert McFarlane titled "FDN Military Operations." In Peter Kornbluh and Malcolm Byrne (eds.) (1993), *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History*. New York: The New Press, 139–143.

Sourcing Material

The CIA has therefore frequently tapped into illicit arms markets and violated UN arms embargoes for supplying guerrillas in conflicts, where the US wanted to be seen as neutral. Weapons and equipment that is supplied

to paramilitary forces have to be 'sterile': it should not be possible to trace it back to the US Former CIA officer John Stockwell explained:

> The CIA maintains prepackaged stocks of foreign weapons for instant shipment anywhere in the world. The transportation is normally provided by the U.S. Air Force, or by private charter if the American presence must be masked. Even tighter security can be obtained by contracting with international dealers who will purchase arms in Europe and subcontract independently to have them flown into the target area. Often, the CIA will deliver obsolete American weapons, arguing that World War II left so many scattered around the world they are no longer attributable to the U.S. (Stockwell 1978, 58)

It is rumored that the CIA stores arms to be used in PMOs at several sites in the US, which enables the CIA to quickly initiate a PMO. Publicly known is Camp Stanley or the 'Midwest Depot,' which is about 25 miles north of San Antonio, Texas. The CIA has used the facility since at least the early 1960s and it may still be in use (Savage 2014).[9] Another arms depot used by the CIA and SOCOM is Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey, which was used for funneling Soviet-era equipment to the Syrian rebels (Angelovski and Marzouk 2017).

The CIA has used in the past three primary means to procure weapons and materials for PMOs: (1) obsolete US military equipment that has been decommissioned, (2) equipment acquired from partner states, and (3) equipment acquired from the gray arms market, usually via middlemen, such as freelance arms merchants or via CIA front companies. The earlier CIA PMOs utilized a lot of Second World War-era equipment and weapons, most notably B-26 bombers, which were in use in many countries and could thus be employed in a deniable fashion.[10] US allies and other friendly governments have also provided obsolete and foreign-made (Eastern Bloc) weapons to US PMOs. Finally, the CIA has not shied away from tapping into the global illicit arms market, which has been dominated by well-connected independent arms merchants. This so-called 'gray' arms market relates to seemingly legal government-to-government arms transfers, where arms shipments are diverted to third parties, such as paramilitary groups, and do not reach the end users specified in an arms deal.[11] Typically, non-standard weapons are transferred through intermediaries, using private charter for transportation, and transfers are completed quickly (in days or weeks rather than months or years for regular 'white' state-to-state arms transfers) (Karp 1994, 187). Many of the weapons supplied by the CIA to

the Mujahedeen actually originated from Eastern Bloc countries, such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, and China, and were procured via the gray arms market from corrupt officials and military officers (Coll 2005, 66).

Bases

The CIA often conducts part of the training of indigenous forces in the US and more training happens on the territory of regional allies. The training of proxy forces may occur in states that neighbor the target state, or in some cases it is done in the US in covert training facilities. In 1958 the Pentagon offered the CIA the deactivated Second World War-era base Camp Hale (near Fort Carson) in Colorado to train Tibetan guerrillas there (Knaus 1999, 155). The Tibetans were trained in encryption, radio communication, map reading, field first aid, the use of small arms, parachuting, and even received basic instruction in government and international relations (Knaus 1999, 217–221). The CIA had also used the small Opa-locka airport near Miami as an operations base for planning the overthrow of Arbenz in Guatemala and the Bay of Pigs invasion (Chardy 2013). The Cuban exiles were trained by the CIA at the Harvey Point Defense Testing Activity base near Elizabeth City, NC. It was reported in 1998 that over 18,000 foreigners from over 50 countries had received 'counterterrorism' training at Harvey Point (Weiner 1998).[12] Also known is Camp Peary or 'the Farm' north of Williamsburg, VA, where the CIA trains its case officers and conducts some paramilitary training. People associated with the Afghan training program in the 1980s were trained at Camp Peary and also at the nearby Fort A.P. Hill close to Richmond, VA (Cooley 2002, 71).

It is fairly typical for PMOs to use training and operations bases in a country that is neighboring the target state or is at least in the same geographic region, since this provides a safe haven for the proxy forces and since it reduces the risk to US personnel managing PMOs. The US government has usually made deals with suitable partner states to allow the existence of these bases and sometimes the partner states have played a more active role in a PMO, including direct military support to US-supported proxies in the target state. For example, the KMT operated out of bases in Burma to attack China; the Tibetan guerrillas operated out of a base in Mustang, Nepal; the Hmong were supported from bases in

Thailand; and the Mujahedeen were supported from bases in Western Pakistan. More recently, the Syrian opposition was primarily supported from bases run by the Jordanian security service in the neighboring country Jordan (Gibbins-Neff and Warrick 2016).

Proprietaries

The Church Committee Report defined proprietaries as 'business entities, wholly owned by the Central Intelligence Agency, which either actually do business as private firms, or appear to do business under private guise' (US Senate 1976, 205). The main purpose of proprietaries is to provide cover to CIA officers and to facilitate covert operations by disguising intelligence activities as private business operations. Most of the proprietaries that are known to have been used by the CIA are companies in the aviation business sector because air transport capacities are absolutely critical to supporting major covert operations, such as PMOs. The Church Committee Report explained the advantages of using proprietaries opposed to commercial capacities:

> In paramilitary operations, airlift and sealift by Agency-owned carriers has many advantages: flexibility, security, ability to implant technical collection devices, etc. CIA agents, who engage in hazardous activities which would ordinarily make them uninsurable, can obtain commercial insurance at standard or subsidized rates via a conglomerate of CIA-owned insurance companies. In foreign locations where actual contact with the nearest CIA station is not operationally discreet, proprietaries provide payroll channels and other administrative services for Agency personnel. Firms based in locations with permissive corporate laws and regulations can also engage in many activities unrelated to their charters. (US Senate 1976, 207)

According to former CIA officer Victor Marchetti, the CIA has used three types of proprietaries: (1) CIA-owned companies that conduct legitimate business in addition to assisting CIA covert operations, which enjoy relative independence and little oversight; (2) 'front organizations' that are set up entirely for the purpose of covert operations that do not conduct any business; and (3) independent organizations that are not owned by the CIA, but that share the same ideology and usually employ former US intelligence personnel, which makes it possible to occasionally work towards mutual goals (Kwitny 1987, 120–121).

One of the first CIA proprietaries was Civil Air Transport (CAT), which the agency purchased in 1950 from General Claire Chennault, who had organized and led the American mercenary fighter wing of the Flying Tigers in China during the Second World War. Initially, the CIA merely contracted CAT to support operations against the communist Chinese, but eventually it was decided that it was better to have full control over the airline. In order to hide the CIA ownership of CAT, the CIA formed the Wilauer Trading Company, which went on to incorporate two companies in Delaware, the Airdale Corporation (from 1957 The Pacific Corp.) and CAT Inc. (Champion 1998, 459).

The CIA continued to buy more proprietaries in the 1950s, which became known as the 'Delaware corporations' because of this state's lax regulations (Robbins 1990, 49). The Pacific Corp. would over time serve as a holding company for a range of air proprietaries such as Southern Air Transport (SAT), Air Asia, Intermountain Aviation, and Air America, the latter being the most well-known CIA proprietary. Air America was a rebranding of CAT and it eventually became the biggest 'private' airline with over a hundred aircraft in the early 1970s.

As a consequence of congressional scrutiny during the mid-1970s, many of the CIA proprietaries were shut down or sold off, including Air America, because of the perceived reduced need for them after the Vietnam War and as a result of their public exposure (US Senate 1976, 208). The CIA changed its view on air proprietaries in the late 1970s because they proved to be 'unwieldy, vulnerable to exposés, and no longer necessary' (Robbins 1990, 283). John Prados similarly suggested that '[m]anaging the proprietaries, including many more than mentioned here, was a formidable task. The CIA used interlocking boards of directors plus agency personnel working under cover' (Prados 2006, 296). However, privatized former CIA proprietaries continued to do business with the CIA later on. Amnesty International suggested: 'Some of the covert carriers identified by past US congressional inquiries and other investigation are still in business' (Amnesty International 2006). Southern Air, Kalitta Air, Evergreen International Airways, and Tepper Aviation were commended for their services in relation to Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and the War on Terror by US Transportation Command in 2003 (Amnesty International 2006).[13]

The CIA was believed to have operated hundreds of smaller front companies in the 1980s, which were used in support of numerous covert oper-

ations across the world (Reed and Cummings 1994, 161). The most infamous CIA-connected air carriers of this era were Tepper Aviation, St. Lucia Airways, and SAT.[14] During the 1990s the CIA seems to have created its own in-house air force by establishing the Air Branch of the Special Activities Division. The Air Branch is considered a successor to Air America and it provides air assets for covert operations (Hunter 1999, 1). The Air Branch is used for the insertion and extraction of CIA personnel, the transport of sensitive cargo, and the collection of intelligence. The Air Branch operates a wide range of 'nonstandard' and 'off-the-books' aircraft such as small jets, transport planes, and helicopters, some of which are foreign-made. Aircraft types that have been associated with CIA covert air operations include DHC-6 Twin Otters, L-100 (commercial C-130) transport planes, large Boeing 757, Antonov An-2 and An-32, Mi-17 and Mi-19 helicopters (Spyflight 2017).[15] The CIA can also 'borrow' aircraft from the Pentagon and the State Department when needed.

The existence of the CIA Air Branch became more widely publicized because of the discovery of the extraordinary rendition flights, which transferred terrorist suspects to third countries for detention and interrogation. An employee working for the Boeing subsidiary Jeppesen Dataplan leaked information about the company's involvement in rendition flights in 2006, which triggered an ACLU lawsuit against the company. Jeppesen did all the flight plans for the rendition flights. The plane used in these instances was a Boeing 737 jet, supposedly owned by a CIA front company (Meyer 2006). Following the fallout from the extraordinary rendition scandal, the CIA had to shut down up to ten companies in 2008 that had been set up in Europe after 9/11 because they were 'ill conceived and poorly positioned' (Richelson 2015, 320). This is unlikely to put an end to the general practice of the CIA of using front companies. Analyst Brian Champion has claimed that

> [t]he use of subreptitious aircraft in the covert pursuit of foreign policy goals seems to have become a routinized intelligence practice. Undoubtedly, a measure of its success as an instrument of covert action is proportional to the degree of secrecy such air movements can preserve. The repainting of aircraft in a variety of liveries, and the adoption and shedding of real or fabricated registration identifications, place aircraft among a nation's more obvious covert assets…As there will be no shortage of conventional wars, clandestine shipments of weapons and other material will seemingly persist. (Champion 1998, 473)

The bottom line is that the CIA has access to a fleet of aircraft, many of which are 'off-the-books' or registered to front companies, that are always available for moving weapons and other sensitive cargo to the trouble spots in the world.[16]

Personnel in PMOs

The CIA uses three types of personnel in PMOs: (1) CIA officers (paramilitary officers, covert action officers, and case officers) and SOF personnel seconded to the CIA; (2) CIA contractors, who are typically former US military personnel hired by the agency for covert operations; and (3) mercenaries or 'security contractors' and foreign agents. Usually, the number of CIA officers, who are managing a PMO is fairly small. CIA Angolan Task Force Chief John Stockwell set out to run the secret war in Angola with a CIA staff of only two dozen people. He planned for 'four case officers who could answer cables and write memos; other case officers to run agents and gather intelligence about Angola; two paramilitary officers to plan the arms shipments and supervise the war; covert action specialists who would run the propaganda campaign; logistics and finance officers; reports officers to disseminate the intelligence; and secretaries and assistants' (Stockwell 1978, 72).

The Special Activities Division (SAD)

The SAD is part of the CIA's Directorate of Operations (formerly known as National Clandestine Service) and is considered one of the elite military units in the US national security apparatus.[17] The size of SAD is estimated at around 150 paramilitary operators. They are recruited from US Special Operations Forces, such as Delta Force, Army Special Forces, or the Navy SEALs, and they have to undergo a very rigorous selection and training process (Fredriksen 2012, 311). The SAD has its own Air, Maritime, and Ground Branches that can operate worldwide, sometimes in support of overt US military operations, or in support of CIA covert operations. For specific operations, the SAD forms a Special Operations Group (SOG), comprising of members of one or all SAD branches. An SOG can be as small as one, but would normally consist of ten CIA personnel with at least one case officer proficient in the local language (Cloud 2001, A4). The SAD often cooperates with SOF and can request additional personnel from the Pentagon as needed, much to

the consternation of their military commanders (Falksohn et al. 2003). A famous casualty of the CIA's PMO in Afghanistan was paramilitary officer Johnny Micheal Spann, who was killed in a prison uprising in Qala-i-Jangi (Clark 2015, 177).

CIA Contractors

It is very hard to determine how big the CIA actually is because of their extensive use of noncareer contract personnel, who may account to up to 50–60 percent of the CIA's actual manpower (Baer 2007). Sometimes the CIA uses contractors as a method for ensuring deniability in particularly sensitive operations. In the early days when the CIA was still small, it had to employ US military personnel for larger operations. They invented the method of 'sheep-dipping' soldiers into covert operations in order to avoid legal repercussions of using US military personnel in neutral countries. According to Fletcher Prouty, sheep dipping is:

> an intricate Army-devised process by which a man who is in the service as a full career soldier or officer agrees to go through all the legal and official motions of resigning from the service. Then, rather than actually being released, his records are pulled from the Army personnel files and transferred to a special Army intelligence file. Substitute but nonetheless real-appearing records are then processed, and the man "leaves" the service. He is encouraged to write to friends and give a cover reason why he got out. He goes to his bank and charge card services and changes his status to civilian, and does the hundreds of other official things that any man would do if he really had gotten out of service. Meanwhile, his real Army records are kept in secrecy, but not forgotten. If his contemporaries get promoted, he gets promoted. All of the things that can be done for his hidden records to keep him even with his peers are done. Some very real problems arise in the event he gets killed or captured as a prisoner. (Prouty 2011, 202–203)

Sheep-dipped military personnel were used in the covert U-2 operations and in the air proprietaries, such as Air America. When these operations became much larger and more complex, it was far too burdensome to rely on sheep-dipped soldiers, and the CIA began to recruit pilots like any other airline (Robbins 1990, 1). Journalist Christopher Robbins described the Air America contractors as patriotic adventurers looking for an opportunity to apply their skills without the boredom and safety of civilian life. A pilot interviewed by Robbins stated:

> I wouldn't have flown for the North Vietnamese Army for ten thousand dollars a month. There was a semblance with Air America that what you were doing was right. I was there for my country, the money, and the fun and I didn't give a shit who was right or wrong. Most guys believed they were saving the world. But they wouldn't have done it for a thousand a month – it's a lot easier to save the world for four. (Robbins 1990, 12)

In this sense, the CIA contractors cannot be described as mercenaries since they were consistently serving their own country, although in an unofficial or covert capacity with some more freedom than regular government personnel. For example, they could choose to be involved in a particular operation or to quit at any time, which is rarely possible for soldiers (Singer 2003, 161). At the same time, many more CIA contractors have been killed in action than CIA officers, which suggests a certain dedication to duty that can be found in this 'private' sector.

Mercenaries

Mercenaries are an enduring feature of war since there are always military professionals in search of adventure and a paycheck. In today's world mercenaries can make a difference in conflicts where the overall military standard is low and where they can bring superior skills and technology to the table.

The most infamous employment of mercenaries by the CIA was in Congo during the Congo Crisis in the mid-1960s. At that time the UN forces were about to withdraw and the Congolese army had proven utterly incompetent to defeat the rebels, who called themselves 'Simbas' or lions. Initially, the US government tried to persuade the Belgians to send paratroopers, but they did not like this risky option. As a result, the US turned to former Katangan president Tshombe to recruit European mercenaries like 'Mad' Mike Hoare and the French Bob Denard, who could be used for stopping the chaos that was unfolding in that country (Gleijeses 1994, 77). The mercenaries were transported by four US C-130 aircraft across Congo and were able to call in air support from the Congolese air force, which relied solely on foreign mercenary pilots (Gleijeses 1994, 80). Many of the Congolese air force T-28 and B-26 aircraft were flown by Cuban exiles on behalf of the CIA (Gleijeses 1994, 80). Although the mercenaries proved to be militarily effective as they cleared Stanleyville from rebel forces, they also committed atrocities and engaged in looting. Another

famous case was Angola in the 1970s and 1980s. Bob Denard was hired to recruit a small French mercenary force for the CIA. Other mercenaries were recruited in Portugal and from Britain. Stockwell commented that the 'quality [of the mercenary force] was exceptionally low, some had no previous training. In two cases street sweepers were recruited directly from their jobs and dispatched to Africa' (Stockwell 1978, 224). A year later the Organization of African States passed the *Convention on the Elimination of Mercenarism* in Africa, in part because of the experiences with the CIA-sponsored mercenary operations in Congo and Angola.

More typically, the CIA would bribe local warlords or pay salaries to indigenous or foreign fighters, which effectively turns them into mercenary forces, since they would be paid to fight. For example, the CIA used Army Special Forces to recruit, train, and operationally lead primitive tribes in the mountains of Laos as mercenaries, who were known as Montagnards or Armee Clandestine. A major advantage of using them was that they were considerably cheaper than American soldiers: their main payment consisted in food, clothing, and other goods, and a small salary of $60 a month (Lanning 2005, 149–150). Even the recent PMO in Syria morphed into a major mercenary operation after the idealism of Syrian rebels ran out: it has been reported that the Pentagon paid Syrian rebels between $250 and $400 per month in salaries (Alexander 2015).

Since the 1990s it has become fairly common by Britain, France, Israel, and the US to use so-called Private Military Companies (PMCs) as proxies or fronts in various conflicts. The general concept of the PMC goes back to General Stirling's British Watchguard International founded in 1967 to offer military training and other military services to governments in the Middle East. However, it was the South African company Executive Outcomes (EO), which started the major trend of privatized military operations in the early 1990s. EO intervened in the conflicts of Angola on the side of the MPLA government in 1993 and in Sierra Leone in 1995 on the side of the government in Freetown (Singer 2003, 107–115). EO became the model for international PMCs that sprang up in the late 1990s.

The American PMC MPRI was founded in 1987 and its business model is to provide military training, instruction, and advice to client militaries in support of US foreign policy (Singer 2003, 119–120). Another US PMC that rose to prominence and notoriety during the occupation of Iraq was Blackwater USA. The company was founded by former Navy SEAL Erik Prince in late 1997 with the purpose of providing tactical training to US military and law enforcement personnel (Scahill

2008, 96). In 2003 the company got its first high-profile contract to protect the head of the Coalition Provisional Government in Iraq, Paul Bremer, and further protective services contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Scahill 2008, 134). Blackwater changed its name in 2009 to Xe Services Worldwide and became closely involved in the CIA drone program in Pakistan since the Pakistani government would not tolerate uniformed US personnel on its territory.[18] In its current incarnation, the company is called ACADEMI and controls several other international security companies such as Triple Canopy. The US government has also relied on 'security contractors' for training and assisting rebel forces in Libya. Stratfor e-mails published on Wikileaks revealed that the American firm SCG International had provided training, security, and intelligence to the Libyan rebels during the Libyan civil war of 2011.[19] US security contractors have also been hired to train Syrian opposition forces in Jordan since at least 2014 (Bowman 2014).

Financial Operations

A particular murky area of covert operations relates to their funding and of how funds are dispersed to third parties. It is just not possible to conduct a 'covert operation' and use normal government accounting procedures or write checks to foreign agents from the US Treasury since this undermines deniability and creates potential problems for the recipients. Foreign individuals on CIA payroll cannot declare this unusual income for tax purposes and neither can CIA proprietaries without arousing suspicions by a host government. As a result, the techniques that have been used by the CIA for concealing the origins of funds for reasons of secrecy come close to or match techniques used for money laundering by criminal organizations.

The way the CIA was originally financed and how it paid for covert operations was in the early years unlike any other agency in the entire US government. Until the early 1970s not even Congress knew the overall budget of the CIA or how much money it spent specifically on covert operations (Weiner 1991, 129). Even today the budget of the CIA and other intelligence agencies remains hidden within the so-called black budget, which funds the specific agencies, highly sensitive weapons and technologies, and intelligence activities such as intelligence collection and covert action. As of 2013 the black budget hidden within Pentagon budget was estimated to be $52.6 billion with additional $23 billion for

national intelligence programs (Gellman and Miller 2013). According to documents leaked by Edward Snowden, the overall CIA budget for FY 2013 was $14.7 billion with $2.3 billion for human intelligence, $2.5 for security and logistics, $66.8 million for creating and maintaining cover identities, and $2.6 billion for covert action programs such as the CIA drone program and the arming of Syrian opposition forces (Gellman and Miller 2013). This means the CIA spends more on covert action than intelligence, suggesting that the CIA is more of a covert action agency than an intelligence agency, as many of its critics have claimed (e.g. Prouty 2011, XXXVII; McGehee 1983, 192).

US Government Funding Mechanisms

When the CIA was launched in 1947, it got its funding by taking it surreptitiously from armed services appropriations (Weiner 1991, 118). The CIA's first covert action in Italy to ensure the election victory of the Christian Democrats in 1948 was funded by captured Axis money (Zegart 1999, 189). In 1949 Congress passed the CIA Act, which provided some legality to the unusual practice of operating a government agency with no official budget. The CIA Act states that the CIA is authorized to:

> [t]ransfer to and receive from other Government agencies such sums as may be approved by the Office of Management and Budget, for the performance of any of the functions or activities authorized under section 104A of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 403–4a)., and any other Government agency is authorized to transfer to or receive from the Agency such sums without regard to any provisions of law limiting or prohibiting transfers between appropriations. Sums transferred to the Agency in accordance with this paragraph may be expended for the purposes and under the authority of sections 403a to 403s of this title without regard to limitations of appropriations from which transferred. (Public Law 1947, Sec 5a, para 1)

This legal provision seems to suggest that the CIA can legally receive money from (or transfer money to) other government departments, regardless of the purposes for which the money was originally appropriated (Weiner 1991, 119–120).[20] This means that covert operations can be funded from monies originally appropriated for foreign aid programs. For example, Congress never officially authorized or appropriated any funds for

supporting the Hmong in Laos, which was in excess of $300 million per year. Some of the money came from funds that had been appropriated for refugee aid in Southeast Asia (Weiner 1991, 126–128). Of course, this does not mean that Congress was not informed about the covert operation, only that alternative funding mechanisms were used to obscure US involvement, which seems to be a normal practice for PMOs.[21] Funding for the Contras was even more unconventional:

> According to Al Martin, a retired US Navy lieutenant commander who was part of the Contras affair, in July 1984, a secret memorandum written by Colonel Oliver North and Donald Gregg, then the vice-president's national security advisor, set a target of $1 billion a month to supply the Contras. This target was to be achieved via illegal financial operations inside the US. North initiated several schemes: fraudulent insurance transactions, illegal bank loans, fake security sales, insurance fraud, money laundering, etc. Five thousand people, an army of right-wing supporters, became involved in raising money for the 'Cause', as North defined it. (Napoleoni 2003, 23)

In other words, the Reagan administration asked for donations from private donors in the US, offering tax benefits in return to ensure uninterrupted funding of the Contras.

Foreign Funding

Another way of funding a PMO is to use an allied government for funding a proxy force in return for various benefits such as increased US aid, the transfer of advanced US weapons to the partner state, or anything else that the partner state might desire in terms of US trade or diplomatic favors. This way US financial assistance to paramilitary proxy forces can be easily disguised as a 'normal' aid to foreign partners, who would disperse the money to the proxies or use the money for running the PMO. For example, in the early 1980s the Saudis wanted some advanced US weapons systems that were restricted for export. The Reagan administration pushed through the export of $8.5 billion worth of the latest US weapons systems to Saudi Arabia, including five AWACS planes. In return for this favor the Saudis agreed to provide funding to Reagan-era PMOs in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua: the Saudis contributed at least $32 million to the Contras and gave overall $2 billion to the Mujahedeen (Marshall 1988). Analyst Bruce Riedel claimed that

'private Saudi funds were especially critical in the first years of the war, when the United States provided only limited support' and that 'private Saudi donations…averaged around $20 to $25 million a month' (Riedel 2014, 76). More recently, Saudi Arabia has been a major sponsor of the US PMO in Syria, providing both money and weapons to US-supported Syrian opposition forces worth several billion dollars (Mazzetti and Apuzzo 2016).

Private and Offshore Banking

There is a long historical trail that connects the CIA with less regulated banking practices such as the use of 'offshore accounts' in tax havens. Offshore financial centers and private banks are often not as restricted by international banking rules, which makes them ideal for anybody who is interested in hiding and laundering money, namely criminals, tax evaders, governments under sanctions, kleptocrats, and of course spies. Some offshore banks have made it possible for their customers to deposit money anonymously, using financial constructs such as shell corporations controlled by their owners through anonymous 'bearer shares.'[22] Financial transactions through offshore or private banks can be untraceable, which makes them also ideal to use in covert operations. Columnist Jack Anderson described in some detail how the CIA moved money for the purchase of arms:

> On the day after Christmas 1984, Michael Linden, an agent of Associated Traders, a CIA front, wrote to the First National Bank of Maryland ordering the transfer of $5.3 million into a Swiss bank account. First National was to "transfer the sum to Bank Cantrade AG, Zurich, Switzerland," for deposit in Account No. 273830. The account was in the name of a "Dr. Schaefer," presumably a code name. The funds didn't go directly from Maryland to Switzerland, of course. First the $5.3 million was wired from a CIA money-market account in the Cayman Islands to the Banco Sudameria Int. in Panama. The Panamanian bank telexed the amount to the Union Bank in Zurich, which shunted it to the Bank Cantrade. Throughout the transaction, transfers were authorized "by order of a client," an obfuscatory phrase used to protect the identity of the CIA and its front, Associated Traders. Like Switzerland, both Panama and the Cayman Islands have strict banking confidentiality laws, which make complete financial disclosures difficult if not impossible. (Anderson 1986, B8)

Two major bank scandals of the 1980s and early 1990s shed some light on the CIA's financial operations as it concerned the use of private and offshore banks, namely the collapse of the Nugan Hand Bank in 1980 and the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) in 1991.

The Nugan Hand Bank was founded in 1973 by Michael Hand, a former CIA paramilitary officer, who had served in Laos, and Frank Nugan, who was an Australian businessman (Robbins 1990, 297). The bank was so heavily connected to the US national security establishment with many former US generals and admirals on its board and with then former DCI William Colby serving as the bank's attorney that many believed it was the successor to Castle Bank, which had handled money for CIA operations before (Kwitny 1987, 46). The bank was headquartered in Hong Kong and registered in the Cayman Islands with offices in Sydney, Hong Kong, Manila, Taipei, and Bangkok. The bank managed $1 billion per year in investments (Blum 1987). One of the services offered by the bank was to establish and run shell companies registered in Cayman Islands for their customers as a money laundering and tax evasion scheme (SMH 1980, 2). In 1980 Frank Nugan committed suicide and his CIA partner, Michael Hand, disappeared, which resulted in a huge scandal as the bank suddenly faced scrutiny by the authorities. $50 millions had disappeared from the balance sheets and the bank's connections to unsavory businesses involving drug- and arms trafficking became apparent (SMH 1980). The bank was linked to the heroin trade in the Golden Triangle and to a coup against Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, who had opposed US intelligence presence on the Australian continent (Stein 2015). Furthermore, it has been alleged that the CIA had deposited money in the bank as conduit for its covert operations in Angola and Iran (Kwitny 1987, 96). In fact, Hand continued to work in covert operations, assisting with the arming of the Contras in Nicaragua before he disappeared again in 1991 (Stein 2015). When Hand reappeared in Idaho in 2015, neither the FBI nor the Australian government seemed to have been interested in bringing the fraudulent banker to justice (Stein 2015).

The Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) was founded by Pakistani banker Agha Hasan Abedi with Saudi and UAE oil money and a $2.5 million cash infusion by Bank of America in 1972 (Adams and Frantz 1992, 23). BCCI was headquartered in London with offices around the world and the overseas branch was based in the Cayman Islands. BCCI became known as the 'Bank of Crooks and Criminals International' because of its illegal business practices and some illustrious clients, ranging from the Medellin

Cartel, Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to Osama bin Laden and Oliver North (Adams and Frantz 1992, 5–6). BCCI eventually assumed the role of the Nugan Hand Bank during the 1980s. The CIA laundered money through several BCCI accounts, which was used for a variety of covert operations, most notably those related to the Iran-Contra scandal and to the funding of the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan.[23] Deputy Director Richard Kerr publicly admitted to the BCCI's role in US covert operations, but denied that there was anything illegal to the CIA's dealings with the bank (Adams and Frantz 1992, 326).

Like in the Nugan Hand Bank case there were again many connections to the US government. For example, then former DCI Richard Helms had aided the BCCI in taking over the First American Bank in 1978 (US Senate 1992, S. Hrg. 102–350, Part 4). These unorthodox banking connections are important because they indirectly connect the CIA and other intelligence services to the criminal activity of their proxies and agents, most importantly drug trafficking. Of course, the CIA is not responsible for the crimes of their bankers, but it is most likely the bankers' disregard for laws and regulations that has led the CIA to choosing certain banks for their financial operations.

Notes

1. Pakistan had a secret agreement with the US government that gave Pakistan extensive control over specifics of 'Operation Cyclone.' According to former ISIS General Mohammad Youssaf, who was in charge of the covert war: 'The CIA supported the Mujahideen by spending the American taxpayers' money, billions of dollars over the years, on buying arms, ammunition and equipment. It was their secret arms procurement that was kept busy. It was, however, a cardinal rule of Pakistan's policy that no Americans ever become involved with the distribution of funds or arms once they arrived in the country. No Americans ever trained, or had direct contact with, the Mujahideen, and no American official ever went inside Afghanistan.' See Youssaf and Adkin 1992, 81.
2. The CIA has subcontracted occasionally some of its dirty work to its allies and partner services. Author Mark Curtis noted that '[t]he British could be helpful to the Americans in running and organising hitsquads' since they 'had few lawyers to contend with.' See Curtis 2010, 168.
3. For example, the Mujahedeen used terrorist tactics, including assassinations, which the CIA was prohibited to encourage. By transferring operational control to Pakistan the problem was sidestepped.

4. Most famous is Operation TPAJAX to overthrow Mossadegh, which started as Operation BOOT initiated by MI6. When Britain realized that they lacked the resources to mount the operation they turned to the US for assistance.
5. Britain' participation was hidden by the use of David Walker's private military company KMS or 'Keenie Meenie Service' (a former subsidiary of Control Risks Group), which employed 'former' SAS personnel. Through KMS Britain was also involved in the Iran-Contra scandal since KMS was also training the Contras in Nicaragua. See Cooley 2002, 75–78.
6. The German covert action to procure Soviet material from Afghanistan and assist the Mujahedeen was called 'Operation Sommerregen' and was funded at a modest 250,000 DM per year. See Flade 2013.
7. The BND may in fact remain largely under American control to the present day. When it was revealed through the Snowden leaks that the BND was illegally sharing data on German citizens with the NSA and even allowed the NSA to tap German communications, the German government seemed unwilling to address any of the evidence that was publicly presented or to take action and stop the illegal US espionage against Germany. An investigative committee of the German parliament completely whitewashed the scandal, absolving the BND of any wrongdoing, while the opposition parties disagree. A new law from 2016 governing the BND further restricts the service to protect Germany against espionage, while the US keeps its spy facilities in Germany without any more sharing of data collected from these facilities.
8. The computer malware 'Stuxnet' was a joint US-Israeli covert action to sabotage the Iranian nuclear program.
9. An investigative report by FAS discovered that Camp Stanley has no active duty military personnel and the facility is maintained by civil service employees and contractors. Job adverts for positions at the facility indicate that a security clearance is required and that a variety of small arms and munitions, including artillery shells, mortars, and grenades are stored there. See FAS 2016.
10. For example, B-26 bombers were used in the PMOs in Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, and Congo.
11. For example, the Contra resupply operation used end-user certificates from the governments of Guatemala and El Salvador. See Hancock and Wexler 2014, 367. More recently, SOCOM got caught using 'misleading' end-user certificates for purchases of Soviet-era military equipment from Eastern Europe that were purchased for the Syrian rebels. See Angelovski and Marzouk 2017.
12. More recently, the CIA has used Harvey Point for preparing SEAL Team 6 for the Abbottabad raid of 2011 (Hudson 2012).
13. See also Reed 2013.

14. The head of Tepper Aviation and CIA contractor Pharies Petty was shot down en route from Kamina Air Base in Zaire to an airstrip in Angola, delivering equipment to UNITA in November 1989. See Gup 2001, 322–325. St Lucia Airways was outed as a CIA front during the Iran-Contra scandal, as its aircraft were used for transporting Hawk missiles destined for Iran to Israel. See Woodward 2005, 423. The downing of a SAT aircraft in Nicaragua, flying from the Salvadoran air base Ilopango, led to the exposure of the Contra operation. See Robbins 1990, 306.
15. Ransom Clark wrote that the CIA owned Soviet/Russian MI-17 helicopters, which were used to insert CIA paramilitary officers into Afghanistan in September 2001. See Clark 2015, 175.
16. For moving thousands of tons of weapons from the Balkans and Eastern Europe to the Syrian rebels, the CIA and the Saudis relied on the Azerbaijan airline Silk Way Airlines, which conducted 'diplomatic' flights with no checks or documentation between 2014 and 2017.
17. Ironically, paramilitary officers are considered in the CIA to be below other operations officers, which means that they are less influential and have fewer career opportunities in the CIA.
18. For a good overview of Blackwater's dealings with the CIA see Max Boot 2013. Boot quoted CIA sources suggesting: 'that their [Blackwater's] involvement in operations became so routine that the lines supposedly dividing the Central Intelligence Agency, the military and Blackwater became blurred…It became a very brotherly relationship. There was a feeling that Blackwater eventually became an extension of the agency.' See Boot 2013, 343.
19. E-mail exchanges between Fred Burton from Stratfor and James Smith from SCG International from September 2011, available at: https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/54/5411923_re-fwd-re-pls-fwd-to-fred-.html.
20. According to researcher L. Britt Snider, in the first five years of the CIA, '[k]nowledge of the Agency's budget within Congress was extremely limited…Only HAC [House Appropriations Committee] chairman knew what the CIA's budget actually was and where it was located in the budget of other agencies. Moreover, only three staffers, one in the House and one each on the SASC and SAC, were privy to this information. These staffers ensured that the funding requested each year for the Agency was included in nondescript line-items within the appropriations of the Defense and State Departments.' See Snider 2008, 163.
21. In a few instances, Congress has openly appropriated funds for PMOs or mandated by law that money be spent for regime change, most notably for overthrowing Saddam in 1998.
22. The possibilities and techniques for anonymous bank through offshore financial centers are discussed in Lilley 2003.

23. The Saudis used BCCI intermingled with CIA money to funnel up to $1 billion to Pakistan's ISI and the Mujahideen. BCCI facilitated the smuggling of arms and people into Pakistan by bribing Pakistan's customs service in Karachi. See Lohbeck 1993, 184–185 and Cooley 2002, 94.

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CHAPTER 4

Dilemmas of Secrecy

Apart from a few exceptions, the US has undertaken pro-insurgency PMOs generally as covert operations with the goal of *plausible deniability* led by the CIA rather than as operations that are formally integrated into larger US military operations or that are part of official US foreign policy. CIA veteran Harry Rositzke suggested that '[p]lausible denial requires that no covert operation can be traced back to the US government…It means that an operation, even if it is blown, can be denied as an officially sponsored act without the government's being caught in a barefaced lie' (Rositzke 1977, 153). The chances of conducting a 'secret war' with actual plausible deniability in this sense are almost zero. The Church Committee stated in 1976: 'In no paramilitary case studied by the Committee was complete secrecy successfully preserved. All of the operations were reported in the American press to varying extents, while they were going on. They remained deniable only to the extent that such reports were tentative, sketchy, and unconfirmed, and hence were not necessarily considered accurate' (US Senate 1976, I:155). Analysts Bruce Berkowitz and Allan Goodman pointed out that 'running an operation covertly may offer flexibility, but it also adds complexity, costs, and risks' (Berkowitz and Goodman 2000, 129). There are a lot of complications and penalties for undertaking a PMO as a covert operation that aims to be plausibly deniable opposed to activities that are overt and public, such as the trade-off between secrecy and control—the greater the emphasis on deniability, the more diminished are opportunities for control—and the

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trade-off between secrecy and effectiveness: the greater the emphasis on deniability, the smaller the degree of US support that can be provided to proxies and subsequently the smaller the odds that US support can affect the outcome of a conflict. Since the costs of using a covert approach in PMOs are so substantial, the question becomes why not *always* support proxy forces openly and officially? This chapter seeks to explore the reasons for why the US government seems to prefer a covert approach to PMOs supporting rebels, despite the fairly obvious downsides of doing so.

Secrecy as an Operational Necessity

Possibly the strongest argument in favor of secrecy in PMOs is that this may be an operational necessity: it may significantly reduce chances of success if the opposition was aware of the operation itself, or worse, some of its specifics. In fact, a covert action might become unfeasible altogether once it is discovered by the enemy (Berkowitz and Goodman 2000, 129).

