

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

Master's Thesis

2024

Marek Mária

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

**Targeted Killing as a Tool of Counter-terrorism:
The case of Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian
Peninsula**

Master's Thesis

Author of the Thesis: Marek Máka

Study programme: Security Studies

Supervisor: Ing. Bc. Luděk Michálek, Ph.D.

Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on the 3rd of January

Bc. Marek Máka

References

MÁKA, Marek. *Targeted Killing as a Tool of Counter-terrorism: The case of Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula*. Praha, 2023. 56 pages. Master's thesis (Mgr). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies, Department of Studies. Supervisor Ing. Bc. Luděk Michálek, Ph.D.

Length of the Thesis: 102 097

Abstract

This thesis explores the topic of targeted killings and their effectiveness as a tool of counter-terrorism. The study begins with discussing the employed theory of decapitation and the legal and ethical questions the use of this method raises. The effectiveness is studied in two cases of leadership decapitations, specifically the case of Ahmed Abdi Godane, the former leader of Al-Shabaab, and Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the former leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The analysis was conducted through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach and the timeframe has been set as two years before and two years after the decapitation. The results from the short-term perspective seem to suggest that leadership decapitation does decrease the organization's capability, with the scope of it depending on individual groups. In the medium to long-term timeframe, the results of the analysis were ambiguous as in the case of Al-Shabaab, there was no significant decrease in the capabilities of the group present due to the decapitation, however, in the case of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, there was a serious decrease occurring in all of the studied indicators. Finally, the thesis suggests that using targeted killings as part of more complex counter-terrorist operations greatly improves its effectiveness.

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá tématem cíleného zabíjení a jeho účinností jako nástroje boje proti terorismu. Studie začíná pojednáním o použité teorii dekapitace vůdců a o právních a etických otázkách, které použití této metody vyvolává. Účinnost je zkoumána na dvou případech dekapitací vůdců teroristických organizací, konkrétně na případu Ahmeda Abdi Godaneho, bývalého vůdce Al-Šabábu, a Násir Vahajšího, bývalého vůdce Al-Káidy na Arabském poloostrově. Analýza byla provedena kombinací kvantitativního a kvalitativního přístupu a časový rámec byl stanoven na dva roky před dekapitací a dva roky po ní. Výsledky z krátkodobého hlediska zřejmě naznačují, že dekapitace vůdců skutečně snižuje akceschopnost organizace, přičemž její rozsah závisí na jednotlivých skupinách. Ve středně dlouhém až dlouhodobém časovém horizontu byly výsledky analýzy nejednoznačné, neboť v případě hnutí Al-Šabab nedošlo v důsledku dekapitace k výraznému snížení schopností skupiny, avšak v případě Al-Káidy na Arabském poloostrově došlo k závažnému poklesu ve všech zkoumaných ukazatelích. Závěrem práce naznačuje, že používání cíleného zabíjení v rámci komplexnějších protiteroristických operací výrazně zvyšuje jejich efektivitu.

Keywords

Targeted killings, terrorism, counter-terrorism, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Al-Shabaab, leadership decapitation

Klíčová slova

Cílené zabíjení, terorismus, boj proti terorismu, Al-Káidy na Arabském poloostrově, Al-Šabáb, dekapitace vůdců

Title

Targeted Killing as a Tool of Counter-terrorism: the case of Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Název práce

Cílené zabíjení jako nástroj boje proti terorismu: případ hnutí Al-Shabaab a Al-Káidy na Arabském poloostrově

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to Ing. Bc. Luděk Michálek, Ph.D. for supervising this thesis and having patience with me. I would also like to thank Ly and my family for their continued support.

Table of Contents

- Introduction: 2
- Methodology 6
- 1. Theoretical framework 8
 - 1.1 Leadership Decapitation 8
 - 1.2 Legal debate..... 10
 - 1.3 Ethical and moral debate 14
- 2 Analysis of targeted killing cases 16
 - 2.1 Case of Ahmed Abdi Godane – leader of al Shabaab..... 16
 - 2.1.1 Analysis of Quantitative Indicators 20
 - 2.1.2 Analysis of Qualitative Indicators 32
 - 2.2 Case of Nasir al-Wuhayshi – leader of AQAP 37
 - 2.2.1 Analysis of Quantitative Indicators 41
 - 2.2.2 Qualitative analysis 49
- 3 Cross-case evaluation 53
- 4 Conclusion..... 56
- List of Figures: 59
- Summary 60
- Bibliography..... 62

Introduction:

After 9/11 the world and mainly the United States entered a new era, the era of war against terrorism. Suddenly the long-standing idea of danger and war, which was waged for territory and power between states through their powerful and numerous armies was challenged by a fairly new style of warfare – terrorism. The sole idea is to inflict as many civilian casualties as possible in the quest to create a climate of fear and bring its cause to worldwide attention. After the attack of Al-Qaeda in September of 2001, the United States and its population were hungry for revenge and decided, that the best defense strategy to prevent any more of these attacks, was to wage war against these terrorists. In the upcoming years, Islamic terrorism became even more widespread, and countries experiencing it, became developing various strategies to fight it.

One of the methods of counterterrorism became targeted killings. A method that became controversial due to the challenges when it comes to international law, raises questions regarding its morality, civilian casualties, and ultimately its effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is a tool of counterterrorism, that is being frequently used mainly by the government of Israel and the United States of America.

The goal of this work will be to assess the effectiveness of this particular counter-terrorist tool, through analyzing two different cases of decapitation conducted by the United States. The first case of choice is the killing of Ahmed Abdi Godane the former leader of the Somali Al-Shabaab and the second case being the decapitation of Nasir al-Wuhayshi a former head of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Within these cases, I will be analyzing the state of the affected organization before and after the targeted assassination, both from the quantitative and qualitative perspective, to determine how much of an impact the particular death had on the organization. Based on the analysis of these two cases I will look to answer the established research question: “Are targeted killings an effective counter-terrorist tool, as in does the death

of a leader of a terrorist organization impact the capabilities of their appropriate group”.

The relevance of this topic remains, as terrorism is still being seen as a threat and targeted killings a viable tool for fighting it. The reason why I chose to study those particular cases, is that I believe I’m able to add some form of novelty to the topic, as these particular organizations are well known, but the amount of research that has been conducted around them in regards to targeted killings is limited.

The academic literature regarding the effectiveness of targeted killings has been explored mainly on the decapitations conducted by Israel and the United States. The results of these studies did not offer a clear conclusion, as the results varied, depending on what methodology, criteria of effectiveness, and other factors have been employed, hence there is literature that favors the use of targeted killings as an effective counter-terrorist tool and also literature that criticizes the employment of this method.

Daniel Byman in the article “Do Targeted Killings Work?” focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the period from 2001 to 2006, finding that even though the number of terrorist attacks increased, the lethality decreased. Arguing that killing the key leaders and weaponry specialists was one of the main reasons, confirming this by including a quote from now-deceased Hamas leader – Rantisi, saying that “it would unilaterally accept a "period of calm" because of the losses it was suffering among its senior cadre.” (Byman, 2006). Bryan C. Price approached the effectiveness of targeted killings from a different perspective in his article “Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism (Price, 2012), studying it through the mortality of terrorist groups with and without a leadership decapitation occurring. The author concluded that the targeted killings did have an impact on the longevity of the different organizations and offers an explanation as to why terrorist organizations should be more vulnerable to leadership losses, due to their unique nature. Max Boot, the author of the

article “Do Targeted Killings Weaken Terrorist Groups?” (Boot, 2022) focuses mainly on the case of Al-Qaeda and the killing of Bin Laden. Concluding that not only the actual killing but also the process of hunting hampers the terrorist activities as the leaders need to be more cautious slowing the communication and also due to lack of public appearance, decreasing the motivation of the followers. As a final example of the literature in favor of the effectiveness of decapitation, the work by Patrick B. Johnston “Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns”, (Johnston, 2012) the author concluded that counterinsurgents who are able to kill or capture insurgent leaders have a higher chance of defeating the insurgencies than those who can't. Furthermore, once an enemy leader is removed successfully, the intensity of a conflict is likelier to decrease than it is after a failed attempt.

Nevertheless, there is no shortage of literature, suggesting that targeted killings might not be the most effective tool. Yasutaka Tominaga in his article “Evaluating the impact of repeated leadership targeting on militant group durability” (Tominaga, 2019) argues that the efficiency of this strategy greatly depends on the use of it. According to the data, if targeted killings are used only once or twice, it actually might make the group stronger, making it more resilient; however, when targeted killings are used repeatedly, their effectiveness rises greatly. Additionally, here is an observation suggesting that the sooner in the organization's existence the attacks happen, the higher their effectiveness. Jenna Jordan in her study “When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation” (Jordan, 2009) comes to the conclusion that targeted killings are ineffective and even counterproductive, especially in the case of well-established groups that have a large amount of members. The justification for this conclusion is that, similarly to Tominaga, there is a reason to believe that the decapitation might only make the group more resilient. Additionally, the killing might lead to revengeful assaults, generate empathy for the group, and cause more deadly strikes. Byman (Byman, 2006) arrived

at a partly similar conclusion, stating that targeted killing does have the ability to incite retaliatory attacks, however, as stated above, ultimately in the case of Hamas, even though the attacks increased, the casualties inflicted decreased. As a final example, in the book “How Terrorism Ends; Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist campaigns” Audrey K. Cronin (Cronin explains that killing terrorist leaders might easily be counterproductive as it might turn the assassinated leader into a martyr and consequently gain more recruits into their ranks. She argues in favor of arresting the leaders, as in her studied cases, putting leaders into jail proved to be a strong instrument as it demonstrated the power of the legal system of the country.

In conclusion, the literature correlates to the nature of targeted killings, which is simply unpredictable. Depending on the specific cases and methodological approach, different conclusions were drawn regarding the effectivity of this counter-terrorist instrument, even in the same piece of work. There were very solid facts presented, supported by clear evidence in favor of both of the opinions regarding the effectiveness of targeted killings. I believe this only shows that the topic is worth studying further to expand the pool of information and evidence, so the policy makers are able to choose the right method, depending on the nature of the group, and thus achieve better results in counter-terrorist campaigns.

The study will be divided into four main chapters. The first chapter introduces the theoretical framework for this study and also includes two subchapters that introduce two important aspects that are connected to targeted killings which are questions regarding their legality and morality. The second chapter is the core body of this work, the analysis of two cases of targeted killings. The third chapter will be focused on cross-case comparison, comparing the results from the analysis. The final chapter will be the conclusion, where the final evaluation of the results of the analysis will take place and through them, the research question will be answered.

Methodology

The methodology, employed for this particular research will be a multiple case study, focusing on two cases of targeted killings, where each of them will consist of introducing the target and the organization he was a leader of, the description of the killing, qualitative and quantitative analysis of the state of the organization prior and after the assassination, and finally, a verdict of the analysis, whether the killing concretely aided with hampering the operation of the organization.

The reason for employing this particular methodology is that it allows for a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data, therefore the chance to accurately assess the available information. During my literature review, I concluded that researching this topic only through the quantitative lens is inadequate as it may portray the situation differently than it actually was. Meaning that for example, in the case of no significant decrease in violence or mortality, that particular case would be marked as a complete failure, in reality, from qualitative research we can discover, that the number of attacks was supposed to be much larger, but due to caution, caused by the targeted killing, it stayed on the same level, therefore having a positive effect.

The selection of cases was chosen in a way to cover a range of terrorist organizations, to hopefully achieve a higher applicability of the paper's findings to other not-researched cases, and to fill a research gap. As of now, the majority of the research has been done on the assassinations conducted by Israel, particularly the Second Intifada, larger quantitative studies, and cases before the year 2005. In my research I will be focusing on cases that happened in the past ten years, to bring novelty to the topic and see if the conclusions and findings still hold up, with the recent cases of targeted killings.

The researched time frame has been established for two years before and two years after the decapitation. Two years prior should allow for the establishment of a solid understanding of in what state the organization was at the time of the targeted killing and even the possibility of predicting, in which direction it was heading. Similarly, the two-year distance after the killing should be the minimum time, so we are able to properly identify short-term, as well as medium to long-term effects.

As previously mentioned, this paper will be researched both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. The data for the quantitative research will be obtained from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), which is maintained by the “The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism” staff at the University of Maryland. However, it's important to emphasize that while it is currently the largest publicly available terrorism database, the data it contains is limited to events up to the year 2020. The qualitative research will be conducted through a combination of academic texts, news articles, and other publicly available information.

The type of quantitative data that will be researched is going to be the number of attacks conducted and the lethality of the attacks, the type of weaponry used, and finally the type of targets. The frequency and lethality of attacks are going to be the main factors as they indicate how much of a terror the particular organization causes in the researched timeframe, allowing us to determine whether the targeted decapitation was successful in hindering the organization and its capabilities. The type of weaponry used in attacks is also an interesting factor as it is an indicator of professionalism and additionally the financial state of the organization. If suddenly after the attack the majority of weapons used in attacks are firearms instead of bombs or possibly rocket-type weapons, it's safe to say, that we are witnessing some sort of shift in the organization's capabilities, either due to lack of planning/leadership or disruption in the financial department. Finally, the type of targets is a type of indicator that acts similarly to

weaponry type, as the findings suggest that if the organization prefers to target soft targets (non-military personnel), the capabilities of the organization are at the lower end, as fighting military personnel requires more resources.

The researched qualitative data will mainly be the political events during the researched time, the development of the organization, and lastly societal impact of the said decapitation, for example, popular support, or other factors that might have not surfaced from the quantitative research.

1. Theoretical framework

In my thesis, I will be working with the theory of leadership decapitation. I have chosen this theory as I believe it is well suited for my topic. The victims of all of the studied assassinations are men who have been leaders of their propriate organizations for an extensive time. Therefore, eliminating them should cause a significant disruption in the course of the organization. If not that, then at least hinder its operationalization to a point where their attacks are less frequent and deadly.

1.1 Leadership Decapitation

Leadership decapitation isn't a new ground-breaking strategy. It is a strategy that has been practiced for centuries by state and non-state actors in times of war and also in peace, to affect the political situation within the country of its foe or to hamper the full potential of the enemy's combat ability. With the same idea in mind, states such as the United States and Israel began practicing leadership decapitation as a counter-terrorist method. Using this method, the states are expecting to create a power vacuum, possibly a shift from offense to defense and overall decreasing the operability of the organization, leading to disrupting the organization's future operations (Price, 9).

These assumptions are based on a set of theories identified in correlation to violent organizations and leadership. Due to the nature of violent organizations, and terrorists specifically, the authority that the leaders possess is not linked to some legal basis, therefore the followers don't follow them, because they are obligated to do so, but because they believe in the cause and the leader. Even with religious causes, where you could argue the goal doesn't change, with a charismatic leader at the helm, the commitment and overall attractiveness of the cause might be drastically different (Price, 17).

The last set of factors suggests that leadership decapitation should have a great effect on terrorist group is the fact that terrorist groups are categorized as value-based organizations. These types of organizations require strong leaders, as there is no big emphasis on material gain/profit, that would motivate its members on its own. Additionally, this characteristic makes succession more difficult as new leaders might have a different interpretation of the ideology, possibly creating turmoil as the followers might not agree with that particular interpretation, causing succession battles (Price, 20;21).

Nevertheless, it's important to mention that this theory and consequently using assassinations as a counter-terrorist measure have its gaps. The main critique is the legal and ethical aspects, which I will focus on separately later in this paper. Additionally, many factors have arisen that limit the effectiveness of this theory, however, the results are not conclusive every time, as various authors came to different conclusions, depending on their dataset or set factors.

