

LEADERSHIP DECAPITATION: ISRAELI COUNTERTERRORISM POLICY AND THE PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD

Scott Nicholas Romaniuk
School of Security and Global Studies
American Military University, United States

Abstract

The specific conditions under which terrorist decapitation results in the dissolution of the terrorist group and other short- and long-term effects of this tactic are some of the critical questions that require further attention given that states such as the US and Israel are sure to employ this tactic to considerable means in the near and distant future, particularly given the vague framework of the unending nature of War on Terror (WOT) that has helped produce numerous loopholes that enable the undertaking of precision acts that are often characterized as “discriminate wars” (Schmitt, 2005). In this paper I argue that in spite of short-term success for Israel, the PIJ was able to reorient itself from the shock of losing its leader. This is demonstrated not only by its ongoing service to violent terrorist means, but also due in part to its increased use of suicide bombings that have resulted in a greater loss of life since the events of 1995 as well as the escalation of suicide terrorism (ST) by other terrorist groups and organizations in the region and further abroad.

Keywords: “Discriminate Wars,” effectiveness, radicalization, suicide terrorism (ST), terrorist cells

Introduction

One of the key features of states’ counterterrorism (CT) policies has been the targeted killing of terrorist operatives, including those operating in a leadership capacity. Many within academic and policy circles advocate the effectiveness of leadership decapitation as a policy choice and CT tactic and strategy with the aim of properly neutralizing the operational capacity of a terrorist cell, group, organization, or network (Jordan, 2009; Frankel, 2010; David, 2002; Byman, 2006; Johnston, 2012). The specific conditions under which terrorist decapitation results in the dissolution of the terrorist group and other short- and long-term effects of this tactic are some of the critical questions that require further attention given that states such as the US and Israel are sure to employ this tactic to considerable means in the near and distant future, particularly given the vague framework of the unending nature of War on Terror (WOT) that has helped produce numerous loopholes that enable the undertaking of precision acts that are often characterized as “discriminate wars” (Schmitt, 2005).

The research question presented herein is of importance given its relationship with one of the most radicalized and violent terrorist organizations demonstrating a long history of success and resilience. As such, further in-depth analysis regarding instances of leadership decapitation will afford a better understanding of how this organization has responded to the policy option of targeted leadership killings, and the extent to which, if at all, its ability to wage Islamic Jihad (IJ) against the state of Israel has been or is impaired. I argue that in spite of short-term success for Israel, the PIJ was able to reorient itself from the shock of losing its

leader. This is demonstrated not only by its ongoing service to violent terrorist means, but also due in part to its increased use of suicide bombings that have resulted in a greater loss of life since the events of 1995 as well as the escalation of suicide terrorism (ST) by other terrorist groups and organizations in the region and further abroad.

Research Question

What effects did the successful targeted killing of Fathi Al-Shiqaqi have on the operationality of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's Islamic Jihad (Palestinian Islamic Jihad [PIJ])?

Research Purpose

This research seeks to address the issue of and effects related to the policy of leadership decapitation (either openly or covertly) of the PIJ's command through the successful targeted killing of Fathi Al-Shiqaqi by the Israeli secret service (Mossad) on October 26, 1995, which took place on the Mediterranean island of Malta. An extent body of literature has so far been produced with regards to the correlation between the reduction of terrorist growth, the activity of terrorism, the effectiveness of terrorist groups in terms of their operationality, and the removal of specific elements of their command structure, namely the movements top leader or leaders. The purpose of this paper is therefore to evaluate, in part, the effectiveness of leadership decapitation as a counterterrorism strategy against Islamic terrorist groups by using the case of the PLO as a sample of Islamic groups that are not organizations that span multiple countries. The specific case of the PLO was chosen because it is a non-transnational organization. This facilitates the measurement and study of the effects of leadership decapitation as a counterterrorism strategy as opposed to transnational organizations or networks (i.e., Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Taliban, Abu Nidal Organization [ANO or Fatah], and Jemaah Islamiya [JI]) that may be composed loosely of cells that operated relatively independent of one another (US Department of State [DoS], 2010).

