

Thanato-tactics

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Throughout the years of the second intifada, a major Israeli effort was directed at the development of airborne assassinations and the specific technology related to it. From what was often described as a "rare and exceptional emergency method," it has become the Israeli Air Force's main form of attack in the Gaza Strip. According to Ephraim Segoli, a helicopter pilot and former commander of the air force base in Palmahim, located halfway between Tel Aviv and Gaza, from which most assassination raids have been launched and where now the largest fleets of remotely controlled killer drones are located, airborne "liquidations are the central component of IDF operations and the very essence of the 'war' it is waging." Segoli, speaking in May 2006, claimed, furthermore, that "the intention to 'perfect' these operations meant that Israel's security industries have... started concentrating [much of their efforts] on the development of systems that primarily serve this operational logic."¹

According to data collected by the human rights organization B'Tselem, from the beginning of the intifada to February 2008, 376 Palestinians were killed in targeted assassinations. Only 227 of those were the intended targets for assassination. The rest were Palestinians who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. About fifty of those were children.² The assassinated included many of the political and military leadership of Hamas, as well.

What follows deals with the methods—technological, operational, legal, and other—that form the basis of these operations and asks how they interact. How do these tactics of assassination intersect with political considerations and calculations? How does the Israeli government and military seek to justify these assassinations, legally, morally, and politically?

Beyond thinking of targeted assassination as a direct, preemptive response to terror, the aim here, an update and revision on my previous research on the

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subject,³ is to show how Israeli security organizations conceived assassination as a central component in a political "project" and as an attempt to generate a degree of control over Palestinian politics and the population at large. It asks, following Achille Mbembe's essay "Necropolitics," "What is the relationship between politics and death" that these efforts form?⁴ How, after the evacuation of the ground surface of Gaza, did bodies, rather than territories, or death, rather than space, turn into the raw material of Israeli sovereignty?

TARGETING

Segoli explained that targeted assassinations are "a success story based upon a high degree of cooperation between the General Security Service (GSS) and the air force."⁵ Above all, airborne targeted assassinations were fed by the information and organizational powers that the GSS developed under Avi Dichter, director of the GSS from 2000 to 2005, who gained considerable popularity with the public and with the prime minister, Ariel Sharon, as a result of their "success." The efficiency of the operations has relied on the close networking between the intelligence provided by the GSS, fast-tracked political decisions, and the strike capacity of the air force. The GSS drafts the death lists and recommends the time of the operation (once included, rarely has a name been removed from them alive); it provides the files on each person to be liquidated (including details of their involvement in the resistance and their prospective danger to Israel); a special ministerial committee gives its approval (the typical length of deliberation is fifteen minutes, and there are generally no objections); and the air force does the killing.⁶

Each targeted assassination is a large-scale operation that integrates hundreds of specialists from different military branches and security apparatuses. Beyond its reliance on background intelligence (much of it gathered in mass arrests and from Palestinians stopped at checkpoints), targeted assassination depends on sharing real-time information between various agents, commanders, operators, and different military planes and on their ability to act upon it. After a Palestinian is put on the death list, he is followed, sometimes for days, by a "swarm" of different kinds of unmanned aerial vehicles. Often, different swarms follow different people simultaneously in different areas of the Gaza Strip. In this way, the security services establish the targeted person's daily routines and habits and maintain continuous visual contact with him until his killing.⁷ As well as being cheaper to operate, unmanned drones have the advantage over manned planes or helicopters because they can remain in the air around the clock, some for as long as thirty hours, and because their formations circulate in relatively small areas while providing a multiplicity of angles of vision. Moreover, drones are quiet and barely

visible to the human eye. This is the reason that beginning in 2004, the air force started to shoot its missiles from drones, rather than from its more visible battle helicopters. A swarm of various types of drones, each circulating at a different altitude, up to a height of 30,000 feet, is navigated by a GPS system and woven by radio communication into a single synergetic reconnaissance and killing instrument that conducts the entire assassination operation. Some drones are designed to view the terrain vertically in order to establish the digital coordinates of a targeted person, while others look diagonally, in order to distinguish facial features or identify a vehicle's license plates. Some drones are designed to intercept radio signals and mobile-phone transmissions, while others can carry and shoot missiles. With the development and proliferation of drone technology, "very few Israeli soldiers [are] in the airspace over Gaza," and "the air is mainly filled with Golems." It is "an army without soldiers."⁸

Airborne assassinations depend as well on other mechanisms within Israel's system of domination. While targeted assassinations are explained as the alternative to collective punishment, to hardships imposed on the "uninvolved population," and to mass incarcerations, they are dependent on intelligence obtained in those mass incarcerations and interrogations. They rely, primarily in the West Bank, upon seducing Palestinians into collaboration in exchange for travel and work permits. The checkpoints themselves are part of Israel's "surveillance assemblages." In them, it is easy for the General Security Service to make contact with its informers without raising suspicions.

The clandestine Unit 504, jointly operated by military intelligence and the GSS, is responsible for the forced recruitment of Palestinians into collaboration. From one of its bases south of Haifa, where it also maintains Facility 1391, a Guantanamo Bay-style secret prison for "administrative detainees," Unit 504 trains groups of Palestinians to mark targets, plant and detonate bombs, or "shake the tree for the air force."⁹ In previous years, members of this Palestinian military unit of the IDF would splash ultraviolet paint on the roof of a car to identify the target for a pilot to destroy.¹⁰

The missiles aim most often at a vehicle, but increasingly, and since Palestinians now often take the precaution to walk, also at pedestrians. Each assassination thus juxtaposes different spaces and domains: a control room in central Tel Aviv in which young soldiers navigate remotely piloted drones and missiles, as in a live computer game, into the narrow, dusty alleys of Gaza's refugee camps, where young Palestinians end their lives.

The IDF employs the sanitizing term "focused obstruction" or "focused pre-emption" (*sikul memukod*) to describe these assassinations. Such rhetoric is repeated by most of the popular Israeli media, which conceals as far as possible

the real impact of the killings, mostly avoiding mentioning the names of Palestinian civilians killed in Israeli attacks and the display of the corpses, blood, and body parts—the very images on which it lingers when covering the aftermath of a Palestinian terror attack. Indeed, the Israeli media's use of selective imagery allows it to project assassination not only as necessary, but also as ethical, rhetorically legalizing it by what Neve Gordon has called "the discursive production of a pseudo-judicial process."¹¹

One of many counterpoints to these digitized visions of "precision" killing was provided by Aref Daraghmei, a witness to an August 2002 targeted assassination in the village of Tubas in the West Bank, who has provided the following testimony for B'Tselem:

The helicopter...fired a third missile towards a silver Mitsubishi, which had four people in it. The missile hit the trunk and the car spun around its axis. I saw a man stepping out of the car and running away. He ran about 25 meters and then fell on the ground and died. The three other passengers remained inside. I saw an arm and an upper part of a skull flying out of the car. The car went up in flames and I could see three bodies burning inside it. Three minutes later, after the Israeli helicopters left, I went out to the street and began to shout. I saw people lying on the ground. Among them was six-year-old Bahira.... She was dead.... I also saw Bahira's cousin, Osama.... I saw Osama's mother running towards Bahira, picking her up and heading towards the a-Shifa clinic, which is about 500 meters away. I went to the clinic and saw her screaming after seeing the body of her son, Osama.¹²

OPERATIONAL PLANNING

The operational aspect of airborne targeted assassinations relies on military developments that originated in Israel's war in Lebanon during the 1980s and 1990s. In February 1992, Hezbollah Secretary General Sheikh Abbas Mussawi was the first to be killed in an airborne assassination when a group of Israeli helicopters flying inland from the Mediterranean Sea attacked his convoy, killing him and his family. The first airborne targeted assassination in Palestinian areas took place on November 9, 2000, when an Israeli Apache helicopter pilot launched a U.S.-made Hellfire antitank missile at the car of a member of Tanzim al-Fatah organization, Hussein Muhammad Abayit, in Beit-Sahur, near Bethlehem, killing him and two women, Rahmeh Shahin and Aziza Muhammed Danun, who happened to be walking by the car when it exploded in the middle of their street. The IDF's spokesperson announced that the killing was part of "a new state policy."¹³ Since 2002, however, it has been Gaza that has become the world's largest laboratory for airborne

assassinations.¹⁴ The U.S. administration feebly protested Israeli assassinations, demanding through diplomatic channels that Israel merely "considers the results of its actions." Meanwhile, different branches of the U.S. security forces, themselves engaged in unacknowledged assassinations using unmanned drones began to "examine Israeli Air Force's performances and results in order to draw lessons for its own wars."¹⁵

The planning and execution of these operations follows the principles of air force operational planning. The unit of "operational analysis" is part of the Israeli Air Force's "operational group" and is responsible, together with various intelligence agencies, for planning and optimizing bombing missions. There are three levels according to which bombing is planned: mechanical, systemic and political.

At the mechanical level, planning is concerned with the matching of munitions with targets—calculating what size and what type of bomb is needed to destroy a particular target; what amount of explosives is needed to destroy a car, a building of a particular size, a tunnel, or a bunker. The mechanical level involves calculations by civil engineers and blast experts assessing the structure of the target and the quality of its construction. Military engineers then use a computer program to determine the munitions, attack angle, and time of day that will ensure the destruction of the target with the minimum use of munitions, destruction, and death to bystanders.