An example of this is the debate about whether imprisoning terrorist leaders is the superior form of decapitation compared to simply assassinating them. Audrey K. Cronin an established expert in this field, argues in her work "How Al-Qaida Ends," and "How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist campaigns, that imprisonment of leaders is the better option, as we can extract valuable information from the arrested leaders, "humiliate"

him in public, possibly decreasing his popular support. Cronin's final argument is that with assassination we are facing the possibility that the leader will be pronounced a martyr, therefore leading to radicalization of the group, which is definitely an unwanted outcome of a counter-terrorist measure (Cronin 2009, 14; 2006, 22). All of the above are valid points, nevertheless study by Jenna Jordan comes to a different conclusion. In her article "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation", the author works with a large dataset consisting of 298 cases, during a period from 1945 to 2004. She argues that in multiple instances the arrested leaders are still able to communicate with their group and that it might facilitate violence as it's not uncommon that the members will try to launch a rescue operation. The quantitative study concludes that the assassination of a leader led to the organization's downfall in 30% of instances, while the apprehension of the top leader proved effective in 21% of cases (Jordan 2009, 736), suggesting that the death of a leader is more of an effective counter-terrorist tool, as the demise of a group is one of the ultimate goals. Nonetheless, Jordan is a good example of criticism for this theory as she concludes in her work, that targeted killings are in most cases not an effective method and can generate counterproductive results.

1.2 Legal debate

This chapter will present the multifaceted legal dimensions surrounding targeted killings, exploring the complexities that arise when traditional concepts of armed conflict and state sovereignty intersect with the evolving nature of modern threats.

The practice of targeted killings often carried out through unmanned aerial vehicles or other covert means, has become a prominent tool in the arsenals of states grappling with non-state actors deemed threats to national security. While proponents argue that such measures are necessary for pre-emptive self-defense in the face of imminent dangers, critics contend that they represent a dangerous departure from established legal frameworks, potentially undermining

the very foundations of international law.

As we navigate through the legal labyrinth of targeted killings, this chapter aims to unravel key questions: What legal justifications are put forth by states engaging in targeted killings? How do these actions align with established principles of international humanitarian law and human rights? What challenges arise in distinguishing between combatants and civilians? To address these queries, I will examine relevant legal frameworks and cases that shape the discourse around targeted killings.

To address these questions, we should start with the basics of why targeted killings are even controversial in the first place. The main debate revolves around the question, under what set of laws we should judge terrorist attacks. In essence, terrorists are criminals as any others, meaning, if we would have evidence that a mass shooting is about to take place, police would conduct an arrest and the suspect would be judged under criminal law. Consequently, as you can see, the concept of targeted killings directly opposes this logic. On top of this, these attacks are conducted outside of the territory, of the states that are conducting these attacks which is a disruption of state sovereignty and could be seen as a plain murder of a foreign citizen (Zuradzki, 2015). However, there is an instance where these actions would be legal, and that is in the case of an armed conflict. From this standpoint, the term used by the United States “war on terrorism”, which on one hand could only be seen only as a symbolic slogan, on the other hand declares that The United States is in an armed conflict, and that permits the US and its military to act in a certain (Falk, 2020). Therefore, under the Law of armed conflict, targeted killings can be considered legal under certain circumstances that I will expand on in a short moment. Both the United States and Israel entered this realm of armed conflict. United States by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, calling upon the right to self-defense and authorizing the president “to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed or aided the terrorist

attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons.” (Public Law 107–40, 2001). For Israel, the ruling of the Israeli High Court of Justice in 2006 is a landmark case in this regard, where the ruling identifies the targeted killings by Israel to be subject to the Law of Armed Conflict and established four criteria to be met, for the attack to be performed legally (HCJ 769/02, 2006).

Nevertheless, it’s important to mention that, if one doesn’t believe this justification, there is no discussion, as from the legal standpoint concerning human rights and criminal law, the operations that the United States and Israel are conducting are considered extrajudicial executions, hence illegal (Falk, 2020).

Even though the skepticism regarding the legality of targeted killings still persists, the United States and Israel both managed to justify its legality by “complying with the four fundamental principles of international law governing the use of force” and through these principles set out a list of conditions that need to be met, for the attack to be a legitimate counter-terrorist instrument. The principles that I’m referring to are identified as – military necessity, discrimination, unnecessary suffering, and proportionality (Falk, 2020; Bachmann, 2013).

The principle of military necessity could be generally explained in a way that only actions, carried out in accordance with international law and actually necessary to accomplish a military purpose should be given a green flag (International Committee of The Red Cross). In the case of targeted killings, we are mainly referring to how imminent and large of a threat the target is and if there is no other permissible option such as capture, without endangering the lives of the state’s soldiers.

The second principle of discrimination is one of the core criteria for waging a war. It anchors the principle that war is fought among armies, meaning that civilians and civilian objects are

not to be targeted. There are also set criteria for distinction, so not only the army can be lawfully targeted but also volunteers and militia. Nevertheless, it's important to mention, that in asymmetric conflict, like the fight against terrorism, the set of rules, that serve as a distinction become hard to apply in practice, as terrorists don't wear uniforms or other forms of clothing, where it could be apparent that they are members of the hostile organization. Additionally, there is a group of people that are difficult to categorize, as it is civilians who are helping the terrorists, either by their own convictions or being forced to do so. The Israeli High Court of Justice tried to address this issue by stating, that if civilians are taking a direct part in hostilities, forfeit their right to be protected and creating a list of criteria that distinguishes between indirect and direct participation (Falk, 2020; HCJ 976/02 section 35., 2006). The United States's distinction is broader, identifying the valid targets as operational participants, operatives, or generally someone who is posing an actual ongoing or future threat (Falk, 2020). We witnessed an interesting case, where a citizen of the United States Anwar al-Awlaki, who was a radical Islamic cleric residing in Yemen, was killed by a US drone strike, raising a lot of questions. The administration justified this attack under the law of armed conflict and necessary defense, since according to the intelligence he posed a significant threat (Zuradzki, 2015; Falk, 2020.)

Unnecessary suffering is an interesting principle in correlation to targeted killings as it circles back to the discussion of arresting vs. killing the targets. You can argue that eliminating the targets is unnecessary suffering since you are able to arrest them instead, even though that being riskier and more challenging. Therefore, to comply with this principle, assassinations should be conducted only as a last resort and when the threat is imminent, in other words, the killings should be preemptive, acting as a form of self-defense (Falk, 2020). Both the United States and Israel agree with the notion, that targeted killing should be a tool of last resort. Though, there are some differences and gaps when it comes to the differentiation of how serious of a threat certain individuals pose and when it's feasible to eliminate them. Obtaining information about

terrorists is a difficult task, especially specific intel about the progress of a potential or upcoming operation. Due to this, we are able to observe the elimination of targets, that could be classified merely as ongoing, and even though the threat they present is definitely real, targeting someone like this would not pass under the preemptive classification. Nevertheless, due to the delicacy of this timing, in the case of the United States, we know that such targets are considered legitimate (Falk, 2020).

The final principle that targeted killings need to uphold is proportionality, meaning that every attack conducted should ideally come with zero civilian casualties, and if it does, civilian deaths should be kept to a minimum. However, due to the nature of how targeted killings are conducted, especially nowadays with drones and airstrikes, civilian casualties are bound to happen. A significant point in this topic is that it has been argued that targeted killings are advantageous since they should cause fewer casualties, so when we witness operations that had a significant number of civilian casualties, there is bound to be criticism of the method and thus proportionality remains as a prevalent topic regarding targeted killings. The question then is, how many civilian casualties are acceptable for one death of a terrorist, with the answer to this question being completely impossible and unethical, therefore being extremely difficult to determine if a specific attack has been proportional.

1.3 Ethical and moral debate

Simultaneously with the legal debate regarding targeted killings, we are met with moral and ethical challenges. The main concerns circle back to the debate whether killing someone is the right form of justice, which ultimately comes to a personal belief, if in some cases, killing someone for their crimes is a means of delivering justice or if that option is off limits (Zuradzki, 2015).

Secondly, coming again to the principle of proportionality and civilian casualties, how can we claim some form of moral high ground, when in reality during counter-terrorist operations, including targeted killings, similarly to the terrorists innocent bystanders are being killed. Now obviously, the big difference between the terrorists and the military conducting said operations is that killing civilians is not the goal of the operation, but unfortunate collateral damage, even though sometimes accounted for. Ultimately though, you can argue that it doesn't matter, because the aftermath is the same, innocent people lost their lives and that should be unacceptable, especially as a byproduct of something that is punishing exactly that (Byman, 2006).

Ultimately, the goal of these two chapters was to showcase the possible legal and ethical gaps, and its justifications by the users of this counterterrorist tool. The presented criticism is the reason why targeted killings were and remain labeled as a controversial tactic. Especially during the early periods of the fight against terrorism, the representatives of various international communities were openly critical of this tactic, calling it unlawful and a violation of human rights (Tempest, 2004; Whitaker & Burkeman, 2002; Yachot, 2013). After the ruling of the Israeli High Court of Justice, there has been a decline in the critics both among scholars and in the international community, but that doesn't mean it has completely died off (Falk, 2020). But the protests tend to stay within the realm of statements and not actual political action and even when that is attempted, the answer to those is silence (Schweiger, 2019).

2 Analysis of targeted killing cases

In this chapter, I will analyze two different cases of targeted killings. As previously mentioned, all of the killings were conducted by the United States and both the two men were long-standing leaders of their appropriate organizations, meaning that according to the theory, the loss of these leaders should be of significance to their respective organizations. All of these killings were done by a drone strike. Since each of these leaders, comes from different terrorist organizations, I hope that due to this diversity, I will be able to reach a conclusion, that is applicable to a wider range of cases.

2.1 Case of Ahmed Abdi Godane – leader of al Shabaab

The story of Ahmed Abdi Godane begins in the aftermath of a political turmoil, that happened in Somalia. To establish some historical context, in 1991 the government of President Siad Barre collapsed, and Somalia found itself in a state of chaos, which was a perfect environment for warlordism and other extremist groups. Among them was Al-Itihaad al-Islamiyya, the predecessor to al-Shabab, serving as the breeding ground for several of its leaders, was a militant Salafi extremist group that reached its zenith in the 1990s following the collapse of the Siad Barre military regime and the onset of civil war (Shire, 2020). Their influence declined after a confrontation with the Ethiopian army and a lot of their fighters fled to Afghanistan in the late 1990s (Masters, 2014). During that time Godane is also believed to be present in Afghanistan, where he underwent military training and gained battlefield experience, after gaining an interest in militant Islamism during his studies in Sudan and Pakistan (Anzalone, 2014).

The civil war in Somalia was still ongoing and a Transitional National Government was established in the year 2000, with the hope of stabilizing the situation, without much success. In 2004, diverse clan-based courts consolidated to establish the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).

The ICU implemented stringent decrees reminiscent of the Taliban, leading to a notable period of peace and security in Mogadishu, unprecedented since 1991 (Shire, 2020). Within the ICU, the radical youth wing, Al-Shabaab, emerged, guided by battle-hardened, Taliban-trained commanders. Among them, Ahmed Abdi Godane rose to prominence and held the position of secretary-general within the executive council of the ICU.

In December 2006, Ethiopia initiated an invasion of Somalia, swiftly displacing the ICU from Mogadishu with minimal opposition (Masters, 2014). This intervention, undertaken at the behest of Somalia's transitional government, is believed to have had a radicalizing impact on al-Shabab, according to analysts. Following the exodus of much of the ICU to neighboring countries, al-Shabab persevered, relocating to the south and initiating a campaign of asymmetric attacks, encompassing bombings and assassinations, targeting conventional Ethiopian forces. Godane played a central role in this restructuring of Al-Shabaab into a Somali nationalist group (Shire, 2020).

Ahmed Godane's efforts earned him a position at the very top, becoming the emir of Al-Shabaab at the end of the year 2007. The following two years were very successful for Al-Shabaab as under the leadership of Godane, the organization expanded its territory and solidified its power structure at the provincial level through governors (Anzalone, 2014). That resulted in a phase marked by a semblance of stability, due to a rigorous application of Sharia, allowing a revival of trade and commerce and small infrastructure projects such as road construction (Anzalone, 2014).

Nevertheless, this period of stability didn't last very long, as internal clashes over strategy and other matters started to intensify. The Ethiopian army withdrew from Somalia by 2009, and thus Al-Shabaab lost the main enemy and motivator for common Somalis to join their cause and with the harsh Sharia law imposed, a lot of the population was turning away from

supporting Al-Shabaab (Masters, 2014; Shire 2020). To tackle this issue, Godane decided to internationalize its group and join the global Jihad. This move was supposed to bring in new foreign fighters, that would fill the void that was created by the decline of local fighters (Shire, 2020). Al-Shabaab officially merged with Al-Qaeda in 2012, which was a move that had critics on both sides of this merger, and in the case of Al-Shabaab only intensified the internal crisis (Bryden, 2014). Godane faced criticism from two fronts. One was from prominent foreign fighters, in this case, the most prominent voice was Omar Hammami, and the second front was the displeased core members, namely Ibrahim al-Afghani, Ma'alin Burhan, Mukhtar Robow, and Hassan Dahir Aweys (Masters, 2014). Both of these camps disapproved of Godane's strategy, generally cruel behavior, and his way of dealing with disapproving voices both within the organization and among the people under al-Shabab's governance. Godane decided to deal with this criticism exactly in the way for which he was criticized, by violence. All of the mentioned men that voiced their disapproval were either killed or ran away from Somalia during 2013 (Shire, 2020).

Completing the suppression of the most vocal and potentially threatening internal dissent, Godane solidified his control over Al-Shabaab. Godane's success was a result of his ongoing consolidation of power, being patient and outplaying his rivals, and lastly due to the crucial support from important factions within the organization, namely the Amniyat network, which is the Al-Shabaab's secret service, until his death in 2014, the militant group orchestrated coordinated attacks within and beyond Somalia (Bryden, 2014).

Unfortunately for Godane, he didn't have the chance to enjoy his victory for a long time, as he was killed in a drone strike the next year. The operation was conducted by the United States, with the full knowledge and approval of Somalia's government (Alexander, 2014), through both unmanned and manned aircraft, using hellfire missiles and laser-guided munitions. The attack took place in Somalia, specifically at an Al-Shabaab camp south of the capital city, after

intelligence suggested that Godane should be present at the site (U.S. Department of Defense, 2014). At the time experts agreed that Godane's death will be a significant loss for Al-Shabaab, some even suggesting the collapse of the whole organization. Now we know that this prediction hasn't materialized, but how weighty really was the loss of Godane will be explored in the next subchapters.