Theory and Practice of Leadership Decapitation

Two main expectations orbit the central logic behind the use of leadership decapitation. First, the killing of a prominent individual who is in a position to influence or direct a terrorist organization will lessen the overall effect or operationality of the group because the quality of the group's element of command and control is ultimately compromised (Kim, 2010: p. 4). As a result of the change that takes place in the command structure where a less-capable or experienced individual takes the place of the eliminated target, a degree of competence or effectiveness of the overall group is expected to take place. Second, well-planned, effectively coordinated, and successfully implemented precision attacks are expected to compel terrorist leadership to remain mobile or "on the run" without having the luxury of establishing a permanent site of command (Kim, 2010: p. 4). The result is the disruption of critical functions of the leadership role, which negatively impacts the group's violent operations.

A number of theoretical perspectives have been employed in order to substantiate the position that supports the use of targeted killing for the purpose of leadership decapitation. Two well-known theoretical bases are the leadership and social network theories. Leadership theory is particularly useful in rallying support for the use of leadership decapitation as a viable option for governments facing the threat of terrorism to any extent. It explains that a leader's charismatic qualities stand as the group's central structure, providing both strength and cohesion for the group and those that comprise it. This quality is also used to explain the "operational success of an organization," which can become prone to infighting following the loss of leader and eventually collapse (Jordan, 2009: p. 722; Mannes, 2008

Social network theory has also proven a valuable in the understanding of vulnerabilities of terrorist organizations. Its value is in its focus on the importance of the network structure as opposed to the individual characteristics that can be found within that structure or group. This analysis shows that the relationship ties of the group are important, and the health of this aspect will affect the group's ability to "access new ideas, recruit new individuals, and achieve sustainability" (Ressler, 2006: p. 2). Hierarchical organizations are seen to have a particular susceptibility to operations that seek to eliminate the leading individual(s) than groups that are more widely dispersed such as networks or cells that do not require a connection with a central authority. Both theories, however, are only pieces of a larger puzzle that presents academics and policy makers with the means of approaching, analyzing, and understanding terrorist groups and organizations. It is nearly impossible to say that one is of more importance than the other or that any are able to completely fit into the framework in which terrorists operate.

Successful implementation of precision killing is not necessarily a prerequisite for having a partially or still desirable outcome on the operationality of a terrorist group. In this vein, we may note that even a misfire of the policy retains a disruptive power whereby terrorists are unable to properly meet and plan operations without the fear or the practical issue of being interrupted by counterterrorism interdiction. The desired outcome, however, is said to be (and understandably so) the elimination of the intended target. If a third expectation is to be added to the list, then the desired outcome of the policy implementation is the general reformation of group policy of individual behavior within the group. Not only is the use of precision killing seen as a way of undermining a leader's personal power and safety, they have deterrent and coercive value for dissuading terrorist operatives to take the place of the eliminated leader.

Fathi Al-Shiqaqi and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad

Shortly after the creation of the Israeli state in the western bank of the Middle East, US involvement in the region was only just beginning to grow with the creation of regional offices, close coordination with United Nations (UN) work in the area, and the initiations of political and economics programs that sought to bring stability to underdeveloped areas of the region through financial support and expertise (Lesch, 2007). In 1948, Israel and the Arab world engaged in ongoing conflict (i.e., The 1948 War, Six Day War, Yom Kippur War, and the Israel-Lebanon Conflict) that has persisted to this day, which has resulted in the displacement of millions of peoples and presented the US with one of the toughest balancing acts in the history of US foreign policy (Smith, 2008).

Following the Second World War, Britain and France were entangled with Egypt over control of the Suez Canal, which required the intervention of the Canada, the US, and the UN. The geopolitical climate of the Middle East during this time could therefore be characterized as considerable uncertainty that posed a critical challenge to Western states and even divided them over their methods of intervention in order to stabilize and bring security to the region. At the same time, a number of states in the region (i.e., Turkey, Greece, Iran, Pakistan, and Iraq) worked together in the interest of creating a defensive ring with the aim of containing the spread of Communism in the area (Walker, 2006: p. 64). It was amid this backdrop of uncertainty and conflict, and in the Egyptian-occupied and ruled Gaza Strip that Fathi Al-Shiqaqi was born and eventually founded the PIJ with his associate Abd Al-Aziz Awda (Council on Foreign Relation [CFR], 2012; Global Jihad, 2009; The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise [AICE], 2013).

