

**Militia and Insurgency Violence:
The Politics of Sectarianism in Iraq**

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Abstract

The central research question this thesis addresses is the following: In cases where the state is weak, to what extent do sectarian identities explain the diverging and often converging objectives and strategies of various sectarian militant groups vying for political power and territorial control? In order to answer this question, this study focuses on the case of contemporary Iraq. The main argument of this thesis is that sectarian identities alone play little role in defining and determining the political objectives and military strategies pursued by various sectarian affiliated groups. I argue instead that it is the motivation of greed, which largely influences the behavior of many of the main actors in the Iraq conflict. However, I also argue throughout this study that while greed is a key motivation of the leaders of militant organizations, the rank and file members are largely driven by political, economic and social grievances. Consequently, as I demonstrate in this study sectarian politics is an outcome rather than the primary cause of the dynamics of violence in Iraq. More specifically, it is the presence of a state that is weak in political legitimacy as well as bureaucratic and military strength which has resulted in the politicization of sectarian identities in ways that have exacerbated forms of violence in the country.¹ As such this thesis concludes that the ongoing conflict in Iraq is primarily a political struggle rather than a conflict over sectarian identity and culture and, moreover, differences in sectarian affiliation is not the most salient variable that explains the root causes of the conflict.

¹ For more, see Adeed Dawisha, "The Unravelling of Iraq: Ethnosectarian preferences and state performance in historical perspectives," *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 2 (2008): 219-230.

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Introduction

Research Puzzle

Why do some armed organizations utilize lower levels of violence, while others choose to employ a higher degree of brute force as part of their strategy to defeat their rivals in the context of intra-state conflict? And, to what extent do sectarian identities explain the different strategies, objectives, and shifts in the alliance formation of sectarian-oriented armed groups? In order to address these two related questions, my thesis will utilize Iraq as a case study so as to develop an analytical model that takes account of the mix of motives underpinning the strategies utilized by armed organizations in civil war. More specifically, I will examine the reasons for variations in the use and levels of violence, and shifts in the military strategies of two key Sunni insurgent groups and one umbrella group for Shiite militia: ISIS (*al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah Fī al-‘Irāq wa al-Shām* or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), JRTN (*Jaysh al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqshabandīyah* or the Naqshabandi Army), and the government backed militia of the PMF (*Quwwāt al-Ḥashd al-Sha‘bī* or the Popular Mobilization Forces). Given the ongoing wars in Yemen, Syria, and Libya, the present conflict in Iraq is far from a marginal case in a region where intra-state wars have become especially pronounced.

Relevance of the Study: Transcending the Sunni-Shiite Dichotomy

The ongoing civil conflict in Iraq, characterized by the emergence of a range of armed organizations, is routinely perceived as one stemming from inherent tensions between the sectarian and ethnic groups in the country.² This assumption, that sectarian grievances are at the heart of the

² See for example, Bronson Hoover (producer), “Iraq crisis: The Sunni-Shia divide explained,” *BBC News*, June 21, 2014, accessed May 14, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/magazine-27945271/iraq-crisis-the-sunni-shia-divide-explained>, Erika Solomon, “Sunni and Shia struggle with Iraq’s reconciliation process,” *Financial Times*, April 23, 2018, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/77082afa-3816-11e8-8eee->

conflict, arises from the perception that these communities have historically harbored deep religious and ideological enmities. This essentialist perspective obscures some key, non-identity based dynamics associated with the current conflict in Iraq that are of central concern to my research. Specifically, I argue that the now dominant culturalist explanation of the conflict does not adequately account for the seemingly puzzling shifts in the motivations and strategies of insurgent and militia groups, the alliances between insurgent and militia leaders, and the motivations and objectives of the main actors involved in the conflict. Building on the scholarship of Tareq Ismael and others, I argue that while sectarian folklore clearly existed in Iraq prior to the US-led invasion of 2003, it was only after this invasion that a deep-rooted political sectarianism evolved.³ This was the result of deep social discontent that was then politicized by both Iraqi politicians and leaders of armed organizations. This continues to be a strategy of choice for politicians, primarily because it has facilitated the mobilization of Iraqis along the lines of various factions in a process that was then reinforced, and exacerbated, by wider geostrategic rivalries.

In my thesis, I will revisit and build upon this argument by closely examining the events surrounding the recent battles in Mosul. Mosul represents an important case study since much of the analysis surrounding these battles has assumed that they have resulted from deep divisions between sectarian communities and organizations: most notably, ISIS, various other Sunni-backed anti-government forces, and Shiite groups supported by state elites. My thesis challenges this common presumption of sectarianism. I argue that sectarian and ethnic differences do not lie at the heart of the conflict. Rather, the conflict is better understood as a struggle between different

[e06bde01c544](#), and, Tony Karon, "Understanding Iraq's Ethnic and Religious Divisions," *Time Magazine* (February 24, 2006), accessed May 14, 2018, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1167476,00.html>.

³ Sectarian Folklore entails that while Iraqis were aware of their ethnic and sectarian identity, they only expressed it culturally (clothes, food, praying style, etc.), not in politics, also that Iraqis were cooperating and intermarrying on a large scale. For more, see Tareq Y. Ismael, and Jacqueline S. Ismael, "Entrenching sectarianism: How Chilcot sees Iraq," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 11, no. 1-2 (2017): 30, https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcis.11.1-2.23_1.

political groups vying to capture state power and patronage. I will focus solely on the Shiites and Sunnis, excluding the Kurds from my analysis, since the focus of my thesis is to evaluate the extent to which sectarian divisions (not ethnic divisions) have played a role in the conflict. I hope to demonstrate empirically that these armed groups are primarily driven by a desire to capture political influence, and that inter-sectarian competition does not adequately explain the evolving strategies of these organizations, nor the reasons underlying changes in alliance formation between Sunni and Shiite political organizations.

Furthermore, Jentzsch et al. argue that scholars have seldom included militias (forces with an anti-rebel dimension that could be state sponsored or not)⁴ in the study of armed conflict in intra-state conflicts.⁵ Therefore, according to Jentzsch et al., the integration of militias into our study of intra-state conflict affords us a richer understanding of the literature concerning the internal dynamics of intra-state conflict, its duration, and termination.⁶

The Outline

So far in this introduction, I have outlined the main research puzzle and the importance of the research. In Chapter 1, I will review the literature related to the themes explored in this study. Next, I will define the terms that will become the cornerstones of my analysis. I will then present to the reader the theory of the three stages of strategic patterns of warfare, employed by most insurgencies around the world. Following this, I will present a brief overview of counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns, their principles, and dilemmas. This first chapter will conclude by outlining my methodology and its weaknesses.