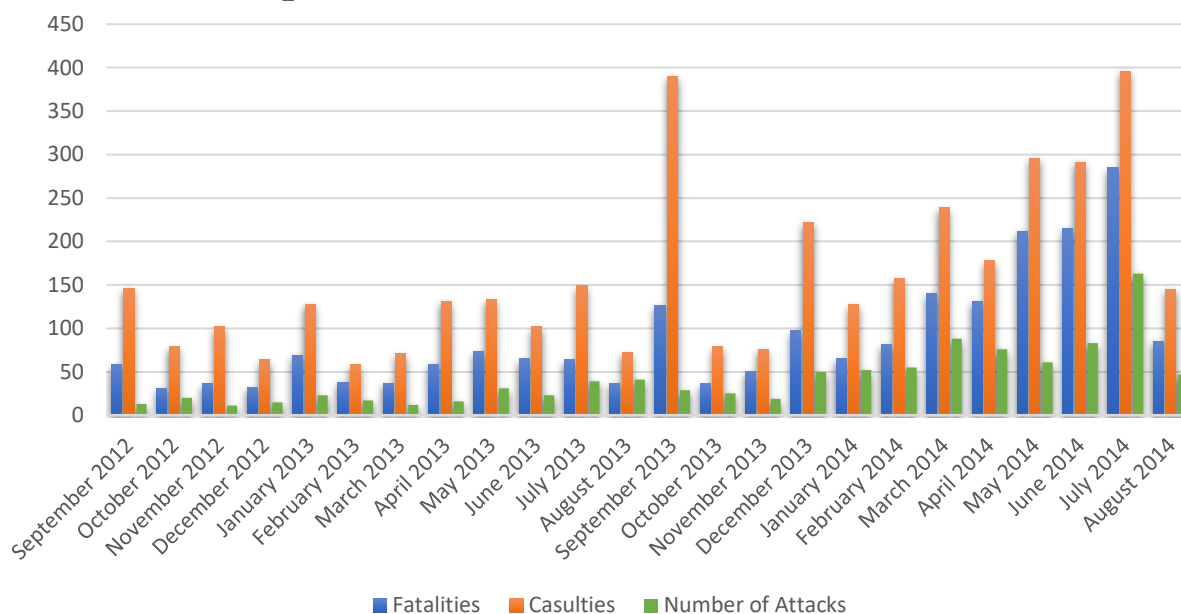
2.1.1 Analysis of Quantitative Indicators

To study how big of an impact had this killing on Al-Shabaab, several different indicators, which were already mentioned in the methodology chapter, will be employed. There were no limitations set up regarding the location where the attacks occurred, therefore including the entire world and the researched time frame has been established as a set of two time periods. The first period being two years before the decapitation, meaning from September 1st, 2012, to the 31st of August 2014, and the second period ranges from September 1st, 2014, till the 31st of August 2016. As explained before, this range should be suitable for this research, because it will allow for observing the previous trend, in the case of the pre-decapitation period, and also for long-term effects with respect to the post-decapitation period.

Number of attacks and casualties

The first area of interest is the number of terrorist attacks and the number of casualties incurred during the set time period. Additionally, the casualties will be divided into the whole number that was tallied and also what part of those casualties were lethal. The reason for that is that it's an interesting distinction as we can observe if there were shifts present in that regard, possibly suggesting worse planning or execution by Al-Shabaab.

Figure 1: Number of Al-Shabbab attacks and casualties prior to the death of Ahmed Godane



Now turning our attention to the actual numbers, in the period between September 2012 and August 2014, Al-Shabaab conducted 1009 attacks, inflicting 3831 casualties, from which 2122 were lethal, amounting to 55.40%.

From the clustered column chart, we can observe that the number of attacks in the period from September 2012 till August 2013 was consistently staying under the number of 40 (except for August 2013), with the casualties mainly hovering in the range of 70 to 130, therefore overall, we can say, that there are no significant jumps between the months. This fairly “stable” trend was interrupted by September 2013, where we don’t observe a drastic change in the occurrences of attacks, but the number of casualties and fatalities skyrocketed, more than doubling the previous peak. This is caused by the Westgate Shopping Mall incident, that happened in Nairobi, Kenya, where five members of Al-Shabaab opened fire on civilians and took the mall hostage for three days, killing 67 and wounding at least 200 people. Ultimately being killed by the Kenyan security forces (McConnell, 2015). Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack and explained that this assault was supposed to serve as a punishment to Kenya, for deploying security forces into Somalia (GTD, 2013a). The two following months followed a comparable

trend, to the one we were observing in the pre-Westgate Shopping Mall incident, however, that is the last time for the upcoming future.

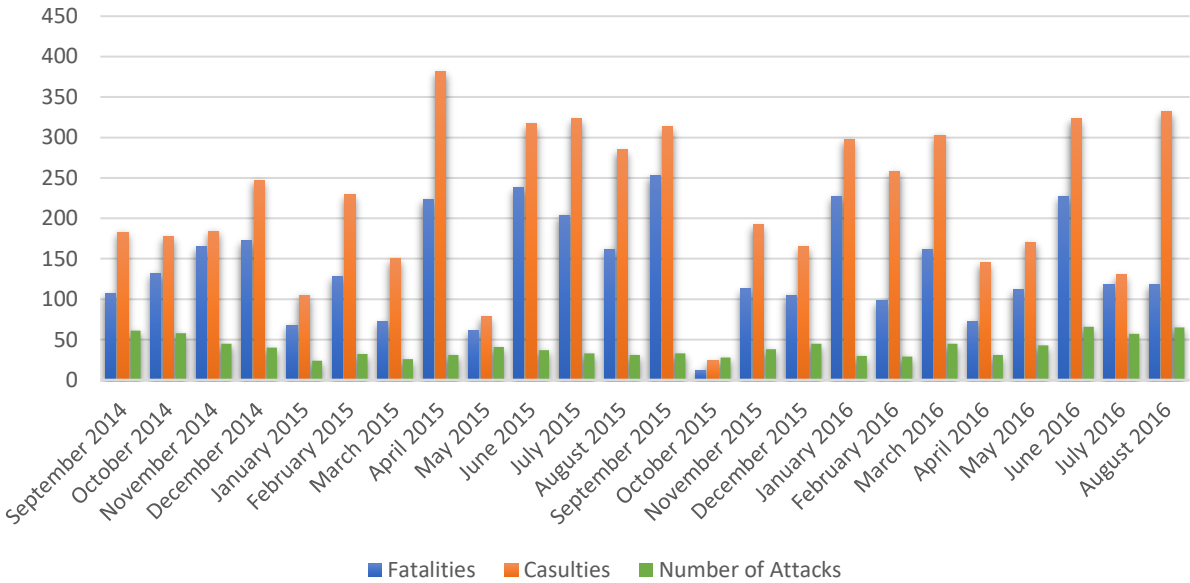
Beginning in December 2013, we witness a change in the behavior of the organization. In comparison, to the previous months, where except for the mentioned month of August in 2013 the number of attacks stayed below the number 40, from December 2013 the number of attacks for the upcoming eight months didn't fall below the number 50, with the last month in this researched time period August 2014 being the only exception, with 47 attacks. This sets the median to 61 attacks per month, compared to the median of 20 in the pre-December 2013 period. The total number being 334 attacks to 675 attacks. Thus, in almost half the time, the organization increased the number of attacks two-fold.

We observe similar results in the department of casualties, where the number of them didn't drop below the threshold of 127. In the pre-December 2013 period, there were 1780 casualties, 811 (45.50%) of them being fatal. But in the post-December 2013 period, 2051 casualties were recorded and out of them, 1311 were fatalities (63.83%). Therefore, we can state, that there was a significant increase in the lethality of the organization's attacks, nevertheless what is interesting is that examining the numbers closer, when it comes to the ratio of casualties-attack, that number decreased in the post-December 2013 period. In the pre-December 2013 period, there was an average of 5,3 casualties per attack, however in the post-December 2013 period we are met with only 3 casualties per attack. The same trend occurs in the case of fatalities, where the ratio is 2,4 to 1,9, so the gap is much closer, but still the "effectivity" per attack is still in favor of the pre-December 2013 period.

To summarize, the two years prior to Ahmed Godane's decapitation can be divided into two time periods, with December 2013 being the dividing month. The first period is characterized by the number of attacks staying below the number 40, with one exception, and also the number

of casualties staying within a fairly stable range, amounting to a median of 102 casualties per month. Within the second time period, we observe a drastic increase in attacks, amounting to 675 doubling the previous time period. Nevertheless, after a closer look, when it comes to effectivity, the latter period is behind the earlier one with 3 casualties per attack compared to 5,3 per attack. Concluding that while the ability or incentive to conduct attacks seemingly increased significantly, the effectivity suffered.

Figure 2: Number of Al-Shabbab attacks and casualties after the death of Ahmed Godane



Turning our attention to the period after Ahmed Godane’s death, in the period two years between September 2014 and August 2016, Al-Shabaab conducted 969 attacks, inflicting 5311 casualties, from which 3350 were lethal, amounting to 63.12%.

Exploring the chart, we can see that the number of attacks didn’t vary significantly in this time period, with the median being 37,5 attacks per month. April 2015 was the month, where the most casualties occurred as during that month a very tragic event happened, once again in Kenya, where Al-Shabaab conducted an attack on Garissa University College. The attackers singled out Christian and non-Muslim students, taking them hostage for 13 hours and executing them until security forces managed to end the siege. The attack resulted in at least 148 fatalities, including 142 students, six security officers, and all four attackers, with an additional 104

individuals injured (Ellis et al., 2015). The extremist group Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, stating it was a response to Kenya's military actions in Somalia (Lister & Cruickshank, 2015; BBC, 2019; GTD, 2015). This particular attack is the gravest in the entire four-year span of this research, toppling the previously mentioned Westgate shopping Mall attack in September 2013.

When it comes to the number of attacks and casualties there are no consistent significant jumps, as in the pre-decapitation period, except for October 2015, where even though the number of attacks didn't vary drastically, compared to the other months, the casualties and fatalities certainly did. Exploring this month further, this anomaly is mainly due to the fact that there was an unknown number of casualties in a significant number of cases. There are records of the attacks happening, but when trying to access the cited local sources, they are no longer available.

Since there is no interesting change of trend happening, we can focus our attention on the core of this sub-chapter, which is the pre and post-decapitation comparison, in this particular area. Beginning with the number of attacks, the comparison of total numbers is 1009 attacks to 969 attacks, with the higher number being in the pre-decapitation period, seeming like the decapitation might have worked, but when we focus on the number of casualties, there is a very significant discrepancy. In the pre-decapitation period, Al-Shabaab caused 3831 casualties, with 2122 being fatal, but in the post-decapitation period, there were 5311 casualties, with 3350 of them being fatal. Making it a 38,63% increase in the case of casualties as a whole, and a 57,91% increase in fatalities.

Now we are aware of the rising trend before Godane's death, so it could be interesting to make a separate comparison to that time period as well. Comparing these two periods, we are met with a ratio of 61 attacks per month to 37 attacks per month, in favor of the post-December

2013 period and in the case of casualties the number amounts to 222 per month to 210 per month, once again with the post-December 2013 period, being in lead. Therefore, in this case, we could say that the decapitation of Ahmed Godane did have a positive effect, but to an extent that's fairly minuscule and not in the scope the strategy and theory suggest.

To make this comparison from all possible angles, often there is the topic of the short-term effects of these killings. Sometimes we witness a sharp increase in attacks as a retaliation for the death of the deceased leader, nevertheless, that wasn't the case here. To make it more accurate to the ongoing trend before the death of Godane, If we compare the more active post-December 2013 period to the four months after the decapitation, which was also very active, before calming down for a while, the comparison comes out as 61 attacks per month to 51 attacks per month and in terms of casualties its 222 to 183. Therefore, no significant signs of retaliation craze, more of a sign in favor of the decapitation theory, with both decreasing approximately 15%, thus from the short-term perspective there seems to be a decrease in capabilities.

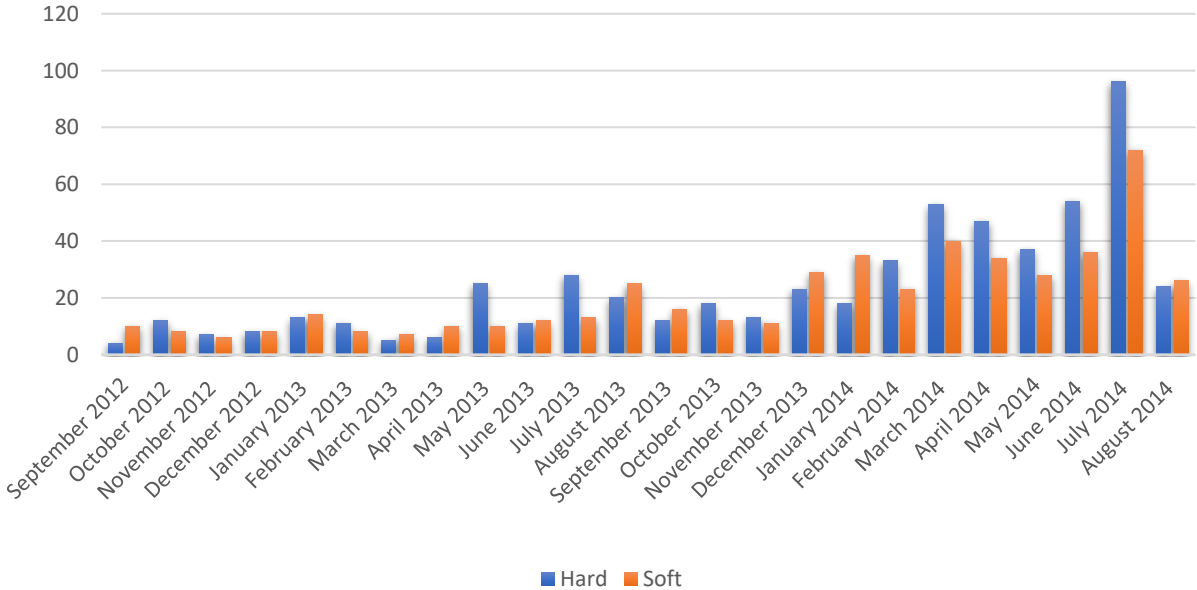
In conclusion, even though, the number of attacks did decrease, the increase in casualties and especially fatalities is drastic, leading to the conclusion, that the killing of Ahmed Godane didn't have the impact many were predicting, especially from the long-term perspective. To address any doubts, since the beginning of the researched pre-decapitation period was slower in nature, possibly skewing the results, I also compared the data to the more active post-December 2013 period, treating it as if that would be the continuing trend. In this case, there is indeed a big difference, where the trend after the decapitation would actually appear to be tamer compared to the post-December 2013, however as illustrated by the numbers, the difference is not that significant, but from this perspective it does challenge the original narrative that the killing of Ahmed Godane was completely ineffective or even counterproductive, considering the dramatic increase in casualties. However, as mentioned previously, even in this more favorable

instance, the expectations from this counter-terrorist strategy are definitely different.

The type of targets

The type of targets has been determined as the second area of interest. Looking at the chart, you notice that the targets are divided into two categories – hard targets and soft targets. Hard targets are to be understood as typically well-protected entities that pose a significant challenge to attack, due to being often heavily guarded, fortified, or otherwise difficult to access or damage. These can include military and police forces, military camps and bases, and prisons. In the case of Al-Shabaab, we are talking mainly about attacks on military personnel and bases of the AMISOM mission and police forces. The term contrasts with soft targets, which are generally unprotected or vulnerable entities. Examples of those might be unarmed civilians and civilian infrastructure such as business or transportation. The reason for analyzing this indicator is because the shifts in choosing between hard and soft targets can reflect an organization’s operational capabilities, strategic preferences, and objectives.