In 1974, Fathi Al-Shiqaqi entered medical school at the University of Zaqqaziq, which was decision informed by the death of his father as result of cancer that took his like in the mid-1960s (Sivan, 1990; Wonder, 2008: p. 255). He studied in Egypt for seven years,

combining his studies with increasing interaction with the neo-Muslim Brotherhood's students circles (Wonder, 2008: p. 255). His experience in higher-education was also blended with the spiritual teaching of the Muslim community in the Middle East but becoming increasingly frustrated with the political climate and relations of the period, chose to pursue a path that deviated from teaching or researching in a field of advanced education.

It cannot be claimed that he completely disassociated himself from the realm of education. He retained a strong commitment to his own radical philosophical views with which he expressed a vision for change and social, political, and institutional realignment (Global Jihad, 2009). The humiliating defeat suffered by the Arab power in the face of Israeli military and strategic prowess had a profound effect on the young Shiqaqi, as did the Islamic Revolution that took place in 1978 by Ayatollah Khomeini (Wonder, 2008). His exposure to these conditions opened up channels through which he pursued a desire for change; they drove Al-Shiqaqi to become part of the military branch of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) in approximately 1980, when he “expressed several times his disappointment from the moderation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its reformist agenda” (Global Jihad, 2009). Al-Shiqaqi's disenchantment with the Muslim Brotherhood was a benchmark in his leadership development that was based on a radical philosophical interpretation of Islam. His budding leadership was supported by his impressionability in the early stages of his life, especially when he was still in Egypt. Islamic Jihad is considered as having started as a student movement, eventually growing in scope to include a wide range of societal members.

The assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat by Egyptian Islamic activist, Khalid El-Islambouli, in 1981 was a source of great inspiration for Al-Shiqaqi who then moved back to Gaza with the view of forming the Palestinian Branch of the EIJ, which became known as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Global Jihad, 2009; AICE, 2013). He was capable of maintaining close ties with those who would help him in his movement and proliferating the ideals enshrined within his cause. Bashir Musa Nafi, an associate of Shiqaqi, left Egypt after the assassination of Al-Sadat and moved to London where he worked on the Muslim Students Federation Journal, “which was funded by an Iranian-run group called the Islamic Center for Studies and Publishing” (Wonder, 2008: p. 232). The connections that Shiqaqi maintained were instrumental in maintaining and strengthening the momentum of the PIJ.

During the formation of the PIJ, Al-Shiqaqi relied on his educational background and undertook a number of literary projects that included the publication of a booklet (*Khomeini: The Islamic Solution and the Alternative*) that attempted to legitimize (for the first time) the justification of suicide missions by members of the Islamic community in the spirit of Jihad (Wonder, 2008: p. 229; Global Jihad, 2009). Although he sought to deliver a stirring message that would bring together Muslims in a common cause, his work has been criticized as mere reiteration of previous discussions of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology in that, “he indicted Western and Eastern imperialism as a means to dominate Muslims by ‘confusing ideologies’ and ‘reminded his reader[s] that the Jews’ were ‘enemies of Islam and agents of imperialism’ likely in league with both the United States and the Soviet Union” (Mayer quoted in Wonder, 2008: p. 229). Al-Shiqaqi's violent and hate-inspiring behavior resulted in his incarceration by Israeli authorities for a sentence of no less than four years (one year in 1983 and a subsequent three years beginning in 1986) in total for his seditious actions and rhetoric (Global Jihad, 2009; AICE, 2013).

The First Intifada, often characterized at the roots of resistance for the Palestinian people, also served as fertile ground for first sewing the seeds of his view of an IJ as well as the eventual establishment of the roots of the PIJ. Nearing the 1990s, Al-Shiqaqi worked to consolidate the PIJ by collaborating with the efforts of Hezbollah and establishing an operations center in the Syrian capital of Damascus (Global Jihad, 2009). The Syrian regime

was a useful tool in the consolidation of the PIJ for their cooperation with the movement. In both the United Kingdom (UK) and the Palestinian territories, Nafi and Al-Shiqaqi continued transnational publication activities in support of the PIJ and the First Intifada, and was a proven method of connecting with “students who had been expelled from Egypt” (Alexander, 2002: p. 30).

The early 1990s was an active period for both Al-Shiqaqi and the PIJ. Shortly after the Oslo Accord (officially referred to as the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles [DoP]) in 1993, Al-Shiqaqi was the principle player in the formulation of the National Alliance in January 1994 (AICE, 2013). The National Alliance was a significant achievement for Al-Shiqaqi and demonstrated a strong leadership quality for having united eight different groups linked to the PLO, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas, all of which stood in stark opposition to the Oslo process and the treaties of peace that resulted from them (AICE, 2013).

