

**ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP DECAPITATION AS A
COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY**

by
Lindsay Megan Hans

A thesis submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Government

Baltimore, Maryland
May 2022

© 2022 Lindsay Hans
All Rights Reserved

Abstract

The strategy of leadership decapitation continues to remain a contentious portion of counterterrorism policy even after the two-decade long War on Terror has concluded. Removing the leader from one of these organizations by either capturing, killing, or capturing and then killing them, has inevitably led to questioning how effective this strategy really is. Are we successfully reducing these group's operational capabilities and the ability for them to harm more innocent people in the future, or are we simply perpetuating the cycle of hate, providing more motivation and reasoning for them to continue their violent tactics?

While some terrorist groups are similar in their desired goals, many are quite different categorically in how they achieve means to this end. Motivated by different internal and external driving factors from one another, their strategies are uncovered over time through their attack history and in-depth analysis into their leader's behaviors and decisions. This thesis assesses nine terrorist organization's attack history, the role of these internal and external driving factors, and whether the direct use of this strategy was effective in thwarting future attacks.

Thesis Advisor: Kathryn Wagner-Hill, Ph.D.

Thesis Reviewers: Stephen M. Grenier, Ph.D. and Alexander Rosenthal, Ph.D.

Contents

Abstract	ii
List of Figures	v
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Literature Review	5
1.1.1 Leadership Decapitation as a Counterterrorism Strategy	5
1.1.2 Internal and External Driving Factors of Terrorist Organizations	11
1.1.3 Salafi-Jihadism’s Role in Terrorism	18
1.2 Methodology	32
2 South America	36
2.1 National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN)	36
2.2 Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	40
2.3 Shining Path (SL)	45
2.4 Results	49
3 Africa	51
3.1 al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQIM)	52
3.2 al-Shabaab	56

3.3	Boko Haram	61
3.4	Results	63
4	The Middle East	65
4.1	al-Qaeda (AQ)	66
4.2	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS/ISIL)	71
4.3	Taliban	78
4.4	Results	83
	Conclusion	85
	Bibliography	95

List of Figures

2.1	National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN) Terrorist Attacks, 1970-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	40
2.2	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) Terrorist Attacks, 1970-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	45
2.3	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) Terrorist Attacks, 1970-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	48
3.1	Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) Terrorist Attacks, 1993-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	56
3.2	Al-Shabaab Terrorist Attacks, 1993-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	60
3.3	Boko Haram Terrorist Attacks, 1993-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	63
4.1	Al Qa'ida (AQ) Terrorist Attacks, 1992-2019, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	71
4.2	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS/ISIL) Terrorist Attacks, 1992-2019, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	78
4.3	Taliban Terrorist Attacks, 1992-2019, before and after leadership decapitation strategies	83

Introduction

Terrorism. A word throughout history that has become synonymous with so many others: fear, extremists, intimidation, radicalism, bombings, savagery, violence, brutality, and war. It has become a word that incites a range of emotional reactions dependent on the group affected. From anger and sadness of those directly touched by the September 11th terrorist attacks, to patriotism exuded from the individuals and families of those who served during the War on Terror, to an emotional sense of fulfillment and nationalism of those who directly participate in these fear-instilling actions. Terrorism has evolved to become a vicious cycle perpetuated by the attitudes, words, and actions of all players involved, with both sides feeling betrayed, harmed, and inappropriately targeted of such actions, that they inevitably feel obligated to respond. Many times, this response is a physical action (e.g., conventional warfare, asymmetric warfare, military strikes, insurgency, etc.), which fails to render the other side wholly incapable of attacking and pushing their strategic agenda in the immediate future. The opposing side might retreat and regroup, but eventually musters up enough force or strategy, or both, and responds however they deem appropriate. Action incites reaction and so on and so forth, leading to this violent cycle seeking to retribute the harm each other have endured. We have become accustomed to associate *terrorism* as a war of ideals, and “winning the hearts and minds” of those who differ in opinion has become a far more difficult strategy when the other side holds the same perspective on their own stance.

The reduction and complete removal of U.S. and allied forces from Afghanistan, after twenty years of war and counterterrorism operations, depicted how much more work still needs to be done in achieving this strategic objective. During the exfiltration, a “bombing at a gate at Kabul’s international airport killed 11 U.S. Marines, one soldier, one Navy corpsman and dozens of Afghan civilians...throwing the final days of a U.S.-led evacuation effort into chaos and fulfilling a nightmare scenario President Biden’s top aides had desperately sought to avoid.”¹ The Taliban was heavily monitoring the process of the U.S. removing troops and civilians in the capital, but it was ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K), “the Islamic State’s Afghanistan and Pakistan arm, that took responsibility for the attack in a statement, saying one of its adherents penetrated security barriers around the airport, dived into a large group of U.S. troops and Afghan civilians and detonated an explosives belt.”² This attack was originally intended to target the continued presence of U.S. military in the region; however, it took on a heightened level of violence and intimidation knowing full well that the U.S. was already working so hard to remove troops entirely from the country. This attack suggests the goal of ‘winning hearts and minds’ has yet to be achieved. Vowing to punish those responsible, President Biden said, “We will hunt you down and make you pay,”³ demonstrating this vicious cycle at work yet again.

What is the answer then? How do we resolve this political issue that continues to incite fear and violence incessantly wreaking havoc across the world and in our backyards? This question invites countless more in seeking to remediate this issue the United States has battled for over thirty years, and in many countries well before these past two decades. The answer is not a simple

¹ John Hudson, Alex Horton, Missy Ryan and Dan Lamonthe, “Bombing at Kabul airport kills 13 U.S. service members and dozens of Afghans,” *The Washington Post*, updated August 26, 2021, accessed on February 1, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/kabul-suicide-bombing-service-members/2021/08/26/8bfe63ac-069e-11ec-ba15-9c4f59a60478_story.html

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

fix or a few adjustments in national policy. Diving deeper into terrorism and its root causes, a plethora of primary, secondary, and even tertiary issues are presented that arise throughout the evolution and lifecycle of a terrorist organization and the individuals that constitute them. From foot soldiers to commanders and even leadership themselves, numerous factors provide the driving motivation of individuals to join the ranks. Understanding these internal and external factors provide policy makers and intelligence analysts with the foundation of how these groups are created, and the primary driving factors for committing such violence.

In order for terrorist organizations to acquire financial resources and materials, develop plans for operations, and execute attacks on their enemies, a clear ideology and purposeful path forward must be established. These roles are undertaken by the individual who assumes responsibility and often, is the one who creates the initial momentum of the movement or group. These leaders are eclectic in their strategies, personality, and motivations; however, they are fearlessly followed by the masses. Not every leader must possess a charismatic persona; however, when a leader is identifiable, states find it hard to resist targeting him.⁴ Lifespans of terrorist organizations vary from weeks and months in some, to years on end in others. Counterterrorism strategists and policy makers seek to thwart this impetus by focusing their efforts on a strategy known as *leadership decapitation* with hopes of reducing their overall lifespan and preventing more victims from their operations.

In *Leadership Decapitation: Strategic Targeting of Terrorist Organizations*, Jenna Jordan explains that multiple tactics to defeat and degrade terrorist organizations can and have been employed by states, “including brute force, repression, regime change, negotiations, undermining

⁴ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader,” In *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 15.

of support, ideological change, cutting off finances, and leadership targeting.”⁵ Each of these strategies has their associated pros and cons, and also their criticisms; none larger than that of leadership targeting. Leadership decapitation tactics are designed to target the group’s leadership with hopes of reducing or eliminating its operational capability and consist of killing, capturing, or capturing and then killing the individual. Audrey Kurth Cronin elucidates in her article “Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader,” the immediate effects of removing a leader vary, depending on the structure of the organization, the degree to which it fosters a cult of personality, the availability of a viable successor, the nature of its ideology, the political context, and whether the leader was killed or imprisoned.⁶ By removing a high-valued target (HVT), the terrorist group is unstable, and requires dedicated time and resources to fulfill and maintain current operational requirements, while also seeking to replace senior leadership. Decapitation tactics are also intended to disrupt the terrorist group’s organizational routine and dissuade others from assuming power.⁷ But how does a state determine whether to use this tactic? Decisions about whether to capture or to kill the chief may depend on local conditions, but in their effects on a campaign they embody the classic dichotomy between the so-called law enforcement paradigm and the so-called war paradigm in counterterrorism.⁸ By capturing a leader, a state is recognizing that the individual is a criminal and is lawfully entitled to a trial, while killing him is treating him as a combatant, fair game for attack.⁹

What happens when these tactics are used? Are they successful in reducing future terrorist activity by the organizations? Is one tactic more beneficial than another? If so, what are the

⁵ Jenna Jordan, “Introduction,” in *Leadership Decapitation: Strategic Targeting of Terrorist Organizations* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019), 3.

⁶ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader,” In *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 14.

⁷ Daniel Byman, “Do Targeted Killings Work?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (March/April 2006), p. 103-104.

⁸ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader,” p. 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*

strategic benefits of each and what should counterterrorism strategists consider for the future? More specifically, how and when has this strategy been implemented against terrorist organizations around the world, and what have the success rates been?

This thesis begins broadly by examining the strategy of leadership decapitation. Second, it will take a more interior focus on the terrorist organizations and the internal and external driving factors of those who seek to become part of these groups. Finally, an external factor (social-religious affiliation), more specifically, Salafi Jihadism, will be extensively explored in the third set of case studies.

The counterterrorism strategy of leadership decapitation will prove effective in each of the nine terrorist organizations analyzed, with the exception of Boko Haram. It will demonstrate it is most effective when used against organizations with a long-standing leader who is coveted by his following, and similar results will also be seen when the natural death of this leader is observed. Internal psychosocial factors that drive individuals to join terrorist organizations will provide significant obstacles in defeating from a counterterror operational perspective. Finally, the combination of internal driving factors with one's religion and faith, will demonstrate the dangerous and dynamic combination of motivation and desire in Salafi-Jihadist terrorist organizations that these leaders extensively exploit, making defeating them so difficult for counterterrorism strategists.

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 *Leadership Decapitation as a Counterterrorism Strategy*. Research has been completed over the past two decades that seek to answer whether the counterterrorism strategy of

leadership decapitation is effective when fighting the war against terrorism, although many differ in their results. Scholars that do argue for the strategy contend that, while it should not be the only strategy used and is not a ‘silver bullet’¹⁰ against all terrorist organizations, it does exhibit utility and should therefore, be considered. Removing a leader from their organization prohibits them from exercising extreme power and influence of the group’s operational and networking activities. The backbone of this strategy seeks to force the remaining individuals of the organization into a stressed predicament whereby, they struggle for direction that their leader provided them, they are ill-equipped with how to use resources and tools to carry out future operations and attacks, and they fight internally over who will carry on this important and coveted role in the immediate aftermath, and potential long-term future.¹¹ By removing the leader, an organization can be deprived of critical skill sets, years of operational experience, and valuable networking relationships gained through their leadership. Simply stated, advocates of this strategy stress the importance of short-term gains in counterterrorism efforts against the enemy.

Examining Israel’s policy of targeted killings, Daniel Byman posits that “when these individuals are arrested or killed, their organizations are disrupted; the groups may still be able to attract recruits, but lacking expertise, these new recruits will not pose the same kind of threat.”¹² Individuals such as bomb makers, financial heads of operations, recruiters, terrorist trainers, and leaders themselves can be scarce in an organization. For some, it can take months and years to learn these crafts, let alone train, equip, and prepare the next generation for attacks. Depending on how far along a terrorist group is in its lifecycle could be indicative of these key players and could illustrate the level of capability they possess. Therefore, it is crucial to remove these individuals to

¹⁰ Kenneth Yaoren, “Leader Decapitation and the Impact on Terrorist Groups,” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2019), p. 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Daniel Byman, “Do Targeted Killings Work?” p. 104.

thwart the production of more attacks and essentially, more terrorists from conducting those attacks. Achieving this, however, requires counterterrorist operations to execute a rapid pace of attacks¹³ against those organizations. If these targeted killing operations continue, it puts further stress on a group. Byman explains, “to avoid elimination, the terrorists must constantly change location, keep those locations secret, and keep their heads down, all of which reduces the flow of information in their organization and makes internal communications problematic and dangerous.”¹⁴ Byman’s thorough explanation of Israel’s policy on targeted killing demonstrates these short-term achievements can have detrimental implications on a terrorist organization’s operational capability; however, the ability to obtain ‘excellent intelligence’ is required to ensure that any attacks do not inadvertently kill innocent civilians, one of the larger issues associated with leadership decapitation.

Michael Freeman focuses more intently on the qualities that make a leader important. He argues that “leaders potentially perform two large aggregated functions: they inspire members of the organization and/or they manage that organization by providing operational direction.”¹⁵ He analyzes three case studies of leadership targeting that include Aum Shinrikyo, Sendero Luminoso (the Shining Path), and the Algerian GIA. His methodology measures each variable (inspirational and operational) for each group before and after the leadership decapitation, and tracks the ideological shifts throughout this timeline. From these three case studies, his results indicate that when terrorist leaders possess the traits of inspirational and operational value, that leadership targeting will be the most effective as it reduces the group’s capabilities.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Michael Freeman, “A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and its Consequences for Leadership Targeting),” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (2014), p. 667.

Bryan Price takes the concept a step further in his analysis by adding that for this counterterrorism policy to be effective, “leadership succession must be difficult.”¹⁶ This position within the organizations must be coveted, for if they “are easy to replace, the benefits of targeting high-ranking leaders may not be worth the costs.”¹⁷ His research argues that the mortality rate of a terrorist organization significantly increases when using the leadership decapitation tactic. He analyzes incidents from two databases: The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), for the years 1970-2004 and 1968-2007, respectively. His results yield significant findings and are largely counter to that of the current research conducted at the time of his publication. His theory-based conclusion is that “terrorist groups are susceptible to decapitation because they have unique organizational characteristics (they are violent, clandestine, and values-based organizations) that amplify the importance of leaders and make leadership succession difficult.”¹⁸

Patrick Johnston, like Price, addresses the faulty previously used research and methodologies that have sought to draw credible conclusions about the tactic of leadership decapitation from large-*N* studies. He “addresses these challenges by analyzing a large number of cases in which governments attempted—successfully and unsuccessfully—to remove top militant leaders and the events that followed these attempts.”¹⁹ He counters previous claims in his analysis of ‘118 decapitation attempts from a sample of 90 counterinsurgency campaigns’²⁰ and suggests that leadership decapitation “increases the chances of war termination, increases the probability of

¹⁶ Bryan C. Price, “Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism,” *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2012), p. 14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁹ Patrick B. Johnston, “Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns,” *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (Spring 2012), p. 49.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

government victory, reduces the intensity of militant violence, and reduces the frequency of insurgency attack.”²¹

While the leadership decapitation tactic exhibits “disrupting terrorist organizations, throwing them into chaos and preventing them from planning future attacks,”²² each of which can be deemed beneficial from a counterterrorism standpoint, there are many opposed to the use and even consideration of the strategy. The largest argument stems from the legal and ethical ramifications attached to the use of targeted killings. More than any other counterterrorism tactic, targeted killing operations display the tension between addressing terrorism as a crime and addressing it as war.²³ The questions of immediate necessity, protection of citizens, and prevention of attacks find themselves blurred and butting up against international policies and agreements. Blum and Heymann write, “when agents of a state seek to engage in enforcement operations outside their own territory without consent of the foreign government, they are further constrained by international norms of peaceful relations and the respect for territorial boundaries among states.”²⁴ By states violating these agreements, it stands to wonder how much additional violence is ensued in the aftermath? They argue that “targeted killings must only be carried out as an extraordinary measure, where the alternative capture or arrest is unfeasible”²⁵ and these alternatives “should be pursued, not just as a matter of law but also as a matter of sound policy.”²⁶ So, what are these alternatives they speak of?

Audrey Cronin, in her book *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, argues that arresting a leader and putting them on trial is more effective.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Stephanie Carvin, “The Trouble with Targeted Killing,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 21, Issue 3 (2012), p. 531.

²³ Gabriella Blum and Philip Heymann, “Law and Policy of Targeted Killing,” In *Laws, Outlaws, and Terrorists: Lessons from the War on Terrorism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010), p. 145.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

By “capturing a leader, putting him or her behind on trial and then presumably behind bars” it “emphasizes the rule of law, profiles leaders as criminals, and demonstrates the appropriate application of justice.”²⁷ While this falls in line with legal and ethical guidelines of a state, this specific form of leadership decapitation can have secondary benefits associated with it. She posits that “arresting a leader damages a campaign more than killing him does, especially when the jailed leader can be cut off from communicating with his subordinates, yet also paraded in humiliation before the public.”²⁸ Brian Phillips also contends this notion adding, “the short-term violence reduction is only associated with leaders arrested (not killed) and when the target is a midlevel leader as opposed to the top leader.”²⁹ This form can also result in a succession struggle within the terrorist organization and more importantly, provide the opportunity for interrogations to occur that can yield real-time, or close to, intelligence on the inner workings and structure of the terrorist organization itself. While she makes excellent points she also exclaims, “Past experience with decapitation of terrorist groups. . . is just the beginning to be studied in a systematic way and... the relationship between decapitation and a group’s demise is not straightforward.”³⁰

It is for this reason that studies and research have varied in results. Many scholars have relied on case studies to draw conclusions, whereas other have conducted large-*N* studies over significant periods of time to find causal relationships amongst factors. Lisa Langdon and her colleagues found that “the leadership of a group can generally change or be seriously challenged without threatening the group’s survival.”³¹ Although their study spanned the years from 1750 to 2004, the issue lies in the sample they derived their results from, which was only nineteen terrorist

²⁷ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader,” p. 17.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 14.

²⁹ Brian J. Phillips, “How Does Leadership Decapitation Affect Violence? The Case of Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (2015), p. 324.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 27.

³¹ Lisa Langdon et. Al, “Targeting the Leadership of Terrorist and Insurgent Movements: Historical Lessons for Contemporary Policy Makers,” *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, Vol. 15 (Spring 2004), p. 75.

organizations. This is considerably small and their study does little to explain other factors at play between the groups. Another small sample size study is that of Aaron Mannes. He tests multiple regression models for terrorist organizations that committed at least ten terror attacks in its history. With his dataset consisting of only “81 observations, including 21 comparisons and 60 instances of terrorist organizations losing their leaders”³² the results were mixed. He concludes, “it is difficult to assess the utility of decapitation strategies” and “the limited effect of the decapitation strategy, particularly on fatal attacks by terrorist groups, raises doubts about its overall efficacy.”³³ Jenna Jordan contends that it is ‘organizational resilience’ that allows for some terrorist organizations to remain active, while others die out. Specifically, “groups that are bureaucratic and have popular support are the hardest to destabilize through leadership targeting, and it’s in these cases that counterproductive outcomes are likely.”³⁴

1.1.2 *Internal and External Driving Factors of Terrorism*. Analyzing the effects of terrorist organizations both locally and globally is just as important as dissecting the internal and external factors present, as it allows policymakers to streamline analysis strategies that seek to thwart future attempts of violence, both at home and abroad. A good starting point, would be in seeking to answer why do individuals choose to engage in terrorism? Are they battling with internal conflicts as individuals in their society or are they pressured by external factors to join the fight? Many scholars and experts in the field have sought out this question in determining better ways in which to approach these global threats.

³² Aaron Mannes, “Testing the Snake Head Strategy: Does Killing or Capturing its Leaders Reduce a Terrorist Group’s Activity?” *The Journal of International Policy Solutions*, Vol. 9 (Spring 2008), p. 42.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 43.

³⁴ Jenna Jordan, “Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes,” *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (2014), p. 11.

Internal Factors. In *Psychology of Terrorism*, Randy Borum analyzes the scientific and professional social science literature pertaining to the psychological and/or behavioral dimensions of terrorist behavior. He discusses that until 1981, “academic publications in psychology, listed no reference to terrorism or related terms, such as ‘hostages’ or hijacking.”³⁵ Since then, more research and time has been dedicated to understanding the violent behavior and cognitive desires to engage in this activity. One main question posed, is how and why do people enter, stay in, and leave terrorist organizations? Martha Crenshaw suggests in her article “An Organizational Approach to Analysis of Political Terrorism,” that there are at least four categories of motivation among terrorists: (1) the opportunity for action, (2) the need to belong, (3) the desire for social status, and (4) the acquisition of material reward.³⁶ In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, and State of Mind*, Jerrold M. Post’s chapter expounds further on these basic elements and argues that political terrorists are driven to commit acts of violence as a consequence of psychological forces, and that their special psycho-logic is constructed to rationalize acts they are psychologically compelled to commit. He posits that, “individuals are drawn to the patch of terrorism in order to commit acts of violence, and their special logic, which is grounded in their psychology and reflected in their rhetoric, becomes the justification for their violent acts.”³⁷ Ultimately, Borum argues the reality that “motives individuals to join a terrorist organization and to engage in terrorism vary considerably across different types of groups, and also within groups – and they may change over time.”³⁸ Though terrorist organizations may share similar ideologies, financial networking relationships, and similar socioeconomic conditions, each

³⁵ Randy Borum, *Psychology of Terrorism* (Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, 2004), 64.

³⁶ Martha Crenshaw, “An organizational approach to the analysis of political terrorism,” *Orbis* 29(3): 465-489.

³⁷ Jerrold M. Post, “Terrorist psycho-logic: Terrorist behavior as a product of psychological forces,” in *Origins of terrorism: psychologies, ideologies, theologies, and state of mind*, ed. W. Reich, 25-40 (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25.

³⁸ Randy Borum, *Psychology of Terrorism* (Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, 2004), 24.

is unique in their own light and therefore, respectively reflect varying degrees of internal motivations.

In “The Search for the Terrorist Personality,” John Horgan frames the issue of vulnerability as ‘factors that point to some people having a greater openness to increased engagement than others.’³⁹ Common concepts across research narrow these down to injustice, identity, and belonging. Seeking to add some semblance of order to the chaotic world that is terrorism, Frederick J. Hacker presents a theoretical framework in his book *Crusaders, Criminals, Crazies: Terror and Terrorism in Our Time*, and divides terrorists into three groups—political, criminal, and the emotionally disturbed. He concludes that “remediable injustice is the basic motivation for terrorism.”⁴⁰ In essence, Borum defines this concept as the desire to fulfill revenge or justice and is “a common response to redress or remediate a wrong of injustice inflicted on another.”⁴¹ Jeffrey Ross’s article “Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism” further adds that perceptions of injustice may also be viewed as grievances and that it is perhaps the most important precipitant cause of terrorism. These may come from economic, ethnic, legal, political, racial, religious, and/or social struggles experienced by a single member of society or a group. Not one directional, he explains, that “grievances lead to support, support may lead to grievances or the availability of weapons and explosives, counterterrorist organization failure can lead to support, and organizational split and development may lead to grievances.”⁴² How one characterizes their identity can have just as a profound motivation for one to turn to terrorism, and recruiters of terrorist organizations look for this. In *Understanding Terrorism: Psychological Roots*,

³⁹ John Horgan, “The search for the terrorist personality,” in *Terrorist, victims, and society: Psychological perspectives on terrorism and its consequence*, ed. A. Silke, (London: John Wiley), 3-27.

⁴⁰ Frederick J. Hacker, *Crusaders, Criminals, Crazies: Terror and Terrorism in Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976).

⁴¹ Randy Borum, *Psychology of Terrorism* (Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, 2004), 24.

⁴² Jeffrey Ross, “Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism,” *Journal of Peace Research* 30: 326.