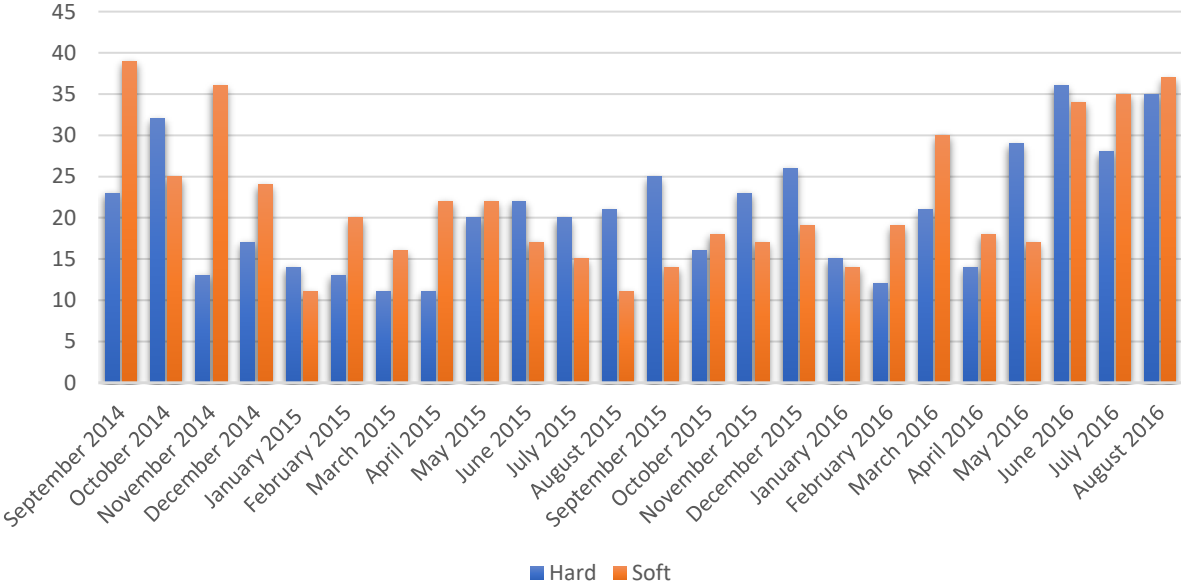
Figure 3: Target selection prior to the death of Ahmed Godane



In the first instance analyzing the data before the killing of Ahmed Godane, in total the

organization conducted 578 attacks against hard targets and 493 attacks against soft targets. Examining the chart there is no consistent trend present, with hard targets and soft targets switching the leading position in the individual months. Nevertheless, there is a period of time where we observe some pattern. From March 2014 to July 2014, the hard targets were consistently in the leading position, with August 2014 breaking this five-month-long trend. However, the difference between hard targets and soft targets during that particular period doesn't seem to be significant enough to draw a concrete conclusion. It mirrors the rising trend in the area of the number of attacks, signaling the general increase of capabilities, but not a concrete change of strategy when it comes to specific targeting.

Figure 4: Target selection after the death of Ahmed Godane



Moving on to the post-decapitation period, inspecting the data, there are some visible changes present. Beginning with the overall number, Al-Shabaab targeted hard targets in 497 cases and soft targets in 530 cases. There is also an interesting pattern, in the first nine months after the killing, where except for October 2014 and January 2015, the targeting of soft targets was in the leading position in seven out of the nine months. This phenomenon is in agreement with the finding in an article by Abrahms and Potter (2015, 329-330), implying that decapitation strikes,

especially when successful, have a significant effect on civilian targeting. In their models, it amounted to approximately a 40% increase in the case of soft targeting. In the case of Ahmed Godane, if we focus on the more active timeframe (the post-December 2013) in the pre-decapitation period to make a more accurate comparison, the average percentage of soft targets from the entire amount of targets amounts to 51.76%. In the identified post-decapitation period, it adds up to 62.41%, therefore in the short-term there seem to be changes in the targeting department, even though they don't seem to be drastic, equaling approximately 10%.

Continuing with the comparison, now with the entire data from both timeframes. As previously mentioned, in the pre-decapitation period there were 578 attacks against hard targets and 493 attacks against soft targets, with hard targets being the priority, as 53.98% of all the attacks. In the post-decapitation period hard targets were targeted in 497 cases and soft targets in 530 cases, this time soft targets taking the leading position as 51.60% of all attacks, thus even in the long-term there has been a small shift towards targeting soft targets, approximately by 5%. The trend is consistent with the one that has been identified in the short-term, however, the disparity has been continually minimized due to the fact that hard targets started to close the initial gap and even be dominant in some of the remaining months.

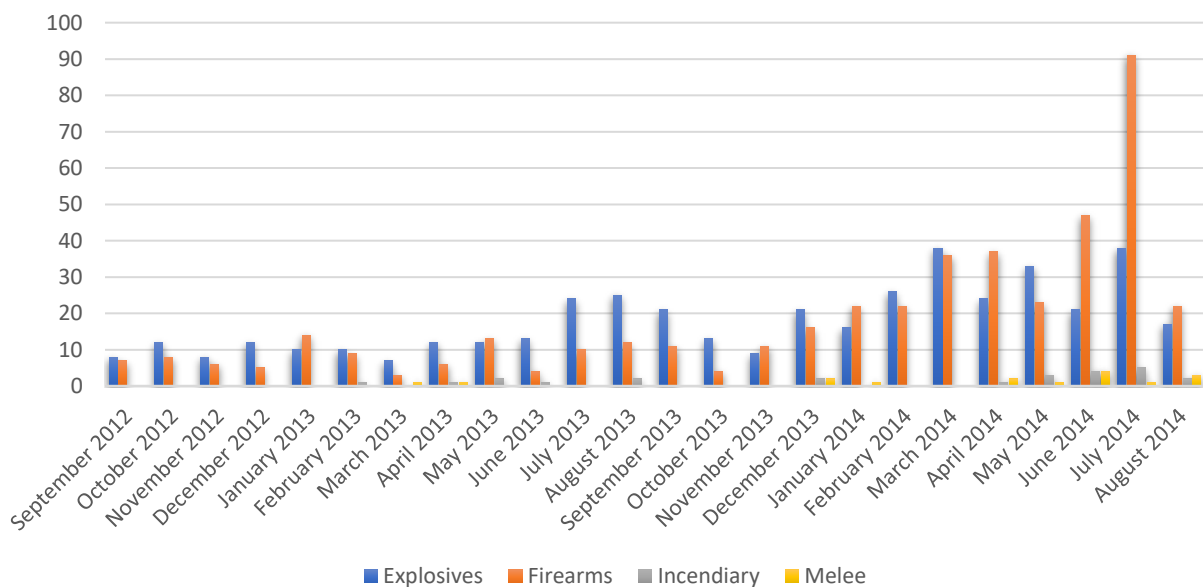
In conclusion, based on the identified theory and final numbers, there is an argument to be made, that after the death of Ahmed Godane, there has been a very small decrease in the capabilities of the organization, as they preferred to target less challenging targets. However, it's important to keep in mind that the difference between the two researched time frames is not very significant. The main difference has been identified in the initial period after the decapitation, and in combination with the decreased number of attacks and casualties compared to the active period pre-decapitation, all this would suggest a decreased capabilities of the group in the initial months after the death of Ahmed Godane. Nevertheless, in the long-term standpoint, from the perspective of target selection, there doesn't seem to be enough

justification present for a conclusion, that Al-Shabaab was significantly affected in their capabilities.

Weapon type

The weapon has been determined as the third and last area of interest. The weapons used in Al-Shabaab attacks were divided into four different categories – explosives, firearms, incendiary, and melee. The reason for analyzing this indicator is because similarly to target type, there is a theory that suggests that by examining the weapon type used in attacks, we should be able to determine the amount of resources available to the researched group and the level of planning and know-how the group possesses. The use of explosives represents the highest level of capability as it suggests a stable financial and operational situation as using this type of weaponry is more financially demanding and also requires the presence of someone with skill in this field. Firearms are regarded as the standard, with melee weapons and incendiary as the inferior.

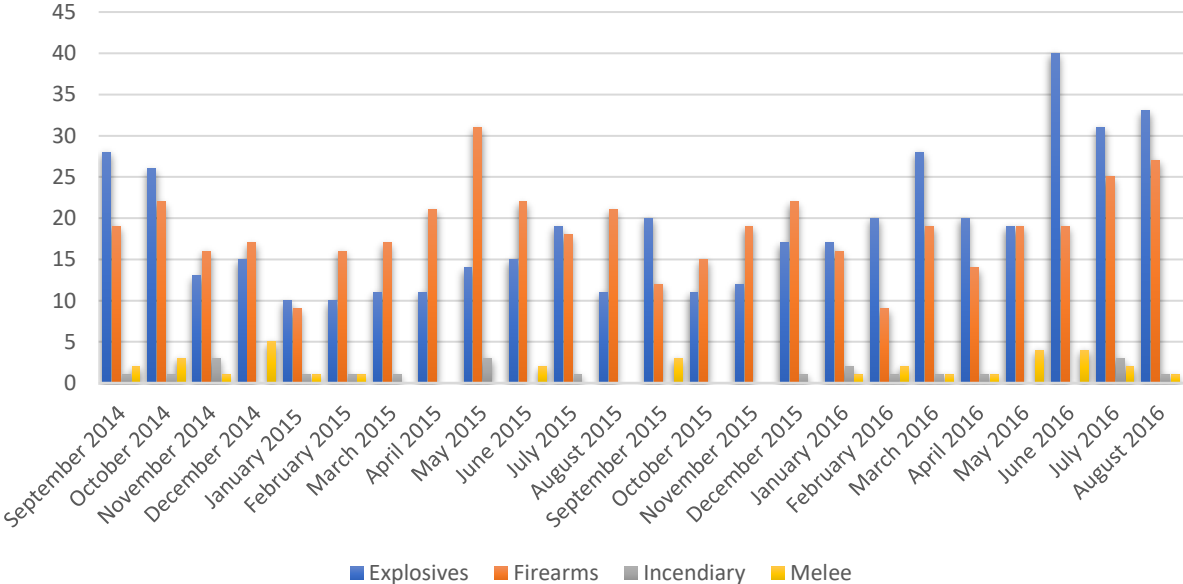
Figure 5: Type of weaponry prior to the death of Ahmed Godane



Exploring the chart, it's evident that in most of the months prior to the decapitation of Ahmed Godane, explosives were the main weapon of choice with firearms being in a close second.

However, studying the total data, firearms actually come out at the top by one percent (48.35% to 47.30%), due to an interesting occurrence in the months of June and July of 2016, where the use of firearms sky-rocketed and so did the ratio between the use of explosives and firearms, in favor of the latter. That is highly unusual as in the rest of the months, in most of the cases the explosives were the ones preponderating. The possible explanation could be connected to one of the previously analyzed indicators, the number of attacks. As discussed during that time period, the number of attacks rose rapidly, therefore it might be possible, that due to the sudden rise in the number of attacks, the organization didn't possess either the financial or simply producing capability to supply its troops with the number of explosives that was needed. I believe this is a more plausible explanation than the one that the cited theory would suggest, meaning a decrease in capabilities, as the other two indicators suggested increased activity and there was no shift towards targeting soft targets in this particular time period.

Figure 6: Type of weaponry after the death of Ahmed Godane



Moving on to the data in the post-decapitalization period, the total numbers come out a bit differently. In this timeframe the ratio between the months where explosives were the leading weapon of choice and the ones where firearms were, is perfectly even, with eleven to eleven

and one month, the May of 2016 being even. Nevertheless, in the total numbers, it's the explosives that come out at the top this time around, with a share of 47.27% to 46.85%, meaning the difference between them became even closer than in the pre-decapitation period. It was particularly the months close to the end of the researched period, that turned the tide in favor of explosives, as the use of them heightened, especially in June 2016. Interestingly, the amount of melee attacks grew by 50%, but since the share of them in the grand scheme is still minimal, with the other weaponry not decreasing, I don't believe it's indicative of anything greater.

In conclusion, since the total amount of explosives didn't decrease, and even took the leading position as the weapon of choice for the post-decapitation period, there is no evidence in this regard that Al-Shabaab suffered a decrease in their capabilities to conduct a higher level of attacks, supported by the fact, that just seven months after the decapitation Al-Shabaab conducted their deadliest attack in the entire four-year period, that has been researched.

2.1.2 Analysis of Qualitative Indicators

The goal of this subchapter is to analyze mainly the post-decapitation period, from the perspective of qualitative indicators such as political events, public support, and others. The reason for this is that the qualitative indicators might not provide us with the whole picture, as there might have been events that affected the operation of the group. For example, even though from the quantitative perspective the leadership decapitation might have been ineffective as casualties and the number of attacks increased, when studying the qualitative indicators we might realize, that there could have been some events that have transpired due to the killing, that have reduced the capabilities of the group. Such as that the leader spent most of his time hiding, therefore hindering the course of operation of the group, meaning that without the decapitation, the group would very likely be more active. Thus, taking only quantitative data into account might produce a skewed result when analyzing whether leadership decapitation had a counter-terrorist effect.

Beginning with the pre-decapitation period, the main events that were happening in Somalia were described in the introduction of this chapter, therefore I will not develop on them further, but rather suggest what kind of effect the events might have had on the organization. The clashes with AMISOM and internal turmoil were at the forefront of the agenda and definitely affected the group to a certain degree. The combination of those two factors most likely decreased the group's activity, with the internal clashes being the more affecting factor, as it was the different views on strategy that were one of the principal areas of disagreement, with Godane pushing for more active presence (Anzalone, 2014). Resolving the internal discord by getting rid of his opposition, combined with the territorial losses, Godane could again focus on fighting and as revenge for the surging activity of AMISOM conduct more attacks, focusing more on the hard targets, nevertheless, from the quantitative research we saw that that surge went proportionally with soft targets as well. Here the explanation is a combination of multiple factors. Firstly, Al-

Shabaab started to lose popular support due to the fact, that the group lost its once-held insurgency status, as the common enemy in the form of Ethiopia disappeared (Shire, 2020). Secondly, even though there was a period of stability, Al-Shabaab generally treated the population poorly (Maruf and Joseph, 2018), therefore the vision of a possible future without Al-Shabaab was desirable for many (Bryden, 2014). Lastly, Somalia is a tribal country, and since Godane's purge of the disagreeing voices, those affected clans had less of an incentive to keep supporting Al-Shabaab. Due to all that, it's not difficult to believe that Godane didn't particularly care to keep the civilian casualties to the minimum, and targeting them could inflict fear into the population, making it less likely to be disobedient.

Examining the post-decapitation period, the events and situations that transpired during the year 2014 were most definitely not favorable toward the survival of the group. The group found itself in a slump, so it was only natural that after Godane's assassination, many experts suggested that Al-Shabaab found itself in a very difficult position, and the demise of the group could be possible (Anzalone, 2014). Nevertheless, there was one advantageous factor present for Al-Shabaab, that being the fact that no power vacuum occurred as the new successor of Ahmed Godane, Ahmad Diriye was appointed just days later after Ahmed Godane was assassinated (United Nations Security Council, 2014). Al-Shabaab therefore had solid leadership in place, with a difficult task of resurgence up ahead, while multiple obstacles still being in place. There were multiple factors present, with the main ones being the continued loss of territory in combination with the ongoing military pressure and the rise of ISIS as a competitor.

Regarding the loss of territory and military pressure, beginning in 2011 and continuing for the following years, culminating in 2013 and 2014. Al-Shabaab was losing significant parts of its territory (Roble, 2015). Being forced to cede territory without a fight as AMISOM outnumbered Al-Shabaab two to one, thus conventional warfare was out of the question, forcing the

organization to fully transition into guerilla-style warfare (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). That obviously had an economic impact, as the loss of ports and income streaming from taxes was a large portion of its revenue (Blanchard, 2020). Furthermore, during the years 2015 and 2016, Al-Shabaab lost important military and operation leaders (Goobjoog, 2015; Ackerman, 2016) and it was also a period when the United States increased its presence in the region (Blanchard, 2020). Therefore, when Diriye took over and also throughout his reign, he faced a difficult situation. The chosen strategy seemed to be attacks focusing on Kenya, trying to use it as a recruiting strategy, through high-profile attacks, such as the Garissa University College, and by trying to instigate conflict among the Christian and Muslim population (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). Additionally staying committed to the guerilla warfare seemingly paid off as the momentum of the military offensive by AMISOM has decelerated, because the commanders were reluctant to advance towards Al-Shabaab's positions in the jungle, fearing high casualties (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). Moreover, the organization started using a tactic, where it targeted isolated bases of AMISOM, inflicted heavy casualties, stole military supplies, and then quickly withdrew. These attacks underscored a significant challenge confronting AMISOM and the Somali government, which was the lack of sufficient troops to secure and defend all the territories reclaimed from Al-Shabaab (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). The tide was turning and though Al-Shabaab was not in a position to reclaim and actually hold its once-controlled land, the predicted downfall of the organization has been averted.