⁴ Corinna Jentzsch, Stathis N. Kalyvas, and Livia Isabella Schubiger, "Militias in Civil Wars," ed. Corinna Jentzsch, Stathis N. Kalyvas, and Livia Isabella Schubiger, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 5 (August 2015): 756, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002715576753>.

⁵ Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger, 757.

⁶ Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger, 757, and Weinstein, "Inside Rebellion," 5.

The second chapter outlines the objectives motivating each of the three groups examined – ISIS, the PMF, and JRTN – followed by an analysis of the violence utilized by these groups from January 2017 to February 2018. The third chapter examines the recent political developments that challenge typical sectarian explanations of conflict in the Iraq region. To conclude, the final chapter will review the findings of this thesis.

Chapter 1

The Literature

The Iraqi Context Briefly

Iraq, for most of the 20th and 21st centuries, has been a post-conflict society that has engaged in post-conflict reconstruction, albeit intermittent, incomplete, or deficient.⁷ However, since the 1980s, these conflicts have started to take an incrementally bigger toll on the country.⁸ Since 2003 especially, the conflicts have essentially rendered the country weak and plagued with an array of internal and external stressors that have stunted development.⁹ While the war stops every now and then in the country, the conflicts endure – social, political, and economic grievances stemming from the lack of security and jobs, authoritarianism, external interference, and so forth.¹⁰ Iraqi society is multiethnic and multi sectarian.¹¹ The Iraqi state is weak and defined by a weak institutional capacity.¹² Given all of these factors, we must revisit the existing literature on the intersection of these topics: rebellions, peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, and the causes of sectarian conflict.

⁷ For excellent history on Iraq read, Hanna Batatu, *The old social classes and the revolutionary movements of Iraq: a study of Iraq's old landed and commercial classes and of its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), and Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ International Crisis Group, "Fight or Flight: The Desperate Plight of Iraq's 'Generation 2000,'" *International Crisis Group*, report n.169, August 8, 2016, accessed May 13, 2018, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iraq/fight-or-flight-desperate-plight-iraq-s-generation-2000>.

¹⁰ S. Heydemann, M. Lynch, D. O'Driscoll, and M. Yahya, "Politics of Post-Conflict Reconstruction," Panel discussion, *Carnegie Middle East Centre*, February 1, 2018, Accessed March 13, 2018. <http://carnegie-mec.org/2018/02/01/politics-of-post-conflict-reconstruction-event-5805>

¹¹ Ismael, "Entrenching sectarianism," 30.

¹² Adeed Dawisha, "National identity and sub-state sectarian loyalties in Iraq," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 4, no. 3 (2010). doi: 10.1386/ijcis.4.3.243_1

Why do people rebel?

First, rapid social and economic change is conducive to violence.¹³ Drawing from the discipline of psychology and sociology, Ted Gurr argues that rapid social and economic (structural) changes cause rising expectations among the populace.¹⁴ People begin to expect more and, naturally, become dissatisfied when these expectations are unmet.¹⁵ Eventually, if enough people become dissatisfied, for a long enough time, they might turn to armed violence against the state or one another.¹⁶ In the case of Iraq, this was the case after the 2003 American-led invasion, when very quick liberalization of the Iraqi economy took place, leaving many without jobs.¹⁷ Samuel Huntington corroborates Gurr's arguments by adding that the rebels' violence is exacerbated in the context of a weak state with weak institutional capacity.¹⁸ This is also the case with Iraq: the onset of conflict in Iraq has led many of its intelligentsia to emigrate from the country.¹⁹ Traditionally, Sami Zubaida explains, drawing from the work of Benedict Anderson, the intelligentsia overlap with the state capacity.²⁰ Furthermore, the de-Baathification law left many Iraqis unemployed.²¹ It is worth noting that many Iraqis became Ba'athists as a white elephant in order to find a job in the public sector, which is traditionally the main employer in

¹³ World Bank Group. *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011), 75. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=718846>.

¹⁴ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970). As seen in "World Bank Development Report," 75, 76 and 311.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Khalid Mustafa Medani, "State Building in Reverse: The Neo-Liberal "Reconstruction" of Iraq," *Middle East Report*, no. 232 (2004): 35.

¹⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). As seen in "World Bank Development Report," 75, 76 and 311.

¹⁹ Andrew Chang, "The Great Iraqi Brain Drain," ABC News, February 16, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=81480&page=1>.

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983), as seen in S. Zubaida, "Iraq: History, Memory, Culture," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44, no. 2, 333, and 344, en.1, doi:10.1017/S0020743812000116. This is also from a POLI 650 Presentation Paper I submitted in Winter 2018.

²¹ Davide Mastracci, "How the 'catastrophic' American decision to disband Saddam's military helped fuel the rise of ISIL," *National Post*, May 23, 2015, accessed May 14, 2018, <http://nationalpost.com/news/world/how-the-catastrophic-american-decision-to-disband-saddams-military-helped-fuel-the-rise-of-isil>.

modern Iraq.²² In addition, the ethnic quota system that was introduced in the 2005 constitution gave place to a network of patronage in the state molded by ethnicity and sect.²³ People were employing their co-ethnics rather than people based on their merits.²⁴ Lastly, given the lack of stability that Iraq has witnessed since the 2003 invasion, the state could not effectively develop by building capable and credible institutions.²⁵

Economists and social scientists have argued that one of the reasons for intra-state violence is that the various actors have commitment problems.²⁶ That is, the different actors cannot commit to one another to abstain from violence, even when it might be beneficial for them to do so.²⁷ This line of thinking can be traced as far back as Thomas Hobbes, who argues that weak state capacity exacerbates commitment problems between actors as the state is incapable of processing the grievances of the violent actors via its established institutions; the state is also incapable of deterring insurgents who seek to challenge the state legitimacy.²⁸ Jack Hirshleifer expanded on this argument by demonstrating that actors operating in an anarchic context (where the state is weak) only opt for violence when doing so increases their returns not on a diminishing scale.²⁹ That is, the cost of fighting does not set the cost of the profits reaped from fighting – like gathering

²² Tarik Kafala, "The Iraqi Baath party," *BBC News*, March 25, 2003, accessed May 14, 2018, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2886733.stm, Anne Garrels, "Iraq to Restore Former Baath Party Followers," *NPR: All Things Considered*, January 12, 2008, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18049763>, and IRFAD, "Iraq Labor Force," *IRFAD*, 2014, accessed May 14, 2018, <http://www.irfad.org/iraq-labor-force/>.