Consequences, and Interventions, Donald Taylor and Winifred Louis's chapter "Terrorism and the Quest for Identity explores this internal perception. They depict this scenario:

These young people find themselves at a time in their life when they are looking to the future with the hope of engaging in meaningful behavior that will be satisfying and get them ahead. Their objective circumstances including opportunities for advancement are virtually non-existent; they find some direction for the religious collective identity, but the desperately seeking advantaged state of their community leaves them feeling marginalized and lost without a clearly defined collective identity.⁴³

The concept of belonging runs closely with the previously discussed concept of identity, as it is often this desire that individuals seek to complete their identity. Experiencing affiliation with something larger than oneself and feeling connected fulfills this need. In their *Psychology* article "Terrorist Behavior and U.S. Foreign Policy," Luckabaugh and colleagues argue that, "the real cause or psychological motivation for joining is the great need for belonging,"⁴⁴ and Crenshaw adds from her chapter in *Current Perspectives in International Terrorism*, that "for the individuals who become active terrorists, the initial attraction is often to the group, or community of believers, rather than to an abstract ideology or to violence."⁴⁵

Beginning with internal factors, we can look at grievances to understand where frustrations are built up at the local level, and what drives individuals to seek remediating these issues outside of the state government. For it is these socioeconomic grievances that many terrorist organizations strive to exploit in pursuing their strategic agenda and gaining followership. Abdisaid Musse Ali-Koor explores these grievances in his article "Islamic Extremism in East Africa." He remarks, "in

⁴³ Donald M. Taylor and Winnifred Louis, "Terrorism and the quest for identity," in *Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Roots, Consequences, and Interventions*, eds. Fathali M. Moghaddam and Anthony J. Marsella (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004), 178.

⁴⁴ Robert Luckabaugh, Edward Fuqua, Joseph Cangemi and Casimir Kowalski, "Terrorist Behavior and U.S. Foreign Policy: Who is the enemy? Some Psychological and Political Perspectives," *Psychology* 34(2): 1-15.

⁴⁵ Martha Crenshaw, "The Subjective Reality of the Terrorist: Ideological and Psychological Factors in Terrorism," in *Current Perspectives in International Terrorism*, eds. R. O. Slater and M. Stohl (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1988).

East Africa, perceptions of unequal socioeconomic status and some ill-advised state actions have nudged Muslims toward more conservative tendencies and enabled ‘us versus them’ narratives to resonate.”⁴⁶ It is this lack of fulfillment by the state on the local level that provides an environment in which terrorist groups can grow, thrive, and exercise their individual oversight on the populous or unique strategic agenda that seeks to drive the government to remediate these grievances they have caused.

External Factors. External factors that perpetuate the cycle for those to join terrorist outlets in expressing their grievances are most commonly seen in the economic (e.g., poverty, lack of educational opportunities, etc.), political (e.g., government repression), and social (e.g., education, social inequality, and religion) realms. While many root causes of terrorism are linked to poverty, poor economic development, and social cleavages amongst the population, here the divide between successful rates of education take the majority of the spotlight. Youth unemployment and associated secondary education completion and attendance rates are significantly lower in Muslim communities, along with resources that provide for these opportunities. In his article “The Root Causes of Terrorism are Internal, Not External,” M. D. Nalapat describes that “it is the absence of opportunity caused by the stranglehold of the feudal elite in the rural areas and the commercial-military elite in the cities that has led thousands of youths towards radicalism.”⁴⁷ Another large external factor is the dissatisfaction with the individual governments. The United Nations Development Programme’s article “Journey to Extremism in Africa” cite the characteristics of this include: “belief that government only looks after the interest of a few; low level of trust in government authorities; and experience, or

⁴⁶ Abdisaid Musse Ali-Koor, “Islamist Extremism in East Africa,” *Africa Security Brief* No. 32 (August 9, 2016): 5.

⁴⁷ M. D. Nalapat, “The Root Causes of Terrorism are Internal, Not External,” RadioFreeEurope, last updated February 13, 2009, accessed on October 20, 2020, https://www.rferl.org/a/The_Roots_Of_Terrorism_Are_Internal_Not_External/1492727.html

willingness to report experience, of bribe-paying.”⁴⁸ The largest of external influences directly stimulating the success rate and growth of African terrorist organizations is that of the well-funded foreign Islamist groups, such as al-Qa’ida. “This includes so-called Wahhabi organizations whose sponsorship of educational and religious activities has been fueled by the wealth of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other oil-rich Gulf States,”⁴⁹ references Ali-Koor. These regions and world players arm themselves with the knowledge of these local issues and target them for the distribution of funding, educational scholarships abroad, and the diffuse of their conservative interpretation of the Koran. Nalapat explains this blaming of external factors for the “accelerated radicalization of youth in the country, pointing to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or the disputed Kashmir region, is the truth is that they themselves are the culprits.”⁵⁰

The terrorist organizations actively operating in these states and geographically-associated regions stem from religious ideologies, specifically Islamic extremism. Not occurring overnight but across decades, Ali-Koor states “the genesis of this is largely the externally-driven diffusion of the Salafist ideology from the Gulf States.”⁵¹ Socioeconomic events were the primary driver for this development over time. He goes on to expound that “buoyed by the global oil boom and the desire to spread the ultraconservative Wahhabi version of Islam throughout the Muslim World, funding for mosques, madrassas, and Muslim youth and cultural centers began flowing into the region at greater levels in the 1980s and 1990s.”⁵² This external funding created the opportunity for families to send their children to these Gulf States for higher education where these ideals were

⁴⁸ United Nations Development Programme, “Journey to Extremism in Africa,” last updated 2017, accessed on October 1, 2020, <https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf>

⁴⁹ Abdisaid Musse Ali-Koor, “Islamist Extremism in East Africa,” 4.

⁵⁰ M. D. Nalapat, “The Root Causes of Terrorism are Internal, Not External,” RadioFreeEurope, last updated February 13, 2009, accessed on October 20, 2020, https://www.rferl.org/a/The_Roots_Of_Terrorism_Are_Internal_Not_External/1492727.html

⁵¹ Abdisaid Musse Ali-Koor, “Islamist Extremism in East Africa,” Africa Security Brief No. 32 (August 9, 2016): 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*

further engrained into their lifestyle. These young men subsequently brought back this ideology to their homeland, which resulted in the Salafist discussion becoming more mainstream and a growing intolerance that fostered greater religious polarization⁵³ that we see today. Merriam-Webster defines this *heterodox* ideology as “contrary to or different from an acknowledged standard, a traditional form, or an established religion,”⁵⁴ in this case, Christianity.

In the National Counterterrorism Strategy Development put forth by Africa’s Center for Strategic Studies, “Africans have addressed these ills head on, responding at the regional, subregional, and national level, yet their policies have not stemmed the terrorist tide and their actions against terrorism may not have a lasting positive impact, if they are not well organized and clearly framed.”⁵⁵ One specific example cited by the United Nation’s representative Lansana Gberie, is that the “African Union has adopted a fairly convoluted definition of terrorism, describing it merely by implication.”⁵⁶ Constructing and implementing national counterterrorism strategies, along with clear, detailed definitions, that address the unique threats each group possesses will allow for these African governments to responsibly and effectively thwart future activity and attacks from occurring. One specific strategy already implemented is that of *leadership decapitation*. Mentioned earlier, it consists of killing, capturing, or capturing and then killing the individual. Its tactics are designed to target the group’s leadership structure with hopes of reducing or eliminating its operational capability. Benefits can include, but are not limited to: eliminating a charismatic leader responsible for the organization’s momentum and ideology;

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ “Heterodox,” Merriam-Webster. Accessed on October 1, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heterodox#note-1>

⁵⁵ “National Counterterrorism Strategy Development,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://africacenter.org/programs/national-counterterrorism-strategy-development/>

⁵⁶ Lansana Gberie, “Terrorism overshadows internal conflicts,” United Nations, last updated April 2016, accessed on October 1, 2020, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2016/terrorism-overshadows-internal-conflicts>

creating turmoil and disruption during the group's succession; causing the replacement leader(s) to expend countless amounts of energy and resources in hiding rather than planning future attacks; increasing the state's capability for a swift victory; and reducing the operational capability of the terrorist organization. Cronin argues that "decisions about whether and how to target leaders reflect philosophies in a state's counterterrorism approach, and historical case studies indicate that these tactical choices have significant strategic implications for the outcomes of campaigns."⁵⁷ For any significant movement towards removing these threats from each country, Ali-Koor specifies "it is vital for East African governments and citizens, therefore, to understand both the external and domestic drivers of these extremist ideologies, so that the process of radicalization can be interrupted before it cements itself within local communities and grows increasingly violent."⁵⁸

1.1.3 *Salafi Jihadism's Role in Terrorism*. Rashid Dar and Shadi Hamid from the Brookings Institution cite, "with the recent spate of horrific attacks from Nice to Dhaka, and political rhetoric around Islam and Muslims becoming more heated, divisive, and sloppy, it's becoming increasingly important to at least define our terms."⁵⁹ Let's first define the terms *Islamism*, *mainstream Islamism*, *Salafism*, *Jihadism*, and *Salafi-Jihadism* for a better understanding. The first term that should be defined is that of *Islamism*. A phenomenon known for incorporating a wide spectrum of beliefs and behaviors, Islamist's "believe Islamic laws or Islamic values should play a central role in public life; they feel Islam has things to say about how politics should be conducted, how the law should be applied, and how other people—not just themselves—should conduct themselves morally."⁶⁰ More commonly referred to as *mainstream Islamism*, these individuals seek "to

⁵⁷ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader," In *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 16.

⁵⁸ Abdisaid Musse Ali-Koor, "Islamist Extremism in East Africa," 2.

⁵⁹ Rashid Dar and Shadi Hamid, "Islamism, Salafism, and jihadism: A primer," The Brookings Institution, last updated 2019, accessed on August 15, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer/>

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

reconcile pre-modern Islamic law with modern nation-states,”⁶¹ meaning they do not seek to revert back to seventh century times like those who are Salafists. In his book *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, Roel Meijer explains *Salafism* as having derived “from the term of the pious forefather (*al-salaf al-salih*), the first three generations of Muslims who had first-hand experience of the rise of Islam and are regarded as exemplary for the correct way to live for a future Muslim.”⁶² Specifically speaking, he expounds that this “golden period is considered to be restricted to the first generation of Muslims or even to the period of the four rightly guided Caliphs (632-661).”⁶³ Salafis are extremely dedicated to not only mirroring these behaviors, but in truly reflecting the spirit behind each action.

Since Islamism is over-arching and broad enough that it captures the realm of all behaviors, it so too captures those who seek to exploit this phenomenon to fulfill their own strategic agenda, like those who have gained notoriety over the past fifty years (e.g., extremists, Jihadists, and Salafi-Jihadists). Thomas Hegghammer examines the relationship between religion and politics of Salafi-Jihadists and finds that “Jihadism is a relatively new term that only gained currency in the academic discourse in the late 1990s.”⁶⁴ Dar and Hamid expound upon the term, and state “*Jihadism* is driven by the idea that jihad (religiously-sanctioned warfare) is an individual obligation (*fard ‘ayn*) incumbent upon all Muslims, rather than a collective obligation carried out by legitimate representatives of the Muslim community (*fard kifaya*), as it was traditionally understood in the pre-modern era.”⁶⁵ *Salafi-Jihadism* is therefore, a combination of these two previously defined terms. A recent report published by the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Roel Meijer, “Introduction,” in *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) 3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁶⁴ Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islam,” in *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) 246.

⁶⁵ Rashid Dar and Shadi Hamid, “Islamism, Salafism, and jihadism: A primer,” 2016.

Transnational Threats Project defines a group or individuals as a Salafi-Jihadist based on two criteria:

First, the group or individual emphasizes the importance of returning to a ‘pure’ Islam, that of the Salaf, the pious ancestors. Second, the group or individual believes that violent jihad is *fard ‘ayn* (a personal religious duty). *Fard ‘ayn* includes tasks every Muslim is required to perform, such as *zakat* (almsgiving), *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca), *salat* (daily prayers), *sawm* (fasting during Ramadan), and the *shahada* (accepting Muhammad as God’s messenger).⁶⁶

Defined by Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, *jihad* is “the holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty,”⁶⁷ and Wiktorowicz explains that this major faction of Salafis, “take a more militant position and argue that the current context calls for violence and revolution.”⁶⁸ This call for action is centered around the five defining characteristics of Salafi-Jihadism known as *tawhid*, *hakimiyya*, *takfir*, *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*, and *jihad*, and each will be explored further below. As one of the most outspoken and well-known faces of Salafi-Jihadism, Osama bin Laden was unbelievably critical of Western influence in Islamic states. The author of *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, Shiraz Maher describes how “he denounced a group of Saudi intellectuals who attempted to promote coexistence between Muslims and the United States in the aftermath of 9/11, supposedly because their interpretation of Islam lacked the five defining features central to the Salafi-Jihadi project.”⁶⁹ In *The al-Qaeda Reader: The Essential Texts of Osama bin Laden’s Terrorist Organization*, Raymond Ibrahim translates that bin Laden declared, “the Islam preached by [moderates] does not contain [the doctrine of] loyalty and disavowal [*al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*], nor

⁶⁶ Hannah Byrne, Nicholas Harrington, Seth G. Jones, Danika Newlee, Clayton Sharb, and Charles Vallee, *The Evolution of the Salafi-Jihadist Threat: Current and Future Challenges from the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, and Other Groups*, CSIS Transnational Threats Project (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2018) 4.

⁶⁷ “Jihad,” Merriam-Webster.com, last updated 2021, accessed on August 15, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jihad>

⁶⁸ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” p. 208.

⁶⁹ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 15.

does it contain *jihad*, nor the boundaries established by the *shari'a* [e.g., takfir], since it is these very doctrines that worry the West most.”⁷⁰ Maher explains:

By reference to their own works, ideas were selected based on: their importance to the movement, the centrality of those ideas to their aims, and objectives, and the extent to which those ideas were sufficiently cultivated in a particularly unique or different way to inform the Salafi-Jihadi worldview.⁷¹

The five characteristics propelled the movement over the past four decades into its current status in the world today.

Tawhid. For one to truly realize and fulfill *tawhid*, they must not only believe and think it, but they must express it profusely, and be willing to demonstrate actions that support the existence, of one true God. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz bin Baz outlines the three branches of *tawhid* as, *tawhid al-rububiyya* (Oneness of Lordship), *tawhid al-uluhiyya* (Oneness of divinity or worship), and *tawhid al-asma’ wa-l-sifat* (Oneness of names, qualities or attributions). They must be willing to go to war for it and if they are not willing, then one does not, as Maher explains, “understand the true meaning of this concept, and has consequentially failed to realize *tawhid al-uluhiyya*.”⁷² *Jihad* is a prime example of how *tawhid* can be fulfilled. It is the “tool by which monotheism is established and implemented as a political system over society.”⁷³ ‘Abdallah Azzam expresses that, “in order to fully realize the most important and basic article of faith—demonstrating belief in the oneness of God—he cultivated the Wahhabi notion of Islam as a living ideal in particularly jihadist terms.”⁷⁴ Believing isn’t enough; one must live it through action, and violent action. Pairing this characteristic with that of *jihad* has opened many doors of violence Salafi-Jihadist groups such as

⁷⁰ Raymond Ibrahim, “Al-Qaeda’s Declaration of War Against Americans,” in *The Al-Qaeda Reader: The Essential Texts of Osama bin Laden’s Terrorist Organization* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 25.

⁷¹ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 15.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 157-158.

⁷⁴ ‘Abdallah Azzam, *The Tawhid of Action* (Tibyān Publications, n.d.).

⁷⁵ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 166.

the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and its affiliates, and other groups to commit atrocities in order to be closer with God.

Hakimiyya. Rooted in the colonial experience, this concept is derived from concerns about the modern political system. Referencing theorists such as Maududi and Qutb, Maher posits that “establishing the sovereignty of God in the political system—through *hakimiyya*—would not just secure God’s rights, but would also provide temporal empowerment,” since this was the stage “at which the Prophet Muhammad’s message was transformed and transmitted on a much larger scale than it had been before.”⁷⁶ What Salafi-Jihadists did with the concept was similar to that of *jihad*. It was established in line with that of *tawhid*. The use of this established structure further provides for defining what is acceptable and what is not, a line that is wholly inflexible and offers little understanding for missteps because its rule is under the word of Allah. If one were to deviate from His word, it would go against the extension of *tawhid*, and essentially, take one out of the fold. This act of unbelief (*kufir*), would then make one an acceptable target of *takfir*. The Islamic State’s execution of so many “unbelievers” is a prime example of identifying those who go against this grain, or God’s word.

Takfir. This characteristic in the Salafi-Jihadist movement, at its most basic level, is where one Muslim can declare another Muslim, or group of Muslims, “outside” of the Islamic group as a whole. Wiktorowicz states this concept, “represents one of the most prominent sources of fissure within the Salafi community and exemplifies the impact of contextual interpretation on factionalization.”⁷⁷ It is because it causes one to pass judgment on whether another has left the Islamic faith by choice, or through an act, either of which are up to the perception of the one judging. Essentially, they are interpreting another’s actions, of which they quite possibly could

⁷⁶ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 185.

⁷⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” p. 228.

wholly misinterpret. Maher explains that, “the one who pronounces *takfir* on another is said to be performing *mukaffira*, a practice that is governed by a dense and distinct series of rules.”⁷⁸ The concept of *takfir* stems from the early stages of Islam, establishing a line drawn in the sand between those who are pious and those who seek to argue its political considerations. Since those times it has transformed into an effective and dangerous tool wielded by Salafi-Jihadists to newly establish and redefine, or more strategically define, those who are considered “in” and those who are deemed “out.” Maher describes, “from Indonesia to Pakistan, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, and across North Africa, militant groups have frequently invoked the doctrine to justify mass casualty attacks against ordinary Muslims—ironically, the very constituency in whose defence they often claim to act.”⁷⁹ This dangerous characteristic allows for one who is not “committing the act,” to determine intention, altogether leaving one’s fate in the eye of the beholder; a common concept referenced in modern times as a convenient excuse to commit violence.

Al-wala’ wa-l-bara’. Similar to how *takfir* is used as a protective tool in Islam, *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* also invokes similar reactions, as its definition envelopes other concepts that mirror the divide between “in” and “out.” Stemming from war and crisis, the “origins of the idea as something which both protects the Muslim community—by preaching exclusivity and loyalty to it—while also licensing attacks on its enemies—by advocating violent disavowal from them.”⁸⁰ Originally meant as tool to distinguish believers from non-believers, this defining characteristic has evolved as a tool used by Salafi-Jihadists to separate those who do not fully devote themselves to God as outcasts, labeling them as the enemy, and making it acceptable for others to invoke *takfir*. This has especially been the case during times of struggle. This is exemplified again during the Soviet-

⁷⁸ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 72.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 83.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 112.

Afghan war in the 1980s causing noteworthy doctrine to be produced by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. “Whereas the political application of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* had previously been used by those in authority and...to rally support against external belligerent forces, Maqdisi and others were now fashioning it into a tool for popular use against established power structures.”⁸¹

Jihad. Probably the most well-known characteristic of the movement, like Salafism, this concept is also debated amongst Muslims. “At its core the contemporary Salafi-Jihadi movement regards physical struggle in the cause of God as the pinnacle of Islam, its zenith and apex,”⁸² but it is often contested over how this is best fulfilled, should be implemented, and appropriately and measurably practiced. Perhaps one of the most contentious debates stems from how jihad is used as a defensive measure, originating from the Soviet-Afghan war during the 1980s and reaching into the 2003 invasion of Iraq, militant Sunni Muslims were faced with explaining their behavior against Western players and also, against their fellow Muslims. Just like the previous concepts, Salafi-Jihadists found new ways to explain their actions. Maher details, “they achieved this by interpreting the laws on fighting (*qital*) and killing, equal retaliation (*qisas*), and human shields (*tatarrus*) in expansive new ways.”⁸³ Once again, Salafi-Jihadist’s reference classical thoughts and concepts and applied them to new and emerging circumstances to fit their narrative.

The defining characteristics of *tawhid*, *hakimiyya*, *takfir*, *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*, and *jihad*, have provided the basic foundation of the movement’s goals, “with each of its constituent components driving towards that goal,”⁸⁴ and continuing to be those with which they are measured. Byrne et al. report that the current number of active Salafi-Jihadist groups is “at its highest level over the past 40 years” and suggest that “this finding is significant, since 1980 marked the era

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 123.

⁸² *Ibid*, 32.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 41.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 15.

when foreign fighters like Abdullah Azzam—and eventually Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri—flocked to Pakistan and Afghanistan to fight the Soviets and support the Afghan mujahideen.”⁸⁵ These characteristics provided the initial momentum for groups like these to rise, why they continue to seek to fulfill their goal in establishing an Islamic Caliphate across the globe, and why Salafi-Jihadism will continue to provide a religious foundation for groups like these to commit atrocities in its name; however, the term with which society has become so accustomed to is that of *jihad*.

Largely recognized and ultimately associated with the September 11th terrorist attacks, “its proponents have challenged established power structures, spawned a massive security industry in the West and overrun large parts of the Levant.”⁸⁶ Merriam-Webster further defines this as “a personal struggle in devotion to Islam especially involving spiritual discipline; and a crusade for a principle or belief.”⁸⁷ It is through this concept where their religion is proven and defended. “Viewed in this way,” Maher exclaims, “jihad in the path of God is ‘*ibada*, an act of worship akin to ritualistic acts such as prayer (*salaa*), pilgrimage (‘*umra*), or fasting (*sawm*).”⁸⁸ One of the largest proponents of this Islamic practice was ‘Abdallah Yusuf Azzam. Known as the Father of Global Jihad and an extremely influential Salafi-Jihadist, he authored multiple books including *Join the Caravan*, *The Defence of the Muslim Lands: The First Obligations After Iman*, and *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah*. In *Join the Caravan*, he declares, “jihad is the most excellent form of worship, and by its means the Muslim can reach the highest of ranks [of paradise].”⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Byrne et al., *The Evolution of the Salafi-Jihadist Threat*, 7.

⁸⁶ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 31.

⁸⁷ “Jihad,” Merriam-Webster.com, last updated 2021, accessed on August 15, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jihad>

⁸⁸ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 32.

⁸⁹ ‘Abdallah Azzam, *Join the Caravan*, (np, 1987), 18.

Dissecting the concept of jihad further, we become aware of two types: offensive and defensive. “It is generally accepted within both normative Islam and Salafi-Jihadi circles that only a rightful authority, such as the Caliph, can sanction the former;”⁹⁰ however, the circumstances for defensive jihad are quite different. While offensive jihad is proactive in nature, defensive jihad is reactive, often stemming from an outside attack or occupation from non-Muslims. According to Maher, “defensive jihad is borne of necessity and circumstances which, left unaddressed, would pose a threat to the community of Islam.”⁹¹ A great example of this fierce dedication to the protection of Islam is found in a passage from ‘Abdallah al-Ghunayman. He states:

If the enemy attacks a land, everyone who is able is obliged to defend it, even the women are also obliged to fight. This was stated by the *fuqaha*’ [jurists], because this is an individual obligation; the role of the leader is to organize. If there is a leader, all well and good; if there is no leader, the Muslims are still obliged to fight.⁹²

‘Abdallah Azzam echoes this notion by citing Ibn Taymiyyah’s words, “when the enemy wants to attack Muslims, defense becomes obligatory on all those upon whom the attack is intended, and on others beside them, just as Allah has said.”⁹³ Unbeknownst to Muslims as to what will occur, the affirmation stands that if there is an attack from an outside entity, they are religiously required to remove such threat in order to protect the greater Muslim community. “Within the contemporary jihad movement this concept was developed further by Anwar al-Awlaki who argued that God is the only *amir* required for jihad because it is fought *fi sabil Allah*, in the path of Allah.”⁹⁴ Disassociating the concept of defensive jihad with any one individual allows this concept to endure the test of time in Islam and the Salafi-Jihadi movements. With the goal to fulfill

⁹⁰ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 35.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 36.

⁹² ‘Abdallah al-Ghunayman, *Question #11275: Is it a condition of jihad that there be a leader?*, Islam-qza.com., Last updated October 4, 2013, accessed on July 11, 2021, <https://muwahhidmedia.wordpress.com/2013/07/24/is-having-a-ruler-a-condition-for-the-defensive-and-offensive-jihad/>

⁹³ ‘Abdallah Azzam, *Join the Caravan*, 19.

⁹⁴ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 39.

jihad in the name of Allah, “legitimacy instead resides in the hands of individual actors, allowing Salafi-Jihadis to invoke precisely this principle in order to establish their authority and legitimize their actions,”⁹⁵ such as the result of collateral damage and/or civilian casualties during its military campaigns.