In the context of targeted assassinations, the mechanical level is concerned with the development of the warhead, the explosives used within it, and the accuracy of its delivery. Like the knife of the guillotine, the warhead and other innovations in the technologies of bombing aimed at making killing more efficient and "civilized" in fact enable its routine and frequent application. I will return to this point at a later part of the essay. In this role—as the designer and employer of the knife of the guillotine—the unit of operational analysis has been criticized at least twice, once for the use of excessive force and the other for excessive caution. The first case involved the decision, on July 23, 2002, to use a one-ton bomb to destroy a residential building in Gaza where the leader of Hamas's military wing, Salah Shehadeh, was spending the night, causing several buildings to collapse, killing Shehadeh and additional fourteen Palestinian civilians, more than half of them children. In the second case, two years later, the operational analysis unit was criticized for allocating a quarter-ton bomb for the attack on a meeting of Hamas's leadership. The bomb failed to cause the collapse of the building, allowing the leaders to escape unharmed from the ground floor.

The second level of planning is the systemic. The function of the unit of operational analysis extends beyond the planning of physical destruction. It attempts to predict and map out the effect that the destruction of a particular target might

have on the enemy's overall system of operation. Following the principles of "system analysis,"¹⁶ the enemy is understood as an operational network of interacting elements. In air force targeting theories, cities, societies, and political regimes are vulnerable because of their reliance on networked infrastructures that sustain life. When translated to its war with the Palestinians, the killing of members of Palestinian organizations is similarly thought of in relation to a systemic logic. Unlike state militaries, much of whose power is grounded in physical infrastructure and equipment, in the case of the Palestinian resistance, the infrastructure of resistance is the people themselves.¹⁷ The effectiveness of the Palestinian resistance is grounded in its people and in the efficiency of the relations between them: political and spiritual leaders, spokespersons, financiers, commanders, experienced fighters, bomb makers, and recruiters. The killing of a key individual is conceived in terms similar to the destruction of a command-and-control center or a strategic bridge. Both are intended to trigger a sequence of systemic "failures" that will disrupt the enemy's system, making it more vulnerable to further military action.¹⁸ "Operational shock" is best achieved, according to the military and the GSS, when the rhythms of these operations is rapid and the enemy system is not given time to recover between attacks.¹⁹

The third level of planning is political. Aerial bombing has had a political dimension from the inception of air forces between the First and Second World Wars. In his 1921 *The Command of the Air*, the Italian Giulio Douhet recognized the effects of bombing on civilian and military morale. Air power could break a people's will by destroying a country's "vital centers," he argued. Douhet identified the six basic target types as industry, transport, infrastructure, communications, government, and "the will of the people." The first four are types of targets related to targeting's military-systemic logic, while the last two could be attributed to political/psychological objectives. The political objective of targeting is to compel the enemy leadership to negotiate a surrender on the attacker's terms. Douhet was explicit about the fact that air war calls for the manipulation of civilian fear and suffering in order to achieve its political aims and that according to these terms, an air war could be considered a terror war.²⁰ When considering the political rationality of targeting, the killing of the uninvolved civilians that the military calls "collateral damage" could no longer be simply considered as the byproduct of the intention to hit military targets, but rather as the very aim of the bombing.

Often, the political logic of targeting is hidden behind military rhetoric that argues for the logic of bombing according to the first two levels of planning, the mechanical and systemic, which are considered legal according to international law. For example, in Israeli military announcements during the 2006 War between Israel and Hezbollah, Israeli targeting was explained according to a military logic: the

destruction of airports, bridges, Hezbollah offices, launching sites, supply lines, infrastructure, and so on. It presented civilian casualties as the regrettable side effects of its attempts to hit military or dual-use targets. However, the destruction of homes and the killing and displacement of civilians was the main leverage of political pressure. This set of calculated acts has precedents in the logic of Israel's military interventions in Lebanon, which often aimed to manipulate differences and existing hostilities within Lebanon's complex social-political-ethnic fabric. The bombing in the 2006 War, according to Israeli speakers, aimed to turn the Lebanese populace against Hezbollah—a stratagem that was based on the assumption that a cold political calculus can triumph over vengeful rage in time of war. The creation of civilian casualties and their justification as "collateral damage" was part of an attempt to create a human catastrophe that could not be tolerated internationally and that would thus precipitate international intervention on Israel's terms. The bombing of Shiite towns and villages in the south was meant to force hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee northward toward Beirut. There, Israel hoped, their presence would put pressure on the government, who would in turn put pressure on the Hezbollah leadership to stop its military activities and disarm. Needless to say, these tactics led to crushing strategic failures. The refugees had neither the inclination nor the power to pressure the government in Lebanon or Hezbollah, and the bombings created nothing but public outrage and further support for Hezbollah.²¹

"TECHNOLOGY INSTEAD OF OCCUPATION"

Perennial overoptimism regarding air power has led successive generations of airmen to believe that unprecedented technological developments would allow wars to be won from the air, with bombing to intimidate politicians into submission and native populations to be managed by air power. The role of this new technology was to reduce uncertainty and increase control. The fantasy of a cheap aerial occupation, or "aerially enforced colonization," is as old as air forces themselves. In the 1920s, Winston Churchill, as minister of war and air, was fascinated with what he perceived to be the economically efficient, quick, clean, mechanical, and impersonal alternatives that air power could provide to the otherwise onerous and expensive tasks of colonial control. Emboldened by a murderous aerial attack on a tribal leader in Somaliland in 1920 that put down a rebellion, he suggested that aircraft be further adapted to the tasks of policing the empire. In 1922, Churchill persuaded the British government to invest in the air force and offered the Royal Air Force 6 million pounds to take over control of the Mesopotamia (Iraq) operation from the army, which had cost 18 million thus far.²² The policy, called "control

without occupation," saw the RAF successfully replacing large and expensive army contingents. Sir Percy Cox, the high commissioner in Baghdad, reported that by the end of 1922, "on [at least] three occasions demonstrations by aircraft [have been sufficient to bring] tribal feuds to an end. On another occasion planes...dropped bombs on a sheik and his followers who refused to pay taxes, held up travelers and attacked a police station."²³ Arthur "Bomber" Harris (so called after his infamous bombing campaigns on German working-class districts when commander of the RAF's bomber wing during World War II) reported after a mission in Iraq in 1924: "The Arab and Kurd now know what real bombing means, in casualties and damage. They know that within 45 minutes a full-sized village can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or injured."²⁴ The methods pioneered in Somaliland were also applied by the RAF against revolutionaries in Egypt, Darfur, India, Palestine (mainly during the 1936–39 Arab revolt),²⁵ and in Afghanistan's Jalalabad and Kabul. Anticipating the logic of targeted assassinations, Harris later boasted that the Afghan war was won by a single strike on the king's palace.²⁶

Similar belief in "aerially enforced occupation" allowed the Israeli Air Force to attempt to replace the network of lookout outposts woven through the topography of the terrain by translating categories of "depth," "stronghold," "high point," "closure," and "panorama" into "air-defense in depth," "clear skies," "aerial reconnaissance," "aerially enforced closure," and "panoramic radar." With a "vacuum cleaner" approach to intelligence gathering, sensors aboard unmanned drones, aerial reconnaissance jets, attack helicopters, unmanned balloons, early warning Hawkeye planes, and military satellites capture most signals out of Palestinian airspace. Since the beginning of the second intifada, the air force has put in hundreds of thousands of flight hours, harvesting a stream of information through its network of airborne reconnaissance platforms, information that was later put at the disposal of different intelligence agencies and command-and-control rooms.

Distinctions must be maintained, however, between the kind of operation that the IDF conducts in Gaza (ever more so after the "evacuation") and those in the West Bank. The degrees of violence that Israel employs in Gaza greatly exceed the levels of violence employed in the West Bank. These differences in military approach are shaped by differences in degrees of control over the territory and the population. In the West Bank, Israel has a massive civilian presence of about half a million settlers and an extensive ground military presence, whereas even before the evacuation, Gaza was always considered a territory that it is hard for ground troops to enter. Whereas Israeli soldiers have broken into all Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps in the West Bank again and again, they have done so much less often in the larger and more impoverished refugee camps of Gaza. The evacuation of Gaza sharpened this tendency, and the strip was thereafter

controlled primarily from the air, but also from the territorial waters off its coastline and through border terminals along its fences.

In the West Bank, as its former chief commander, Yair Golan, mentioned in 2007, the military seeks to maintain a constant degree of "effective friction" for both operational and intelligence purposes, bringing the Palestinian civilian population into constant contact with Israeli soldiers and other security personnel.²⁷ The tactics of constant friction are maintained by the presence of settlements, roadblocks, checkpoints, and military offices for civilian administration. They control the population by constant harassment, as well as by modulating flows of various kinds: people, goods, and services. Aerial assassinations in the West Bank have indeed ceased after Operation Defensive Shield on April 2002, when the IDF destroyed organized Palestinian police and military forces, as well as many government offices, and reinstated complete ground control over Palestinian population centers. Since the end of 2002, assassinations in the West Bank have been undertaken from the ground, many of them under the pretext of arrest operations. According to figures released by B'Tselem, between 2004 and May 2006, Israeli security forces killed 157 persons during operations referred to as "arrest operations."²⁸ The most common justification for IDF killings conducted during ground raids in the West Bank is that the victim "violently attempted to resist arrest," but ground forces do not always allow militants to surrender and often try to steer them away from it.