²³ Joel Wing, "Origins of Iraq's Ethnosectarian Quota System," *Musings on Iraq* (blog), April 19, 2016, accessed May 14, 2018, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.ca/2016/04/origins-of-iraqs-ethnosectarian-quota.html>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ World Bank Group, *Iraq Systematic Country Diagnostic* (PDF document: February 3, 2017), accessed May 14, 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/542811487277729890/pdf/IRAQ-SCD-FINAL-cleared-02132017.pdf>.

²⁶ "World Bank Development Report 2011," 75.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*, (London: Printed for Andrew Crooke, 1651). As seen in "World Bank Development Report 2011," 75, 76, and 312.

²⁹ J. Hirshleifer, "Anarchy and Its Breakdown," *Journal of Political Economy*, 103, no.1 (1995): 26. As seen in World Bank Development Report 75,76 and 312.

resources or protecting previously earned resources.³⁰ This balance, which all actors adhere to according to Hirshleifer, explains the logic of using violence variably both in intensity and frequency across time and space.³¹

Political economists contend that material incentives, or ‘greed,’ best explain the motivations and strategies of insurgent organizations. These scholars downplay the role of ideological, political, and social grievances, and generally assume that the actors in the conflict are primarily motivated by an interest in wealth accumulation.³² In this formulation, insurgent groups are likened to criminal organizations and firms rather than to social movements; the leaders and members of these organizations are commonly viewed as motivated by individual rather than collective interests.³³ This debate of whether violent rebels are driven by normative reasons (grievance), or economic reasons (greed), was developed as the “Greed and Grievance” dichotomy by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler.³⁴ Collier and Hoeffler “suggested that primary commodities, diasporas, low earnings, human capital and dispersed populations were positively correlated to the outbreak of civil conflict suggesting support for the “greed” hypothesis.”³⁵ The majority of the response to Collier and Hoeffler’s “Greed and Grievance” model was in the form of a critical discussion, rather than a refutation or corroboration of their findings – that is, the debate over the greed and grievance model is not fully conclusive (scholars are sitting on the fence).³⁶ For example,

³⁰ J. Hirshleifer, “Anarchy and Its Breakdown,” 26.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See for example, Mary Kaldor, *New & Old war: Organized violence in a global era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Mats R. Berdal and David Malone, *Greed & Grievance: Economic agendas in civil wars* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000); Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievances in Civil Wars,” *Oxford Economic Paper* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563-595, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oeq/gpf064>; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000534>.

³³ From Omar Aziz, “Militancy Spurring Sectarianism Rather Than Sectarianism Spurring Militancy: Understanding the Politics of Sectarianism in Iraq,” (unpublished M.A. Thesis Proposal, McGill: February 19, 2018).

³⁴ Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance,” as seen in “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 75, 76, and 304.

³⁵ Collier, as seen in “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 75.

³⁶ “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 94, e.n. 9.

Nicholas Sambanis “finds that GDP per capita and political instability are the only variables that predict civil war onset.”³⁷ Scholars who focus on natural resources have “found mixed results;” however, oil is the most frequent result related to the onset of civil war outbreak.³⁸ Iraq has the fourth largest proven crude oil reserve in the world.³⁹ Edward Miguel, Shanker Satyantath, and Ernest Sergenti have demonstrated that a causal relationship exists between “rainfall and agricultural shocks to the onset of civil war,”⁴⁰ while Timothy Besley and Torsten Persson “explore the effect on international price shocks on the onset of conflict.”⁴¹

In contrast, social movement theorists argue that while material incentives play an important role in terms of recruitment of new members into insurgent organizations, this does not in itself explain why individuals would choose to join these groups, engage in high-risk behavior, or deploy particularly brutal forms of violence against their rivals.⁴² Instead, these scholars contend that both leaders and members of insurgent groups are driven by a combination of ideological, political, and social grievances rather than pure greed.⁴³ For example, Steward, Esteban, and Ray argue that inequality or identity alone cannot fully explain why civil conflict takes place.⁴⁴ These scholars argue that both identity and inequality together are causes and drivers of violence in civil

³⁷ Nicholas Sambanis, “What Is Civil War?: Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (2004): 814–58. As seen in “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 93, en. 9.

³⁸ “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 93, en. 9.

³⁹ OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin 2017, “OPEC share of world crude oil reserves, 2016,” accessed April 29, 2018, http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/data_graphs/330.htm

⁴⁰ Edward Miguel, Shanker Satyanath, and Ernest Sergenti, “Economic Shocks and Civil Conflict: An Instrumental Variables Approach,” *Journal of Political Economy* 112, no. 4 (2004): 725, as seen in “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 93, en. 9.

⁴¹ Timothy Besley and Torsten Persson, “Repression or Civil War?” *American Economic Review* 99, no. 2 (2009): 292–97. As seen in “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 93, en. 9.

⁴² Omar Aziz, M.A. proposal.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Joan Esteban and Debraj Ray, “Polarization, Fractionalization and Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 2 (2008): 163–82; Frances Stewart, “Horizontal Inequalities: A Neglected Dimension of Development,” In *Wider Perspectives on Global Development*, UNU-WIDER (United Nations University-World Institute for Development Economics Research; ed.), Helsinki: UNU-WIDER, as seen in “World Bank Development Report,” 75, 76, and 307, and 326.

conflict.⁴⁵ Identity alone can lead to civil conflict and not necessarily because it stems from concerns of inequality, but solely because of the propensity for a certain identity-oriented group(s) to self-rule.⁴⁶ James Fearon also argues that violence is precipitated both for “normative and economic reasons.”⁴⁷ Fearon develops his argument by demonstrating that a positive causal relationship exists between identity polarization and the onset of violence.⁴⁸ This is because, in such a context of high polarization, different identity groups cannot make “credible commitments” to not use violence against one another.⁴⁹ Here, the emphasis is that neither greed nor grievance alone is sufficient to explain the eruption of violence in a society, and that both normative and economic concerns are intertwining and interchangeable reasons for the onset of violence in intra-state conflict.⁵⁰

Scholars working from an historical-institutional (HI) perspective focus on the nature of political and social linkages of insurgent leaders to patronage networks.⁵¹ They contend that, taken together, these institutional linkages to formal political authorities crucially determine the type of strategies and alliances pursued by leaders of insurgent organizations.⁵² These scholars argue that armed leaders who belong to communities that are relatively marginal to the patronage networks of the state develop organizations that are more likely to benefit local communities and to abide by the latter’s norms and security interests.⁵³ From this perspective, these groups are thus viewed as less prone to deploy excessive levels of violence since the social context in which they operate

⁴⁵ Esteban and Ray, “Polarization,” as seen in “World Bank Development Report,” 75, 76, and 307.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 75, and James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization*, 49, no. 3 (1995): 379, as seen in “World Bank Development Report,” 75, 76, and 308.