Historical events throughout the 1980s and 1990s progressively invoked hostility within Muslim populations. Developing a chain of causation between Muslims and the Western world, jihadi movements sought new ways to remediate this oppressiveness, not only with the West, but towards fellow Muslims. Maher discusses this was achieved, “by interpreting the laws on fighting (*qital*) and killing, equal retaliation (*qisas*), and human shields (*tatarrus*) in expansive new ways.”⁹⁶ Displeased with the status, or lack thereof, of their jihad, they believed it was Western nations who were to blame for their inability to conquer surrounding lands. Additionally, “all of the contemporary problems of the Muslim world including corruption, nepotism, political instability and repression were therefore the products of a Western conspiracy to contain Islam and keep Muslims in check.”⁹⁷ One of the largest catalysts for these expansive interpretations can be pointed towards Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait, for it brought American troops into the Gulf states, a place in which their position as non-Muslims was unwelcome. This only fueled Salafi-Jihadi minds that the West was looking to expand their devious agenda. Though technically invited by Saudi Arabia, it was nonetheless deemed a belligerent move. Multiple events in the 1990s surrounding Arab-Israeli relations, the massacre of Muslim by Serb forces in Srebrenica, and the establishment of United States military bases, ultimately led Osama bin Laden to issue *fatwas* against the United States. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines *fatwa* as, “a legal opinion

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 40.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 41.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 42.

or decree handed down by an Islamic religious leader.”⁹⁸ These fatwas provided Muslim followers with the legitimization of committing jihad.

While the rules of *qital* explicitly delineate a framework that affords the protection of women, children, the elderly, and non-combatants, it has been stated that these protections cannot always be fulfilled during jihad. Chapter one of an At- Tibyān publication pronounces:

But this *protection* is no absolute, nor is it unrestricted. Because indeed there are circumstances in which is it permissible to kill them both, intentionally, and unintentionally. And in these situations, the restriction is removed, and these women and children revert back to the original ruling of the People of *kufr*-permissibility.⁹⁹

Responsible for the September 11th terrorist attacks, al-Qaeda has adopted this adjusted mindset and used specific arguments to rationalize the killing of nearly 3,000 American citizens on that day. Maher explains:

These arguments, which al-Qaeda has used to justify 9/11 and which it has popularized ever since...include the belief: (a) that ordinary citizens of Western states are neither innocent nor civilians, because they are vicariously liable for the actions of their governments; (b) that civilian deaths are justified under the law of equal measures, *qisas* or equal retaliation; (c) the use of human shields, *tatarrus*, sanctions the targeting of civilians; and (d) it is not always practical or possible to distinguish between civilians and combatants when an assault is obligated.¹⁰⁰

While these arguments will be explored further below, they highlight the loose requirements and broad acceptance amongst the contemporary global jihad movement in explaining “collateral damage” and civilian casualties during their military campaigns. These arguments do not just apply to the September 11th terrorist attacks, but to prior attacks (e.g., embassy bombings in Kenya and

⁹⁸ “Fatwa,” Merriam-Webster.com, last updated 2021, accessed on July 11, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fatwa>

⁹⁹ “The Original Ruling Regarding Killing Women and Children of the Kuffar,” in *The Clarification Regarding Intentionally Targeting Women and Children* (At-Tibyān Publications, 2004), 18.

¹⁰⁰ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 49.

Tanzania in 1998) and continued targeting towards the West, to include lone-terrorist attacks that are becoming more common today.

I. *Ordinary citizens of Western states are neither innocents nor civilians.* Solely being defined under the identify of their nation (e.g., the United States), American citizens have been blanket-assigned all despicable characteristics of their government (perceived by the Muslim world), despite their personal relations, or lack thereof. Representing the economic constraints upon the Muslim community, this was largely the reasoning for the World Trade Centers as the main targets of the September 11th terrorist attacks. The contemporary global jihad movement sees each citizen and an extension of the government for which they represent, and therefore, and acceptable target to conduct jihad against. Maher describes, “an apathetic non-voter who pays no tax is therefore just as culpable as an evangelical partisan who canvases for, and financially supports, his elected leader.”¹⁰¹

II. *Civilian deaths are justified under the law of equal measures.* Commonly referred to in the Christian faith as “an eye for an eye,” this argument contends that Muslims are justified in killing women, children, the elderly, and non-combatants because these groups have been killed in their community. The massacre in Srebrenica of Muslim refugees by Serbian fighters represents an excellent example of the redress by the contemporary Salafi-Jihadi movement. This argument falls under the concept of *qisas*. Defined by Maher, “it typically related to cases of murder, manslaughter, or acts involving physical mutilation (such as the loss of limbs) and creates a framework for the victim (or their families) to seek retributive justice.”¹⁰² As previously discussed, the global jihad movement has evolved this concept to fit their strategic agenda in two ways. “Firstly, they have taken an instrument of justice intended for private individuals and have applied

¹⁰¹ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 57.

¹⁰² Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 50.

it to international affairs...Secondly, by applying *qisas* as an instrument of international law they hold every citizen-stranger of an enemy state liable for the actions of their government.”¹⁰³ So, for all the suffering the Muslim world has endured, because of *qisas*, al-Qaeda was perfectly within their right to kill nearly 3,000 American citizens.

III. *The use of human shields sanctions the targeting of civilians.* Human shields (*tatarrus*) are those who find themselves caught up in the midst of an attack. They are not originally targeted and often colloquially referred to as “collateral damage.” Essentially, “the rules relating to *tatarrus* apply whenever and wherever civilians are intermixed with legitimate targets; they are killed typically due to misfortune or because they cannot be reasonably distinguished and separated out from the intended target.”¹⁰⁴ Examples of this include the suicide-bombing of a government building and inadvertently destroying a school filled with children next door, or a mass-shooting on a military base killing women and children attending the on base theater. “By challenging the way in which *tatarrus* has been traditionally viewed by scholars, contemporary militant movements have sought to broaden and dilute the threshold of acceptability for killing human shields.”¹⁰⁵

IV. *It is not always practical to distinguish between civilians and combatants.* Notably declared by Osama bin Laden in a statement he issued in 2004, he exclaims:

We do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians. American history does not distinguish between civilians and military, not even women and children. They are the ones who used [nuclear] bombs against Nagasaki. Can these bombs distinguish between infants and the military?¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

¹⁰⁶ John Miller, “A conversation with the most dangerous man in the world,” *Esquire Magazine*, Vol. 133, Issue 2 (Feb. 1999), in *Compilation of Osama Bin Laden Statements 1994-January 2004*, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS): 96.

Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi support this contention, and expound upon this final argument, which is an extension of *tatarrus*, describing that it involves intention. Quoting al-Libi, Maher says, “The Muslim hit-man has to target the unbeliever, because if he can actually distinguish, between him and the Muslim, that becomes his duty; if he is unable to do it, he has to distinguish by his intentions.”¹⁰⁷ The expansion upon the concept of *tatarrus* has proven more deadly, allowing for mere words and an individual’s “intention” to suffice for the killing of innocents and civilians.

These four main arguments have evolved ancient doctrine concepts (e.g., *qital*, *qisas*, and *tatarrus*) into modern applications for contemporary jihadi movements to support their interpretation in order to conduct their strategic agenda of fulfilling *jihad*. Maher declares “they have needed to construct a malleable theological framework to achieve this, one that molds classical opinions to fit the modern world.”¹⁰⁸ In doing so, the contemporary global jihad movement accounts for and explains “collateral damage” and civilian casualties during their military campaigns.

So, the question becomes, how do we combat against these fiercely driven religious motivations of terrorist organizations that adhere to the Salafi-Jihadi faith? We know from previous studies done in counterterrorism circles that the strategy of leadership decapitation *can* be effective. But are we essentially perpetuating the cycle of killing when we use this counterterrorism strategy against these groups? It would seem in their eyes, our use of swift and violent removal of their leadership would just serve as continued means and motivations to continue their retaliatory justice. Will the age-old adage an “eye for an eye” in this application truly leave the whole world blind? The third set of case studies in this paper seeks to answer the

¹⁰⁷ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 65.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 67.

effectiveness of leadership decapitation efforts against these religiously-motivated terrorist organizations.

1.2 Methodology

Nine terrorist organizations were selected and examined in this paper, each representing one of the top three terrorist organizations for that specific region of the world. Each region originally began with a longer list of groups to be covered; however, as research and analysis progressed, individual groups were removed for a number of reasons. Each is discussed further below according to their corresponding regions.

Two databases were primarily used for the selection and attack analysis for each terrorist organization. All organizations were selected from the University of Maryland's Big, Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) database which represents the most notorious terrorist organizations since 1998. Filtered under 'Lethality' the top five groups from each region were originally selected for the countries in each corresponding region: South America, Africa, and the Middle East. The data for these attacks included in this database were retrieved from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) put forth by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). It is currently the most comprehensive unclassified database on terrorist attacks,¹⁰⁹ and includes relevant incident data pertaining to each attack from 1970 through 2019. Such data includes the GTD identification number, date of attack, country, city, perpetrator group, number of fatalities, the number of people injured, attack type (e.g., armed assault, assassination, bombing/explosion, facility/infrastructure attack, hijacking, hostage taking (barricade incident), hostage taking (kidnapping), unarmed assault, unknown, suicide attack and non-suicide attack),

¹⁰⁹ "About the GTD," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), last updated 2020, accessed on October 1, 2020, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/about/>

and the target type (e.g., abortion related, airports and aircraft, business, educational institution, food/water supply, government (diplomatic/general), journalism and media, maritime, military, NGO (non-governmental organization), other, police, private citizens and property, religious figures/institutions, telecommunication, terrorists/non-state militia, tourists, transportation, utilities, violent political party, and unknown).

The recorded incidents for each organization were filtered under all three criterion options available in the database. *Criterion I* filter includes incidents in which, “the act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal.”¹¹⁰ *Criterion II* filter includes incidents in which, “there must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims.”¹¹¹ *Criterion III* filter includes incidents in which, “the action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities (i.e., the act must be outside the parameters permitted by international humanitarian law (particularly the admonition against deliberately targeting civilians or non-combatants)).”¹¹² The option for ‘excluding ambiguous cases’ was also selected, as in certain cases, there may be some uncertainty whether or not an incident meets all of the criteria for inclusion as a GTD terrorist incident. The goal for this analysis was to reflect the number of incidents that were *certainly* committed by each terrorist organization. The final terrorism criteria marked was that of ‘including unsuccessful attacks.’ The purpose of this was to include all attacks that were attempted, and not just those which were successfully carried out. This ensured accurate numbers for *all* attacks committed by each terrorist organization were included in the datasets. It should be noted that this research and

¹¹⁰ “GTD: Advanced Search,” National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), last updated 2021, accessed on October 20, 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/?back=1&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&dtp2=some&perpetrator=20033

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

analysis is wholly unclassified and therefore, does not reflect any classified data for terrorist attacks committed, terrorist leaders, or any and all on-going current leadership decapitation efforts by the U.S. Government and/or its allies.

Although the range of years in this database are from 1970-2019, there are no incidents recorded at all for the year of 1993. Attacks, or incidents, for the groups in the regions of Africa and the Middle East predominantly occur after 1993, so the time period covered is significantly smaller when compared to other regions of the world. As such, when examining each graphic, the timeline will instead illustrate the years 1992-2019, vice the entire timeline of the database (e.g., 1970-2019) to ensure a clearer picture of the rise and fall of incidents, while also depicting less white space.

South America. The three terrorist organizations to be analyzed are the National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and Shining Path (SL). Two terrorist groups not included in this case study include the United Self Defense Units of Colombia (AUC) and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL). These two organization's recorded incidents accounted for 68 and 284, respectively, and were not included in the analysis as their numbers are significantly lower than the other three, much larger and more active terrorist organizations.

Africa. The three terrorist organizations chosen to be analyzed are al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram. Originally included in research was the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), as they followed close behind AQIM in the number of recorded attacks on the database (e.g., 309); however, after thorough research it was discovered their leader, Joseph Kony, although in poor health, is still assessed to be alive. Additional time, or the assessment of his capture or death will be needed to determine if either of these actions have

affected the number of attacks committed by this violent terrorist organization. As such, the LRA was removed from this paper's analysis. Finally, around sixteen other terrorist organizations were included in the BAAD database for the region of Africa, but reflected such small numbers, so they were not included in the overall analysis in this portion of the paper.

The Middle East. The three terrorist organizations to be analyzed are al-Qa'ida (AQ), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS/ISIL), and the Taliban. Around 40 other terrorist organizations were included in the BAAD database for the regions of the Middle East and the Far East, but reflected such small numbers, so they were not included in the overall analysis in this portion of the paper. Two groups from the Far East were initially considered to be included, but were left out for length concerns of the paper.

2 South America

It is clear leadership decapitation is a controversial tactic to use in counterterrorism operations and that it cannot be applied generally across all terrorist organizations due to the sheer number of factors present. The first set of case studies in this paper seeks to employ a systematic way of understanding how this tactic has fared within one region of the world, South America. A comprehensive look at three case studies of leadership decapitation in this region provide measurable results that indicate it is an effective tactic that should be used for the future.

2.1 National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN)

The National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) is Colombia's largest leftist guerilla group, formed in 1964 following the decade of Colombian civil war, from 1948-1958, known as La Violencia¹¹³ by brothers Fabio and Manuel Vásquez Castaño. The brothers' Marxist-Leninist group sought to defend Colombians whom they believed to be victims of social, political, and economic injustices perpetrated by the Colombian state.¹¹⁴ The group was

¹¹³ Mapping Militant Organization, "National Liberation Army (ELN)," Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/national-liberation-army-eln#highlight_text_15733

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

predominantly comprised of “Cuban Revolution and Che Guevarra inspired students, Catholic radicals, and leftist intellectuals”¹¹⁵ who were determined to fight for a better democracy that was more representative of the people in the country. Beginning their training in the Province of Santander, the ELN officially announced themselves when they took over small village within the province. After growing their numbers over the years through recruitment, their steady growth was halted in 1973 when a government military offensive almost eliminated the group in its entirety.¹¹⁶ Roughly 67% of their members were killed, alongside the original founding brothers. The ELN was at a crossroads; allow the group to die with its leaders or restructure the organization and push forward. It was at this point that Father Manuel Pérez Martínez (“El Cura Pérez” or “Poliarcho”) and Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista (“Gabino”) accepted leadership of the group. With this new leadership pair came new tactics in which they financially funded their exploits. Different from their previous ideological standard, the ELN began kidnapping, bank robbing and assassinating military members, along with targeting larger corporations for extortion. They expanded efforts by attacking petroleum installations, pipelines, and exploratory drilling sites, mostly owned or operated by foreign companies.¹¹⁷ As time went on, similar to other Colombian groups (e.g., FARC), the ELN adopted taxing coca and marijuana growers, especially in the Bolivar Province, where the group had established its headquarters.”¹¹⁸

Throughout the ELN’s lifecycle, the leadership structure has endured constant changes of command. While one specifically resulted from a medical issue (e.g., El Cura Pérez’s death from

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ James D. Higday, “Enduring Freedom-The FARC and Other Terrorist Groups in Colombia and South America: Are We Moving Closer to the Next Phase in the War on Terror?” *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, Vol. 28, Issue 4 (2002), p. 49.

¹¹⁸ Mapping Militant Organization, “National Liberation Army (ELN),” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/national-liberation-army-eln#highlight_text_15733

hepatitis in 1998), the other key players have either been captured, temporarily released to facilitate and/or participate in peace negotiations, have fled the country to evade arrest, or a combination of the aforementioned three results. Additionally, two leaders had their arrest warrants nullified in 2006 by President Álvaro Uribe so they could participate in peace talks with the Colombian government. As of 2019, the Central Command (COCE) of the ELN is comprised of Gabino, Eliécer Erlinto de Jesus Chamorro (“Antonio Garcia”), Israel Ramírez Pinead (“Pablo Beltrán”), Rafael Sierra Granados (“Ramiro Vargas”), and Gustavo Anibal Girablo (“Carlos Marin Guarín” or “Pablito”).¹¹⁹ “Reports published in January 2019 confirmed that Gabino has fled Colombia to evade arrest.”¹²⁰ Pablo Beltrán, while accepted onto the negotiating team for the peace talks that took place in Cuba, has remained in Cuba to evade arrest by Colombian authorities. Pablito, was captured in Apure, Venezuela in 2008, subsequently “escaped from prison in Arauca, Venezuela with the help of other ELN guerrillas,”¹²¹ and then fled to Venezuela to evade arrest after allegedly being “one of the orchestrators of the January 2019 attack in Bogotá.”¹²² The remaining two, Antonio Garcia and Ramiro Vargas, are considered ELN negotiators and in 2006, their arrest warrants were nullified to facilitate their efforts during peace talks with the Colombian government. One additional member who served in ELN leadership (1991-2008), Francisco Galán, was temporarily released from prison twice (in 2000 and 2005), to participate in peace

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ “Ejército: Alias ‘Gabino’ No Está En Colombia,” *Caracol Radio*, updated January 3, 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, https://caracol.com.co/radio/2019/01/03/nacional/1546515246_022597.html

¹²¹ Mapping Militant Organization, “National Liberation Army (ELN),” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/national-liberation-army-eln#highlight_text_15733

¹²² Adriaan Alsema, “Almost half of ELN’s forces are in Venezuela, Colombia’s military claims,” *Colombia Reports*, last updated May 9, 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, <https://colombiareports.com/almost-half-of-elns-forces-are-in-venezuela-colombias-military-claims/>

negotiations; however, due to his behavior during negotiations, “the ELN renounced Galán’s status as a spokesperson.”¹²³

Although ELN continues to discuss the desire for a peaceful future since the peace deal between the FARC and Colombian government was struck in 2016, a nonviolent existence has yet to be achieved. Periods of less violence have followed the targeted killing and capture of ELN’s leaders (See Figure 1.1); however, they remained brief (approximately a year) before they began to rise again. Another brief period of reduced violence can also be witnessed after El Cura Pérez’s death, but once again, it was only for a year. The prison escape of Pablito in 2009 and the additional evasion actions out of the country by multiple other leaders, suggests the continued increasing levels of violence through 2018. As current members of the COCE, these individuals remain vital and dangerous pillars of the organization, capable of continuing their operations abroad.

¹²³ Mapping Militant Organization, “National Liberation Army (ELN),” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/national-liberation-army-eln#highlight_text_15733

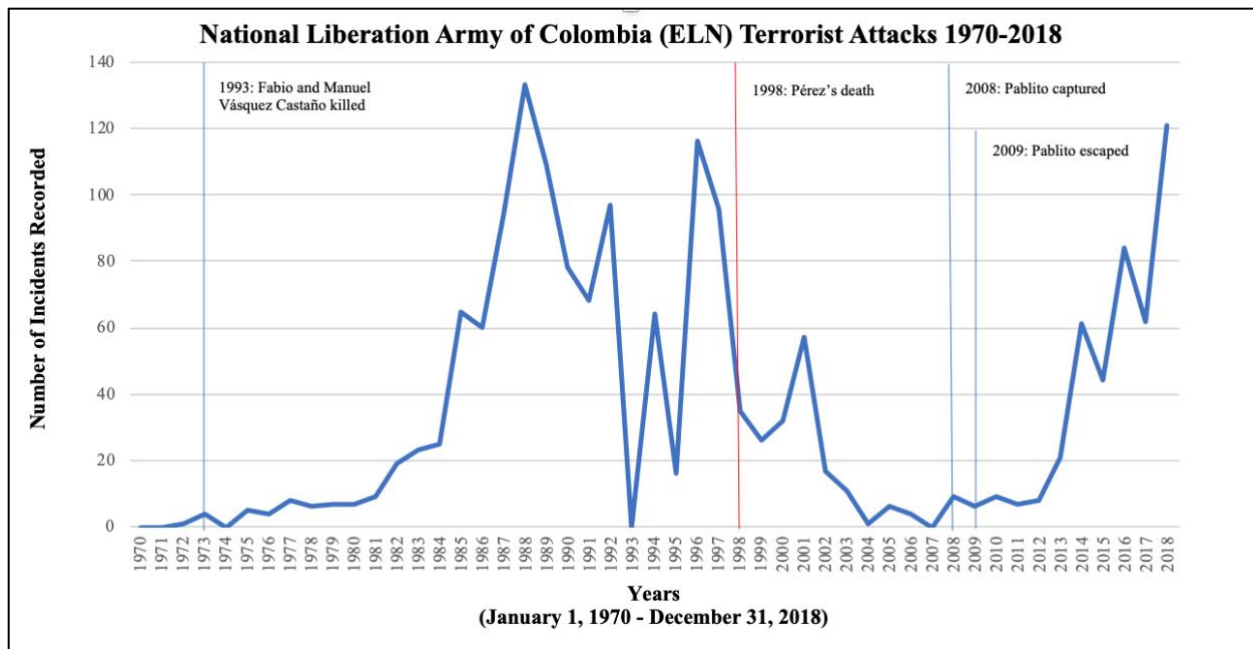


Figure 2.1. National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN) Terrorist Attacks, 1970-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies. Total recorded incidents: 1735. *Source:* Global Terrorism Database (GTD).¹²⁴

2.2 Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) was a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group, founded in 1964 by Manuel Marulanda and Jacobo Arenas.¹²⁵ Sparking the motivations of the peasant population after La Violencia, FARC members, similar to the ELN, felt neglected by the Colombian government and sought an outlet in which to voice their grievances and take action. The height of the FARC’s early phase of operations came shortly after its founding, between 1966

¹²⁴ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: National Liberation Army of Colombia,” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on July 20, 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=359&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

¹²⁵ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>

and 1968 and operations included, raids on military posts and facilities that allows the collection of needed weapons, ammunition, military uniforms, and even telecommunications equipment.¹²⁶ Though they seemed to be gaining momentum, “an effective military counterinsurgency campaign and the opening of diplomatic relations between Colombia and the Soviet Union in 1968 reportedly combined to weaken the organization,”¹²⁷ which resulted in the organization struggling to sustain operations into the 1970s. Presented with this dilemma, the FARC proved resurgence through an adjustment of their illicit activities and restructuring their group’s strategy. Originally aimed at overthrowing the government they adopted the financing of its operations “through the drug trade, kidnapping, extortion, and illegal gold mining,”¹²⁸ while shifting their primary strategy of defense, to one which provided educational and medical services to loyal communities, trained militants for combat, and carried out attacks.¹²⁹ The policy of taxing the drug industry and mobilizing and recruiting people in the lower end of the drug business was laid out formally in the unpublished “Conclusions” of the FARC Seventh Conference.¹³⁰ This shift in tactics wasn’t their only struggle, however. They repeatedly experienced the need for new leadership as counterinsurgency strategies presented by the Colombian military provided pressure upon the growing organization.

From their commencement in 1964 until their transition in to a political party in 2017 (now referred to as the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force), the FARC has had 16 members of

¹²⁶ James D. Higday, “Enduring Freedom-The FARC and Other Terrorist Groups in Colombia and South America: Are We Moving Closer to the Next Phase in the War on Terror?” p. 49.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, “Origins and Development of the Guerillas,” In *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2001), p. 26.

the Secretariat,¹³¹ which was considered the highest level of leadership that could be attained. It was a “seven-member group that oversaw all of the FARC’s activities and appointed bloc commanders.”¹³² There is no literature suggesting any individuals in this level of FARC leadership has ever been taken into custody. Their aggressive strategic attitude and dedication to their cause demonstrated over the years they would fight to the death if need be. Besides the two original founders dying of natural causes (e.g., Jacobo Arenas in 1990 and Manuel Marulanda Vélez “Tirofijo” in 2008), Efraín Guzmán (“Nariño”) also died of natural causes after 24 years with the organization. The remaining members of the Secretariat either retired voluntarily, went into hiding, their affiliation is currently unknown, were arrested and/or killed, or have become a part of the congressional representation in the Congress of Colombia or its affiliates. Jaime Guaracas, considered third in command and one of the founders, “retired from combat due to health issues”¹³³ and as of 2019, resides in Cuba. Luciano Marin Arango (“Ivan Marquéz”), who was extremely involved with the drug trade operations, was offered a seat on the Congress of Colombia, but ultimately declined in “protest of the arrest and pending extradition of former FARC leader, Jesus Santrich.”¹³⁴ Last reported, he went into hiding in 2018 and has made appearances over videos criticizing the behavior of the Colombian government during the peace agreements. Known as “El Médico,” Jamie Alberto Parra (“Mauricio Jaramillo”) was the physician for Marulanda and eventually became the commander of the FARC’s Eastern Bloc¹³⁵ when he replaced Iván Ríos. His affiliation is currently unknown.