The legal framework for targeted assassinations has developed in response to the pace of events. Immediately after the start of the second intifada, the head of the IDF's International Law Department, Colonel Daniel Reisner, stated that due to the heightened level and frequency of Palestinian violence, Israel could start defining its military operations in the Occupied Territories as an "armed conflict short of war," which placed the intifada in the context of international law, rather than criminal law.²⁹ Such a definition implied that, for the purpose of their killing (but not their internment), members of militant Palestinian organizations could be seen as combatants and thus attacked at will, not only when in the process of a hostile action or while resisting arrest.³⁰ Given that in international law, distinctions between "inside" and "outside" regulate the logic of security operations ("internal" operations are perceived as policing or security work, "external" ones as military) and that the definition of "inside" depends upon whether a state has "effective control" over the territory in question,³¹ the evacuation of the Gaza Strip strengthened Israel's conviction that targeted assassinations are legal and has made their use more frequent. Politically, Israel expected that once it had evacuated the settlements and had retreated to the international border around Gaza, the international community would be more tolerant of these forms of military

action.³² This implies that the tactics of airborne assassinations have developed in response to the Israeli military ceding territorial control, or otherwise, that the evacuation could be thought of as a means to facilitate the continuation of assassinations.

Indeed, the tactical precondition for Israel's policy of territorial withdrawal was that its security services be able to maintain domination of the evacuated areas by means other than territorial control. The members of an IDF think tank called the Alternative Team involved in rethinking Israeli security after the evacuation of Gaza admitted: "Whether or not we are physically present in the territories, we should still be able to demonstrate our ability to control and affect them."³³ The occupation that they conceived to follow the supposed end of the occupation—that is, the domination of Palestinians after the evacuation of the ground space of the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank is completed—was alternately referred to by these and other military planners as the "invisible occupation," the "airborne occupation," or "occupation in disappearance."³⁴

The ability of the Israeli Air Force to maintain a constant "surveillance and strike" capability over Palestinian areas was one of the main reasons for the Sharon government's confidence in and popular support for unilateral ground withdrawals and for accordingly transforming the logic of occupation. Sharon's sacking of Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon and his replacement with the pilot and former air force commander Dan Halutz several months before the ground evacuation of Gaza testified to the perceived offset of military emphasis from the ground to the air and to the Israeli government's acceptance of Halutz's mantra "technology instead of occupation."³⁵ Halutz, as head of the air force, supervised almost one hundred operations of targeted assassinations. Until the result of the 2006 War in Lebanon made him realize otherwise, he was known as the strongest proponent of the claim that airpower can gradually replace many of the traditional functions of ground forces. In a lecture he delivered at the military's National Security College in 2001, he explained that "the capability of the air force today renders some traditional assumptions—that victory equals territory—anachronistic,"³⁶ and he even suggested any subsequent war in Lebanon could be won from the air: "Why do you need to endanger infantry soldiers?" he asked. "I can resolve the entire Lebanon [situation] from the air in 3 to 5 days—a week, maximum."³⁷ The approach that Halutz promoted was drafted in a military publication that was handed out to members of the senior staff in April 2006, two months before the second Lebanon war, explaining that in future conflicts, new military technology would allow for the transformation of warfare from conflicts based on maneuvers to conflicts based on "standoff capacity, precise fire and the deadly effects of invisible forces, without the need to resort to occupation and with minimum friction with the

enemy and the civilian population." The publication further emphasizes the importance of generating an "effect" on the enemy's leadership, either by searing their consciousness or by their "decapitation."³⁸

While previously the IDF would cordon off an area with fences and earth dikes and place checkpoints on the approach roads, the airborne occupation of Gaza enforces its closures by leafleting villages and refugee camps around the area to be shut off, declaring it off-limits and then targeting whoever tries to enter. In this manner, the evacuated settlements of the northern part of Gaza have remained under closure ever since the 2005 evacuation. Following the evacuation, a procedure, code named A Knock on the Door, replaced military bulldozers with bomber jets for the purpose of demolishing houses. This new method involves an air force operator telephoning the house to be demolished, as happened on August 2006 at the a-Rahman family home in Jabalia refugee camp. On Thursday, August 24, 2006, at 11:30 in the evening, someone called the telephone at the house of Abed a-Rahman in Jebalia, claiming to be from the IDF.

The phone had been disconnected because the bill had not been paid to the Palestinian phone company, but was activated for the sake of this conversation. The wife of Abed a-Rahman, Um-Salem, answered the phone.... [On the other side of the line, a voice] said "evacuate the house immediately and notify the neighbors." She asked "who is talking?" and was answered: the IDF. She asked again, but her interlocutor had hung up. Um-Salem tried to use the phone, but it was disconnected again.... The entire family left the house without having the possibility to take anything with them. At 24:00, the house was bombed by military helicopters and was completely destroyed.³⁹

This shows that the "evacuation" thus could not be thought of as an act of decolonization, but rather as the reorganization of state power and control and the enactment of a technocolonial rule.

THE POLITICS OF KILLING

For targeted assassinations to assume the preeminence that they have among all other Israeli techniques of domination, they have had to rely upon not only the maturing of operational and technological developments, but also on legal and popular support. When all these components were put in place, less than a year after the beginning of the intifada, and with successful assassinations carried out routinely since then, the appetite for assassinations has grown. A central factor helping maintain a high level of popular support for targeted assassinations was the daily terror alerts that the GSS under Avi Dichter routinely released. Their

average during the height of the intifada, from 2001 to 2003, was between forty and fifty a day, and Israeli popular public support for targeted assassination, which seemed not only a response, but a suitable revenge, as well, stood at about 80 percent.⁴⁰ In government meetings called to authorize the attacks, Sharon's enthusiasm for successful attacks encouraged the GSS and the military to pursue such operations with greater vigor. Given the high level of Israeli public support for targeted assassinations, no government minister could afford to let slip his or her opposition to the policy or to the timing of a particular assassination as recommended by the GSS, lest it be leaked to the media.

The partial relinquishment of control and the selective absence of government from these decisions brought about the growing autonomy of the security services, which started leading the pace of events. With targeted assassination, security operatives thus filled the political vacuum of the intifada years, dictating developments on the ground. From their own perspective, the GSS and the military believed that targeted assassinations provided the government with "military solutions to situations that were thought of as militarily unsolvable." As the intifada wore on, an obsession with assassination gripped the entire Israeli security system, so much so that in a 2002 meeting called to discuss the assassination of several Palestinian leaders, a military officer suggested conducting one killing every day as a matter of policy. The minister of defense thought it was "indeed an idea," and Sharon seemed excited, but the GSS recommended that the idea be dropped, because it was supposed to be for the GSS, not the military, to decide where and when Palestinians should be killed. (At that point, in any case, killings were already being carried out at an average rate of one every five days.)⁴¹ The military and the GSS, confident of their ability to hit anybody anywhere, at any time, started publishing in advance the names of those to be killed.⁴² According to a June 2003 statement by then Chief of Staff Ya'alon, targeted assassinations became the continuation of politics by other means. "Liquidations," he claimed, "gave the political levels a tool to create a change of direction."⁴³

The effects of targeted assassination on political developments were varied. One of its effects was assuring that no diplomatic process "forced" on Israel could occur. Whenever a political initiative, local or international, seemed to be emerging, threatening to return the parties to the negotiating table, an assassination followed and derailed it. Until the opening of government and GSS archive, it would be hard to establish this intention beyond a doubt, but the following examples demonstrate a clear pattern of action whose intention is the radicalization of conflict when its level could be subdued. On July 31, 2001, the Israeli Air Force bombed an apartment building in Nabulus in which a Hamas officer was located, killing two Hamas leaders, Jamal Mansour and Jamal Salim, and two boys, bringing

the end of a nearly two-month-long Hamas cease-fire. The January 2002 killing of Ra'ad Karimi, a leader in Fatah's own militant group, al-Tanzim, in the preparation of which the GSS has already invested millions of shekels, was not prevented, although the killing was certain to bring about the collapse of a cease-fire that started in December 2001 and to bury an American diplomatic initiative. The assassination led to the spate of Palestinian suicide attacks of February and March 2002. On July 23, 2002, a day before al-Tanzim was to announce a unilateral cease-fire, Salah Shehadeh was assassinated, foreclosing this development. A year later, at the beginning of the summer of 2003, another type of cease-fire, a hudna, or tactical truce, was declared, and another American diplomatic initiative was launched. As it was being formulated, on June 10, 2003, the military attempted to assassinate Abdul al-Aziz Rantisi, a political leader from the Hamas. A few weeks later, Israeli security forces targeted al-Tanzim militant Mahmoud Shawa in Qalqilyah, derailing the initiative completely. On December 1, 2003, the same day that the Geneva Initiative was launched, the IDF conducted a massive operation attempting to kill Sheikh Ibrahim Hamed, head of Hamas in Ramallah. In June 2006, just as Mahmoud Abbas was about to declare a referendum vote on a progressive political initiative of the "prisoners' document,"⁴⁴ Israel targeted Jamal Abu Samhadana, the commander of the Popular Resistance Committees in Gaza, and the idea for the referendum was cancelled.