⁴⁸ Fearon, “Rationalist explanations for war,” as seen in “World Bank Development Report,” 75, 76, and 308.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ From Omar Aziz, M.A. proposal.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

greatly determines the manner in which their leaders are able to generate material resources and recruit new members into their ranks in a more effective fashion.⁵⁴ In contrast to political economy and social movement approaches, this perspective has the analytical advantage of explaining the reasons why various armed organizations deploy different levels of violence in pursuit of their objectives.⁵⁵ Also through the lens of institutions, Douglass North, John Wallis, and Barry Weingast have examined how “impersonal institutions” play a role as channels for political mediation to avert violence.⁵⁶ Similarly, Timothy Besley and Torsten Persson argue that an inverse causal relationship exists between the level of investment in the judiciary and state capacity, and the levels of the incidence of violence.⁵⁷ That is, the higher the investments in the judiciary and state capacity, the lower the incidence of violence.⁵⁸ Philip Keefer argues that violence takes place when societies cannot take punitive measures against leaders with hegemonic and aggressive tendencies, and cannot collectively build a counterinsurgency campaign.⁵⁹ In essence, Keefer argues that institutionally-based political parties act as a guarantor against the occurrence of violence by providing the space to resolve the issues related to collective action and credibility.⁶⁰ Some scholars have expanded on the aforementioned theories, corroborating them with the addition of quantitative empirical evidence. For example, Jack Goldstone et al. have found that the “quality of political institutions is the most salient factor in determining the occurrence frequency

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). As seen in “World Bank Development Report pages” 75, 76 and 320.

⁵⁷ Besley and Persson, “Repression or Civil War?” as seen in “World Bank Development Report,” 75, 76, and 301.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Philip Keefer, “Insurgency and Credible Commitment in Autocracies and Democracies,” *The World Bank Economic Review* 22, no. 1 (2008): 33–61. As seen in “World Bank Development Report,” 75, 76, and 315.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

of civil political clashes and violence.”⁶¹ Similar to Goldstone et al.’s empirically-based findings, Markus Brückner and Antonio Ciccone propose “that institutions are necessary to accommodate shocks in prices to avoid violence.”⁶²

The Causes of Sectarian Conflict⁶³

There are five main theoretical approaches on the subject of the causes of sectarian conflict. First, the sectarian security dilemma contends that, in the absence or presence of a weak or non-impartial central state, sectarian groups must rely on themselves to ensure their own security and resources for their survival.⁶⁴ In so doing, other groups become alarmed that a neighboring group is taking measures to secure itself.⁶⁵ As a result, the other groups begin doing the same, thus setting a trigger of reactions that might render the first group less secure – hence the dilemma.⁶⁶ Namely, a group’s quest for security has a self-defeating purpose because it will lead to a set of reactions from other groups that will ultimately render the first group less secure.⁶⁷

Second, sectarian status is another cause of sectarian conflict and occurs when a group seeks to assert its position within a given society.⁶⁸ The group feels that another group(s) is

⁶¹ Jack A. Goldstone et al., “A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability,” *American Journal of Political Science* 54, no. 1 (2010): 190–208. As seen in “World Bank Development Report,” 75, 76, and 310.

⁶² Markus Brückner and Antonio Ciccone, “International Commodity Prices, Growth and the Outbreak of Civil War in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Economic Journal* 120, no. 544 (2010): 519–34. As seen in “World Bank Development Report,” 75, 76, and 302.

⁶³ This section reproduced from Omar Aziz, “The Politics of Ethnic Conflict: Lessons from the Post-KRG Referendum” (Unpublished term paper for McGill course POLI 650, April 23, 2018).

⁶⁴ B. R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993), 27; David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 41–75; William Rose, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict: Some New Hypotheses,” *Security Studies* 9, no. 4 (2000): 1–51; Fearon, “Rationalist,” 379; Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214. As seen in Daniel Byman, *Keeping the Peace: Lasting Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 229, e.n. 1. N.B.: Ethnic has been interchanged with sectarian since both are identity politics.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 31 October 1958* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958); Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 2000); Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*

blocking their legitimate right (linguistic, cultural, etc.) within a certain populace and thus decides to take action.⁶⁹ It must be noted here, however, that rather than seeking a leveled playing field, groups usually seek one tilted to their advantage which is the original cause of the problem as it leads other groups to feel marginalized and to believe action must be taken to re-establish their status.⁷⁰ The difference between sectarian status, and the sectarian security dilemma, is that the latter is about a group's survival whereas the former is about a group's status, rights, and representation.⁷¹

A third cause of sectarian conflict is hegemonic ambitions, which occurs when merely achieving security and cultural rights does not satisfy a given group.⁷² Rather, a hegemonic group seeks to dominate other groups by making, for example, its religion the only religion, its culture the only culture, its language the only language, and so forth.⁷³ In this context, the sectarian security dilemma and sectarian status causes of conflict can be thought of as defensive causes, whereas hegemonic ambitions can be thought of as an offensive cause of conflict.⁷⁴ That is, conflict induced by the security dilemma and/or sectarian status concerns are the result of fears over survival and/or cultural, work, linguistic, or other rights, and this leads actors to take defensive measures to protect these rights.⁷⁵ In this case, if the sectarian security dilemma and sectarian status are the only causes of conflict in a given society, then conflict can be deterred if people live in harmony unarmed and have freedom to speak their language, practice their religion, and so forth.⁷⁶

(Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978). As seen in Byman, *Keeping the Peace*, 230, *en. 16-17*, and Byman, 22.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Douglas A. Hibbs, *Mass Political Violence: A Cross-National Causal Analysis* (New York: Wiley, 1973), 4. As seen in Byman, *Keeping the Peace*, 231, *en. 37-38*.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