When Covert Action Requires Secrecy Some types of covert action that seek to destabilize hostile regimes could be conducted openly. In fact, certain activities that have been traditionally carried out by the CIA as covert action have been turned over to public or private entities that do more or less the same thing, but in a fully legal and overt manner. For example, the CIA sponsorship of Radio Free Europe was successfully transferred to the US Information Agency (now under Broadcasting Board of Governors). Similarly, other subversion of problematic regimes (also called 'promotion of democracy') is now handled by State Department funded 'NGOs' such as the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute (Wettering 2011, 566).[1] However, other types of covert action cannot be carried out openly without completely undermining any chances of their success. For example, bribing a foreign politician to influence decisions of a foreign government or to manipulate an election by providing assistance to a certain party would not be possible or would be highly ineffective if it was done overtly.[2] Politicians or parties, who openly accept money from a foreign government would be considered to be corrupt, traitors, or foreign puppets. Besides such bribes or financial support might be illegal in the country where it occurs and result in such officials getting 'fired, imprisoned, or executed' (Berkowitz and Goodman 2000, 129–130).[3] Similarly, if a resistance movement was to receive open foreign support it might result in the

target government brutally cracking down on opposition, making it even more difficult for the opposition forces in the country to effect political change. As it concerns PMOs, a covert approach may enhance operational security and thus chances of success.

Operational Security PMOs are particularly vulnerable at the initial state of first infiltrations since the target state could frustrate the formation of effective resistance by systematically capturing inserted agents and air-dropped material. If only one agent is captured by the target state and can be forced to cooperate, it might be possible to roll up the entire agent network and to compromise any further insertions without the sponsor of these operations realizing it due to the difficulty of confirming agent reports coming from denied territories. The method is called a 'double-cross system' and it has been used effectively many times since the Second World War.[4] Early Cold Waroperations behind the Iron Curtain may have been compromised in this manner due to inadequate operational security. In several instances, the security services of targeted governments have been able to penetrate émigré groups abroad, who represented the main recruitment pools for PMOs.[5] For example, Castro could learn about the plans of Cuban exiles to conduct an armed landing on Cuba to overthrow him as early as October 1960 by reading US newspapers. This enabled Cuban intelligence to infiltrate the exiles and to give advance warning of the landing that was to occur at the Bay of Pigs (Rositzke 1977, 178). Operational security was so poor that the *New York Times* was able to provide details about the preparations of the invasion that was planned for mid-April 1961 already in January (Kennedy 1961). Just days before the invasion, the *Los Angeles Times* even printed a map with possible landing and airdrop sites, including the Bay of Pigs area (Sherman 1961). The bottom line is that without secrecy the target government would be alerted and could through aggressive counterintelligence and counterespionage suppress a foreign-supported insurgency before it gains any traction. At the same time, if secrecy is very critical to the success of a PMO it also means that an armed group has no serious capability to challenge a government, meaning that the chances of success are low from the start.

Ambiguity and Uncertainty as an Advantage Although it might not be possible to maintain strict secrecy as to a sponsor's intention to support a paramilitary group in another country, it can still be beneficial from an operational point of view to officially deny that there was 'lethal' support

or more than just diplomatic support. It has been pointed out that 'Secrecy and deniability increase the target's sense of uncertainty and make its ability to prepare for contingencies more difficult and costly,' which would make at least in theory success more likely (Reisman and Baker 1992, 14). Creating uncertainty in the mind of the enemy can work in two ways to the own advantage: the target government might not be sure about the extent a resistance group is supported and might therefore underestimate the threat, in which case it will fail to take effective measures. Alternatively, the targeted state might be tricked into largely overestimating the foreign support and will waste scarce resources in fighting a nonexisting threat, which are not available for more productive purposes. Furthermore, deliberate efforts might be undertaken to fuel paranoia within the target's state's leadership with respect to who can be trusted, resulting in excessive or arbitrary repressive measures by a regime that can undermine its popular and elite support base.[6]

Secrecy as a Safeguard Against Blackmail US paramilitary personnel that is in theater and that works closely with paramilitary forces usually do not wear US uniforms, or national insignia, or carry any identification that proves that they are in fact US government personnel. CIA paramilitary personnel and contractors accompanying a force might also carry weapons in order to defend themselves.[7] As a result, CIA paramilitary personnel are not protected under international law and are at risk to be treated as unlawful combatants if they were to be captured (Maxwell 2004, 17). There are good reasons why paramilitary personnel are stripped off identification before they go on secret mission: it not only saves the American government from embarrassment if they get captured, but more importantly, it protects the US government against blackmail. Without identification captured paramilitary personnel cannot prove that they are Americans or work for the US government, which means that US officials can disavow knowledge of them and their mission (Nutter 2000, 162). A famous case is the American spy Hugh Redmond, who was involved in intelligence collection and in sabotage and subversion activities in Communist China.[8] When he was arrested in 1951, the US government predictably denied having knowledge of him and claimed that he was merely a private businessman. Consequently, Redmond, who never admitted his employment with the CIA, spent almost 20 years in Chinese jails before it was reported that he had committed suicide in 1970 (Gup 2001, 214). A somewhat different but equally famous case is the capture of Allen Pope, who was a CIA con-

tract pilot (for CAT) shot down in Indonesia when he was flying combat missions in a B-26 without insignia for Permesta in 1958 (Conboy and Morrison 1999, 139–141). Again, the US government denied that Pope was anything more than a private mercenary unaffiliated with the US government. Pope's fate would have been identical to Redmond's if it had not been for the fact that the pilot had managed to retain some identification on the mission in violation of security procedure. According to Christopher Robbins, '[c]rew members were supposed to be stripped naked and be examined by the proper authorities to ensure they had no personal effects or ID upon them' (Robbins 1990, 70). However, at a press conference the Indonesian government was able to present documents proving that Pope was working for the CAT (a known CIA front) (Gup 2001, 110; Robbins 1990, 71). Pope was denied PoW status and sentenced to death, but not executed since his life was a bargaining chip for the Indonesian government. President Eisenhower decided to abandon the covert operation in Indonesia and made many other concessions, which eventually resulted in Pope's release in 1962. The bottom line is that the US government can avoid blackmail and other consequences if operations are secret and captured US personnel carries no identification and is expendable. Otherwise, the US government would be under political pressure to undertake every conceivable effort to free captured personnel, including political concessions to adversaries, which undermines the very purpose of undertaking these operations in the first place.[9]

Secrecy for Escalation Control

Related to considerations of operational necessity are concerns over controlling escalation in a proxy war, especially in regard to minimizing the risk of retaliation by the enemy or an escalation of the conflict beyond what is desirable from a US perspective. During the Cold War, both superpowers were quite aware of efforts by the other side to support rebel groups or 'liberation movements,' but by keeping these efforts officially unacknowledged, no side felt compelled to take any drastic action against their adversary or retaliate directly against a sponsor of a proxy force (Berkowitz and Goodman 2000, 130). Cold War 'allies used proxies as a substitute for a direct confrontation that would result in global war' (Hughes 2014, 26). In the minds of the Cold War strategists, the world was merely a 'grand chessboard' or a 'football game,' where the superpowers coached their respective teams to win (Lohbeck 1993, 185).

Avoiding Retaliation A country that was attacked through destabilization would naturally want to retaliate. Retaliation would serve two major goals: to raise the costs for the aggressor and potentially to deter further aggression by a forceful response. However, if a country that has been covertly attacked does not have certainty about who the attacker was, the country cannot retaliate or it would risk attacking an innocent party with all the consequences that would result. If the target government chooses to retaliate without having the ability to prove beyond doubt that it has been covertly attacked first, it may provide the actual aggressor with a pretext to openly intervene. For example, the Syrian government may lament foreign support to rebel groups, but it would be extremely careful not to provoke the US or another power into an overt military intervention. Sometimes a sponsor of a covert PMO might actually want to provoke the target into retaliating or responding in a way that indicates aggression, so that they can intervene openly.[10] Ambiguity therefore substantially constrains responses of targets and limits their options (Hosmer and Tanham 1986, 6). Generally speaking, the countries that have been targeted by the US government with regime change have been too weak in order to threaten any serious retaliation.

Diplomatic Fig Leaf By not acknowledging support to an armed group in a conflict, it allows for the continuation of diplomatic relations and negotiation, which enables better control of escalation. Both sides can pretend that no deliberate destabilization is happening, which allows the target and its allies to save face and to avoid unwanted escalation. Berkowitz and Goodman argued that 'the Soviet government knew the CIA was supporting resistance fighters in the Ukraine' and 'was supporting Afghan mujahideen in the 1980s…If US leaders had admitted responsibility, Soviet leaders would have been compelled to retaliate, perhaps with military action' (Berkowitz and Goodman 2000, 130). In the 1980s, the Soviets even pretended domestically that there was no war in Afghanistan; hence there was no covert war against the US that it was losing (Gerol 1988). It was therefore better for the Soviet regime not to acknowledge an open confrontation with the West in Afghanistan than to denounce it on the world stage and risk looking weak with potential consequences for its internal political stability. The US also benefitted from Soviet silence since it reduced risk for unwanted escalation on their side. In fact, both sides continued to

negotiate arms control agreements and engaged in other negotiations while the conflict in Afghanistan was still going on and was even escalated by the American side from 1985. Another factor that was important was the need of avoiding a nuclear war since both superpowers had realized early on in the Cold War that global thermonuclear war could threaten the survival of humanity (Hughes 2014, 26). This made it imperative to reduce tensions between the superpowers and to avoid any situation, where US military personnel would be directly engaging Soviet military personnel in combat. By conducting covert PMOs, this threat was minimized since the US would only use intelligence or civilian personnel instead of military personnel, which allowed for nominal deniability and a diplomatic fig leaf.

Symmetric Responses The most obvious way for a government targeted with destabilization to respond is to use covert action against any country it was suspecting of covert aggression. Indeed, some of the targets of covert and overt US intervention have turned to covert aggression such as terrorism, subversion, and insurgency as retaliatory measures (Hosmer and Tanham 1986, 1). This includes Libya, which has sponsored 'liberation movements' such as the IRA to anger the British because of their close association with the Americans. In particular, the Lockerbie bombing may have been a Libyan retaliation for the US bombing of Tripoli in 1986.[11] The Soviets and the Afghan government avoided any direct retaliation against the US for Operation Cyclone, but they did not shy away from covertly attacking Pakistan. Analyst Bruce Riedel pointed out that the Afghan intelligence service KHAD sponsored various terrorist attacks in Pakistan like the hijacking of a Pakistani airliner in March 1981, as well as several assassination attempts on Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq (Riedel 2014, 37–38). Zia died in a plane crash on 17 August 1988. An investigation of the crash concluded that the plane had been sabotaged, but the perpetrators have remained unknown (Riedel 2014, 72). Similarly, Iraq tried to retaliate against the US for the 1991 Gulf War by planning an assassination attempt on former President George H.W. Bush. This also happened at the time when the CIA was plotting the overthrow of Saddam with the exiled Iraqi National Congress. In the end, covert action has sometimes encouraged targeted states to sponsor terrorism, which is often directed against US allies rather than the US itself.

Secrecy for Elite Control Over Foreign Policy

The US government may prefer secrecy with respect to controversial aspect of US foreign policy in order to avoid public debate and to preserve the ability of foreign policy elites to pursue policies as they see fit. Democratic theory suggests that in a democratic system the elected government has to take into consideration public sentiments and opinions regarding important policy issues in order to win future elections and to stay in power (Boussios and Cole 2010, 210). Taking decisions that would be normally unpopular is only advisable if the public can be convinced that important US national interests are at stake. Foreign intervention or war is rarely popular with the general public, especially in cases where the reasons for intervention are complex and the benefits for US society are vague or nonexistent. Scholar David Gibbs has pointed out that it is an argument within the realist tradition as exemplified by Hans Morgenthau that the government 'is not the slave to public opinion' (Gibbs 1995, 215–216). Morgenthau even suggested that propaganda and selective public dissemination of information is to be used for manipulating public opinion on foreign policy in order to preserve the government's freedom of action (Gibbs 1995, 216). Gibbs claims that at least in the early Cold War the American public would have been also shocked to learn that its own government was employing questionable methods, such as the assassination of foreign leaders or that it would support the overthrow of democratically elected foreign governments.[12] Similarly, analysts Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler have argued that '[a] study of Nicaraguan operations also reveals that "deniability" in covert operations is not an issue strictly of operational security but more often a matter of dealing with incongruence between official government position and actual government covert practice' (Hancock and Wexler 2014, 14). In other words, the government wants to present to the public an issue or policy in a way that is favorable to the government's agenda, but a revelation of actual practices used would contradict the government's argument.

Examples Researcher David Gibbs has argued that the primary reason for the Eisenhower administration in choosing covert action in Congo in 1960–61 was that they wanted to avoid the public controversy of backing Mobutu's military coup against elected President Lumumba (Gibbs 1995, 223). He wrote: 'During these events, the US government released no information pertaining to its intervention in the

Congo; at the same time, information was selectively released which suggested that the USA was not intervening at all and was, on the contrary, seeking to protect the Congo from potential intervention by other powers' (Gibbs 1995, 222). In Laos the White House preferred keeping their support to the Hmong secret because they wanted the American public to believe that the war was limited to merely supporting South Vietnam in their struggle against communism. Furthermore, President Kennedy believed that the US needed to be seen as adhering to the Geneva Agreement of 1962, which guaranteed the neutrality of Laos. Therefore, the US could not commit US ground troops and was limited to covert support to anti-communist forces in Laos (Kurlantzick 2016, 89). Needless to say, the North Vietnamese and Chinese also violated the agreement and it was mostly the American public and Congress that was deceived. CIA operative Stockwell argued: 'I submit to you that the Cambodian people knew that they were being bombed; it was no secret to them. Unfortunately, there was nothing on the face of the earth that the Cambodian people could do to stop the bombing. However, the people of the United States could stop the bombing, or at least raise an effective protest of it' (Stockwell 1991, 71). Similarly, it can be argued that the main reason for secrecy in the Angola PMO of the 1970s was that the Ford administration tried to avoid public controversy. The US intervention in Angola required a close partnership with the South African Apartheid regime, which was viewed at the time as racist, if not criminal in the West (Stockwell 1978, 188). Stockwell argued: 'We had allied the United States with South Africa in military activities, which was illegal and impolitic. We had delivered white mercenaries into Angola to kill blacks as a technique of imposing our policies on that black African country' (Stockwell 1991, 58). Even more recently in the Libya intervention, the president deceived the American public about both the purpose of the intervention and the means that were used, remaining silent about US paramilitary support to the Libyan rebels (Weissman 2016). Ostensibly, US intervention was driven by the humanitarian concern to protect civilians in the Libyan civil war and was limited to air strikes against Gaddafi forces that were attacking civilians. In reality, the main objective of the intervention was early on regime change in Libya by any means necessary. According to Stephen Weissman, President Obama was concerned that the coalition that intervened in Libya may splinter (Weissman 2016, 674).

Secrecy for the Benefit of Proxies In some cases, the US government may have preferred an overt approach to assisting proxies, but may have avoided it because the proxies and partners in a PMO demanded secrecy. There are several important reasons why the proxies would want to avoid open acknowledgement of foreign assistance. On the one hand, foreign assistance can lend legitimacy to their own cause and struggle and it may also force a sponsor to accept a greater commitment as the stakes rise. On the other hand, proxies risk to be considered foreign puppets, if not traitors, to the general population of their country and it 'can turn what looks like patriotic opposition into what looks like treason' (Treverton 1987, 113). Furthermore, allies might be embarrassed or might face political difficulties at home if it was publicly known that they contributed to a US-led PMO. Secrecy might be a requirement by an ally for an operation to take place, as the ally might deem an overt 'American connection deleterious to their own interests' (Daugherty 2004, 16). For example, it has been argued that the Pakistani government was only willing to serve as conduit of arms and training to the Mujahedeen on condition that the PMO was not publicly acknowledged by the US since it would have otherwise complicated Pakistan's relations with its neighbors (Eyth 2002, 70; Treverton 1987, 117). Similarly, Pakistan made it from 2004 onwards a requirement for US drone strikes in their tribal areas that they are undertaken by the CIA as covert actions because of internal political reasons (Mazzetti 2013, 109). The Pakistani government was willing to help the US counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan by allowing drone strikes against Taliban militants across their border in the tribal areas of Northwest Pakistan, but would not openly tolerate any US troops in Pakistan (Scahill 2009). The result was the compromise of using CIA and security contractors for managing drone operations from inside Pakistan, which gave both the Pakistani and the US government some plausible deniability: the US government could truthfully state that its military was not operating inside Pakistan and Pakistan could publicly deny knowledge and responsibility for the drone strikes, going as far as publicly protesting alleged violations of their sovereignty for domestic political reasons (Miller and Woodward 2014).

Secrecy as a Legal Fiction

One could consider PMOs to be 'unacknowledged' rather than being truly covert in the sense of plausible deniability. The US government simply does not officially acknowledge that it supports a certain group in a conflict while not undertaking any major effort to conceal its activities. An

obvious example are drone strikes conducted in neutral countries, which were not acknowledged by the Obama administration, but widely reported by the press. By not acknowledging the drone strikes, the administration could maintain the legal fiction that they were secret and thus apply the state secrets privilege to keep evidence related to drone strikes out of US courts and shield the government and individual officials from legal action. According to ACLU lawyer Ben Wizner, '[t]he state secrets cases stand for the proposition that *no amount* of public evidence can overcome a government secrecy claim so long as the "privileged" content has not been officially confirmed…This legal fiction is essential to ensuring that no one from the CIA or the NSA will ever face prosecution for lawbreaking' (quoted from Ambinder and Grady 2013, 210–211). In other words, the US government may favor a covert action approach to PMOs because of various legal issues that could tarnish the US as a rogue state and put US officials at risk of prosecution by the International Criminal Court or other international bodies.

Use of Force Violations Providing arms and other assistance to guerrillas can be considered an act of force, which can only be justified either on the grounds of self-defense by the state providing the support, or on the grounds of an UN Security Council authorization. Otherwise a use of force would violate international law. It has been pointed out by legal scholars such as Michael Schmitt that there is an important legal precedent with the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) ruling on Nicargua vs. the United States in 1986. The ICJ determined that the US had in fact committed an illegal act of force against Nicaragua by 'recruiting, arming, equipping, financing, supplying and otherwise aiding, and directing military and paramilitary actions in and against Nicaragua' (Schmitt 2014, 140–141).[13] The ICJ demanded from the US to pay reparations to the people of Nicaragua to compensate for the damages and aggression, but the US government claimed that the ICJ lacked jurisdiction in that case. Schmitt has argued in reference to this ruling that '[a]rming rebels fighting another state categorically violates international law, absent a specific justification, and, regardless of whether the action also rises to the level of a use of force, the principle of non-intervention' (Schmitt 2014, 145). Other legal scholars have argued that PMOs can be justified under the international norm of the 'self-determination of peoples,' which was first proclaimed by President Woodrow Wilson in his '14 Points' and is included in the UN General Assembly's Declaration of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations from 1970. It says:

> Every state has the duty to refrain from any forcible action which deprives peoples…of their right to self-determination and freedom and independence. In their actions against and resistance to such forcible action in pursuit of self-determination, such peoples are entitled to seek and to receive support in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. (Quoted from Reisman and Baker 1992, 42)

The argument of aiding the self-determination of peoples has always been a slippery slope since it opens the door to all kinds of interventions by various states, including PMOs initiated by America's enemies and directed against US allies.[14]

Arms Embargoes Often countries that are in the middle of a civil war are subjected to a UN arms embargo since arms transfers into war zones may escalate a conflict and may cause more instability and violence. For example, the Clinton administration was severely restricted in aiding the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats because of the European Community and UN arms embargo that prohibited arms transfers to the Yugoslavia successor states (Hicks 2005). The way around it was to give tacit consent to the Iranians to ship weapons into Bosnia and to use a private company for training the Croats.[15] Similarly, there was a UN arms embargo against Libya during the civil war of 2011, which made it politically difficult for certain NATO members and the US to openly supply weapons to the Libyan rebels.[16] UN Security Council Resolution 1970 prohibited all transfers to Libya, covering both the government and rebel forces (Booth 2011). Although there has not been a comparable UN arms embargo against Syria, sponsors of opposition groups are restricted by international regulations prohibiting the assistance to terrorist organizations. Unless it could be sufficiently ensured that weapons transferred to opposition groups would not end up in the hands of terrorists, such transfers would violate international law (Schmitt 2014, 145–146). Covert arms transfer to the Syrian rebels was therefore a way of circumventing the legal issues of an overt arms transfer.[17]

Human Rights Violations The sponsors of armed groups in an internal conflict have some responsibility for their actions, for example, if supplied weapons are used for committing war crimes. Although a state sponsor may not want to support terrorist groups or death squads, which is illegal,

the state sponsor may still be guilty of 'negligent support.' Schmitt has argued that 'the provision of lethal aid to the rebels would not implicate US state responsibility for violations of international humanitarian law by rebel forces, at least absent US control over their activities' (Schmitt 2014, 147). However, another legal scholar has claimed that 'when a state provides weapons, training, or logistical support to these groups but does not impose sufficient levels of control or discipline, it puts the rebels in a position to more efficiently commit these violations' (Cronogue 2013). This would suggest that states are clearly responsible for the actions of armed groups over which they exercise control and that state sponsors are obligated to control their proxies. Otherwise they would still be guilty of 'negligent support' if human rights are committed by the proxies. Not acknowledging support to a problematic proxy sidesteps this legal issue.

Secrecy and Bureaucratic Politics

The covert approach to PMOs could be a product of bureaucratic politics and the rivalry between different US agencies over controlling the PMO turf. The bureaucratic politics paradigm of government decision-making suggests that decisions are heavily influenced by the institutional interests of bureaucracies implementing policies and by their standard operating procedures. Bureaucracies do things because they have always done them in a certain way and they are also in competition with other bureaucracies and may bargain with them, resulting in irrational or suboptimal outcomes (Gibbs 1995, 214). In other words, a major reason why PMOs are dominated by the CIA and are conducted as covert operations may have to do more with how this national security function evolved over time and how it has been institutionalized.

Operational Flexibility Presidents have turned to the CIA for conducting PMOs in the early Cold War period because of its 'can do' attitude and the great flexibility that it could provide (Treverton 1987, 102–103). The CIA enjoys 'special arrangements' as it concerns its funding and its methods that sets it apart from any other government agency. The Department of Defense is an extremely large organization that is very cumbersome to manage and often slow in responding to nontraditional challenges such as communist subversion of societies in the 1940s and 1950s. In contrast, the CIA was a new and very lean organization with a knack for imaginative solutions and unorthodox ideas. The agency has

many people already deployed around the world, it has stockpiles of weapons in storage ready to use, it has acquired impressive transport capabilities to move them anywhere, it has 'contingency funds' or monies it can spend without immediate approval by Congress, and it usually has the intelligence capabilities to provide information about resistance groups and target countries.[18] There are also important differences in style between CIA-led and SOF-led paramilitary programs with CIA programs requiring a much smaller US footprint and lower associated cost (Strandquist 2017). The CIA would follow a franchise approach where support comes with few strings attached in exchange for some of the 'profits,' while SOF-led programs would follow a 'company ownership' model, where proxies would be treated more like 'employees,' requiring much more monitoring and control (Standquist 2017, 81–82). The CIA approach can be implemented faster and seems to require less risk. As a result, it is usually easier for presidents to initiate a CIA covert operation than to send the US military for supporting proxies.

Organizational Culture Some critics of the CIA have argued that the agency was always more interested in conducting covert operations than in collecting and analyzing intelligence (Prouty 2011, 69). CIA officers in the operational wing of the agency always enjoyed faster promotion than the analysts, and at least during the Cold War, involvement in covert action was even more prestigious and beneficial for the career than espionage (Treverton 1987, 105). Naturally, if an organization emphasizes a certain mission or certain function over others and promotes individuals who have excelled in that role, it means that it creates institutional incentives to pursue operations for the benefit of managers and the personnel involved. As pointed out by Treverton, 'officials managing particular programs develop stakes in their continuance; projects often grow but seldom shrink under the pressure of changing operational realities; officials develop personal stakes in the people they are working with. What makes action different, in degree if not in kind, is the element of secrecy that attaches to it, together with the special nature of the CIA as an organization' (Treverton 1987, 102). The CIA is a spy agency and everything it does will reflect the institutional culture of secrecy. It will naturally treat PMOs as covert operations at which the agency excels. Rather than using US military stockpiles and US military aircraft to move them, it will typically rely on foreign-sourced material and proprietaries or other clandestine air transport capabilities, even when it is plainly obvious that chances

for plausible deniability are slim or nonexistent. For example, the CIA has chosen to procure arms from their Saudi and European allies instead of delivering US weapons through 'normal' channels, despite the fact that the CIA 'covert' operation was reported in the media as early as August 2012.[19] Treverton has also suggested that as '[m]ost early covert actions were conceived in secrecy and began small; the assumption of covertness was reasonable' (Treverton 1987, 99). Programs grow, but the covert modus operandus is not abandoned even when PMOs become too big to remain hidden. Sometimes the CIA will even caution political decision-makers against expanding a PMO if this jeopardizes the secrecy and deniability of an operation, which can deny proxies the additional help they would need to succeed.[20] For example, the CIA wanted to preserve deniability even at the cost of denying the Mujahedeen US weapons needed in the war for securing victory.

Bureaucratic Competition From Operation Valuable Fiend in Albania onward, the CIA managed to carve out a small covert operations empire consisting of specific capabilities that the CIA permanently maintained. In other words, the institution has made investments into carrying out this role and has ever since jealously guarded its dominance in the PMO turf against infringements by other agencies such as the Pentagon's SOF. Journalist Evan Thomas argued that the CIA wanted the Bay of Pigs operation to be covert because this allowed them to retain bureaucratic control over it. He wrote: 'Bissell [the CIA's Deputy Director of Plans] had been caught in his own web. "Plausible deniability" was intended to protect the president, but as he had used it, it was a tool to gain and maintain control over an operation …. Without plausible deniability, the Cuba project would have been turned over to The Pentagon, and Bissell would have become a supporting actor' (Thomas 1996, 266). Bissell had used the secrecy of the operation for remaining in control of it (Thomas 1996, 246). Since then the CIA's control of PMOs has not gone unchallenged. Many CIA critics have pointed out that the CIA has not been particularly good at PMOs since it would lack the resources and expertise to do PMOs well. Also in order to avoid wasteful duplication and improve PMOs it might make sense to consolidate a paramilitary capability in the Pentagon, as was recommended by the 9/11 Commission (2004, 415). Not surprisingly this suggestion has been met by fierce bureaucratic resistance. Former CIA officer Frederick Wettering has argued that the CIA was often subjected to 'bureaucratic warfare' by other agencies that tried to

move on the CIA's covert operations turf. He wrote: 'The CIA has also suffered, and is still suffering, from turf grabs by both the State and Defense Departments,' pointing at the State Department's own political and paramilitary action in Iraq in the early 1990s when there was also an ongoing CIA covert action and at Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's desire to dominate PMOs (Wettering 2011, 568–569). Although Wettering did contend that the CIA had many 'flops' in covert action and had become increasingly disinterested in them, he paradoxically concludes that 'I remain somewhat hopeful that the CIA's authority will be reconstructed, and that the CIA will defend its political action and paramilitary turf from further encroachment' (Wettering 2011, 570).

Notes

1. CIA defector Phil Agee has argued that NED has the function of destabilizing other countries and that this is similar to what the CIA used to do covertly. See Agee 2003. William Blum quoted one of the founders of NED, Allen Weinstein, who said in 1991: 'A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.' See Blum 2000, 180.
2. The US interference in the democratic processes of other states, in particular the internal affairs of US allies, is a particular sensitive issue and it is no surprise that the US government has to be discrete about it in order to exercise hidden influence. The recent discovery of US meddling in the French election has been a major embarrassment.
3. President Hamid Karzai had received tens of millions of dollars from the CIA delivered in suitcases, backpacks, and plastic bags, which was used to influence decisions of the Afghan government. See NYT 2013.
4. The term originally refers to the Double Cross Committee or 20 (XX) Committee of MI5, which systematically captured and turned Nazi agents to the point that ran the entire German intelligence network in Britain during the Second World War. This is described in John Masterman's book, *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939–1945* from 1972.
5. For example, the Albanian PMO was apparently compromised by the penetration of the Albanian community in Italy by the Albanian intelligence service Sigurimi. There were even members inside the émigré political groups in exile that kept Sigurimi and the Soviets well-informed about developments and operations. See Lulushi 2014, 86.
6. According to Richard H. Shultz, what started as an attempt of creating a resistance movement in North Vietnam through agent insertions morphed into a psychological warfare operation whose main purpose was to increase North Vietnam's paranoia to an extent that it could be exploited for subversion and deception. He quoted DCI William Colby that his intention in

North Vietnam was to 'increase the insecurity in North Vietnam to match the insecurity they were producing in South Vietnam.' See Shultz 1999, 111–112; 128–129.

7. According to Christopher Robbins, Air America personnel were ordered not to carry weapons on their flights in war zones, but this prohibition was routinely ignored. See Robbins 1990, 134.
8. This was the time when the CIA was sponsoring the KMT insurgency in Burma/Southern China, and it has been alleged that Redmond may have been connected to that effort. He was a member of the CIA paramilitary Special Activities Division with wartime experience in the OSS as a paratrooper.
9. An almost bizarre case of successful blackmail by an adversarial power was the delivery of $400 million in cash by the Obama administration to Iran in order to free four American hostages, which completely undermined US financial sanctions against Iran and which represented a strange reversal of earlier policies towards Iran by the administration.
10. In the case of Guatemala, the US was putting a lot of diplomatic and propaganda pressure on the Arbenz government to actually provoke them to seek assistance from the Communist bloc, which could be used against them. Indeed, Arbenz made the mistake of buying weapons from Czechoslovakia, which provided the US with an excuse to overthrow the 'communist' Arbenz.
11. The culpability of Libya in the Lockerbie terrorist attack from 21 December 1988 has never been proven. Although Gaddafi did agree to pay compensation of $2.7 billion to the families of the victims to get US sanctions lifted, he never conceded Libyan responsibility. Gaddafi handed over two Libyan suspects to the International Criminal Court, but there was never enough evidence—one of them was declared innocent by the court and the second was released for 'humanitarian reasons' in 2009. It now seems likely that Lockerbie was in fact an Iranian retaliation for the downing of Iran Air 655 on 3 July 1988 by the USS *Vincennes*.
12. Apparently, even renowned scholars of IR like Hans Morgenthau were not aware of US assassination schemes of the early Cold War since Hans considered assassination as an essentially obsolete political practice. See Gibbs 1995, 224.
13. See also International Court of Justice, 'Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua: Judgment of June 27, 1986.' Available at: http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/70/6503.pdf.
14. The implicit assumption legal scholars are making, who consider US covert action as lawful is that of US exceptionalism: the US has a special responsibility towards the international system and may take actions that are not permissible for anybody else. See Reisman and Baker 1992, 3.

15. According to SIPRI report on the Yugoslavian arms embargo, the 'US Government later acknowledged that it had allowed deliveries to Bosnian and Croatian forces to take place, even though it knew that these violated the UN arms embargo.' See Mark Bromley 2007.
16. NATO tried to get around these legal restrictions by declaring the Libyan National Transitional Council the legitimate government of Libya in September 2011, which meant that the actual government of Libya was now relegated to rebel status.
17. According to Mark Lowenthal, Obama administration lawyers had advised against overt support to the Syrian opposition because of its violation of international law. See Lowenthal 2015, 235.
18. During the Reagan administration, Congress had become quite concerned about the CIA's use of contingency funds and has subsequently sought to regulate these monies more tightly. See Snider 2008, 183.
19. To be fair, not all of this is merely bureaucratic inertia or mindless habit: if US weapons were to be exported officially they would be subject to State Department ITAR regulation. Even so, there may have been a violation of export rules as it was reported that some of the shipments to a secret warehouse in Jordan included US-made weapons from Croatia, which would be still subject to end-user regulations that do not allow the diversion of weapons to other parties than specified in the export license.
20. Bruce Riedel quoted a study from the National Security Archive, which suggested that 'it was the CIA, ironically, that cautioned against too much covert aid for the rebels [because] too large a military support operation for the rebels might provoke Soviet retaliation against Pakistan.' Quoted from Riedel 2014, 143–144.

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CHAPTER 5

Accountability in Paramilitary Operations

Accountability in covert action matters greatly for the effectiveness of this foreign policy instrument. Without sufficient democratic accountability, it can be expected that there will be a lot of recklessness, incompetence, waste, and corruption, which renders covert action ineffective and potentially even creates new dangers and challenges for US foreign policy. According to Amy Zegart, '[l]egislative oversight done well, ensures that the Intelligence Community gets the resources it needs and deploys those resources to maximum effect…Good oversight also maintains accountability by ensuring compliance with the law and generating public trust and support for agencies that must, by necessity, hide much of what they do' (Zegart 2011, 6). Unfortunately, good oversight of covert action is rare. As a result, Congress is at least partially to blame for the dismal record of a long series of misguided and ultimately failed PMOs. This chapter will look at the democratic accountability mechanisms that are in place and why they often fail to ensure that PMOs and the foreign policies they are meant to support are sound. It will be argued that weak oversight mechanisms combined with the tendency of evading congressional oversight by the executive branch have resulted in poor accountability and a lot of dysfunction and lacking effectiveness that comes with it.

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Covert Action in US Law

At least initially, there was a shaky legal basis for covert action, as it was a function not specifically spelled out in the legislation that created the CIA. Congress also initially showed little interest in overseeing intelligence. Therefore, presidents were in the early Cold War little restrained by either laws or congressional oversight when they wanted to use this foreign policy instrument. Due to excesses and abuses that surfaced during the congressional investigations into the activities of the intelligence services in the mid-1970s, covert action became subjected to a lot of legal and executive regulation and oversight (Ranelagh 1986, 610–616).

The Mandate for Covert Action

The CIA got into the business of covert operations almost by accident in 1948. The US government was faced with the threat of rising socialism in post-war Italy, which could have resulted in the loss of this important ally (Clark 2015, 60–61). Secretary of Defense James Forrestal suggested to DCI Roscoe Hillenkoetter: 'Something has to be done about this. State shouldn't get into that business, and the military can't do it. Can you take it on?' (quoted from Cogan 1993, 90). CIA lawyers suggested that the National Security Act of 1947 included a contingency clause that could be used. The law gave the CIA a mandate for five general functions: (1) to collect intelligence, (2) to provide coordination for all US intelligence activities, (3) to do intelligence analysis and disseminate intelligence, (4) to perform additional services for the US IC, and (5) to 'perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct' (US Congress 1947, S.758–5). This last provision was interpreted by the CIA as a broad mandate to carry out covert action abroad in support of US foreign policy objectives. Congress never suggested otherwise (Reisman and Baker 1992, 118). Subsequently, the CIA launched its first covert action to manipulate Italian elections and secure a victory for the Christian Democrats in April 1948. The operation was so successful that it led to the creation of the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) through the NSC directive 10/2 two months later.[1]

The National Security Act remained silent with respect to the need for the notification of Congress regarding covert activity. Since this legislation also made it illegal for the CIA to obtain funding from other sources than

Congress, it can be assumed that Congress intended to retain control over covert action by its powers of the purse (Eyth 2002, 58–59). However, it was probably not the intention of Congress to allow presidents and the CIA to conduct secret wars with little accountability (Snider 2008, 259). Even President Truman did not envision the CIA conducting large covert operations when he created the agency. In an editorial after the Bay of Pigs debacle, Truman stated:

> I never had thought that when I set up the CIA that it would be injected into peacetime cloak and dagger operations. Some of the complications and embarrassment I think we have experienced are in part attributable to the fact that this quiet intelligence arm of the President has been so removed from its intended role that it is being interpreted as a symbol of sinister and mysterious foreign intrigue – and a subject for cold war enemy propaganda. (Truman 1963)

None of Truman's successors heeded this warning and even Congress was never enthusiastic about taking away the covert action role from the CIA.[2] At times Congress did take an active role in covert action, including efforts to micromanage operations, especially when things seemed to be going wrong.

The Hughes-Ryan Amendment

Only after Vietnam and the Watergate scandal did Congress start to more tightly regulate and oversee covert action. The Hughes-Ryan Amendment is complementary to the War Powers Resolution of 1973 in the sense that it sought to reaffirm Congress' authority to declare war or more broadly to authorize the use of force, both overtly and covertly (Koh 1987, 1273). Congress was at the time particularly concerned about US covert action in Chile, which DCI Richard Helms incorrectly denied was happening in a testimony in Congress (Snider 2008, 272). This legislation enacted by Congress in December 1974 is an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. The amendment states:

> No funds appropriated under the authority of this or any other Act may be expended by or on behalf of the Central Intelligence Agency for operations in foreign countries, other than activities intended solely for obtaining necessary intelligence, unless and until the President finds that each such operation is important to the national security of the United States and reports, in a timely fashion, a description and scope of such operation to the appropriate

> committees of the Congress, including the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the United States House of Representatives. (US Congress 1974, Section 662)

In essence, Congress demanded timely notification of covert operations and a written finding (memorandum of notification) by the president that describes the scope and goals of the operation. This prevents the president from unofficially authorizing the CIA to carry out a covert action by merely giving a nod. As a result, real 'plausible deniability,' where the president can claim ignorance for an exposed covert operation, has therefore become impossible (Daugherty 2004b, 64). The law also recognized covert action as a legitimate function of the CIA that would be subject to congressional oversight and potentially control (Ranelagh 1986, 610). At the same time, there is still some leeway for presidents to decide when to inform Congress and the extent to which Congress is to be informed, if at all (in case it is considered a 'minor' covert action or it is a particularly 'sensitive' one, the president might not inform Congress). President Ford issued the first covert action finding on 18 July 1975 when he authorized covert action in Angola, notifying Congress as required by law in very general terms (Treverton 1987a, 155).[3]

After the Iran-Contra scandal, Congress repealed the Hughes-Ryan Amendment and replaced it with a much stricter regulation in the Intelligence Authorization Act of 1991. It requires the president to issue a finding in advance (it cannot be issued retroactively) that spells out all the agencies involved in the covert action. The covert action also must be in accordance with US laws and it prohibits specifically 'any covert action which is intended to influence US political processes, public opinion, policies, or media' (US Senate 1991). The finding must be relayed to the oversight committees before or soon after the start of the covert action.[4] Furthermore, Congress must be notified about any changes to previously authorized covert action (Daugherty 2004b, 66). However, Congress was never able to affirm a right to approve covert action before it happens, merely that it was to be kept informed (Zegart 2011, 28).