Besides the local challenges described in the previous paragraph, the leadership of Al-Shabaab was confronted with an additional complication. This was manifested in the emergence of ISIS, which was inducing instability within the organization. Al-Shabaab and mainly Godane has been an admirer and therefore a loyal ally to Al-Qaeda. The representatives of ISIS have been in contact with some of the Al-Shabaab leaders, trying to persuade them to leave Al-Qaeda behind and pledge allegiance to the Islamic State, which has been gaining momentum, territory,

and its approach was more corresponding to Al-Shabaab's strategy (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). This pressure by ISIS heightened in the year 2015 when there were recorded activities by pro-ISIS representatives. The persuading was done through multiple channels. Firstly, by organizing phone calls between ISIS leaders and Al-Shabaab members. Secondly, via representatives that visited parts of Somalia, trying to persuade the clan leaders, in some cases even giving away money as a gesture. Thirdly, by Mosques, that were inclined to the ISIS's cause, where supporters proclaimed the existence of an "Islamic government," asserting that devout Muslims were duty-bound to endorse and uphold it (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). Fourthly, propaganda material created by ISIS is aimed at both ordinary Somalis and Al-Shabaab fighters (Anzalone, 2017). This material, mainly in the form of videos and essays, where fighters from Somalia and other countries are urging their brothers to join the caliphate and the "true defenders of Islam" (Anzalone, 2017). The result of these efforts, the success ISIS was having at the time, and the potential of desertion made the leaders of Al-Shabaab seriously think about their stance towards the Islamic State. There are records of the leadership discussing this topic, however, even though there were signs that were suggesting a possible separation from Al-Qaeda and a new alignment to ISIS, in the end, this hinted shift didn't occur. Al-Shabaab internally solidified its allegiance to Al-Qaeda and stated that any disagreement regarding this position would not be tolerated (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). After this announcement, some clashes occurred and a few bands of pro-ISIS fighters deserted from Al-Shabaab, nevertheless the number wasn't significant.

In conclusion, from the qualitative perspective, Al-Shabaab didn't find itself in a favorable position during the post-decapitation period. The organization was facing many issues, mainly from the military standpoint, as the group was consistently losing its territory, and being forced to fully transition to guerilla tactics. Nevertheless, somewhat miraculously the organization managed to withstand this challenging period, continued to exist and as we could see from the

terrorist perspective, even be more lethal than in the period before decapitation. The factor that contributed to this reality was the inability to fully push Al-Shabaab's remaining territory and properly hold the land that was already secured, due to the insufficient number of AMISOM and government troops. Because of this, the organization was given the breathing room it needed and through favorable tactics managed to stabilize. It's safe to say then, that there were factors that had counter-terrorist effects, however, technically only one of them was caused by the targeted killing. In the case of the spread of ISIS, there is some evidence that this increased activity was partly due to the death of Ahmed Godane as he was an avid supporter of Al-Qaeda and since he was gone, ISIS agents tried to up their efforts of persuasion, as they felt like there is a chance after Godane's passing. Nevertheless, as concluded, it was the military campaign of AMISOM and Somali forces that kept Al-Shabaab occupied, potentially preventing them from planning some larger attacks and even under this pressure Al-Shabaab managed to conduct the deadliest attack in the post-decapitation period. Concluding, that from the qualitative standpoint, no events transpired that would have significant counter-terrorist effect, because of the decapitation.

2.2 Case of Nasir al-Wuhayshi – leader of AQAP

Nasir al-Wuhayshi was a charismatic and capable man, with not much information available about him and his whereabouts before his radicalization. Al-Wuhayshi comes from the Southern part of Yemen, where he spent his youth in religious institutions (BBC, 2015b). In the late 1990s, al-Wuhayshi decided to travel to Afghanistan to join Al-Qaeda and fight against the United States. Al-Wuhayshi's enthusiasm for the cause must have been apparent as he managed to climb through the ranks, becoming Osama bin Laden's personal secretary (Singh & Chakravorty, 2018). He participated in the battle for Tora Bora and afterward escaped to Iran, where he was arrested and extradited to Yemen in 2003. The imprisonment proved to be advantageous as al-Wuhayshi met Qasim al-Raymi, an instructor at an Al-Qaeda camp in the 1990s, and other prisoners that have been arrested for the USS Cole bombing in the year 2000, among them being innocent civilians (Siyech, 2018). Al-Wuhayshi radicalized these men and escaped from prison in 2006, spreading across the country and laying the foundation for the re-establishment of Al-Qaeda in Yemen.

As it was previously mentioned, al-Wuhayshi's Al-Qaeda was only a resurrection of the organization, that had previously been active in Yemen, and similarly to the modern situation, even in the past, it was due to favorable conditions for the organization. The beginnings of mujahedeen in Yemen date back to the early 1990s, when Yemen was divided into North and South. During that time, mujahedeen, who were returning from Afghanistan, were welcomed in Yemen by the ruler of North Yemen – Abdullah Saleh, who used these fighters to fight against the forces of South Yemen (Singh & Chakravorty, 2018). The southern regime was defeated, and Yemen unified under the rule of Saleh, with the Islamist militants settling in the southern part of Yemen. In the following years, multiple jihadist organizations were created, namely Islamic Jihad in Yemen, Army of Aden Abyan, and Al-Qaeda in Yemen (AQY), each organization emerging as the previous one disbanded. Al-Qaeda in Yemen conducted two high-

profile strikes, the first hotel bombing in 1992, targeting the U.S. Marines, and the already mentioned USS Cole bombing in 2000 (Knoll, 2018). In combination with the 9/11 attacks, there was significant pressure on Salleh to intensify counterterrorist measures, resulting in an aggressive campaign that severely weakened AQY, forcing it into a hibernation up until the 2006 resurrection (Singh & Chakravorty, 2018).

After the resurrection, the base of operation was set up in Southern Yemen, where training and recruiting occurred in the upcoming years, and soon after the organization started conducting its first attacks (Knoll, 2018). The upcoming development of the organization is closely tied to the events that transpired in Yemen and generally in the Middle East, aiding with the further development of the organization. The first important event was the Houthi rebellion that took place from 2004 till 2010. The military's focus on the Houthi insurgency in the northern regions resulted in decreased attention to the southern areas, providing an opportunity for Al Qaeda to slowly expand (Siyech, 2018). The second event was the invasion of Iraq, which fully preoccupied the United States, once again providing breathing room for Al-Qaeda in Yemen. Lastly, the event that actually prompted the creation of the organization, was the situation in Saudi Arabia, where the campaign against Al-Qaeda forced the remaining members to flee to Yemen and merge with the local branch, creating Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula – AQAP in January of 2009 (Knoll, 2018). Besides the political reality, the propaganda branch was an important part of AQAP's rise. Specifically, Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen who was a leader of that branch, influenced a large audience through a media channel by the name of al-Malahem, a magazine aimed at its Arabic supporters, and finally, a paper called Inspire, which was published in English, with the intention of radicalizing more domestically based extremists to carry out acts of terrorism on the U.S. territory (Sharp, 2015). The organization eventually gained unwanted attention, as a counterterrorist campaign was launched by the Yemeni government in 2010. The campaign is considered unsuccessful, as it failed to deliver significant

results and AQAP remained in a strong position for the next important period (Singh & Chakravortty, 2018).

The political situation in Yemen during the Arab Spring was turbulent. Popular protests occurred in Yemen and the long-standing president Saleh decided to step down in favor of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi at the end of 2011. The country found itself in an economic and humanitarian disaster which AQAP benefited from. The organization started controlling territory in the south and even rebranded itself to Ansar al-Sharia, to mainly get rid of the negative associations that were connected to the Al-Qaeda name (Siyech, 2018). In the controlled territories AQAP was trying to sway the local population to their side, providing services and protection (Knoll, 2018). This however didn't go unnoticed as the government, with the help of the United States and its drones, launched an offensive against AQAP in September of 2012, pushing AQAP from their territories (Singh & Chakravortty, 2018; Siyech, 2018).

The last monumental pre-decapitation period was from the year 2014, due to the resurgence of civil war. Just as in the past, it was the Houthis that rebelled against the government, however this time, they joined forces with the former president Saleh. The Houthi coalition fared successfully, even dissolving the parliament, which disturbed Saudi Arabia, which decided to intervene in Yemen against the Houthis, naming it Operation Decisive Storm (Knoll, 2018). As was the case during the first civil war, the Yemeni forces had to concentrate on the northern part of the country, leaving the south exposed and up for grabs. AQAP took advantage of this situation and managed to occupy territory once again, most importantly the city of al-Mukalla, an important port that AQAP seized in April 2015 (Al-Ganad et al., 2021). There AQAP attacked the local prison, freeing approximately 150 of their fighters, and secondly, the group raided the local branch of the Yemeni Central Bank, reportedly looting roughly 100 million dollars (Siyech 2018; Singh & Chakravortty, 2018). The city became AQAP's provisional base

of operation, again striving to gain the trust of the local population by building infrastructure and providing security and other services. Additionally, the group was benevolent even in the area of the law, where the expected harsh restrictions were not forced upon the population, further earning the goodwill of the population (Siyech, 2018).

The drone strike on al-Wuhayshi was conducted shortly after the successful occupation of al-Mukalla, on the 12th of June 2015. His death was confirmed by the organization three days later, in a video that was released on the al-Malahem media channel (Russakis et al., 2015). Considering al-Wuhayshi's important position even in the global Al-Qaeda network, his death was considered a significant blow. Additionally, as the mastermind behind sophisticated attacks and a charismatic persona, that enjoyed a certain status due to his proximity to Bin Laden, it was not certain to what extent this loss will affect AQAP, despite having a capable replacement in the form of Qasim al-Raymi (Lister et al, 2015). To determine the effect of this decapitation, the development of the organization will be analyzed both from the quantitative and qualitative standpoint, providing the basis for a complete analysis to draw a conclusion.

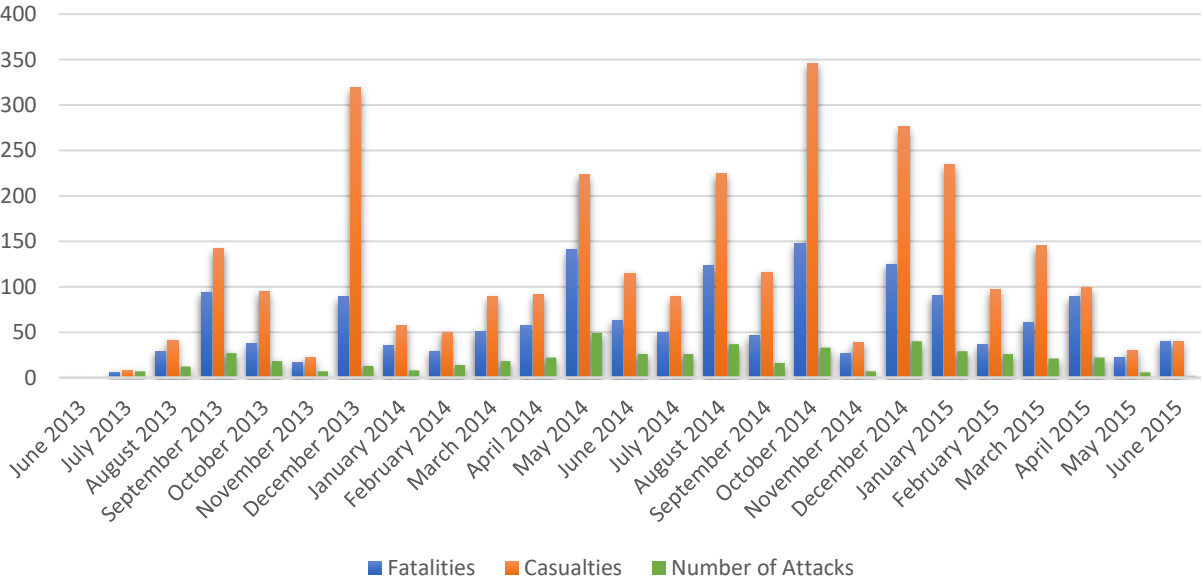
2.2.1 Analysis of Quantitative Indicators

The identical group of indicators that were previously introduced will be examined. Similarly, to the previous case, there were no restrictions concerning the locations of the attacks, encompassing the whole globe, and the investigated time span has been defined as two time periods, pre and post-decapitation. The first period being two years before the decapitation, meaning from June 12th, 2013, till the 12th of June 2015, and the second period ranging from the 12th of June 2015, till the 12th of June 2017.

Number of attacks and casualties

Starting with the focus on the count of terrorist attacks and the casualties sustained within the specified time frame. As before, the casualties will be split into the total number recorded, and the portion of those casualties that resulted in fatalities.

Figure 7: Number of AQAP attacks and casualties prior to the death of al-Wuhayshi

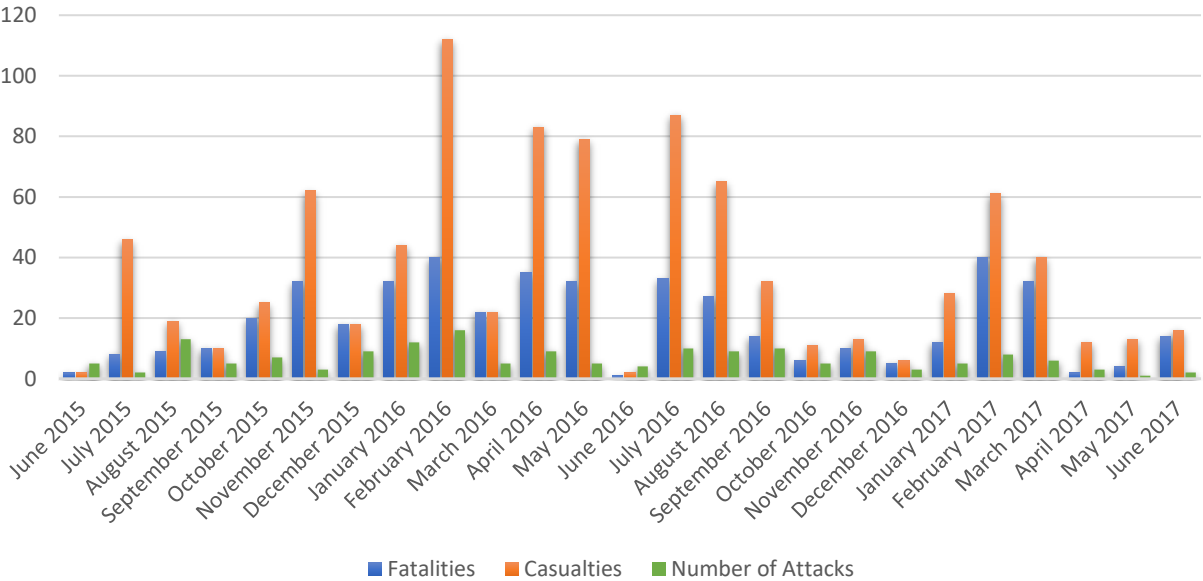


First focusing on the total data in the pre-decapitation period, the organization conducted 486 attacks, inflicting 2988 casualties, from which 1506 were lethal, amounting to 50.43%. Exploring the chart further for trends and patterns, we can observe an increase in the number of attacks beginning from May 2014, where before the median of attacks per month was 13,

and afterward the median rose to 26 attacks per month, however decreasing rapidly in the last two months. A similar trend could be identified in the area of casualties, where the median before May 2014 was 57 casualties per month, compared to the median of 115 casualties per month in the period after May 2014, but again same as the number of attacks, decreasing significantly during the last two months. This trend could possibly be explained by the political situation, where during the initial months of 2014, the situation in the north intensified and so did the calls for independence in the southern region of the country, leading to an increase in attacks by AQAP (Singh & Chakravorty, 2018). The decline would correspond with AQAP's focus on governing its seized territories. However, there is one significant anomaly in the pre-May 2014 period when it comes to casualties and that is December 2013, due to a singular attack, the biggest one in the entire pre-decapitation period, that occurred on the 5th of December. That day AQAP detonated an explosives-laden vehicle at the Ministry of Defense in Sanaa and afterwards attacked a military hospital complex, killing 56 people, and an additional 215 suffered injuries (GTD, 2013b). AQAP claimed responsibility for the attacks and stated that it was because the US drone strikes were operated from there and simultaneously apologized for the attack on the hospital, explaining that it was apparently a mistake of an individual (BBC, 2013; Al Jazeera America, 2013). Other notable attacks were in October and December of 2014, where on two occasions AQAP conducted suicide attacks against Houthi civilians killing 47 and 49 people and injuring many others (Ghobari & Gamal, 2014; AFP, 2015). The last very prominent case was the Charlie Hebdo attack in January of 2015, where the attackers killed 12 individuals. AQAP claimed the attack, even though one of the attackers pledged allegiance to ISIS before his death, however according to intel, the perpetrators received training in Yemen, supporting the claim of AQAP (BBC, 2015a; Al Jazeera America, 2015).