In contrast to being a defensive measure, hegemonic ambitions are purely offensive measures taken by a hegemonic group, and seek to subordinate other groups with the objective of ensuring and reinforcing the hegemonic group's security and status in the long run.⁷⁷

The fourth cause of conflict is elite competition.⁷⁸ The cases discussed so far have focused on group-level characteristics, but in this case – elite competition – ruling elites and/or patronage networks take advantage of local grievances to protect their power and/or accrue more power to compete with other elites.⁷⁹ They do so by manipulating sectarian identities and using a discourse that presents the local grievances as being sectarian-based.⁸⁰ In so doing, leaders exacerbate the scale and nature of existing conflicts by portraying sect as a salient factor in the dynamics of the conflict.⁸¹ They do so in order to discredit political rivals from other sects, presenting them to their supporters as a threat to their own sect.⁸² They also do this to discredit and compete with political rivals from within their own ethnicity, by portraying them as being incompetent and incapable of protecting and advancing the rights of their own sectarian group.⁸³

Fifth, external powers often play a critical role in sectarian conflicts. This is partly because sects often span more than one nation.⁸⁴ External powers can help appease conflict. However, more often, external powers exacerbate conflict by inducing security concerns, assisting ruling elites,

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Byman, *Keeping the Peace*, 34–35.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Byman, *Keeping the Peace*, 39–40. See also Abraham Ashkenasi, “Socio-Ethnic Conflict and Paramilitary Organization in the Near East,” in *Political Violence and Terror: Motifs and Motivations*, ed. Peter H. Merkl (Berkeley: University of California. Press, 1986), 314, as seen in Byman, 233, en. 63.

and so forth.⁸⁵ Some scholars have even argued that in order for sectarian national movements to be successful, it is imperative that they receive the consent and assistance of external powers.⁸⁶

To conclude this brief review of the literature on the causes of sectarian conflict, this section draws from the following words by Daniel L. Byman:

The theories presented [above] (...) are not alternative explanations and often overlap in practice: groups that fear for their security, for example, often resent discrimination as well. Hegemonic groups often provoke status or security conflicts with subordinate groups. A particular common cause of conflict that co-exists with others is the presence of elite competition. Elites exploit broader mass grievances concerning security, status, or dominance. Outside powers play on all of these causes, exacerbating their influence. When various causes coexist, the potential for conflict grows.⁸⁷

The conflict in Iraq cross-cuts all of the causes. The Shiite believe that they have been marginalized in the past and thus have status concerns. The Sunnis and Shiite fear one another; especially, the latter fear the Sunnis because of the recent experience with ISIS.⁸⁸ There are external powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others who interfere in the politics of the country and attempt to exacerbate sectarian tensions.⁸⁹ There are also sectarian leaders who

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Byman, *Keeping the Peace*, 42.

⁸⁸ David Zucchino, "As ISIS Is Driven From Iraq, Sunnis Remain Alienated," *New York Times*, October 26, 2017, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/26/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-sunni.html>, and Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, "Iraq's Sectarian Crisis: A Legacy of Exclusion," *Carnegie Middle East Centre*, April 23, 2014, accessed May 14, 2018, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2014/04/23/iraq-s-sectarian-crisis-legacy-of-exclusion-pub-55372>.

⁸⁹ Lionel Beehner, "Iraq's Meddlesome Neighbors," *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 31, 2006, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/background/iraqs-meddlesome-neighbors>.

manipulate sectarian identities and sentiments in order to wield power for themselves and their allies.⁹⁰

Peacebuilding in post conflict fragile societies

Three main alternative explanations exist in the literature on post-conflict reconstruction. First, scholars have argued that a positive relationship exists between efforts rendered by an intervener and the outcome of a post-conflict order. James Dobbins et al., through the prism of studying US interventions in the post-World War II order, demonstrated that the more resources, number of interveners (for burden sharing), time, and troops that were consecrated for the intervention, the higher the likelihood of successful post-conflict rebuilding.⁹¹ Doyle and Sambanis further develop this line of argument by presenting us the “peacebuilding triangle,” which consists of the extent and nature of violence between active actors, the extent to which human and infrastructural capacities exist after the conflict, and the level of external assistance provided.⁹² Essentially, the higher (extent and nature) the violence between the actors (and the number of actors) involved in a conflict, the weaker the nation-state economic and social capacity becomes, and then the more assistance is needed to rebuild.⁹³ Second, other scholars have argued that successful post-conflict reconstruction is less about commitment and more about sequencing.⁹⁴ This logic draws from the works of the 1960s and 1970s canonical theorists of democratization such as Dankwart Rustow, Samuel Huntington, and Robert Dahl.⁹⁵ Huntington argues that in the

⁹⁰ Zaid Al-Ali, “How Maliki Ruined Iraq,” *Foreign Policy*, June 19, 2014, accessed May 14, 2018, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/06/19/how-maliki-ruined-iraq/>.

⁹¹ James Dobbins et al., *America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica: Rand, 2003). As seen in S. Mohandes, “After War: Intervention, democratization, and state-building in post-conflict environments,” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard, 2012), 4.

⁹² Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations peace operations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), as seen in Mohandes, “After War,” 20.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Mohandes, “After War,” 19.

⁹⁵ Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics*, 2 no. 2 (April 1970): 337-363; Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press,

context of developing societies, it is imperative to have political institutionalization before political mobilization in order to prevent disorder and bouts of instability.⁹⁶ That is, if there are no political institutions to mediate political differences, then elections and *en masse* political participation polarizes society and is thus more conducive to conflict.⁹⁷ Roland Paris, Edward Mansfield, and Jack Snyder echo Huntington's argument.⁹⁸ For example, in his proposal entitled "Institutionalization before Liberalization," Roland Paris explains: "[P]eacebuilders should delay liberalization and limit political and economic freedoms in the short run, in order to create conditions for a smoother and less hazardous transition to market democracy—and durable peace—in the long run."⁹⁹ Third, scholars have argued that external intervention can do little to stimulate political change.¹⁰⁰ In his article "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," Seymour Martin Lipset argues for the centrality of economic development in achieving a successful democratic process.¹⁰¹ Other scholars have advanced this argument by attempting to locate traits of societies – beyond economic wealth – that are conducive to democracy: civil society, economic relations, freedom of the press, class relations, etc.¹⁰²

1968); Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); As seen in Mohandes, "After War," 21, fn. 23.