Review and Approval of Covert Action

During the congressional investigation into US intelligence activities, which did unearth various illegal or immoral intelligence activities from domestic spying to assassinations and mind control experimentations, President Ford decided to preempt further congressional legislation that

may have tied the hands of the CIA too much by issuing Executive Order (EO) 11905. The EO prohibited any government agency to engage in 'political assassinations' and it established new oversight and control mechanisms for covert action, namely the Operations Advisory Group (which replaced the 40 Committee) and the Intelligence Oversight Board (US White House 1976).[5] Further regulation of covert action resulted from President Reagan's EO 12333, which defined covert action as a particular type of 'special activity.' This EO clearly specified that only the CIA (or the Pentagon in wartime) may undertake special activities that are approved by the president (US White House 1981, Section 1.8, Para e). However, there is also a loophole where the president can use another agency if that agency was 'more likely to achieve a particular objective' (US White House 1981, Section 1.8, Para e). The EO excludes from the definition of covert action: intelligence collection and counterintelligence, traditional diplomatic and military activities, traditional law enforcement activities, and activities that provide routine support to overt activities of the US government (US White House 1981, Section 3.5, Para b).

Daugherty has described the covert action planning and review process under the Clinton administration as follows. After the president and the NSC determine that a covert action might be needed, the CIA is asked to produce a preliminary proposal that takes into account available resources, chances for success, inherent risks, and whether support by other agencies would be needed, among other things (Daugherty 2004b, 70). If approved, a Covert Action Planning Group is formed under the chairmanship of the CIA Deputy Director of Operations, which works out the operational details and conducts a legal review. The completed proposal is then reviewed by a Covert Action Review Group (CARG). After approval by the CARG and the Inspector General of the CIA the revised proposal goes to the White House, where more review would be conducted by an interagency working group to ensure 'interagency concurrence, coordination, and cooperation' (Daugherty 2004b, 72). The final proposal and finding then goes to the president for signature and is relayed to Congress within 48 hours (Bobich 2007, 1126).

Congressional Oversight of Covert Action

William Daugherty has argued that after the establishment of firm congressional oversight of intelligence in the late 1970s, it became impossible for a president to carry out a covert action without the knowledge of Congress

or in violation of US laws and statutes. He stated: 'Since the Reagan years, the covert action approval and review processes have been such that (a) there is no possibility of a "rogue" operation by the CIA, and (b) lawyers are present at every stage to insure that constitutional requirements, federal statutes, executive orders, and internal agency regulations are fully complied with' (Daugherty 2004b, 68).[6] Daugherty considers Iran-Contra to have been an extreme aberration and a 'criminal activity' perpetrated by a few people in the White House staff, who may or may not have acted with the president's knowledge (Daugherty 2004a, 35). While this view is consistent with his overall argument that congressional oversight of covert action is extensive and effective, Iran-Contra may not have been as much of an aberration as Daugherty makes it out to be. Daugherty's main point is that the CIA cannot carry out 'rogue' covert actions that have not been approved by the president and reviewed by Congress, which is certainly true for most PMOs. The question that Daugherty does not address is: how accountable are covert action programs in reality in the sense that they are closely monitored by Congress, that Congress investigates potential criminal activities or abuses, or that Congress ensures that crimes and abuses do not go unpunished? The failure of Congress to take measures to correct abuses following scandals such as Iran-Contra (or more recently the Senate's determination that CIA 'enhanced interrogation' constituted torture) indicates that Congress might be kept generally informed, but that its actual oversight is toothless or without consequence.[7]

The Oversight Committees

Before the congressional investigations into intelligence activities of the mid-1970s, intelligence oversight was 'fleeting, ad hoc, and sporadic' (Zegart 2011, 20). According to the CIA's official history, 'No documentary evidence has thus far been found that…CIA subcommittees were formally briefed on specific operations, either in advance or after the fact' (Snider 2008, 260). Most oversight occurred through the Armed Services committees and through select members of Congress, who were kept in the loop about CIA activities (Snider 2008, 259–260). After the Bay of Pigs debacle of 1961, Congress was more active in overseeing CIA covert operations.[8] The CIA subcommittees were regularly briefed on covert action programs, but oversight was weak since Congress assumed that these 'Cold War activities' were essential to US national security (Snider 2008, 260). Legislators usually approved operational

funds without having any detailed knowledge of their purpose and often they preferred not to know (Daugherty 2004b, 62).

This practice changed after the Watergate scandal, which led to the Church and Pike committee investigations. The Church committee's final report recommended the creation of a permanent intelligence oversight committee, which was established as the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) in May 1976 (Snider 2008, 51). The committee was to be staffed by 15 members from both parties with no more of eight members from one party. A year later a similar bipartisan oversight committee was established in the House of Representatives as the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) with 22 members chosen according to the proportion of seats in the House. The armed services committees continued to have oversight responsibility over the DoD elements of the IC and to approve the budget for the CIA (Snider 2008, 51). An important function of the intelligence oversight committees is to review intelligence programs, including covert action programs. According to Daugherty,

> Each spring all facets of these programs are reviewed and critiqued by both the HPSCI and the SSCI. Then, throughout the year, quarterly reviews of the programs are undertaken, similar in scope to the annual review by congressional staff from the oversight and appropriations committees. Finally, members of Congress and/or their staff can call the Agency and "request" a briefing or update on any program at any time. These requests, which number literally in the hundreds every year, are met expeditiously by Agency personnel, and result in the desired meetings, usually within forty-eight hours. (Daugherty 2004b, 73)

As a result, it may seem that congressional oversight of covert action is thorough because of frequent information request, but it does not prove that Congress always gets the full picture or has the inclination to act on any of the information requested and given.

Congressional Interference in and Investigation of PMOs

Before the establishment of formal and stringent intelligence oversight, US administrations have been evasive and sometimes outright deceptive about covert operations when dealing with Congress. For example, the Johnson administration downplayed their assistance to the government of Laos. Ambassador to Laos Bill Sullivan lied outright to the Senate's Foreign

Relations committee about US personnel advising and training Laotian troops in a closed hearing in 1969 even after the story of the Laotian secret war had gone public through a *New York Times* article (Kurlantzick 2016, 185–187).[9] However, the war in Laos did have with Stuart Symington an important supporter in Congress: Symington had been briefed about the war early on, he had visited Laos several times to meet the CIA's operations chief there, and he later called the CIA's performance in this war 'splendid' (Snider 2008, 271). Regardless of how much Congress knew and approved, it is a matter of fact that the US intervention in Laos was not just a 'secret' war but also a war that was both unconstitutional and a violation of international law. According to constitutional lawyer John Hart Ely, '[s]ecret wars are prima facie unconstitutional, since they haven't been authorized by Congress, let alone exposed to the scrutiny of the American public' (Ely 1995, 72). Furthermore, the Laotian PMO was in direct violation of the Geneva Accords of 1962, which prohibited the introduction of foreign personnel and military materials, including 'members of military missions, foreign military advisors, experts, instructors, consultants, technicians, observers, and other foreign military persons…and foreign civilians connected with the supply, maintenance, storing and utilization of war materials' (quoted from Ely 1995, 69).

Congress intervened only a few times to stop covert action. The first test case was the PMO in Angola in 1975. Congress was in the middle of investigating CIA abuses with fears of a new Vietnam in the making soon after the fall of Saigon in April 1975 (Ranelagh 1986, 608–609). Senator Dick Clark was concerned about US collaboration with South Africa in Angola and he therefore introduced a legislation known as the Clark Amendment in December 1975, which prohibited any funding of CIA covert action in Angola (Treverton 1987a, 158–159). The law came into force in February and it subsequently ended US support to the FNLA, which was the first time that Congress forced the termination of a major cover action by denying the president funds for the operation (Snider 2008, 275; Treverton 1987a, 158–159).[10]

Congress became equally concerned about CIA covert action in Latin America in the early 1980s and in particular with respect to CIA connections to right-wing death squads in El Salvador (Ranelagh 1986, 679–680). The first Boland Amendment merely prohibited 'the use of funds by the Central Intelligence Agency or the Department of Defense to furnish military assistance to certain groups seeking to overthrow the government of Nicaragua' (US Congress 1982). The Reagan administration continued

their support to the Contras on the basis that the support was meant to interdict arms shipments to the Sandinistas, but when the CIA was caught mining the harbor of Managua, Congress prohibited all support to the Contras regardless of the goals through the Second Boland Amendment of December 1984 (McManus and Toth 1985; Treverton 1987b, 111).

Congress was much more enthusiastic regarding the CIA covert action in Afghanistan since it provided an opportunity to directly hurt the Soviet Union. Ranelagh suggests that with respect to the PMO in Afghanistan, 'Congress rather than the President was in the driver's seat, nearly tripling Reagan's original request for funding Afghan rebels' (Ranelagh 1986, 681). A group of members of Congress around Charlie Wilson, Gordon Humphrey, Orrin Hatch, and Bill Bradley lobbied aggressively for substantially increasing the military aid to the Mujahedeen in 1985–86 (Lohbeck 1993, 187). Congressman Wilson took a particularly active role in this PMO, visiting the Mujahedeen in Pakistan and Afghanistan several times. On his initiative the CIA purchased $50 million worth of heavy Swiss Oerlikon air defense systems for the Mujahedeen, which turned out to be of little use in the difficult operational environment (Lohbeck 1993, 150–154). Eventually, Congress approved the transfer of Stinger missiles to the Mujahedeen as proposed by DCI Casey in early 1986 (Snider 2008, 285).[11]

After the Iran-Contra scandal broke in November 1986, Congress conducted several investigations into it. They reviewed 300,000 documents, they interviewed over 500 witnesses, and they conducted over 40 public hearings (Snider 2008, 295). A major focus of the investigation was the diversion of funds from arms sales to Iran to the Contras in violation of the Boland Amendments. This was ironic since Congress had already reversed its policy towards Nicaragua when it approved a $100 million aid package to the Contras in October 1986 (Snider 2008, 298). The ultimate outcome of the investigations was in many respects very disappointing, apart from the public disclosure of many details relating to the Iran-Contra operations.[12] None of the major Iran-Contra conspirators received jail time since they were pardoned by President George H.W. Bush, who was himself implicated in the scandal.[13]

During the Clinton years, Congress conducted several investigations into covert action or supposed covert action in Bosnia and in Iran. After the *Los Angeles Times* had published a story about the US State Department permitting Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia in April 1996, Congress launched an investigation as to whether this constituted an illegal covert

action as was suggested by the CIA (Snider 2008, 301; Hicks 2005, 246). The final report produced by special committee in the House of Representatives tried to clarify the issue of what constitutes and what does not constitute covert action. The committee came down on the view that as long as US government officials do not initiate or facilitate the covert actions of other governments, it does not amount to covert action if they are merely informed by others about intended covert actions (Hicks 2005, 254). The delicate issue was thus whether the failure to enforce an arms embargo amounts to facilitation, which resulted in differing views in Congress (Hicks 2005, 254). The House considered it as 'traditional diplomatic activity,' while the Senate did not (Snider 2008, 301).

Congress made a law to fund the overthrow of Saddam Hussein despite the lacking interest of the Clinton administration. After the failed uprising by the Kurds in August 1996, the CIA had terminated its PMO in Iraq and broke the relationship with Ahmed Chalabi's INC completely in February 1997 (Snider 2008, 303). However, Chalabi was successful in lobbying Congress and secured continued congressional support to his organization through the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Snider 2008, 303). This law, which was eventually signed by President Clinton, made it the official policy of the US government to seek regime change in Iraq and provided $97 million for this purpose.[14] The law specified the forms of assistance that should be given to resistance organizations, namely propaganda, military assistance in the form of transferring materials from DoD, and humanitarian assistance with the only restriction that no assistance shall be given to groups aligned with the Hussein regime (US Congress 1998, Section 4). The CIA remained skeptical of Chalabi, but thanks to his good connections to Congress he was propelled to the position of president of the interim government of Iraq after the US invasion of 2003.[15]

The 9/11 attacks resulted in upsurge in covert operations activity around the world, primarily in the context of counterterrorism efforts, but also aimed at the overthrow of hostile regimes such as Iran, Libya, and Syria. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Congress did not interfere much with war on terror of the Bush and Obama administrations and did not even question the illegal wiretapping and other civil rights violations of the Bush era.[16] Intelligence scholar Glenn Hastedt has argued that '[p]erhaps most obvious is the problem presented to congressional oversight by a seemingly ever expanding stock of presidential powers surrounded in secrecy' (Hastedt 2013). It seems that Congress has been less than fully informed about the long string of covert operations since 2001.[17] When al Qaeda began to fade into history and the Obama administration

tried to use the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force to pursue more covert wars seemingly unconnected to fighting al Qaeda, Congress intended to reaffirm its war powers in the wake of the Libya intervention of 2011. After criticism by Congress for not seeking congressional approval for the US intervention in Libya, the administration released a detailed report that laid out its rationale as to why congressional approval was not necessary. The administration argued that '[g]iven the important US interests served by US military operations in Libya and the limited nature, scope and duration of the anticipated actions, the President had constitutional authority, as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive and pursuant to his foreign affairs powers, to direct such limited military operations abroad' (US White House 2011, 25). Congress failed to take action when the 90-day deadline for withdrawal in Libya specified in the War Powers Resolution passed in June 2011, but some members of Congress were quite concerned about executive overreach. Conservative politicians Walter Jones and Rand Paul introduced legislation that threatened impeachment if the Obama administration was to arm the Syrian rebels without prior congressional approval (Herb 2013). In 2014 Congress passed a law that specifically prohibited the introduction of US forces into ongoing conflicts (US Congress 2014, Sec. 148i)

Despite these concerns, the congressional intelligence oversight committees approved the arming of the Syrian rebels in July 2013 (DeYoung 2013). Originally budgeted at around $1 billion a year, Congress had cut the program to arm the Syrian opposition by 20 percent in 2015, as there were open questions with respect to overall US strategy in Syria (Miller and DeYoung 2015). In the same year, the Obama administration started another paramilitary program led by the Pentagon to arm fighters against ISIS (mostly the Kurdish YPG). None of the programs were particularly successful: the CIA failed to overthrow Assad and the Pentagon program had little to show for its $500 million paramilitary training program in Syria as of fall 2015 when it was cancelled. Only 180 Syrian rebels were trained (instead of planned 5,000 per year), which brings the cost to $2 million per fighter (Rhodan 2015).

Congressional Oversight Limitations

William Daugherty has claimed that 'covert action programs receive far more congressional scrutiny than any other CIA activity' (Daugherty 2004a, b, 30). This may be so, but one has to take account that congressional intelligence oversight as a whole is already weak. Of course, there is

a general difficulty in measuring oversight intensity and quality since much of it occurs in secret or might be exercised in the way of informal questions asked by staff on the phone or by e-mail (Zegart 2011, 19–20). However, it is possible to judge intelligence oversight by actions taken by Congress such as conducting meetings, holding hearings, producing reports, and introducing legislation that corrects misguided policies and abuses. According to Zegart, 'Congress has never expended as much effort overseeing intelligence as other policy areas' (Zegart 2011, 10).

General Limitations of Intelligence Oversight

There are three major intrinsic and systemic factors that are largely responsible for weak congressional oversight and poor accountability in PMOs: (1) lacking incentives for Congress to do oversight well; (2) lacking resources that would be required for good oversight; and (3) lacking expertise.

Lacking Incentives: There are no good incentives for Congress to be active or even proactive in the oversight of intelligence and covert action specifically. Zegart argued that 'intelligence is the worst of all worlds: a complicated policy area that requires large up-front investments of time to master but promises low political payoffs and a non-trivial degree of political risk' (Zegart 2011, 12). Since a lot of intelligence oversight activity necessarily occurs in secret, it means that there are not many opportunities for politicians to take public credit for accomplishments. Americans are little interested in foreign policy and it therefore matters little in elections (Davidson 2009, 6). The main thing on the mind of legislators is to secure their reelection. Expending a lot of time and effort on overseeing clandestine and covert activities that remain largely hidden from the public and are not a primary public concern contributes very little towards this goal (Zegart 2011, 37). At the same time, there are incentives for not knowing details of covert operations since knowledge suggests responsibility. Legislators will be reluctant to ask questions that could result in uncomfortable answers or would require them to take action that they do not want to take.[18] It is therefore easier to steer away from issues that could result later in questions about their own culpability. Besides, legislators may have made up their minds already about certain policies and may deliberately or unconsciously avoid exposure to

information that contradicts their views.[19] Legal scholar Harold Koh has also suggested that the intelligence committees may have been partially 'captured' by the agencies that they are supposed to oversee and regulate. Koh stated: 'The federal agencies exist in a symbiotic relationship with the congressional committees and subcommittees to which they report… [An agency] purchases freedom…by playing ball in the areas that are of concern' (Koh 1987, 1273, n. 79). In other words, members of intelligence committees might get occasionally information from the agencies that is politically useful to them and in return they avoid asking tough questions that could embarrass the agencies. There are also some cheerleaders for the military-industrial complex in Congress, who will consistently support any war, covert or otherwise, since defense contractors are also major contributors to political campaigns.

Lacking Resources: The two main oversight committees only have a combined membership of 37 senators and representatives, whose job is to oversee the activities of 17 agencies with over 100,000 personnel altogether. A particular challenge is the high level of classification that is typical for covert operations, many of which fall into the category of so-called Special Access Programs (SAPs) (known as Controlled Access Programs (CAP)[20] for highly sensitive programs/activities in the IC) that 'involve access controls and security measures typically in excess of those normally required for access to classified information' (US Senate 1997, 26). The main mechanisms are strict 'need to know' and compartmentalization that does not allow any one individual to access all information about a program apart from a handful of 'super-users,' who would not have time to read through all the SAP information anyway (Priest and Arkin 2010, 27). As it concerns the most sensitive or most classified programs such as SAPs/CAPs, only the Gang of Four (House and Senate Majority and Minority leaders) or the Gang of Eight (Gang of Four plus the ranking members of the intelligence committees) would receive an oral briefing, but no other members of Congress (Lowenthal 2015, 298). A covert PMO such as Operation TIMBER SYCAMORE is almost by definition a highly sensitive activity that falls under the SAP/CAP umbrella, which means that a fairly small number of people in the US government would be 'read into' the specifics of the operation. According to analyst William Arkin, oversight of these highly classified programs is intrinsically weak. He argued:

> A list of names gets sent forward with a one or two-line description of what the program is, and there are literally a half dozen people within the entire U.S. Congress who have a high enough clearance to read that report. So, when you're talking about hundreds of programs, and then you're talking about layers of different types of special access programs, I think we can all agree they don't get very effective oversight. (Quoted from Kibbe 2012, 385)

A consequence of the high classification of covert action programs is that members of the oversight committees cannot delegate reading through lengthy reports or receiving briefings to staff members since they would lack the necessary clearances or would not have the 'need to know.' Very few personal staffers of members of Congress have high enough clearance for reviewing intelligence information and even the committee staff that has the clearances may not access certain information under committee rules (Zegart 2011, 103). Even if classification was no obstacle, the staffing levels for the intelligence committees are too small to deal with the mountain of information that would need to be reviewed for effective oversight. The House Intelligence Committee has only a staff of 39, which is less than the staff levels in other important congressional committees (Zegart 2011, 99). More importantly, staffing levels have not kept up with the tremendous growth of the IC from the late 1970s to the present, which equates into a 'net decrease in intelligence oversight,' according to government secrecy expert Steven Aftergood (quoted from Zegart 2011, 100).

Lacking Expertise: One issue with respect to oversight quality relates to the composition of the oversight committees. Lacking aggressiveness of the intelligence committees is owed to the tendency that they 'have been populated by legislators who are typically more moderate than their party colleagues in the House and Senate' (Zegart 2011, 10). The intelligence oversight committees are not attractive to the 'movers and shakers' in Congress (Zegart 2011, 93). In other words, only those members of Congress who are not likely to rock the boat will be allowed to sit on the intelligence committees. Unlike almost all other congressional committees, there are strict term limits that ensure a higher turnover of committee members, which is detrimental to retaining institutional expertise and memory.[21] By the time a committee member gained any good knowledge of intelligence they move on to a different committee. The problem is exacerbated by the issue that very few members of Congress have ever

worked in the IC (Zegart 2011, 88). Expertise in the field of covert action is even more difficult to find than for intelligence in general. It has been noted that there has been also a substantial decline in the expertise of the oversight committees' staff. In the 1980s, many staff members had held senior positions in the IC with many years of experience in key intelligence subject areas such as counterintelligence or technical collection systems. However, in the 1990s most of the experienced staff members had been removed and replaced by people selected for their political loyalty rather than their expertise in intelligence (Ott 2003, p. 84).

Evasive Measures by the Executive

Since the start of routine congressional intelligence oversight in the 1970s, successive administrations have tried to minimize congressional interference in covert action programs by a variety of evasive maneuvers. Although there was a period in the 1970s and 1980s when Congress was particularly active in the oversight of covert action and intervened in it, the inclination and capacity of Congress to do so seems to have declined steadily since the 1990s. As Harold Koh argued, 'Congress' post-war effort to enact legislation that would stop the last war simply channeled executive action into new, unregulated forms of warfare. In a familiar regulatory pattern, Congress' successive efforts to catch up with executive evasion of its legislative controls served only to shift executive activity into a new pattern of evasion' (Koh 1987, 1274). There are three major strategies of how the executive branch can evade congressional oversight, namely to delay notification and limit information provided to Congress, to rely on agencies other than the CIA for conducting covert action, and finally to use third countries and other proxies such as private companies to carry out operations on behalf of the US government (Cogan 1993, 94–95).

The Executive Branch Decides the Extent to Which Congress Is Kept Informed

From the beginning of strict congressional oversight of intelligence, there have been concerns that Congress could sabotage secret presidential policies by leaking them to the press. Ranelagh even argued that the legal requirement for informing Congress about secret operations amounted to nothing less than a contradiction in terms: 'if Congress knew about operations, they were unlikely to stay secret' (Ranelagh 1986, 611). In cases where the

secrecy of a covert operation was absolutely critical for its success, the executive branch reserved itself the right to delay the notification of Congress indefinitely or after the operation had been completed (Cogan 1993, 94). An example where a president delayed congressional notification due to concerns over leaks was the Iranian hostage rescue operation of April 1980 (Cogan 1993, 94). More often it seems that the executive tends to keep information provided to Congress to an absolute minimum. Legal scholar Marcus Eyth has conceded that 'oversight committees are limited because they have no way to verify the information shared by the executive about covert operations. In other words, the CIA can select what, if anything, the agency wants to disclose, and Congress has little choice but to accept the information' (Eyth 2002, 65). What seems to give great credence to this argument is a statement by Senator Jay Rockefeller, who said in a 2007 interview with journalist Charles Davis: 'Don't you understand the way Intelligence works? Do you think that because I'm Chairman of the Intelligence Committee that I just say I want it, and they give it to me? They control it. All of it. All of it. All the time. I only get, and my committee only gets, what they want to give me' (quoted from Schwarz 2015). In some notable cases, legislators have requested documents or statements from agencies concerning certain matters under investigation, but they got stonewalled by the agencies. For example, the CIA destroyed the tapes of harsh interrogations in 2005 after the story went public to preempt a request from Congress to hand them over (Mazzetti 2009). The DoJ refused to answer questions, gather facts, hand over documents, and held Congress in contempt with respect to the ATF gunrunning Operation FAST AND FURIOUS of 2011.[22] In a more recent case, the FBI refused to hand over the 'Comey memos' or personal communications between former FBI Director James Comey and President Donald Trump to the congressional government oversight committee chaired by Representative Jason Chaffetz in relation to the Russia probe.[23] It is hard to say whether the agencies are more forthcoming with respect to requests of information by the intelligence oversight committees or how well they answer questions in closed hearings, but the above examples indicate that Congress has little leverage to force the executive to share information if the agencies and the president do not want to.

Using Other Agencies Than the CIA for Covert Action

The State Department has a long history of supporting CIA covert operations in numerous ways, including providing official cover to CIA operatives (e.g. through USAID). The tendency to conduct covert operations

more overtly since the 1980s has made the State Department an important player in 'regime change,' mostly through its affiliated 'pro-democracy NGOs' that support nonviolent strategies for overthrowing problematic governments.[24] However, the State Department has not even shied away from conducting its own PMOs. Former CIA officer Frederick Wettering noted that it was the State Department that was put in charge of distributing the $97 million in aid to Iraqi opposition groups (which was to be expended with the specific goal of overthrowing Saddam) (Wettering 2011, 567). In 2011 the State Department approved the transfer of arms to the Libyan rebels under fraudulent end-user certificates, but apparently the arms were not shipped (they were eventually provided by the CIA through covert channels) (Solomon and Shapiro 2015). One aspect of the Benghazi scandal of 2012 was that the State Department was apparently directly involved in the transfer of arms from Libya to the Syrian opposition forces via Turkey (McCarthy 2016). The US 'diplomatic mission' in Benghazi, which was attacked by jihadists on 11 September 2012, was not a regular US consulate. Its CIA annex served as secret arms storage with very tight security.[25] Based on the available public information it seems that it was the State Department, rather than the CIA, that was managing the arms transfer to Turkey (destined for Syrian opposition forces). The congressional investigations of the Benghazi attack focused largely on the failure of the State Department to act on advance warnings and the inadequate response to the attack (US Senate 2014). However, the more interesting aspect of the scandal is that the Obama administration may have circumvented congressional oversight of covert action by using the State Department instead of the CIA for these sensitive arms transfers to Syrian rebels that seem to have started in the middle of 2011, a full year before the presidential finding that authorized 'nonlethal' support to the Free Syrian Army (McCarthy 2016).

It has also been noted by analysts that the Pentagon has moved more aggressively into the CIA's covert action turf through Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and its clandestine outfit Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) since the beginning of the War on Terror (Kibbe 2007). According to journalist David Axe, '[b]etween 2001 and 2011 SOCOM grew from thirty thousand personnel to sixty thousand. Its budget swelled from less than $2 billion to nearly $10 billion. The number of SOCOM's people within Joint Special Operations Command, the forward-deployed, combat-oriented division of SOCOM, ballooned from 1,800 to 25,000 – nearly half of the command's overall payroll' (Axe 2013, 65). The large majority of these secret or 'clandestine operations'

were conducted in the context of counterterrorism (CT) and can be characterized as 'kill or capture' operations aimed at neutralizing dangerous terrorists. At the same time, the Pentagon has been also involved in operations that are close to covert action, as they aim to destabilize or overthrow regimes hostile to the US in a covert manner. Jennifer Kibbe has pointed out that '[a]n amendment to the FY 2005 National Defense Authorization Act represented a further step along SOCOM's road to independence. Congress granted SOCOM forces the authority, for the first time, to spend money to pay informants, recruit foreign paramilitary fighters, and purchase equipment or other items from foreigners (so-called Section 1208 funds)' (Kibbe 2012, 377). Unlike CIA covert action, the Pentagon is not required to notify Congress about clandestine operations that it may undertake in anticipation of a conflict and that could therefore be considered 'traditional military activities' (Kibbe 2007, 62–63). No presidential finding is required, which therefore circumvents another important congressional oversight mechanism.

It has been argued that the Bush White House had deliberately shifted more covert activity to the Pentagon because it made it easier to conduct controversial operations (Kibbe 2007, 63). This trend of relying on SOF rather than the CIA for covert interventions in other countries continued under President Obama. By the end of the Obama administration, US SOF were deployed in 138 countries, where they were training indigenous forces, collecting intelligence, and conducting combat operations in places like Somalia, Yemen, and Syria (Turse 2017). These military operations fall under the purview of the armed services committees and not the intelligence committees, leaving an oversight gap. The armed services committees do not have comparable time and resources to subject special operations that may cross over into paramilitary covert action to exercise an adequate level of oversight. Congress is often not briefed at all on military clandestine operations, according to a complaint by a HPSCI member (Kibbe 2012, 383).

The Use of Liaisons and Private Actors

The tendency of presidents to ask partner states or private/nongovernment actors to function as US proxy or cutouts became very apparent during the Reagan years. The administration even raised money for covert operations from partner governments and private individuals. Obviously, this practice was not motivated by the US government lacking the funds to pay for these

operations, but more likely aimed at circumventing congressional oversight to prevent public exposure or congressional interference. This exact issue was already discussed as a major concern in the Church Committee report. The report pointed out that '[s]ome MKULTRA research was conducted abroad' and that an ARTICHOKE memorandum explicitly stated it would be advantageous to work with scientists of a foreign country since it 'permitted certain activities which were not permitted by the United States government' (US Senate 1976, 421).[26] In light of this danger, the committee recommended

> the CIA should be prohibited from causing, funding, or encouraging actions by liaison services which are forbidden to the CIA. Furthermore, the fact that a particular project, action, or activity is carried out through or by a foreign liaison service should not relieve the Agency of its responsibilities for clearance within the Agency, within the Executive branch, or with Congress. (US Senate 1976, 459)

This means that in theory the CIA has to report covert action carried out through foreign liaison just the same as if it was carried out by the agency itself and that foreign liaison is not to be used for circumventing US laws. In practice, Congress has no way of determining whether covert action by other countries may have been encouraged by US agencies and even if Congress was properly notified about such covert action by a proxy, Congress cannot compel partner states to provide information to them.

Another approach to circumventing congressional oversight is to rely on private actors such as PMCs. Analyst Richard Pious has suggested that 'Presidents may lower their political and diplomatic risks by pretending to privatize a paramilitary operation' (Pious 2012, 474). PMCs can be hired to train and lead indigenous forces instead of CIA paramilitary officers or SOF, which creates a lot of oversight challenges for Congress. According to Peter W. Singer:

> Hiring private military firms as a substitute for official action gives a cover of plausible deniability that official forces lack. Unlike front companies, the personnel involved are outside of government and maintain no direct tie with government budgets. So, even the limited legislative oversight over covert operations (such as that embodied in the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence) is restricted. In fact, under current US law, as long as the contract is under $50 million, any US military firm can work abroad without notification being given to Congress. Many contracts naturally fall under

> this amount, while larger ones are easily broken up to do so. In addition, Congress tends to focus its attention on official aid programs (rather than "unofficial" programs) and, even if looked at, PMFs [Private Military Firms] offer extra layers of protection from scrutiny by shrouding activities within an unfamiliar, often foreign business network. (Singer 2003, 209–210).

Obviously, private entities cannot be forced to release documentation of their activities through the Freedom of Information Act and they are also exempt from public inquiries, 'often making their activities completely deniable' (Singer 2003, X). Concerns about the greatly diminished accountability of PMCs in overt and covert US military operations have been repeatedly noted in the academic literature. This results in a serious oversight gap and increases risks of failure and blowback.

Notes

1. The OPC was staffed by CIA personnel, but its head was appointed by the secretary of state and reported to the secretaries of State and Defense. This CA outfit was in 1952 incorporated into the CIA when it was merged with the Office of Special Operations (OSO) to form the Directorate of Plans (later renamed Directorate of Operations). See Ranelagh 1986, 133–134.
2. Senator Patrick Moynihan was one of the few legislators, who favored abolishing the CIA altogether. He introduced two legislations to close down the CIA and transfer its functions to the State Department in 1991 and 1995. Moynihan was apparently mostly concerned about the operational/CA role of the CIA, which interfered negatively with the diplomacy of the State Department. See McGarr 2015.
3. The finding described the covert action as 'provision of material, support and advice to moderate nationalist movements for their use in creating a stable climate to allow genuine self-determination in newly emerging African states.' Quoted from Treverton 1987b, 155.
4. Congress originally wanted to be notified of CA within 48 hours after start of a covert operation, but under special circumstances the president can delay notification even indefinitely. All of these provisions are a legislative response to the violations that happened during the Iran-Contra affair. President Reagan did issue a finding to sell arms to Iran, but it was issued more than half a year after the first arms shipment in January 1986. This finding was also not relayed to Congress until after the operation was exposed in November 1986.
5. A CIA legal review of the prohibition of assassinations stated that killings that occur in covert actions such as PMOs are permissible with a few exceptions:

'In contrast, paramilitary operations designed to kill every enemy soldier, with surrender to be refused even if offered, clearly would be prohibited. Nor would CIA condone the use by a supported group of car bombs to spread terror among an enemy population.' See CIA 1996, 19.

6. The presence of lawyers in the review process is hardly a guarantee that no US laws and regulations are violated in the process of carrying out a covert action. In fact, it is quite impossible for pro-insurgency PMOs to strictly conform to International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), in particular the requirements for the issuing of end-user certificates. There is also the issue that some PMOs have supported groups on the State Departments Foreign Terrorist Organization list or trained individuals associated with these groups, which is another violation of US laws.
7. Regarding the Senate's assessment of the CIA's 'enhanced interrogation techniques,' see Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program, 13 December 2012. SSCI's finding #3 was: 'The interrogations of CIA detainees were brutal and far worse than the CIA represented to policymakers and others.' This assessment has not resulted in the prosecution of any CIA or Bush administration official, who has authorized or has been involved in torture.
8. CIA subcommittees were formed in the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees in the Senate and the Armed Services Committee in the House, which makes a total of six CIA subcommittees. See Ranelagh 1986, 479.
9. L. Britt Snider has claimed in contrast that over 50 members of Congress were briefed about the secret war in Laos and that Congress had approved funding for the paramilitary operation. See Snider 2008, 270.
10. The Clark Amendment was repealed in 1985 to allow CIA support to UNITA.
11. The missiles only arrived in Afghanistan in September 1986.
12. A particular victory for transparency in CIA covert operations was the public release of over 50,000 Iran-Contra documents and over 13 volumes of congressional hearings and documentation that is available for research. Some of the interesting discoveries in the Iran-Contra documents are published online on the website of the National Security Archive of George Washington University.
13. Bush was vice president under Reagan and as such a member of the NSC. He was briefed on both the Contra and the Iran operations, as was also claimed by Oliver North. See Walsh 1997, 304. Special investigator Lawrence Walsh wanted to indict both Reagan and Bush for their involvement in Iran-Contra.
14. The legislation stated: 'It should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power

in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime.' US Congress, Public Law 105-338, 105th Congress from 31 October 1998, Section 3.

15. Chalabi lasted only a month in this position because of his great unpopularity in Iraq and his reputation as a fraudster. See Smith 2004.
16. Congress did go along with the CIA's extraordinary rendition program, despite concerns over its impact on transatlantic relations and human rights abuses, and it even retroactively legalized warrantless wiretapping by providing immunity to participating telecommunications providers.
17. Marc Ambinder and D.B. Grady have argued that by fashioning counterterrorism as a 'war' Congress has been removed from the loop since 'Congress cannot by its nature and expertise or the Constitution tell the commander in chief how to conduct a war. And if Congress has deemed the inchoate battle against terrorism to be such a war, there is little it can do, in retrospect, to regather or reclassify certain types of operations as distinct from this war.' See Ambinder and Grady 2013, 120. Indeed, the PMO in Somalia and the covert war against Iran have been justified as aspects of the war on terror.
18. Sometimes legislators will pretend that they have never been briefed on certain information after it is leaked to the public. For example, SSCI chairman Senator Barry Goldwater claimed that the CIA never briefed him on the mining of Managua and SSCI chairman Senator Diane Feinstein claimed that she was never accurately briefed on the CIA's use of 'enhanced interrogation techniques.' Since the briefings themselves are classified and might have occurred informally there is no way for the public to prove the legislators wrong when they claim that they were not informed.
19. Zegart quoted CIA officer Robert Baer (who was a key operative in the Kurdish uprising in Iraq), who told her in an interview: "I used to joke that we treat Congress like mushrooms: keep them in the dark and feed them shit…I knew [House Intelligence Committee Chairman] Goss's chief of staff, but no one ever called me." See Zegart 2011, 8–9.
20. There are actually separate control systems for Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) relating to highly classified collection sources and methods, SAPs that are mostly used for R&D and acquisition programs, and a covert action control system. It seems that all of them use similar access control measures and regulations, but they are separate channels or compartments. Certain highly sensitive military activities such as 'clandestine operations' might be managed as SAPs, a major example being Operation Neptune Spear, which was the SAP codename for the Abbottabad raid.
21. The Senate abolished term limits in 2005 and the House limits HPSCI membership to four terms or eight years.

22. This is documented in an angry report by the US Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Fast and Furious: Obstruction of Congress by the Department of Justice, 115th Congress, 7 June 2017.
23. The FBI's letter to deny the request is available at https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Reply-Letter-Director-Comey-Memos.pdf.
24. There is a big debate on the involvement of the State Department in 'color revolutions' around the world. While it is true not all color revolutions were sponsored by the State Department, there are a few cases where the US government did acknowledge that US diplomats exceeded normal diplomacy by enabling opposition groups. In 2014 it surfaced that the State Department covertly funded until 2010 the development of a 'Cuban Twitter' service called ZunZuneo, which was meant to create a communications channel for opposition groups. The State Department even sent out messages that were clearly subversive by ridiculing the Castro brothers. The State Department has funded a lot of other technologies for enabling pro-democracy activists and even expended millions in training activists in online activism (the use of social media) and in evading government surveillance. Many of the activists, who played a key role in the Arab Spring, had received training from State Department-supported programs through NED, NDI, and IRI.
25. According to the Citizens' Commission on Benghazi report, the CIA was trying to buy up MANPADS left over from the Libyan civil war, which were then stored in the CIA Annex until they were to be shipped to Turkey. It would follow that a main objective for the attack on the CIA Annex was to capture the weapons stored there. See Citizens' Commission on Benghazi 2016, 27–28.
26. Project MKULTRA was a secret research program led by the CIA in collaboration with universities, hospitals, and other institutions aimed at investigating 'mind control,' which involved illegal and unethical human experimentation on sometimes unwitting or involuntary test subjects.