The pre-decapitation period can therefore be labeled as active with several big attacks happening. A rising trend in terms of attacks and casualties has been identified, with May 2014 being the starting point in that regard. Nevertheless, a downfall occurred in the immediate months before the decapitation, both instances possibly being explained by the political situation in Yemen.

Figure 8: Number of AQAP attacks and casualties after the death of al-Wuhayshi



Continuing with the post-decapitation period, in this time frame, AQAP conducted 166 attacks causing 908 casualties, 460 of them being fatalities, amounting to 50.66%. Meaning the trend that was set in the immediate months before the decapitation continued after the decapitation in both the short and long term. There were no high-profile attacks during this period and some of the larger attacks were claimed by Hadramawt Province of the Islamic State and AQAP’s involvement in them was only claimed by sources and not the group itself.

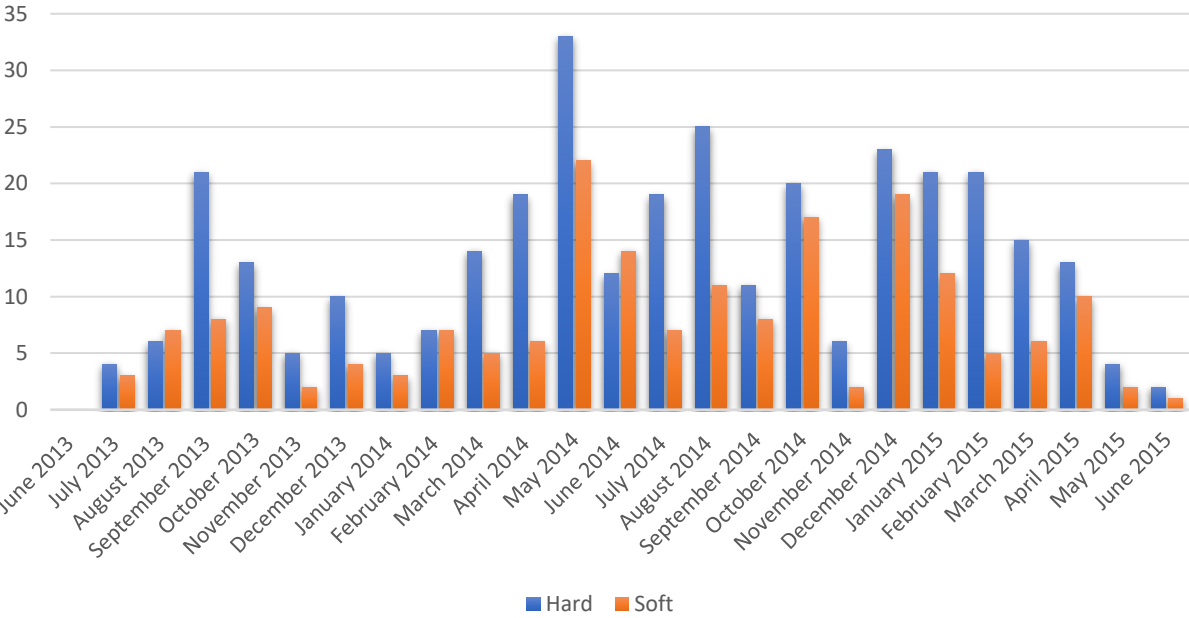
Overall, the number of attacks decreased by 65.84%, with the median number of attacks per month being 5, compared to 18 in the previous period. A similar phenomenon occurred in the case of casualties, where the amount dropped by 69,72%, indicating a severe decrease both in the number of attacks and casualties. The only indicator that did not plummet, is the amount of

casualties per attack, as in the pre-decapitation period it approximately amounted to 6.2 casualties per attack, and in the post-decapitation period it adds up to roughly 5.5 casualties per attack. Therefore, this suggests that the capabilities of the group decreased significantly, but the effectiveness of the attacks didn't seem to waver.

The type of targets

Continuing with the second indicator, being the type of targets, that were focused during AQAP's terrorist attacks. As in the previous case, the targets will be divided into hard targets and soft targets. In this case, examples of hard targets are the police and army units of the government or the Houthi militias. Soft targets remain mainly ordinary citizens, government officials, and other civilians. The objective persists and it is to identify a possible shift in targeting strategy, which could indicate a change in the capabilities of the group.

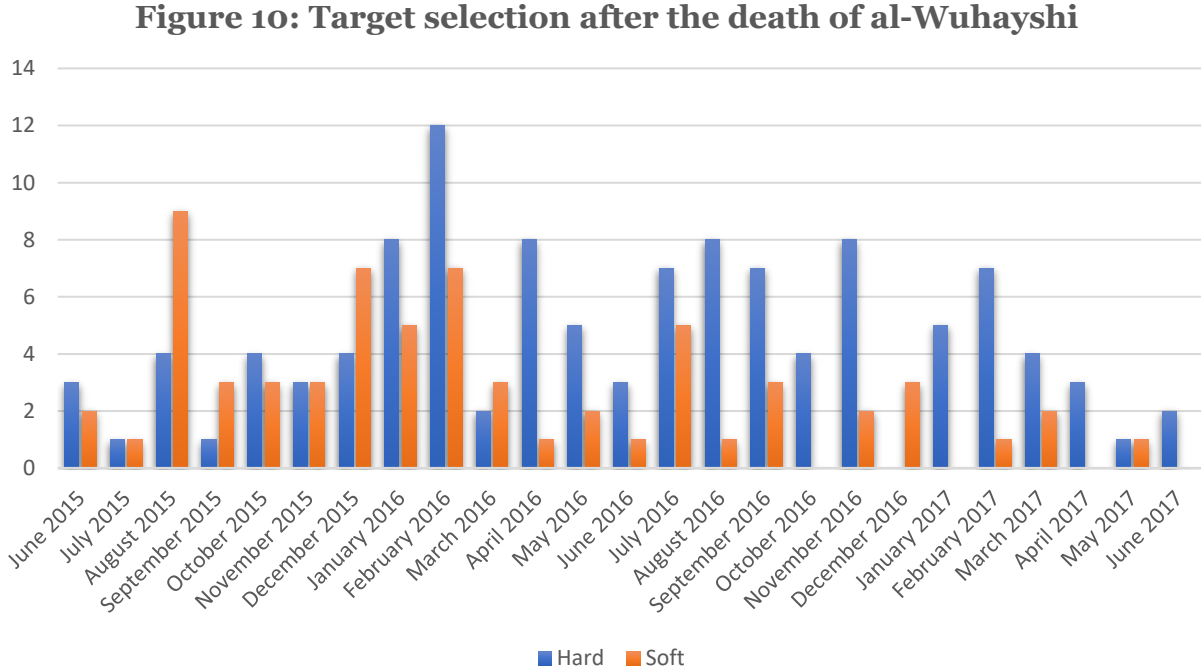
Figure 9: Target selection prior to the death of al-Wuhayshi



Beginning with the pre-decapitation period, in the entire researched time frame, the organization carried out 329 attacks on hard targets and 190 attacks on soft targets. This means that the hard targets were a priority, being the target of choice and only in two cases out of the

24 months were soft targets in the leading position over the hard targets, which were 63.39% of all the targets. Therefore, there is a consistent trend of prioritizing hard targets, often doubling the number of soft targets in the individual month. This is consistent with the outlined strategy of the organization, which tried to minimize the civilian casualties as it was trying to win its support.

Continuing with the post-decapitation period, in the 24-month timeframe, AQAP targeted hard targets in 144 cases and soft targets in 65 cases. In line with the pre-decapitation period, hard



targets continue to dominate. Even though the number of months where soft targets were predominant has increased, the overall proportion of attacks has slightly shifted in favor of hard targets, which in this period constitute 63.69% of all targets. There seems to be no clear pattern present, only an observation that a significant portion of soft attacks occurred in the first year or so after the targeted killing, possibly suggesting an agreement with the previously introduced theory by Abrahms and Potter, that after a successful targeted killing, the organization turns its attention to the civilian population. Exploring this further, paradoxically in the months where

the soft targets were in the majority, the number of casualties was on the lower side. It was the months with hard targets as the majority, where a higher number of casualties occurred, indicating that those targets were the priority. Additionally, most of the attacks including soft targets were either targeting the governmental offices or attacks on military/police targets and the civilians were collateral damage. No substantial assault was carried out with the sole intention of targeting civilians.

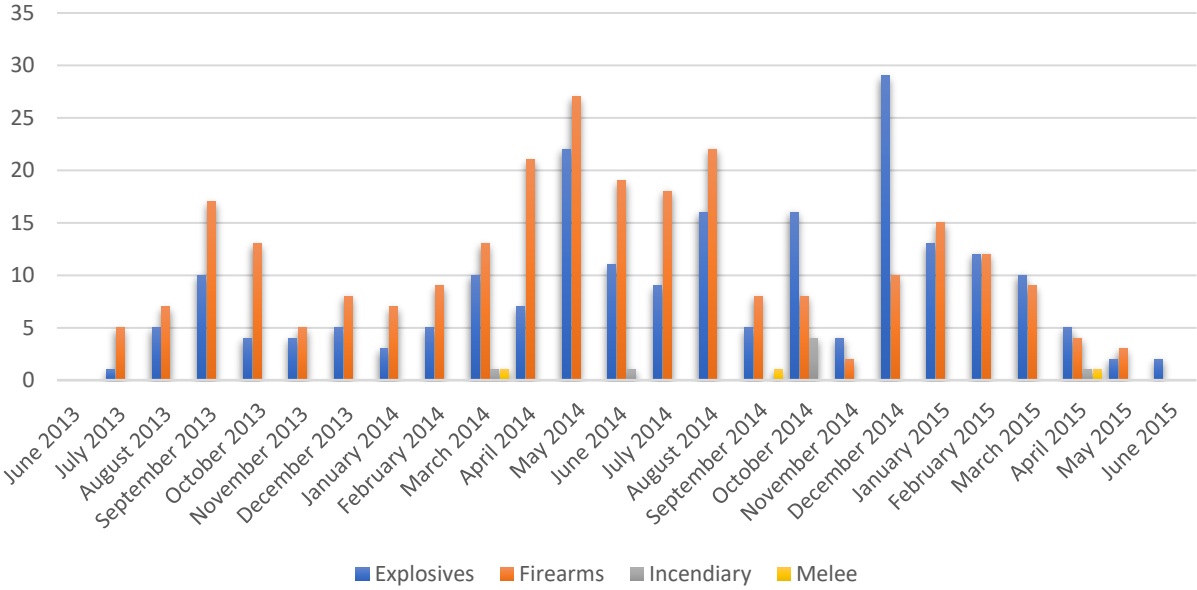
In conclusion, upon reviewing the data and specific cases more in-depth, there seems to be no indication of a shift toward prioritizing soft targets. Especially after analyzing the connected factors, namely the casualty rate and the nature of the soft target attacks. Therefore, from the targeting standpoint, the capability of the group was not affected by the death of Nasir al-Wuhayshi.

Weapon type

The indicator that remains to be analyzed is the type of weaponry used in attacks conducted by AQAP in both the pre-decapitation and post-decapitation period. The weaponry is divided into the same categories as in the previous – explosives, firearms, incendiary, and melee.

Analyzing the total data, the leading weapon of choice in the pre-decapitation period was firearms, representing 54,36% of the cases. Followed by explosives, that were used in 43,57% of cases. And finally, incendiary and melee weaponry was only incumbent in 1,45% and 0,62% of the cases, respectively.

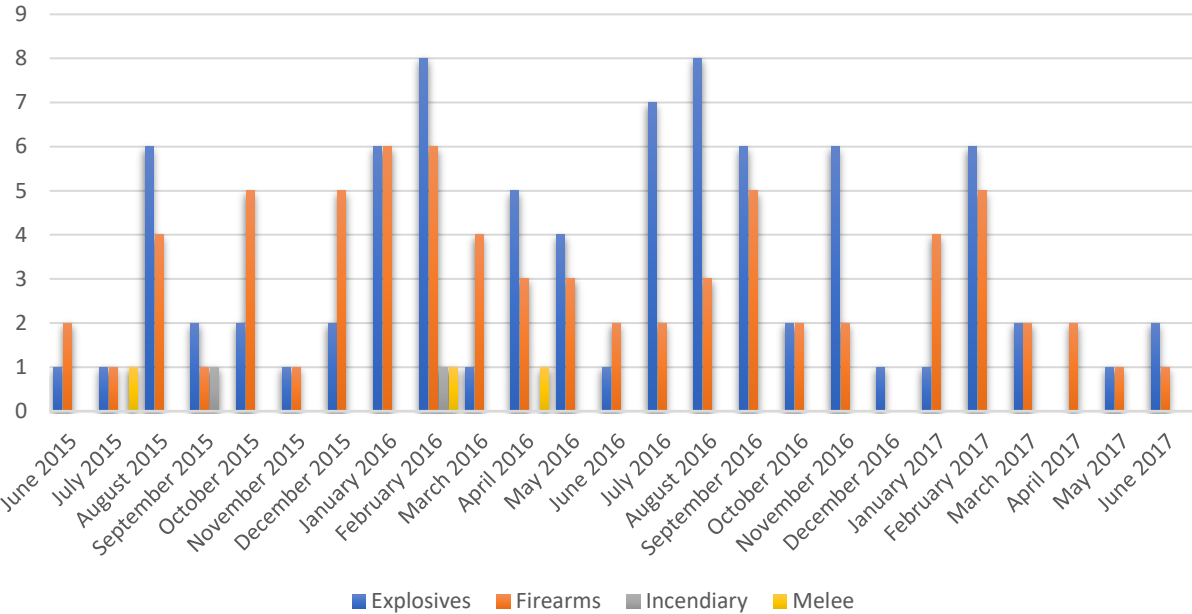
Figure 11: Type of weaponry prior to the death of al-Wuhayshi



Exploring the chart, we observe an interesting trend. For most of the individual months, firearms dominate the attack methods. However, around October 2014, there was a noticeable shift. In the subsequent months, the ratio between the use of explosives and firearms narrows, and in many cases, explosives take the lead. Notably, except for October, November, and December of 2014, the difference remains relatively slight. This could indicate that as AQAP was again gaining territory, it might have led to increased financial capabilities, translating to

more attacks using explosives.