⁹⁶ Huntington, *Political Order*, 4, as seen in Mohandes, "After War," fn. 24.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Edward Mansfield, and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why emerging democracies go to war* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005); Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building peace after civil conflict*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), as seen in Mohandes, "After War," 28, fn. 27.

⁹⁹ Paris, *At War's End*, as seen in Mohandes, "After War," fn. 28.

¹⁰⁰ Mohandes, "After War," 23.

¹⁰¹ Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, 53, no. 1 (March 1959): 69-105. As seen in Mohandes, "After War," 23, fn. 30.

¹⁰² Major studies addressing these issues include: Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967); Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Gabriel Almond, and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963); Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), as seen in Mohandes, "After War," 23, fn.31.

What is violence and why do people use it?

Violence is an age-old empirical phenomenon;¹⁰³ humans have committed violence both against other humans and non-humans. Our concern here is with violence committed against humans. Informed by the works of Stathis Kalyvas and Charles Tilly on violence, we have found that the usage of violence across time and space has a certain ‘logic’ that is constant despite its setting or ‘level of sophistication.’¹⁰⁴ First, ‘violence can be used to ‘destroy or incapacitate an opponent who could otherwise pose a threat or an obstacle to some goal, such as control of territory or goods.’¹⁰⁵ Second, violence ‘can induce fear or anger in opponents, leading them to behave in a way that may serve the aggressor’s goal (e.g. flight, submission, or retaliation.’¹⁰⁶ Third, violence ‘can be used expressively to convey some message or emotion to an audience or to participants; or it can be intrinsically satisfying as in revenge, retribution, or sadism.’¹⁰⁷ These are the three constant purposes for violence “regardless of cultural or economic context.”

The Dominant Theory on Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Objectives and Tactics

Theoretical Objectives of Insurgencies

Insurgents are attempting to “win local support or at least local acquiescence and tolerance.”¹⁰⁸ Insurgents “do not always need the locals to support them but they do not want the locals to actively oppose them.”¹⁰⁹ For example, “to tell the government what the insurgents are doing or to fight the insurgents.”¹¹⁰ Insurgents can get local support by “positive appeals.”¹¹¹ That

¹⁰³ Penny Green and Tony Ward, “State-Building and the Logic of Violence in Iraq,” *J scand stud criminol crime prev Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 10, no. 1 (2009): 48–58.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Rex Brynen, “Peacebuilding,” POLI 650, lecture on February 7, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

is insurgents “can mobilize the local population so that they share their political goals.”¹¹² In so doing the locals start seeing the insurgents as the “good guys” thus “actively supporting them with food, shelter, money, and so on and so forth.”¹¹³ Insurgents can “also not win support but at least tolerance and acquiescence through threats and coercion.”¹¹⁴ For example, the insurgents threaten to “wipe up a village if its members collaborate with the government.”¹¹⁵ Finally, “locals have a tendency to pick a winner.”¹¹⁶ The locals “might not like either” the insurgents or militia men but from their perspective “it’s better to be on the winning side than the losing side.”¹¹⁷ Insurgents “need local support to get recruits, resources, intelligence, concealment/protection.”¹¹⁸ For example, “Mao’s famous dictum, ‘the people is the sea in which the insurgent fish swim,’”¹¹⁹ is reflective of that relationship between insurgents and the locals.¹²⁰ There are exceptions to the rule as always and here it means that “there are insurgencies that do not have much popular support.”¹²¹ For example, “Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army was essentially a religiously “wacky” oriented fundamentalist profit making gang going village to village pillaging, raping, and killing.”¹²² However “that is not the case with most insurgencies as they are mostly people with political goals and the attitude of the local population [towards them] matters.”¹²³ Insurgents “are also trying to undermine government legitimacy and capability.”¹²⁴ The insurgents usually aim to

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

“weaken the government’s hold and popularity and ultimately want to defeat the government on the battlefield and politically.”¹²⁵

Theory on the Main Pattern of Insurgent Strategies

“In the beginning, the first phase, insurgencies are involved in hit and run activities in peripheral areas.”¹²⁶ ‘Because in the beginning insurgencies will not be strong enough to take the government where the government is strong.’¹²⁷ For example, “lightly armed insurgencies do not want to fight much better, heavily equipped government forces. Thus the insurgents, for example, will ambush a government truck convoy, attack a police station, fire some rockets into a military base and then scoot off, etc.”¹²⁸ The purpose of insurgent attacks on peripheral areas is to “raid for resources, generate publicity and attract support, terrorize to discourage people from collaborating with the government, limit the government’s ability to govern (if the government tax collectors or police patrols cannot go in rural areas for fear of being ambushed, then the government’s rule is undermined), polarize, alienate, provoke counter-productive repression (for example, the government might use massive human rights violations to quell insurgency, which might push more people into the arms of the insurgency), engage in sabotage attacks on oil pipelines, communication infrastructure (when infrastructure is damaged, the government’s capacity is damaged), and insurgents can attack symbolic targets that do not have economic-military purposes just to highlight that the insurgents are present”¹²⁹ and to demonstrate their ideology, for example, by attacking places of worship.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

The second phase takes place if the insurgents do the first phase “long enough and they are having success while doing it; they may establish [insurgent-controlled] areas.” Insurgent-controlled areas “are no go zones for the government because they cannot safely operate in these areas.”¹³⁰ In these areas, insurgents can “begin to establish structures, camps, training, administration, even a parallel government (taxing systems and justice systems), generate resources, train and equip larger forces (from half dozens or dozens to company size battalions from hundreds or several hundreds), heavier weapons, negotiate for recognition (support from neighboring states, diplomatic support and so forth).”¹³¹

“If the second phase goes well, the insurgent will transition to the third phase: move from classic guerilla war to beginning to mount more regular military operations.”¹³² For example, “cut the major cities from each other, cut transportation networks, encircle cities and transportation networks, weaken the government’s morale, and eventually take the government on perhaps directly in military combat that results in the defeat of the government military forces, or perhaps the government as a result will collapse politically from within.”¹³³ The latter three phases are classic stages of guerilla warfare,¹³⁴ and constitute “the patterns for 90 percent of the insurgencies.” “However, there are insurgencies that are more urban based.”¹³⁵

In these phases for classic insurgency warfare “it is important to have sanctuaries where the insurgents are relatively free from government interference.”¹³⁶ “One of the reasons the insurgents begin in the periphery is because, by definition, it is the periphery where the government