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CHAPTER 6

Critical Loss of Control

This chapter uses some insights from principal-agent theory (PAT) in order to analyze the problems inherent to controlling proxies in PMOs. PAT can possibly explain why proxies always seem to underperform and to behave in a manner inconsistent to the objectives of the sponsor. PAT is used in microeconomics to model different sets of problems: the question of whether an organization should 'make' or 'buy' (transaction costs), the question of what is a fair price for a service (bargaining), and the question of how incentives and information need to be structured for achieving the best outcome for a principal (contract theory). PAT has now spread far beyond economics and has been applied to fields of international relations and government (public-private relations). Some scholars have used it for analyzing military outsourcing and relationships of states with paramilitary groups, as well as for analyzing the 'terrorist's dilemma' in managing a violent organization (Singer 2003; Byman and Kreps 2010; Corbin 2011; Shapiro 2013). In all principal-agent situations, or whenever a principal hires an agent to perform a task, there is always a divergence of interest between the two, since the agent will aim to maximize the own benefit at the expense of the principal. This delegation of tasks requires some transfer of authority from the principal to the agent, who is given some limited autonomy to perform the task. The principal is generally at a disadvantage in this arrangement because of limited monitoring capabilities (monitoring incurs cost) and a limited capability for sanctioning agent behavior (imposing penalties). The inherent problems in PMOs for controlling

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proxies, which include various sets of agents, are the main reason why PMOs tend to fail or produce unfavorable outcomes for principals/sponsors in the long term, which means that there are only limited chances for ever 'fixing' PMOs.

Principal-Agent Theory and PMOs

In a very basic PAT model there is one government sponsor (the principal), who hires one proxy (the agent) to perform a specific task (overthrow a target government). Both sides would behave rationally in terms of maximizing their own utility and their relationship would be governed by some kind of contractual agreement or promise, where the principal provides assistance to the agent in return for services that help to bring about the desirable outcome for the principal in a conflict. This arrangement would be based on the assumption that the interests of the principal and the agent sufficiently overlap to make the agreement work. However, specific challenges emerge in illicit contracts.

Illicit Contracts

PMOs are different from contractual arrangements in a business context. In licit contracts, a principal can reward an agent according to objective performance measurements or impose fines for underperformance or misbehavior. In covert operations, principal-agent dilemmas are amplified for several reasons: (1) the relationship between principal and agent is illicit, meaning that contractual agreements cannot be strictly enforced, if at all; (2) as a result of the covert nature of the activity, agent monitoring and retaining control becomes much more difficult and incurs much greater risk or cost for a principal[1]; and (3) if the agent misbehaves or greatly underperforms, the principal is left with the choice of continuing the support regardless in the hope that tables will turn or to terminate the relationship, which also equates to abandoning any direct control over the agent and the conflict as a whole. In principle, PMOs are structurally similar to the practice of state sponsorship of terrorist organizations. This means that the findings of the literature on state sponsorship of terrorist or insurgent groups are highly relevant for understanding some of the issues related to controlling proxies in PMOs, especially as it concerns the problem of how state sponsors can exert control over proxy organizations that operate covertly abroad (Byman and Kreps 2010). PAT may also

shed light as to why principals decide to delegate tasks to agents, who may have 'divergent interests or lower levels of efficiency' (Byman and Kreps 2010, 2).

Motivations for Delegation

As Byman and Kreps have pointed out, major motivations for choosing task delegation could be either specialization and comparative advantage (the agent possesses unique knowledge or skills that are more costly to acquire for the principal) or for increasing the credibility of their commitment (by handing authority to the agent the principal signals that actions are not taken for the sole purpose of serving the principal) (Byman and Kreps 2010, 4). The latter point is particularly important in proxy warfare since it is the autonomy of the proxy that provides legitimacy to the support of the sponsor. The US government may support an insurgent group to overthrow a hostile government on the basis that support is indirect and that the proxy remains fully autonomous. If both principal and agent have an identical goal, the cost of delegation would be minimal to the principal, provided that the agent can perform as promised. However, the greater the autonomy of the agent and the more the agent is capable of pursuing own interests over the interests of the sponsor, the greater the chances that the sponsor can claim not to be responsible for any misbehavior of the proxy. Proxy autonomy strengthens deniability. At the same time, proxy autonomy may also stand in the way of achieving the desired outcome (Corbin 2011, 36) (Diagram 6.1).

Modelling Principal-Agent Relationships in US PMOs

A more nuanced analysis is needed for understanding how the US government conducts PMOs in general terms. The analysis is complicated by the reality that there are actually multiple layers of agents involved in any

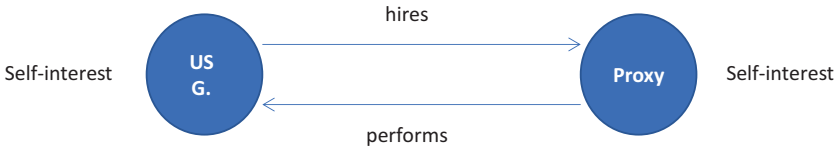

Diagram 6.1 Principals and agents

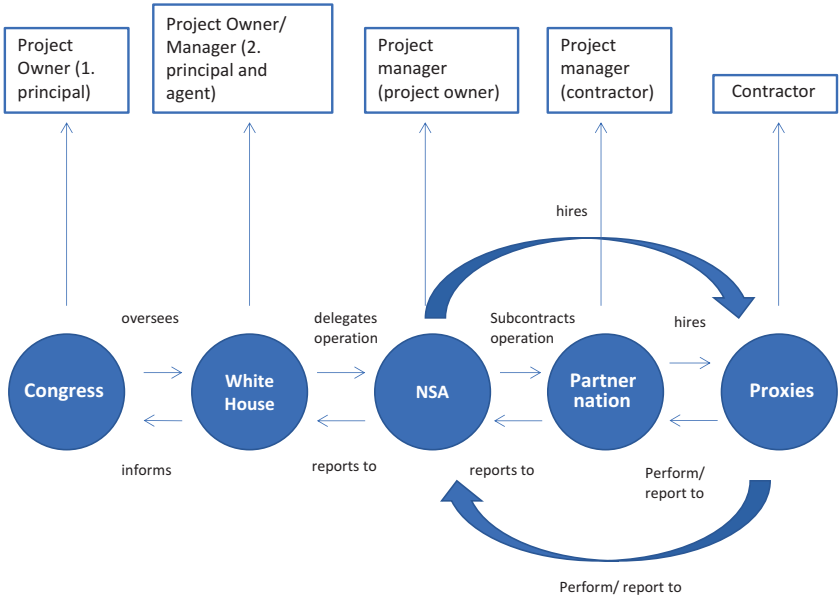

Diagram 6.2 Principals and agents in PMOs

major PMO, which pursue their own separate interests. First of all, the US government is also not a unitary actor: it is a conglomerate of a variety of institutional actors with their own institutional/bureaucratic interests arranged in a system of 'checks and balances.'[2] The US Constitution requires a separation of powers between the legislative, the executive, and the judicative branch. Furthermore, the executive branch itself is not unitary, but is divided into the political leadership that is regularly exchanged through elections and the permanent national security bureaucracy, which may subcontract PMOs to partner states (Diagram 6.2).

The Principals

A principal is defined as an actor who possesses authority that they can transfer or delegate. With respect to US proxy warfare, there are two major principals that can prescribe policy (dictate the goals of operations), that can initiate or terminate operations, and that can hold agents such as other institutional actors accountable, namely Congress and the White House.

Congress The legislative branch of the government represents the will and interests of the American people and was originally conceived by the Founding Fathers to be the most powerful branch of the government (Glennon 2015, 10). It is part of the function of Congress to provide oversight over the executive branch and hold specific members of the executive branch accountable. The role of Congress in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy is more limited than in other policy fields, but Congress may intervene as it sees fit and can provide checks and balances to an administration's foreign policies (Carter 2015, 133). In theory, Congress has not only control over declarations of war but also authority over covert operations through a reinterpretation of the Constitution's 'letters of Marque and reprisal clause' (Pape 2004, 54). Congress can initiate covert operations by allocating funds that the executive branch has to spend for this purpose as it did in 1998 with the Iraq Liberation Act. Congress can also terminate covert operations by making laws that prohibit the executive to spend money on them as it did with respect to Operation IA FEATURE in Angola. Finally, Congress may attempt to micromanage covert operations by allocating monies for specific purposes or by introducing legal restrictions on how the executive can carry out a covert operation as Congress tried to do in Operation CYCLONE in Afghanistan.

White House It is the president who usually initiates a covert operation through a 'presidential finding.' The president and the NSC decide jointly about foreign policy matters and strategy in coordination with Congress. Presidents have turned to covert action since it is politically easier than the use of direct military force. It has been argued that the propensity of a president to initiate covert operations or the style and goals of covert operations reflect presidential personality. Quoting James Barber's book *The Presidential Character*, analysts Hancock and Wexler refer to the 'active-positive' style, the 'active-negative' style, the 'passive-positive' style, and the 'passive-negative' style as an explanatory model for presidential proclivity for covert action (Hancock and Wexler 2014, 19–20). Although they suggest that '[a]ll of these presidential personality types are no more or less likely to pursue covert warfare…presidential personality affects to what extent the advice [given by official and unofficial advisors] has impact' (Hancock and Wexler 2014, 21). As a result, some presidents will accept the advice coming from their national security apparatus and some will not, resulting in either bureaucratic stakeholders manipulating presidents into initiating ill-conceived covert operations, or in executive action without bureaucratic backing, both of which can be disastrous.

Three Layers of Agents

There are three sets of contractors to consider in this model: there is the national security bureaucracy, which implements national security policies of an administration; secondly, there are partner nations that often control key aspects of PMOs; and thirdly, there are freelance covert operators and the proxy forces themselves, who are most removed from the principals.

The National Security Bureaucracy Michael Glennon has argued that there is a 'double government' in the US comprised of two sets of institutions: 'the presidency, Congress, and the courts' and a network of 'several hundred executive officials who sit atop the military, intelligence, diplomatic, and law enforcement departments and agencies' (Glennon 2015, 6). Glennon calls the latter a 'Trumanite Network' since it emerged during the inception of the national security state under Truman. Others refer to this phenomenon of a powerful bureaucratic elite pursuing an independent and hidden agenda as 'parapolitics' or the 'deep state' (Wilson and Lindsey 2009). It is important to keep in mind that the phenomenon of the 'deep state' (the clandestine elements of the government) is separate from the 'shadow government,' which can be a power elite completely outside of the official government and which can exercise influence on key government officials.[3] While it is a contentious issue whether or not a shadow government exists in the US, the postulation of an existing American deep state should be considered far less controversial, given the reality of the sheer size of the US government's clandestine underbelly.[4] Presidents have to deal with bureaucratic inertia and they may get frustrated in trying to commandeer the deep state as sometimes 'policy takes on a life of its own' (Glennon 2015, 28). Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer warned President Trump not to antagonize the CIA because they 'have six ways from Sunday to getting back at you,' indicating that presidents better have to go along with the deep state's preferred policies or face seeing their policies sabotaged by the deep state from within (Chaitin 2017).

Partner Governments Partner governments often end up controlling crucial aspects of PMOs and have therefore a major influence on its success or on certain aspects of blowback. While partner governments can be compensated by the US government for their participation in a covert operation, this does not mean that the interests of the US government and partner governments would coincide completely, or that partner

governments would be always responsive to US demands. In several cases studied partner governments sometimes ignored US concerns or even acted against the interests of the US government.[5] The bottom line is that partner governments are sovereign entities, which may allow the US to assume a leadership role, but may ultimately decide themselves when and how to cooperate. There are only limited ways how the US can incentivize or discipline partner governments, especially after the cooperation has ended.[6]

The Proxies and Freelance Covert Operators The proxies in pro-insurgency PMOs are often described as 'freedom fighters' or 'rebels' fighting against a tyrannical government or foreign occupation forces. They might be 'organic' in the sense of having emerged out of genuine internal opposition groups without outside support, or they might be mercenary armies that have been inserted into a conflict and that are fully financed and operationally led by the US government.[7] The proxies may share the general goal of overthrowing a target government, but they may have very different ideas about the political future of their country. Ideological compatibility between sponsors and proxies is usually critical because it makes little sense for a sponsor to assist in the overthrow of a government to put in its place one that is worse as it concerns the foreign policy goals of the sponsor. Short of victory, there are many ways in which proxies can misbehave in the eyes of a sponsor and become a liability to the sponsor.

Moral Hazards

The term 'moral hazard' originated from the insurance industry and relates to the problem of how insurance changes incentives for reducing risk (Rowell and Connelly 2012, 1051). In other words, insured may be willing to take higher risk than if they were not insured. In the context of principal-agent relationships, 'moral hazard' refers to the problem of unobservable agent behavior (Rauchhaus 2009, 877). If the principal cannot adequately monitor the agent then the agent may engage in 'shirking behavior': namely to avoid costs and risks at the expense of the interests of the principal in the assumption that the principal cannot observe and subsequently sanction shirking behavior. Agents may cut corners, overcharge, underperform, or act opportunistically—all in the assumption that the principal has limited means to find out. Shirking behavior is also associated

with *agency losses* that are defined as 'costs when agents engage in undesired independent action' (Byman and Kreps 2010, 6). Shirking becomes more likely when the consequences of poor performance can be fully externalized by the agent and/or the principal has no ability of direct monitoring and has to rely on information that is provided by the proxies themselves. The direct monitoring of agents in PMOs incurs additional risk and cost for the principal (it weakens deniability and exposes own personnel to risk) and at the same time yields few benefits since there are in covert operations often only limited ways of sanctioning agent behavior (Treverton 1987, 118). By their very nature covert operations are designed to have low observability, which also creates difficulties for principals to monitor and control their agents at every level. The consequence is greatly increased inefficiency in every aspect of an operation.

Moral Hazards: The Deep State

The deep state may be formally under the control of Congress and the White House, but given the fact that it can outlast any administration and that it has insulated itself from real accountability, there are considerable moral hazards that can cause PMOs to fail. It would be grossly inaccurate to disregard the deep state as an independent, although within itself often divided, actor in the implementation of PMOs and other covert operations.[8] The national security bureaucracy has an inherent interest in increasing the amount of resources they control (budget and personnel), in exercising influence on policy that enhances their access to resources, and to pursue strategies that shields them from any criticism and accountability.

Advocacy of Flawed Operations Defense analyst Todd Stiefler has concluded in his analysis of whether the CIA distorts intelligence to promote covert operations is 'indeed real.' '[R]epeatedly, objectivity and balance have been sacrificed in order to promote particular agendas in the operational arena' (Stiefler 2004, 632). This is by no means a new concern. The CIA may have painted a rosier picture about the prospects of the Cuban Brigade 2506 prior to the Bay of Pigs landing in order to get Kennedy's approval for the operation in the assumption that Kennedy would authorize a direct military intervention if things went badly, which it turned out he did not want to do.[9] In the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, President Kennedy had a meeting on PMOs at the Pentagon in May 1961. His advisor Robert A. Lovett, a former secretary of defense,

pointed at the problem that those involved in planning a PMO should also provide the intelligence and advice since they would become advocates for their freedom fighters and their cause. He reasoned: 'if you are making business for yourself, collecting information and planning an operation without an assigned job, your question is, "What are we going to do now? We are in business. We have 400 men. What will we do with them?"' (US NSC 1961, 8) The CIA or the Pentagon might promote PMOs that serve their own bureaucratic agendas, but that are ill-advised in terms of promoting US foreign policy objectives (Stockwell 1978, 251; McGhee 1983, 192).

Detrimental Bureaucratic Competition Sometimes there is even bureaucratic competition within the deep state over who controls or conducts certain operations, which can become highly counterproductive since the efforts of the Pentagon (or State Department) may conflict with the efforts of the CIA. In several cases the CIA and the Pentagon ran PMOs in parallel in the same theater, supporting different paramilitary groups and in a few cases they were even supporting groups on opposing sides.[10] William Blum claimed that in Congo during the 1960s the 'US Air Force C-130 were flying Congolese troops and supplies against the Katanganese rebels, while at the same time the CIA and its covert colleagues in the Pentagon were putting together an air armada of heavy transport aircraft, along with mercenary units, to aid the very same rebels' (Blum 2004, 159). In a sense, one part of the government can be undoing or hindering what another part of the government does, which becomes more likely when operations are secret. This can make US foreign policy inconsistent and seems to substantially increase the risk of failure.

Lacking Bureaucratic Accountability What can potentially encourage national security bureaucracies to advocate foreign policies that are reckless is a moral hazard caused by lacking accountability. In this sense, moral hazard refers to a situation when one party in a contract takes the risk and the other party suffers the consequences of risk gone bad. There are more upsides for national security bureaucracies to pursue PMOs, regardless their actual chances of success, than there are downsides of failure. A proxy force might get crushed and the president might be embarrassed by a failed foreign policy, but failure is very unlikely to affect the careers of the bureaucratic managers of a PMO. First of all, few failed operations are complete failures—usually they have some redeemable quality that can be

proclaimed as success.[11] Secondly, failure can be always blamed on the proxies or circumstances beyond the control of the managers of a PMO. Only in one instant has a failed PMO resulted in a president asking for top deep state officials to resign, namely JFK after the Bay of Pigs invasion.[12]

Moral Hazards: Partner Nations

Sometimes partner nations are just functioning as contractors or US agents, but in a few cases partner nations have contributed substantial funding to CIA operations and have run their own parallel covert operations alongside US-run covert operations. This can be highly problematic when partner nations have goals that are decidedly different from US foreign policy objectives. This may not be apparent at first, but can materialize at a later stage of a PMO.

Introduction of Competing Objectives When it is decided to involve partner nations and give them some critical role in a PMO, one risks that partner nations will prioritize their own objectives in an ongoing conflict over the objectives of the US government. A partner state can be in a position to steer US aid to particular rebel groups that are more aligned with the foreign policy goals of the partner nation. Highly problematic is the US cooperation with nondemocratic partner nations or states that are ideologically opposed to Western values. Partner governments, such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and more recently Turkey, have consistently sponsored radical Islamic groups for ideological reasons.[13] This meant that these states nurture fundamentalist groups hostile to US interests in order to advance radical Islam that gives them greater influence in target states and over world politics. According to the *New York Times*, '[m]ost of the arms shipped at the behest of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to supply Syrian rebel groups fighting the government of Bashar al-Assad are going to hard-line Islamic jihadists, and not the more secular opposition groups that the West wants to bolster, according to American officials and Middle Eastern diplomats' (Sanger 2012). NATO member Turkey was caught funding ISIS by buying oil from the terror group and allowing them to operate from Turkish territory (Halpern 2016). In a now famous e-mail exchange between Hillary Clinton and John Podesta, Clinton acknowledged: 'While this military/para-military operation is moving>> forward, we need to use our diplomatic and more traditional intelli-

gence>> assets to bring pressure on the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia,>> which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL and>> other radical Sunni groups in the region' (WikiLeaks 2014). In other words, the US was fighting ISIS, while two of its main regional allies were supporting the US PMO in Syria were also actively supporting America's enemies, which was known to key US decision-makers at that time.

Misuse of US Funds and Resources The US government has to compensate partner nations for their efforts or assistance in covert operation. Resources meant for proxies are also often funneled through partner states. This results in substantial monitoring challenges for US officials. Accounting is notoriously difficult in covert operations, especially if it involves dodgy banks and corrupted third world partner governments, where it is common for civil servants to receive bribes or take a cut from resources entrusted to them. For example, corruption at all levels in Pakistan and Afghanistan resulted in tremendous losses of material in the 1980s. A CIA officer involved in Operation CYCLONE, John McMahon, noted: 'when we saw some of the Soviet successes against the mujahideen, I became convinced that all the arms that we had provided were not ending up in Afghan shooters' hands.' McMahon therefore asked ISI about the matter and received the response: 'You're absolutely right! We are caching some arms. Because some day the United States will not be here, and we'll be left on our own to carry on our struggle' (Weiner 2008, 445). The NSA estimated in a secret study that about 30 percent of transferred weapons were stolen or sold (Weiner 1991, 153). According to John Cooley, 'US diplomats and intelligence officers were lucky if they got even 50 out of 100 guns sent to the Afghans, through the ISI, by the CIA and its allies' (Cooley 2002, 43). Even more concerning was the issue that US part of the $3 billion in covert operations funding to Pakistan may have furthered nuclear proliferation (Winchell 2003, 379; Cockburn 2009; Rashid 2009, 38). Pakistan covertly tested a nuclear bomb design in a 'cold test' in 1983, violating the provisions of the Glenn Amendment for US aid (Riedel 2014, 70). A similar nightmare of corruption and arms diversion was unfolding in Jordan. It was reported that '[w]eapons shipped into Jordan by the Central Intelligence Agency and Saudi Arabia intended for Syrian rebels have been systematically stolen by Jordanian intelligence operatives and sold to arms merchants on the black market' and

that the 'Jordanian officers who were part of the scheme reaped a windfall from the weapons sales, using the money to buy expensive SUVs, iPhones and other luxury items' (Mazzetti 2016). The consequence of such corruption is that proxy forces do not get the weapons they need, which increases the risk of failure.

Wagging the Dog Whenever a partner nation plays a critical role in running a PMO on behalf of the US government, there is a great danger that the partner nation might try to manipulate the US government. In light of the PMO in Syria, which has been largely financed by the Saudis it is completely unclear what conceivable benefit it would have for the US to overthrow the secular Assad government and replace it with a radical Islamic government or with a government that is too weak to control radical Islamic influences that have metastasized in Syria during the civil war. On the other hand, there are some tangible benefits for Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey to get rid of Assad (Phillips 2017, 36). As pointed out in a *Foreign Affairs* article, 'most of the foreign belligerents in the war in Syria are gas-exporting countries with interests in one of the two competing pipeline projects that seek to cross Syrian territory to deliver either Qatari or Iranian gas to Europe' (Orenstein and Romer 2015)—for sure Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey are not concerned about democracy and human rights in Syria, which are rather absent in any of these countries (see also Ahmed 2013; Erlich 2014, 219). It appears that the US was dragged into the Syria conflict by its regional partners. According to analyst Christopher Phillips, 'the Syrian civil war helps to illustrate that the United States no longer dominates the Middle East' (Phillips 2017, 37). By supporting these efforts, the US government is ultimately serving foreign interests rather than own national security interests.[14]

Moral Hazards: Proxy Forces

For reasons of deniability, limited personnel resources, and the minimization of risk, US personnel will have only very limited contact to their proxies, especially within the theater of operations. Embedding own personnel in proxy forces is often avoided, which means that the US government has to trust the proxies that they will do what they have promised to do. Again, the absence of a strong monitoring capability will result in moral hazards.

Lacking Fighting Spirit Principal and agent may have different exposure to and attitudes regarding risk, which can result in shirking behavior on either side. The risk that the US government faces in a PMO is vastly different from the risk faced by the guerrillas themselves: a president may be afraid of bad publicity when an operation is exposed, but for the proxies it can be a matter of life and death. In order to reduce their own risk of death and defeat, proxies have a strong incentive to escalate a conflict to the point that the US is compelled to provide more and even overt military support to them. The more support the US is willing to provide, the better the chances for the proxies to win and the lesser the risk for them to suffer the consequences of defeat. Especially if proxy forces are incompetent or are no real match for the government their natural instinct dictates to them to keep their heads down and wait for the cavalry to arrive. For example, it was widely understood by Oliver North and others that the Contras were mostly waiting for the US Marines to sweep them into power in Managua (Wroe 1991, 78). 'Between January 1981 and July 1982 the latter [the Sandinistas] recorded 45 clashes with US-backed guerrillas, as opposed to 234 cases of cattle rustling' (Hughes 2014, 49).

Misuse of Resources There is the risk that resources provided to proxies are used to fill the pockets of rebel leaders, who may wish to retire comfortably after the conflict is over, or that they are used for criminal purposes to the same end. Corrupted rebel leaders may sell off weapons to enemies of the US Warlords and rebel commanders may have an interest in keeping a conflict going so that they continue to receive foreign support that at least partially ends up in their own pockets (or offshore accounts), especially if they have no realistic prospects of winning.

When Proxies Go 'Rogue' The worst case is that proxies that have been armed and trained by the US turn into enemies. The experience in Syria is particularly sobering. Many individuals, who have gone through US paramilitary training programs in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have reportedly defected with their weapons to jihadist groups. In one incident, 75 'graduates' of Division 30 (the US-trained faction of Syrian rebels) joined Jabhat al-Nusra, taking 12 four-wheel vehicles with machine guns and ammunition with them (Bulos 2015). Massive amounts of equipment the US provided to the Free Syrian Army ended up with ISIS, including hundreds of Toyota trucks, heavy artillery, anti-aircraft guns, and grenade launchers, which were likely provided to rebel groups that defected to the jihadists.

Proxy Warfare as 'Goat Rodeo'

The term is derived from the historical practice of teaching children to lasso using goats instead of cattle and it has been used in many different contexts to refer to a messy situation where several people try to cooperate while pursuing separate and conflicting agendas, which will predictably result in failure of achieving a supposed common goal. According to analyst Vinay Gupta, 'a goat rodeo occurs when a committee sets out to solve a problem but is composed of individuals with different goals who are representing different classes of organization or agency…Lacking a shared competitive framework or genuinely shared goals, the situation inevitably devolves into failure. Cooperation is impossible, because people want different things, and competition is implausible because the actors involved have entirely different rule sets' (Gupta 2015, 6). A PMO involves many players with different agendas, who may agree that they want to overthrow a certain government, but may wildly disagree about means, rules, or specific outcomes. Gupta suggests that goat rodeos should be avoided by permitting 'only a single class of player to participate, or fix the goal and bar those with alternative objectives' (Gupta 2015, 7).

Strategies for Controlling Agents

PAT suggests that principals can improve outcomes through two main strategies: (1) crafting contracts in a way that there are sufficient incentives for the agent to perform well and (2) intensified monitoring so that 'good' behavior can be incentivized and 'bad' behavior discovered and potentially be corrected. In reality, it can be quite difficult for sponsors to properly incentivize desired agent behavior in PMOs since there is an obvious monitoring/moral hazard problem and since there are only limited options for punishing 'bad' behavior.

Controlling Proxies: Behavior vs. Performance-Based Rewards

There are two main strategies how a principal can compensate an agent, either by compensating for a particular behavior or service, or by compensating for results achieved. Both strategies have their downsides. Behavior-based compensation may ensure that the agent is more responsive to the wishes of the principal, but it also takes away incentives for exceeding the minimal expectations of the principal. For example, the CIA's paid Afghan warlords in 2001 to defect from the Taliban in 2001. Although it did

facilitate a speedy victory, it was also observed that these 'rented' auxiliary forces 'were also less than fully committed' (Peceny and Bosin 2011, 609). It was easier to pay Afghan warlords not to fight than to get them to fight for their sponsor. In the end, the strategy was inconsequential as once payments dried up warlords would switch sides again or threaten to switch sides if they did not receive more payment.

Performance-based compensation gives the agent a greater stake in the outcome and therefore makes it more likely that the agent will avoid 'shirking' behavior since compensation is deferred. Ethan Corbin has excellently outlined the sponsors control dilemma in PMOs:

> Principal-agent theory states that principals must design ways to overcome the inevitable challenges of moral hazard and conflict of interests when hiring an agent to act on its behalf. Limited control mechanisms (a.k.a., "carrots and sticks") may be employed to do so, including instrumental monitoring, sanctions, or outcome-based bonuses. The inevitable dilemma that arises in the case of an "illegitimate" contract—like the one firmed up between Syria and its armed group agents—is the reduction in one or both of the two stated benefits (i.e., an increase in cost, or a reduction in plausible deniability). In general, an application of principal-agent theory to state alignment with armed groups would suggest that states will favor carrots (performance-based compensation) over sticks (instrumental control and sanctions for suboptimal performance) as they will seek to minimize exposing their connection to their agents while maximizing the potential force they can extract from them. (Corbin 2011, 27)

In other words, the principal is more likely to achieve desired outcomes by using a performance-based compensation approach than by trying to penalize proxies for poor performance. In practice it means to offer proxies the ultimate 'carrot,' namely a promise by the sponsor to put them in power (by offering 'diplomatic recognition') once the old regime has fallen. Although this provides a strong incentive for proxies to perform since the payoff of seizing control over government institutions and assets is very high, the approach limits any ability to restrain proxies during the conflict and also compromises the chances for establishing a democracy post-conflict.

Controlling Proxies: Pitfalls of a Divide and Rule Strategy

As a general rule, it makes sense for a sponsor to have a 'portfolio' of several supported groups in a conflict as a hedging strategy, since it makes it possible to shift support from one group to other groups, if one group

turns out to be problematic or is not responsive to the wishes of the sponsor. By maintaining a certain degree of competition, if not rivalry, between sponsored groups one can use this competition for improving overall proxy performance (Corbin 2011, 36). There are, however, serious downfalls in this 'divide and rule' approach. First, it may reduce the effectiveness of proxy forces if they are operating under different command structures with little coordination and with few incentives for supporting each other. As pointed out by Hughes, '[p]roxies (notably insurgents and terrorist groups) are often prone to rifts and intramural feuding' (Hughes 2014, 46). For example, the Syrian rebels seemed to spend as much time fighting each other as they spent on fighting their government (Sengupta 2016). Secondly, the support to multiple groups may create serious problems after the fall of the targeted government. Instead of ending the conflict through victory by one group, the result could be the continuation of the conflict with a changed set of players. Thirdly, sponsors often tend to support the most radical and most detested warlords because they are more controllable since they are much more dependent on the sponsor than groups with a broader support base and a more moderate political agenda.[15] This means that radicalism is strengthened, making it less likely that victory could result in democracy (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Seven factions of the Mujahedeen

Hezb-I-Islami (Party of Islam)
Radical Islamic group that was led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and which received most of US and Pakistani support
Hezb-I-Islami Khalis (Party of Islam led by Khalis)
Tribal-based Islamic group that was led by Maulvi Younas Khalis, who was more moderate than Hekmatyar
Jamat-I-Islami (Islamic Society)
Tajik pan-Islamic group that was led by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani
Ittehad Islami (Islamic Unity)
Islamic group that was led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, who was closely aligned with Hekmatyar in the late stage of the war
Mahaz-I-Milli Islami (National Islamic Front of Afghanistan)
Sufi Islamic group that was led by Pir Sayed Ahmed Gailani, who was a monarchist
Jabha-I-Nijat-Milli (Afghan National Liberation Front)
Royalist group that was led by the religious leader Sibgratullah Mojadidi
Harakat-I-Inquilab-Islami (Islamic Revolutionary Forces)
Moderate Islamic group that was led by Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi

Adopted from Kurt Lohbeck 1993. *Holy War, Unholy Victory: Eyewitness to the CIA's Secret War in Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, pp. 281–282

Controlling Proxies: Calibrating Support

PMOs are low-cost and low-risk operations from the perspective of the US government since they are generally not expensive compared to traditional military operations and since few US personnel have to be put at risk (Gleijeses 2016, 304). It makes little difference for the US government whether to spend $1 billion, $2 billion, or $5 billion on a PMO, since these sums are insignificant in comparison to the Pentagon's overall budget or the cost of invading and occupying another country. The question then is: why not provide more money and equipment to a proxy if money was no object and if it could improve the chances for success to provide more support? Of course, providing more resources cannot compensate for a flawed strategy and a proxy may not be capable of utilizing better resources, such as more advanced weaponry.[16] But more importantly, the provision of limited resources can be used as an instrument for controlling proxies (Corbin 2011, 37). It is quite apparent that a lot of US PMOs were almost embarrassingly underresourced with proxies receiving equipment of both poor quality and quantity. Some of this may have been owed to 'plausible deniability' concerns and some of it to corruption, but it seems equally likely that underresourcing operations has been used as a control strategy. According to Ethan Corbin, '[s]tates can use the flow of such resources as a means of either punishing or rewarding the results of their armed group agent's actions. Such control can converge the preferences of the armed group to the state's as the group will seek to optimize its performance as a means of garnering greater resources' (Corbin 2011, 37). Arms shipments or additional fighters can be deliberately delayed in order to remind proxies to fulfil their obligations towards the sponsor. As a control strategy, the sponsor would have to hold back enough material from the proxies in order to make them sufficiently compliant, as delays in the delivery of material would incur immediate costs to them in their battlefield effectiveness. This approach to controlling proxy behavior leads to the so-called 'hold-up' problem. Hold-up 'occurs when one contracting party threatens another with economic harm unless concessions are granted by the threatened party' (Smith and King 2009, 18). The hold-up problem results from lacking trust between principal and agent and emerges whenever one side needs to make an initial investment before the project can move forward. It can also result from opportunistic behavior on part of either side. This opportunistic strategy typically causes delays and chronic underinvestment, which undermines the chances of a success-

ful completion of the project. So, if the main strategy of a sponsor is to control proxies by calibrating support according to the responsiveness of the proxy to the wishes of the sponsor or according to 'good' behavior, there is a risk that the control strategy risks compromising the overall goal of achieving a military victory: proxies can in this case never be given *enough* material to achieve victory because if they were to achieve victory this strategy of control simply collapses. As a result, a typical outcome for a PMO is a strategic stalemate where a conflict just continues for many years with no victory in sight until the effort is eventually abandoned or the proxy forces are defeated.

Notes

1. Jacob Shapiro has pointed out that there exists a trade-off for violent covert organizations (really any paramilitary organization from small terrorist groups to larger guerrilla organizations) between monitoring and security. Monitoring in this sense would mean for the organization to keep records on all of its activities and agents, which also creates a huge security risk since any records captured by state security forces can compromise the organization as a whole. See Shapiro 2013, 110–111.
2. The bureaucratic politics model is based on the idea of competing bureaucracies that make collective decisions in a process of bargaining, which introduces some irrationality in the decision-making process of the US government as a whole. In their book on *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Priscilla Clapp and Morton Halperin challenged the idea that 'decisionmakers are motivated by a single set of national security images and foreign policy' and that decisions made would reflect these goals. See Clapp and Halperin 2006, 3. A more accurate view would be that decisions more often reflect a political compromise to accommodate the interests of the various bureaucratic stakeholders.
3. The Italian P2 (Propaganda Due) masonic lodge, which comprised of a wide range of Italian elites in and outside of government, can be considered a 'shadow government' that influenced the Italian state through their control of the Italian deep state, namely the three Italian intelligence services SISMI, SISDE, and CESIS. Members of P2 came from all branches of the government and conspired to make policy decisions in secret and outside of the regular democratic mechanisms, which not only destroyed accountability but also the very concept of a division of power. See Ganser 2009, 261.
4. One of the first exposés of the American secret government can be found in David Wise's and Thomas Ross' book *The Invisible Government* from

1964. A more recent treatment of the subject has been provided by Dana Priest and William Arkin in *Top Secret America* from 2010. The main point is that the US national security apparatus is far too big for any single person to comprehend or to control and that it has become little accountable to their political masters. See Glennon 2015, 23–24.

5. Some of the US allies have supported groups that fundamentalist or jihadist and have therefore contributed to the problem of international terrorism. A particularly spectacular case of an ally doublecrossing the US is Saudi Arabia, which has supported al Qaeda and other jihadist groups. The so-called missing 28 pages of the 9/11 Commission Report shed some light on the connections of Saudi officials with terrorist groups and the 9/11 attacks. The report stated: 'The Joint Inquiry's review confirmed that the Intelligence Community also has information, much of which has yet to be independently verified, indicating that individuals associated with the Saudi Government in the United States may have other ties to al-Qa'ida and other terrorist groups.' The report details connections between the 9/11 hijackers and Saudi individuals associated with the Saudi government. Although the evidence is not conclusive much points of a Saudi collusion with al Qaida. See US Congress 2002. It is now even acknowledged in the mainstream media that the Saudis are the biggest sponsors of terrorism in the world.
6. Bruce Riedel pointed out that the US had limited influence on Pakistan's actions in support of the Mujahedeen and ultimately lost all remaining influence after Washington had withheld the delivery of arms. See Riedel 2014, 147.
7. An example for support to a genuine or 'organic' guerrilla organization are the Tibetan guerrillas, who were resisting foreign occupation, and an example for a CIA paramilitary mercenary army that was salaried and led by the agency were the Hmong tribes in Laos.
8. The notion of the 'deep state' was originally coined by Peter Dale Scott, who identified it as 'that part of the state driven by top-down policy-making, often by small cabals.' This would constitute a parallel government engaged in 'deep politics' that pursue hidden agendas with hidden dynamics within the government, sometimes resulting in 'deep events' that may only be explicable through an analysis of the deep state and deep politics. See Scott 2007, XVI, 4–7. The term 'deep state' has received a lot of publicity because of the Trump administration using the term to describe the bureaucratic resistance that they receive in their attempts of reform in the national security sector, which was heavily criticized by the mainstream media as 'conspiracy theory.' Regardless, the existence of national security sector bureaucratic politics and bureaucratic resistance that all presidents since President Truman had to deal with is a reality that has ensured the

immense continuity in US national security policies, greatly diminishing the power that presidents have.