The post-Oslo Accord period was the pinnacle of Al-Shiqaqi’s career as the leader of the PIJ. Under his direction, the PIJ led a tremendously violent suicide campaign against the state of Israel between 1994 and 1995. During this period, the suicide campaign comprised male-only ST but expanded in 2004 to include female suicide terrorists (FST) (O’Rourke, 2009: p. 698). While many other terrorist groups appear to remain silent on the issue of employing females for the purpose of ST, some seem to be slowly drifting in this direction and flirting with the idea of using female suicide attackers. In any event, the PIJ can truly be accredited with the idea of combining a women’s role with suicide bombings (Bloom, 2007: p. 150).

In 2004, “the PIJ reversed ten years of male-only ST by perpetrating its first FST attack (O’Rourke, 2009: p. 698). Emphasizing the need for women to become combatants just as men in the PIJ has set a strong precedent with which the West and countries well beyond the West and still engaged in a war with terrorism, will have to contend. It denotes the escalation of this brand of asymmetric warfare by mobilizing greater numbers and to include a new range of actors that call for greater inquiry and understanding in order to confront international terrorism’s ever-growing and expanding threat matrix. In the words of Bloom, “When Jihad becomes a personal obligation, then the woman is summoned like a man, and need ask permission neither from her husband nor from her guardian, because she is obligated, and none need to ask permission in order to carry out a commandments that everyone must carry out” (Bloom, 2005: p. 61).

Notwithstanding its escalation of scope to eventually include the use of FST, Al-Shiqaqi set in motion one of the most critical and arguably valuable contributions to serve the cause of the PIJ as well as other like-minded terrorist organizations. The martyrdom-seeking, or suicide, operations as a relatively new strategic option and largely employed by the Palestinians is one that has not been abandoned, nor has the PIJ even considered abandoning it as a strategic option (Palestinian Media Watch [PMJ], 2013). To the contrary, and as already mentioned, the scope of this strategic option is only expanding, and is not likely to be soon abandoned. The timing and conditions under which such options are executed remain issues left to the commanders of these groups. This was one of the most central features of Al-Shiqaqi’s role with the PIJ (PMJ, 2013).

The Impact of Leadership Decapitation

Given Al-Shiqaqi’s contribution to the growth and strengthening of the PIJ along with the group’s use of suicide terrorism, the leader represented an attractive targeted, particularly for Israeli security forces because of the conflict that the Israeli government was involved in with the PIJ. Its violent opposition toward the existence of Israel and its designation by the US State Department has helped to concretize a number of strong enemies of the movement

(CFR, 2012). The PIJ has predominantly targeted Israeli civilians as well as military personnel in much the same manner as Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). This is the means through which the group seeks the creation of an Islamic regime that encompass all of the historic Palestinian lands in the Middle East.

The PIJ considers the Arab-Israeli conflict an ideological war rather than a territorial dispute as others might (CFR, 2012). One of the distinct differences between the PIJ and its counterparts in the region is the PIJ's lack of political participation, and unlike other terrorist group that have shown their willingness to negotiate, members of the PIJ "see violence as the only way to remove Israel from the Middle East map and reject any two-state arrangement in which Israel and Palestine coexist (CFR, 2012).

Even though the PIJ is a small and rather secretive organization that boasts less approximately 1,000 members and runs on comparably limited support in the region, its leadership was successful in building the group into a highly-militant and violent terrorist organization with the ability to strike with deadly outcomes. Its suicide attacks can be characterized a fairly indiscriminate assaults against vulnerable targets within Israeli territory, however, even members of the Palestinian community have noted that with the construction of security barriers around Gaza, the execution of suicide attacks has become a remarkable challenge and has resulted in a drastic reduction of suicide attacks outside the barriers (CFR, 2012).

To date, the PIJ has concentrated on Israeli targets as opposed to US property even though a number of Americans have become victims of the PIJ's assaults over previous years they were not intended targets of the group. In recent years, the PIJ elicited threats to the US that the American embassy would become a legitimate target if the building was moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, but no such attack has been carried out (CFR, 2012). In spite of its relatively short history and even though the group is composed of a fairly small rank and file, its terrorist track record has proven quite remarkable, especially given that the PIJ manages to maintain a successful recruitment campaign in spite of little probability of the group's ultimately political objectives coming to fruition.