¹³⁰ Ibid. NB ‘liberated areas have been changed to insurgent-controlled areas to maintain neutrality’

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

does not project power.”¹³⁷ “Insurgent-controlled zones become the internal sanctuaries where the insurgents can operate.”¹³⁸ “In some cases, insurgents may have neighboring countries that may either allow them to use their territory for the purposes of organizing the insurgency or these governments can’t stop the insurgents from using their territory.”¹³⁹ “One of the challenges for external sanctuaries is insurgents maintaining their independence, because when insurgents are supported, their supporters want to manipulate their politics; they want to make the insurgents proxies.”¹⁴⁰ That said, “external support can be important for sanctuary, funding, arms, diplomatic support, and credibility and recognition.”¹⁴¹ “Conversely, the government will make sure that the insurgents do not get that support and recognition.”¹⁴²

“How are insurgents actually fighting?”¹⁴³ “In the first two stages of the war insurgents are using small arms (rifles, assault rifles (300m), grenades, mines and IEDs).”¹⁴⁴ “And light weapons that can be carried by one person or a small crew (rocket propelled grenades (RPG 300m), light machine guns (750m), light (60mm) mortars (750mm), and man portable air defense systems (MANPADS)).”¹⁴⁵ “Because the insurgents at this stage are engaging in a hit and run activity, they must use portable weapons in order to move quickly and hide in difficult settings (jungles, deserts, mountains, scrub, etc.)”¹⁴⁶ “Most of these weapons have got ranges of a couple hundred meters.”¹⁴⁷ “Poorly maintained assault rifles in the hands of poorly trained insurgents have trouble hitting

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

anything beyond a hundred meters.”¹⁴⁸ “Firing these weapons on full automatic on the hip, the insurgents have almost no chance of hitting anything whatsoever.”¹⁴⁹ “So you will often observe insurgents wasting massive amounts of ammunition because they do not know how to aim, but generally speaking, we are talking about engagement in which the lethal zone is about a couple hundred meters.”¹⁵⁰

“There are also heavier light weapons in which a couple of people can carry with or without needing to break them down into bits.”¹⁵¹ “Medium machine guns can reach up to 1500m if used properly, medium (82 mm) mortar can reach up to 3000 meters, recoilless rifles (like a cannon but with thinner walls) can reach up to 1000 meters, (usually wire guided) anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) can reach up to 3000 meters, and heavier weapons mounted on vehicle – called “technical.”¹⁵² “Some of these weapons can be carried and some must be driven around.”¹⁵³

“When the insurgents get into the later stages of war – third phase – the insurgents begin using medium and heavy weapons – heavy mortars, towed artillery, rockets, and captured tanks.”¹⁵⁴ “Obviously, to operate medium and heavy weapons the insurgents must have areas under their control where they can maintain them, fuel them, find ammunition for them, etc.”¹⁵⁵ “An important note to keep is that most of the wars are going to be fought with small arms at a range of a few hundred meters.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Brynen, “Peacebuilding,” lecture on February 9, 2018.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Counterinsurgency

“Counterinsurgency campaigns (COIN) typically focus on one to four related areas.”¹⁵⁷ First, “if COIN can destroy the insurgent forces, COIN wins.”¹⁵⁸ Second, “if COIN can build government legitimacy, then COIN can drain the grievances which are fueling the insurgency.”¹⁵⁹ “However, the former point depends on the type of insurgency.”¹⁶⁰ “Not all insurgencies are entirely or predominantly grievance driven.”¹⁶¹ “It is possible to have insurgencies that are greed driven (driven by resources), and these insurgencies are not really feeding off political grievances but simply access to resources.” Third, “COIN can build government capacity.”¹⁶² “That is, if the government is strong and powerful, then it is harder for the insurgency to grow.”¹⁶³ This is, “both in terms of the ability of the government to apply coercive resources – if the government has greater capacity – and non-coercive resources (coopting etc.).”¹⁶⁴ Third, “COIN can deter support for rebel activities through repression (if a village cooperates with rebels, COIN will burn the village), or by COIN providing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to address those grievances.”¹⁶⁵ “Some of those COIN tactics will potentially work across purposes.”¹⁶⁶ For example, “if COIN is attempting to deter rebel activities through massive repression and coercion, it is going to be very hard for the government to grow legitimacy.”¹⁶⁷ Another example, “if COIN is engaging enemy forces, COIN might be generating considerable collateral damage which will

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

undermine government legitimacy.”¹⁶⁸ “So it may not be possible for COIN to pursue all of those at the same time, and some countries will have a different mix than others.”¹⁶⁹

Some of the COIN principles are as follows: “legitimacy is the main objective; unity of effort is essential (coordination issues); political factors are primary; counterinsurgents must understand the environment; intelligence drives operation (COIN needs information in order to act); insurgents must be isolated from support (physically and politically isolated); security under rule of law is essential; long term commitment (insurgency issues are not fixed quickly); COIN must manage information and expectations, use appropriate levels of force, empower the lowest levels in COIN, and the host nations must be empowered.”¹⁷⁰

“COIN paradoxes are as follows.”¹⁷¹ “sometimes more force is less useful, so if COIN engages in so much force that it secures military victory but produces significant collateral damage, COIN may have caused so much political damage to the cause that it offsets the military gains of dead insurgents.”¹⁷² “The more successful the COIN, the less forces and the more risk is needed.”¹⁷³ “Sometimes the best reaction is to do nothing.”¹⁷⁴ “Some of the best COIN weapons don’t shoot (political, economic, and social factors).”¹⁷⁵ “The host country doing something tolerably is better than outsiders doing it well.”¹⁷⁶ “A COIN tactic that works here and now might not work there or later (insurgents are adaptive).”¹⁷⁷ “Many of the decisions are not made by generals, but by lower ranking COIN operatives.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

“Essential to COIN is understanding the context it is operating in – the social, political, economic, cultural, geographic context.”¹⁷⁹ “This can be challenging for military personnel as they are neither selected for nor trained for being political anthropologists.”¹⁸⁰ “This is essentially the skill set COIN personnel need to understand what it is going on locally.”¹⁸¹ “COIN must also understand insurgent capabilities – where they are drawing their political support, where they are getting their money, are they using criminal networks, how many artillery, are they dug in, how many air support, but also what is the grievance, where do they get their social support base, are they involved in drug smuggling, how are they collecting their money.”¹⁸²