9. In their planning documents from 1960, the CIA stated that they considered it unlikely that an invasion of Cuban exiles could unseat Castro. Another CIA document from January 1961 indicated that the CIA expected direct US support to the Cuban exiles on the beach of which Kennedy was apparently not aware of. Prados 2006, 242–244. The report of the CIA's Inspector General on the Bay of Pigs invasion (the 'Kirkpatrick report') stated: 'When the project became blown to every newspaper reader…the agency should have informed higher authority that it was no longer operating within its charter…As the project grew, the agency reduced the exiled leaders to the status of puppets…The project was badly organized…The agency became so wrapped up in the military operation that it failed to appraise the chances of success realistically. Furthermore, it failed to keep [the president and his] policymakers adequately and realistically informed of the conditions essential for success.' Quoted from Talbot 2015, 398.
10. William Blum has noted several instances where 'the CIA was acting in direct military opposition to another arm of the US government' such Costa Rica in 1955 and Burma in 1970. See Blum 2004, 159 and n26. A more recent example of competing CIA and Pentagon PMOs is Syria. See Bulos et al. 2016.
11. Successful aspects can include testing the feasibility of an operation, establishing relations with opposition groups, collecting intelligence from denied territories, or inflicting greater cost on adversaries. If one sets the bar low enough, pretty much any PMO can be deemed a success of sorts.
12. JFK fired DCI Allen Dulles and DDP Richard Bissell following the Bay of Pigs debacle, granting them a six-month grace period to quietly retire.
13. National security analyst Robert Chandler has claimed that Saudi Arabia is leading a civilizational and religious conflict against the West with the goal of Islamizing the whole world. He argued: 'In exchange for its windfall oil revenues, Saudi Arabia exports "hate" to the capitalist West in the form of a civilizational jihad, which includes propaganda and disinformation against Christians, Jews, Shias, and moderate Muslims. The tacit boundaries of the Saudi-capitalist West geopolitical competition also includes the intolerant Wahhabi religious sect that legitimizes the rule of the Royal Saudi family and exports global terrorism.' See Chandler 2008, 482.
14. Lawrence Davidson has made a convincing argument that US foreign policy has been hijacked by foreign lobbies since Americans do not care about foreign policy and since US politicians are easily influenced by foreign interests. See Davidson 2009.

15. ISI favored Hekmatyar over other warlords because he was intensely loyal to them. ISI knew they could rely on Hekmatyar to follow because he was widely detested in Afghanistan and had a very shaky power base. Unfortunately for them, Hekmatyar had few competent commanders and he was not nearly as effective as the Pakistanis claimed.
16. Tyrone Groh has pointed out that the CIA PMO in Laos was negatively affected by the Hmong's inability of operating complicated or more advanced weaponry, which made them less effective. In order to compensate for these lacking technical capabilities, the US had to conduct airstrikes on behalf of the Hmong. See Groh 2010.

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CHAPTER 7

War Crimes and Criminal Conduct

War causes the breakdown of the normal order of society. The normal rules of civilized conduct are suspended, allowing atrocities to happen and crime to flourish. Thus, it would be a wrong expectation to assume that this would be any different in proxy warfare, or that proxy forces could somehow behave better than regular Western armed forces have behaved in the armed conflicts of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century. At the same time, there is a good amount of evidence for a pattern of atrocity and criminality that seems to occur with great regularity and possibly to a greater extent in civil wars compared to interstate wars (Heuser 2012). Subsequently, atrocities and crime are an important and unavoidable feature of proxy warfare. Often the war crimes and other crimes of proxies are downplayed as random events that occur because of 'a few bad apples' that exploit the situation of societal chaos. This makes it easier to dismiss transgressions of proxies as coincidental or specific to particular conflicts and certain actors within conflicts. However, this misses the point that will be made in this chapter, namely that atrocities and crime are not random in civil wars, but will occur very predictably because of rational incentives that nonstate proxies have to misbehave. If it is indeed predictable that a potential nonstate proxy force will massively violate the conventions of war and will engage in organized criminal activity as an alternative funding mechanism, it calls into question the overall legitimacy and wisdom of conducting proxy wars in the first place by utilizing actors that the sponsor has no full control over. At the very least, sponsors would need to have a greater

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awareness of the problem and will need to change the incentives for proxies or take other precautions in order to avoid excessive violence and organized criminal activity.

Nonstate Forces Tend to Violate International Norms

Pro-insurgency PMOs are typically about the use of guerrillas for the purpose of destabilizing or overthrowing a target government and as such a theory of proxy warfare has to incorporate major lessons from the practice of guerrilla warfare. Proxies have few incentives for conforming to standards of international law and the conventions of war. However, they do have many incentives for violating them. Furthermore, the sponsors of proxies have often a very limited capability to detect and correct abuses of their proxies and the sponsors lack incentives to do so, even when they can detect them.

The Blurred Line Between Guerrilla Warfare and Terrorism

What is of great importance here in view of the compatibility of guerrilla warfare with the laws of armed conflict is its connection to terrorism and the conceptual difficulty of clearly separating the two phenomena. Terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman has argued that '[t]errorism is often confused or equated with, or treated as synonymous with, guerrilla warfare… since guerrillas often employ the same tactics (assassination, kidnapping, bombings of public gathering-places, hostage-taking, etc.) for the same purposes (to intimidate or coerce, thereby affecting behaviour through the arousal of fear) as terrorists' (Hoffman 2006, 35). According to Hoffman, the crucial difference therefore does not lie in the tactics employed, but rather in the characteristic that guerrillas 'operate as a military unit, attack enemy military forces, and seize and hold territory…, while also exercising some form of sovereignty or control over a defined geographical area and its population' (Hoffman 2006, 35). Hoffman admits that terrorism is a 'subjective' and 'pejorative term' and there are no pure categories since 'considerable overlap exists' (Hoffman 2006, 35).

Both guerrillas and terrorists have in common that they are branded by the government that they fight as illegitimate (invariably a government will call rebels or insurgents 'terrorists') and that they feel justified because of their relative weakness to use tactics that are prohibited by international

law. Carl Schmitt was probably the first theorist of guerrilla warfare to recognize that guerrillas are because of their very nature outside of the international system and cannot be integrated into international law as international law is based on the principle of sovereignty that is challenged by the guerrilla or partisan (Schmitt 1963). Schmitt claimed since the partisan is outside of the international order he 'expects from the enemy neither justice, nor mercy. He has turned his back on conventional enmity of the domesticated and contained war and has moved into the realm of another, real enmity, which through terror and counter-terror escalates to annihilation' (Schmitt 1963, 17). The partisan cannot afford to lose and will do anything to win, which is also true for the government. This leads into a vicious cycle of reprisals and counter-reprisals, where both sides go beyond what is permissible in regular warfare (Schmitt 1963, 33).

Interestingly, Schmitt also discusses the practice of proxy warfare in which world powers use partisans to their advantage. He stated: 'The partisan stops to be primarily defensive. He becomes a tool of world revolutionary aggression. He is burned and betrayed of everything for which he fought and of his rooted telluric character that provided the legitimacy to his partisan irregularity' (Schmitt 1963, 77). In other words, by accepting sponsorship by a world power the partisan also undermines the legitimacy of the own fight and risks to become an expendable instrument of their sponsors. One might add that for this exact reason, the partisan in the service of a world empower owes no loyalty to anyone and is also emboldened to do whatever it takes to win since he has a powerful friend backing him. As a result, guerrillas have no reason to shy away from terrorism and atrocities whenever it serves their purposes. To some extent there is a logic inherent in the practice of guerrilla and proxy warfare that incentivizes misconduct.[1]

Radicalization and Enforcing Cohesion

Guerrillas cannot enforce discipline to the same extent as regular armed forces can (Cronogue 2013). Usually, many guerrillas are volunteers, who fight part-time during the night while pursuing a regular job during the day. Guerrillas or rebels are often not military professionals, but might be normal people, who have been politically radicalized.[2] Many are recruited from the young and uneducated segments of Third World societies, which means that they cannot be expected to know international law and be familiar with the conventions of war. Guerrilla organizations are usually

structured like regular armed forces in a hierarchical manner with a clear command structure, but since the fighters are volunteers and since the guerrillas have limited reach and control over society, there is a substantially greater risk of high rates of desertion, especially if a military campaign goes badly. Furthermore, it could hurt morale and the goal of recruiting more volunteers if a guerrilla organization imposed draconian punishments on those members who have committed war crimes. Needless to say, guerrilla leaders might consider it more important to win the war than to make sure that discipline is enforced and crimes committed by guerrillas are punished. However, the problem of a propensity of guerrillas to commit war crimes goes deeper than just weak discipline and lacking appreciation for international law. It might be actively encouraged by guerrilla leaders for reasons of increasing cohesion and effectiveness.

COIN expert David Kilcullen has argued that there are great similarities in the way criminal organizations and insurgent organizations function and that there are rational reasons why guerrilla groups are drawn to atrocities and illegal activity. Describing underground Communist methods of social control over recruits in clandestine political movements, he suggested:

> [r]evolutionary cells would absorb and mobilize recruits, blood them in violent street confrontations with rival groups, groom through a series of increasingly illicit actions, lead them progressively into an ever-greater level of illegality and alienation from society, thus make it harder to betray or leave the movement lest they be punished by the government whose laws they have broken. (Kilcullen 2013, 128)

In the most extreme form some guerrilla groups in Africa have captured children, tortured or drugged them, and then forced them to kill their parents as was the case with the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (Eichstaedt 2013). After committing such a horrific deed, they could not go back to their previous lives and were therefore fundamentally tied to the rebel groups. Traumatizing recruits is of course also a method of brainwashing that allows leaders to retain control over them in the long term. Constant ideological indoctrination and the deliberate encouragement of fanaticism is a frequently used control strategy of rebel leaders since it makes it less likely that guerrillas will desert or defect. Of course, it also makes it more likely that guerrillas will engage in reprisals against government personnel and also civilians perceived as government collaborators.

Child Soldiers

The use of children as fighters is of course in itself a war crime, which is all too common in the internal conflicts of the Third World, as argued by Peter Singer (Singer 2010).[3] Singer claimed that '[u]nfortunately, the issue of child soldiers is still a largely invisible one to American security studies' and it is certainly absent from any discussion of proxy warfare (Singer 2010, 157). Since the phenomenon is so widespread it is not surprising that the US government has sometimes supported paramilitary forces that employed child soldiers. For example, warlord Vang Pao in Laos used child soldiers in Laos and it was known to the CIA. According to one former Hmong guerrilla, '[a]n American and a Thai man came into my school and I was taken away to military training' to join the war at the age of 13 (Lloyd-George 2011). The Mujahedeen also frequently employed child soldiers as young as 12 years old (Rashid 2010, 109). Even more recently the CIA and State Department had backed the SPLA, which was known for its use of child soldiers, during the 1990s. According to HRW, the South Sudanese rebels gave boys military training and '[m]any boys were used in combat. The SPLA reportedly had a "Red Army" made up of fourteen to sixteen-year-old boys. According to former SPLA officers, these boys were initially used for fighting in Sudan but, "in the first few years, the Red Army fought and was always massacred. Then they were taken off the frontline…. Then they were assigned to menial jobs"' (HRW 1996, 19). US Congress passed the Child Soldier Prevention Act in 2008, but the Obama administration granted South Sudan and its SPLA a waiver that allowed them to continue using child soldiers in a renewed civil war while receiving State Department aid (Turse 2016).

Violence Against Civilians as a Strategy of War

Deliberate attacks on civilians that occur in the context of civil wars are often portrayed as random and senseless outrages that are irrational and therefore inexplicable. This may not be the case as observed by the two scholars Lucy Hovil and Eric Werker in the context of a conflict in Western Uganda. They argued that violence 'is both rationally carried out and fundamental to the war aims of the perpetrators' (Hovil and Werker 2005, 9). There are several ways in which deliberate violence against civilians can be beneficial for an insurgent group that is looking for or that is receiving support from a sponsor. Prospective proxies may use excessive violence to

draw the attention of potential sponsors to the conflict and to provoke an overreaction by the government's security forces that can be used to brand the government as an oppressive and tyrannical regime. Escalation of violence initiated by the insurgents can be used for triggering a broader uprising against a government. Atrocities committed by insurgents are then blamed on the government and used as a propaganda tool to mobilize internal support and potentially receive international assistance through an international intervention, either overt or covert. This is a new pattern that has been observed recently in Kosovo, Libya, and Syria. According to analyst Robert Rauchhaus, writing about NATO's use of the KLA as proxies:

> The signs of violence and provocation are usually obvious – the groups that provoke violence with riots, kidnappings, and bombings are attempting to draw attention to the conflict. Prior to US intervention in Kosovo, for example, *The New York Times* and other media sources documented KLA bombings of police stations, as well as hundreds of kidnappings, rapes, and murders of Serbian civilians. If third parties do not recognize what is happening, it is not because they cannot see, but more likely because they do not want to see. (Rauchhaus 2009, 877–878)

An even more blatant case of proxies trying to provoke a conflict escalation and foreign intervention may have been the chemical weapon attack on civilians that killed 1429 civilians, including 426 children, in August 2013 (Erlich 2014, 102). Although it was initially claimed that the Syrian rebels had no access to chemical weapons and that the only possible perpetrator was the Assad regime, it later turned out that the two UN investigations could not conclusively determine the responsible party and that ISIS-affiliated insurgents had used chemical weapons at least 52 times in Syria and Iraq (Schmitt 2016). Needless to say, President Assad would have had little to gain from the use of chemical weapons that he knew could result in foreign intervention that would doom his regime, while the rebels would have had everything to gain from such an atrocity if it could be successfully blamed on the government and if it triggered an international intervention on their behalf.[4]

Once an insurgent group has secured the backing of a foreign government it still has incentives for attacking civilians, which can be a form of shirking behavior. The activities and success of guerrilla groups can be very difficult for a sponsor to monitor, which means that in order to prove to the sponsor that the rebels are actually doing something they engage in

highly visible and 'noisy' activities such as attacks on civilians. For example, the Nicaraguan Contras probably felt that it was a lot easier to terrorize, murder, rape, and torture civilians than to confront the Sandinistas in open battle. According to John Stockwell, '[t]hey go into villages. They haul out families. With the children forced to watch, they castrate the father. They peel the skin off his face. They put a grenade in his mouth, and pull the pin. With the children forced to watch, they gang-rape the mother, and slash her breasts off. And sometimes, for variety, they make the parents watch while they do these things to the children' (Stockwell 1989).

Atrocities committed against civilians and enemy forces can be also part of a psychological warfare strategy that is designed to terrorize the enemy and to thereby undermine enemy morale. The Vietcong and the CIA pursued extremely brutal and sometimes bizarre psychological warfare campaigns to intimidate the population. In one scheme dreamt up by covert operator Edward Lansdale, rumors of vampires were spread and enemies were captured, then drained of their blood, and left with fake bite marks on their necks (Valentine 1990, 25–26). The Mujahedeen in Afghanistan often ritually tortured captured Soviet soldiers to death in order to terrorize them and to provoke reprisals from the Soviet military that could turn the Afghan population against the government. The *Washington Post* reported in May 1979:

> Little mercy is given by either the Islamic faithful who are leading a holy war against those deemed "Godless communists" or by the government forces intent on establishing a new Marxist order. The favorite tactic of the Islamic tribesmen is to torture victims by first cutting off their noses, ears, and genitals, then removing one slice of the skin after another. "It is a slow and painful death," the diplomat noted. Some of the government's advisors were among the victims killed in the March uprising in the Western city of Herat. Eyewitnesses said they were systematically hunted down by specially assigned insurgent assassination squads conducting house to house searches. (Randal 1979)

There is no doubt that the Soviets also committed massive war crimes in Afghanistan, which became a focus of Western reporting from the early 1980s onward. However, many of the Soviet reprisals were provoked by the extreme brutality of the Mujahedeen, who routinely tortured and executed captured Soviet soldiers. NSC staffer and PSYOPS expert Walt Raymond came up with a plan to encourage Soviet soldiers to defect, but

he was confronted by CIA case officer Gust Avrakotos, who brought some pictures to a White House meeting to demonstrate how futile such an effort would be. According to George Crile, '[o]ne of them showed two Russian sergeants being used as concubines. Another had a Russian hanging from the turret of a tank with a vital part of his anatomy removed. Another showed a mujahid approaching a Soviet defector with a dagger in his hands.' CIA director Casey privately commented to Avrakotos, 'I think your point is quite valid. What asshole would want to defect to those animals' (Crile 2003, 333).

The CIA sometimes encouraged the Mujahedeen to use terror tactics against the Soviets to torment them in every possible way. For example, author Steve Coll stated that 'part of the other aspect of this overall program was to try to cripple the Russian equipment; remote control bombs, time devices, and occasionally even car bombs and briefcase bombs to try to assassinate the Soviet leadership inside the capital of Kabul' (Coll 2003).[5] The Mujahedeen targeted Afghan civilian officials in Kabul and carried out other terrorist attacks on civilian infrastructure (Coll 1992). Bombings targeted Radio Afghanistan, Kabul University, the Ministry of Interior, and the living quarters of Soviet advisors (Jalali and Grau 2010, 368).[6]

Criminal Activities by Proxy Forces

The scholarship on the close connections between terrorist/insurgent groups and organized crime has grown substantially. This section will only be able to discuss some of the main findings of the literature and apply them to the issue of PMOs. The focus will be on the apparent and complex connection between CIA covert operations and drug trafficking. It is argued that the CIA has tended to overlook the illegal activities of their proxies and at times has even encouraged them. Although this argument seems contentious, it can be backed up by a wealth of evidence that points in this direction.

Insurgency and Organized Crime

The traditional view has been that terrorist/insurgent group is political in nature and therefore inherently distinct from a criminal organization that has economic goals. However, scholars had to come to terms with the reality that sometimes criminal organizations behave like terrorist organizations and that terrorist/insurgent organizations can become corrupted

and behave more like criminal organizations. An example for the former is the Medellin Cartel, which waged a terror campaign against the Colombian government in the late 1980s and an example for the latter is FARC, which started out as Marxist guerrillas and morphed into a drug cartel. Scholar Tamara Makarenko has therefore suggested that there is a 'crime-terror continuum' in which organizations can move to either side of the spectrum (Makarenko 2004). There can be also alliances between criminal groups and terrorist/insurgent groups that are motivated by mutual benefit: terrorists/insurgents can gain access to criminal expertise (e.g. money laundering) and criminal networks (e.g. smuggling routes), while criminals may benefit from the protection and destabilization (weakening of the government's ability to enforce laws) that insurgents/terrorists could provide (Makarenko 2004, 131).

Fighting a war without regular sources of income such as taxation is pretty difficult. Insurgents/terrorists need to finance propaganda, train recruits, bribe officials, buy weapons and ammunition, and purchase all kinds of other materials and supplies. The need for generating funds to finance wars has driven many terrorist/insurgent groups into criminality, using established organized crime techniques such as extortion (levying a 'liberation tax' or demanding 'charity'); violent crimes such as bank robberies; the smuggling of illicit goods, most notably illegal narcotics; counterfeiting; and more recently credit card fraud. Even if a terrorist/insurgent group has a foreign sponsor with deep pockets, it makes a lot of sense for them to diversify their income. As Geraint Hughes pointed out, '[a]bandonment or betrayal can have a particularly disastrous effect if proxies assume that they are guaranteed support' (Hughes 2014, 41). Since proxies are often treated like expendable cannon fodder they have every reason to mistrust the motives of their benefactors and to organize their own alternative funding and supply mechanisms so that the loss of support from the sponsor can be compensated. A sponsor may have an incentive to allow such criminality because it reduces costs for them and because it allows the continuation of a foreign policy even if funding gets cut for political reasons.[7] In other words, the criminality of proxies allows PMOs to become self-sustaining and independent from the sponsor's domestic politics.

CIA Covert Operations and Drug Trafficking

Scholarly opinion has been divided about the extent that the CIA is in fact responsible for the drug trafficking that occurs in the wider context of

covert operations. At one end of the spectrum is Peter Dale Scott, who has claimed that 'US backdoor covert foreign policy has been the largest single cause of the illicit drugs flooding the world' (Scott 2010, 12). Historian Alfred McCoy more modestly suggested that '[t]hese covert alliances [between the CIA and drug trafficking proxies] provided a significant, albeit unquantifiable, contribution to the expansion of narcotics trafficking in key source regions' (McCoy 2003, 15). The more charitable and mainstream view is that the CIA cannot be faulted for the criminal activities of their proxies. However, the connection between proxy warfare and drug trafficking is so obvious that it can be hardly ignored.

It seems that the US support to the KMT in Burma/China in the early 1950s was the first time that the CIA was cooperating with an insurgent army heavily involved in the drug business.[8] McCoy claims that the KMT systematically increased opium production in Burma from 80 tons at the end of the Second World War to 300 to 400 tons by 1962 (McCoy 2003, 162). When their invasions from Burma into Southern China failed, the KMT began concentrating on occupying larger territory in Burma for the purpose of growing opium, which was subsequently transported to Thailand (McCoy 2003, 173). Some of the drug shipments have involved CAT planes and CAT personnel and what was worse, the main drug lord in Thailand receiving the shipments was General Phao Siyanan, who happened to be also on CIA payroll (McCoy 2003, 178). The arms for drugs exchanges were so obvious that US embassy sources in Thailand unofficially acknowledged it to the *London Sunday Observer* in an article of March 1952 (Hancock and Wexler 2014, 75).

Another notable CIA drug connection was Operation MOMENTUM in Laos. McCoy suggested that the Hmong had no real interest in winning the war for the CIA and that the more important objective for its proxy General Vang Pao was to profit from the opium trade (McCoy 2003, 289–291). Air America was transporting drugs on behalf of the Hmong guerrillas from Long Tieng. Christopher Robbins, who covers the opium connection to Air America in an entire chapter of his book, claims that '[t]here is no evidence to support the extreme argument [that the CIA was selling opium to the Mafia], and it would be unlikely if there were, but AA was certainly used to carry opium' (Robbins 1990, 212). An official CIA history admits that the CIA was conscious of Hmong drug trafficking and that it 'later took action against the traders as drugs became a problem among American troops in Vietnam.' However, 'The CIA's main focus in Laos remained on fighting the war, not on policing the drug trade' (Leary 1999).

By the 1980s, the CIA was again supporting paramilitary groups that it knew trafficked drugs in Afghanistan and in Nicaragua. Before the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, most opium in Central Asia was grown in Iran and Turkey, but civil war in Afghanistan soon provided an ideal environment for drug operations (Lohbeck 1993, 242). Afghanistan turned into a major opium producer in the world with production growing from 100 tons of opium in 1971 to 2000 tons by 1991 (McCoy 2003, 16). The warlord who received most US support, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, happened to be also one of the biggest drug lords in Afghanistan, laundering the profits through BCCI (Cooley 2002, 109–110; Scott 2010, 170). CIA director for the Afghan operation, Charles Cogan, brushed away this issue by stating in a documentary: 'We didn't really have the resources or time to devote to an investigation of the drug trade. I don't think that we need to apologize for this' (quoted from McCoy 2016, 866).

The most serious allegations of CIA stem from journalist Gary Webb's investigation into the Contra-crack cocaine connection published in the *San Jose Mercury* in 1996. The main claim of Webb was that the CIA had used drug proceeds from the sale of crack cocaine in Los Angeles for financing their covert operation in Nicaragua in the 1980s (Webb 1996). This claim resulted in an official investigation of CIA Inspector General Frederick Hitz, which produced two volumes. It indicated that 50 Contra individuals associated with both the CIA PMO and drug trafficking (Hancock and Wexler 2014, 411). However, the reports stress that the CIA had no direct contacts to drug traffickers mentioned in Webb's story. Interestingly, Hitz found it necessary to provide his personal views about the allegations in an academic article that reviews whether there was any CIA impropriety in the case. The bottom line of his argument is that the CIA had not been instructed to collect narcotics intelligence and 'that CIA personnel during the 1980s were intensely focused on the anti-Sandinista purpose of the Contra program' (Hitz 1999, 460). In other words, the failure of the CIA to investigate tips it had demonstrably received from informants that Contra leaders were running a drug smuggling operation was owed to the fact that it was not the CIA's job to do so.[9]

Post-Cold War Drug Connections to CIA Proxy Wars

Drug trafficking and other criminal activity has remained an enduring feature of CIA covert operations in the post-Cold War world. An important

case in point was NATO's support to the KLA on the Balkans, which was heavily connected to organized crime and in particular drug trafficking from the start. According to journalist Chris Hedges, the KLA 'began on the radical fringe of Kosovar Albanian politics, originally made up of die-hard Marxist-Leninists…as well as by descendants of the fascist militias raised by the Italians in World War II' (Hedges 1999). Balkans analyst Christopher Deliso has claimed that the KLA also had a Mafia and jihadist connection. He wrote,

> [b]y 1994, the Albanian mafia was responsible for $2 billion worth of heroin imported into Europe. Switzerland's jails were overflowing with more than 2,000 émigré Albanians arrested for trafficking. Ominously, the drug money was being invested into weapons destined for Albania and for the looming war with the Serbs in Kosovo. And, while the drug lords could hardly have been mistaken for men of religion, a secondary motive for selling heroin to Europeans was, as one trafficker in Milan put it, "to submerge Christian infidels in drugs." (Deliso 2007, 36)

The KLA financed its weapons purchases through heroin trafficking via their connections to the Albanian mafia in the years leading up to the war. It was furthermore driven by a jihadist zeal to weaken the European infidels and to spread Islam. The KLA was on the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations for the presence of al Qaeda fighters in their midst, but it was quietly removed from the list in February 1998 just before the NATO intervention (Deliso 2007, 39). It was reported in May 1999 in the middle of NATO's air campaign that Europol was investigating the KLA for massive heroin trafficking into Europe and the trafficking of weapons stolen from Albanian armories (Viviano 1999).

The connections of the US-supported Libyan and Syrian rebels to drug trafficking and other illegal activity were less obvious in the beginning of the Arab Spring, but they have become undeniable at this point. Far from being the upright freedom fighters as which they were portrayed in Western media, it was clear early on in the Arab Spring that both Libyan and Syrian rebel groups were composed to a large extent of jihadists with links to organized crime. Both countries have now been turned into transshipment hubs for drugs, weapons, and people into Europe with serious consequences for European security. The UN's Office of Drugs and Crime noted: 'Syria is a tremendous problem in that it's a collapsed security sector, because of its porous borders, because of the presence of so many criminal elements and organized networks…There's a great deal of

trafficking being done of all sorts of illicit goods—guns, drugs, money, people' (Holley 2015). In particular, Syria and Iraq have become major producers and markets for an amphetamine-based drug called Captagon (Fenethylline). Reportedly, Captagon enables 'Syria's fighters to stay up for days, killing with a numb, reckless abandon' (Holley 2015). The drug is produced almost exclusively in Syria since 2012 and is trafficked through Lebanon. It is used by jihadist groups as a means of financing the war with profits in the range of hundreds of millions per year (Freeman 2014). In January 2014, ISIS captured a pharmaceutical plant in Aleppo that enabled them to produce huge quantities of Captagon pills. However, doubt has been cast on the theory that ISIS is behind the Captagon epidemic in the Persian Gulf region. An article in *The Economist* argued that 'the only faction systematically involved in producing the drug was Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Lebanese militia' and that '[r]ogue members of the Assad regime and the Free Syrian Army were also manufacturing it, but neither of the most extreme jihadist factions, Islamic State (IS) or Jabhat al-Nusrah (now Jabhat Fatah al-Sham), was found to be profiting from Captagon. Indeed, IS has executed alleged drug traffickers and destroyed narcotics-manufacturing plants' (Economist 2017). Bizarrely, a Saudi prince, Abdulmohsen bin Walid, was implicated in the trafficking of Captagon when he was caught with two tons of Captagon pills and other narcotics with a market value of $280 million packed in 40 suitcases and transported in his private jet at Beirut International Airport on the way to Riyadh (Vltchek 2015). It seems unlikely that this giant amount of drugs was intended for the prince's personal consumption and it seems more likely that it was part of a major trafficking operation to finance proxy warfare in Syria.[10]

Vetting of Rebels

Since there is almost always a chance that unsavory elements in rebel forces could be armed and trained by the US government, enabling them to do more harm than good, it is quite important that there is a vetting process in place to select, who can participate in CIA or Pentagon paramilitary training programs. In addition, there have been concerns by Congress about the CIA protecting terrorists, war criminals, and drug traffickers for the sake of covert operations in the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal. Senator Robert Torricelli claimed that the CIA had a Guatemalan guerrilla on the payroll, who committed a murder, which prompted the

Clinton administration to introduce stricter rules for the agency's recruitment of sources and assets. The so-called Torricelli principle (also known as 'Deutch rules' since they were implemented by DCI John Deutch) stated that the CIA was not allowed to have any contact with anybody, who had committed human rights violations (Shipp 2012, 38). The Torricelli principle has been abandoned after 9/11, but there is now an expectation that the CIA is more careful when it comes to allowing foreigners into paramilitary training programs. In particular, there has been a lot of public debate about the vetting of Syrian rebels over concerns that jihadists could participate in CIA and Pentagon paramilitary training. Congressman Pete Visclosky questioned: 'We must also ask ourselves if we can truly vet these rebel groups beyond their known affiliations and ensure that we are not arming the next extremist threat to the region' (US Congress 2014, H7555).

Thorough vetting would require to check every potential program participant against criminal and terrorist databases, to collect information about their background, including families and friends, and to conduct lengthy interviews to uncover motivations, beliefs, and psychological stability. The CIA did try to make an honest effort to vet the Syrian rebels at first, but it became clear early on that the task was far from easy. *Newsweek* published an article that outlined the great difficulty of vetting Syrian rebels. A former operative quoted in the article suggested: '"To be really honest, very few people know how to vet well. It's a very specialized skill. It's extremely difficult to do well" in the best of circumstances, the former operative said. And in Syria it has proved impossible' (Stein 2014). According to this article, the way the vetting worked was that the CIA would recruit a trustable source in Syria and ask them to come up with 200 guys the source trusted, who would then all be accepted into the training program. The former operative added:

> The main problem with plans that arm and train the "moderates" – who ominously are only moderate in their fighting abilities…is that it assumes perfect knowledge or "good enough" knowledge, about the people being armed. When in fact there is nothing close to that…Background info on these fighters is next to nothing and misleading, especially in Syria, where we don't have a liaison relationship, and so the vast majority of even check-the-box is by third parties [who are] out-of-the-country players with a stake in the game. (Stein 2014)

Much of the information on jihadists came from Saudi and Jordanian intelligence, both of which had interest in overthrowing Assad and in hiding the jihadist connection to the Syrian rebels. A common problem with getting intelligence on individuals from Arabic countries is also that there are many people with similar names and that there are different ways of spelling Arab names in English, which makes it easy to make mistakes in correctly determining the identity of a person. The CIA databases of jihadists are also often outdated and greatly incomplete, which allowed jihadists to slip in. For the Pentagon anti-ISIS paramilitary program, there were even quotas for the number of people to be recruited and trained, which created incentives for lackluster vetting (Murphy 2016). The Syrian rebels generally had an idea what they needed to say to be accepted as a 'moderate' rebel into a training program. Even if they expressed sympathy for al-Nusra it was not a good enough reason to turn them down (Murphy 2016).

One can be justifiably skeptical about the US government's ability to weed out fanatics and hardcore criminals in future PMOs given the past track record and the continuing challenge of reconciling operational needs and objectives with the goal of supporting only genuine and 'moderate' freedom fighters. All too often immediate needs to get as many fighters on the battlefield as possible will trump any concerns about who these fighters really are and what actually motivates them to fight.

The Commitment Dilemma

Scholar Robert Rauchhaus has explained that there is a commitment dilemma in humanitarian interventions that make it difficult for intervening states to withdraw security guarantees that they have given to non-state armed groups if these groups fail to live up to their promises. The are not arming the next extremist threat to the region any US PMO that has failed to remain covert and was in need of public justification, which is in the post-Cold War period usually a humanitarian argument. Rauchhaus argued that '[t]o mobilize support for humanitarian relief missions, especially ones that are backed by the use of force, decisionmakers often attempt to draw sharp lines and paint things in black and white' (Rauchhaus 2009, 879). According to the rules of propaganda, the targeted government has to be portrayed as absolute evil and the rebels need to be the knights in shining armor who can save the day and who will protect civilian lives. Propaganda cannot deal with important nuances such as the

connections of rebel groups with terrorists and organized crime and it has to be therefore silent about them. The US government may not even be itself aware of these connections, or may take the view that some compromises need to be made for the greater good. The problem is that the more propaganda claims the necessity to help the rebels, the less room of maneuver exists for the government to withdraw from the public commitment it has given.

> Unfortunately, the same mechanisms that will commit a third party to intervene in the event of a humanitarian crisis may make it difficult or impossible to punish a domestic minority that has become a cobelligerent or provocateur. Invoking a fraud clause and canceling the security guarantee might prove difficult or impossible for similar reasons. Thus, once a third party intervenes or threatens to intervene, opportunities for free-riding and exploitation may emerge. In contrast, if a third party fails to commit sufficiently to intervening, the belligerents may discount the third party's demands. (Rauchhaus 2009, 873)

As a result, the US government, once it has decided to assist rebel group, either have to give them a free pass for the transgressions they commit, or it has to acknowledge them and thereby undermine the political rationale and justification for assisting the rebel group in the first place. It would boil down to an acknowledgement of a failure of judgment, which politicians would normally want to avoid. It might also become a moral dilemma to abandon an ally, especially if the partnership had lasted many years and some trust had been established between guerrilla leaders and US covert operatives and diplomats. The US government may feel obligated to protect their agents if they had stayed loyal, even if they were also involved in war crimes and illegal activity.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the US government rarely sought to prosecute or punish the war criminals and other criminals among their proxies, as well as former proxies. For example, no serious effort has been made to identify, prosecute, and punish those Libyan rebels for the videotaped torture, rape, and execution of Gaddafi and as of 2017 nobody has ever been charged for this war crime. Knowing that repercussions for bad behavior are very unlikely, supported rebel forces are easily emboldened to commit war crimes. Sometimes it may even be desirable from the perspective of the sponsor that there is an escalation of violence since it strengthens their case for open intervention, for example, as happened in Kosovo

and Libya. In the chaos of civil war atrocities committed by rebels can be easily blamed on the government and when the dust settles and peace is restored the public has already forgotten as to what the intervention was all about.

Notes

1. Insurgency theory has emphasized that guerrillas should be careful to treat populations respectfully and should not treat them as enemies, which makes sense since the guerrillas claim to represent 'the people' on whose behalf they pursue revolution. At the same time, revolutionary practice does rarely coincide with the theory. See Heuser 2012, 15.
2. The US Army's guerrilla manual states: 'In guerrilla units some individuals have developed strong ideological motives for taking up arms. These ideologies take root in two broad areas – politics and religion. The individual tends to subordinate his own personality to these ideologies and works constantly and solely for the "cause." In some resistance fighters, this motivation is extremely strong.' See US Army 2009, 6. This is a polite way of describing radicalization.
3. International law does not prohibit the recruitment into military service of persons under the age of 18, but it does require that belligerents have 'to take all feasible measures' to avoid this practice. Geneva Conventions Additional Protocol I (1977), Article 77.2. In today's world the use of child soldiers is widely considered to be morally wrong and an intrinsic war crime since children have not developed the ability to think critically and make moral judgments, which is easily abused by military leaders.
4. The US government claimed that the rockets that hit al Ghouta with chemical warheads were fired from Syrian government-controlled territory over nine kilometers distanced. These claims were challenged analysis by MIT professor Theodore Postol, who suggested that the rockets could have had only a maximum range of two kilometers, and chief UN chemical weapons inspector Ake Sellstrom suggested that the rockets could have been fired from a range as close as one kilometer. In other words, there is substantial evidence that the rocket was launched from rebel-controlled and not government-controlled territory. See Reese Erlich 2014, 101–104.
5. Coll also reported that there was a legal debate at CIA whether or not to provide sniper rifles to the Mujahedeen, which they wanted to use for targeting Soviet generals in Kabul. Providing the rifles was seen as a potential violation of the assassination prohibition. In the end, the rifles were sent to Pakistan but without night vision goggles and intelligence support. See Coll 1992.

6. Jalali and Grau argued: 'Many people find such bombing attacks morally reprehensible, yet have no qualms when much bigger bombs are dropped from aircraft. Neither type of bombing attack is surgical and both types kill innocent bystanders. The real difference is in the size of the bomb and the means of delivery. The Mujahedeen lacked an air force but retained a limited bombing option. The Soviets had an air force and conducted large-scale bombing attacks throughout the war.' See Jalai and Grau 2010, 370. However, if one accepts this argument, one could make the exact same argument to justify bombings by insurgents against US/allied troops and civilians in places like Iraq or Afghanistan. It is still terrorism.
7. According to Peter Dale Scott, the Truman administration was conscious of the fact that the KMT was funded by drug trafficking and viewed it as positive since it allowed KMT operations to become self-sustaining. In Scott's view the main objective for the KMT to undertake an invasion of China into Burma was not actually to regain control of mainland China, but rather to seize the opium fields in Burma and control the opium trade. Peter Dale Scott 2010, 64; 79.
8. McCoy goes back even further in history by connecting the OSS to the Sicilian Mafia during the Second World War out of which grew the so-called French Connection, a heroin trafficking network from Lebanon/Turkey via Marseille to New York. See McCoy 2003, 24–45.
9. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler have claimed that the CIA had received a special waiver from the Department of Justice that exempted them from the obligation to report on individuals engaged in drug trafficking in the 1980s. See Hancock and Wexler 2014, 396.
10. It is true that Saudi Arabia imposes extremely harsh punishments on drug dealers and drug users and that it has cooperated with the West in fighting narcotics trafficking when faced with the importation of drugs. At the same time, it is widely known that certain members of the Saudi royal family have privately a much more liberal attitude when it comes to taking drugs. Middle East expert Robert Fisk has pointed out that the 'photographs which have been leaked out, show boxes, very large boxes with the Saudi royal coat of arms on the front' and suggests 'I think what's actually happening is that the Lebanese do not want to embarrass the Saudis. He will be freed – that I can promise you' because '[t]he Saudis pour money into Lebanon to rebuild it after every Israeli invasion or bombing and they can't afford bad relations with Saudi Arabia. But, the Lebanese suspect that all this stuff was manufactured in Lebanon and they want to find out where it comes from.' See Fisk 2015. The prince and nine other individuals were charged with drug trafficking, but it is unclear what happened to them, if anything. At the minimum, the case indicates that there are corrupted elements in the Saudi royal family, who can get away with any crime.