¹³¹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Four Secretariat leaders were killed through various military raids and government operations, along with one who was murdered by his bodyguard. Luis Edgar Devia Silva (“Raúl Reyes”) was the group’s “principal spokesman and chief diplomat”¹³⁶ and killed during a military raid. Analysts described his killing as “the most damaging blow yet struck by the government of President Alvaro Uribe in his five-year campaign to defeat the rebels.”¹³⁷ Another blow to the organization came six days later, when José Juvenal Velandia (“Iván Ríos”) “considered key to the group’s future,”¹³⁸ was killed by his bodyguard, Pedro Pablo Montoya, “in exchange for a \$2.5 million reward from the Colombian government.”¹³⁹ A couple years later Víctor Julio Suárez Rojas (“Jorge Briceño Suárez” or “Mono Jojoy”) was killed “in a military air strike in the Macarena region, known to be a FARC stronghold.”¹⁴⁰ Guillermo León Sáenz Vargas (“Alfonso Cano”) was originally captured during a raid on his family home in 1981, where he afterwards was “imprisoned until 1982 when President Betancur granted him amnesty.”¹⁴¹ Later, after rising through the ranks and becoming their commander, he was killed in a military raid in 2011.

The remaining Secretariat members were Jorge Torres Victoria (“Pablo Catatumbo”), Félix Antonio Muñoz Lascarro (“Pastor Alape”), Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri (“Timoleón Jiménez” or “Timochenko”), Milton de Jesús Toncel Redondo (“Joaquín Gómez”), Julián Gallo Cubillos (“Carlos Antonio Lozada”), and Juan Hermilo Cabrera Diaz (“Bertulfo Álvarez”). Each has either

¹³⁶ Chris Kraul, “A Colombian rebel leader is killed in border fighting,” *Los Angeles Times*, updated March 2, 2008, accessed on July 10, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-mar-02-fg-colombia2-story.html>

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ “Colombia says rebel leader Rios killed by own men,” *REUTERS*, last updated March 7, 2008, accessed on July 10, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-colombia-farc/colombia-says-rebel-leader-rios-killed-by-own-men-idUSN0735666820080307>

¹³⁹ Carlos Raúl van der Weyden Velásquez, “Colombia: Reward for FARC Guerilla for Killing His Commander,” *Global Voices*, last updated March 21, 2008, accessed on July 10, 2020, <https://globalvoices.org/2008/03/21/colombia-reward-for-guerrilla-man-who-killed-his-commander/>

¹⁴⁰ “Colombian army kills top FARC rebel leader Mono Jojoy,” *BBC News*, last updated September 23, 2010, accessed on July 10, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-11399914>

¹⁴¹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on July 1, 2020, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>

participated in the 2016 peace accords, currently holds a seat as a congressional representative in the Congress of Colombia, or represents the political party in an official capacity.

The FARC represents one of few terrorist organizations that achieved the goal of transitioning successfully into a recognized political party. Although some ex-guerrilla members have refused to demobilize and have continued militant and drug-trafficking activities under the FARC's original name,¹⁴² this accomplishment marks a hopeful outlook and growing relationship between the Colombian government and its citizens who have felt underrepresented for so long. Apart from two significant events (e.g., Guzmán's natural death in 2002 and the leadership decapitation of Mono Jojoy in 2010), it appears that other leadership changes, whether naturally occurring or through decapitation efforts, resulted in an increase of terrorist incidents (See Figure 1.2), with the most significant increase (e.g., 115 incidents) occurring after Arenas, one of the founder's death, in 1990. Marulanda's death, compounded with Reyes and Ríos' leadership decapitation results in another increase with 33 incidents over a two-year period, though not as significant as Arenas' death.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

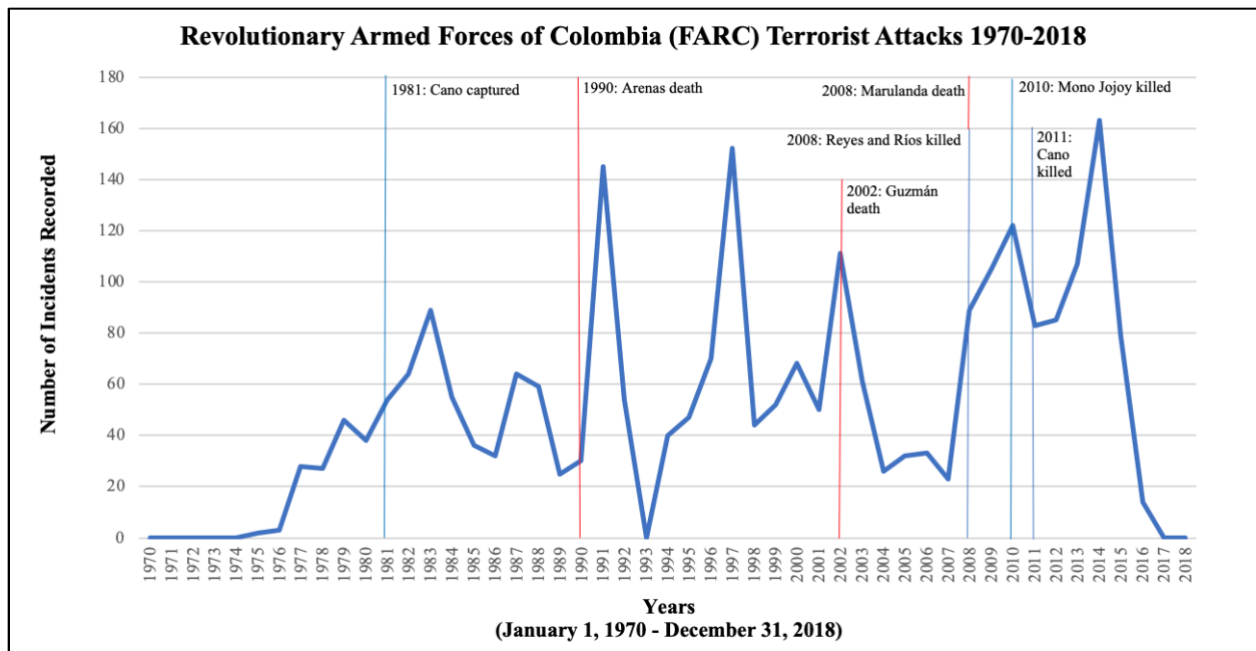


Figure 2.2. Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) Terrorist Attacks, 1970-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies. Total recorded incidents: 2507. *Source:* Global Terrorism Database (GTD).¹⁴³

2.3 Shining Path (SL)

Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path or SL) emerged in the early 1960s by Abimael Guzmán who “had carefully built the movement from his position as a faculty member of the National University of San Cristóbal de Huamango in Ayachucho, a remote isolated part of Peru.”¹⁴⁴ The organization rigidly applied the tenets of Maoism, rejected all other Marxist models, and invested in building a tightly-disciplined and well-controlled military organization, drawing comparisons

¹⁴³ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on July 20, 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=576&dt2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

¹⁴⁴ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader,” p. 18.

to the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia.¹⁴⁵ Unlike other terrorist organizations in South America who rose up to challenge their governments, SL “began to engage in violence just after extensive land reform and the restoration of democracy in Peru”¹⁴⁶ had taken place. Guzmán devised their strategy that used violence to “bring down Peru’s democratic government, disrupt the economy, destroy the state’s reputation among the peasantry and, ultimately, ruin its reputation among the population in general.”¹⁴⁷ Their targets began with local authorities, such as bureaucrats, mayors, law enforcement, and mid-level politicians, until they graduated to wealthy heads of states and larger infrastructure that was representative of the Peruvian economy. Like the ELN and FARC, SL shifted their strategy later in their lifecycle to involvement in the drug trade, specifically in 1986. The government and other analysts believe that the guerilla movement shifted its primary bases to remote drug-producing areas, and funded its activities through drug production and providing protection to drug traffickers.¹⁴⁸

In the 1980s and 1990s, SL had grown to include more than 10,000 full-time soldiers and controlled more than 40 percent of the countryside,¹⁴⁹ and was one of the most violent terrorist groups in the world,¹⁵⁰ amassing 4,563 incidents from 1970 through 2018.¹⁵¹ Guzmán’s reign exemplified how one single individual could strategize so vividly and excel at organization without

¹⁴⁵ Jeremy M. Weinstein, “A New Threat of Terror in the Western Hemisphere,” *SAIS Review*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter-Spring 2003), pp. 3-4.

¹⁴⁶ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader,” p. 18.

¹⁴⁷ Kathryn Gregory, “Shining Path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, leftists),” Council on Foreign Relations, last updated August 27, 2009, accessed on July 15, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/shining-path-tupac-amaru-peru-leftists>

¹⁴⁸ Maureen Taft-Morales, *Peru: Current Conditions and U.S. Relations*, Congressional Research Service Report, R40716, July 21, 2009, p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ Jeremy M. Weinstein, “A New Threat of Terror in the Western Hemisphere,” p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ Maureen Taft-Morales, *Peru: Current Conditions and U.S. Relations*, p. 9.

¹⁵¹ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: Shining Path,” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on July 20, 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=590&ntp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

being present and still achieve strategic goals. His elaborate philosophy for violence, developed during 17 years of organizational planning, was known as Gonzalo Thought, a form of Marxist-Leninist theory applied to a Peruvian context, characterized by clear moral codes, rote memorization, and oversimplified ideological explanations for every thought.¹⁵² The level of his omnipotence was clearly demonstrated by this fixed and resolute foundation, exercised over time, and reinforced by his dedicated followers in the violent acts they committed.

On September 12, 1992, however, a turning point came for the SL when Guzmán was captured in a police raid in Lima¹⁵³ and imprisoned, sending a shockwave throughout the organization. It wasn't just the sheer reckoning of their evasive leader finally being captured, but the way in which the Peruvian government under the new administration of President Alberto Fujimori displayed this act of achievement. Guzmán was displayed in a cage, in a striped uniform, recanting and asking his followers to lay down their arms.¹⁵⁴ This image of the once considered untouchable leader in a compromised and vulnerable condition, deeply affected the organization. The police closed in on other senior leaders in the following months, and as the core members were captured one by one, the general membership crumbled, losing its ideological direction and sense of imminent victory.¹⁵⁵ With SL attacks in a steep decline, their struggle to reenergize their ranks was compounded by the government's efforts and delivery of changes in the economy, housing, and healthcare that ultimately, proved their claims false.

The case study of SL is different from the ELN and the FARC, in that, it had a single leader who remained the true figurehead throughout its most violent years. The organization had an elaborate, tiered membership structure, wherein members served first as sympathizers, then

¹⁵² Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader," p. 19.

¹⁵³ Jeremy M. Weinstein, "A New Threat of Terror in the Western Hemisphere," p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader," p. 19.

¹⁵⁵ Jeremy M. Weinstein, "A New Threat of Terror in the Western Hemisphere," p. 5.

activists, then militants, then commanders, and finally members of the central committee;¹⁵⁶ however, none of them possessed more charisma or yielded more power and influence than Guzmán. It is for this reason paired with the aggressive attitude of President Fujimori's administration that there is such a steep decline in the number of incidents recorded for the SL after Guzmán's capture (See Figure 1.3). From 1992 to 1994 (Note: zero incidents are recorded across the GTD for the year 1993), SL's incidents went from 286 to 74, marking a 74% decrease, the largest across their lifecycle.

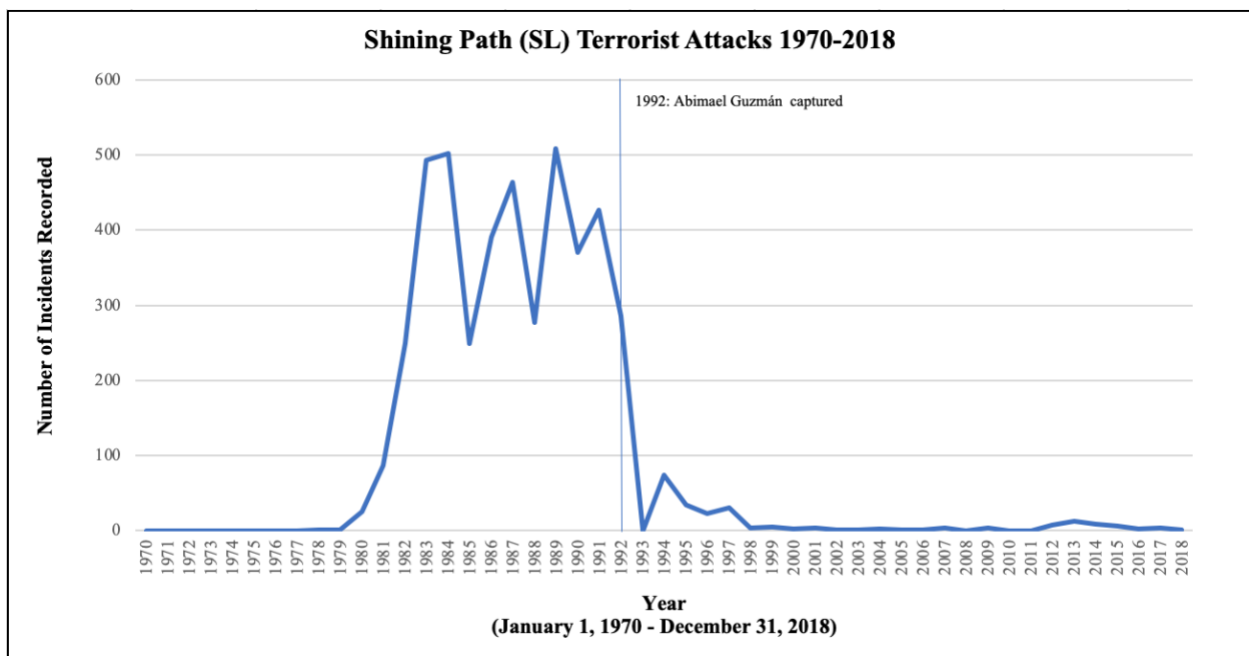


Figure 2.3. Shining Path (SL) Terrorist Attacks, 1970-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategy. Total recorded incidents: 4563. *Source:* Global Terrorism Database (GTD).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader,” p. 19.

¹⁵⁷ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: Shining Path,” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on July 20, 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=590&ctp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

2.4 Results

The ELN, FARC, and SL each experienced periods of decline in committed attacks by the organization after a leadership decapitation strategy was implemented. The killing of Fabio and Manuel Vásquez Castaño and the capture of Pablito both resulted in a decline of incidents committed by the ELN; 100% from 1973-74 and 33% from 2008-09, respectively. Additionally, Pérez's natural death yielded a 26% decrease in incidents. For the SL, Abimael Guzmán's capture resulted in a 74% decrease of incidents over the following two-year period (1992-94) and a steady period of low recorded incidents through 2018. Mono Jojoy's (FARC) capture marked a 31% decline in incidents from 2010-11, while the natural death of Efraín Guzmán marked a 45% decline from 2002-03, which continued downward through 2004, totaling 76%, before it began rising again. These results of attack decline show evidence that leadership decapitation implemented by a government and/or military operations targeting these individuals can be effective. These percentages are also indicative that natural death of a leader can project these attacks in a declining fashion. The results, however, are more consistent in the ELN and SL.

While leadership decapitation success did occur across each of these terrorist organizations, the FARC stands out with mixed results overall. The two events mentioned above depict success in the leadership decapitation strategy, however, four other decapitation events and the occurrence of two natural deaths illustrate incident rise, largely contrary to the previously considered measure of success. The capture of Cano in 1981 (+15%), killing of Reyes and Ríos in 2008 (+15%), and the killing of Cano in 2011 (+2%) each resulted in an upward trend of violence, while the natural death of Arenas and Marulanda also resulted in an increase of violence; 79% from 1990-91 and 15% from 2008-09, respectively. The uptick in violent incidents after the natural deaths of Arenas and Marulanda could be explained by the embodiment these individuals

represented for the organization as its founders. Altogether, the numbers overwhelmingly suggest that the strategy of leadership decapitation was not successful when implemented against the FARC.

3 Africa

Africa's Center for Strategic Studies posits in their National Counterterrorism Strategy Development program, that "the past few years have witnessed a rapid rise in terrorism and violent extremism across Africa, generating threats and problems of considerable cost, scale, gravity, and complexity."¹⁵⁸ Nation states including Algeria, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda are primarily plagued with the majority of terrorist action, with smaller factions of activity occurring in Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Sudan, and the Sinai Peninsula. From 2011 to 2016, the United Nations Development Programme cited, "it caused 33,000 fatalities as well as widespread displacement, creating situations of pronounced and critical humanitarian need."¹⁵⁹ Both governmental and international partners have continued fostering relationships that seek to rid out these violent organizations and percolate their networks which provide financial opportunity and resources that fulfill the ability to achieve their strategic agendas. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism published in their 2019 country reports on terrorism that along with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and other security forces in the region "the United States continued to support East

¹⁵⁸ "National Counterterrorism Strategy Development," Africa Center for Strategic Studies, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://africacenter.org/programs/national-counterterrorism-strategy-development/>

¹⁵⁹ United Nations Development Programme, "Journey to Extremism in Africa," last updated 2017, accessed on October 1, 2020, <https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf>

African partners across the Horn of Africa in their efforts to build CT (counterterrorism) capability, including aviation and border security, advisory assistance for regional security forces training and mentoring of law enforcement to manage crisis response and conduct investigations, and advancing criminal justice sector reforms.”¹⁶⁰ While these efforts and reforms have proved helpful, the state governments associated in these regions with rising violent extremism have a far way to go in achieving success.

So, does this work? Is this counterterrorism strategy effective in reducing the number of attacks/incidents as time progresses, or does this reinvigorate the ranks and cause more attacks to occur? If it is successful, what factors can be attributed to it? Understanding there are internal and external driving factors in terrorism, does one hold more power over a terrorist organization than another? Will one sway the success or failure rate of this counterterrorism strategy? Do internal or external driving factors play a larger role in the overall success or failure of leadership decapitation efforts on these organizations in Africa? Each terrorist organization will be examined by the internal and/or external behaviors they exhibit compared to their historical record of terrorist attacks committed by each group to determine if the leadership decapitation strategy is more/less effective as a counterterrorism strategy.

3.1 al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

Al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (also referred to as al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb) is an Algerian Salafi-Jihadist organization that joined al-Qa’ida (AQ) in

¹⁶⁰ Bureau of Counterterrorism, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2019,” U.S. Department of State, accessed on October 1, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Country-Reports-on-Terrorism-2019-2.pdf>

2006,¹⁶¹ with their main goal of overthrowing the Algerian government and establishing a caliphate in the Maghreb that would enforce Sharia Law. “The anti-European, local, and anti-colonial dimension of AQIM’s history appears to be the group’s core driver, but the shared background of its leaders as mujahadeen in Afghanistan links it to a broader global current of Islamist militancy that also encompasses the core of Al Qaeda,”¹⁶² says Chivvis and Liepman who dissect the evolution of AQIM in north Africa. One specific event fostered the environment for this evolution to occur and has shaped the group’s current organization structure. They explain, “in 1991, when an Islamist political coalition was on the verge of winning control of the parliament, the Algerian military intervened, annulling the election and breaking up the Islamist parties.”¹⁶³ Some Islamists formed a terrorist group called the *Groupe Islamitise Armé* (GIA), otherwise known as the Armed Islamist Group, which “began a bloody insurgency against the government that lasted through the 1990s.”¹⁶⁴ These violent events led to the devastation of a large portion of the Algerian Sunni Muslim population and in return, a loss of popular support. As such, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) was created in 1998, a faction of the GIA, citing the main reason for the split was “to protest its indiscriminate tactics and excessive slaughter of civilians.”¹⁶⁵ True to their roots, the ideology and strategic direction of the group did not significantly shift, until the terrorist attacks of September 11th set in motion multiple events, which allowed the relationship between GSPC and AQ to strengthen. First, perpetuated by bin Laden’s

¹⁶¹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on October 5, 2020,

https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/aqim#text_block_18762

¹⁶² Christopher S. Chivvis and Andrew Liepman, “North Africa’s Menace: AQIM’s Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response,” (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2013), 2.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on October 5, 2020,

https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/aqim#text_block_18762

efforts, he was seeking to expand his global reach and “like-minded Jihadi offshoots,”¹⁶⁶ so he extended contact with the GSPC in 2002. Second, the global war of terrorism efforts in 2004 caused the GSPC to experience mounting pressure in maintaining their operational capability, which caused hundreds of fighters to request amnesty. Finally, AQ leaders in Pakistan were seeking “to exploit longstanding tensions in France over the rights of French Muslims,”¹⁶⁷ and did this by proclaiming that the French “ban on headscarves in public schools and efforts to prevent families from punishing allegedly ‘debauched women’ were insults to Islam.”¹⁶⁸ This propelled the leader of AQIM, Abdelmalek Droukdal, to pursue a closer relationship with AQ.

Unlike AQ Central, AQIM considers France and Spain, not the United States, the “far enemy,” and prefers to target regional governments over western nations.¹⁶⁹ They are internally driven by immense feelings of injustice imparted largely by the Algerian government. According to the National Counterterrorism Center, they employ “conventional terrorist tactics, including guerilla-style ambushes, and mortar, rocket, and IED tactics,”¹⁷⁰ and procure their primary funding through extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and donations from supporting groups.

Multiple individuals have held the reign of leadership for AQIM over the years. Its founder was Hassan Hattab, who led the split from the GIA in 1998, but was later forced out due to his willing desire to negotiate with the Algerian government.¹⁷¹ Nabil Sahraoui was next to assume command of the GSPC, but was killed a year later in 2004 during a shootout with

¹⁶⁶ Christopher S. Chivvis and Andrew Liepman, “North Africa’s Menace: AQIM’s Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response,” 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁹ Christopher S. Chivvis and Andrew Liepman, “North Africa’s Menace: AQIM’s Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response,” (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2013).