From the very start of the intifada, Palestinian political leaders were targets of assassinations. At the end of August 2003, government authorization was given to kill the entire political leadership of Hamas in Gaza without further notice. A place on the assassination list was assured, according to Israeli speakers, to anyone who had crossed the threshold of being involved in planning terror attacks, but in fact, the entire political wing of Hamas was placed on it, regardless of whether or not the target was directly involved in operational planning. The method was referred to as opening the "hunting season"—the first leader to reveal himself would be the first to be killed. The stated intention was to weaken Hamas, which led the armed resistance against Israeli settlers, civilians, and the military and to reinforce Fatah's position in the Gaza Strip. The first one to be killed under these instructions was Ismail Abu Shanab, a relatively moderate political leader of Hamas who was targeted on August 21, 2003. On March 22, 2004, Israel assassinated the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. A month later, on April 17, 2004, Yassin's successor, Abdul al-Aziz Rantisi was killed. Dichter explained that the reason for these assassinations was to strengthen the position of Abbas and the moderates in the "Palestinian street." At the beginning of 2006, when the "moderates" were ousted by the newly elected Hamas government, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz repeated the warning, promising that "no one will be immune," including

the Palestinian prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh.⁴⁵ The logic behind these “decapitations” assumed that new leaders would not be as experienced as those killed and that the relative power of their organizations within the field of Palestinian politics would thus decline. “Killing,” according to Shimon Naveh, “injects energy into the enemy system, disrupting its institutional hierarchies,” although, as Naveh has said, “there can be no precise prediction of the outcome of these killings,” the effect, according to the IDF, is a degree of institutional and political chaos that allows Israeli security forces to sit back and see “how the cards fall.”

Not only assassination, but also its suspension, is being used as a weapon. Suspended credible threats of killing generate political effects regardless of the actual assassination taking place. The practical confirmation of this principle was paradoxically pronounced with its cancellation. In July 2007, as part of a package of gestures that the Israeli government “granted” to the Palestinian government of Mahmoud Abbas, Israel announced not only the release of Fatah prisoners (so that they fight Hamas in the West Bank), but also pardons for other activists who were on its target list. The IDF and the GSS offered, under certain conditions that included travel restrictions, to remove from these lists a number of Fatah activists and announced that they will not further pursue attempts for their arrest or assassination. The enthusiastic acceptance by these wanted Palestinians of the conditions imposed by the Israeli security forces demonstrated the pressure that Palestinian militants felt being on Israel’s death lists. At several other points during the intifada, Israel’s suspension of targeted assassinations was itself used as an incentive to reach a cease-fire on Israel’s term.

“Radical” Palestinian leaders could be assassinated to open the way for a more “pragmatic” politics. “Pragmatic” leaders could be assassinated in order to open the way for direct confrontation or to stave off a diplomatic initiative. Other assassinations could have been undertaken in order to “restore order,” others still to “create chaos”; some assassinations would be undertaken simply because they could be undertaken and because no one happened to intervene to stop the assassination machine. Theorizing about the political effects of targeted assassinations has thus become almost an industry unto itself, heavily populated with intelligence analysts, game theorists, and other statistically oriented behavioral scientists—many of whom seem addicted to a jargon that is aimed at making unthinkable state behavior appear intelligent, responsible, rational, and inevitable.

A considerable part of Israel’s security logic of assassination is grounded in the bias of Israel’s intelligence agencies toward personality analysis. The Israeli sociologist Gil Eyal demonstrated that, following a long Orientalist tradition, the Israeli intelligence services have tended to seek motives for political developments, as well as for terror attacks, not in responses to a history of repression or in pursuit

of rational political goals, but in the personal irrationalities, idiosyncrasies, and inconsistencies of Arab leaders.⁴⁶ When undertaken, political and economic analysis generally has provided no more than a context for the work of psychological profiling.⁴⁷ The natural consequence of this logic has been the belief that in killing, Israel’s security services remove not only a leader, but also the cause of a political or security problem. Understanding of the resistance to the occupation, in turn, has similarly been bound up with a focus on certain key figures, while the causes behind it have been ignored.

Although so much effort has been put into modeling enemy behavior, and the security services remain confident in their methods, years of targeted assassinations have not managed to limit violence, nor have they reduced Palestinian motivations for resistance, or strengthened President Mahmoud Abbas, or reinforced “the moderates in the Palestinian street.” On the contrary, assassinations have fed the conflict by seeding terror, uncertainty, and rage and by promoting social chaos, creating further motivations for violent retaliations and dramatically increasing Palestinian popular support for acts of terror.

Assassinations thus have contributed to the actual emergence of the threat they were purportedly there to preempt. In this respect, Israel’s security organizations have not “restored order,” but have been acting instead as the agents of chaos. Israeli order is preserved by the systematic destruction of Palestinian order.

The power of targeted assassinations to affect politics has been most strongly felt within the Israeli political system itself. In the half year from the beginning of 2004, when the political debates regarding the evacuation of Gaza settlements began, to June 6, 2004, when the “disengagement plan” came to a vote and was authorized by the Israeli government, targeted assassinations were accelerated, leading to the death of thirty-three Palestinians. In anticipation of the evacuation operation itself, scheduled for August 2005, the level of assassinations increased again, with July 2005 being the bloodiest of that year. This bloodshed helped Sharon present himself as “tough on terror” while pursuing a policy that was understood in Israel as left leaning. In this manner, targeted assassinations and the supposed ability of the Israeli Air Force to maintain a constant “surveillance and strike” capability over Palestinian areas paradoxically increased the support for “territorial compromise” embodied in the ground evacuation of Gaza.

THE “HUMANITARIAN” WAR

The policy of targeted assassination continuously interacted with domestic and international criticism of it to the effect of generating technological and procedural innovations that purportedly aimed at its self-moderation and at reducing

the death of bystanders. The transformation in the procedures and technology of airborne assassinations accelerated after the protests that followed the death and destruction caused by the 2002 attack on Salah Shehadeh and increased significantly following the announced refusal of several Israeli Air Force Reserve pilots to take part in such missions if called to do so.⁴⁸ On the one hand, the security forces sought to improve legal arguments and moral justifications for the assassinations, and on the other, they sought to improve the precision of intelligence and attacks so that fewer bystanders would get hurt. The first approach was exemplified by an IDF invitation to Asa Kasher, a distinguished professor of philosophy at Tel Aviv University, to provide an ordered ethical defense for targeted assassinations. The resulting "principles of military ethics in fighting terror," developed with a team of officers of the IDF's National Defense College, exemplified the intersection of military efficiency with ethical considerations. It emphasized the standard of self-defense and outlined the military's obligation to reduce the level of civilian casualties. Assassinations were argued for not as retribution for acts of terror already committed, but as responses to the potential of future threats. Unlike acts deemed illegal under criminal law, airborne executions should be considered legal (and moral) if responding not to what a person has done, but to what he may do. The document has been approved by the chief of staff and accepted as IDF standard ethical reference for these attacks.⁴⁹ Around the same time the air force began to employ operatives whose task was to minimize "collateral deaths." Using cameras on auxiliary drones, they observed the surrounding context of an impending attack in order to judge the "safest" moment to launch missiles. These specialists have effectively become the "trigger" of the operation, deciding to what level of danger Palestinian bystanders can be acceptably subjected. As one of these operators explained to me, they see their work not as facilitating assassinations, but as saving lives, minimizing the slaughter that would undoubtedly have occurred were they not there to maintain vigilance.⁵⁰ I will later return to this line of justification.

Three years later, responding to the widespread condemnation of a March 2006 attack that killed a man and two children, the chief of the air force, Eliezer Shaked, called a press conference at which he claimed that the air force makes "superhuman efforts in order to reduce the number of innocent civilian casualties in aerial strikes."⁵¹ To prove his claims, he projected charts that numerically "demonstrated" how the air force had reduced the ratio between the victims of aerial raids that it defined as "combatants" and those victims it was willing to concede were "noncombatants" or "uninvolved civilians"—from the death of one "uninvolved person" for every target of assassination in 2002 to one civilian death for every twenty-five targets killed in 2005, he claimed.⁵² Data collected by the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem show that the military figures were skewed—

largely because the military included within the definition of "combatants" any adult man who happened to be in the vicinity of the assassination,⁵³ but even according to their own and to Palestinian studies, the number of "noncombatant" victims has radically decreased.

The change was due both to technological innovations in the warhead and the missile system and to a change in the command and regulation of these attacks. Most technological developments were related to the mechanical level of the attacks—the design of the warhead. As part of its attempt to reduce unintended casualties, Israel's Armament Development Authority, Rafael, developed the Spike missile to replace the U.S.-made Hellfire—a laser-guided antitank missile—for the purpose of targeted assassinations. The Spike is itself a small, joystick-navigated "kamikaze" drone with an "optical head."⁵⁴ Rafael also developed the Firefly, a missile with an even smaller warhead.⁵⁵ Clips from the "Kamikaze" cameras on "smart missiles" and from other airborne sensors were routinely broadcast in the popular media to support IDF refutations of Palestinian accusations of indiscriminate killing and to focus political and public resolve for the further application of this tactic. The images and videos from these munitions are thus as much a media product as they are "operation footage."⁵⁶

In the summer of 2006, a new type of explosive started to be used in missiles shot in targeted assassinations. That new munitions were used became apparent when doctors in Gaza hospitals started receiving Palestinian victims with horrifying burn wounds, amputations, and internal burns never seen before. A former Israeli Air Force officer and head of the IDF's weapons-development program, Yitzhak Ben-Israel, explained that these new munitions—referred to as "focused lethality munitions" or "munitions of low collateral damage"—were designed to produce a blast more lethal, but also of smaller radius than traditional explosives. "This technology allows [the military] to strike very small targets... without causing damage to bystanders or other persons." Medical and forensic research led an independent Italian investigative team to believe that these munitions were dense inert metal explosives, or DIMES.⁵⁷