Figure 12: Type of weaponry after the death of al-Wuhayshi



Continuing with the data in the post-decapitation period, there is a shift present. In this timeframe, the most used weaponry is explosives, which were being used in 51,78% of the cases, dethroning firearms, which represented 45,28% of the cases. Once again incendiary and melee weapons were on the lower end of use, but in this period, it was the melee weapons above incendiary, with shares of 1,86% and 1,26%.

Analyzing the chart for possible trends, similarly to the pre-decapitation period, the use of firearms was more dominant during the initial part of the timeframe, and explosives started to prevail consistently since April of 2016. Since explosives were on the upward trend right before the decapitation, this development would suggest that the financial/strategic/expertise capabilities decreased for a short-term after the death of al-Wuhayshi. However, examining the qualitative factors, the group managed to occupy the city of al-Mukalla for an entire year, making a substantial amount of money (Al-Ganad et. al, 2021). Regarding the strategic and expertise aspect, Qasim al-Raymi used to be the head of military operations and AQAP’s famous bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri was alive till the second half of 2017 (Chamberlain,

2018), suggesting that neither of these areas were in a vulnerable position, disapproving the suggested trend.

In conclusion, since the share of attacks where explosives were used overtook the use of firearms in the post-decapitation time period, there is no indication towards the assumption that the capabilities of AQAP have decreased. There has been a possible short-term effect identified, but it does not correspond with the situation within the organization, at least judging by the available information.

2.2.2 Qualitative analysis

In this subchapter, the aim is to conduct an analysis of specific qualitative indicators that could provide deeper insights into AQAP's overall status following the decapitation of al-Wuhayshi and information that would suggest a counter-terrorist effect of the decapitation. The factors that will be explored are the political situation in Yemen, the surge of drone strikes by the United States, and finally the support of the local population.

In terms of political events, the civil war was and is still ongoing and amid that AQAP managed to occupy the port of al-Mukalla for a whole year, using the city as a base for their operations and additional expansion in the region. AQAP continued with its established approach of acting benevolently towards the population and performing a variety of services. However, this period of calm came to an end at the beginning of 2016, when a United Arab Emirates-led counterterrorism offensive began (Radman, 2019) and in April of 2016, the Emirati and Yemeni troops reclaimed al-Mukalla (Carboni and Sulz, 2020). The first reports suggested that there was heavy fighting, however after a while a piece of new information came to light, stating that there was a deal negotiated between the UAE and AQAP's leadership (Al-Ganad et. al, 2021), as AQAP forces withdrew to Shabwah and Abyan provinces (Carboni and Sulz, 2020). The counter-terrorist operation intensified forcing AQAP's further tactical withdrawals and in

2017 moved to its safe havens in the mountains (Radman, 2019; Siyech, 2018).

When it comes to drone strikes conducted by the United States, there are many polarizing opinions. Drone strikes became prevalent again in 2016 when 43 strikes were reported. However, the real surge occurred in 2017 after President Trump declared several provinces in Yemen as “areas of active hostilities.” In 2017 the number of drone strikes increased to 131 (New America). As mentioned the narrative towards drone strikes differs. Some authors suggest that the attacks are counterproductive as there is evidence, by witnesses that state, that the drone strikes alienate the local population towards the United States, due to the civilian casualties. These events create grievances that are used by AQAP as a perfect recruiting strategy for their cause (Faulkner and Gray, 2014; Bolland, 2018). And for similar reason, drone strikes may cause a short-term spike in violence (Conrad, 2020). The second opinion is that drone strikes are beneficial for two main reasons. Firstly, there is evidence suggesting that due to the high number of strikes the organization and mainly its leadership is being careful and consequently in hiding (Radman, 2019; Kendall, 2018). This could lead to a decrease in leadership and recruiting and even the possible emergence of new local leaders, further destabilizing the unity of the organization. Secondly from the plain standpoint that it is indeed effective in killing the targets and creating pressure on the organization, without the need to risk the lives of soldiers, resulting in a possible fragmentation of the group (Carboni and Sulz, 2020; Kendall, 2018). Nevertheless, it seems that the disadvantages that are connected to the strikes outweigh the proposed benefits (Conrad, 2020; Bolland 2018).

Lastly is the popular support of the organization, which is closely connected to the counter-terrorist operations conducted by the. The forces of the UAE launched a recruitment program, aimed at gathering the local population. As some of the local population was opposed to AQAP’s control over their territory and its role in bringing danger to its doors, many of the young men joined up with the UAE forces, which provided them with training and finances.

(Kendall, 2018; Carboni and Sulz, 2020; Radman, 2019). Generally, the attitude of the population towards AQAP has been very pragmatic. As the country was in the midst of an economic crisis and civil war, AQAP was a welcomed entity, because it provided its territory with security and other services, therefore the population supported/tolerated the group, even though many might not have agreed with its ideology (Radman, 2019). Additionally, there was a financial incentive to join the organization, as the pay was very lucrative and in the difficult economic situation Yemen found itself in, it was an immense opportunity. Nevertheless, this type of loyalty is volatile and with the emergence of the UAE, which offered the same conditions, it's no wonder that the local support for AQAP wavered.

The question then is whether AQAP would have been able to recover from all of these events, if al-Wuhayshi was still alive, as the organization showed in the past it was able to overcome a counter-terrorist operation. I believe that this is difficult to judge, due to the fact that the operations were very different from one another, as the latter one actually provided the local population with an attractive alternative to AQAP, making recruiting and the very existence of the group much harder, so even with al-Wuhayshi at the helm it would have been a difficult task.

In closing, judging by the analyzed information, the organization was experiencing a downfall in the post-decapitalization period, from both the qualitative and quantitative perspective. The ultimate question is however whether it was due to the killing of Ahmed al-Wuhayshi. The analysis suggests that it was a combination of multiple counter-terrorism efforts and also the strategy of the group. It's difficult to separate the killing itself from the broad counter-terrorist operation conducted by the U.S and the Saudi-led coalition, but there was evidence that suggested that the one identifiable counter-terrorist effect of the al-Wuhayshi killing was the less visible appearance of the new leader al-Raymi, however, that could be also due to the increased number of drone strikes that occurred later on. The other events such as the loss of

territory and popular support were solely because of the ground operation by Saudi Arabia and UAE. Therefore, even though the organization experienced a downfall, the targeted killing of Ahmed al-Wuhayshi didn't seem to play an overly significant part.

3 Cross-case evaluation

In this chapter, I would like to discuss the similarities and differences between the two analyzed cases. Firstly, the similarities will be explored, seeing if there is a presence of some kind of pattern in both cases, suggesting an applicable trend for future counter-terrorist operations. Secondly the differences will also be explored and researched further to analyze if there are some factors present that might have caused that particular difference. The structure of this chapter will correspond to the individual quantitative indicators, comparing the findings within the particular indicator and then at the end, the qualitative circumstances will be also explored and compared.

Beginning with the “golden” indicator, identified as the number of attacks and casualties inflicted, we are met with different results. Strictly based on data, in the case of Al-Shabaab the number of attacks decreased after the killing of Ahmed Godane, however, the number of casualties increased, suggesting that in the medium to long-term period, the decapitation was completely ineffective. But due to the significantly increased activity prior to the death of Ahmed Godane, to conduct more complete research that period was considered as a potential trend and when comparing it to the post-decapitation period in its entirety, there indeed was a decrease both in casualties and a number of attacks, where the decrease was very significant, however, the number of casualties barely decreased by six percent. From the short-term perspective, the difference is more noticeable, increasing to roughly fifteen percent. Concluding that even in this more favorable setting, the counter-terrorist effect of killing Ahmed Godane has been barely noticeable in the medium to long-term perspective, but in the short term, there is an observable change present. The results in the case of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula are vastly different. Based on the data, after the killing of Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the number of attacks decreased by almost sixty-six percent and the number of casualties dropped by nearly seventy percent. Therefore, judging the effect of the killing solely based on the data, it has been

greatly successful in decreasing the capabilities of the group. The results are then fairly conflicting. From the short-term perspective, the data would suggest that the decapitation of a leader does decrease the capabilities, with the extent varying. In the medium to long-term timeframe, the results differ, with Al-Shabaab recovering and even strengthening, and in the case of AQAP the downfall continuing. The difference here comes down most likely to qualitative factors such as the existence of supportive and most importantly effective ground operation, or even strategy of the group, which in the case of AQAP was more inclined towards decreasing its activity, while in the case of Al-Shabaab, the advances by AMISOM and Somali forces were not effective enough and Al-Shabaab adopting a resistance guerilla tactics meant the group managed to stay relevant.

Continuing the comparison with the other indicator—type of targets, once again the findings are not consistent in both of the cases. In the case of Al-Shabaab, there has been a shift towards targeting soft targets, which was even more prominent in the short-term after the decapitation as in the previous indicator. However, it's important to mention that the shift is again in the range from five to ten percent, depending on the timeframe, making it noticeable, but not of great significance. In the case of AQAP, there are no noticeable changes in the targeting priorities, with hard targets being in the lead in both pre and post-decapitation period, with an almost identical percentual share. Similarly, to Al-Shabaab, initially, there was an argument to be made for a potential shift in the short-term timeframe, however upon closer analysis, it was deemed irrelevant. Recurrently the difference in this area is well explainable by quantitative analysis in relation to the different attitudes the organizations had towards the local population. Al-Shabaab didn't particularly enjoy the support of the civilians, as after the disappearance of the common enemy, in the form of Ethiopia, the support for the organization wavered due to their practices. On the other hand, AQAP tried to earn the trust and support of the local population, as they wanted to appeal to the local clans and successfully rule the territory,

therefore it would not make sense to target civilians, even after the decapitation of their leader, as their strategy remained the same and it would greatly hamper their efforts regarding controlling territory.

The type of weaponry was the final analyzed quantitative factor, and in comparison to the other ones, in this case, the findings were consistent in both of the cases. The aim was to analyze, whether there was a visible change in the type of weaponry used after the decapitation, mainly focusing on the use of explosives, as the primary factor for determining, if the capabilities of the terrorist group were decreased as a result of the targeted killing. In both of the instances, the share of attacks, where explosives were used, rose in the post-decapitation period, which is contrary to the hypotheses suggesting, that after a decapitation, the capabilities of the group should decrease and with that the use of explosives, as the more financially and strategically demanding weapon. There were no signs supporting this claim in the analyzed cases, possibly only from the short-term perspective in the case of AQAP, but in the medium to long term the use of explosives dominated. Additionally, in both cases, the use of other weaponry such as incendiary or melee weapons was pretty much negligible as together the share of these two types stayed under six percent, with the decapitation not having any significant effect on their usage.

4 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to assess the effectiveness of targeted killings as a counter-terrorist tool. To determine the effectiveness an analysis of two cases of targeted killings was conducted, to analyze how much of an impact, their death had on the capabilities of the said terrorist organization. The chosen cases of targeted killings were the case of Ahmed Abdi Godane, a former leader of Al-Shabaab, and the case of Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the former leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, as both of these leaders are considered to be crucial for their organizations, due to their prominence as founding members and having lead the organizations for numerous years. The general findings are ambiguous and therefore correspond to the academic discourse, describing targeted killings as a counter-terrorist tool, which results are hard to predict, due to numerous factors affecting its success.

In the case of Al-Shabaab, the decapitation of Ahmed Abdi Godane from the counter-terrorist standpoint proved to be ineffective. Even though many were predicting a decline of the group due to his death, the organization remained relevant and even more dangerous as the amount of casualties increased by almost forty percent, when comparing the two-year-long period prior to and after the decapitation. Nevertheless, it's important to mention that there was some evidence present that suggested, that at least from the short-term perspective, especially in comparison to the months right before his death, the decapitation did have a slight counter-terrorist effect. The other quantitative indicators were not in cohesion with each other. The target selection inclined very minimally to suggesting there was a decrease in capabilities occurring, most prominently in the imminent time after the decapitation, however, when it came to the choice of weaponry, no signs were pointing towards the decline of financial or strategic capability. Generally, then, in the long run, the organization wasn't affected, judging by the continuous activity and ability to conduct difficult and deadly attacks. Therefore, in the grand scheme, the killing of Ahmed Godane didn't prove to be an effective counter-terrorist measure.

The case of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is in stark contrast to the case of Al-Shabaab, as from the quantitative perspective, the number of attacks and the number of casualties decreased dramatically, roughly by sixty-five percent and seventy percent, suggesting a dramatic decrease in the capabilities of the organization. Interestingly, there were no such dramatic changes in the two other analyzed indicators. The target selection stayed consistent throughout the entire four-year period, with hard targets being the priority and their share being roughly sixty-four percent in both the pre and post-decapitation period. In the weaponry type, a change did occur, but in the direction favoring an increase in capabilities, as the use of explosives became the weapon of choice in the post-decapitation period, compared to firearms in the pre-decapitation period. Hence in the case of AQAP, the qualitative context is important as it offers some explanation to this data. Because the organization was trying to maintain a territory in the southern part of Yemen, it expended a significant amount of effort to win over the support of the local population and such, the strategy was set to keep the civilian casualties to a minimum, and the strategy remained even after the death of al-Wuhayshi. Additionally, financially the group was in a very good position as it managed to obtain a substantial amount of money through the control of the port al-Mukalla. The downfall in operations is then mostly due to a combination of multiple factors, with the ground operation led by the UAE, supported by the USA drone strikes, and the decision to tactically withdraw by AQAP being the key factors. Therefore, due to these events that were happening at the same time, it's difficult to judge how much of a role the death of Nasir al-Wuhayshi had. Building upon the analysis, it seems like the ground operation with the mobilization of the local population and the strategy of the group played more of a part, but once again it's difficult to determine whether Nasir al-Wuhayshi wouldn't be able to deal with the situation more effectively, therefore completely dismissing his death as a potentially significant factor would be unreasonable. Based on the established criteria the decapitation of Nasir al-Wuhayshi proved to be an effective counter-terrorist measure as there was a significant

decrease in operations and casualties after his death, but it's important to keep in mind the additional counter-terrorist operations that happened in the researched time period.

In conclusion, when compiling the results of the analysis obtained from both of the cases, it's safe to say that every instance of targeted killing is unique and so are the results. Judging by the conducted analysis, targeted killings should have at least a slight counter-terrorist effect from the short-term perspective, but in the medium to long-term timeframe, the success of it depends on the situation of each individual group. It has also been shown that if the targeted killing is accompanied by a continuous and preferably some form of ground counter-terrorist operation (especially for groups that want to control territory) the impact of the killing is greatly amplified. Thus, the answer to the question whether targeted killings are an effective counter-terrorist measure, the response is that it depends on what the expectations are. A single leadership decapitation will have some effect, especially in the short-term, but it will not collapse an entire organization. However, when being a part of a more robust counter-terrorist operation, it should be advantageous to include targeted killings, especially when they are conducted routinely.