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CHAPTER 8

Endgames and Outcomes

This chapter will review the outcomes of 25 US pro-insurgency PMOs since 1949 in view of identifying the reasons for failure and success such as adverse selection, escalation, and political betrayal. It was determined that there were altogether eight cases that could be counted as military successes in the sense that proxy forces succeeded in overthrowing a hostile government. It is argued that it can improve the chances of success for PMOs to provide direct military support to proxies, which was the case for half of the successful PMOs. However, limited direct US military involvement, usually in the manner of airstrikes, does by no means guarantee a favorable outcome. The focus of this chapter will be on the costs associated with 'success,' namely the limited ability of the US government to positively influence the post-conflict political order and to provide political stability to the respective countries. All too often compromises have to be made with respect to democracy, human rights, and the criminal activity of the new governments. It is argued that given the propensity of PMOs to fail or to result in the establishment of incompetent and corrupted revolutionary governments, there is no good reason to pursue a pro-insurgency PMO without a strong commitment to positively shaping the post-conflict political environment through nation-building, especially since failure can be extremely costly in terms of the creation of failed states and sometimes of whole world regions with permanent political instability (Table 8.1).

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Table 8.1 Success of PMOs

	Insertion of foreign fighters/ agents?	*Intervention by hostile third party?*	*Included direct US military role?*	*(Military) victory/ regime change?*	*US/Int. stability forces deployed?*	*Permanent peace post-victory?*	*Drug trafficking by proxies?*	*Severe human rights violations by proxies?*
1. Albania (1949–53)	X	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
2. Ukraine (1949–53)	X	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
3. Burma/Southern China and Korea (1950–53)	X	–	–	–	–	N/A	X	X
4. Guatemala (1954)	X	–	–	X	–	–	–	X
5. Tibet (1958–74)	X	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
6. Indonesia (1958)	–	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
7. Cuba (1961)	X	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
8. Congo (1960–68)		–	X	X	X	–	–	X
9. North Vietnam (1962–74)	X	X	X	–	–	N/A	–	–

10. Laos (1955–74)	–	X	X	–	–	N/A	X	–
11. Iraq (1972–75)	–	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
12. Angola (1975–90)	X	X	–	–	–	N/A	–	X
13. South Yemen (1979–82)	–	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
14. Chad (1981–82)	X	–	–	X	–	N/A	–	–
15. Nicaragua (1981–86)	X	X	–	–	–	N/A	X	X
16. Afghanistan (1979–89)	X	X	–	X	–	–	X	X
17. Iraq (1992–96)	X	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
18. Bosnia (1994–95)	X	–	X	X	X	X	X	X
19. Sudan (1996)	–	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	–
20. Kosovo (1996–2000)	–	–	X	X	X	X	X	X
21. Afghanistan (2001)	–	–	X	X	X	–	X	X
22. Somalia (2002–2006)	–	–	–	–	–	N/A	–	X

(*continued*)

Table 8.1 (continued)

	Insertion of foreign fighters/ agents?	*Intervention by hostile third party?*	*Included direct US military role?*	*(Military) victory/ regime change?*	*US/Int. stability forces deployed?*	*Permanent peace post-victory?*	*Drug trafficking by proxies?*	*Severe human rights violations by proxies?*
23. Iran (2005–2008)	X	–	–	–	–	N/A	X	X
24. Libya (2011)	X	–	X	X	–	–	–	X
25. Syria (2011–present)	X	X	X	–	–	N/A	X	X

Failure

The reasons for failure are usually complex and every single PMO or every single war is unique in the overall circumstances and factors that affect its outcome. However, there are certain patterns that can be found in many PMOs and that give clues about inherent flaws and consistent problems that emerge in PMOs. As discussed in earlier chapters, the key issue in PMOs is always how to retain sufficient control over proxies in order to make desirable outcomes more likely. Below are some typical reasons for PMOs going astray.

Adverse Selection in PMOs

A common problem that probably applies to most PMOs considered is the general failure of the US government to adequately understand its proxies and the conflict in which they were fighting. Often the US overestimated the competence and legitimacy of its proxies, backing groups who had neither the ability nor the determination to fight and win, or who were otherwise problematic. The issue of selecting clients under conditions of incomplete information is called 'adverse selection' in PAT. It is a concept that originates from the field of insurance that explains how insurance companies end up with more 'problematic' clients than is indicated in general insurance risk calculations—the bad risks drive out good risks in a marketplace where insurers cannot distinguish the two (Johnson 1977). Clients who are in most need of insurance are more likely to apply for an insurance policy than those potential clients who are not in need of insurance because of their lower risk. Obviously, insurance companies would like to have more 'good' or low-risk clients, but instead they end up with more 'bad' or high-risk clients because those are the ones most likely to seek insurance. The problem is amplified by the information asymmetry between insurance company and insurance applicant: the applicant has an incentive to withhold critical information from the insurer that indicates higher risk and the insurer has a limited ability to discover hidden risk (checking information provided by the applicant also incurs cost for the insurer).

The adverse selection problem has been applied to financial markets, the management of terrorist organizations (Shapiro 2013), and to humanitarian interventions (Rauchhaus 2009). When the US government tries to decide whether or not to support an armed group in a conflict, they

have little ability to check information that is provided by the group itself due to limited access to the reality on the ground and the fact that many paramilitary forces are covert in nature. At the same time, prospective proxies have incentives for overstating their capabilities for winning the conflict and for misrepresenting their goals in order to increase their chances of receiving external support. Furthermore, one has to consider that the 'market' for suitable proxies can be extremely limited: there may be just one or two groups that could be conceivably used as US proxies in an armed conflict.[1] The US 'may not have much choice over who becomes its partners in secret operations' (Treverton 1987, 149). Not surprisingly, some opposition groups will actively lobby in Washington, DC, to receive monetary and paramilitary support from the US government. In the end, it can be very challenging for the CIA to confirm whether an opposition in exile has any support of the population of their home country or whether they can deliver on any of the promises they make. Not surprisingly, John Prados observed that '[i]n many instances the CIA recruits turn out to be brittle and have little real capability' (Prados 2006, 646).

Conflict Escalation

The US government usually chooses a PMO over other methods of intervention because it avoids any direct confrontation and uncontrollable escalation. This was an important consideration during the Cold War and the same constraints often remain in place in today's conflicts. This means that for political reasons the US cannot escalate a proxy war beyond certain limits since it could turn into a wider conflict and necessitate a direct US military intervention, which is precisely what is sought to be avoided through an indirect proxy warfare approach. In order to boost the battlefield success of proxies, the US might increase the amount of money and materials that is transferred to proxies, or transfer more advanced weapons, or ramp up training programs, or even carry out or increase US military airstrikes in support of proxies. However, whether or not these efforts translate into battlefield successes very much depends on the ability of the opposition to escalate the conflict even further. What has happened in several cases is that another third party might intervene on behalf of the target state, which escalates the conflict quickly beyond the political limits that constrain the US government. What was before a mere internal conflict can turn into an interstate conflict between the state backers of differ-

ent belligerents (Hughes 2014, 56). A major PMO always seems to attract other states to back one of the belligerents. So whenever one of the superpowers was backing an armed group or a government in a civil war, it often prompted the other superpower to back the opposition. For example, when the CIA backed the anti-Castro Cubans and launched the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, it actually resulted in the Soviets giving security guarantees to Castro and deploying combat troops and nuclear missiles on Cuba after which any further PMO to overthrow Castro became hopeless (Hughes 2014, 60). When the CIA started to back Hmong against the communist Pathet Lao, it prompted the North Vietnamese to escalate the war in Laos, creating a new theater in the Southeast War (Kurlantzick 2016, 147–156). When the CIA began the effort of arming the FNLA, it actually triggered a Cuban and Soviet intervention in this country although it was often argued that the CIA was merely responding to Cuban/Soviet intervention (Gleijeses 2016, 9). Similarly, when the CIA supported anti-communist insurgents in Afghanistan it prompted the Soviet intervention (Cooley 2002, 10). Still, the CIA anticipated losing the war in 1985 as the Soviets were quite willing to escalate the conflict beyond the initially very limited goals of the US government in Afghanistan (Prados 2006, 486). More recently, the US PMO in Syria has attracted several other states that backed various groups in the conflict: first, Iran intervened on behalf of Assad by sending Hezbollah into Syria, and second, Russia intervened in the conflict by sending combat troops and combat aircraft into Syria in September 2015. This significantly altered the balance of power in Syria and effectively undercut the chances of victory for the opposition forces (Gerges 2016). Apart from the one exception of Afghanistan in the 1980s, which will be discussed more below, escalation of a conflict through the intervention of another third party has consistently resulted in the failure of a PMO.

Betrayal

Sometimes sponsors support paramilitary forces in order to put pressure on another government with no serious intention of allowing the proxies to actually win the conflict. By choosing an indirect covert approach, it is possible (at least in theory) to increase the pressure on the target government by ramping up support to proxies and to deescalate by withholding or reducing support to proxies. The support to insurgents or terrorists can be used as a bargaining chip in negotiations to achieve more limited

political goals. What this means in effect is that the US government has sometimes outright betrayed proxy forces by making a deal with the target government or its backers when it seemed politically opportune to do so. A questionable betrayal was the abandonment of the goal of Tibetan independence in the early 1970s when the issue had become inconvenient for Nixon's and Kissinger's pursuit of a reconciliation with China. Apparently, the topic of the status of Tibet did not come up in the official negotiations of China, support to Tibetan independence just did no longer fit into US foreign policy (Knaus 1999, 309–310). Needless to say, the odds of the Tibetans of pushing the powerful Chinese out of Tibet without any direct support from the US, including strong diplomatic support, were slim to begin with. The US also betrayed the Kurds three times for opportunistic political reasons. In the initial support of Kurdish insurgents in 1972 to 1975, the US mainly got involved to assist its client state Iran in its border dispute with Iraq. When the dispute was resolved to the satisfaction of Iran in 1975, the US withdrew aid to the Kurds. While it may seem smart to use proxies in this cynical way, there are numerous downsides to such a strategy of exerting indirect pressure on hostile states, which will be discussed chapter, namely, issues related to the 'disposal problem.' Besides, betrayed friends can easily turn into dangerous enemies, resulting in more conflict and less security for sponsors.

Victory

This study identified 8 PMOs out of 25 that achieved military victory, regime change, or the establishment of a separate state on the former territory of the target state during the time they received US paramilitary support. This includes Guatemala (1954), Congo (1960–68), Chad (1981–87), Afghanistan (1979–89), Bosnia (1993–95), Kosovo (1996–2000), Afghanistan (2001–02), and Libya (2011). In a few cases targeted governments were overthrown or a separatist state was established a few years after US support had ended, which makes it difficult to determine whether the PMO played role in it or whether other factors were responsible for the turn of events. One example is Indonesia where the US-supported Permesta was decisively defeated shortly after the US withdrew its support (Prados 2006, 179). Sukarno was eventually overthrown by a CIA-backed coup in 1965, which achieved the goal of

removing him from power (Blum 2000, 102). Similarly, the Sandinistas were not defeated on the battlefield, but in the election of 1990. The US had officially ended its support to the Contras on 3 February 1988 (Prados 2006, 571). According to Noam Chomsky, the US government had secured the election outcome by funneling $50 million to opposition parties (Chomsky 1990). Nicaraguans may also have been tired of the war and may have assumed that a Sandinista election victory would have just meant a continuation of the conflict. Another relevant case is Sudan, where the US had supported SPLA in 1996. It is unclear whether US paramilitary support to the SPLA had continued after 1996 and to what extent this impacted on the 2005 peace agreement. There is no doubt, however, that the US had supported South Sudanese independence diplomatically, which was achieved in 2011.

Direct US Intervention

It is not particularly surprising that chances of success go up slightly when the US can provide direct military support to allies in the form of air strikes and SOF on the ground. In four out of the eight successful PMOs, the US contributed substantial firepower to its proxy forces, primarily in the form of airpower ((Bosnia (1993–95), Kosovo (1996–2000), Afghanistan (2001–02), and Libya (2011)). At the same time, it has to be stressed that the availability of US airpower in proxy wars is most certainly no guarantee for a successful outcome as could be seen in the case of Laos. What started as a guerrilla war became increasingly a conventional battle over the Plain of Jars, which the Hmong tried to hold and which the communists tried to take (Kurlantzick 2016, 164). Analyst Tyrone Groh has argued that the high dependence of the Hmong on US airpower 'had disastrous consequences' because they overestimated its impact and this likely resulted in the Hmong believing 'they could hold their ground against a conventionally and numerically superior enemy and often got caught over-extended' (Groh 2010, 91). The NATO air campaign against Serbia in 1999, which was aimed at supporting the KLA proxies, preventing Serbian ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and in overthrowing Milosevic, was also not particularly successful in achieving any of these goals. The KLA was greatly inferior to the Yugoslav army and paramilitaries, but assisted NATO's campaign by forcing the Serbians to amass troops that were easier targets from the air (Lake 2009, 90).[2]

Lucky Circumstances

In four out of the eight successful cases, US proxies succeeded without direct US military involvement, which would suggest that there may be a repeatable recipe for success in PMOs. As a result, it is worthwhile to look at these cases more closely in order to understand key factors in their success.

Guatemala PBSUCCESS was the agency's first successful PMO after a series of failure in Eastern Europe and East Asia. What is most obvious about the operation is that it almost entirely relied on psychological warfare and economic and diplomatic pressure for achieving the overthrow of Arbenz with the paramilitary component playing only a subordinate, if not minor role (Cullather 2006, 43–44). A CIA memo to President Eisenhower explained that the operation relied on 'psychological impact rather than actual military strength, although it is upon the ability of the Castillo Armas effort to create and maintain the impression of very substantial military strength, that the success of this particular effort primarily depends' (quoted from Cullather 2006, 74). The CIA itself was surprised that their plan had worked. Operations chief Frank Wisner stated that the operation 'surpassed even our greatest expectations' when President Arbenz decided to go into exile rather than face a mutiny in his ranks (Thomas 2006, 124). Although victory achieved against all odds with only casualty on the side of the guerrillas, it all came down to tremendous luck as pointed out by CIA historian Nick Cullather:

> Had the Guatemalan Army crushed Castillo Armas at Chiquimula, as it easily could have done, investigations would have uncovered the chronic lapses in security, the failure to plan beyond the operation's first stages, the Agency's poor understanding of the intentions of the Army, the PGT, and the government, the hopeless weakness of Armas's troops, and the failure to make provisions for the possibility of defeat. (Cullather 2006, 109)

In other words, PBSUCCESS was a poorly planned and executed operation where victory hinged on little more than a giant bluff.

Congo The covert intervention in Congo during the 1960s is usually considered as a great success for the CIA. Researcher Stephen Weissman has pointed out that out of five PMOs that were discussed by the Church

Committee, the Congolese operation was the only one praised for having 'achieved its objectives' (Weissman 2014, 14). The CIA succeeded in neutralizing Lumumba, crushing a revolt, and most importantly, in preventing communist influence in a key region of Africa. A closer look reveals a much more confusing and complex picture than the narrative of defeating communist rebels and establishing a stable Congolese government. The initial CIA effort was purely political. The elimination of Lumumba did not have the desired effect of saving Congo from communism and instead intensified the civil war. This resulted in the deployment of 20,000 UN peacekeepers from 1960 to 1964. The US government switched sides from the Katanganese rebels, who had carried out the bloody deed of killing Lumumba, to the new Kasavubu government and assisted them in crushing the Simba rebellion, eventually encouraging a military coup by Mobutu. It is hard to see any particular strategy in the chaotic events that led to the rise of one of Africa's most brutal dictators.

Chad The military victory in Chad was at the time overshadowed by the far greater victory in Afghanistan, where CIA proxies were battling the Soviets and not just the Libyans. The PMO was encouraged by a Libyan intervention in this country and the deployment of 4000 Libyan soldiers in northern Chad. The US put diplomatic pressure on the Chadian Transitional National Union Government (GUNT) to expel the Libyans and then assisted Hissene Habré in a coup, which succeeded in June 1982. The Libyans had lost their proxies inside Chad and were attacked by Chadian forces at their main base of operations in northern Chad in 1987. A major factor in the victory was direct French military support, especially logistical and air support to Chadian forces (James 1987, 22). The Libyan military, which was operating beyond its borders, was probably not a tough opponent. Besides, Gaddafi may have concluded after the 1986 Tripoli air raid that accepting defeat in Chad was less risky than further antagonizing his powerful enemies.

Afghanistan Many books have been written about Operation CYCLONE, which often praise the genius of CIA strategists. The myth of the Soviet-Afghanistan war was that the Mujahedeen were an irresistible force and that the introduction of the Stinger missile was the primary reason for the speedy Soviet defeat from 1986 to 1988. This simplified version of history does not hold up to scrutiny. In reality, the CIA benefitted again from

rather lucky circumstances that do not provide a recipe for victory. Analyst Bruce Riedel pointed out that the Soviets had made the mistake to send far too small a force into Afghanistan. He stated: 'By severely undersupplying the war effort, the Soviet Union all but ensured its own defeat' (Riedel 2014, 29). Furthermore, the Stinger was only introduced in September 1986 and the Soviet withdrawal was announced just one month later, which is far too short a time to have had any influence on that decision. The Soviet troops had quickly adjusted to the new threat by conducting night operations, as the Mujahedeen lacked night vision equipment. There is no public documentary evidence that the Stinger missiles were even discussed within the Politburo as a factor when the decision to withdraw was made (Steele 2011). More likely is that Gorbachev, who had assumed the office of the general secretary in 1985, simply did not believe in the benefits of continuing the war and may have decided to withdraw as early as summer 1985, regardless of the CIA escalation in support to the Mujahedeen later in that year (Harvey 2003, 240). Gorbachev had ordered a review of Soviet Afghanistan policy in April 1985 and was determined to get out of conflict that he had characterized as a 'bleeding wound' in February 1986. The decision to withdraw was merely delayed by Gorbachev because of a variety of internal and external political factors (Arntson 2014, 2–3). Furthermore, 'the CIA bungled it' in the words of Congressman Bill McCullum when they failed to achieve a speedy victory over the Najibullah regime after the Soviet withdrawal. McCullum criticized the CIA for secretly pursuing 'a wrong-headed Afghan policy for years. That policy has now culminated in a monumentally incompetent program of arms procurement and distribution, and worse yet, in the handing over of the fate of the Afghan people to Pakistan's bumbling military intelligence service' (McCullum 1989). The US government made a deal in September 1991 with the Soviets to cut off the aid to the Mujahedeen (Coll 1992), which did not stop ISI from continuing the support to radical Islamic factions that brought the Taliban into power.

After Victory

What matters in regime change or offensive pro-insurgency PMOs is not simply that the other side is militarily defeated or pushed into politically conceding defeat, but rather what happens after the victory. Ideally, the victorious party would go about establishing a unified transitional government, which would then hold national elections to create a new legitimate

democratic government. The conflict would be resolved and the country can be rebuilt and returned to a path of relative stability and prosperity. However, the very instrument of PMOs makes this desirable conflict outcome highly unlikely. Out of the eight successful PMOs there is not a single case where a legitimate democratic government was established after a military victory. In Congo, Afghanistan, and Libya peace lasted only a few years before the countries returned to a civil war. In Guatemala, Congo, and Chad the price of peace was a dictatorship that could brutally suppress any major opposition. As Treverton stated, 'most successes of covert action look small, ambiguous, or transitory' (Treverton 1987, 203–204). PMOs are generally half-hearted measures that can only deliver temporary success in the best of circumstances and may set up countries for decades of humanitarian disaster in the worst of circumstances.

Transitional Government

When the old government is overthrown a new government has to be put into its place. The most obvious problem is that opposition forces are often disunited and cannot agree on who should lead the future government and how the spoils of war (political control of institutions and government assets) should be divided. It is difficult enough to do nation-building when there are US or international troops inside the country that can restore law and order and prevent the factions of using force for achieving their political goals, as has been seen in the overall unsuccessful US/NATO occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. However, if no US or international troops are available to ensure that democratic institutions are built and political conflicts are henceforth settled without recourse to violence, there is little that any outside power can do to influence who will eventually take control of the new government and how the assumed power will be used in the end.

The main lever for US control over a post-conflict political order in another state is diplomatic recognition of the new transitional government. The US could thereby pressure its allies with respect to who is acceptable to the US as a leader of a transitional government and who is not. The US government may use a carrot in conjunction with the diplomatic stick by offering economic aid packages to the new government or might even offer military aid for rebuilding the national armed forces. However, while these measures can influence the formation and ultimate success of a new national government they do not amount to any firm

control. Often the US lacks a sufficient understanding of the politics or culture of the country in question and will end up backing the wrong people for the wrong reasons. They might bring into power people and political groups who are incompetent, corrupt, or unacceptable to the population, which always creates problems in the long term.

In many cases the new political leaders will be recruited from the ranks of the proxy forces, who have achieved victory, since they have control on the ground and are therefore needed for maintaining order until a new national military under a new national government can be formed. Warlords and rebel commanders might be effective military leaders, but they are often not politicians capable of bringing a nation together after a period of civil war. Since they rose to power through the use of violence they will be prone to ruling their country in the same brutal and dictatorial manner that they ran their guerrilla organization. For example, after the resignation of Arbenz as president, the CIA arranged the creation of a junta under Colonel Elfego Monzón to take control of the Guatemalan government (Immerman 1997, 175). However, Castillo Armas was not willing to be sidelined and it was agreed to make him part of the junta and eventually Guatemala's provisional president. He was elected president by 99 percent of the vote—he was the only candidate (Immerman 1997, 177). Castillo Armas proceeded with some radical and anti-democratic reforms: 'disenfranchising the illiterates (two thirds of the electorate), canceling land reform, and outlawing all political parties, labor confederations, and peasant organizations' (Cullather 2006, 113). Three years later Castillo Armas was assassinated and Guatemala suffered from a string of worse dictatorships.

The rise of Mobutu due to the CIA's paramilitary activity in Congo of the 1960s is another dark legacy for the agency's covert operations. Mobutu played a key role in the coup against Patrice Lumumba in 1960 and he became Congo's army chief of staff in 1965. At that time there was a power struggle between President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Tshombe, which threatened to split the country once again. According to Stephen Weissman, the CIA resolved this dilemma by financing a coup by Colonel Mobutu, which the CIA's chief of station Lawrence Devlin had called 'the best possible solution' (quoted from Weissman 2014, 20). As Weissman explained in his article, the decision of the CIA to support Mobutu's rule had long-lasting negative consequences for Congo. Weissman argued that Mobutu 'would never have been able to consolidate control were it not for the CIA cash he distributed to his allies' and that the CIA's propensity to exert influence on Mobutu's regime through

corruption led to 'irresponsible governance': 'Mobutu and his associates never had to compete for the affection of the broader public and develop a real political base and had no incentive to put the state's resources to good use. And because Mobutu could depend on the CIA's paramilitary support, he felt no pressure to develop even a minimally capable military' (Weissman 2014, 21). He ran the country in a brutal and authoritarian manner, torturing and executing political opponents until his overthrow and death in 1997.

Renewed Civil War and State Failure

In the popular narrative of the CIA's war in Afghanistan, the US brought about the hastened collapse of the Soviet Union, and it would have worked out well for Afghanistan and the rest of the world if America, in the words of Charlie Wilson, had not 'f__ked up the endgame' [by leaving Afghanistan to its own devices after the Soviet withdrawal] (Crile 2003, 523). The likely truth is that the US had already set Afghanistan on a bad path in the 1980s when the US was still fully engaged in that country. A major mistake was to hand control of Operation CYCLONE to the Pakistani ISI.[3] According to Ahmed Rashid, 'The Zia regime saw the Afghan jihad as a means to end these claims for ever, by ensuring that a pliable pro-Pakistan Pashtun Mujaheddin government came to power in Kabul' (Rashid 2009, 186). ISI was also interested in reusing jihadist fighters from the Afghanistan war for their own proxy war with India in Kashmir (Rashid 2009, 186). To ensure this outcome of a pro-Islamic government in Kabul, ISI funneled most assistance to Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami, a radical Sunni Muslim group.[4] When the last Soviet troops had left Afghanistan in February 1989, the war with the communist Najibullah regime in Kabul continued until it fell in early 1992 (Prados 2006, 490). But it was not the Pashtuns under Hekmatyar who took Kabul, but the Tajiks under Rabbani and his commander Ahmed Shah Massoud together with Uzbek forces under General Dostum. Hekmatyar subsequently attacked Kabul to assume control of the government, but by 1994 he had failed in this effort (Rashid 2009, 21). Subsequently, ISI allowed a group of young and radical Islamic fighters, who called themselves 'Talib' or Islamic scholars, to capture a large arms depot left over from the Operation CYCLONE (Rashid 2009, 27). The Saudis used ISI to funnel money to the Taliban and later provided them directly with funds, vehicles, and fuel that was critical to their successful attack on Kabul in 1994 (Rashid 2009, 201).

Unfortunately, the very dynamics that could be observed in Afghanistan of the early 1990s also played out in Libya in the aftermath of the successful NATO effort to overthrow Gaddafi. Libya had been ruled in an autocratic style by Gaddafi, who was able to keep the country that has always been divided by tribalism together. The complete lack of a democratic tradition and the tribal structure of Libyan society made it unlikely from the start that a rebellion against the regime could somehow transform the country into a Western-style democracy. In summer 2011 the international community recognized the Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legitimate government of Libya, which promised to hold democratic elections after the end of the civil war. The problem was that the anti-Gaddafi rebels were not united and also included many jihadists, including jihadists who had come to Libya from other parts of the Middle East (just like the 'Afghan Arabs' in the 1980s). Libyan jihadists known as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) were among the biggest foreign factions fighting in Iraq and they returned to Libya to create an Islamic state (West 2011). The NTC included the LIFG, which had been suppressed by Gaddafi government and which was widely acknowledged to have had ties to al Qaeda (Blair 2009). So it was no surprise that the NTC quickly declared after victory that any law not compliant to Sharia was deemed illegal (Gagnon 2011). Soon after a black al Qaeda flag flew over a Benghazi court house. While the NTC did follow through with the plan of a national election in July 2012, the continued violence and in particular the attack on the US diplomatic mission in Benghazi on 11 September 2012 clearly indicated that the country was on a trajectory into political chaos. Muslim Brotherhood Islamists gained a slight majority in the 2012 elections and they created a militia separate from the regular Libyan military called Libya Shield, which eventually became Libya Dawn. The Libyan civil war restarted in July 2014 after an attack of the predominantly Islamic Libya Dawn on the Libyan parliament (Strategic Comments 2015). A paper by the Council of Foreign Relations argued:

> Libya's transitional road map fell apart in 2012, as the elected parliament and several subsequent governments failed to demobilize, disarm, and reintegrate revolutionary brigades that had fought against the Qaddafi regime. As a result, the brigades aligned with political factions and began to fight each other, killing thousands of Libyans, internally displacing about 400,000 people, and creating a refugee population of one to two million abroad. (Serwer 2015)

Libya is now split into two major parts controlled by a government in Tobruk and another government in Tripoli. Other armed groups such as the Tuareg tribes and ISIS are also controlling territory in Libya. It is fair to say that much of the chaos could have been avoided by the permanent deployment of NATO peacekeepers after the fall of the Gaddafi government, who would have disarmed the rebels and secured weapons stockpiles left over from the war.

Criminal States

In three successful PMOs, namely in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan after 2001, the US government and NATO did take the prudent course of action of sending peacekeepers who would oversee the process of nation-building. Although these measures did suppress a resurgence of the conflict (at least in Bosnia and Kosovo), it also resulted in the establishment of highly corrupted criminal states or narcostates. A criminal state is a state that has been captured by organized crime or by a corrupted political elite that partners with organized crime (Bunker and Bunker 2006, 375). Again, there are reasons inherent in the practice of PMOs that make such outcomes likely (as opposed to the creation of genuine democracies). This final section will discuss what went wrong with democratization in these three states and how this is linked to the way the governments were formed after the civil war.

Bosnia

Under the noses of thousands of NATO peacekeepers the Balkans have become a hub for drug-, human-, and arms trafficking with the governments in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo seemingly participating in the criminal activity. It would be wrong to assume that it was always that way. Rather this was a direct outcome of the civil war of the 1990s and the apparent inability or unwillingness of NATO to establish governments that were not made up by corrupted or compromised politicians. During the 1990s NATO overlooked the very obvious connections of the Bosnian Muslims led by Alija Izetbegovic to fascist Muslim formations of the Second World War era and between the Albanian mafia and the KLA. As pointed out by Christopher Deliso, the 'Muslim fascist brigade would be resurrected in the 1990s, during the presidency of Izetbegovic,' who had

been a recruiter for the fascist Muslim Handzar Division that had sworn loyalty to Hitler (Deliso 2007, 5). The war in Bosnia attracted many jihadists. According to analyst John Schindler, al Qaeda sent thousands of fighters into Bosnia from all over the Islamic world: 5000 Saudis, 3000 Yemenis, 2800 Algerians, and 2000 Egyptians and Tunisians, among others, which was known by US intelligence at the time (Schindler 2007, 110). Izetbegovic was the author of the Islamic Declaration of 1969, in which he promoted a fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran and in which he advocated an Islamic state in Bosnia based on the model of Pakistan. Although Bosnia and Herzegovina did not turn into a caliphate as predicted by some analysts, it is undoubtedly a criminal state ruled by a kleptocratic elite that assumed control of the government after the Dayton peace agreement.

The Albanian mafia grew substantially during the Yugoslavian civil war and the Kosovo war because it controlled the smuggle routes that brought in the weapons and drugs (for further transshipment into Europe). They corrupted the local politicians, who had received the support of the West, resulting in the establishment of kleptocratic regimes in the Balkans. A comprehensive report on organized crime in Bosnia Herzegovina by Sheelagh Brady stated:

> many post conflict countries have also shown how governments and politicians have turned to criminals and illegal activities during conflicts to fund their actions and retain power, in conjunction with maintaining and increasing personal wealth. In many cases these relationships were maintained after the war. As a result, many criminals attempted to emerge from conflict, with support from the ruling class, as respected businessmen putting their ill-gotten gains into 'legitimate' business. These relationships are said to exacerbate the level of corruption, and in turn criminalise political and economic systems. (Brady 2012, 10)

Similarly, Balkans specialist James Pettifer wrote back in 1997 that

> Western policies have unintentionally assisted these tendencies [of authoritarian government] by their emphasis on strong presidential governments in the Balkans as a factor of 'stability'. The relationship between satrap-type presidents and actual state power and democracy does not seem to have been much considered, either at the level of safeguarding human rights or a democratic and efficient law enforcement system. (Pettifer 1997, 14)

Surprisingly, Bosnia and Herzegovina have remained relatively stable despite the radical Islamic and mafia influence on Bosnian politics. Only in early 2014 there were serious signs of trouble due to violent protests against government corruption, where numerous government buildings were set on fire, that some have called the 'Bosnian Spring' in reference to the Arab Spring of 2011 (Judah 2014).

Kosovo

In Kosovo the situation was worse than in Bosnia: members of the criminal KLA were allowed to take control of government institutions, which rather predictably transformed Kosovo into a narcostate. Among the KLA members who became powerful politicians in Kosovo are KLA cofounder Xhavit Haliti, who became a member of the Kosovo Assembly in 2001 and its deputy chairman in 2007; KLA's political leader Hashim Thaci, who was the first prime minister of Kosovo (1999–2000) and is the current president (since 2016); KLA military commander Agim Ceku, who became Kosovo's Prime Minister (2006–08) and Minister of the Security Forces (2011–14); and Ramush Haradinaj, who was a KLA commander and became the second Prime Minister of Kosovo (2004–05). Journalist Peter Klebnikov wrote in *Mother Jones* in 2000:

> As the war in Kosovo heated up, the drug traffickers began supplying the KLA with weapons procured from Eastern European and Italian crime groups in exchange for heroin. The 15 Families also lent their private armies to fight alongside the KLA. Clad in new Swiss uniforms and equipped with modern weaponry, these troops stood out among the ragtag irregulars of the KLA. In all, this was a formidable aid package. It's therefore not surprising, say European law enforcement officials, that the faction that ultimately seized power in Kosovo—the KLA under Hashim Thaci—was the group that maintained the closest links to traffickers. (Klebnikov 2000)

The Albanian mafia is said to surpass even the Italian mafia, as it controls the Balkans route through which $400 billion per year in drugs were moved in the late 1990s (Cilluffo and Salmoiraghi 1999, 23). A leaked intelligence report on organized crime in Kosovo by the German BND from 2005 established the many links between former KLA leaders turned Kosovo politicians and organized crime. The list of crimes of top Kosovo politicians included in the report is extensive. For example, the

report claims that Haliti had organized a police 'task force' that functioned as a death squad to eliminate political opponents (BND 2005, 9). Another name that appears frequently in the report is Hashim Thaci, the current president of Kosovo. Thaci is accused of running a criminal network disguised as 'security service' involved in various money laundering and smuggling activities and connected to the Albanian mafia (BND 2005, 12).

Afghanistan (After 2001)

The Bush administration wanted to conduct the war in Afghanistan against al Qaeda and their Taliban backers on the cheap and with minimal military resources so that they could focus on the goal considered more important by the neocons, namely taking down the Hussein in Iraq. Essentially, the CIA paid out between $70 million and $100 million in bribes to Afghan warlords (Rashid 2009, 97). Although the plan worked and a new government could be established rather quickly in Kabul, there were very costly consequences to this paramilitary approach to regime change. An initial defeat was that the small number of available US troops in Afghanistan enabled Osama bin Laden's and the Taliban's escape to a safe haven in Pakistan, which ensured the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan (Rashid 2009, 91; 99). US ally Pakistan was reported to have airlifted hundreds of ISI operatives and Arabs who had assisted the Taliban and possibly thousands of Taliban fighters from Kunduz in late 2001. Journalist Ahmed Rashid argued that 'the ISI was running its own war against the Americans and did not want to leave Afghanistan until the last moment' (Rashid 2009, 92). The efforts of establishing a new government were also hampered by the issue that various warlords serving under the umbrella of the Northern Alliance had to be rewarded with positions in the new government. The Northern Alliance wanted 20 seats in the cabinet, including key positions such as minister of defense, intelligence, the interior, and foreign affairs. They were also granted three out of five deputy president slots at the Bonn conference in November/December 2001 (Rashid 2009, 105). The warlord militias were not disarmed and the Taliban were not completely defeated, but made a comeback in 2006 and they continue to destabilize Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai was chosen to be interim president and later president of Afghanistan (from 2004 to 2014) because of his political

skills and his loyalty to the US In reality, he led an incompetent government that had no control over large parts of the country, which is the reason why he was often derided as the 'mayor of Kabul.' The effort of rebuilding Afghanistan failed due to immense corruption at all levels of society. Despite dumping $109 billion into Afghanistan's reconstruction as of 2014, a sum greater than the Marshall Plan, Afghanistan remains among the poorest and most underdeveloped countries in the world, ranking 169 on the Human Development Index (Engelhardt 2015). Ironically, the CIA facilitated the corruption at the top of the Afghan government by delivering suitcases of 'ghost money' to Karzai to keep him in line with US foreign policy objectives and to keep him in power by paying off the warlords (New York Times 2013). In an ironic twist former President Karzai complained in an interview that 'the US used money like ammunition' in Afghanistan 'and this is why it did not work. It caused more corruption…too rapid money-firing guns…this was the

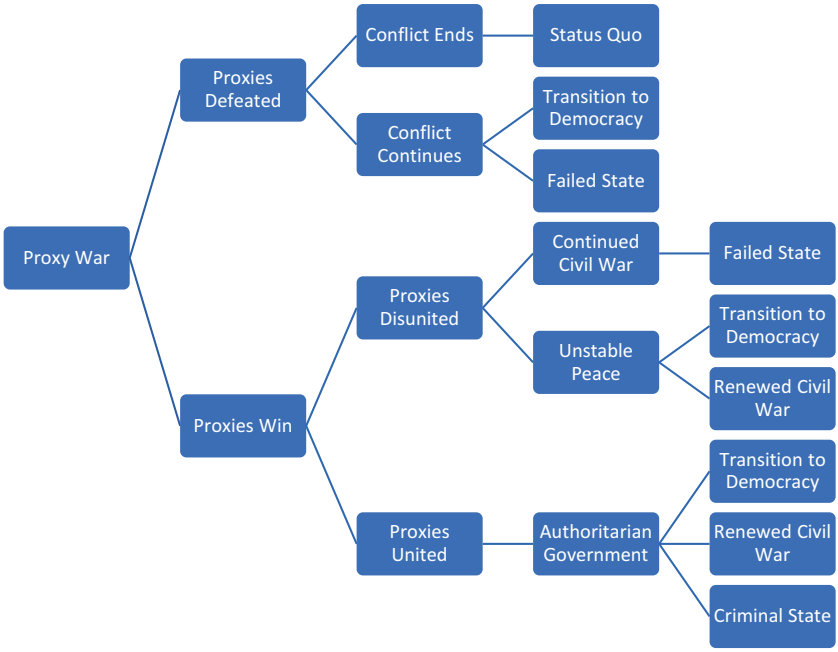

Diagram 8.1 PMO outcomes

fundamental cause of corrupting things in Afghanistan…they turned some people into millionaires over night and in other parts of the country they bombed people into total extinction over night' (RT 2017). Karzai stated that the US undermined democracy in Afghanistan and never gave it a real chance (RT 2017).