At the end of November 2006, again in response to local and international protests regarding the killing of civilians, the Israeli government wanted to demonstrate that it was acting to regulate targeted assassinations further. It established a "legal committee" to rule on the assassination of individuals, with the assassination of senior political leaders subjected to the opinion of the attorney general. A few weeks later, on December 14, 2006, in response to petitions by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel and the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (known by its Arabic acronym, LAW), the Israeli High Court of Justice issued a ruling in which other regulatory directives

were outlined: Assassinations could take place only when there is "well-founded, strong and persuasive information as to the identity [of the person assassinated] and his activity"; if they could help curtail terror attacks; if other, more moderate uses of force, such as arrest, cannot take place without gravely endangering the lives of soldiers; and if the assassination does not lead to "disproportionate collateral harm to innocent civilians."⁵⁸

Whether or not these measures have reduced and will reduce the deaths of bystanders in targeted assassinations, a critical perspective cannot allow this possible outcome to exonerate the act. Instead, it must contend with the nature of the claims that these and other military developments in the technology, techniques, and proficiency of targeted assassination will eventually bring about fewer unintended deaths. Otherwise, one would have to accept the Israeli terms of a necro-economy in which a "lesser evil" or "lesser evils," represented by a lower body count, should be measured against an imaginary or real, present or future "greater evil" in the form of more suffering and death on both sides.⁵⁹

The problem of the "lesser evil" presents itself as the necessity for a choice of action in situations where the available options seem to be limited. The condition by which choice presents itself affirms an economic model embedded at the heart of ethics according to which various forms of suffering can be calculated (as if they were algorithms in mathematical minimum problems), evaluated, and acted upon. The articulation of the dilemma of the "lesser evil" has its origin in the classical philosophy of ethics and in theology and has been invoked in a staggeringly diverse set of contexts—from individual situational ethics through political choices to international relations. Significantly, it has recently been prominently invoked in the context of attempts to govern the economics of violence in the context of the "war on terror" and to moderate the power of brutal regimes, but also in maneuvering through the paradoxes and complexities of human rights and humanitarian aid.

In relation to the "global war on terror," the terms of this argument were recently articulated by the human rights scholar and now deputy leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, Michael Ignatieff. Ignatieff claims that in the "war on terror," democratic societies may need to establish state mechanisms that would regulate the breach of some rights and allow their security services to engage in other covert and unsavory state actions—in his eyes, a "lesser evil"—in order to fend off or to minimize potential "greater evils" such as terror attacks.⁶⁰ Ignatieff is even willing to consider Israeli targeted assassinations under conditions similar to those articulated by the Israeli High Court of Justice as "qualifying within the effective moral-political framework of the lesser evil."⁶¹ For Alan Dershowitz, one of the most vocal apologists for Israel in the United States, "targeted assassination

[is] the polar opposite of collective punishment" and is therefore not only legal, but, under the conditions stated above, ethical.⁶²

In the terms of this necroeconomy, targeted assassinations are to be understood as the "lesser evil" alternative to possible greater evils that could occur to Israelis, but that could occur as well to the Palestinians themselves. Israel, which undertakes these operations, would like Palestinians to understand that, beyond protecting its own population, the use of targeted assassinations helps it restrain more brutal measures that would affect the entire Palestinian population, with targeted assassinations killing only—or mostly—those "guilty." According to former Chief of Staff Ya'alon, "focused obstructions are important because they [communicate to the Palestinians that we] make a distinction between the general public and the instigator of terror."⁶³ As I mentioned above, however, the intelligence necessary for targeted assassinations relies on "collective measures" such as mass arrests and the checkpoint/terminal system.

However, as Adi Ophir has suggested, this conception of the "lesser evil" is problematic even according to the terms of its own proposed economy. The economy of violence assumes the possibility of a lesser means and the risk of more violence, but questions of violence are forever unpredictable. The supposed "lesser evil" may always be more violent than the violence it opposes, and there can be no end to the challenges that stem from the impossibility of calculation. A less brutal measure is also a measure that may easily be naturalized, accepted, and tolerated.⁶⁴ When exceptional means are normalized, they can be more frequently applied. Elevating targeted assassinations into a legally and morally acceptable practice makes them part of the state's legal options, part of a list of counterterrorism techniques, with all sense of horror lost. Because they help normalize low-intensity conflict, the overall duration of this conflict can be extended, and finally, more "lesser evils" can be committed, with the result that the greater evil is reached cumulatively. "Lesser evils" can thus bring about greater evils, even according to the very economy they invoke.

However, because "lesser-evil" arguments measure and compromise only Palestinian life and rights for the sake of Israeli security, which stands as a nonnegotiable or unmeasured absolute value, they cannot be understood as properly moral arguments and should simply be understood according to the Israeli utilitarian logic of warfare, its efficiency, and the way it is mediated locally and internationally. Cases of colonial powers seeking to justify themselves with the rhetoric of improvement, civility, and reform are almost the constant of colonial history.

An analogous phenomenon that can help clarify the paradox of the "lesser evil" can be observed in the IDF's use of rubber-coated steel munitions. Soldiers believe that "rubber bullets" are nonlethal munitions and that their use

demonstrates restraint in situations that are not life threatening. But this perception leads to their more frequent and indiscriminate use, causing death and permanent injury to many Palestinian demonstrators, mainly children.⁶⁵ Similarly, the purported military ability to perform "controlled," "elegant," "pinhead accurate," and "discriminate" killing can bring about more destruction and death than "traditional" strategies do, because these methods, combined with the manipulative and euphoric rhetoric used to promulgate them, induce decision makers to authorize their frequent and extended use. The illusion of precision, here part of a rhetoric of restraint, gives the military-political apparatus the necessary justification to use explosives in civilian environments where they could not be used without injuring or killing civilians. The lower the threshold of violence that a certain means is believed to possess, the more frequent its application tends to become.

The "lesser evil" approach that has sought to moderate Israel's war on the Palestinians and to normalize Israeli control led the IDF to inaugurate, in the middle of 2003, the program Another Life, whose aim was to "minimize the damage to the Palestinian life fabric in order to avoid the humanitarian crisis that will necessitate the IDF to completely take over the provision of food and services to the Palestinian population."⁶⁶ This program has turned "humanitarianism" into a strategic category in Israeli military operations and has influenced the design of its various instruments of control. Indeed, "humanitarian" has become the most common buzzword in various matters of occupation design, with the designation of "humanitarian gates," "humanitarian terminals," "humanitarian technology," and "humanitarian awareness," as well as—according to a procedure already put in effect since the beginning of the intifada—a "humanitarian officer" (usually a middle-aged reserve soldier) employed in checkpoints to smooth the process of passage and to mediate between the needs of Palestinians and the orders of soldiers.

The paradox of the lesser evil further affects most practitioners who operate the various systems in the ecology of the occupation: the army commander who, according to international law, is responsible for the territories under his domination and who attempts to administer Palestinian life (and death) in an enlightened manner; the security agents who introduce new spatiotechnological means of domination (arguing for them as more humane) and who generate new types of powers; human rights organizations and lawyers who lodge petitions challenging the legality of those means and powers and thus affirm the logic of the system as a whole; the humanitarian agent providing life-sustaining substances and medical help and who thus sustains the occupation; the politicians, the intellectuals, the Palestinian administrator, and not least the Palestinian civilian who is the subject of this regime.

In regard to the humanitarian agents, Israel's system of domination has learned to use the work of Palestinian, international, and Israeli organizations to fill the void left by a dysfunctional Palestinian Authority and to manage life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In spite of the fundamental moral differences between these groups, the logic of the lesser evil allows for moments of cooperation between organizations whose stated aims are widely different. Indeed, the urgent and important criticism that peace organizations often level at the IDF to the effect that it is dehumanizing its enemies masks another, more dangerous process by which the military incorporates into its operations the logic of, and even seeks to cooperate directly with, the very humanitarian and human rights organizations that oppose it. Israeli theorist Ariella Azoulay has claimed that although it has brought the Occupied Territories to the verge of hunger, the Israeli government tries to control the flow of traffic, money, and aid in such a way as to prevent the situation reaching a point of total collapse because of the international intervention, possibly under a UN mandate, that might follow.⁶⁷

It is in this "pragmatic" approach that the principle of the "lesser evil" justifies and naturalizes crimes and other forms of injustice and masks political responsibilities. By accepting the necessity to choose the "lesser evil," oppositional and advocacy groups accept the validity of the systems that have imposed these choices, blocking possible ways to struggle against and refute the logic and validity of the governmental rationality that grounds them. Writing about the collaboration and cooperation of ordinary Germans with the Nazi regime, mainly by those employed in the Civil Service (but also by the Jewish councils set up by the Nazis), Hannah Arendt explained that the argument for the "lesser evil" had become one of the most important "mechanisms built into the machinery of terror and crimes." She explained that "acceptance of lesser evils [has been] consciously used in conditioning the government officials as well as the population at large to the acceptance of evil as such," to the degree that "those who choose the lesser evil forget very quickly that they chose evil." She further claimed that even for the practical consequences, it is always better if enough people refuse to participate in criminal state behavior, rather than engage in moderating it.⁶⁸

Against all those who stayed in Germany to make things better from within, against all acts of collaboration, especially those undertaken for the sake of the moderation of harm, against the argument that the "lesser evil" of collaboration with brutal regimes is acceptable if it might prevent or divert greater evils, she called for individual disobedience and collective disorder. Participation, she insisted, communicates consent. Moreover, it hands support to the oppressor. When nothing else is possible, to do nothing is the last effective form of resistance, and the practical consequences of refusal are nearly always better if enough

people refuse. In her essay "The Eggs Speak Up," a sarcastic reference to Stalin's dictum that "you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs," Arendt pleaded for "a radical negation of the whole concept of lesser evil in politics."⁶⁹

The moral principle of the "lesser evil" could be discerned in the legal category of "proportionality" employed by the High Court of Justice when it was called to rule on matters relating to "security" and "human rights" considerations in the context of the occupation. According to the principle of "proportionality," the state must weigh its alternative security measures in a way that balances security needs against the livelihood of the Palestinian inhabitants. Because of the constant international criticism of the occupation, it is always in the interest of the state to moderate its violence and take into account the "humanitarian issues" arising from the occupation, thereby deflecting attention from the fundamental illegitimacy of the entire project. Although it often has seemed as if the Israeli High Court of Justice has adopted a profoundly adversarial position toward the government, by moderating the attitudes of the military and "balancing" rights against security, the court has effectively taken part in the very logic by which the occupation works.⁷⁰

Furthermore, when, in the aftermath of the court's rulings, the military itself began using the vocabulary of international law, principles such as "proportionality" started to become compatible with military goals such as "efficiency," helping make military action more economical. In this sense, the "lesser evil" argument relates to the discursive nature of warfare and especially to the discursive nature of low-intensity war.