¹⁷⁰ Counter Terrorism Guide, “Al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),” National Counterterrorism Center, accessed on October 5, 2020, <https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/aqim.html>

¹⁷¹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on October 5, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/aqim#text_block_18762

government forces. His leadership period was significant because it was under him that the GSPC “pledged nominal allegiance to AQ and the Taliban.”¹⁷² Succeeding him was Abdelmalek Droukdel (“Abu Musab Abdul Wadud”) who was credited for completing the allyship with AQ, morphing the GSPC into what we know today as AQIM. Another prominent member of leadership is Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who was in charge of the GSPC’s southern battalions during the later 2000 years. Credited with expanding forces in southern Algeria and Mali, “his familial ties to the tribes of the southern Maghreb region allowed him to capitalize on the trafficking trade, augmenting his financial resources.”¹⁷³ He broke off in 2012 to form his own organization, but later returned in 2015 and served as a commander for their forces in Libya. His current whereabouts are unknown. Abdelhamid Abu Zeid was an AQIM commander who worked closely with Droukdel, as he was given multiple battalions to lead in an effort to balance the growing influence of Belmokhtar; however, in 2013 he was killed while fighting French forces. Yahya Abu Hammam (Djamel Okacha) succeeded Zeid, serving as an AQIM commander. Serving as the AQIM emir of the Sahel, he was designated by the U.S. State Department in 2013 as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.”¹⁷⁴

AQIM has no desire to pursue peace negotiations with the Algerian government. They are extremely dedicated to achieving a caliphate not only in Algeria, but in other Islamic lands they consider to be lost, such as Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. While no successful capture of a leadership member of AQIM has occurred, there have been two leaders killed. Of these two, only one resulted in a decrease in attacks; from 2013-2014 after Zeid (See Figure 1.1). Although there is no evidence AQIM has committed attacks outside the Maghreb region they do publicly

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

express support for Islamist extremism in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Chechnya, and Palestine.¹⁷⁵

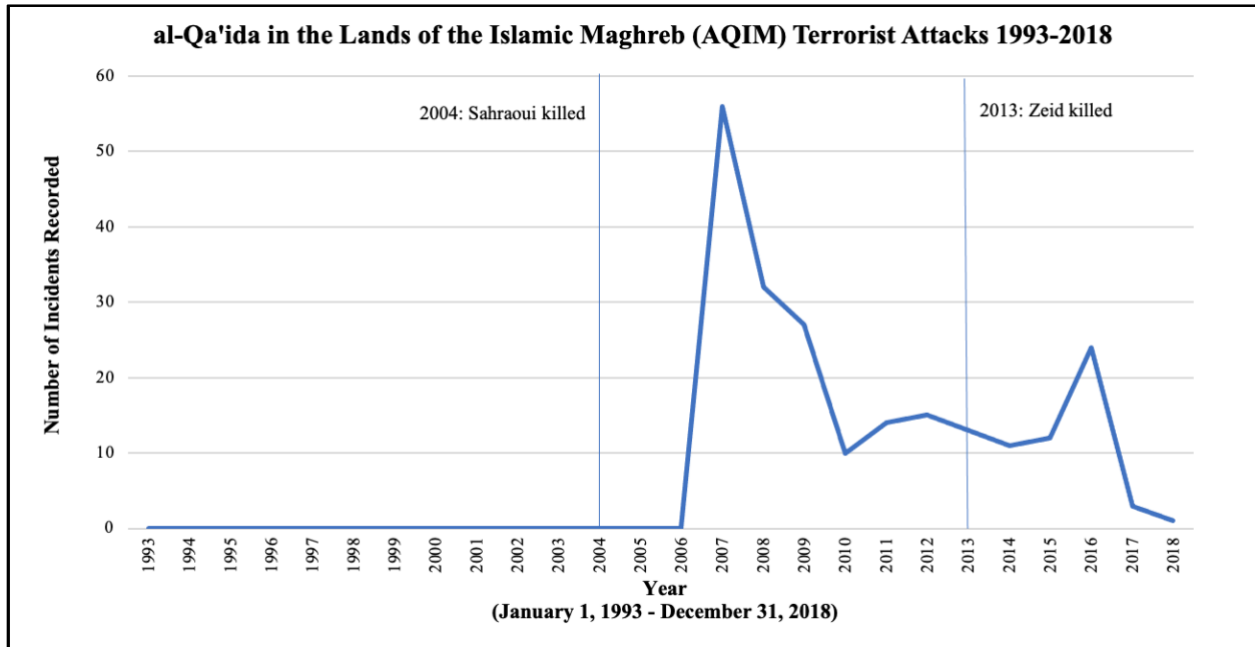


Figure 3.1. Al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) Terrorist Attacks, 1993-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies. Total recorded incidents: 218. Source: Global Terrorism Database (GTD).¹⁷⁶

3.2 al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab, meaning “The Youth” in Arabic, is a Somali-based terror group that seeks to “establish a fundamentalist Islamic state in the country and hopes it will ultimately expand to

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on October 5, 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&dt2=some&success=yes&perpetrator=20033&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=3&count=100#results-table

encompass the whole Horn of Africa,”¹⁷⁷ as laid out by the National Counterterrorism Center. They wish to impose the strict version of Sharia Law and their ideology is a brand of Salafism and Wahhabism that supports takfir, which is the excommunicating of apostates or unbelievers.¹⁷⁸ The Council on Foreign Relations representatives Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, and Mohammed Aly Sergie “say the forerunner of al-Shabaab, and the incubator for many of its leaders, was al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI, or “Unity of Islam”), a militant Salafi group that peaked in the 1990s, after the fall of the Said Barre’s 1969-1991 regime and the outbreak of the civil war.”¹⁷⁹ This group’s make-up consisted of many Middle-East educated Somali extremists whose group was partially funded and supported by bin Laden. As time went on, the group’s dynamic changed. In the early 2000s, a rift developed between AIAI’s old guard, which had decided to create a political front, and younger members, “who sought the establishment of a ‘Greater Somalia’ under fundamentalist Islamic rule.”¹⁸⁰ With both sides refusing to budge, those who did not seek the political avenue “joined forces with an alliance of sharia courts known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and served as its youth militia.”¹⁸¹ It was during this time that al-Shabaab controlled the capital Mogadishu, which caused the neighboring country of Ethiopia to become extremely concerned. A majority-Christian nation, Ethiopia invaded Somalia in December of 2006 and ousted the ICU from the capital with little resistance.¹⁸² At the behest of the Somali government, this action of using a neighboring state to remove current power, let alone one whose ideals were completely opposite to fundamentalist Islamic rule, did not sit well with the members of al-Shabaab. They internalized this hatred and

¹⁷⁷ Counter Extremism Project, “Al-Shabaab,” last updated 2020, accessed on October 6, 2020, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-shabaab>

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, and Mohammed Aly Sergie, “Al-Shabaab,” Council on Foreign Relations, last updated January 10, 2020, accessed on October 6, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab>

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

“retreated to the south, where they began organizing guerilla assaults, including bombings and assassinations, on Ethiopian forces”¹⁸³ as a way of fulfilling revenge for the injustice they had experienced. Rob Wise, a counterterrorism expert for the Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote, “the Ethiopian occupation was responsible for transforming the group from a small, relatively unimportant part of a more moderate Islamic movement into the most powerful and radical armed faction in the country.”¹⁸⁴

Al-Shabaab’s leadership has played a vital role in the group’s establishment and the main reason they continue to wreak havoc in Somalia, carrying out extremely deadly attacks. So much so, that in 2008 they “launched a violent campaign in revenge for Ayro’s death, focusing on attacks against U.S. and UN targets in Somalia.”¹⁸⁵ Aden Hashi Ayro was al-Shabaab’s first leader, originally joining AIAI in 1991. In the late 1990s, Ayro received training at al Qa’ida camps in Afghanistan where he reportedly met with bin Laden.¹⁸⁶ He returned to Somalia where he would take what he learned and impart his knowledge on new recruits and members of the organization. This training would serve as the basis for his argument in pushing al-Shabaab to connect with a global jihadist movement, which was demonstrated after their independence from the ICU in 2006. Ayro was killed in a U.S. airstrike on May 1, 2008¹⁸⁷ and was succeeded by Ahmed Abdi Godane (“Mukhtar Abu Zubeyr”). He picked up where Ayro left off and under his leadership fortified stronger ties with AQ, “though this pledge was not formally accepted by AQ until 2012.”¹⁸⁸ Two

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Rob Wise, “Al-Shabaab,” Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) Homeland Security & Counterterrorism Program Transnational Threats Project, Case Study Number 2 (July 2011), accessed on October 6, 2020, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/110715_Wise_AlShabaab_AQAM%20Futures%20Case%20Study_WEB.pdf

¹⁸⁵ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Al Shabaab,” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on October 6, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-shabaab#highlight_text_13349

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

years later in 2014, he was killed in a U.S. air strike. Succeeding him, and current emir of the group, is Ahmad Umer (“Abu Ubaidah”). “According to analyst Hassan M. Abukar, Abu Ubaidah heads a faction within the group that closely follows Godane’s policies of ruling through the consolidation of power and brutal suppression of opposition.”¹⁸⁹ It has been reported in June 2018 by Kenyan intelligence reports, however, that Umar might be approaching death due to a long illness, leaving the opportunity for potential successors to vie for control of the group next.¹⁹⁰ Hussein Ali Fiidow, al-Shabaab’s current financial administrator has been identified as the most likely successor to Umar. Two other men are important to al-Shabaab leadership, though they don’t have such considerable influence as the previously mentioned men. First, is Hassan Dahir Aweys, who is sometimes referred to as the spiritual leader of al-Shabaab. He originally led the militant wing of AIAI and later served as an important leader within the ICU. Known for conflicting views with Ayro’s leadership style and standard operating procedure, he fled the country after Ethiopia invaded in 2006. He spent time as the leader of several other organizations (e.g., Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia (ARS) and Hizbul Islam), both of which opposed and rivaled al-Shabaab. Aweys was later arrested by the Somali government in 2013 and transferred to house arrest in 2014. The second is Mukhtar Robow, who was a founder and commander of the group. Robow “defected in 2017 and now pledges his loyalty to the Somali federal government.”¹⁹¹

Due to the loss of urban centers, al-Shabaab has shifted their tactics to asymmetrical attacks, with greater reliance on suicide bombs, IEDs, hit-and-runs, political threats, assassinations, and grenade attacks.¹⁹² These attacks ramped up considerably after the death of

¹⁸⁹ Counter Extremism Project, “Al-Shabaab,” last updated 2020, accessed on October 6, 2020, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-shabaab>

¹⁹⁰ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Al Shabaab,” Stanford University, last updated July 2019, accessed on October 6, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-shabaab#highlight_text_13349

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Counter Extremism Project, “Al-Shabaab,” last updated 2020, accessed on October 6, 2020, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-shabaab>

Ayro in 2008 (See Figure 1.2) and in 2013 when Aweys was arrested; however, it is clear that he wasn't held to the same respect and standing as other leaders, such as Ayro, Godane, and Umar. A decrease in events did occur after Godane's death in 2014, suggesting that the U.S. strike was effective in removing him from power and forcing the group to reorganize their structure.

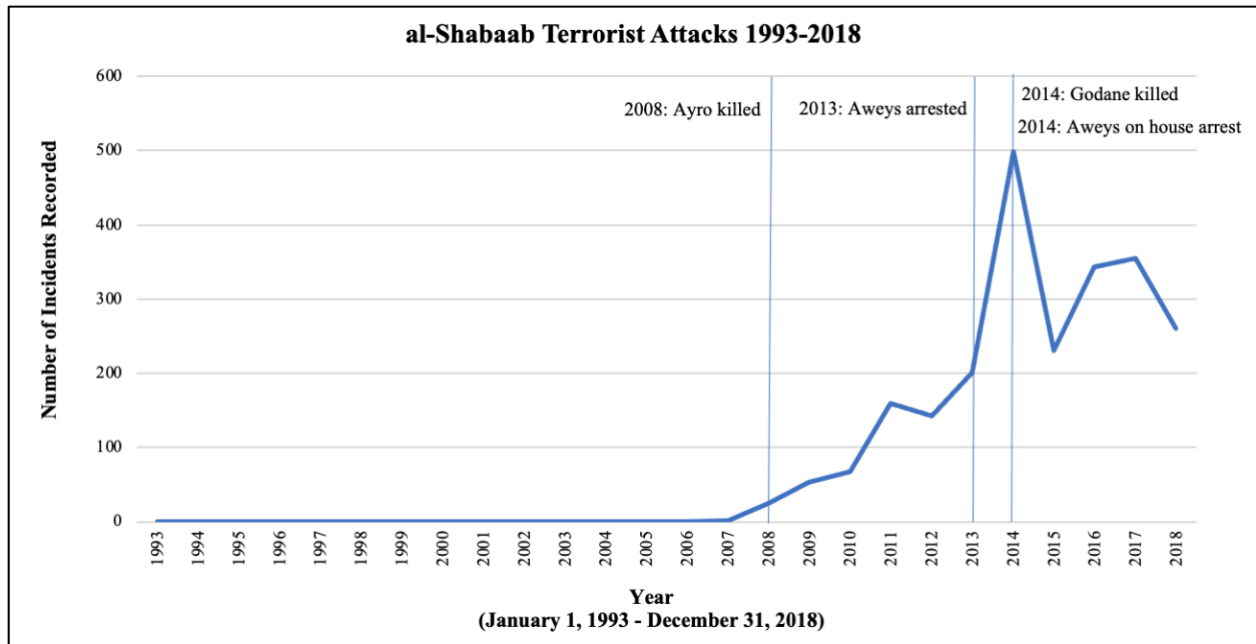


Figure 3.2. Al-Shabaab Terrorist Attacks, 1993-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies. Total recorded incidents: 2336. Source: Global Terrorism Database (GTD).¹⁹³

¹⁹³ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: al Shabaab,” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on October 6, 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&dt2=some&success=yes&perpetrator=20036&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=24&count=100#results-table

3.3 Boko Haram

Roughly translated to “Western education is forbidden,” Boko Haram is a Sunni Islamist militant organization that opposes Western education and influence in Nigeria.¹⁹⁴ The group promotes a Salafi-jihadist brand of Islam and seeks to establish a caliphate, or Islamic State, in Nigeria.¹⁹⁵ They fulfill this strategic agenda by carrying out large-scale attacks inside Nigeria to include western targets, such as the U.N. headquarters and maintain close ties with other organizations (e.g., AQIM). Boko Haram was formed in 2002 when “Mohammed Yusuf, a well-known preacher and proselytizer of the Izala sect of Islam in the Maiduguri region of Nigeria, began to radicalize his discourse to reject all secular aspects of Nigerian society.”¹⁹⁶ Opening a religious complex that included an Islamic school, he targeted students who were from poor families of Muslim faith across Nigeria. Though an external influence (e.g., poverty and lack of education), Yusuf exploited these young children in their desire to belong to something greater than themselves. Feeling marginalized and lacking a collective identity, these students and future recruits would “adhere to Yusuf’s teachings and live outside secular society.”¹⁹⁷ Originally desiring to withdrawal from Nigerian society and not aimed at overthrowing the government, the environment changed in 2009 with the death of their leader Yusuf, paired with clashes between the Nigerian government. This motivated the group to take violent action in avenging his death.

Abubakar Shekau emerged as Boko Haram’s leader in July 2010, and became known for ordering attacks on mosques and using children as suicide bombers.¹⁹⁸ Multiple outlets have

¹⁹⁴ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Boko Haram,” Stanford University, last updated 2019, accessed on October 7, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/boko-haram#highlight_text_11840

¹⁹⁵ Counter Extremism Project, “Boko Haram,” last updated 2020, accessed on October 7, 2020, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/boko-haram>

¹⁹⁶ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Boko Haram,” Stanford University, last updated 2019, accessed on October 7, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/boko-haram#highlight_text_11840

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Counter Extremism Project, “Boko Haram,” last updated 2020, accessed on October 7, 2020, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/boko-haram>

claimed his death, although they are followed by jihadist videos mocking these claims by Shekau himself. Two other men are of note in Boko Haram's leadership structure. First, is Mamman Nur, third-in-command of Boko Haram under Yusuf, and second-in-command under Shekau. Frictions with Shekau lead Nur's followers to form a splinter group called Ansaru in January 2012.¹⁹⁹ The second man is Khalid al-Barnawi. He became the leader of Ansaru, or "The Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa," focusing attacks towards Christians and the Nigerian government. Believed to have rejoined Boko Haram in 2015 because of conflicting ideals on which targets were acceptable, he was confirmed as the ISIS-appointed leader on August 2, 2016.²⁰⁰ Nur is deceased, but al-Barnawi is still alive.

Analysts suggest that Boko Haram and Ansaru are operationally linked and continue to support one another. Despite the organizational structure changes of the group, Boko Haram continues to commit egregious and violent attacks. The killing of its group founder suggests that revenge was a strong motivator for the ramping up of violent behavior in response to the Nigerian government, which has continued today (See Figure 1.3). It is clear that this leadership decapitation effort was not effective in reducing the groups operational capabilities, and demonstrates the extent to which individuals will go to regain a sense of belonging when it is robbed from them, or better, the determination of those who are willing to participate in terrorism to seek acts of revenge when community identity is so strong.

¹⁹⁹ Mapping Militant Organizations, "Boko Haram," Stanford University, last updated 2019, accessed on October 7, 2020, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/boko-haram#highlight_text_11840

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

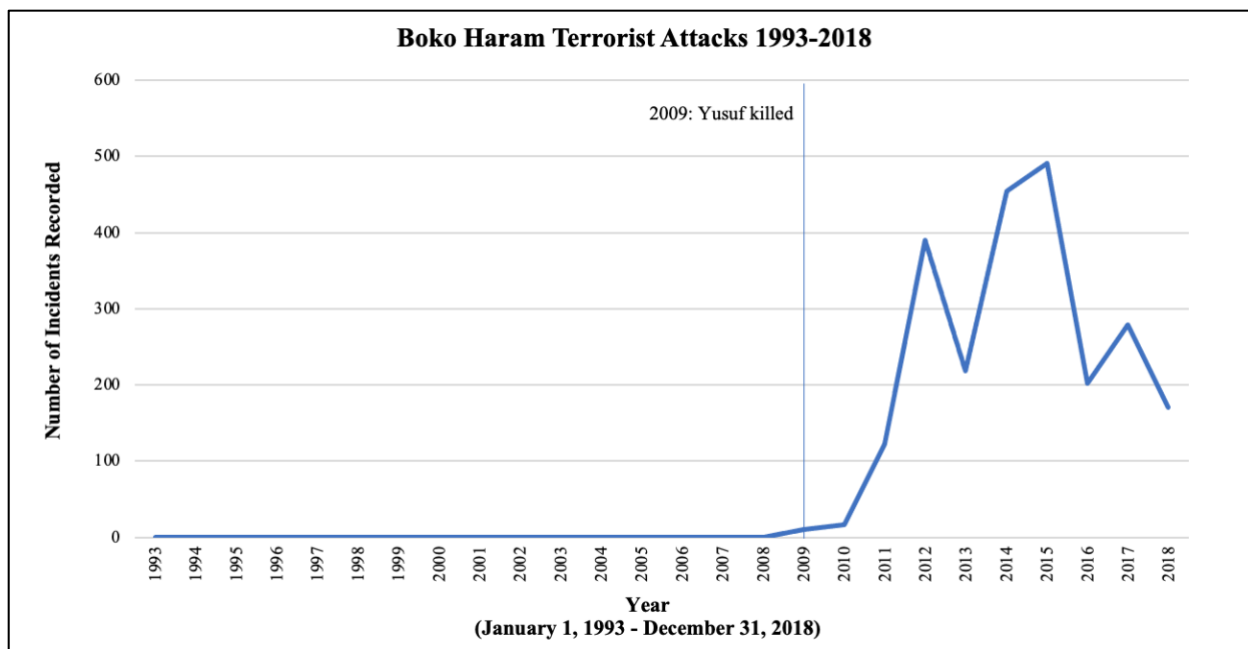


Figure 3.3. Boko Haram Terrorist Attacks, 1993-2018, before and after leadership decapitation strategies. Total recorded incidents: 2355. Source: Global Terrorism Database (GTD).²⁰¹

3.4 Results

AQIM and al-Shabaab both experienced periods of decline in committed attacks by the organization after a leadership decapitation strategy was implemented. The killing of AQIM’s Zeid and al-Shabaab’s Godane resulted in a decline of incidents committed; 15% from 2013-14 and 53% from 2014-15, respectively. These results indicate that leadership decapitation efforts by a government and their adversaries (e.g., United States) can be effective in reducing a terrorist organization’s operational capability, but this is displayed in the more immediate aftermath of a leadership decapitation event. These results, however, are overpowered by those that depict a

²⁰¹ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: Boko Haram,” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on October 7, 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&perpetrator=30101&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=24&count=100#results-table

group's response to their original leader's death. After the death of Sahraoui, although three years delayed, the number of incidents drastically increased from zero to 76, constituting 34% of their entire attack history. The death of al-Shabaab's Ayro in 2008, marked an increase of attacks that would continue over a six-year period until 2014. This period would see 1,146 attacks, consisting of 49% of their overall attack history, and Aweys' subsequent arrest in 2013 could also be a contributing factor. The death of Boko Haram's leader Yusuf would illustrate a similar trend, marking a three-year increase of attacks following his death. Totalling 539 attacks from 2009-2012, this would consist of almost a 23% of the group's attack history. It is these numbers that are troubling, for these leader's deaths indicate a strong response from their followers.

4 The Middle East

Since the dawn of the 24-hour news cycle and with the recent explosion of social media, the world has been exposed to the contentious and dynamic environment that is the Middle East. From wars in the Gulf States to terrorism in the eastern countries like Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Philippines, and Syria, these regions of the world display varying geo-political stability levels saturated with religious undertones. But the Middle East has long since been displaying controversial religious movements within the Islamic faith well before media platforms existed. Often referred to as the Wahhabis, the Salafi movement is representative of a large and diverse community of followers. Examining the anatomy of the Salafi movement, Quintan Wiktorowicz posits, “all Salafis share a puritanical approach to the religion intended to eschew religious innovation by strictly replacing the model of the Prophet Muhammad; yet the community is broad enough to include such diverse figures as Osama bin Laden and the Mufti of Saudi Arabia.”²⁰² As such a large group, they are representative of multiple positions within the faith, not always aligning with one another. Common topics of controversy are apostasy and what behavior causes such a label, jihad and how it is best fulfilled, and which activities render the most respect and of

²⁰² Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 29, Issue 3 (2006), p. 207.

utmost importance for one to be an activist. Many of these divisions have occurred as a result of time simply passing and the world emerging into a new millennium, whereby Salafis have been forced to apply their religious beliefs to new issues.

While the movement of Salafi-Jihadism can be considered a wholly modern phenomenon, terrorism and its ugly characteristics, is not. Terrorism, as defined by the Global Terrorism Database, is “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by non-state actors to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.”²⁰³ At the time of this paper in 2021, there are dozens of organizations, movements, liberation groups, revolutionary forces, fronts, armies, and unions that are characterized as terroristic in nature. Perhaps the groups most notorious for their terrorist behaviors are those born from the Muslim faith. Shmuel Bar explains, “while terrorism—even in the form of suicide attacks—is not an Islamic phenomenon by definition, it cannot be ignored that the lion’s share of terrorist acts and the most devastating of them in recent years have been perpetrated in the name of Islam.”²⁰⁴ This group of case studies explores the heavy issue the role of religion plays in terrorist organizations, specifically Salafi-Jihadism, and strives to answer whether it is for this role that the counterterrorism strategy of leadership decapitation against these groups is ineffective.

4.1 al-Qa’ida (AQ)

Al-Qa’ida (AQ) (also referred to as al-Qaeda or al Qaeda) is a Salafi-Jihadist militant organization primarily based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with a global network of members and affiliates, who seek to rid the Muslim world of foreign influence and establish Sharia-based Islamic

²⁰³ “Defining Terrorism,” National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), last updated 2021, accessed on October 1, 2021, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

²⁰⁴ Shmuel Bar, “The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism,” *Policy Review*, Vol. 125 (2004): 27.

governments.²⁰⁵ Designated by the U.S. State Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on October 8, 1999,²⁰⁶ and credited as the most powerful terrorist organization in the world, it is also the longest operating and responsible for many of the deadly terrorist attacks in the last 25 years,²⁰⁷ including the most prominently recognized September 11th terrorist attacks of 2001 in the United States. AQ is also responsible for “terrorist atrocities across the globe, including the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2002 Bali bombing, the 2003 Saudi Arabia bombings, the 2004 Madrid bombing, and the 2005 London bombing.”²⁰⁸

AQ was founded by Osama bin Laden during a three-day meeting at his home in Peshawar Province, Pakistan, with Abu Ubaidah al-Banjshiri, Abu Hajir,²⁰⁹²¹⁰ Abdullah Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Sayeed al-Masri, Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, Wael Hamza Julaidan, Sayyed Imam al-Sharif, and Mohamed Loay Bayazid.²¹¹ It was this meeting on August 11, 1988 that marked the beginnings of AQ’s advisory council, commonly referred to as a *shura*. This shura council would form the foundation for which their doctrine would develop. Later in 1996, bin Laden declared jihad against the United States and its allies, “the contents of which would continue to serve as the three cornerstones of al-Qaeda’s doctrine: to unite the world’s Muslim population under sharia; to liberate the ‘holy lands’ from the ‘Zionist-Crusader’ alliance; and to alleviate perceived economic and social injustices.”²¹² In this extensive fatwa, he would cite 13th century scholar Ibn

²⁰⁵ “Islam’s philosophical divide: Dreaming of a caliphate,” *The Economist*, last updated August 6, 2011, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2011/08/06/dreaming-of-a-caliphate>

²⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” Bureau of Counterterrorism, last updated 2021, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

²⁰⁷ Mapping Militant Organizations, “Al Qaeda,” Stanford University, last modified 2019, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-qaeda>

²⁰⁸ Counter Extremism Project, “al-Qaeda,” last updated 2021, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda>

²⁰⁹ “TAREEKHOSAMA/50/Tareekh Osama 122-123,” IntelWire.com, last updated August 11, 1998, accessed on October 2, 2021, <http://intelfiles.egoplex.com/1988-08-11-al-qaeda-founding.pdf>

²¹⁰ Counter Extremism Project, “al-Qaeda,” last updated 2021, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda>

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

Taymiyyah's words that, "All Muslims should join forces to drive back the infidelity, which controls the Islamic world."²¹³ Fueled by discontent of Western forces being invited into their lands by Saudi Arabia, he would pronounce:

Putting up with minimum harm for the sake of driving back the biggest harm, is the great infidelity. Driving back the American occupier enemy is the most essential duty after faith...Clearly after Belief there is no more important duty than pushing the American enemy out of the Holy land.²¹⁴

Though this is just one particular piece of his fatwa, by bin Laden issuing this against the Americans and other Western forces (those to be unbelievers or *kufir*), he perceived they were encroaching onto their Holy Lands making them targets for *takfir*. He inevitably declared them outsiders (*hakimiyya*), and encouraged his followers and fellow Salafi-Jihadists to commit *jihad* in His name (through *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*) in order for them to fulfill *tawhid*. Here we see the five characteristics in application.