On October 26, 1995, the same year that the PIJ was responsible for the murder of eighteen Israeli soldiers and a civilian near Netanya, in the northern and central region of Israel some thirty kilometers north of Tel Aviv, two gunmen who were believed to be operating as agents of Mossad (Israeli Secret Service) shot and killed Al-Shiqaqi while he was in front of the Diplomat Hotel in Sliema, Malta. A man who drove by on a motorcycle shot al-Shiqaqi in quick succession. The assassin used a silenced weapon that retained the casing of the discharged rounds. Agents who traveled to the island on several counts and under false names executed the operation with precision on that day. Their target was traveling through the region and was expected to meet with Libyan leader Muammar Al-Gaddafi to conduct a meeting at which the funding of Al-Shiqaqi's factions was to be discussed. This likely involved the financing of the PIJ's terrorist operations, including its ST campaign.

The operation carried out against Al-Shiqaqi was one of three during the 1990s under the auspices of the Israeli government. The mission that eliminated Al-Shiqaqi was the first of these three and was considered a moderate success on several counts. The precision with which the operation was planned, coordinated, and orchestrated stood as quite a remarkable feat as far as covert operations are concerned. The second notable factor to emerge from this scenario is the subsequent difficulty with which the PIJ attempted to replace Al-Shiqaqi. As noted by Eisenstadt (2001) and David (2003), "No competent successor emerged to replace Shikaki, producing disarray in Islamic Jihad" (p. 116). The effectiveness of the PIJ was also suggested to have been undermined for several years because of the struggle that ensued over "policy and power" (Eisenstadt, 2001). It has been noted that Al-Shiqaqi's killing rests on the

positive side of the ledger because of its immediate effect whereby his death led to the “splintering of this organization, hindering PIJ operations long thereafter” (Eisenstadt, 2001). The PIJ did replace their fallen leader, however, with Ramadan Abdullah Shallah (also known as Sheikh Abdullah Ramadan), “a British-educated Palestinian, taught Middle Eastern course at the University of South Florida from 1990 to 1995” (CRF, 2012).

Measuring the long-term success of the operation has been a difficult and contentious issue, and now contributes a piece to the ever-growing puzzle regarding the use of targeted killings and leadership decapitation with the aim of impacting the effectiveness of a terrorist group. In January 1996, Yahya Ayyash, one of Hamas’ most “skilled and prolific bomb makers whose handiwork proved critical to many terrorist attacks against Israel” was killed when his mobile phone that had been booby-trapped by the Israeli domestic intelligence agency, Shin Bet, detonated while in use (David, 2003: p. 116). The loss of Ayyash was considerable given his abilities that earned him the nickname “The Engineer” (Al-Muhandis), however, the recoil as a result of his assassination involved four suicide bombings in the following months that resulted in the deaths of fifty Israelis (David, 2003: p. 116; Gunning, 2008: p. 210). The assassination of Ayyash also directly led to massive demonstrations by Palestinians in Gaza in the amount of 100,000 people, and arguably served as a source of hatred and radicalized behavior among members of society who might not have considered contributing to Hamas’ violent cause (Wagner, 1996).

Press reports have contended that Israel’s policy option of targeting the leaders of terrorist groups, particularly the PIJ, has proven positive by “exacting a toll on [their] operational capabilities,” which included an attempt to blow up a bus on 2/8, the Tel Aviv central bus station on 3/8, a Haifa disco on 17/8, and a target in Beersheva today, while on 6/8 Israeli security arrested a suicide bomber awaiting orders” (Eisenstadt, 2001). Eisenstadt (2001) also notes that several bombings have “produced fewer casualties than could have been expected (notably, the PIJ suicide bombing of the cafe in Kiryat Motzkin on 12/8, which injured 21 Israelis). These (and other) failures can, in part, be attributed to Israeli luck, good intelligence, and an alert citizenry. At the same time, the planning of terrorist operations by the PIJ were subsequently characterized as poorer than usual, inadequately prepared for, and executed in sloppy fashion.