Military threats can function only if gaps are maintained between the possible destruction that an army can inflict in the application of its full destructive capacity and the actual destruction that it does inflict. Restraint is what allows for the possibility of further escalation.⁷¹ A degree of restraint is thus part of the logic of almost every conventional military operation: However bad military attacks may appear to be, they could always get worse. At the moment when this gap between the possible and the actual application of force closes, war is no longer a language, and violence is stripped of semantics and simply aims to make the enemy disappear as a subject.⁷²

The promoters of the instruments, techniques, and rhetoric supporting such "lesser evils" believe that by developing and perfecting them, they actually exercise a restraining effect on the government and on the rest of the security forces, which would otherwise succeed in pushing for the further radicalization of violence, and that targeted assassinations are the more moderate alternative to the devastating capacity for destruction that the military actually possesses and would unleash in the form of a full-scale invasion or the renewal of territorial occupation, should the enemy exceed an "acceptable" level of violence or breach some

unspoken agreement in the violent discourse of attacks and retaliations. Confirming this logic, only a few weeks before the June 2006 invasion of Gaza, air force chief Shaked, arguing for targeted assassinations, explained that "the only alternative to aerial attacks is a ground operation and the reoccupation of Gaza" and that targeted assassination "is the most precise tool we have."⁷³

The reoccupation of Gaza starting in June 2006 and the Lebanon war of July–August 2006 demonstrated that more destructive alternatives are always possible, especially when the "unwritten rules" of low-intensity conflict are perceived to have been broken. From the June 28 kidnapping of an Israeli soldier in Gaza and until December 2006, over 500 Palestinians were killed, including 88 minors, and more than 2,700 injured.⁷⁴ Forty-six million dollars worth of infrastructure, including a power plant, and 270 private houses and residences, was destroyed. This should be understood as an eruption of violence meant to sustain the threat of greater measures. In terms of their justification, targeted assassinations thus exist at the middle of the spectrum between war and peace.

Naturally, I am not suggesting that "greater evils" should be preferred to lesser ones or that wars should be more brutal. Rather, I am suggesting that we question the very terms of the economy of evils, the system that has presented to us its choice as inevitable. The dilemma, if we are still to think in its terms, should thus not be only about which of the bad options to choose, but whether to choose at all and thus to accept the very terms of the question. When asked to choose between the two horns of an angry bull, Robert Pirsig suggested alternatives: One can "refuse to enter the arena," "throw sand in the bull's eyes," or even "sing the bull to sleep."⁷⁵

The positioning of the lesser-evil dilemma is integral to political militarism—a culture that sees violence as a permanent rule of history and thus military contingencies as the principal alternative available to politicians. Israeli militarism accordingly always has sought military solutions to political problems.⁷⁶ Locked within the limits defined by the degrees of violence, Israel continually forecloses the exploration of other avenues for negotiations and participation in a genuine political process. At the beginning of 2006, Chief of Staff Dan Halutz expressed this view when he stated that the intifada is part of an unresolvable permanent conflict between Jews and Palestinians that started in 1929. The military, according to Halutz, must therefore gear itself to operate within an environment saturated with conflict and in a future of permanent violence. With this, he echoed an often-recurring claim within Israeli security discourse, as when in June 1977, Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan explained the presumption that Israel's conflict with the Palestinians could be "solved" was fundamentally flawed. "The question was not, 'What is the solution?' but 'How do we live without a solution?'"⁷⁷ The

"lesser evil" approach thus relates to Israeli unilateralism, to the perception that there is no partner, and to the idea of infinite conflict. Territorial, ground occupation is thus projected as a "necessary evil" in the West Bank and assassinations as a "necessary evil" in Gaza. In the absence of both options—a political solution, on the one hand, or the possibility of a decisive military outcome, on the other—the Israeli military thus merely "manages the conflict." The ideology of the lesser evil, the lesser-evil occupation, has thus replaced the political horizon and a quest for justice. At the beginning of 2006, Halutz still thought that the precision methods of the Israeli Air Force would help keep the conflict "on a flame low enough for Israeli society to be able to live and to prosper within it."⁷⁸ This projection of endless war in all likelihood will fulfill itself.

NOTES

- 1 Interview with Ephraim Segoli, Tel Aviv, May 22, 2006.
- 2 B'Tselem, "Statistics: Fatalities," available on-line at <http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp> (last accessed May 10, 2008).
- 3 See chap. 9 in Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).
- 4 In "Necropolitics," Achille Mbembe follows Michel Foucault to argue that sovereignty is located not only within the institutions of the geographically defined nation-state or, as postmodern thinkers suggest, within the operational networks of supranational institutions, but in the capacity of power to make decisions regarding life and death. According to Foucault, the other side of the politics that engages with the management of life (bio-politics) is the administration of death (thanato-politics). See Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, ed. Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, and François Ewald, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 25, and Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2003): pp. 11–40.
- 5 Interview with Ephraim Segoli, Tel Aviv, May 22, 2006.
- 6 See Raviv Druker and Ofer Shelah, *Boomerang* (Jerusalem: Keter Press, 2005) (in Hebrew), pp. 161–216.
- 7 Aharon Yoffe, "Focus Preemption, Chances and Dangers," *Nativ* 109, no. 2 (March 2006) (in Hebrew). See also Yedidia Ya'ari and Haim Asa, *Diffused Warfare: War in the 21st Century* (Tel Aviv: Miskal—Yediot Aharonot Books and Chemed Books, 2005) (in Hebrew), p. 37. The book is the summary of positions developed within the so-called "Alternative Team" and under the influence of the Operational Theory Research Institute (OTRI). Yedidia Ya'ari, the former commander of the Israeli Navy, and Haim Asa, a former member of a comparable Israeli Air Force think tank, directed the team. Affiliated with it were air force pilot Dror Ben David, Brigadier General Gadi Eisenkott, and Brigadier General Aviv Kochavi. General Benni Gantz was assigned to implement this study within the Israeli Defense Forces. The Alternative

Team was operating in cooperation with the U.S. Transformation Group under the U.S. secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld. In 2006, the Israeli chief of staff, Dan Halutz, dismantled the Alternative Team. There were a large number of parallel and smaller teams with similar aims, as well, such as the Military Research Centre for the Study of the Tactical Environment, directed by Gabriel Siboni. On the latter, see Gabriel Siboni, "The Importance of Activity," *Bamohane* (in the Camp), the IDF's official journal, December 31, 2004, (in Hebrew), pp. 14–18.

- 8 Interview with Brigadier General (ret.) Shimon Naveh, former director of the OTRI in the IDF. All the following quotes from Naveh are based on interviews conducted on September 15, 2005 (by telephone), March 7, 2006 (by telephone), and April 11, 2006 and May 22–23, 2006 (at an Israeli Army Intelligence military base in Gilat, near Tel Aviv). All transcripts and translations to English of the interviews were sent to Naveh for confirmation of their content. All future references to the interview refer to those above unless mentioned otherwise.
- 9 Interview with former member of Unit 504, May 2006, who preferred to remain anonymous.
- 10 Robert Fisk, "Death by Remote Control as Hit Squads Return," *The Independent*, May 13, 2001.
- 11 Neve Gordon, "Rationalizing Extra-Judicial Executions: The Israeli Press and the Legitimation of Abuse," *International Journal of Human Rights* 8, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): p. 305. In 2005 *Ha'aretz*, Israel's liberal daily, started to publish, as a matter of policy, the names of Palestinians killed by Israel in all its military operations.
- 12 B'Tselem, "IDF Helicopter Missile-Fire Kills Four Palestinian Civilians and Wounds Dozens," August 2002, available on-line at http://www.btselem.org/English/Testimonies/20020831_Tubus_Killing_Witness_Aref_Daraghmeth.asp (last accessed September 6, 2008).
- 13 Orna Ben-Nafraï and Keren Michaeli, "We Must Not Make a Scarecrow of the Law: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Policy of Targeted Killings," *Cornell International Law Journal* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2004): p. 234 n. 22.
- 14 See Naomi Klein, "Laboratory for a Fortressed World," *The Nation*, July 2, 2007. "Another star of the Paris Air Show will be Israeli defense giant Elbit, which plans to showcase its Hermes 450 and 900 unmanned air vehicles. As recently as May, according to press reports, Israel used the drones on bombing missions in Gaza. Once tested in the territories, they are exported abroad: The Hermes has already been used at the Arizona-Mexico border." In November 2002, a car travelling in a remote part of Yemen was destroyed by a missile fired from an unmanned Predator drone, killing six suspected members of al-Qaeda. While the U.S. administration did not publicly acknowledge responsibility for the attack, officials let it be known that the CIA had carried it out. The June 2006 killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the January 2006 attempt to kill Ayman al-Zawahiri were undertaken from the air. Previous strikes killed Mohammed Aref, al-Qaeda's military chief, and Hamza Rabia, a senior operative in Pakistan. Currently, the U.S. military plans to double the number of Predator and Global Hawk drones used for surveillance and targeting. See Anthony Dworkin, "The Yemen Strike: The War on Terrorism Goes Global," *Criminology of War Project*, November 14, 2002, available on-line at <http://www.criminologyofwar.org/news/news-yemen.html> (last accessed September 6, 2008). Chris Downes, "Targeted Killing in an Age of Terror: The Legality of the Yemen Strike," *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 9, no. 2 (2004): pp. 277–79.
- 16 Ludwig von Bertalanffy defines a system as a complex of interacting elements. Thus, a system's problems, according to Bertalanffy, are problems of the interrelations of a great number of variables that occur in the field of politics, economics, industry, commerce, and