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Number of Al-Shabbab attacks and casualties prior to the death of Ahmed Godane

Figure 2: Number of Al-Shabbab attacks and casualties after the death of Ahmed Godane

Figure 3: Target selection prior to the death of Ahmed Godane

Figure 4: Target selection after the death of Ahmed Godane

Figure 5: Type of weaponry prior to the death of Ahmed Godane

Figure 6: Type of weaponry after the death of Ahmed Godane

Figure 7: Number of AQAP attacks and casualties prior to the death of al-Wuhayshi

Figure 8: Number of AQAP attacks and casualties after the death of al-Wuhayshi

Figure 9: Target selection prior to the death of al-Wuhayshi

Figure 10: Target selection after the death of al-Wuhayshi

Figure 11: Type of weaponry prior to the death of al-Wuhayshi

Figure 12: Type of weaponry after the death of al-Wuhayshi

Summary

Cílem této studie bylo posoudit účinnost cíleného zabíjení jako nástroje boje proti terorismu. Za účelem zjištění účinnosti byla provedena analýza dvou případů cíleného zabití, aby bylo možné analyzovat, jaký dopad měla jejich smrt na schopnosti dané teroristické organizace. Vybranými případy cíleného zabití byly případ Ahmeda Abdi Godaneho, bývalého vůdce Al Šabábu, a případ Násira Vahajšího, bývalého vůdce Al-Káidy na Arabském poloostrově, neboť oba tito vůdci jsou považováni za klíčové pro své organizace, protože byli jejich významnými zakládajícími členy a vedli organizace po mnoho let.

V případě hnutí Al-Shabaab se dekapitace Ahmeda Abdi Godaneho ukázala jako neúčinná. Přestože mnozí předpovídali úpadek skupiny v důsledku jeho smrti, organizace zůstala relevantní a ještě nebezpečnější, protože počet obětí se zvýšil téměř o čtyřicet procent. Přesto je důležité zmínit, že byly přítomny důkazy, které naznačovaly, že alespoň z krátkodobého hlediska, zejména ve srovnání s měsíci těsně před jeho smrtí, měla dekapitace mírný protiteroristický účinek. Nicméně z dlouhodobého hlediska nebyla organizace postižena, soudě podle nepřetržité aktivity a schopnosti provádět obtížné a smrtící útoky.

Případ Al-Káidy na Arabském poloostrově je v ostrém kontrastu s případem Al-Šabábu, neboť z kvantitativního hlediska se počet útoků a počet obětí dramaticky snížil, zhruba o šedesát pět procent a sedmdesát procent, což naznačuje dramatický pokles v schopnostech organizace. Zajímavé je, že u dalších dvou analyzovaných ukazatelů k tak dramatickým změnám nedošlo. Výběr cílů zůstal po celé čtyřleté období konzistentní, přičemž prioritou byly tvrdé cíle a jejich podíl činil zhruba šedesát čtyři procent v období před i po dekapitaci. U typu výzbroje sice došlo ke změně, ale ve směru upřednostňujícím nárůst schopností. V případě AQAP je důležitý kvalitativní kontext, který nabízí určité vysvětlení těchto závěrů. Protože se organizace snažila udržet území v jižní části Jemenu, vynaložila značné úsilí na získání podpory místního obyvatelstva, a tak byla strategie nastavena tak, aby civilní ztráty byly minimální, a tato

strategie zůstala zachována i po smrti Násira Vahajšího. Kromě toho byla skupina ve velmi dobré finanční situaci, protože se jí podařilo získat značnou částku peněz díky kontrole přístavu al-Mukalla. Úpadek operací je pravděpodobně způsoben především kombinací více faktorů, přičemž klíčovými faktory jsou pozemní operace vedená Spojenými arabskými emiráty, podporovaná údery bezpilotních letounů USA a rozhodnutí AQAP takticky se stáhnout. Vzhledem k těmto událostem, které probíhaly současně, je proto obtížné posoudit, jak velkou roli hrála smrt Násira Vahajšího. Na základě analýzy se zdá, že větší roli sehrála pozemní operace s mobilizací místního obyvatelstva a strategie skupiny, ale opět je těžké určit, zda by Nasir al-Wuhayshi nebyl schopen situaci řešit efektivněji, proto by bylo nerozumné jeho smrt jako potenciálně významný faktor zcela odmítnout. Na základě stanovených kritérií se dekapitace Násira Vahajšího ukázala jako účinné protiteroristické opatření, neboť po jeho smrti došlo k výraznému poklesu operací a obětí, ale je důležité mít na paměti další protiteroristické operace, ke kterým došlo ve zkoumaném období.

Závěrem lze říci, že při shrnutí výsledků analýzy získaných z obou případů lze konstatovat, že každý případ cílené vraždy je jedinečný a stejně tak jsou jedinečné i výsledky. Soudě podle provedené analýzy by cílené zabíjení mělo mít z krátkodobého hlediska alespoň mírný protiteroristický efekt, ale ve střednědobém až dlouhodobém časovém horizontu závisí jeho úspěšnost na situaci každé jednotlivé skupiny. Ukázalo se také, že pokud je cílené zabíjení doprovázeno průběžnou a nejlépe nějakou formou pozemní protiteroristické operace (zejména u skupin, které chtějí kontrolovat území), je dopad zabíjení značně zesílen. Odpověď na otázku, zda je cílené zabíjení účinným protiteroristickým opatřením, tedy zní, že záleží na tom, jaká jsou očekávání. Jediná dekapitace vedení bude mít určitý účinek, zejména v krátkodobém horizontu, ale nezpůsobí zhroucení celé organizace. Pokud je však součástí důraznější protiteroristické operace, mělo by být záhodné zařadit cílené zabíjení, zejména pokud je prováděno rutinně.

Bibliography

- Abrahms, M., & Potter, P. B. K. (2015). Explaining terrorism: Leadership deficits and militant group tactics. *International Organization*, 69(2), 311–342.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818314000411>
- Ackerman, S. (2016, April 1). *US drone strike kills key al-Shabaab leader in Somalia*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/01/us-military-somalia-airstrike-al-shabaab-terrorist-targets>
- AFP. (2015, January 1). *Death toll of Yemen anti-houthi bomb blast rises to 49*. Alarabiya News. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2015/01/01/Death-toll-of-Yemen-anti-Houthi-bomb-blast-rises-to-49>
- Al Jazeera America. (2013, December 22). *Al-Qaeda apologizes for Yemeni Hospital attack*. Al Jazeera America. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/12/22/al-qaeda-apologizesforyemenihospitalattack.html>
- Al Jazeera America. (2015, January 11). *Kouachi brothers had weapons training in Yemen*. Al Jazeera America. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/11/kouachi-france.html>
- Al-Ganad, T., Johnsen, G. D., & al-Katheri, M. (2021, January 5). *387 days of power: How Al-Qaeda seized, held and ultimately lost a Yemeni city*. Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies. <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/12247>
- Alexander, D. (2014, September 5). *U.S. confirms death of Al Shabaab leader Godane in Somalia strike*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/cnews-us-somalia-usa-islamist-idCAKBN0H01OO20140905/>
- Anzalone, C. (2014). The Life and Death of Al-Shabab Leader Ahmed Godane. *CTC Sentinel*, 7(9). <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CTCSentinel-Vol7Iss96.pdf>
- Anzalone, C. (2016). The Resilience of al-Shabaab. *CTC Sentinel*, 9(4). <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/CTC-SENTINEL-Vol9Iss422.pdf>
- Bachmann, S. D. (2013). Targeted killings: Contemporary Challenges, risks and opportunities. *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, 18(2), 259–288.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jcsl/krt007>
- BBC. (2013, December 6). *Al-Qaeda claims attack on Yemen Defence Ministry*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25256368>
- BBC. (2015a, January 14). *Charlie Hebdo Attack: Three Days of Terror*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30708237>
- BBC. (2015b, June 16). *Profile: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11483095>

- BBC. (2019, June 19). *Garissa University College Attack in Kenya: What happened?*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48621924>
- Blanchard, L. P. (2020, January 16). *Al Shabaab*. crsreports.congress.gov. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1169937.pdf>
- Bolland, T., & Lee Ludvigsen, J. A. (2018). “No boots on the ground”: The effectiveness of us drones against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. *Defense & Security Analysis*, 34(2), 127–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2018.1478184>
- Boot, M. (2022, August 2). *Do targeted killings weaken terrorist groups?*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/do-targeted-killings-weaken-terrorist-groups#:~:text=Targeted%20strikes%20have%20done%20the,influence%20across%20the%20Middle%20East.>
- Bryden, M. (2014, February 21). *The reinvention of Al-Shabaab*. CSIS. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/reinvention-al-shabaab>
- Byman, D. (2006). Do targeted killings work? *Foreign Affairs*, 85(2), 95. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20031914>
- Carboni, A., & Sulz, M. (2020, December 14). *The wartime transformation of AQAP in Yemen*. ACLED. <https://acleddata.com/2020/12/14/the-wartime-transformation-of-aqap-in-yemen/>
- Chamberlain, S. (2018, August 21). *Al Qaeda bomb maker killed in Yemen drone strike last year, US official confirms*. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/world/al-qaeda-bomb-maker-killed-in-yemen-drone-strike-last-year-us-official-confirms>
- Conrad, C. (2020). Death from Above: Evaluating the Impact of Drone Strikes on AQAP Activity. *Journal of Politics & Society*, 2020, Vol 31, Issue 1, P130, 31(1). <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=92a5b268-9e3f-4cc3-a727-8148ad960585%40redis>
- Cronin, A. K. (2011). *How terrorism ends: Understanding the decline and demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. Princeton University Press.
- Ellis, R., Brumfield, B., & Purefoy, C. (2015, April 3). *Five arrested in deadly attack on Kenyan College*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/03/africa/kenya-garissa-university-attack/index.html>
- Falk, O. (2021). *Targeted killings, Law and Counter-Terrorism Effectiveness: Does fair play pay off?* Routledge.
- Faulkner, C. M. (2014). The Emergence of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Effectiveness of US Counterterrorism Efforts. *Global Security Studies*, 5(1). <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=70aff6da-c817-4fda-8ffc-1f41081638a6%40redis>

- Ghobari, M., & Gamal, R. E. (2014, October 10). *Al Qaeda claims responsibility for Sanaa suicide bombings*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-violence-idUSKCN0HZ21320141010>
- Government forces capture Al-Shabab Ring Leaders in Bakol*. Goobjoog. (2015a, February 18). <https://en.goobjoog.com/government-forces-capture-al-shabab-ring-leaders-in-bakol/>
- GTD. (2013a). Incident Summary for GTDID: 201309210001. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=201309210001>
- GTD. (2013b). Incident Summary for GTDID: 201312050016. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=201312050016>
- GTD. (2015). Incident Summary for GTDID: 201504020031. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=201504020031>
- HCJ 976/02. Public Committee Against Torture v. Government*. (2006, December 14). <https://versa.cardozo.yu.edu/opinions/public-committee-against-torture-v-government>
- Ibrahim Shire, M. (2020). How do leadership decapitation and targeting error affect suicide bombings? the case of Al-Shabaab. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 46(5), 682–702. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610x.2020.1780021>
- International Committee of The Red Cross. (n.d.). *Military necessity*. How does law protect in war. https://casebook.icrc.org/a_to_z/glossary/military-necessity
- Johnston, P. B. (2012). Does decapitation work? assessing the effectiveness of leadership targeting in counterinsurgency campaigns. *International Security*, 36(4), 47–79. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00076
- Jordan, J. (2009). When heads roll: Assessing the effectiveness of leadership decapitation. *Security Studies*, 18(4), 719–755. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410903369068>
- Kendall, E. (2018, July). *Contemporary Jihadi Militancy in Yemen*. Middle East Institute. https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/MEI%20Policy%20Paper_Kendall_7.pdf
- Knoll, D., Thurston, A., & Faber, P. G. (2017, October). *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP): An Al-Qaeda Affiliate Case Study*. CNA. https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/dim-2017-u-016116-2rev.pdf
- Lister, T., & Cruickshank, P. (2015, June 17). *Al-Wuhayshi's death deprives al Qaeda of a dynamic heavyweight*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/16/middleeast/wuhayshi-death-impact/index.html>
- Maruf, H., & Joseph, D. (2018). *Inside Al-Shabaab: The secret history of al-qaeda's most powerful ally*. Indiana University Press.

- Masters, J. (2014, September 5). *Al-Shabab*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/183543/Al-Shabab%20-%20Council%20on%20Foreign%20Relations.pdf>
- McConnell, T. (2015, September 20). “*Close Your Eyes and Pretend to Be Dead.*” Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/20/nairobi-kenya-westgate-mall-attack-al-shabab/>
- Price, B. C. (2012). Targeting top terrorists: How leadership decapitation contributes to Counterterrorism. *International Security*, 36(4), 9–46. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00075
- Radman, H. (2019, April 17). *Al-Qaeda’s strategic retreat in Yemen*. Sana’a Center For Strategic Studies. <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/7306#en28>
- Roble, M. A. (2015, January 23). *Al-Shabaab: On the back foot but still dangerous*. jamestown.org. <https://jamestown.org/program/al-shabaab-on-the-back-foot-but-still-dangerous/>
- Russakis, J., Sanderson, T. M., & McGillem, C. (2015, June 16). *The death of AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi*. CSIS. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/death-aqap-leader-nasir-al-wuhayshi#:~:text=On%20June%2012%2C%202015%2C%20al,coastal%20city%20of%20al%20Mukalla.>
- Schweiger, E. (2019). ‘Targeted killing’ and the lack of acquiescence. *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 32(4), 741–757. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0922156519000475>
- Sharp, J. M. (2015, February 11). *Yemen: Background and U.S. relations*. crsreports.congress.gov. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RL34170.pdf>
- Singh, S., & Chakravorty, D. (2018). Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. In *West Asia in transition* (pp. 113–130). essay, The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and the Delhi Policy Group.
- Siyech, M. S. (2018). Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s Rise in Yemen: An Examination. In M. Ebrahimi & K. Yusoff (Eds.), *The Middle East Arc of crisis: Political spin-off and developmental outcome* (pp. 25–47). essay, Penerbit UTM Press, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Tempest, M. (2004, March 22). *UK condemns “unlawful” Yassin killing*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/mar/22/foreignpolicy.israel>
- Tominaga, Y. (2019). Evaluating the impact of repeated leadership targeting on militant group durability. *International Interactions*, 45(5), 865–892. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2019.1647836>
- U.S. Department of Defense. (2014, September 5). *Pentagon confirms death of Al-Shabab co-founder*. U.S. Department of Defense. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/603193/>

- United Nations Security Council. (2014). *Ahmed Diriye*. United Nations Security Council. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/751/materials/summaries/individual/ahmed-diriye>
- US drone attack in Gedo kills Al-Shabab officials*. Goobjoog. (2015b, March 13). <https://en.goobjoog.com/us-drone-attack-in-gedo-kills-al-shabab-officials/>
- The War in Yemen*. New America. (n.d.). <https://www.newamerica.org/future-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/the-war-in-yemen/>
- Whitaker, B., & Burkeman, O. (2002, November 6). *Killing probes the frontiers of robotics and legality*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/06/usa.alqaida>
- Yachot, N. (2013, March 7). *European Parliament members speak out against U.S. targeted killing program*. American Civil Liberties Union. <https://www.aclu.org/news/national-security/european-parliament-members-speak-out-against-us-targeted>
- Żuradzki, T. (2015). Targeted killings: Legal and ethical justifications. *Human Rights Rule of Law and the Contemporary Social Challenges in Complex Societies*. https://doi.org/10.17931/ivr2013_wg166_03