Since this declaration, similar to other terrorist organizations, AQ has modified their strategic agenda to reach their goals. Following a series of interviews and correspondence with senior al-Qaeda officials by Jordanian journalist Fouad Hussain, he described the 'stages' leading to the ultimate objective of establishing a caliphate.²¹⁵ Seven stages were part of a 20-year plan and were known as the "Awakening," "Opening Eyes," "Arising and Standing Up," Fourth Phase, Fifth Phase, "Total Confrontation," and "Definitive Victory." The awakening stage²¹⁶ would

²¹³ Usama bin Laden, "Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holiest Sites: August 23, 1996," Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, Reference Number: AFGP-2002-003676, last updated 2021, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/declaration-of-jihad-against-the-americans-occupying-the-land-of-the-two-holiest-sites-original-language-2/>

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Counter Extremism Project, "al-Qaeda," last updated 2021, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda>

²¹⁶ Radwan Mortada, "Al-Qaeda's 20-Year Plan," AL-Akhbar English, last updated January 29, 2014, accessed on October 2, 2021, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18437>;

“range from the 9/11 attacks to the U.S. taking over Baghdad in 2003”²¹⁷ and was considered to be quite successful in delivering their message and provoking the U.S. in a war against the Islamic world. The second phase, was to last from 2003-2006 and intended to focus around more development into a movement, whereby they would recruit more young men and establish bases in other Arabic states.²¹⁸ The “Arising and Standing Up” stage would last from 2007-2010 and primarily focus around Syria with attacks in neighboring nations that would help propel them into global recognition. The Fourth Phase would last from 2010 and 2013 where AQ would bring about the hatred of regimes in the Arabic states. Additionally, attacks would be “carried out against oil suppliers and the U.S. economy will be targeted using cyber terrorism.”²¹⁹ During the fifth phase was when an Islamic State would be able to be declared (2013-2016); however, this was usurped by ISIS. The sixth (“Total Confrontation”) and seventh (“Definitive Victory”) phases would see the instigation of fighting between believers and non-believers (*kufir*), and victory by the Islamic State, for the rest of the world would be so exhausted from fighting and overwhelmed by the sheer number of Muslims worldwide that they would succeed.

Since their rise on the global stage, two men have held the official leadership position for AQ: Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Perhaps the largest historical blow to this terrorist organization came in May of 2011 when Osama bin Laden was killed in a raid by U.S. Navy Seals at his home in Abbottabad, Pakistan.²²⁰ He was succeeded by Al-Zawahiri who is still leading the group today. Some analysts credit Zawahiri with controlling the group’s strategy before bin

²¹⁷ Yassin Musharbash, “The Future of Terrorism: What al-Qaida Really Wants,” Spiegel Online, last updated August 12, 2005, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/the-future-of-terrorism-what-al-qaida-really-wants-a-369448.html>

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Peter Baker, Helen Cooper, and Mark Mazzetti, “Bin Laden is Dead, Obama Says,” *New York Times*, last updated May 2, 2011, accessed on October 2, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-is-killed.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Laden's death as he has been credited as an ideological mastermind.²²¹ Mustafa Abu al-Yazid was another core leader. One of the founders and the financial chief of AQ, he was believed to be third in command of the group behind bin Laden and Zawahiri, but was killed in May 2010 by a U.S. drone strike.²²² Other core leaders included Atiyah abd al-Rahman, Abu Yahya al-Libi, and Nasser al-Wuhayshi, but were all killed in U.S. drone strikes.²²³²²⁴²²⁵ Widely seen as a potential successor to his father, Hamza bin Laden was designated as a global terrorist in 2017, and was also killed in a U.S. counterterrorism operation in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region in 2019. During a press conference surrounding the topic, then President Trump stated, "The loss of Hamza bin Laden not only deprives al-Qaeda of important leadership skills and the symbolic connection to his father, but undermines important operational activities of the group."²²⁶

While no successful capture of a leadership member of AQ has occurred, there have been multiple leaders and high-ranking members of the organization that have been killed (See Figure 1.1). The primary means of removing these men from the battlefield have been via drone strikes and raids on the ground. While AQ has only committed 79 terrorist attacks, significantly less than that of other terrorist organizations, their lethality on the BAAD database ranks them third overall, behind the Taliban and ISIS, responsible for 3,842 deaths. The majority of these occurred during the September 11th terrorist attacks that accounted for over 3,000 American deaths.

²²¹ Bruce O. Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2015), 17.

²²² Eric Schmitt, "American Strike Is Said to Kill a Top Qaeda Leader," *New York Times*, last updated May 31, 2010, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/world/asia/01qaeda.html>

²²³ Mark Mazzetti, "C.I.A. Drone Is Said to Kill Al Qaeda's No.2," *New York Times*, last updated August 27, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/28/world/asia/28qaeda.html>

²²⁴ Declan Walsh and Eric Schmitt, "Drone Strike Killed No. 2 in Al Qaeda, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, last updated June 5, 2012, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/06/world/asia/qaeda-deputy-killed-in-drone-strike-in-pakistan.html>

²²⁵ Shane Scott, "No. 2 Qaeda Leader May Have Died in U.S. Airstrike in Yemen," *New York Times*, last updated June 15, 2015, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/world/middleeast/pentagon-says-airstrikes-in-libya-may-have-killed-qaeda-leader.html>

²²⁶ "Hamza bin Laden: Trump confirms al-Qaeda leader's son is dead," BBC News, last updated September 14, 2019, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-49701132>

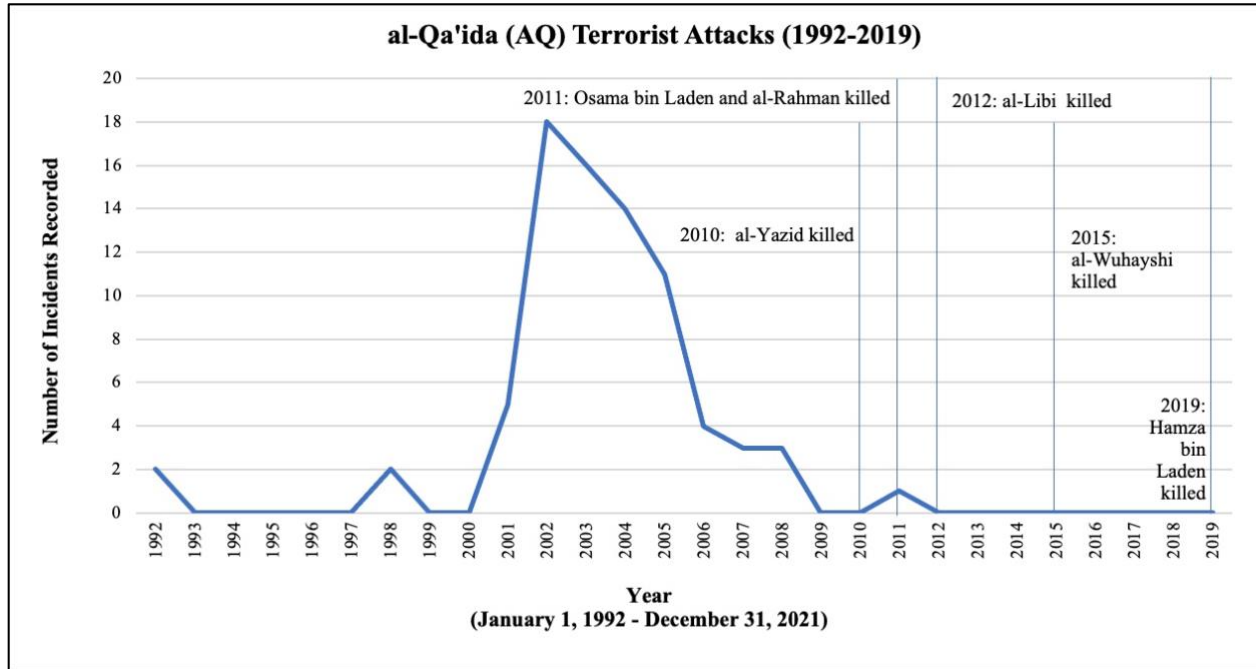


Figure 4.1. Al Qa’ida (AQ) Terrorist Attacks, 1992-2019, before and after leadership decapitation strategies. Total recorded incidents: 79. Global Terrorism Database (GTD).²²⁷

4.2 Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS/ISIL)

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS/ISIL), also commonly referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), is a Salafi-jihadist militant organization primarily operating in Iraq and Syria, seeking to create a global Islamic caliphate, and has “declared *wilayas* (provinces) in Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the North Caucasus.”²²⁸ The Mapping Militant Organizations from

²²⁷ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: Al-Qaida,” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on October 2, 2021, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2019&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=20029&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

²²⁸ Counter Extremism Project, “ISIS,” last updated 2021, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/isis>

Stanford University cites their ideology as “rooted in Salafism—a fundamentalist movement within Sunni Islam—and Jihadism—a modern interpretation of the Islamic concept of struggle, often used in the context of defensive warfare.”²²⁹ They are most notably known for their ruthless public beheadings of Western captives (e.g., journalists and aid workers), their significant and reliant foreign fighters, and their considerable media and propaganda efforts.

Founded by sectarian extremist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 1999, ISIS has undergone multiple changes in leadership, organization name, strategic goals, and ideology since its inception. A native Jordanian, al-Zarqawi traveled to Afghanistan in the 1980s with the intent to join the fight against the Soviet occupation; however, he would return to Jordan where he would establish a militant group called Bayat al-Imam. Actions taken in this group would land him in prison where he would develop a following of radicalized criminals. Once released, he would travel to Afghanistan where he met with Osama bin Laden. This meeting was quite contentious as both men differed in their ideological views. “Zarqawi preferred to target ‘near enemies,’ such as Israel and the Jordanian government, whereas the AQ leadership focused on the ‘far enemy’ (i.e., the United States).”²³⁰ Despite these differences, however, bin Laden still asked Zarqawi to join AQ, but Zarqawi would refuse. Nevertheless, bin Laden would provide him with funding to set up a training camp in Herat, Afghanistan. By October 2001, Zarqawi had trained between 2,000-3,000 Salafi terrorists at the Herat camp.²³¹ After intelligence received post-September 11th terrorist attacks, the U.S. began to target Zarqawi. To evade detection, he and his fighters spread throughout

²²⁹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “The Islamic State,” Stanford University, last updated 2021, accessed on October 3, 2021, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state#text_block_18356

²³⁰ Peter Bergen, Vahid Brown, Joseph Felter, Brian Fishman and Jacob Shapiro, “Bombers, Bank Accounts, and Bleedout: al-Qa’ida’s Road In and Out of Iraq,” Ed. Brian Fishman, Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, July 2008, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://ctc.usma.edu/bombers-bank-accounts-and-bleedout-al-qaidas-road-in-and-out-of-iraq/>

²³¹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “The Islamic State,” Stanford University, last updated 2021, accessed on October 3, 2021, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state#text_block_18356

the Middle East, creating different organizations in each location they went (e.g., Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria). For this reason, the U.S. government collectively grouped all of these organizations under one name as Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad (JTJ), which was the considered the largest following of his at the time. Focused around the invasion of Iraq, JTJ "carried out suicide bombings that killed civilians, while other insurgent groups use guerilla attacks that targeted American and coalition forces."²³² Internationally, JTJ became known for their assassinations and videos depicting grisly beheadings that they released online. In October 2004, "Zarqawi formally joined al-Qaeda and renamed his organization Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn Zarqawi,"²³³ also known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI),²³⁴ however, ideological differences still remained and would until the end of their affiliation.

While AQI had many sympathetic Sunnis in Iraq during their early days, their perceptions as a group would change over time due to their extremely violent attacks. Al-Jabouri and Jensen discuss how Iraqis disapproved of AQI's willingness to target fellow Iraqis and popular Sunni leaders in the country, their perceived foreign membership and leadership figureheads, and their intentional incitement of sectarian violence.²³⁵ This behavior by Zarqawi earned no praise by Zawahiri, bin Laden's second-in-command at the time, for he believed that he could be making better efforts to work on relationships between AQI and Iraqi leaders.

²³² Ahmed Hashim, "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (Winter 2014): 70.

²³³ Mapping Militant Organizations, "The Islamic State," Stanford University, last updated 2021, accessed on October 3, 2021, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state#text_block_18356

²³⁴ M. J. Kirdar, "Al Qaeda in Iraq," Center for Strategic and International Studies, last updated June 15, 2011, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/al-qaeda-iraq>

²³⁵ Najim Abed al-Jabouri and Sterling Jensen, "The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening," National Defense University Journal *PRISM*, Vol. 2, Issue 1: 3-18.

On June 6, 2006 Zarqawi was killed in a U.S. airstrike²³⁶ prompting the group to name his successor, Abu Ayub al-Masri, who was an Egyptian bombmaker with previous training in Afghanistan. Still under pressure for their radical violence, al-Masri attempted to unify the group with more of an Iraqi brand, renaming the organization the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and pronouncing an Iraqi, Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, as the figurehead; however, these efforts were in vain, as membership declined, recruitment slowed, and local resistance efforts even assisted the American forces against their insurgency. Known as the Anbar Awakening, this movement “paved the way for increased U.S. and Iraqi military operations that would diminish AQI’s capacity by the end of 2007.”²³⁷ Operations in 2008 and 2009 led to drastic force reduction of AQI and significantly caused struggle for the group to maintain and control their territory in Iraq. By June 2010, AQI had lost its ability to regularly communicate with AQ leadership, and 36 of AQI’s 42 leaders had been killed or captured,²³⁸ including both al-Masri and al-Baghdadi, who were killed in a joint-U.S.-Iraqi raid on April 18, 2010.²³⁹

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assumed control of the organization and the withdrawal of coalition forces from the region brought new breath to the group. In 2012, he coordinated two significant campaigns called “Breaking Walls” and “Soldier’s Harvest,” both targeting the government and security forces of Iraq. Success of these campaigns led to further criticisms of the government and an expansion of AQI forces, many of which came from local Sunni militant groups joining forces under the umbrella of AQI. Baghdadi then took advantage of the ongoing Syrian Civil War, whereby he moved to Syria, seized territory, and officially changed the group’s name to their

²³⁶ John F. Burns, “U.S. Strike Hits Insurgent at Safehouse,” *New York Times*, last updated June 8, 2006, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/08/world/middleeast/08cnd-iraq.html>

²³⁷ Mapping Militant Organizations, “The Islamic State,” Stanford University, last updated 2021, accessed on October 3, 2021, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state#text_block_18356

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Tim Arango, “Top Qaeda Leaders in Iraq Reported Killed in Raid,” *New York Times*, last updated April 19, 2010, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/20/world/middleeast/20baghdad.html>

current title of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This move and professed claims that they had also created the militant opposition group Jabhat al-Nusra (commonly known as the al-Nusra Front), landed them once again in hot water with AQ. Advised to limit their operations strictly to Iraq, Baghdadi refused and continued their violent standard operating procedures and seizing territory. Zawahiri denounced them for their “so called unilateral and premature imposition of a caliphate without coordination with other jihadist groups through sharia courts, which he calls the ‘prophetic method,’”²⁴⁰ and shortly after their strategic capture of Raqqa in Syria, Baghdadi officially renounced their relationship with AQ. They continued to carry out their violent offensive, seizing territory, and inciting global fear and panic, establishing a basic government in their captured cities. ISIS’s strong media presence provided a platform for which recruitment efforts flourished and “between 2011 and 2016, over 42,000 foreign fighters travelled to join ISIS from over 120 countries.”²⁴¹ The year 2014 saw significant expansion of ISIS, both in followership and in territory. The group captured Fallujah, Mosul, Tikrit, and Tal Afar, declared Raqqa, Syria its capital, and called upon Muslims around the world to pledge allegiance to the new Caliphate. Funds seized from occupied territories combined with natural resources sales, taxation of local communities, and criminal activities yield IS an estimated \$2 billion in assets,²⁴² making them the richest terrorist organization in the world; however, operations in follow-on years would significantly reduce their sources of income. The European Union reports that “bombing campaigns carried out by the international coalition and Russia have specifically targeted and

²⁴⁰ Counter Extremism Project, “al-Qaeda,” last updated 2021, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda>

²⁴¹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “The Islamic State,” Stanford University, last updated 2021, accessed on October 3, 2021, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state#text_block_18356

²⁴² Ehab Zahriyah, “How ISIL became a major force with only a few thousand fighters,” Aljazeera America, last updated June 19, 2014, accessed on October 3, 2021, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/6/19/isil-thousands-fighters.html>

destroyed refinement installations and tankers,”²⁴³ significantly reducing their resources and financial avenues, and causing them to become “increasingly reliant on criminal activities such as extortion, money laundering, and drug smuggling to generate wealth for its war efforts.”²⁴⁴ Joint operations between ISIS and coalition forces continued for years, slowly reducing ISIS control in Syria and Iraq. Throughout 2018, ISIS made up for its declining strength by reverting to more traditional terrorist tactics, whereby the group developed a network of sleeper cells and engaged in guerilla warfare throughout Syria and Iraq.²⁴⁵

On October 26, 2019, U.S. forces conducted an operation in the Idlib province of Syria that resulted the death of Baghdadi. U.S. officials confirmed Baghdadi’s identity using DNA tests of his remains after he detonated an explosive vest²⁴⁶ to prevent being captured by the enemy. His likely immediate successor, Abu Hassan al-Muhajir, was reportedly killed in a U.S. strike in Syria the day after his death.²⁴⁷ Days later on October 31st, ISIS’s Amaq News Agency acknowledged Baghdadi’s death and announced Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Quraishi as his successor and ISIS’s new caliph.²⁴⁸ Under al-Quraishi the group has shifted their strategic agenda once more, from holding territory to insurgency against the states of Iraq and Syria. They encourage followers to

²⁴³ Directorate-General for External Policies, “The financing of the ‘Islamic State’ in Iraq and Syria (ISIS),” European Parliament, September 2017: 17.

²⁴⁴ Mapping Militant Organizations, “The Islamic State,” Stanford University, last updated 2021, accessed on October 3, 2021, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state#text_block_18356

²⁴⁵ Rukmini Callimachi, Derek Watkins and Jin Wu, “ISIS Lost Its Last Territory in Syria. But the Attacks Continue,” *New York Times*, last updated March 23, 2019, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/03/23/world/middleeast/isis-syria-defeated.html?mtref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=68985A42676ED3F564FDBBF7AC7CBCFD&gwt=pay&assetType=PAYWALL>

²⁴⁶ Steve Holland and Phil Stewart, “Trump hails death of ‘depraved’ Islamic State leader Baghdadi in U.S. raid,” *Reuters*, last updated October 26, 2019, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-baghdadi/trump-hails-death-of-depraved-islamic-state-leader-baghdadi-in-u-s-raid-idUSKBN1X602N>

²⁴⁷ Ben Hubbard and Karam Shoumali, “Likely Successor to Dead ISIS Leader Also Reported Killed,” *New York Times*, last updated October 27, 2019, accessed on October 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/27/world/middleeast/al-baghdadi-successor-reported-killed.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage>

²⁴⁸ Hesham Abdulkhalek and Ulf Laessing, “Islamic State vows revenge against U.S. for Baghdadi killing,” *Reuters*, last updated October 31, 2019, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-baghdadi-confirmation/islamic-state-confirms-baghdadi-is-dead-appoints-successor-idUSKBN1XA25A>

“undertake lone-wolf attacks using inexpensive means such as vehicles, knives, and homemade explosives,”²⁴⁹ and continue to produce propaganda to influence the masses across the globe. Though it has lost its self-proclaimed caliphate, ISIS global affiliations continue to grow in other areas of the world (e.g., ISIS-Khorasan) pledging their allegiance and reaffirming ISIS as the central authority.

Similar to AQ, the majority of ISIS leadership deaths have occurred as the result of U.S. airstrikes and raids and not capture or detention (See Figure 1.2). Although he didn’t die by a strike, Baghdadi’s death by suicide further solidified his martyrdom in the eyes of his followers and will most likely be illustrated by an increase in attacks when the database becomes more up-to-date. Though not depicted on the graphic, since the group’s name changed multiple times, each time a transition of power occurred between leadership, it significantly affected the group’s operational status; however, despite these counterterrorism efforts, the group did, in fact, return to commit further atrocities under a different name. Ranked second on the overall BAAD database for lethality, ISIS is responsible for 6,171 deaths worldwide and this number does not seem to be slowing. Multiple affiliate organizations have risen up across the world to include ISIS-Sinai Province, ISIS-Greater Sahara, and ISIS-Khorasan. Additionally, other Salafi-Jihadist terrorist organizations have pledged allegiance to ISIS to include Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines. More time is needed to determine how this group will continue to evolve under Quraishi and the response in attack strength as counterterrorism operations continue to target this group.