- 17 The idea of people as infrastructure was developed in another context—that of African cities. See AbdouMalik Simone, "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg," *Public Culture*, no. 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 407–29.
- 18 This logic was reflected in a March 2006 presentation to U.S. security personnel at the Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution by Avi Dichter, the former chief of Israel's General Security Service. Dichter, the driving force behind the tactical success and frequent application of targeted assassinations, observed that "by eliminating...generators of terror through arrests (the preferred method) or by targeted killings (if absolutely necessary), a state can greatly disrupt the operations of terrorist organizations." See: Avi Dichter and Daniel Byman, "Israel's Lessons for Fighting Terrorists and Their Implications for The United States," Analysis Paper Number 8, March 2006, the Saban Centre for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C.
- 19 Interview with Brigadier General (ret.) Shimon Naveh.
- 20 Giulio Douhet, *Command of the Air* (1921, London: Ayer Publishing, 1942). The full text is available on-line at http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/Publications/fulltext/command_of_the_air.pdf (last accessed September 6, 2008).
- 21 However, an important distinction must still be maintained. The military approaches that the IDF employs in Lebanon are strategically distinct from those employed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to the political scientist James Ron, in Lebanon, Israel employed degrees of violence that greatly exceed those employed in the Occupied Territories, and consequently, casualty figures in Lebanon were much higher than those in the West Bank and Gaza. Ron explains that these differences in military approach are shaped by differences in degrees of control over territory and population. In the Occupied Territories, enclosed within Israeli-controlled territory, Israel still bears some responsibility for the welfare of the populations, whereas in Lebanon—which is completely beyond the states' frontier—the civilian population could be attacked with ferocity without economic and other repercussions to Israel. James Ron, *Frontiers and Ghettos: State Violence in Serbia and Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
- 22 Sven Linqvist, *A History of Bombing*, trans. Linda Haverty Rugg (New York: New Press, 2000), entry 101.
- 23 Philip Anthony Towle, *Pilots and Rebels: The Use of Aircraft in Unconventional Warfare, 1918–1988* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1989), p. 17. David Willard Parsons, "British Air Control: A Model for the Application of Air Power in Low-Intensity Conflict?" *Airpower Journal* (Summer 1994), available on-line at <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj94/parsons.html> (last accessed September 7, 2008).
- 24 Quoted in Lt. Colonel David J. Dean, USAF, "Air Power in Small Wars: The British Air Control Experience," *Air University Review* 34, no. 5 (July–August 1985).
- 25 Dean, "Air Power in Small Wars." David Omisi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force 1919–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990). David MacIsaac, "Voices from the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists," in Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 624–47, especially p. 633.
- 26 Linqvist, *A History of Bombing*, entry 102.
- 27 Brigadier General Yair Golan, in a discussion with the research group for the study of the catastrophization in the Occupied Territories at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, April 20, 2007.
- 28 Ronen Shnayderman, "Take No Prisoners: The Fatal Shooting of Palestinians by Israeli Security Forces during Arrest Operations," *B'Tselem*, May 2005, available on-line at http://www.btselem.org/Download/200505_Take_No_Prisoners_Eng.pdf (last accessed September 7, 2008). See also Al-Haq, "Indiscriminate and Excessive Use of Force: Four Palestinians Killed During Arrest Raid, May 24, 2006," available on-line at <http://www.alhaq.org/etemplate.php?id=8> (last accessed March 7, 2009).
- 29 David Kretzmer, "Targeted Killing of Suspected Terrorists: Extra-Judicial Executions or Legitimate Means of Defense?" *The European Journal of International Law* 16, no. 2 (2005): pp. 196, 207.
- 30 Press briefing by Colonel Daniel Reisner, director of the International Law Department of the IDF Legal Division, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 15, 2000, available on-line at http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2000/11/Press%20Briefing%20by%20Colonel%20Daniel%20Reisner-%20Head%20of (last accessed September 7, 2008).
- 31 The Israeli legal scholar Eyal Benvenisti claimed that the proper measure to judge whether Israel continues to be bound by the obligations of an occupying power is the facts on the ground: "If there were areas under Palestinian control, they were not subject to Israeli occupation." See Eyal Benvenisti, "Israel and the Palestinians: What Laws Were Broken," *Crimes of War Project*, available on-line at <http://www.crimesofwar.org/export/me-intro.html> (last accessed September 7, 2008). Charles Shamas, a Ramallah-based legal expert, joined others in claiming that since Israel still exercises effective control over movement between localities, over the supply of goods, and over access to natural resources, it has in effect authority over the enactment of Palestinian legislation and therefore continues to be bound by the duties of an occupying power. Compare, as well, Baruch Kimmeling's notion of "system of control" in "Boundaries and Frontiers of the Israeli Control System," in Baruch Kimmeling (ed.), *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 265–84.
- 32 Indeed, since the evacuation of Gaza, the IDF became even more willing to employ violence against the Palestinians. In 2006 alone, Israeli forces killed 405 Palestinians in Gaza, half of them civilians, including 88 minors. During the same year, Israel killed 22 Palestinians in targeted assassinations. Following a certain decline in 2007 (293 Palestinians killed in Gaza,

approximately one-third of them civilians) the level of violence peaked again in the beginning of 2008. According to B'Tselem, in only one week, from February 27 to the afternoon of March 3, 106 Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip, at least 54 of whom were civilians. In June 2006, Israel bombed the electric grid in Gaza, cutting off 700,000 people from electricity, and has repeatedly restricted electricity and fuel supplies to Gaza ever since. For data on casualties see, respectively: B'Tselem: "683 people killed in the Conflict in 2006," available on-line at http://www.btselem.org/english/press_releases/20061228.asp; B'Tselem, "Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, 2007 Annual Report," at http://www.btselem.org/Download/200712_Annual_Report_eng.pdf; and B'Tselem, "Contrary to Israel's Chief of Staff, at least Half of Those Killed in Gaza Did Not Take Part in the Fighting," press release, March 3, 2008, at http://www.btselem.org/english/Press_Releases/20080303.asp (all last accessed September 7, 2008).

33 Ya'ari and Assa, *Diffused Warfare Century*, pp. 9–13 (all translations from Hebrew are mine).

34 The last of the terms was coined in a joint program between the former commander of a fighter squadron, Dror Ben David, and researchers at the Operational Theory Research Institute.

35 Halutz constantly defended the technology behind his airborne assassinations, even when it regularly has taken the lives of many bystanders. When asked for his reaction to the death of many civilians in an operation of targeted assassination, he famously retorted, "If you want to know what I feel when I release a bomb, I will tell you: I feel a light bump to the plane as a result of the bomb's release. A second later, it's gone, and that's all. That is what I feel." See Vered Levy-Barzilai, "Halutz: The High and the Mighty," *Ha'aretz Magazine*, August 21, 2002.

36 Israel Harel, "The IDF Protects Itself," *Ha'aretz*, August 29, 2006.

37 Amir Rapaport, "Dan Halutz is a Bluff, Interview with Shimon Naveh," *Ma'ariv*, Yom Kippur Supplement, October 1, 2006. (in Hebrew)

38 Ofer Shelah and Yoav Limor, *Captives of Lebanon* (Tel Aviv: Miskal—Yedioth Aharonoth Books and Chemed Books, 2007) (in Hebrew), p. 199.

39 Darryl Li, "Gaza Consultancy—Research Findings, 20 to 27 August 2006," draft submitted to B'Tselem, September 10, 2006. Testimony number 3287. Unpublished.

40 A *Ma'ariv* Gallup Poll of August 10, 2001 revealed that 76 percent of the public polled supported assassinations. In later years, and in particular as a result of the killing of many bystanders, public support dropped considerably. In June 2003, at the start of the campaign to assassinate the leadership of Hamas, an opinion poll by the daily newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* found that 58 percent of Israelis polled said the military should at least temporarily discontinue targeted killings. After the "disengagement" from Gaza and a quite persistent rocket shelling on neighboring Israeli towns and villages, support for assassination grew again. On January 6, 2003, *Ha'aretz* estimated this support to be more than 80 percent. See Druker and Shelah, *Boomerang*, p. 216.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

42 "The IDF Published a List of Seven Assassination Candidates," *Ha'aretz*, July 6, 2001.