According to Israeli military officials, there are two reasons for the continued failures of the PIJ since the assassination of Al-Shiqaqi in 1995: (1) it is believed that the assassination and that continued assassinations of PIJ leaderships has simply resulted in a crippling depletion of the ranks “of the most experienced Palestinian planners, and (2) compelled PIJ to pursue and implement their operations in a rushed and careless fashion merely to “prove that they remain in the fight (Eisenstadt, 2001). David (2003), reinforces the sentiment, adding that, “targeted killings have impeded the effectiveness of Palestinian terrorist organizations where leadership, planning, and tactical skills are confined to a few key individuals” (p. 120). Both Eisenstadt (2001) and David (2003) touch base with the charisma component of any given leader, stating that there are individual leaders with a certain level of charisma and organizational skills that simply cannot be match or easily replaced, and these can be quite essential in maintaining the cohesive quality of any group.

Detractors of the policy have claimed that the use of leadership decapitation or target killing more generally assert that carrying out the policy actually strengthen Palestinian hatred of Israel and its allies, which leads to the creation of “new legions of volunteer suicide bombers, and perpetuate the violent sequence of events” (Eisenstadt, 2001). Additionally, critics argue that targeted leaders and terrorist operatives in this manner is a useful propaganda tool for terrorist groups because it helps to fabricate the physical battlefield that then validates the ideological conflict that ideological leaders of such groups attempt to propagate so assiduously. With the perpetuation of physical conflict, Palestinians are given

greater opportunities for martyrdom, and thus, increasing the popularity of terrorist groups such as the PIJ. However, as noted by Eisenstadt (2001), “forgoing preemption entails significant risks, as it could provide the bombers with the breathing space necessary to rebuild their capabilities.”

Perhaps one of the most persuasive arguments against the effectiveness of leadership decapitation in this case is that despite the short-term impact that was made on the effectiveness of the PIJ, terrorist attacks launched by the group against Israeli civilian and military targets were both well executed and successful in producing a large number of casualties which falls perfectly in line with the original intentions of the attacker(s) and those who planned and coordinated the operations. To be sure, the style of PIJ’s attacks appear to have undergone a small evolutionary process since the time of Al-Shaqaqi’s death in that a greater number of suicide missions have been waged and with increasingly deadly results. This could very well be the result of Al-Shiqaqi’s teachings to subordinates or even his contemporaries within the organization who passed this knowledge on to a future generation of terrorist operatives giving their lives violently in the name of PIJ’s ideological cause. Moreover, the impact of suicide terrorism has been overwhelmingly positive from the perspectives of terrorist organizations and tragic for the Israeli state, especially given that the PIJ is not the only terrorist group to use the tactic with stunning, if even bloody, outcomes.

Even though the result of leadership decapitation has shown to be effective in some regards with respect to the PIJ, subsequent operations against other terrorist groups tell a different story. The case of Ayyash suggested that leadership decapitation set in motion a wave of heightened radicalization that led to the quadruple suicide bombings that killed scores of innocent civilians. Other terrorist organization, still, like AQ or similar networks of cells dispersed across a region or even the globe might not exhibit a loss of operationality due to the loss of a leader or prominent figure(s) within the organization. In this light, measuring the impact that leadership decapitation has had on the overall effectiveness of the PIJ is not an easy or simple task, and for all the praise that officials in Tel Aviv might extend themselves for offsetting the violent attacks of the PIJ in the immediate aftermath of the assassination of Al-Shiqaqi, the enduring and more deadly campaign waged since 1995 now easily overshadows the sort of optimism occasioned by the killing of the PIJ’s original founder roughly eighteen years ago.

Conclusion

This study has considered the impact of leadership decapitation as a part of current counterterrorism strategies employed by Israel. In doing so, a review of two notable theories on leadership decapitation were presented and applied to the case of Al-Shiqaqi killed by Mossad agents in the mid-1990s. Seen as a victory for the Israeli state, the effects of the leadership decapitation have been measured in multiple ways and suggest that the action undertaken by the state of Israel resulted in the diminution of the PIJ’s effectiveness in waging violent terrorist acts. Today, Israel faces terrorist threats on a number of fronts and from well within its own territory, not merely from within its own region. As such, increasing pressure is mounting to find newer and more effective modalities for contending with and mitigating the terrorist threat that has plagued the state of Israel for decades. Leadership decapitation remains an attractive policy option for Israel given its well-trained and effective intelligence and secret services that have demonstrated a positive track record in carrying out covert operations against terrorists at home and abroad.

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