²⁴⁹ Counter Extremism Project, “ISIS,” last updated 2021, accessed on October 3, 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/isis>

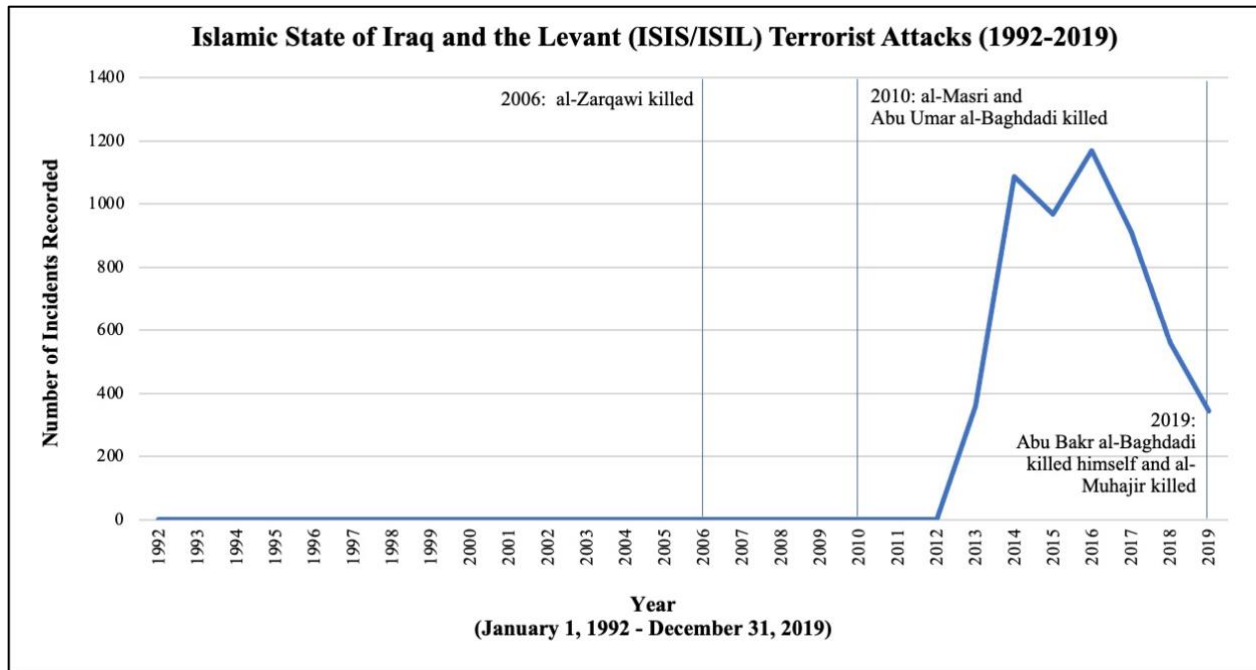


Figure 4.2. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS/ISIL) Terrorist Attacks, 1992-2019, before and after leadership decapitation strategies. Total recorded incidents: 5,396. Global Terrorism Database (GTD).²⁵⁰

4.3 Taliban

The Afghan Taliban emerged as an Islamist militant organization in 1994 under the spiritual leader of Mullah Mohammad Omar during the civil war that followed the Soviet Union’s withdrawal from Afghanistan,²⁵¹ and with the covert backing of CIA and its Pakistani counterpart, the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI).²⁵² Pashto for “students” the Taliban are the

²⁵⁰ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on October 3, 2021, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2019&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=40151&critierion1=yes&critierion2=yes&critierion3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

²⁵¹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “The Afghan Taliban,” Stanford University, last updated 2018, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/afghan-taliban>

²⁵² Lindsay Maizland, “The Taliban in Afghanistan,” Council on Foreign Relations, last updated September 15, 2021, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan#chapter-title-0-1>

predominant umbrella group for the Afghan insurgency, including the semi-autonomous Haqqani network (HN).²⁵³ It garnered attention and popular support with their original goal to establish rule of law after four years of conflict. The group's ideology is based on Salafism that follows a strict adherence to Sharia law, and is considered a shift from traditional Islamist views held by anti-Soviet Mujahedeen fighters in the 1980s and early 1990s to a combination of strict anti-modern Pashtun tribal ideology mixed with radicalized Deobandi interpretations of Islam.²⁵⁴ In November 1994, the Taliban entered the crime-ridden city of Kandahar, and by September 1996 seized the capital, Kabul, from President Burhanuddin Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik whom they viewed as anti-Pashtun and corrupt.²⁵⁵ Known for their harsh rule, they imposed strict adherence to sharia and Wahhabi doctrines. The same year they declared Afghanistan as an Islamic emirate and would go on to control some 90 percent of the country before its overthrow in 2001.²⁵⁶

Quickly overthrown after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan the Taliban would lead a 20-year insurgency against the U.S.-backed Afghan government. The group withstood counterinsurgency operations from the world's most powerful security alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and three U.S. administrations over the course of a war that killed more than 6,000 troops and contractors²⁵⁷ and over 1,100 NATO troops.²⁵⁸ The year 2020 saw an agreement reached between the U.S. and the Taliban, in which the U.S. committed to withdrawing

²⁵³ Counter Extremism Project, "Taliban," last updated 2021, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/taliban>

²⁵⁴ Mapping Militant Organizations, "The Afghan Taliban," Stanford University, last updated 2018, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/afghan-taliban>

²⁵⁵ Lindsay Maizland, "The Taliban in Afghanistan," Council on Foreign Relations, last updated September 15, 2021, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan#chapter-title-0-1>

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ Neta C. Crawford and Catherine Lutz, "Human Cost of Post-9/11 Wars: Direct War Deaths in Major War Zones, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Other," Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, published November 13, 2019, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2019/Direct%20War%20Deaths%20COW%20Estimate%20November%202013%202019%20FINAL.pdf>

²⁵⁸ Lindsay Maizland, "The Taliban in Afghanistan," Council on Foreign Relations, last updated September 15, 2021, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan#chapter-title-0-1>

all U.S. and NATO troops if the Taliban agreed to cut ties with terrorist groups. This agreement came to fruition when the U.S. officially completed their withdrawal in August of 2021.

The Taliban's leadership council is called the Rahbari Shura and is better known as the Quetta Shura, named for the city in Pakistan where Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Taliban's first leader, and his top aides are believed to have taken refuge after the U.S. invasion.²⁵⁹ Responsible for all political and military affairs, the council is charged with providing "shadow governors and battlefield commanders for each of Afghanistan's thirty-four provinces,"²⁶⁰ along with addressing concerns regarding education, economics, health, and social issues.

Mullah Mohammed Omar led the Taliban until his death in April of 2013. He was succeeded by Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour who was declared the Chief commander until he was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan.²⁶¹ Different from that of AQ and ISIS, the Taliban have had a considerable number of their leadership captured, many of them detained at the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp in Cuba. Abdul Ghani Baradar was the deputy of Omar and was the leader of the Quetta Shura from 2007-2010, when he was captured. Released in 2018, he has been appointed as the deputy to the supreme leader of the Taliban, alongside Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mohammad Yaqoob. He signed the Doha Agreement is still a prominent figurehead for the organization today. Mullah Mohammad Fazl was the commander for the main Taliban fighting force against the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance in 2001 and served as chief of army staff for the Taliban.²⁶² Captured in 2001, he was held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba until 2014, where he was released in a prisoner swap for U.S. Army Bowe Bergdahl. Mullah Dadullah was the Taliban's

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Gardiner Harris, "Obama Says Mullah Mansour, Taliban Leader, Was Killed in U.S. Strike," *New York Times*, last updated May 23, 2016, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/24/world/asia/obama-mullah-mansour-taliban-killed.html>

²⁶² Mapping Militant Organizations, "The Afghan Taliban," Stanford University, last updated 2018, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/afghan-taliban>

most senior military commander and one of Omar’s most trusted advisors.²⁶³ He remained in his position until he was killed in 2007 fighting NATO ISAF and Afghan forces.²⁶⁴ Mullah Obaidullah Akhund served as Defense Minister, was the third-highest ranking commander in the Taliban, and had direct access to Omar.²⁶⁵ He was captured in 2002 and released as part of an amnesty program. He was detained again in 2007 and then subsequently released later that year in a prison exchange. He was then re-arrested in 2008 where he died of a heart disease in a Karachi prison in 2010.²⁶⁶ During his time with the Taliban, Arsala Rahmani served a deputy minister for Higher Education, deputy leader of political affairs, and served in the Meshrano Jirga, which was the highest house of the Afghan National Assembly.²⁶⁷ He was invited by President Hamid Karzai to serve in the Afghan High Peace Council whereby an attempted negotiation process of peace was the goal. He was found shot dead in his car in Kabul in 2012.²⁶⁸ Mullah Abdul Qayum Zakir was a Chief Taliban Military Commander for 13 years until he stepped down in 2014.²⁶⁹ Credited for health reasons, it is believed that he removed himself from leadership due to differences amongst other Taliban leaders. Sirajuddin Haqqani (son of the HN founder, Jalaluddin Haqqani) and Moulavi Haibatullah Akhonzada were appointed Mansour’s deputies after he was elected to lead in 2015. They have both remained in these leadership positions since.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Taimoor Shah and Carlotta Gall, “Key Taliban Leader is Killed in Afghanistan in Joint Operation,” *New York Times*, last updated May 14, 2007, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/14/world/asia/14afghan.html>

²⁶⁵ Mapping Militant Organizations, “The Afghan Taliban,” Stanford University, last updated 2018, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/afghan-taliban>

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ “Afghan peace negotiator Arsala Rahmani shot dead,” BBC News, last updated May 13, 2012, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18049265>

²⁶⁹ Mapping Militant Organizations, “The Afghan Taliban,” Stanford University, last updated 2018, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/afghan-taliban>

Ranked first on the overall BAAD database for lethality, the Taliban is responsible for 7,396 deaths worldwide and this number looks to be increasing. Examining at the ebb and flow of terrorist attacks committed by the Taliban (See Figure 1.3), attacks have both increased and decreased in relation to decapitation efforts. After the original leader's (Omar) death in 2013, attacks increased and would continue increasing for another year, during which time another prominent leader, Fazl was released from prison. This increase could be attributed to the followership displaying their desire for justice by committing attacks in his name. After Omar's successor Mansour was killed, the Taliban witnessed a period of attack decline, which would suggest less leadership activity that could plan and execute attacks. After Dadullah was killed in 2007 and Rahmani in 2012, attacks increased, whereas with Akhund's death, attacks decreased. He died of natural causes, so this decrease could be attributed to less motivation by the group to commit acts as retribution. As for efforts that focused around capture, Fazl (2001) and Akhund (2002 and 2007) resulted in an increase of attacks, the opposite desirable reaction for this counterterrorism strategy. After Baradar was captured in 2010, however, the Taliban saw a decrease in attacks for the period of a year. This event could also have been influenced due to the death of Akhund in that same year. We additionally see an increase in attacks by the group after Baradar was subsequently released from prison in 2018.

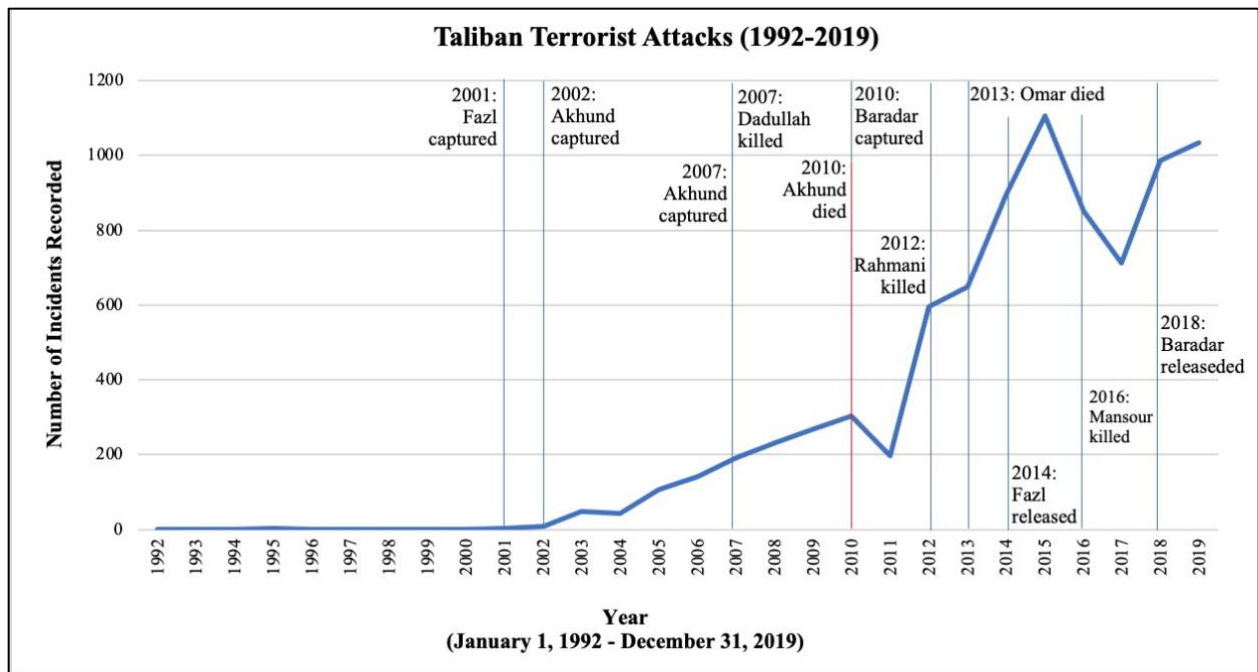


Figure 4.3. Taliban Terrorist Attacks, 1992-2019, before and after leadership decapitation strategies. Total recorded incidents: 8,378. Global Terrorism Database (GTD).²⁷⁰

4.4 Results

AQ, ISIS, and the Taliban each experienced periods of decline in committed attacks by the organization after a leadership decapitation strategy was implemented. After the deaths of bin Laden and al-Rahman, incidents committed by AQ declined 100% from 2011 to 2012, and did not increase again, even with the death of his son Hamza. Of note, a significant downward trend is depicted in AQ’s attack history, beginning in 2002 and lasting through 2009. While no leadership decapitation efforts took place during this time, the decline could be attributed to bin Laden and al-Yazidi’s stringent covert operating procedures that kept them hidden for nearly a decade after

²⁷⁰ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “GTD Results: Taliban,” University of Maryland, last updated 2019, accessed on October 4, 2021, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2019&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&perpetrator=652&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

the September 11th terrorist attacks. For ISIS, terrorist attacks were already on a downward trend for three years before the deaths of Baghdadi and Muhajir in 2019. As for the Taliban, the death of Akhund and release of Baradar (2010) and death of Mansour (2016) resulted in a decline of incidents committed; 36% from 2010-2011 and 17% from 2016-2017, respectively. These results of attack decline show evidence that leadership decapitation implemented as a counterterrorism strategy by governments and/or their adversaries targeting these individuals can be effective. It suggests their removal from the battlefield effectively disrupts their operational abilities to plan for, organize, and commit future attacks.

While leadership decapitation success did occur across each of these terrorist organizations, the Taliban stands out with mixed results overall. The three events mentioned above depict success in the leadership decapitation strategy, however, seven other events illustrate incident rise, largely contrary to the previously considered measure of success. The capture of Fazl in 2001 (+67%), capture of Akhund (+82%), capture of Akhund and death of Dadullah in 2007 (+37% across three years), death of Rahmani in 2012 (+9%), and death of Omar in 2013 (+28%). Additionally, two times Taliban members were released from prison, although not a decapitation strategy, illustrate incident rise. In 2014 when Fazl was released (+20%) and in 2018 when Baradar was released (+5%). By the Taliban gaining these leadership members back, an increase in operational activity is not surprising, especially considering Fazl was a military commander and Baradar was a ranking member on the Quetta Council and deputy to Omar and now Akhunzada and Haqqani. Altogether, these numbers overwhelmingly suggest that their strategy of leadership decapitation was not successful when implemented against the Taliban.

Conclusion

The question of whether leadership decapitation should be used as a counterterrorism strategy will continue to surface as long as terrorist organizations continue attacking innocent civilians and targeting governments. As such, scholars will continue to analyze the effectiveness of this strategy if and when it is used against these violent and politically-driven groups, so as to determine whether they produce results that policy makers and government leadership can lean on when deciding future courses of action. Each of the terrorist groups analyzed in this paper depicted at least one instance of declining attacks after a subsequent leadership decapitation event, with the exception of Boko Haram; however, the overall results remain relatively mixed, proving that this counterterrorism strategy cannot be solely used when a government is seeking to thwart a terrorist organization.

South America. Each terrorist organization from South America delivered results that leadership decapitation does in fact work in reducing violent attacks, with SL illustrating the most effective display of reduction. With the goal of considerably reducing or driving an organization to group death, implementation of this counterterrorism strategy against the ELN and FARC, while showing periods of declining violence, illustrated a continuing roller coaster of significant follow-

on periods of violence after leadership decapitation events occurred. This could be explained by the constant overturn of leadership providing ever-so-slight changes of the group's strategic direction and goals, and a reinvigorated motivation by their followers. Additionally, the natural death of a leader can be just as effective in reducing attacks of a terrorist organization, most notably depicted by the ELN.

Though each of these groups emerged in the 1960s, their number of attacks didn't rise until the mid-to-late 1970s. Previous research suggests that during the pre-insurgency phase is when a government should target these groups, so as to largely reduce their momentum in the beginning with hopes of destroying the organization in its entirety. The ELN is the only group that appears to have been targeted early in their lifecycle; however, with the killing of the Castaño brothers and the quick leadership turnover that occurred, the group continued to grow and commit almost two thousand attacks during their time. While it took around a decade to ramp up the numbers of attacks, this specific example does illustrate that this strategy was wholly ineffective, and targeting during this phase of insurgency was unsuccessful against this group. Understanding that some terrorist groups can continue to function as an outlier when compared to the larger set of terrorist organizations, a government must be prepared to pivot their efforts should a group remain unphased and continue their operational capabilities. Simply put, not all terrorist groups are created equal; therefore, the counterterrorism strategies implemented must be diverse to address the scope of operational capabilities.

In the region of South America, we also see one of the few times a terrorist organization has fulfilled their goal of becoming a state-recognized entity, with the FARC transitioning from a terrorist organization, to holding seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate as an official political party. But this has also brought complications. Though some ex-members refused to

recognize the 2016 peace accords and continue operations in off-shoot affiliations and dissident groups, there is an overwhelming majority of those who did not. These individuals have been in the process of seeking their place within a society they shunned for years, striving to become productive members, though it is proving more difficult than they originally expected. The Latin America Report N°92 from the International Crisis Group explains, “the plan to reintegrate thousands of guerilla fighters through cooperatives hit numerous snags, from the remoteness of the sites chosen for the handover of weapons to the barely veiled resistance (at least initially) of government officials.”²⁷¹ This paired with over five years of economic struggles in the neglect to establish state services in rural areas continues to fail in providing momentum for these individuals to establish successful businesses and a livelihood for their families. One significant hold up is the fact that the U.S. government has not followed through with their decision in removing the FARC from its list of foreign terrorist organizations (FTO). The International Crisis Group reports that sanctions that flow from this designation have “prevented the successful economic and social reinsertion of many ex-combatants, who cannot do things as mundane as open bank accounts, hindering their return to normal employment while limiting U.S. support for rural development.”²⁷² Transitioning from a terrorist organization to a full-fledge political party, or at the very least representation in the country’s current political arena, doesn’t simply happen overnight. Just as terrorist organizations have different phases of evolution, so too must it be understood that this transitioning period or breakdown of the organization will also have different phases. Therefore, a structured path forward must, at the very least, be considered and calculated for, and in this case, the removal of such a negative branded connotation after a significant period of time. Otherwise,

²⁷¹ International Crisis Group, *A Fight by Other Means: Keeping the Peace with Colombia’s FARC*, Latin America Report N°92, (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, 2021), i.

²⁷² *Ibid*, ii.

what would be the allure in changing violent behavior if treatment and social and economic circumstances remained the same?

Africa. The significant number of attacks committed by these groups after their founder is killed can be attributed to the solid foundation of internal factors this leader exploits. Evident in AQIM, al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram, the desire to fulfill revenge for an injustice imparted on a group or individuals can have great implications, especially when committed by their own government. For AQIM, they seek to remediate injustices inflicted upon them by the Algerian government, specifically attributed to the significantly under-represented and devastating slaughter of the Sunni Muslim population, the main target of their exploits. Al-Shabaab exhibits similar experiences as their government used an outside force, predominantly Christian, to rid the capital of forces they deemed adversarial. These fundamentalist Islamic members felt directly persecuted and as such, retaliated to answer the inequality their population felt. Their recruitment and radicalization efforts should also be noted. Established by original leadership, they thoroughly understand the feeling and need to belong, especially in the Somalian refugee diasporas in the United States, and they exploit this desire excellently through online forums in gaining support for their cause in the homeland. Similarly, Boko Haram members are already feeling afflicted and marginalized within their society. Possessing a severe lack of identity, their leader Yusef fulfilled their sense of belonging in a world where little opportunities were present, and provided this environment in which they could achieve some form of success or importance.

Add to the situation a religious undertone, and we see violent acts being dedicated in its name. Religion fosters community and when individuals do not feel like they belong, often in these countries, they seek a means of fulfilling this need; the desire to belong to something larger than themselves. Once they become a part of this community, they are willing to sacrifice for the greater

good. They idolize these leaders who have made them feel a part of something special. Now, take that away, and we see a wish for revenge, a way in which they can honor their ideology while also honoring the man that paved the way. It is for this reason that these internal factors within a terrorist organization, often solidifying their base, that make defeating them so difficult. What's more dangerous is when internal and external factors become so intertwined that they are hard to separate. This internal psychosocial drive expertly paired with one's religion and faith, produces a dangerous combination of motivation and desire for which leaders exploit and counterterrorism experts find it so difficult to target.

The Middle East. Each terrorist organization from the Middle East delivers results that leadership decapitation does in fact work in reducing violent attacks, with AQ illustrating the most effective display of reduction. Mentioned before, AQ only has a recorded 79 attacks throughout the group's history, but ranks third overall in lethality, responsible for 3,842 deaths with the majority occurring on September 11, 2001. If we examine the graphic, we can see that from 2002, follow-on activity of the group is in a steady decline, reduced 100% seven years later. This is probably attributed to the joint operations and invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq in those years. This significant pressure and presence caused their leadership structure to retreat and remain far from the frontlines, less able to lead, plan, and execute attacks at home and abroad.

The Taliban, while showing periods of declining violence throughout their lifecycle, illustrate a continuing roller coaster of significant follow-on periods of violence after leadership decapitation events, especially after the death of founder Omar. Additionally, the Taliban also demonstrates increased violence after members of their leadership organization are released from prison.

While ISIS's attack history exemplifies the least convincing leadership decapitation effort results, it is only through thorough examination of how the group has evolved over the years that tells a different story. With each decapitation effort (death of their leader) the organization was forced to rebrand itself, often adopting new recruitment strategies, ways in which to conduct operations, and financial stresses of achieving attack success. Considering ISIS has gone through multiple cycles of leadership, and understanding obstacles they continue to face bode well that this counterterrorism strategy is successful and proves that it causes significant pressure on these types of groups; however, ISIS continues to remain and off-shoots have sprouted up in other locations of the world (e.g., Bosnia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mozambique). Additionally, the Taliban is now considered a legitimized government and shows no sign of reducing violence against those who wish to defy them. Why still does it prove so difficult to rid the world of these radical extremists? The longer these groups are around, it seems, as if when one leader is removed then ten more take his place through education and radicalization at madrassas in these countries. Fierce loyalty and devotion are required for these Muslims, and with each activity of their daily lives being so interconnected with those five characteristics for one to be considered a pious Muslim, it becomes harder and harder to see how anyone might have any choice in behaving differently and stepping a toe out of line. Pair with this a motivated desire to seek retribution and the cycle of killing just continues.

With so many Islamic militancy organizations propagating up across the globe, the central hub that was AQ has since been destroyed. But while the centralized structure has ended, something more important has remained; ideology. "This radical, international ideology—sustained by anti-Western, anti-Zionist, and anti-Semitic rhetoric—has adherents among many

individuals and groups, few of whom are currently linked in any substantial way to bin Laden”²⁷³ or those were around him. Instead, these groups are following his “precepts, models and methods”²⁷⁴ to conduct their strategic agenda in more modern times. “Despite domestic repression, civil war, and an international ‘War on Terror,’ it has endured and survive more than three decades of forceful repression.”²⁷⁵ The mere fact that so many leadership decapitation efforts have been executed and these groups still remain powerful terrorist organizations, funded and capable of committing attacks, proves that this counterterrorism strategy is less effective against these groups. The significance of how saturated these groups are with the Salafi-Jihadi mindset provide an entirely new motivating factor, unlike those of previously examined terrorist organizations, and present an individual set of concerns for seeking resolve in countering them on the battlefield.

Looking Forward. Each of these nine case studies has provided an in-depth look into the effectiveness of leadership decapitation as a counterterrorism strategy of a terrorist organization’s operational attack capabilities, from 1970 through 2019. With the exception of one group (Boko Haram), eight of the nine portrayed at least one decrease in attacks after a decapitation attempt occurred, lending support to the argument that it is an effective means of reducing these group’s operational activity. But this simply might be where the similarities end. For each terrorist group is unique not only in their strategic agenda, but in their operational goals, means of financial networking, recruitment and education, targeted demographic group(s) for foot soldiers, attack targets and locations, and driving factors to include psychosocial weaknesses, grievances, socio-economic limitations, education availability, and religion. This is ever-more evident by analyzing the rise and fall of terrorist attacks committed by each group during these years and taking a deeper

²⁷³ Jason Burke, “Al Qaeda,” *Foreign Policy*, May-June, 2004, No. 142 (May-June, 2004): 18.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 211.

dive into their leadership structure and organization. What motivates one group to act violently is not always the same case for another. One may feel marginalized in the socio-economic realm, whereas another group might feel ethnically targeted by the government. Proving different from one another, each of these nine terrorist organizations demonstrates how difficult the battle is for a government and its supporters to address each and every one of these factors, and seek a path to redress grievances. Often, these factors are well-established norms in a society affecting multiple generations of families, and after considerable time of grievances not being addressed and remediated, we see many individuals seek an alternative route for themselves, namely violent terrorist activities.