43 Ya'ari and Assa, *Diffused Warfare*, p. 147. Druker and Shelah, *Boomerang*, p. 162 and n. 96.

44 Officially called the National Conciliation Document of the Palestinian Prisoners, "the prisoners' document" was written by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. In it, representatives of Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) tried to articulate policy posi-

tions that would reconcile the various factions.

45 Quoted in Amos Harel and Amnon Regular, "IAF probe: Civilians Spotted Too Late to Divert Missiles in Gaza Strike," *Ha'aretz*, March 7, 2006. See also Soha Abdelaty, "Intifada Timeline, September 30–October 6, 2004," *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, at <http://weekly.ahram.org/2004/710/f05.htm> (last accessed September 7, 2008); and Vincent Cammarato, "Assassination Is Wrong—and Dumb," *Washington Post*, August 30, 2001.

46 For many years, Yassir Arafat remained at the top of Israel's Most Wanted list. The *dtibbuk* haunting Israeli security services, Arafat's "irrational character" was blamed for almost every political stalemate or outbreak of violence. Chief of Military Intelligence Amos Glad, who developed a personal obsession with him, described Arafat thus: "Mentally, Arafat feels at his best when he is surrounded by a reality of flames, fire, suffering and blood." Only an explicit promise extracted from Sharon by George W. Bush prevented the IDF from doing what it really wanted to do and assassinate Arafat himself. Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 290 n. 93, 189.

47 Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient*, p. 183.

48 Chris McGreal, "We're Air Force Pilots, Not Mafia. We Don't Take Revenge," *The Guardian*, December 3, 2003.

49 The principles of the military ethics of fighting terror were developed by a team of the IDF's National Defense College, headed by Major General Amos Yadin, then commander of the college. The team included other officers with experience in such military activities, as well as experts in international law and ethics. The final document, produced by Yadin and Asa Kasher, was presented to the IDF chief of staff and to generals involved in fighting terror. The document was approved, and besides being used in different stages of the education of officers, is currently being used for the preparation of proposed explanatory guidelines for a variety of specific situations and operations. Asa Kasher and Amos Yadin, "The Military Ethics of Fighting Terror: An Israeli Perspective," *Journal of Military Ethics* 4 (2005). See also Asa Kasher and Amos Yadin, "Assassination and Preventive Killing," *SAIS Review* 25, no. 1 (2005): pp. 41–57.

50 Interview with an Israeli Air Force operator of unmanned drones, April 2005. The operator's name cannot be revealed.

51 Harel and Regular, "IAF Probe."

52 Further data published in *Ha'aretz* states that between 2002 and 2003, 50 percent of people killed were uninvolved civilians, that in 2005, the number dropped to 3.5 percent, that in 2006, when attacks accelerated after the abduction of an Israeli soldier, it was 10 percent, and that in 2007, it dropped again to its lowest level, between 2 and 3 percent. Amos Harel, "Precise Military," *Ha'aretz*, December 30, 2008.

53 Amos Harel, "Nothing 'Surgical' about Air Force Attacks in Urban Areas," *Ha'aretz*, June 22, 2006. The B'Tselem figures are available on-line at <http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp> (last accessed September 7, 2008).

54 David A. Fulghum and Robert Wall, "Israel Starts Reexamining Military Missions and Technology," *Aviation Week*, August 20, 2006.

55 Laura Blumenfeld, "In Israel, a Divisive Struggle over Targeted Killing," *Washington Post*, August 27, 2006.

56 Indeed, during the 1991 Gulf War, the public was fed images of "kamikaze bombs"—smart

- bombs or laser-guided munitions—as proof of the technological superiority and surgical skills of the U.S. military. Harun Farocki, "War From a Distance," lecture delivered at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, January 13, 2005.
- 57 Quoted in Meron Rapoport, "Italian TV: Israel Used New Weapon Prototype in Gaza Strip," *Ha'aretz*, October 12, 2006. These weapons are made of a carbon-fiber casing filled with tungsten powder—a metal capable of conducting very high temperatures. Upon detonation, the tungsten particles are propelled outward in a relatively small (about four meters), but very deadly cloud, causing severe burns, amputated limbs, and internal burns.
- 58 HCl 769/02, *The Public Committee against Torture in Israel v. The Government of Israel*. Previous petitions to the High Court of Justice against targeted assassinations (for example HCl 5872/2002, M. K. Muhammed Barake vs. Prime Minister and Minister of Defense) were dismissed.
- 59 "Evil" in this context is best understood, following Adi Ophir, as a category displaced from the realm of the divine or diabolical and relocated in a social order in which suffering and pain could have been, but were not prevented. See Adi Ophir, *The Order of Evils: Toward an Ontology of Morals*, trans. Reia Mazali and Havi Carel (New York: Zone Books, 2005). "Evils can only be justified by appealing to more grave hypothetical evils that could have been caused if the prevention or disengagement actions would have taken place" (section 7.100, p. 339). "The justification displaces the discussion from one order of exchange, in which the one harmed tries to create a link between damage or suffering and compensation, to another order of exchange, in which the defendant tries to create a link between evils that occurred to possible evils that might have occurred" (section 3.432, p. 152).
- 60 Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- 61 According to Ignatieff, assassinations should be "applied to the smallest number of people, used as a last resort, and kept under the adversarial scrutiny of an open democratic system." Furthermore, "assassination can be justified only if...less violent alternatives, like arrest and capture, endanger...personnel or civilians...[and] where all reasonable precautions are taken to minimize collateral damage and civilian harm." *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 129–33.
- 62 Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), p. 173.
- 63 Quoted in Amos Harel and Avi Isacharoff, *The Seventh War* (Tel Aviv: Miskal—Yedioth Aharonoth Books and Chemed Books, 2004) (in Hebrew), p. 343.
- 64 Ophir, *The Order of Evils*, section 7.100, p. 339; sections 7.2 and 7.3, pp. 327–29. See, also, for example, section 7.335, p. 375.
- 65 Iris Giller, "A Death Foretold: Firing of 'Rubber' Bullets to Disperse Demonstrations in the Occupied Territories," B'Tselem, November 1998, available on-line at http://www.btselem.org/Download/199812_Death_Foretold_Eng_rtf (last accessed September 7, 2008).
- 66 Harel and Isacharoff, *The Seventh War*, p. 343.
- 67 Ariella Azoulay, "Hunger in Palestine: The Event That Never Was," in Anselm Franke, Rafi Segal, and Eyal Weizman (eds.), *Territories, Islands, Camps and Other States of Utopia* (Cologne: Walter Koenig, 2003), pp. 154–57. According to the chief of military intelligence, Amos Gilad, "hunger is when people walk around with a swollen belly, collapse and die. There is no hunger in the Palestinian territories." Druker and Shelah, *Boomerang*, p. 329. Since Hamas was elected to power in January 2006, Israel has used the weapon of economic strangulation as a means of political pressure, withholding all Palestinian tax monies—about \$60 million a month—that it is legally obligated to transfer to the Palestinian Authority. Israel has also mobilized the international community to suspend aid until Hamas recognizes "Israel's right to exist" and enters into a political process. However, the international boycott of Gaza residents to pressure the Hamas government has been counterproductive, with both Israel and donor countries desperately seeking a way out.
- 68 Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), p. 36.
- 69 Hannah Arendt, "The Eggs Speak Up" (1950), in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2005), pp. 270–84, see especially p. 271. Arendt claims that Stalin's "only original contribution" to socialism was to transform the breaking of eggs from a tragic necessity into a revolutionary virtue.
- 70 David Kennedy, *The Dark Side of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). See, in particular, the chapter "Humanitarianism and Force," especially p. 295. See also discussion of this issue and of Kennedy's ideas in an article by his former student, Aeyal M. Gross, "The Construction of a Wall between The Hague and Jerusalem: The Enforcement and Limits of Humanitarian Law and the Structure of Occupation," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 19 (2006), pp. 393–400, and "Human Proportions: Are Human Rights the Emperor's New Clothes of the International Law of Occupation?" *The European Journal of International Law* 18, no. 1 (2007), pp. 1–35.
- 71 See Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, "The Order of Violence," in this volume.
- 72 Beyond their meaning in the total mobilization of society, "total wars"—marking the other limit of the conceptual spectrum—are wars that no longer allow any communication to take place. Colonial wars have often been total wars, because the "natives" were not perceived to share the same "humanity" as the colonizers and thus could not be considered a party capable of rational behavior and discourse. Terror is "total," as well, because, most often, it places no legal or moral limits on violence and makes no distinction between innocence and guilt. Moreover, it acts to attack the very possibility of discourse. Degrees and distinctions are precisely what make war less than total.
- 73 Quoted in Harel, "Nothing 'Surgical.'"
- 74 B'Tselem, "683 People Killed in the Conflict in 2006."
- 75 Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (New York: Bantam, 1974), pp. 229–30. On Israeli militarism, see Uri Ben-Eliezer, "Post-Modern Armies and the Question of Peace and War: The Israeli Defense Forces in the 'New Times,'" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004), p. 50. See also Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 1–18; Baruch Kimmeling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: Society, Culture, and the Military* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 209; and Michael Mann, "The Roots and Contradictions of Modern Militarism," *New Left Review* 162 (March–April 1987).
- 77 Dayan's quote is from Foundation for Middle East Peace, "Sharon's Enduring Agenda: Consolidate Territorial Control, Manage the Conflict," *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories* 14, no. 1 (January–February 2004), available on-line at <http://www.fmep.org/reports/archive/vol.-14/no.-1/PDF>.
- 78 Amir Oren, "The Tenth Round," *Ha'aretz* weekend supplement, January 14, 2006.