The only industry that has really taken off during the NATO occupation was opium production and trafficking. Afghan opium production jumped from 185 tons under the Taliban in 2001 to 8200 tons in 2007, supplying 93 percent of the global opiates market (Scott 2010, 13).[5] Billions of dollars were spent on drug eradication, but since this interfered with the strategy of counterinsurgency (destroying opium fields might upset local opium farmers and warlords), drug cultivation was often tolerated (Nordland 2010). The *New York Times* opined that opium eradication in Afghanistan had become 'something of a joke' by 2005 (Gall 2006). In short, the foundations of the dire straits Afghanistan currently is in have not only been laid by the paramilitary 'victory' of the 1980s, but more importantly by the paramilitary approach in 2001 that allowed corrupt warlords to take control of the Afghan state with international backing to enrich themselves, while failing to achieve political stability and a victory over the resurgent Taliban forces. A half-hearted strategy in the initial phase has now turned into America's longest war, lasting already over 16 years (Diagram 8.1).

Notes

1. Shapiro makes this point with respect to the problem of terrorist organizations to recruit members: the pool of suitable members tends to be very small and terrorist leaders do not know who will make a good terrorist in the long term at the stage of recruitment. See Shapiro 2013, 112.
2. Daniel Lake has argued that it was neither the air campaign nor NATO's threat of using ground forces or the KLA that resulted in Milosevic giving in, but rather Serbian vulnerability to economic warfare and political pressure that had destabilized the regime. See Lake 2009.
3. According to Riedel, 'The Pakistanis came to refer to that period as the golden age in US-Pakistani cooperation, when "Reagan rules" were used, meaning that the CIA gave the ISI money and arms and asked no questions about what the ISI did with them. This is a bit of an exaggeration, but not by much.' See Riedel 2014, 147.
4. Bruce Riedel defended the use of Pakistan by questioning 'whether the United States had any viable policy alternatives to Pakistan or whether US

influence could have altered Pakistan's strategy,' suggesting that there was no alternative to Pakistan and that Washington could exercise very little influence on Pakistan, nor were any efforts made in this respect by the Reagan administration. See Riedel 2014, 146–147.

5. It is often pointed out that the Taliban were just hoarding the opium to drive up the prices so that they could cash out at a later point.

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CHAPTER 9

The Disposal Problem

US decision-makers might consider foreign proxies to be expendable, but for sure they are not easily disposable when things go wrong. Once an armed force has been raised and trained, it is not a simple task to get rid of them when it is no longer needed. DCI Allen Dulles referred to the 'disposal problem' in the context of the tragically failed Bay of Pigs invasion (Weiner 1991, 125). The CIA had trained thousands of Cuban exiles to be inserted into Cuba (Brigade 2506 was meant to spearhead the effort) and after April 1961 much of that was cancelled.[1] It is not difficult to grasp that many of the Cuban would-be guerrillas felt betrayed and let down by the US government when President Kennedy's decided to abandon the paramilitary effort against the Castro regime.[2] The disposal problem is one of the most severe aspects of blowback that is frequently associated with a PMO. This chapter makes an effort to look at the disposal problem in a systematic way. It is argued that the disposal problem is threefold: it concerns *manpower*, *weapons*, and *criminal networks*, all of which are needed during a PMO, but become a liability after the PMO is terminated. Even successful PMOs have resulted in serious negative long-term consequences for the sponsors of foreign proxy forces. 'Freedom fighters' have turned into America-hating terrorists, weapons distributed have been used to attack the US and its allies, and covert networks created in the context of covert operations to smuggle weapons to guerrillas have turned into permanent trafficking networks and have corrupted friendly

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governments. In short, the inability of the US national security apparatus to adequately deal with the disposal problem has resulted in massive and continuing damage to national and international security.

Manpower

Manpower created for a PMO is the toughest aspect of the disposal problem to tackle. Armed groups that have been created for one purpose may refuse to disband after victory or after a PMO has been abandoned. These armed group therefore will continue to destabilize the country in which they were fighting and they might spread instability by joining other armed conflicts out of an ideological or religious motivation. In other cases, the US government might be confronted with tough decisions about the extent it is morally obligated to protect former proxies, for example, by offering them asylum in the US It is also not unusual that former paramilitary operatives turn into terrorists, who will attack their previous sponsors. Paramilitary training that is provided to guerrillas might include skills highly relevant for a career in terrorism: clandestine communications, small arms training, handling explosives, small unit tactics, and other useful military skills. Most importantly, former paramilitary operators have gained valuable combat experience and are in a position to pass on their military knowledge and skills to new terror apprentices.[3]

Cuban Exiles

The successful PMO in Guatemala emboldened the CIA to mount a very similar effort against the Castro regime, which was one of the CIA's greatest operational failures. What is less discussed in the literature on the CIA's covert war against Cuba is the substantial blowback that resulted from the effort. In 1960 Miami was overflowing with Cubans and anti-Castro activism. John Prados found that the CIA had identified no fewer than 700 anti-Castro groups that were active in Miami at the time (Prados 2006, 219). Many Cubans were quite keen to return to Cuba as guerrillas and to liberate their country from the communists. The failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion was a major disappointment for many Cuban exiles. The CIA still found some use for them between 1961 and 1965, as covert operations aimed to destabilize the Castro regime continued unabated under the codename Operation MONGOOSE (Ranelagh 1986, 383). This included bizarre Castro assassination schemes, as well as an effort to

recruit mobsters such as Sam Giancana (Ranelagh 1986, 384–389). Author Don Bohning described Operation MONGOOSE as a 'multiagency covert action program of propaganda, economic sabotage, and infiltration of exile units to foment an uprising in Cuba, directed by Air Force Brigadier General Edward Lansdale' (Bohning 2005, 69).

For this purpose, the CIA set up station JMWAVE on the campus of the University of Miami staffed by 300 to 400 CIA personnel under covert operations veteran Ted Shackley with an annual budget of $50 million and an estimated 15,000 Cubans on the payroll (Bohning 2005, 143; Bardach 2006). According to Noam Chomsky, '[t]hese operations included bombing of hotels and industrial installations, sinking of fishing boats, poisoning of crops and livestock, contamination of sugar exports, etc. Not all of these actions were specifically authorized by the CIA, but no such considerations absolve official enemies' (Chomsky 1991). There were many organized crime connections to the CIA's Cuban exiles. Journalist John Cummings suggested '[o]ne had only to look at those netted in Operation Eagle, the federal government's massive drug investigation in 1970, to see that 70 percent of those arrested had been recruited by the CIA for the Bay of Pigs invasion' (Cummings 1981, 78).

Some of the Bay of Pigs veterans, who had received CIA paramilitary training, eventually formed an anti-Castro terrorist group called Omega 7 in Miami in 1974 (Cummings 1981, 77). Omega 7 had been implicated in at least 30 bombings and assassinations between 1974 and 1983 (Treaster 1983). The group carried out two notable terrorist attacks in 1976: they bombed a Cuban airliner en route from Spain to Havana, killing all 73 passengers and crew, and they carried out a 'hit' on behalf of the Chilean security service DINA on former Chilean Defense Minister Orlando Letelier on the streets of Washington, DC, in broad daylight (Bardach 2006; Cummings 1981). The Cuban CIA-trained paramilitaries became in the years after Operation MONGOOSE drug dealers, racketeers preying on the Cuban exile community in the US, and hitmen for hire on behalf of Latin American dictatorships in what was known as Operation CONDOR.[4]

The Mujahedeen

The CIA is to some extent responsible for the emergence of the global jihadist threat in the 1990s, which is substantially connected to Operation CYCLONE, although not in a direct way. Coll claimed that 'CIA archives

contain no record of any direct contact between a CIA officer and bin Laden during the 1980s…If the CIA did have contact with bin Laden during the 1980s and subsequently covered it up, it has so far done an excellent job' (Coll 2005, 87). He does, however, suggest that bin Laden had a 'substantial relationship' with Saudi intelligence and that he had enjoyed Saudi government support. Coll argues that the CIA and the Saudis ran two parallel and independent compartmented PMOs in Afghanistan, pursuing 'independent political agendas' (Coll 2005, 86). Even so, it is rather obvious that the CIA and the FBI could not possibly have failed to notice the massive Saudi effort to recruit jihadists for Afghanistan from various countries, including the US According to Pakistani journalist and author Ahmed Rashid, '[b]etween 1982 and 1992, thirty-five thousand Muslim radicals from forty-three Islamic countries fought for the Mujahideen' (Rashid 2002, 44). They were largely recruited by the Saudis, including on initiative of rich Saudi individuals, with the knowledge and likely consent of the US government.[5] J. Michael Springmann, who was a foreign service officer in Jeddah in 1988, has claimed that he was pressured by his superiors to approve visas for questionable individuals, who had no valid reason to go to the US or who had suspicious credentials. Springmann believes that these individuals were connected to Azzam's and bin Laden's MAK and that they were deliberately allowed to enter the US for training, recruitment, and fund-raising purposes on behalf of MAK (Springmann 2014, 21–22). Journalist Peter Bergen, who is quoted by Springmann, has suggested that Azzam ran 52 recruitment centers in the US, including in Brooklyn, Phoenix, Boston, Chicago, Minnesota, and Washington, DC (quoted from Springmann 2014, 22). MAK's American headquarters was at 556 Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, New York (Gunaratna 2002, 101).[6]

The State Department's analytical wing INR produced a now declassified memo in 1993 that clearly established the connection between the Mujahedeen and international terrorism. The memo stated: 'The war's [in Afghanistan] melting pot gave the militant Islamists numerous ideological and logistical ties with fighters from other countries. Victory over the Soviet Union has inspired many of them to continue their jihad against the infidels, including the US, Israel, and more secular Middle East regimes' (US DoS 1993, 1). The INR points out that the estimated number of non-Afghan fighters in Afghanistan ranged from 4000 to 25,000 and that at least 30 percent were considered criminals in their own countries, who mainly joined to get military training (US DoS 1993, 2). 'Volunteers

trained with small arms, explosives, and other weapons, learning techniques well suited for terrorist operations' (US DoS 1993, 2). Most interestingly, the memo mentions Osama bin Laden by name and establishes connections between the Mujahedeen and the first WTC bombing of 26 February 1993 by pointing out that one of the suspects of the terrorist attack, Mahmoud Abouhalima 'was involved in recruitment efforts for the mujahidin in the US' (US DoS 1993, 3). The mastermind of the attack Sheik Abdul-Rahman, who had managed an Islamic jihadist network in the US out of the Alkifah Refugee Center in New Jersey, had received money from bin Laden. According to regional director of the FBI Robert Fox, several of the individuals linked to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing had received CIA training, presumably for fighting in Afghanistan (Cooley 2002, 199).[7] Many of the former Arab Mujahedeen joined numerous conflicts involving Muslims in the world or they returned home to destabilize their own countries.[8]

Syrian Rebels

The parallels between Operation CYCLONE in Afghanistan and Operation TIMBER SYCAMORE are striking and history seems to repeat itself (Alexander and Alexander 2015, 168). As in Afghanistan, the US relied on Saudi money and on regional partners (in this case Turkey and Jordan) to carry out a regime change operation that dragged on for many years and that required the inflow of substantial numbers of jihadist foreign fighters to beef up the weakened and greatly disunited Syrian opposition forces.[9] According to UN estimates, there were 30,000 foreign fighters from a hundred countries in Syria as of 2016 (UN 2016). It is hard to find any official details of Operation TIMBER SYCAMORE, especially as to how many rebels were trained and which Syrian groups received CIA support since the program remains classified. Press reports suggest that about a billion dollars were spent over four years to support some 50 rebel groups and 15,000 fighters (Gutman 2017; Ritter 2017; Mazzetti et al. 2017). Several thousand fighters had reportedly gone through CIA/SOF training programs in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Jordan with minimal vetting. It was also widely reported that many of the CIA-supported fighters and groups defected to radical Islamic groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra and later ISIS. Former Iraq weapons inspector Scott Ritter claimed that '[t]housands of fighters serving under the banner of Al Qaeda and ISIS were, in fact, armed and trained by the CIA' (Ritter 2017). Ritter is not the only

former national security official to point out the apparent connections between the highly flawed regime change effort in Syria and the dramatic emergence of the Islamic terrorist group ISIS in 2014, about two years after the US started to support Syrian rebels. Former head of the DIA General Michael Flynn oversaw the production of an intelligence report on the growing threat of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI later renamed as ISIS) in 2012. The report stated: 'AQI supported the Syrian opposition from the beginning, both ideologically and through the media. AQI declared its opposition to the Assad regime because it considered it a sectarian regime targeting Sunnis.' Furthermore, the report clearly emphasized the sectarian nature of the Syria conflict: 'The Salafist, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the AQI are the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria,' dispelling the myth of 'moderates' seeking democracy in Syria (US DoD 2012, 289). Flynn suggested in an interview with Al Jazeera that it was a 'willful decision' by the Obama administration to ignore the warnings about the growth of Islamic terrorist groups in the region since that ultimately served the political goal of overthrowing Assad (Al Jazeera 2016).[10] In other words, the efforts to overthrow Assad boosted radical Islamic groups in the Middle East. It also has resulted into a serious disposal problem as the opposition in Syria is collapsing and many of the Syrian and foreign fighters are leaving the country in substantial numbers to go to other countries in the region such as Egypt, Tunisia, or Morocco.

More importantly, many of them have come to Europe or intend to go to Europe, where they pose a substantial security risk, as outlined in a 2014 Europol report: 'EU citizens continue to travel to conflict zones to receive training in combat techniques and to engage in armed struggle… In the wake of the Syrian conflict, the [terrorism] threat to the EU is likely to increase exponentially' (Europol 2014, 8). Indeed, there was a 650 percent growth in terrorism fatalities in OECD countries in 2015, as predicted, with most terrorism deaths in Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, and Turkey (Noack 2016). The November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, which killed over 130 people, also had a Syria connection as at least one of the eight terrorists had travelled to Syria just prior to the attack (Yardley et al. 2015). A study by Erika Brady also suggested an increase in terrorism in Europe linked to the war in Syria: 'If we are content to connect the rise of ISIS to the opportunities provided by the Syrian Conflict, and the rise in global terror attacks and an increased death toll in Europe to the increased influence of ISIS as a terrorist organization, it is clear that the Syrian Conflict has on some level contributed to a significant

international terrorism crisis which looks set to continue for some time' (Brady 2017, 58). Some Middle East analysts already contended that the tens of thousands of Syrian rebels could join jihadist groups after they have been abandoned by the US in order to survive in Syria, leading to more radicalization and a continuing severe threat to the stability of the region (Luck 2017). If anything can be learned from al Qaeda's emergence after the Soviet-Afghan War, it is that Islamic fighters who have been radicalized in the conflict will train the next generation of terrorists determined to attack the West.

Weapons

Weapons are also always a major part of the disposal problem, as countries in the middle of an internal war tend to get flooded by small arms, which almost guarantee long-lasting political instability. PMOs tend to amplify the issue of small arms proliferation since sponsor will supply more and better weapons than would otherwise be available to insurgents. However, once the conflict is over, little or no attempts are made by state sponsors to collect all the weapons that have been handed out to paramilitary groups. It is almost impossible to keep track of small arms and to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands since they are very durable, interchangeable, and easily transferable.

Permanent Destabilization of Countries and Regions

It has been pointed out that small and light arms are the real weapons of mass destruction because they end up killing the most people in contemporary wars. Even post-conflict small arms remain a threat to the security and stability of states trying to recover from the conflict. Rifles can be used, if reasonably maintained, for a century before they become useless. The shelf life of ammunition is naturally shorter, depending on the storage environment, but under ideal conditions it remains useable for decades. When small arms are transferred, it can have therefore long-term implications and may contribute to more conflict down the road. Weapons used in PMOs are often sourced from gray or black arms markets and will eventually end up again on black arms markets. The abundance of arms left over from Operation CYCLONE fueled the Afghan civil war of the 1990s. Similarly, Libya and Syria have been flooded with small arms in the course of the civil wars. In Libya many weapons originated from plundered

Gaddafi stockpiles that were captured by the rebels and from arms shipments by Qatar and other US allies. At the time no efforts were made by the Obama administration to track these weapons (Risen et al. 2012). The problem is that post-conflict new governments have few incentives and often little capability of collecting weapons from armed groups (Danczuk 2016, 44). Despite warnings by the UN, no major efforts were made by the international community to secure the substantial weapons stockpiles in Libya. Libya is now awash in small arms with over 15 million Kalashnikovs in circulation for a population of just six million (Malone 2014).

It is also commonly known pattern that weapons will flow from places with high supply to places with high demand via the black market. A certain type of arms merchant specializes in buying up weapons after conflicts end to ship them to other conflict zones. Not surprisingly, many small arms from Libya have spread to conflict zones in the Middle East and North Africa. Some weapons ended up in the hands of jihadists, who destabilized the neighboring state Mali, triggering a French intervention to suppress the insurgency (Patrick 2013). According to a Council on Foreign Relations report, 'By adopting a "light footprint" approach in Libya, the alliance unwittingly contributed to a security vacuum that allowed countless weapons to stream out of Libya and fuel insurgency, extremism, and crime in neighboring countries…The collapse of his regime left behind "miles of unsecured warehouses filled with rockets, machine guns, ammunition, and antiaircraft systems"' (Patrick 2013). Similarly, the flow of arms into Syria destabilized northern Iraq and resulted in the emergence of ISIS as a major military power in the region. Weapons air dropped by the US military in Iraq to support Syrian 'moderate' rebels ended up with such regularity in the hands of ISIS that a member of the Iraqi parliament even suggested that this was deliberate (Sarhan 2015).[11]

Even in more controlled circumstances than airdropping weapons and hoping they will be picked up by the right type of rebels, such as in arms transfer that equip allied forces, the US government cannot keep track of many transferred weapons. Arms control expert Iain Overton found that the Pentagon could only account for 700,000 out of 1.45 million (48 percent) small arms (rifles, pistols, and machine guns) that were transferred to security forces in Afghanistan and Iraq—110,000 Kalashnikovs and 80,000 pistols were missing from the inventories as of 2007 (Chivers 2016). Inevitably, some of the very same weapons that are meant to equip 'friendly' forces will be used to kill US soldiers and the soldiers of allied nations.

Advanced Weapons

Sometimes the military effectiveness of an armed group can be boosted substantially by providing more advanced weapons to them such as satellite-guided mortars, anti-tank missiles, and MANPADS, as proven in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The problem was that after the war the Afghan warlords were not inclined to give up their most powerful arms, which could be also used in terrorist attacks elsewhere. Therefore, the CIA tried to reacquire at least the unused Stinger missiles, since they could shoot down civilian airliners at up to 10,000 ft. (Coll 2005, 337). The Stinger is also extremely easy to use as it is a 'fire-and-forget' weapon that does not require any further aiming from the shooter once the target has been 'locked.' It has been estimated that between 2000 to 2500 Stingers were distributed to the Mujahedeen, who used them during the war to shoot down altogether 275 Soviet aircraft (Silverstein 2001). Most of the unused Stingers were bought back by the CIA from the warlords, but between 100 and 200 remained unaccounted for as of 2000 (Duffy 2000). The Stingers remained a very valuable commodity in Afghanistan and beyond. The missiles cost about $35,000 per unit but some buyers were willing to pay $100,000 or more. Iran may have bought up to a hundred unused Stingers from the Mujahedeen (Coll 2005, 337). In one case, the FBI was able to arrest members of the Medellin cartel, who were trying to buy Stingers from the black market in 1990 (Cooley 2002, 147). The missiles have a ten-year shelf-life during which they remain reliable. They probably remain useable even longer than that. Some of the missing Stingers probably ended up in Chechnya in the mid-1990s, where they shot down Russian aircraft during the war. Other Stingers left over from the Afghanistan war of the 1980s may have also been used to shoot down NATO aircraft two decades later in Afghanistan (Walsh 2010). More recently, MANPADS that had been left over from the Gaddafi regime ended up in the hands of Al Qaeda and other radical groups, although it is unclear whether the weapons are still operational (Attkisson 2013). Over 3000 MANPADS from Gaddafi's stockpile remained unaccounted for as of 2014 (Malone 2014).

According to Middle East expert Charles Lister, 'Syria represents the Afghanistan of the 21st century, but on steroids. The scale of jihadist militancy in Syria is one thing; the capability that they have acquired…is at least in my opinion unprecedented in modern history' (Watson 2016). However, the US decided not to supply Stingers to the Syrian rebels, although this was proposed by Senator John McCain and others. The

most advanced weapon that the Syrian rebels have received from the US is likely the American-made BGM-71 TOW (Tube-launched, Optically tracked, Wire guided) anti-tank missile, which can kill a modern battle tank, penetrating between 500 and 600 mm of steel, at a range of 2.3 miles. They have also used European Milan and Russian Konkurs and Kornet anti-tank missiles and possibly acquired thousands of them, some of which were captured and some of which were transferred by the Gulf states. *YouTube* videos show that Syrian rebels made heavy use of anti-tank missiles and that some of these missiles are already in the hands of radical groups such as al-Nusra (Sly 2015). A Stratfor analysis suggests that 'a wide array of actors have attempted to use anti-tank weapons such as LAW rockets, rocket-propelled grenade systems, and bazooka rockets to attack diplomatic missions, Western businesses, business executives and government officials' (Stewart 2015). Furthermore, it seems that ISIS managed to amass stockpiles of MANPADS such as the Chinese FN-6 shoulder-launched missile it either received from their Gulf state allies, or that they captured in Libya, Syria, or Iraq from government arms depots. In one incident ISIS shot down an Iraqi helicopter in October 2014 (Gibbons-Neff 2014). Even more concerning is the fact that ISIS and other radical groups operating in Syria were able to acquire chemical weapons, potentially from state sponsors, and may have a rudimentary capability to produce mustard gas (Schmitt 2016). Journalist Seymour Hersh has suggested that Hillary Clinton had approved a transfer of sarin gas to the Syrian rebels from Libya via Turkey (Ramirez 2016). Although it is hard to prove the allegation, the fact is that ISIS has conducted numerous gas attacks in Syria and Iraq, including during the battle for Mosul.

Networks

Transnational criminal *networks* are often needed for supplying a nonstate force in an internal conflict and, unfortunately, they tend to endure over decades after the end of a conflict because of profit motivation and government protection through well-placed government insiders connected to covert operations. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter pointed out in reference to these networks formed in covert operations:

> only for plutonium is the disposal problem greater! For money, thrills, habit, and conviction these men find ways to regroup in the private sector and carry on with their efforts to destroy progressive and nationalist political

> possibilities in Third World countries, as well as to sell arms and drugs, and carry out an unauthorized private sector foreign policy that is vicious and invisible and acknowledges no limits. (Marshall et al. 1987, VIII)

Historian Alfred McCoy has argued that there exists a 'covert netherworld,' which is created through 'the confluence of four essential elements': 'covert methods in their [the states'] exercise of power at home and abroad'; a 'clandestine social milieu populated by secret services and criminal syndicates'; an 'illicit economic nexus that sustains non-state actors'; and a 'related spatial dimension shaped by geography and state policy' (McCoy 2016, 849).

The Covert Netherworld

McCoy argues that '[a]t its core, this netherworld's social milieu is an invisible interstice inhabited by criminal and clandestine actors who carry out complex financial or political operations covertly, that is without leaving a tangible trace' (McCoy 2016, 850). This milieu is composed of spies, gangsters, terrorists, warlords, and corrupt bankers, who all employ the same covert techniques for remaining invisible and pursuing their objectives and who will at times interact with each other for mutual benefit. Governments allow the covert netherworld and the main components facilitating covert activity, such as dodgy offshore banks, smuggling routes, and criminal syndicates, to exist because they can utilize the very same covert infrastructure for intelligence operations and for conducting secret wars. The covert netherworld has to remain in place since without it there would be little chances of doing all the things that intelligence services are supposed to do, namely run spies in other countries, procure enemy equipment, and to support political groups in other countries covertly.

The modern covert netherworld was created in the aftermath of the Second World War through the 'shift in US force projection from the conventional to the covert' (McCoy 2016, 849). The covert infrastructure for PMOs put in place in the 1960s was transformed in the 1980s and 1990s through privatization. 'It had developed into a social and business network, linking individuals with their own agendas – both financial and political…covert warfare was becoming increasingly privatized. And the actions of the individuals in that associated network were raising serious questions about who was doing what for whom' (Hancock and Wexler 2014, 402).

This netherworld has enabled the emergence of what Peter Dale Scott has called 'deep politics': 'the constant interaction between the constitutionally elected government and the subterranean forces of violence – forces of crime – that appear to be the enemy of the government' (Scott 2010, 31). Secret wars or PMOs cannot happen without the existence of the covert netherworld and the covert netherworld impacts on world politics in the form of 'deep politics' and 'deep events' (events triggered by covert interactions) in sometimes consequential ways shaping domestic and international politics. Deep politics is by definition very difficult to observe and to analyze. It is the 'black hole' of politics whose existence may only be inferred through indirect observation (Wilson 2009, 42). However, there are a few cases such as the Iran-Contra affair and Pakistan's involvement in the drug trade that shine some light on the covert netherworld.

Expanding the Deep State

As pointed out by Glennon, the deep state is a network of national security insiders, who use secrets a source of their power and who work together to preserve the status quo and expand their autonomy (Glennon 2015, 11–28). Covert agencies favor PMOs because it puts substantial financial and material resources at their disposal with very little public or even internal accountability. This can be billions of dollars that are funneled through complex networks of offshore accounts, a fleet of aircraft, ships, and other vehicles, and an army of highly trained and experienced covert operatives available on call to operate worldwide. 'Institutions involved in sustaining proxy warfare can also become politically empowered as well as financially corrupted' (Hughes 2014, 50). Individuals with key positions inside a national security apparatus may pursue their own objectives or sometimes their personal financial profit. Of course, this danger is much greater within the deep states of the Third World than in Western democracies, where there are more checks and balances. At the same time, it has happened that deep state elements engaged in semi-covert wars abroad have tried executing a coup in a Western democracy when they disagreed with the policy of the elected government.

Carl Schmitt discussed the example of French General Raoul Salan in his *Theory of the Partisan* to demonstrate the paradoxical logic of guerrilla warfare that encourages counterinsurgents to adopt guerrilla tactics and use them even against their own government if they think it stands in the way of victory (Schmitt 1963, 67–70). Salan was the military commander

of French forces in Algiers, who, discontent with De Gaulle's Algeria policy, led an attempt to carry out a coup in France by sending paratroopers to Paris in 1961. Salan failed and continued the attack on the Fifth Republic by founding the terrorist organization OAS formed by several high-level French officers, who conducted several failed assassination attempts on De Gaulle.[12] They also carried out several false flag attacks against French citizens to be blamed on the Algerian FNL to derail Algerian independence (Tunander 2009, 59). It has been suggested, but not proven, that the OAS was also connected to NATO's clandestine GLADIO network, which may indicate that in this instance a covert network set up by the state for another purpose turned into a threat to the state itself (Tunander 2009, 60).

The Iran-Contra scandal clearly exposed some degree of corruption and criminal conduct by US officials and US covert operatives. Some have argued that this is just an exceptional case and that US intelligence and military personnel involved in covert operations can be trusted to behave ethically and act in accordance to US laws. This might be generally true, but the very nature of covert operations creates tempting opportunities for covert operatives to make some money on the side, to misuse funds and equipment, or to look the other way when they see criminal conduct by others. For example, some Air America personnel were implicated in criminal activity. According to Anthony Robbins, '[t]here was all kinds of smuggling going on – mostly currency. People thought they had the right to break the law as a privilege for dangerous work. It was not official policy as such, but the policy was to look the other way which encouraged these individuals. People made their own laws. Everything became so inefficient and wasteful' (Robbins 1990, 295). Tim Weiner has written about corruption in the 'black ops' Army unit previously known as Intelligence Support Activity, where $300 million were lost, misused, or stolen during the 1980s (Weiner 1991, 187). More recently, the head of the CIA's SAD, Kyle Dustin Foggo, has been prosecuted for the wasting $40 million of taxpayer money by awarding 'sweetheart' contracts to a friend (Smith 2007). A CIA manager commented on recent corruption scandals: 'You have an organization of professional liars…some people will try to take advantage of the system … and it's a system that can be taken advantage of' (Warrick and Smith 2009).

Michael Glennon pointed out that '[t]he CIA…plays a greater role than many realize, particularly in what seems to be the realm of diplomacy' (Glennon 2015, 59). Through its paramilitary role the CIA has become a

major player in US foreign policy. The CIA's cooperation with partner services in PMOs can significantly shift internal balances of power and result in an expanded deep state in allied countries, which can be highly destabilizing as indicated in the example of Pakistan's ISI. ISI was modelled after the Iranian SAVAK, which had been set up with the help of the CIA in the 1950s (Winchell 2003, 375). Before Operation CYCLONE and its massive expansion in the mid-1980s, ISI was a small military intelligence organization tasked with conducting domestic counterintelligence and foreign covert operations. The influx of billions of dollars for managing the covert war and the ISI's growth to over 10,000 military personnel turned the organization into a serious political player in Pakistan. According to Ahmed Rashid, '[w]idespread corruption within the ISI through its involvement in the Afghan heroin trade and the CIA arms pipeline enriched many ISI generals and also provided covert funds for Pakistan's nuclear program and the promotion of new ISI-backed Islamic insurgencies in Kashmir and Central Asia' (Rashid 2009, 38). After President Zia ul-Haq died in 1988 in a mysterious plane crash, the ISI manipulated the elections to prevent a victory by Benazir Bhutto's party PPP (Rashid 2009, 39). 'By that time, it had become readily apparent to many in Pakistan that the ISI was out of control,' according to analyst Sean Winchell (Winchell 2003, 381).

Another side effect of Operation CYCLONE was the Islamic radicalization of ISI and Pakistan's society at large through the large influx of Afghan refugees, Arab jihadists, and the proliferation of Islamic *madrassas* in the Afghan border region in part sponsored by the US and the Saudis and dedicated to spreading radical Sunni Wahabist teachings (Rashid 2010, 89–91; Lacey 2009, 194). Their number grew from 700 in 1991 to over 7000 in 2001 (Williams 2011, 222). It was from these madrassas from where the Taliban emerged with the help of the ISI and from where ISI recruited jihadists for their war in Kashmir. 'Pakistan had in fact created a vast jihadi movement that was increasingly interested in overturning the secular country of the founding father Jinnah and turning it into a strict Islamic theocracy' (Williams 2011, 222). By empowering the ISI with the transfer of funds, training, and technology the CIA had created a monster that went on to sponsor jihadist groups and terrorism and that was, and probably remains, beyond the control of the civilian Pakistani government. According Bruce Riedel, the ISI is controlled by Pakistani generals and continues to sponsor terrorism in India to prevent a détente between the two countries to justify their large budget and nuclear weapons (Rajghatta 2016).

From this three observations shall be made: (1) no bureaucracy is immune to corruption, especially in situations where there is deliberately diminished accountability; (2) the practice of regularly conducting larger covert operations shifts over time more power and control over important foreign policy issues from the elected officials to the bureaucracy that executes them; and (3) the covert interactions of the deep state of one country with the deep state of another country can impact in sometimes unpredictable ways on the political dynamics of either country.

The Hopeless War on Drugs

President Nixon declared a 'war on drugs' in 1971, which resulted in the creation of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 1973 (a reorganization of Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs). The goal of the effort was to reduce the availability of drugs in the US cracking down on drug use domestically and by going to the source of the problem in the producer states. By every metric that can be applied, the war on drugs has been a failure of epic proportions: there is now worldwide much higher drug production, much greater drug consumption, and much greater illicit profits than there were in the 1970s. According to UN estimates, the global drug trade is worth between $320 billion and $500 billion per year, accounting for 2 percent of the world economy and supplying 200 million users of illegal narcotics (Mandel 2011, 104). An estimated $250 billion in drug money is laundered every year by US banks (Scott 2010, 61). According to McCoy, '[t]he global supply of illicit opium increased sevenfold 1,200 tons in 1972 to 8,870 tons by 2007' (McCoy 2016, 852).

What went wrong? A good case can be made that the tremendous growth of the drug trade is connected to the existence of a covert netherworld and the practice of covert operations, which are often indirectly funded by drugs. The connections go beyond governments merely tolerating drug trafficking for the greater good of destabilizing enemy states. Covert operations are a mechanism by which global organized crime can be managed in support of political and economic objectives. The drug and arms trafficking networks that emerge in the context of PMOs are not ephemeral—they outlast armed conflicts that gave birth to them by decades and so do the connections between government intelligence services and criminal networks that were formed during the years of an armed conflict, for example, in Burma with the KMT, in Laos with the Hmong, in Latin America with the Cuban exiles and Contras, and in Afghanistan with the Mujahedeen.

In many developing states that are 'weak states' in terms of enforcing a monopoly of violence, governments have formed alliances with criminal structures, which creates the possibility of influencing these governments through the subtle control of criminal syndicates. Foreign governments can be influenced by empowering covert criminal structures, for example, by allowing them to operate internationally with impunity or by cracking down on them when they become too powerful. Again, Pakistan and its role in the opium trafficking from Afghanistan that dramatically expanded in the 1980s is an interesting case. According to Rashid,

> The US Drugs Enforcement Administration (DEA) had 17 full-time officers in Pakistan during the 1980s, who identified 40 major heroin syndicates, including some headed by top government officials. Not a single syndicate was broken up during that decade. There was clearly a conflict of interest between the CIA which wanted no embarrassing disclosures about drug links between the 'heroic' Mujaheddin and Pakistani officials and traffickers and the DEA. Several DEA officials asked to be relocated and at least one resigned, because the CIA refused to allow them to carry out their duties. (Rashid 2010, 121)

Furthermore, Rashid affirms that '[t]he heroin pipeline could not have operated without the knowledge, if not connivance, of officials at the highest levels of the army, the government and the CIA' (Rashid 2010, 121). The *Financial Times* published an article by an Indian intelligence analyst, who claimed that ISI had 'started a special cell for the use of heroin in covert actions' and that '[t]he cell promoted the cultivation of opium and the extraction of heroin in Pakistani as well as in the Afghan territory under Mujahideen control' for the purpose of 'being smuggled into the Soviet controlled areas in order to make the Soviet troops heroin addicts' (quoted from Scott 2007, 75–76). According to John Cooley, this idea originated from French intelligence chief De Marenches, who had suggested to Reagan to use drugs confiscated by the DEA to distribute them to Soviet soldiers as a method of weakening their morale and combat effectiveness, an idea which Reagan apparently liked and which was implemented by DCI Casey as part of a psychological warfare strategy to distribute subversive materials in the southern Soviet Union (Cooley 2002, 106).[13] After the Afghanistan War, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was reportedly presented by ISI Chief Brigadier General Aslam Beg with an ambitious plan for a large-scale drug deal to finance covert operations, which other Pakistani officials quickly denied (Anderson and Khan 1994).

Several sources indicate that the ISI did use drug money for funding their covert war in Kashmir and to fund its secret nuclear program (Rashid 2009, 319; Winchell 2003, 379). Thanks to ISI involvement in the drug business the opium was refined in Pakistan and reached from there European and American markets, where Afghan opium soon conquered the biggest market shares. After the war ended, the ISI had to shut down its opium production within Pakistan because of American pressure, but they simply shifted the production into Afghanistan, where they still controlled several warlords. Even today Pakistan's ISI retains tight control of the opium trade from Afghanistan, according to a story in the *Rolling Stone* (Aikins 2014). Pakistan is a major transit country for opiates, which has also resulted in it being the country in the world with the most heroin addicts, generating profits for the traffickers in excess of $2 billion in Pakistan alone (Quigley 2014).

The war on drugs cannot be won because of the complicity of governments and major banks in the drug trade. Governments benefit from organized crime connections in numerous ways: it generates profits for covert operations, it enables control over foreign elites through bribes and blackmail, and it allows corrupted governments to steer society through the use of crime and violence by criminal syndicates.[14] The US government may not have direct control over the global drug trade, but it is to some extent complicit in it by allowing supposedly allied governments to run trafficking operations and by protecting major players in the illicit drug trade and the illicit arms trade, as well as the banks that launder the money.[15] It works like a licensing system, where certain actors involved in the drug business are not investigated or prosecuted because of their role in US foreign policy, while other actors that lack the political protection are the ones that are targeted by international law enforcement efforts. This is the reason why the elimination of even big players in the global drug business, such as Khun Sa, Pablo Escobar, or El Chapo is inconsequential and has no effect whatsoever on the availability of drugs. Peter Dale Scott argues that

> [f]or America, in the twenty-first century as in the twentieth century, is still using and protecting drug traffickers and their financiers as assets in efforts to go after terrorist networks. That financial system or milieu is itself a major part of the real enemy, the real problem. Yet we have not seen – and are unlikely to see – efforts to dismantle the 'vast financial structure' – or system or milieu – itself. (Scott 2010, 244)

Of course, not all of the global narcotics trafficking is linked to PMOs and other covert intelligence activity, but only a complete dismantling of the covert netherworld, most importantly the shadow banking system, could turn the tables in the war on drugs.