In a perfect world, states would work hard to represent each group in society, and ensure their basic needs were met; however, human behavior throughout history repeatedly shows us different. Clashes of civilizations continue to occur across the globe, spanning from geo-political differences, to territorial disputes and rights to natural resources, to all-out wars on differences in religion. Significant research has been done to understand these root causes of terrorism, though no single circumstance can be directly pointed to for its creation. Internal and external factors explored in this paper take a look into these circumstances that breed many terrorist organizations that continue to operate around the world, and we are beginning to see regions which are experiencing growth of these organizations, most notably in Africa. While the U.S. has strong, developed policy and doctrine on counterterrorism, many other nations are far behind, both in governing documents and infrastructure and organizations to address these growing threats.

Specific factors that have been and continue to be driving forces behind terrorist organizations violent means of seeking redress have been explored within this thesis, none more prominent than the pairing of an internal need to belong or desire to seek revenge with the external

factor of religion. The violent evolution of Salafi-Jihadism has spread far past the region of the Middle East. The 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism for the United States explains that, “these groups stoke and exploit weak governance, conflict, instability, and long-standing political and religious grievances to pursue their goal of eliminating Western influence in majority Muslim countries and remaking Islamic society.”²⁷⁶ Taking hold in many different areas of Africa and the Far East, with smaller sects of these religious extremists littered across the globe seeking to carry out attacks in its name, their momentum is anything close to being finished. “The collapse of civic society across parts of North Africa and the Levant has fueled the rise of militant groups driven by this ideology” and “it seems as if wherever they emerge right now, they only grow stronger and more emboldened.”²⁷⁷ These groups will continue to prove an issue for the United States, their allies, and the citizens of the nations it seeks to flourish from within.

The strategy of leadership decapitation has value, as it has been proven successful in the most prolific organizations in these regions. However, although its utility has been shown, it cannot become the primary means of countering these groups. Layered policy that seeks to target these groups early in their lifecycle, respond efficiently in disrupting their financial networks and operational means, and providing programs within the nation for these individuals to redress their grievances are capable starting points in reducing these group’s operational capabilities. Defeating an ideology, firmly planted in one’s religion has proven an entirely more difficult feat. Continuing to draw on the national power efforts in revealing the violence of these groups, targeting the avenues in which these groups seek to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize, their financial networks,

²⁷⁶ National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), *National Strategy for Counterterrorism for the United States of America*, October 2018.

²⁷⁷ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, 211.

and their leadership structures, will allow for countries to effectively target means and methods, with the goal of reducing their overall operational capability and hopefully, lead to group death.

Final Words. Voltaire once said, “those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit to atrocities.” Leaders of terrorist organizations continue to hold this power of those who seek to carry out violence in their name for what they perceive as a ‘just’ and ‘right’ cause, for they are the agent of influence. If they are to be effective in fulfilling their strategic agenda, they must “attend simultaneously to the task and mission of the group, as well as to the processes and relationships within it.”²⁷⁸ Successful leaders understand what inspires people, and how to exploit this motivation for their cause, and the leaders of terrorist organizations are no different. If counterterrorism strategies, such as leadership decapitation, are being considered for use, then so too must the internal and external factors present amongst these groups. Only through a thorough understanding of what motivates these individuals can we determine if implementing these strategies will effectively bring organizational death or a significant reduction in attacks committed. Strategists must then

²⁷⁸ Randy Borum, *Psychology of Terrorism*, 60.

Bibliography

- Abdulkhalek, Hesham and Ulf Laessing. "Islamic State vows revenge against U.S. for Baghdadi killing." *Reuters*. Last updated October 31, 2019. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-baghdadi-confirmation/islamic-state-confirms-baghdadi-is-dead-appoints-successor-idUSKBN1XA25A>
- "About the GTD." National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Last updated 2020. Accessed on October 1, 2020. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/about/>
- "Afghan peace negotiator Arsala Rahmani shot dead." BBC News. Last updated May 13, 2012. Accessed on October 4, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18049265>
- Al-Ghunayman, 'Abdallah. *Question #11275: Is it a condition of jihad that there be a leader?* Islam-qza.com. Last updated October 4, 2013. Accessed on July 11, 2021. <https://muwahhidmedia.wordpress.com/2013/07/24/is-having-a-ruler-a-condition-for-the-defensive-and-offensive-jihad/>
- Ali-Koor, Abdisaid Musse. "Islamist Extremism in East Africa." *Africa Security Brief* No. 32 (August 9, 2016): 1-8.
- Al-Jabouri, Najim Abed and Sterling Jensen. "The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening." National Defense University Journal *PRISM* 2(1): 3-18.
- Alsema, Adriaan. "Almost half of ELN's forces are in Venezuela, Colombia's military claims." *Colombia Reports*. Last updated May 9, 2019. <https://colombiareports.com/almost-half-of-elns-forces-are-in-venezuela-colombias-military-claims/>
- Arango, Tim. "Top Qaeda Leaders in Iraq Reported Killed in Raid." *New York Times*. Last updated April 19, 2010. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/20/world/middleeast/20baghdad.html>
- Azzam, 'Abdallah. *Join the Caravan*. Np, 1987.

- Azzam, ‘Abdallah. *The Tawhid of Action*. Tibyān Publications, n.d.
- Bar, Shmuel. “The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism.” *Policy Review* 125(June & July 2004): 27-37.
- BBC News. “Colombian army kills top FARC rebel leader Mono Jojoy.” Last updated September 23, 2010. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-11399914>
- Bergen, Peter Bergen, Brown, Wahid, Felter, Joseph, Fishman, Brian and Jacob Shapiro. “Bombers, Bank Accounts, and Bleedout: al-Qa’ida’s Road in and Out of Iraq.” Ed. Brian Fishman. Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. July 2008. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://ctc.usma.edu/bombers-bank-accounts-and-bleedout-al-qaidas-road-in-and-out-of-iraq/>
- Blum, Gabriella and Philip B. Heymann. “Law and Policy of Targeted Killing.” In *Laws, Outlaws, and Terrorists: Lessons from the War on Terrorism*. MIT Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts (2010): 145-170.
- Borum, Randy. *Psychology of Terrorism*. Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, 2004.
- Bureau of Counterterrorism. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2019*. U.S. Department of State. Accessed on October 1, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Country-Reports-on-Terrorism-2019-2.pdf>
- Burke, Jason. “Al Qaeda.” *Foreign Policy* No. 142 (May-June, 2004): 18-26.
- Burns, John F. “U.S. Strike Hits Insurgent at Safehouse.” *New York Times*. Last updated June 8, 2006. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/08/world/middleeast/08cnd-iraq.html>
- Byman, Daniel. “Do Targeted Killings Work?” *Foreign Affairs* 85(2) (March-April 2006): 95-111.
- Byrne, Hannah, Harrington, Nicholas, Jones, Seth G., Newlee, Danika, Sharb, Clayton and Charles Vallee. *The Evolution of the Salafi-Jihadist Threat: Current and Future Challenges from the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, and Other Groups*. CSIS Transnational Threats Project. Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2018.
- Callimachi, Rukmini, Watkins, Derek and Jin Wu. “ISIS Lost Its Last Territory in Syria. But the Attacks Continue.” *New York Times*. Last updated March 23, 2019. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/03/23/world/middleeast/isis-syria-defeated.html?mtrref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=68985A42676ED3F564FDBBF7AC7CBCFD&gwt=pay&assetType=PAYWALL>

- Caracol Radio. "Ejército: Alias 'Gabino' No Está En Colombia." Last updated January 3, 2019. https://caracol.com.co/radio/2019/01/03/nacional/1546515246_022597.html
- Carvin, Stephanie. "The Trouble with Targeted Killing." *Security Studies* 21(3): 529-555.
- Chalk, Peter and Angela Rabasa. "Origins and Development of the Guerillas." In *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*. Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2001.
- Chivvis, Christopher S. and Andrew Liepman. "North Africa's Menace: AQIM's Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR415.html
- Counter Extremism Project. "Al-Qaeda." Last updated 2021. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda>
- Counter Extremism Project. "Al-Shabaab." Last updated 2020. Accessed on October 6, 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-shabaab>
- Counter Extremism Project. "Boko Haram." Last updated 2020. Accessed on October 7, 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/boko-haram>
- Counter Extremism Project. "ISIS." Last updated 2021. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/isis>
- Counter Extremism Project. "Taliban." Last updated 2021. Accessed on October 4, 2021. <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/taliban>
- Counter Terrorism Guide. "Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)." National Counterterrorism Center. Accessed on October 5, 2020. <https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/aqim.html>
- Counter Terrorism Guide. "Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)." National Counterterrorism Center. Accessed on October 8, 2020. <https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/lra.html>
- Crawford, Neta C. and Catherine Lutz. "Human Cost of Post-9/11 Wars: Direct War Deaths in Major War Zones, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Other." Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University. Published November 13, 2019. Accessed on October 4, 2021. <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2019/Direct%20War%20Deaths%20COW%20Estimate%20November%202013%202019%20FINAL.pdf>
- Crenshaw, Martha. "An organizational approach to the analysis of political terrorism." *Orbis* 29(3): 465-489.

- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. "Decapitation: Catching or Killing the Leader." In *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey (2009): 14-34.
- Dar, Rashid and Shadi Hamid. "Islamism, Salafism, and jihadism: A primer." The Brookings Institution. Last updated July 15, 2016. Accessed on August 15, 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer/>
- "Defining Terrorism." National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Last updated 2021. Accessed on October 1, 2021. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>
- Directorate-General for External Policies. "The financing of the 'Islamic State' in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)." European Parliament, September 2017.
- "Fatwa." Merriam-Webster.com. Last updated 2021. Accessed on July 11, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fatwa>
- Felter, Claire, Masters, Jonathan and Mohammed Aly Sergie. "Al-Shabaab." Council on Foreign Relations. Last updated January 10, 2020. Accessed on October 6, 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab>
- Frederick J. Hacker. *Crusaders, Criminals, Crazyies: Terror and Terrorism in Our Time*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1976.
- Freeman, Michael. "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26(4) (2014): 666-687.
- Gall, Carlotta and Taimoor Shah. "Key Taliban Leader is Killed in Afghanistan in Joint Operation." *New York Times*. Last updated May 14, 2007. Accessed on October 4, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/14/world/asia/14afghan.html>
- Gberie, Lansana. "Terrorism overshadows internal conflicts." United Nations. Last updated April 2016. Accessed on October 1, 2020. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2016/terrorism-overshadows-internal-conflicts>
- Gregory, Kathryn. "Shining Path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, leftists)." Council on Foreign Relations. Last updated August 27, 2009. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/shining-path-tupac-amaru-peru-leftists>
- "GTD: Advanced Search." National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Last updated 2020. Accessed on October 20, 2020. https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/?back=1&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&dt2=some&perpetrator=20033

- Harris, Gardiner. "Obama Says Mullah Mansour, Taliban Leader, Was Killed in U.S. Strike." *New York Times*. Last updated May 23, 2016. Accessed on October 4, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/24/world/asia/obama-mullah-mansour-taliban-killed.html>
- Hasim, Ahmed. "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate." *Middle East Policy* 21(4) (Winter 2014): 69-83.
- Hegghammer, Thomas. "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism." In *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, 244-266. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- "Heterodox." Merriam-Webster. Accessed on October 1, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heterodox#note-1>
- Higday, James D. "Enduring Freedom-The FARC and Other Terrorist Groups in Colombia and South America: Are We Moving Closer to the Next Phase in the War on Terror?" *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 28(4) (2002): 48-52.
- Holland, Steve and Phil Stewart. "Trump hails death of 'depraved' Islamic State leader Baghdadi in U.S. raid." *Reuters*. Last updated October 26, 2019. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-baghdadi/trump-hails-death-of-depraved-islamic-state-leader-baghdadi-in-u-s-raid-idUSKBN1X602N>
- Horgan, John. "The search for the terrorist personality." In *Terrorist, victims, and society: Psychological perspectives on terrorism and its consequence*, ed. A. Silke, 3-27. London: John Wiley.
- Horton, Alex, Hudson, John, Ryan, Missy and Dan Lamothe. "Bombing at Kabul airport kills 13 U.S. service members and dozens of Afghans." *The Washington Post*. Last updated August 26, 2021. Accessed on February 1, 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/kabul-suicide-bombing-service-members/2021/08/26/8bfe63ac-069e-11ec-ba15-9c4f59a60478_story.html
- Hubbard, Ben and Karam Shoumali. "Likely Successor to Dead ISIS Leader Also Reported Killed." *New York Times*. Last updated October 27, 2019. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/27/world/middleeast/al-baghdadi-successor-reported-killed.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage>
- Hunter, Thomas Byron. "Targeted Killing: Self-Defense, Preemption, and the War on Terrorism." *Journal of Strategic Security* 2(2) (2009): 1-52.
- Ibrahim, Raymond. "Al-Qaeda's Declaration of War Against Americans." In *The Al-Qaeda Reader: The Essential Texts of Osama bin Laden's Terrorist Organization*. New York: Broadway Books, 2007.

- International Crisis Group. *A Fight by Other Means: Keeping the Peace with Colombia's FARC*. Latin America Report N°92. Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, 2021.
- "Islam's philosophical divide: Dreaming of a caliphate." *The Economist*. Last updated August 6, 2011. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2011/08/06/dreaming-of-a-caliphate>
- "Jihad." Merriam-Webster.com. Last updated 2021. Accessed on August 15, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jihad>
- Johnston, Patrick B. "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns." *International Security* 36(4) (2012): 47-79.
- Jordan, Jenna. "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes." *International Security* 38(4) (2014): 7-38.
- Jordan, Jenna. *Leadership Targeting: Strategic Targeting of Terrorist Organizations*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019.
- Kirdar, M. J. "Al Qaeda in Iraq." Center for Strategic and International Studies. Last updated June 15, 2011. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/al-qaeda-iraq>
- Kraul, Chris. "A Colombian rebel leader is killed in border fighting." *Los Angeles Times*. Last updated March 2, 2008. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-mar-02-fg-colombia2-story.html>
- Langdon, Lisa, Sarapu, Alexander J. and Matthew Wells. "Targeting the Leadership of Terrorist and Insurgent Movements: Historical Lessons for Contemporary Policy Makers." *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 15(Spring 2004): 59-78.
- "Lord's Resistance Army." Enough Project. Last updated 2017. Accessed on October 8, 2020. <https://enoughproject.org/conflicts/lra>
- "LRA Conflict Background," Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, accessed on October 8, 2020, <https://hhi.harvard.edu/research/insights-impact-of-lra#intro>
- Luckabaugh, Robert, Fuqua, Edward, Joseph Cangemi and Casimir Kowalski. "Terrorist Behavior and U.S. Foreign Policy: Who is the enemy? Some Psychological and Political Perspectives," *Psychology* 34(2) (1997): 1-15.
- Maher, Shiraz. *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." Council on Foreign Relations. Last updated September 15, 2021. Accessed on October 4, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan#chapter-title-0-1>

- Mannes, Aaron. "Testing the Snake Head Strategy: Does Killing or Capturing its Leader Reduce a Terrorist Group's Activity?" *The Journal of International Policy Solutions* 9 (Spring 2008): 40-49.
- Mapping Militant Organizations. "Al Qaeda." Stanford University. Last modified 2019. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-qaeda>
- Mapping Militant Organizations. "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)." Stanford University. Last updated July 2019. https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/aqim#text_block_18762
- Mapping Militant Organizations. "Al Shabaab." Stanford University. Last updated July 2019. Accessed on October 6, 2020. https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-shabaab#highlight_text_13349
- Mapping Militant Organizations. "Boko Haram." Stanford University. Last updated July 2019. Accessed on October 7, 2020. https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/boko-haram#highlight_text_11840
- Mapping Militant Organizations. "National Liberation Army (ELN)." Stanford University. Last updated July 2019. https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/national-liberation-army-eln#highlight_text_15733
- Mapping Militant Organizations. "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)." Stanford University. Last updated July 2019. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>
- Mapping Militant Organizations. "The Afghan Taliban." Stanford University. Last updated 2018. Accessed on October 4, 2021. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/afghan-taliban>
- Mapping Militant Organizations. "The Islamic State." Stanford University. Last modified 2021. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state>
- Mark Mazzetti. "C.I.A. Drone Is Said to Kill Al Qaeda's No.2." *New York Times*. Last updated August 27, 2011. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/28/world/asia/28qaeda.html>
- Martha Crenshaw. "The Subjective Reality of the Terrorist: Ideological and Psychological Factors in Terrorism." In *Current Perspectives in International Terrorism*, eds. R. O. Slater and M. Stohl. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1988.

- Maullin, Richard. *Soldiers, Guerillas, and Politics in Colombia*. RAND. R-0630-ARPA, 1971.
- Meijer, Roel. "Introduction." In *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, 1-32. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Miller, John. "A conversation with the most dangerous man in the world," *Esquire Magazine*, Vol. 133, Issue 2 (Feb. 1999). In *Compilation of Osama Bin Laden Statements 1994-January 2004*, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS): 88-101.
- Mortada, Radwan. "Al-Qaeda's 20-Year Plan." AL-Akhbar English. Last updated January 29, 2014. Accessed on October 2, 2021 <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18437>
- Musharbash, Yassin. "The Future of Terrorism: What al-Qaida Really Wants." Spiegel Online. Last updated August 12, 2005. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/the-future-of-terrorism-what-al-qaida-really-wants-a-369448.html>
- Nalapat, M. D. "The Root Causes of Terrorism are Internal, Not External." RadioFreeEurope. Last updated February 13, 2009. Accessed on October 20, 2020. https://www.rferl.org/a/The_Roots_Of_Terrorism_Are_Internal_Not_External/1492727.html
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "About the GTD." University of Maryland. Last updated 2020. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/about/>
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "GTD Results: Al-Qaida." University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on October 2, 2021. https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2019&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=20029&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "GTD Results: al Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)." University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on October 5, 2020. https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&perpetrator=20033&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=3&count=100#results-table
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "GTD Results: al Shabaab." University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on October 6, 2020.

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&perpetrator=20036&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=24&count=100#results-table

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). “GTD Results: Boko Haram.” University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on October 7, 2020.

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&perpetrator=30101&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=24&count=100#results-table

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). “GTD Results: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).” University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on October 3, 2021.

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2019&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=40151&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). “GTD Results: Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA).” University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on October 8, 2020.

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ctp2=some&success=yes&perpetrator=728&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=4&count=100#results-table

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). “GTD Results: National Liberation Army of Colombia.” University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on July 20, 2020.

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=359&ctp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). “GTD Results: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.” University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on July 20, 2020.

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=576&ctp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). “GTD Results: Shining Path.” University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on July 20, 2020.
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2018&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=590&ntp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). “GTD Results: Taliban.” University of Maryland. Last updated 2019. Accessed on October 4, 2021.
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2019&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&perpetrator=652&criteria1=yes&criteria2=yes&criteria3=yes&ntp2=some&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
- National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). *National Strategy for Counterterrorism for the United States of America*. October 2018.
- “National Counterterrorism Strategy Development.” Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Accessed October 1, 2020. <https://africacenter.org/programs/national-counterterrorism-strategy-development/>
- Phillips, Brian J. “How Does Leadership Decapitation Affect Violence? The Case of Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico.” *The Journal of Politics* 77(2) (2015): 324-336.
- Post, Jerrold M. “Terrorist psycho-logic: Terrorist behavior as a product of psychological forces.” In *Origins of terrorism: psychologies, ideologies, theologies, state of mind*, ed. W. Reich, 25-40. New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Price, Bryan C. “Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism.” *International Security* 35(4) (2012): 9-46.
- REUTERS. “Colombia says rebel leader Rios killed by own men.” Last updated March 7, 2008.
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-colombia-farc/colombia-says-rebel-leader-rios-killed-by-own-men-idUSN0735666820080307>
- Riedel, Bruce O. *The Search for Al-Qa’ida: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2015.
- Ross, Jeffrey. “Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism.” *Journal of Peace Research* 30: 317-29.
- Rostow, Nicholas. “Targeted Killing of Terrorists.” Institute for National Strategic Studies. National Defense University Strategic Forum No. 286 (March 2014): 1-4.

- Scott, Shane. “No. 2 Qaeda Leader May Have Died in U.S. Airstrike in Yemen.” *New York Times*. Last updated June 15, 2015. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/world/middleeast/pentagon-says-airstrikes-in-libya-may-have-killed-qaeda-leader.html>
- Taft-Morales, Maureen. *Peru: Current Conditions and U.S. Relations*. Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report. R40716. 2009.
- “TAREEKHOSAMA/50/Tareekh Osama 122-123.” IntelWire.com. Last updated August 11, 1998. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <http://intelfiles.egoplex.com/1988-08-11-al-qaeda-founding.pdf>
- Taylor, Donald M. and Winnifred Louis. “Terrorism and the quest for identity.” In *Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Roots, Consequences, and Interventions*, eds. Fathali M. Moghaddam and Anthony J. Marsella, 169-185. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004.
- “The Original Ruling Regarding Killing Women and Children of the Kuffar.” In *The Clarification Regarding Intentionally Targeting Women and Children*. At-Tibyān Publications, 2004.
- United Nations Development Programme. “Journey to Extremism in Africa.” Last updated 2017. Accessed on October 1, 2020. <https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf>
- Usama bin Laden. “Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holiest Sites: August 23, 1996” Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. Reference Number: AFGP-2002-003676. Last updated 2021. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/declaration-of-jihad-against-the-americans-occupying-the-land-of-the-two-holiest-sites-original-language-2/>
- U.S. Department of State. “Foreign Terrorist Organizations.” Bureau of Counterterrorism. Last updated 2021. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>
- Velásquez, Carlos Raúl van der Weyden. “Colombia: Reward for FARC Guerilla for Killing His Commander.” *Global Voices*. Last updated March 21, 2008. <https://globalvoices.org/2008/03/21/colombia-reward-for-guerrilla-man-who-killed-his-commander/>
- Walsh, Declan and Eric Schmitt. “Drone Strike Killed No. 2 in Al Qaeda, U.S. Officials Say.” *New York Times*. Last updated June 5, 2012. Accessed on October 2, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/06/world/asia/qaeda-deputy-killed-in-drone-strike-in-pakistan.html>

Weinstein, Jeremy M. "A New Threat of Terror in the Western Hemisphere." *SAIS Review* 23(1) (Winter-Spring 2003): 1-17.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29(3) (2006): 207-239.

Wise, Rob. "Al-Shabaab." Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) Homeland Security & Counterterrorism Program Transnational Threats Project. Case Study Number 2 (July 2011). Accessed on October 6, 2020. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/110715_Wise_AlShabaab_AQAM%20Futures%20Case%20Study_WEB.pdf

Yaoren, Kenneth Yeo. "Leader Decapitation and the Impact on Terrorist Groups." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 11(3) (2019): 7-12.

Zahriyah, Ehab. "How ISIL became a major force with only a few thousand fighters." *Aljazeera America*. Last updated June 19, 2014. Accessed on October 3, 2021. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/6/19/isil-thousands-fighters.html>

Curriculum Vitae

Currently a FMV full-motion video (FMV) and imagery intelligence analysis in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Responsible for exploiting both FMV and National Technical Means (NTM) imagery in a 24/7, 365-day, work environment within a multi-agency Special Access Program. Support current counterterrorism operations and research targeted areas related to the GWOT. Compile secondary imagery intelligence products for use in briefings to high-level government officials include the Director of Central Intelligence, the Director of National Intelligence, and the President of the United States. Additionally compile time-sensitive, all-source intelligence products related to the GWOT and current counterterrorism issues. Concurrently serving as a Mission Payload Operator (MPO) on the MQ-4C Triton Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) for the United States Naval Reserves responsible for operating of mission systems to include: multi-function active sensor (MFAS) search radar, synthetic aperture radar/inverse synthetic aperture radar (SAR/ISAR), electro-optical/infra-red (EO/IR), electronic support measures (ESM), and automatic identification system (AIS).

Previous professional experience includes nine years of active duty service with the United States Navy as S.E.R.E (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape) High-Risk Instructor, and an Electronic Warfare Operator (EWOP) and a Multi-Spectral Targeting System Operator (MTS) on the EP-3E Aries II platform, deployed to CENTCOM, SOUTHCOM, PACOM, EUCOM, and AFRICOM areas of responsibility (AORs).

Previous degrees held are a B.S. Geo-Environmental Studies from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania (2009) and a M.P.S. Homeland Security; Concentration: Counterterrorism from Pennsylvania State University (2019).