Notes

1. The CIA continued its paramilitary effort in Cuba at a much more limited way in Operation Mongoose, which was in essence an effort to sabotage the Cuban economy and in causing public dissatisfaction with the Castro regime. In Operation ZR/Rifle, the CIA made at least a dozen attempts on Castro's life, all of which obviously failed. The Cuban exile community in the US became very disillusioned with the American government's lacking ability and willingness to overthrow Castro and it decided to take matters into their own hands.
2. A theory about the Kennedy assassination that has recently gained some more credence is that Cuban exiles, who had been involved in CIA covert operations, were plotting to kill Kennedy and may have succeeded in Dallas on 22 November 1963. See Fonzi 2013.
3. When the US eventually invaded Afghanistan in 2001 they found over a dozen jihad training schools that trained jihadists in terror tactics using Soviet, Pentagon, and CIA training materials from the 1980s. See Chivers and Rhode 2002. '[b]etween 10,000 and 100,000 recruits graduated from Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan between 1989 and October 2001.' See Gunaratna 2002, 8.
4. Operation Condor was a Latin American analogue to the Phoenix Program in Vietnam: it was a CIA-supported effort by several Latin American dictatorships to systematically capture or kill thousands of perceived opponents domestically and overseas, sometimes as far afield as Europe. See Hancock and Wexler 2014, 313–325.
5. Opinions are divided of the significance of the Afghan Arabs in the Afghanistan war with some sources saying that these were mostly jihad 'tourists,' who contributed little to the war and some sources suggesting that they fought more fiercely than the Mujahedeen. See Williams 2011, 220. Important is that many foreign fighters received military training in Pakistan and Afghanistan through ISI/MI6/CIA and combat experience, which most of them did not have before. See Curtis 2010, 148.
6. According to journalist John Pilger, '[In 1986] CIA director William Casey had given his backing to a plan put forward by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, to recruit people from around the world to join the Afghan jihad. More than 100,000 Islamic militants were trained in Pakistan

between 1986 and 1992, in camps overseen by CIA and MI6, with the SAS training future al-Qaida and Taliban fighters in bomb-making and other black arts. Their leaders were trained at a camp in Virginia. This was called Operation Cyclone and continued long after the Soviet forces were withdrawn in 1989.' See Scott 2007, 123.

7. Riedel claimed 'the CIA never recruited, trained, or otherwise used Arab volunteers.' See Riedel 2014, 151. At the same time, it seems very likely that some Afghan Arabs were trained by ISI in Pakistan.
8. The jihadists, who fought in Afghanistan, joined conflicts in the Balkans, Chechnya, Somalia, Egypt, Algeria, Indonesia, and the Philippines, among others.
9. Turkey played a key role in the recruitment of foreign fighters by providing up to 100,000 fake Turkish passports to militants, mostly given to Chinese Uyghur Islamic militants. Through this effort Turkey was directly involved in beefing up ISIS numbers, according to Christina Lin from Johns Hopkins University. See Lin 2015.
10. A Stratfor report made the same argument: 'Since the Syrian civil war began in March 2011, the United States has pursued policies that can only be called schizophrenic. On the one hand, CIA-trained rebels opposed al Assad. On the other, the United States did not want jihadists to prevail in Syria and turn Damascus into a base for worldwide subversion. The jihadists, however, were the best fighters in the battle against al Assad. If Washington wanted the Syrian president out, it had to back them – as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey did – or send more American troops, as George W. Bush did in 2003. And no one wanted another American invasion of an Arab country.' See Glass 2017.
11. The US military repeatedly air dropped weapons meant for the Syrian opposition forces that were picked up by ISIS. The US military acknowledged 28 missing loads from air drops in 2014. See MacAskill and Chulov 2014.
12. Carl Schmitt wrote about Salan in his *Theory of the Partisan* as an illustration how the logic of guerrilla warfare 'infects' the political process: the general fighting guerrillas overseas turns against the own government conducts guerrilla warfare against them. See Schmitt 1963, 65–71.
13. In a bizarre move the CIA purchased 10,000 Korans to be distributed in the Soviet Union, as well as other PSYOPS materials designed to highlight Soviet atrocities. See Yousaf and Adkin 2001, 193.
14. McCoy uses the example of the Philippines to make the point that government alliances with organized crime can keep politicians in power by steering elections through corruption, buying votes, and the use of violence. See McCoy 2016, 858–859.

15. According to an *International Herald Tribune* story, the CIA has interfered and even stopped investigations into drug trafficking to protect their assets: 'These [Laotian Hmong] tribesmen continued to grow, as they had for generations, the opium poppy. Before long, someone – there were unproven allegations that it was a Mafia family from Florida – had established a heroin refining lab in Region Two. The lab's production was soon being ferried out on the planes of the CIA's front airline, Air America. A pair of BNDD agents tried to seize an Air America. A pair of BNDD agents tried to seize an Air America DC-3 loaded with heroin packed into boxes of Tide soap powder. At the CIA's behest, they were ordered to release the plane and drop the inquiry.' See Collins 1993.

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CHAPTER 10

New Developments

PMOs usually don't work. PMOs never achieved to secure democracy anywhere.[1] PMOs are prone to cause various forms of 'blowback,' especially related to the 'disposal problem.' Regardless, there is no reason to believe that the US government or any other government that has undertaken PMOs in the past would stop using them, mostly because PMOs tend to serve the interests of the deep states that are implementing them. There are also broader trends that contribute to the attractiveness of PMOs as an instrument for exercising power in the international arena, such as due to the 'issues of low military recruitment rates, public aversion to casualties and squeezed defence budgets' (Mumford 2013, 76). Furthermore, there has been substantial interest and analytical effort concerning 'hybrid warfare' or 'hybrid threats' that are defined as the 'diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects' (US Army 2010, V). The term 'hybrid warfare' was frequently used in the context of Russia's use of paramilitary proxies in the 2014 Ukraine conflict, but it could be just as well be applied to the US strategy in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, which combined irregular forces and US airpower. PMOs seem to offer the ability to influence conflicts abroad at relatively low political and economic cost. The 2010 UK Strategic Defence Review argued that '[a]symmetric tactics such as economic, cyber and proxy actions instead of direct military confrontation will play an increasing part, as both state and non-state adversaries seek an edge over those

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who overmatch them in conventional military capability' and that 'the differences between state-on-state warfare and irregular conflict are dramatically reducing' (UK MoD 2010, 16). This chapter will analyze some interesting developments that indicate some change in the way nations like the US go about conducting PMOs and proxy warfare.

Warlord Inc.

Warlords have become an important feature of contemporary conflicts and they provide strong evidence for the increasing fragmentation and disintegration of states. The US has in the past relied on warlords, such as Vang Pao in Laos, Habré in Chad, or Hekmatyar in Afghanistan, to conduct its proxy wars. By doing so, the US government has inadvertently strengthened warlordism and has contributed to state decay in many parts of the world. The foreign support to rebels has tended to prolong conflicts and to make them more severe, sometimes resulting in outright state failure. The concept of neomedievalism that has been proposed by some international relations scholars offers some good opportunities for better understanding the warlord phenomenon and potentially for finding better approaches for utilizing warlords in conflict zones in furtherance of proxy wars or relative stability.

The Warlord Enterprise

A 'warlord' can be defined as the military and political leader of an armed group that controls territory for economic benefit and that provides minimal governance, which sets the warlord apart from the mere bandit (Biró 2015, 52). This can include the provision of basic social services and the enforcement of basic social rules (e.g. against petty crime), adjudicating disputes, building infrastructure, and even social services such as health and education (Biró 2015, 52). Warlord enterprises can persist over decades of conflict and they blur the lines between political, military, and economic functions, which means that in the view of analyst Andrew Trabulsi they 'become indistinguishable from other forms of legal enterprise, or indeed, even the state itself' (Radford and Trabulsi 2015, XVIII). Similar to criminal syndicates warlord enterprises have no interest in completely destroying the state and state institutions since they also benefit from the services that states provide to populations (Radford and Trabulsi 2015, 19). Warlords and drug cartels are not interested in replacing states

in every aspect since they 'risk their competitive advantage over their competitors in the market of violence if they consume scarce resources by providing social services' (Biró 2015, 54). They only want states to be weak enough as to not be able to seriously threaten their existence and operations. The warlord phenomenon is linked to a broader trend of neomedievalism.

Neomedievalism

The term 'neomedievalism' was coined by the Australian theorist Hedley Bull and it mainly refers to a hypothetical 'non-state-centric, multipolar international system of overlapping authorities and allegiances within the same territory' (McFate 2014, 73). Bull suggested five criteria to test whether the international system was returning to a quasi-medieval order, namely 'the technological unification of the world, the regional integration of states, the rise of transnational organizations, the disintegration of states, and the restoration of private international violence' (McFate 2014, 75). Although there was little evidence for neomedievalism in the 1970s, there are now some indications that suggest a breakdown of the Westphalian international order and its replacement with a neomedieval order, where states are only actors among others and where there are competing claims over territories made by a range of substate, state, and supranational actors.

What is particularly relevant with respect to proxy warfare is the realization that it fits excellently into the neomedievalism paradigm, especially as it concerns the disintegration of states and the privatization of violence. The increasing weakness of states makes proxy warfare more viable since it gets easier for nonstate actors to carve out territories beyond the control of a hostile government (sometimes referred to as 'ungoverned spaces'), which means that it will be easier to find proxy forces that can be empowered in pursuit of a strategic objective.[2] At the same time, the proliferation of warlord enterprises and other private military actors such as PMCs and violent criminal syndicates will make it increasingly difficult to rebuild nations that have undergone an extended period of civil war. In the end, this means that competitive warlordism will lead to a fairly durable and therefore fairly stable situation of political instability and disorder like it existed during the Middle Ages (Cerny 1998, 40). A consequence of this is that proxy warfare will become even less decisive and consequential in the long term, since local or regional balances of power can be only temporarily shifted in the favor of one side, as usually none of the main

belligerents will be able to completely eliminate others or achieve a sufficient preponderance of power to marginalize others. Furthermore, proxy warfare will become increasingly akin to mercenary warfare of the late Middle Ages, where large mercenary companies such as John Hawkwood's White Company were able to dominate warfare in Italy of the late fourteenth century (Singer 2003, 23–26). The modern equivalent are increasingly globalized PMCs, which have come to combine basic corporate structures, international mercenaries, and local armed groups. As argued by Andrew Mumford, PMCs will be the 'proxy-war wagers of the future' (Mumford 2013, 80). The definition of what constitutes a PMC has broadened to include some more questionable actors such as warlords and outright criminal gangs, as these actors are trying to appear legitimate by rebranding themselves as private security firms.[3] Proxies will no longer be driven by ideological fervor or by a desire to shape the political order by trying to capture the state and its institutions. Instead they will be increasingly internationally operating opportunistic actors, who are motivated primarily by economic gain that results from some measure of control over territory and populations to extract wealth and to facilitate transnational crime.

The New Way of (Proxy) War

To some extent this new neomedieval warfare is already a reality. The US government has sometimes used local warlords and militias in recent conflicts as substitutes for US military personnel. For example, the State Department and the Pentagon have hired warlords for protective services in Afghanistan and in Libya with varying success. A report to Congress from 2010 even suggested that warlords provided the primary means of security for the US supply chain in Afghanistan and that this allowed warlords to run protection rackets, where they were paid off not to attack US convoys (US Congress 2010, 2–3). In Libya, the CIA hired the Islamist militia group February 17th 'Martyrs Brigade' to provide security to its Benghazi annex, which failed to show up during the attack on 11 September 2012 (Lake 2013).

Despite these flaws in the approach of using warlords, they often provide a quick solution to immediate problems when US or allied forces are not available for whatever reason. The reality is that warlords and international PMCs will continue to play a growing role in US foreign policy and the way the US government conducts conflicts. It is just important to fully

appreciate the limitations of relying on military entrepreneurs for intervention and security functions, the most important limitation being the perpetuation of warlordism and the accompanying decay of state institutions since armed groups are legitimized through their interactions with a sponsoring foreign government. For example, empowering YPG to fight ISIS also undermines Turkey's ability to control a significant part of its territory, which weakens Turkish statehood as a whole and still does not lead to an independent Kurdistan, only to durable disorder.

Managing the New Military Entrepreneurs

Proxy wars will be run increasingly in the form of contract warfare, where nonstate forces are hired to perform specific duties or to serve as substitutes for US forces in internal wars that are particularly messy. International PMCs such as Academi, Triple Canopy, or Dyncorp will often function as 'military enterprisers' tasked with raising an indigenous force that acts on behalf of the US government (McFate 2014, 14). Sometimes PMCs will directly intervene in conflicts as combatants, if indigenous personnel are unavailable or incompetent since military enterprisers can easily transform into mercenary firms (McFate 2014, 14). However, for the most part PMCs will continue to be employed in non-combat roles as it relates to military advising, training, intelligence, and logistics. Usually, the international PMCs will utilize foreign personnel as subcontractors for cost reasons and they might rely largely on local warlords and militias in some cases.[4] It will no longer be necessary or practical to conduct such proxy wars as covert operations, which means that the CIA would no longer be needed to run proxy wars. In fact, an overt approach led by the US military is probably the best solution. However, privatizing PMOs in this way obviously is also fraught with problems, but might ultimately offer better opportunities for controlling proxies.

Warlord proxies and PMCs need to be tightly managed and closely supervised to achieve the best results. There are indeed many lessons that can be learned from how incipient states and princedoms had employed mercenaries in the late Middle Ages and in the renaissance period. Historian Michael Mallet has provided an excellent study of mercenarism in that period, arguing that the organization of war around mercenary companies worked rather well in contrast to the criticism of Machiavelli and other humanists (Mallett 2009). Mallet described contract warfare in the renaissance as follows:

> Their [the condottieri's] concern was not to annihilate their rivals, but to achieve security and predominance within clearly defined spheres of influence. Their population resources were a good deal more limited than their wealth, and so their weapons were small professional mercenary armies, the activities of which were related to the needs and intentions of the states which employed them. The methods were devastation, the capture of small political and diplomatic counters, and the frustration of the enemy to do the same. Battles were calculated risks, fought to gain advantage not overwhelming victory; rarely decisive but far from bloodless. (Mallett 2009, 2)

As in the Middle Ages it remains important to clearly identify reputable providers of security, so that the risk of adverse selection can be minimized. Peter Singer has suggested some solutions to the growing privatization of force. He wrote:

> Independent mechanisms have been found necessary to protect the principal client's interest and ability to make informed decisions on its own without the agent's influence. Other important requirements include clear and verifiable standards of performance; appropriate payment provisions with safeguards; an escape clause with unambiguous terms and conditions; and where appropriate, performance incentives that both reinforce a job well done and penalize poor execution. (Singer 2003, 152)

Contractual obligations of proxy forces have to be clearly spelled out and it has to be possible to hold proxies to these obligations. If a proxy fails to carry out their duties towards the sponsor, they have to be penalized, for example, by withholding payment and other support or in more severe cases by directing attacks against unfaithful proxies. It makes no sense for a sponsor to remain committed to a proxy, who has turned out to be problematic just for the sake of maintaining the political will for intervention. This is a mistake that the US government has made too often, namely to continue PMOs far longer than was justifiable with respect to the prospects and the behavior of proxies. The US government needs to be transparent about the use of paramilitary proxies and there has to be much more public accountability in terms of contractual arrangements between sponsors and proxies and in terms of performance monitoring and penalties for underperformance. Warlords and PMCs, who have gone 'rogue' should be blacklisted and no longer be considered as suitable proxies. It has to be made more difficult for groups and individuals to change their identity to evade accountability. This means that more efforts have to be

made to track armed groups and all individuals associated with them so that switching sides incurs far greater cost to them. Luckily, biometric technology can offer a good solution to the problem. Biometric data should be systematically collected from all proxy forces, which will help in the vetting process in the long term.[5]

Proxy Wars in Cyberspace

It remains a contentious issue among analysts whether cyber warfare exists as an independent or stand-alone mode of conflict, but there is little doubt by experts that cyberspace has become a domain critical to all warfighting capabilities.[6] Military communications systems, early warning systems, military logistics systems, and some of the most advanced weapons systems are all critically dependent on computer networks that are in principle vulnerable to cyber attacks. Furthermore, there are lots of civilian computer networks, some of which have been classified as 'critical information infrastructure,' which if interfered with could result in national disaster. As a result, there are clear indications that conflict will inevitably always be also fought in cyberspace in order to gain a tactical or even strategic advantage over an adversary.

Warfare in cyberspace is substantially different from warfare in the other physical domains (land, sea, air, and outer space) in the sense that it skips the battlefield, that it enables attacks from anywhere at light speed, that it favors covert aggression since attacks are inherently difficult to attribute, and that effects can be nonlethal or easily reversible. Currently, there are no globally accepted rules for cyber warfare, which means that conflict in cyberspace remains, legally speaking a gray area or the 'Wild West,' where states can attack each other with reduced probability of retaliation (Singer and Friedman 2014, 185). In addition, nonstate actors have also discovered the importance of using cyberspace to their advantage, especially as it concerns information operations, recruitment, fund-raising, organization, and intelligence collection (Singer and Friedman 2014, 96–97). In several well-documented cases, state actors have used nonstate actors as proxies in cyber warfare in order to evade retaliation. In many ways cyber warfare encourages the use of proxies since the barrier to entry are low and in the reach of nonstate actors with moderate resources such as terrorist or criminal groups or maybe even individual 'hacktivists.' The use of nonstate actors for cyber attacks also provides deniability in cases, where cyber warfare would be illegal or would result in retaliation if conducted openly.

Patriotic Hackers

Russia, China, Iran, and Syria are widely known for utilizing 'patriotic hackers' as proxies for cyber attacks directed against other states (Singer and Friedman 2014, 110–114). The main reason for this approach is plausible deniability: even if the attacked state can trace back the cyber attack to a particular geographic origin, it would be almost impossible to prove that the respective government was responsible as opposed to hackers that have acted on their own initiative. In a famous early case of cyber warfare, the Russian government used the youth movement *Nashi* as proxies for carrying out a massive distributed denial-of-service attack on the Baltic state Estonia in late April 2007 (Singer and Friedman 2014, 111). According to analyst Thomas Rid, at the time '[n]either experts from the Atlantic Alliance nor from the European Commission were able to identify Russian fingerprints in the operations' (Rid 2011, 12).[7]

Obviously, the Russians and other US adversaries are not the only ones that use criminal hackers for reasons of deniability. There are a couple of indications that the CIA may sometimes rely on the hacktivist group 'Anonymous' for punishing enemies. Anonymous operates according to the principle of 'leaderless resistance': it is not an organization with a command structure or clearly identifiable membership, but rather a 'loose and largely leaderless movement of activists' (Rid 2013, 128). In essence, anybody can be 'Anonymous' and initiate an action on behalf of the group (Singer and Friedman 2014, 82). While Anonymous did occasionally cause damage or embarrassment to the US government by leaking information stolen from US government computers or by taking down the CIA website on one occasion, it is quite apparent that Anonymous and the CIA seem to share quite a few enemies when one looks at the list of parties targeted by Anonymous' hacking over the years. The unknown hackers with their trademark Guy Fawkes mask have supported activists and destabilized regimes that are considered hostile by the US government, namely Iran, China, Russia, Libya, North Korea, and Syria. They have also launched cyber attacks against nonstate groups such as ISIS and the Los Zetas cartel. This does not imply that everything that Anonymous claims credit for is done on behalf of the CIA, but clearly it would be easy for the US government or any other actor to use Anonymous as a proxy or as a cover for cyber warfare. Since there is no leader of Anonymous, there is really nobody who could refute claims of responsibility for certain pranks or hacks supposedly carried out in the name of Anonymous.

Information Operations in Cyberspace

Currently, computer network attacks of a certain level of sophistication are only feasible for nation-states since they require a substantial amount of resources and skills that are not easily available for terrorist groups or even hacktivist groups (Singer and Friedman 2014, 98). As a result, the use of proxies in cyberspace is limited to less sophisticated cyber attacks and most importantly to information operations in cyberspace, which includes social media content manipulation ('trolling'), hacking and leaking damaging information, and typical hacktivism tactics such as DDoS attacks and website defacement. These activities may seem harmless compared to taking down critical information infrastructure, but they play an increasingly important role in contemporary nonviolent resistance strategies and in insurgencies (Petit 2012). In irregular warfare nonmilitary or political activities matter more than success on the battlefield. According to military analyst Brian Petit, '[n]arratives in the form of stories, rumors, biographies and pictures drive our behaviors and shape our convictions' (Petit 2012, 26–27). By shaping narratives activists and insurgents can influence perceptions and can politically mobilize large numbers of people or manipulate other actors such as foreign governments.

Astroturfing is the simulation of a grassroots movement by hiring a small number of activists (or promoters in the marketing world), who create the impression that a cause (or product) receives widespread support. It can be as simple as hiring protesters, who might attract genuine protesters, or to get a thousand people to make numerous calls to elected officials about an issue, or to post large numbers of comments supporting a given narrative on social media. In the online world there are paid 'trolls,' who spend their days posting and blogging using different Internet personas to promote the preferred narrative of their sponsor or the narrative that fits the ideology of the trolls, or to discredit opposing narratives and to verbally attack people with dissenting views.[8] To some extent this process can be even automated as software has been developed to manage personas and post propaganda messages on social media (Jarvis 2011).

The Arab Spring is a major example as to how narratives promoted on social media by activists can bring down governments. Egyptian activists supported by Google, Twitter, and Facebook used the beating and death of Khaled Said by the Egyptian police to support the narrative that Egyptian government is brutal, corrupt, and needs to be overthrown. The incited public outrage ultimately sparked the mass protests on Tahrir Square that

forced Mubarak to resign (Kilcullen 2013, 193). There are many indications that the revolution in Egypt was prepared for several years by the US State Department and that the Egyptian activists acted as US proxies/agents for regime change.[9] The State Department had set up a specific training program that received $57 million in 2009 for three years to teach foreign dissidents in the arts of evading government surveillance (encryption, use of firewalls, anonymization etc.), which, according to *Time* magazine, trained 'more than 10,000 bloggers, journalists and activists…in 10 languages through 50 programs, and hundreds of thousands more have accessed materials and guides published by the groups' (Newton-Small 2012, 1). A number of US government funded pro-democracy NGOs actively supported activists from Arab countries to develop Internet activism skills, including the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and Freedom House (Nixon 2011). Google played an active role in orchestrating the Tahrir Square demonstrations through their Egyptian-born manager Wael Ghonim, who had set up the Facebook page 'We Are All Khaled Said' (Petit 2012, 24; Kilcullen 2013, 192–193). Brian Petit argued, '[a]s the Arab Spring results and the CORE Lab studies on Egypt have proven, social media is powerful tool for producing the psychological effects necessary for a skilled application of UW' (Petit 2012, 27).

The Internet was used by insurgents in Libya and Syria to promote their cause. Although the Gaddafi regime tried to block social media and Internet access, the Libyan insurgents were supported by volunteers in Europe and the Middle East, who helped them to communicate and collect intelligence on the Internet (Kilcullen 2013, 204). Events in the war zone could be filmed and almost immediately uploaded for the world to see. According to cyber security expert Ronald Deibert, '[t]he latest generation mobile phones have been employed as frontline sensors, uploading atrocities for the world to witness as they occur – their shaky, hand-held videos a grim portal into the otherwise hidden spectacle of torture, suffering, and death – thus circumventing the Syrian regime's official blackout of journalists' (Deibert 2013, 155). Social media reporting provides an impression of 'authenticity' and 'immediacy' since it can be made to appear that it is information or media that uploaded by ordinary people in the area, who were eye witnesses of events. At the same time, social media can be integrated into a larger propaganda plan, where supposedly 'authentic' information is deliberately planted on social media as an orchestrated event unfolds to steer the reporting in a particular direction as social media posts can be picked up by the mainstream media to support a story.[10]

The Balkanization of the Internet

It is notable that many countries have created specialized military units for defensive and offensive operations in cyberspace. For example, Edward Snowden revealed the existence of the NSA's Tailored Access Operations (TAO) unit, which conducts sophisticated cyber warfare against adversaries, including the embedding of malware into hardware, the discovery and exploitation of vulnerabilities in software, and the development of advanced hacking tools such as QUANTUM (a tool for monitoring Internet traffic). Similar teams of military hackers exist in major cyber power states such as the UK (Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group (JTRIG) and Joint Cyber Reserve Force (JCRF)), Israel (Unit 8200), China (Unit 61398), and Russia (an announced but unnamed military cyber unit). Some countries have also set up civilian or military 'web brigades' to conduct information operations in cyberspace (disseminating or countering propaganda, mostly through social media). For example, the UK has the 'Twitter troops' of the 77th Army Brigade that specialize in utilizing social media for information operations (Benedictus 2016).

It might therefore seem that proxies have become redundant in cyberspace since nations have developed all the necessary in-house expertise and capability in all aspects of cyber warfare. However, as nations have moved towards embracing the Internet as domain of warfare they have also made efforts to curtail and control global information flows. The result is what some analysts have called a potential 'balkanization of the Internet,' where countries will defend their part of the Internet against foreign influences. In the long term, the Internet may become little more than a collection of national computer networks with highly policed borders in cyberspace and 'fragmented like the telephone system' (Healey 2011, 113). Governments have experienced 'digitally-driven revolutions' or the meddling in national elections through the placement of subversive content on the Internet, which has resulted in ever greater efforts by governments to block content that they do not like or to prepare for disconnecting their networks from the rest of the Internet through 'kill switches.' Egypt managed to temporarily shut down their Internet during the height of the Arab Spring by taking the Egyptian ISPs offline. Most aggressive in the attempt of censoring the Internet has been China with its Great Firewall of China, which makes undesirable content containing certain keywords unavailable to Chinese Internet users (Deibert 2013, 72). Russia and China are now advocating the concept of 'cyber sovereignty' that treats the Internet as a

physical space and that would make it illegal for governments to trespass into other national 'Internets.' The consequence for cyber warfare would be a growing necessity on relying on local proxies for bypassing national cyber borders. Cyber attacks that are remote become much more difficult to accomplish. In the end, local proxies will be needed to disseminate propaganda or to release malware on national networks. As a result, cyber warfare will be to a large extent proxy warfare since local assets are needed to upload propaganda material or to deploy cyber weapons.

Smart Weapons for Smarter Proxy Wars

Unlike in medieval times and even the Cold War period there are now better possibilities with respect for controlling proxies and for reducing the 'disposal problem' through advanced technology such as 'smart weapons.' For a long time, the term 'smart weapons' has been associated with expensive high-tech weapons such as cruise missiles or laser-guided bombs rather than small and light weapons (SALW). This is changing as computer chips have become much more powerful and much cheaper, allowing them to be inserted into all kinds of small devices, including hand guns. The National Institute of Justice sponsored a 'smart gun' in the 1990s that would require an authorized user to wear a transponder that activates the gun by radio signal and automatically deactivates it if it is out of transponder range. Alternatively, user authentication could occur through a fingerprint sensor built into the grip (Cottrill 1998). The new technologies can address some of the aspects of the disposal problem, namely controlling the consequences of transferring SALW to armed groups. Many types of small arms could be upgraded to smart weapons at a reasonable cost. The key technologies relate to the tracking of weapons, remote deactivation of weapons, and weapons that use biometric signature activation.

Tracking Weapons

The most basic approach to controlling SALW is to ensure that they can be tracked and potentially collected at the end of a conflict. Traditionally, the tracking has been accomplished through the use of serial numbers on firearms and other weapons or weapons parts combined with international arms registers that allow determining the origin of a weapon and potentially track its use. An improvement over this approach would be the inser-

tion of RFID tracking chips in weapons that make it possible to uniquely identify and locate every weapon that has the chip. For example, in 2012 it became public that the ATF had intended to insert GPS tracking chips into arms that were allowed to be procured by Mexican cartels in the US in order to track the end users. Although Operation FAST AND FURIOUS, as this effort was codenamed, turned out to have been a failure because of the fact that most small arms transferred did not have a tracking chip, the idea itself was sound: if one can track the weapon, one can track the users, which can then assist in identifying and arresting them.

There would be obvious benefits for PMOs to make transferred weapons trackable. First of all, it would make it harder for corrupt elements in partner states or proxy groups to sell off weapons to the black market without getting caught, which reduces waste and makes sure that weapons are less likely to do damage elsewhere. Secondly, there would be greater chances to collect weapons post-conflict if they can be remotely located, which reduces the danger of permanent political instability due to the continued presence of armed groups. Thirdly, there would be also much greater accountability in PMOs since it can be determined how many and what weapons have been distributed and where they eventually ended up. A potential downside is that tracking chips inside of weapons could also allow enemy forces to track them or may make weapons less reliable (Economist 2013).

Perishable Weapons and Weapons 'Kill Switches'

Weapons can be designed to be perishable or to allow remote deactivation in order to prevent their misuse. One existing example are landmines that automatically deactivate after a preset time or when their batteries run out in order to prevent death and injury of civilians, much of which occurs post-conflict. Landmines are one of the deadliest weapons used in small wars and they have resulted in countries that are littered with them, causing death and injury even decades after a conflict has ended. An important case in this respect is the mining of Laos from the air for disrupting Communist supply lines. Over 270 million cluster munitions such as the BLU 43 Dragontooth landmine were dropped on Laos, many of which failed to explode or deactivate, which has resulted in a considerable human suffering to the present day. Although antipersonnel mines have been outlawed in the Ottawa Treaty, other types of mines have not, and in any case, mines or IED will continue to play a role in small wars. Future mines

could be remotely deactivated or detonated through a simple radio signal. They may also be better capable of discerning targets so that collateral damage and misuse is less likely.

Also of great concern are MANPADS and other missile systems such as TOW anti-tank missiles that have been transferred to armed groups in Afghanistan, Angola, Libya, and Syria. These missile systems could come with non-rechargeable and non-exchangeable batteries that ensure that the weapons will become useless after a certain time (Economist 2013). The missiles might have perishable propellents that give them a short shelf-life, which discourages their stockpiling or resale (Economist 2013). With perishable weapons it would be easier and less consequential to provide proxies with far greater firepower than they have been given before. This could dramatically increase their effectiveness while also better managing the risk of proxies going rogue.

The Vault 7 documents of *WikiLeaks* include documents relating to the Protego Project, which is a malware that the CIA plants in US missile systems that the US exports to its allies, which proves that remote deactivation of weapons system is an existing technology. The malware is embedded in the missile control chips for Pratt & Whitney aircraft with missile launch systems (air-to-air/air-to-ground). According to WikiLeaks,

> The MP unit receives three signals from a beacon: "In Border" (PWA is within the defined area of an operation), "Valid GPS" (GPS signal available) and "No End of Operational Period" (current time is within the defined timeframe for an operation). Missiles can only be launched if all signals received by MP are set to "true". Similarly safeguards are in place to auto-destruct encryption and authentication keys for various scenarios (like "leaving a target area of operation" or "missing missile"). (WikiLeaks.org 2017)

It appears that exported aircraft and missiles have a geographic restriction: they only work in certain geographic areas. They could also have a time set when they deactivate or self-destruct. As a result, missiles transferred to proxy forces may already have safeguards of this kind installed. Obviously, the CIA would have preferred to keep this information hidden since proxies and other allies may insist on using non-US weapons systems to make sure they work even when the US does not approve of their use.

Ideally, a weapon that is transferred to an armed group should be issued to a particular vetted individual, who is the only one who is allowed to use it for a specified purpose. When the authorized user is killed or the weapon

is lost in the field, it would become useless, which prevents its misuse or renders it harmless when it is captured by the enemy. By transferring US smart weapons that have various safeguards installed to prevent misuse of these weapons, many risks associated with proxy warfare and the disposal problem can be mitigated. Of course, this approach would require to give up any pretense of deniability and to accept full responsibility for all the actions of proxy forces since there would be always the option of switching their weapons off.

Drones

Armed drones have been used in support of PMOs and as a new form of covert intervention since October 2001 when an armed Predator drone was used to hunt down Osama bin Laden and other Taliban/al Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan (Clark 2015, 176). The Air Force had developed the armed Predator drone in its rapid procurement program 'Big Safari,' which demonstrated that HELLFIRE anti-tank missiles could be fired successfully from the drones in February 2001 (Hancock and Wexler 2014, 457). Henry Crumpton, who was the CIA officer in charge of the CIA effort to unseat the Taliban, remarked that '[t]he Predator served a complementary and revolutionary role in this complex attack [on Afghanistan in 2001], often because we developed UAV tactics on the fly' (Crumpton 2012, 219). The armed Predator participated in a bombing attack on Taliban/al Qaeda leaders that killed Mohammed Atef in November 2001 (Zenko 2010, 82). The ability of armed drones to surveil large areas and carry out precision strikes against individuals made them a weapon of choice in the War on Terror. The CIA acquired a small fleet of armed drones, as well as JSOC to attack terrorist leaders and militants in neutral countries in a deniable fashion, usually with the permission of the respective local government. The first CIA drone strike occurred a year later in Yemen in November 2002, which killed Qaed Salim Sinan Al-Harithi who was considered responsible for the USS Cole bombing of 2000 (Zenko 2010, 84–89). The main idea is that drone operations are less provocative than manned aircraft when operating in foreign air spaces and that they are therefore more acceptable to local governments that have terrorist groups present on their territory. Besides drones put no American lives at risk and they do not allow enemies to capture pilots, who got shot down. Armed drones have proven to be less useful in situations where they had to operate without the permission of a local government,

especially if that government had a, however rudimentary, air defense capability. Since drones are slow-flying aircraft with little maneuverability they can be easily shot down by fighter aircraft or modern air defense systems. This is the reason for the more limited role of drones in proxy warfare directed against another government.[11] Still, drones have substantially boosted the military capability of proxies on occasion. Since 2007 the US military operates the Reaper drone (a modified version of the Predator), which has substantially more firepower and greater speed with an ability to up to 16 HELLFIRE missiles (compared to two missiles for the Predator) and a maximum speed of 300 mph (compared to 115 mph for the Predator). Armed drones released weapons 145 times in support of Libyan rebels from April 2011 to October 2011 and a Predator drone was involved in locating Gaddafi before getting killed by rebels (Ackerman 2011). The US had a harder time to utilize drones in Syria because of the fact that Syria has modern air defenses and that since 2015 Syria hosts a Russian fighter squadron. Whenever advanced drones are used there is also a concern that they might be brought down and recovered by the enemy, which provides proof of US involvement and potentially leads to the proliferation of sensitive technology. In the future the US and other powers might develop stealth drones with substantial firepower to carry out close air support missions or precision strikes and otherwise assist proxies with respect to reconnaissance, surveillance, and intelligence. Sometimes drone technology will be transferred to proxies for purposes of deniability.[12] Drones can be small, expendable, and lethal, which will make them important assets in future unconventional warfare by SOF and insurgents. There is little doubt that drones will play an increasing role in proxy wars and hybrid warfare. At the same time, since they are remotely operated and networked systems there is also a great danger that future enemies will be able to hijack drones and use them against those who deployed them (Singer and Friedman 2014, 150–151). Of course, as drone technology proliferates so will drones and the technology to counter them.

Notes

1. The only notable exception might be the French support to the American revolutionaries in the War of Independence. However, since France was an absolutist monarchy motivated merely by the idea of harming its geostrategic rival Britain, the outcome of the creation of an American Republic was more of an unintended consequence. The American Revolution likely

inspired the French Revolution, which ended the very government that had supported the Continental Army.

2. 'Ungoverned spaces' are not really ungoverned since they tend to be controlled by nonstate actors, who can impose their rules on respective populations. These are merely territories beyond the effective control of a government. The CIA had identified over 50 ungoverned spaces in the early 2000s and had warned that they provide safe havens to terrorist groups.
3. Since the 1990s the Russian mafia has operated in the guise of private security companies. Warlords are now offering security services in conflict zones to governments, NGOs, and companies. McFate argued: 'The US outsourcing of security has normalized the market for force, inspiring warlords and other conflict entrepreneurs to start their own PMCs.' See McFate 2014, 156.
4. Sean McFate pointed out, '[i]n Afghanistan, 18,867 individuals worked for PMCs, of these, only 197 were US citizens. Similarly, in Iraq, only 1,017 of the 11,628 contractors were Americans.' See McFate 2014, 150–151. McFate argues that the employment of foreign and indigenous fighters is mostly motivated by achieving cost savings for the PMCs as salaries are the main overhead for these companies. Foreign and indigenous personnel is cheaper and enables a PMC to have a higher profit margin and to make more competitive bids for contracts.
5. The US has systematically collected biometrics in Iraq and Afghanistan to identify insurgents. Unfortunately, there is little information as to how successful this single measure was in terms of reducing violence.
6. Thomas Rid has suggested that 'cyberwar will not take place' in the sense of cyber warfare being used as the sole mode of attack. Instead, Rid considers that activities usually associated with cyber warfare, namely cyber espionage, cyber sabotage, and cyber subversion, should not be considered war or warfare. See Rid 2011.
7. A former leader of Nashi later confirmed that the group was responsible for the cyber attack and did so on behalf of the Russian government. See Shachtman 2009.
8. Several governments have created 'troll armies' to engage the enemy in the field of social media and thereby shape perceptions of a conflict in a deniable way that is also more credible with foreign audiences since trolls only seem to represent the 'average joe.'
9. An article in the *New York Times* by Mark Landler made the case that the Obama administration was actively seeking political change in the Middle East prior the Arab Spring. President Obama ordered the production of classified report on the future of the region. The report, known as Presidential Study Directive, 'identified likely flashpoints, most notably

Egypt, and solicited proposals for how the administration could push for political change in countries with autocratic rulers who are also valuable allies of the United States, these officials said…Leon E. Panetta, acknowledged in testimony before Congress, needed to better identify "triggers" for uprisings in countries like Egypt.' See Landler 2011.

10. It is an interesting phenomenon that social media content is now used by the mainstream media as 'authentic' or fact with little effort made to test or determine their authenticity. There are many examples that are relevant here such as the reporting on Syria, ISIS, or the conflict in Ukraine.
11. The US has primarily used drones against nonstate actors with no or little air defense capability in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, and the tribal regions of Pakistan.
12. The Libyan rebels acquired an Aeryon Scout drone from a Canadian company for $100,000, which was used for reconnaissance missions. Similarly, Iran transferred reconnaissance drones to Hezbollah, which were used over Israel and in Syria.

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