“COIN operations are about clear-hold-build (“ink-spot”).” “Clearing means offensive operations with the objective of killing, disrupting, and isolating insurgents.”¹⁸³ “Hold means COIN will maintain presence, enhance security, population controls, intelligence.”¹⁸⁴ “Build by training and equipping – building local support.”¹⁸⁵ “COIN local operations are embedded with foreign advisors and military personnel.”¹⁸⁶

There are “tactical issues that involve how much COIN protects itself from attack, to how much COIN will be open to what is going on around them.”¹⁸⁷ “Do COIN concentrate their forces, or disperse them to get more reach and more information but at the cost of being more vulnerable?”¹⁸⁸ “Do you respond with deterrence, that is, a response to an attack with massive force such as airstrikes etc., but that alienates the local population?”¹⁸⁹ “COIN needs to seize the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

initiative. Coin does not want the insurgents to control the pace. Insurgents are ambushing and surprising, instead COIN needs to surprise the insurgents.”¹⁹⁰

Methodology and its Weakness

The Methodology

I will rely on a range of secondary material in English and Arabic, as well as primary documents with a specific focus on the conflict in Mosul.¹⁹¹ My objective is to utilize process tracing to generate empirical evidence in ways that will enable me to address my primary research questions.¹⁹² This process applies to the qualitative data. For the quantitative data, I will draw from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which covers violence in Iraq from January 2017 to February 2018.¹⁹³

I will focus on the following types of political violence (defined below) in my analysis: “Political violence is the use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation. ACLED defines political violence through its constituent events, the intent of which is to produce a comprehensive overview of all forms of political conflict within and across states. A politically violent event is a single altercation where force is often used by one or more groups to a political end, although some instances – including protests and nonviolent activity – are included in the dataset to capture the potential pre-cursors or critical junctures in a period of disorder.”¹⁹⁴

1. “Battles are violent clashes between at least two armed groups. Battle types are distinguished by whether control of a location is unchanged as a consequence of the event;

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Aziz, “Militia and Insurgency Violence: The Politics of Sectarianism in Iraq.”

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, <https://www.acleddata.com>.

¹⁹⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, “ACLED Definitions of Political Violence and Protest,” accessed May 2, 2018, https://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/ACLED-Definitions-of-Political-Violence-and-Protest_FINAL.pdf.

whether a non-state group has assumed control of a location, or whether a government has resumed control of that location. Battles make up approximately one third of the dataset.”¹⁹⁵

2. “Violence against civilians involves violent attacks on unarmed civilians. These acts comprise a third of the collected data.”¹⁹⁶
3. “Headquarter and base establishment is an event where an armed, organized group established an area or zone for its strategic and safe positioning.”¹⁹⁷
4. “Non-violent takeover of territory notes when an armed organized group assumes control of a territory without engaging in a battle. Its inclusion can accurately track which locations and areas of a country are under the control of a non-state agent.”¹⁹⁸
5. “Remote violence refers to events where an explosion, bomb, or other weapon was used to engage in conflict, and did not require the physical presence of the perpetrator. These elements are crucial distinctions because they suggest the inability of the target to engage or defend themselves and their location.”¹⁹⁹
6. “Strategic developments include incidences of looting, peace-talks, high profile arrests, recruitment into non-state groups, etc., and accounts for a small proportion of the total dataset. These common events suggest the context of disorder.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., accessed April 29, 2018.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., accessed May 2, 2018.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., accessed April 29, 2018.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., accessed May 2, 2018.

The Problem with the Methodology

The World Bank outlines the following problem, with which this thesis identifies, in researching violence in zones where conflicts are ongoing:

One of the greatest challenges in researching lessons on violence prevention and recovery is the lack of available quantitative and qualitative data, due to challenges of security and access, along with low statistical capacity. Even in the World Bank's comprehensive data sets, countries most affected by violence often register empty data columns. Polling, household surveys, and evaluations of the impacts of policies and project interventions are also limited in violence-affected countries and regions.²⁰¹

Douglas A. Hibbs Jr., who also sought to answer the question on the difference in levels of violence – albeit in his publication in the 1970s – found these two deficiencies in qualitative and quantitative methodologies:

The qualitative research has two principal deficiencies. First, qualitative case studies are often concerned primarily with the idiosyncrasies of the particular instance. As a result, factors that may have general relevance tend to become obscured. A problem that characterizes the qualitative work more generally is an ambiguity and circumlocution in style that makes the extraction of testable hypotheses difficult and, at times, impossible. (...) The quantitative literature also has limitations. Many of these studies are almost entirely atheoretical in the sense that they are exclusively concerned with determining the “dimensions” of domestic conflict through the factor analysis of quantitative data. This has been useful for conceptual clarification, but it does not advance causal understanding in any direct way. Other quantitative studies predict (or postdict!) variance in measures of

²⁰¹ “World Bank Development Report 2011,” 94, en. 9.

domestic conflict by means of regression and correlation analyses but ignore issues concerning the underlying causal linkages among the variables involved.²⁰²

²⁰² Hibbs, *Mass political violence*, 4.

Chapter 2

The Objectives of ISIS, PMF, and JRTN

ISIS' Objective

ISIS' objective is to establish a state of its own under its strict interpretation of Islam.²⁰³ ISIS seeks to delegitimize the Iraqi government and neighboring governments.²⁰⁴ Indeed, the group had a tax extraction ability underpinned by its discipline in running the pre-existing state institutions present in territories under its control.²⁰⁵ Contrary to popular perceptions, ISIS obtained most of its revenue by taxing the locals and not from oil sales.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, as acknowledged by the locals themselves, despite relying on brute force and extreme punitive measures, the militants were capable and did provide better services than the Iraqi government: cleaner streets, fixing potholes quicker, more electricity, and so forth.²⁰⁷ In many ways, ISIS was operating like a state that has effectively mobilized its institutions.²⁰⁸ As such, it was able to fill the hole of local grievances stemming from the local population due to the lack of infrastructure.²⁰⁹ That said, what still alienated the locals was the insurgents' radical imposition of what it perceived as the correct interpretation of Islam,²¹⁰ such as confiscating the properties of Shiites, Christians, and other non-Sunnis;²¹¹ imposing *niqab* on women, and punching little girls in the face for forgetting to wear the *niqab* even when they are on short errands from their home;²¹² executing

²⁰³ Rukmini Callimachi, "The ISIS Files: When Terrorists Run City Hall," *The New York Times*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/04/world/middleeast/isis-documents-mosul-iraq.html>.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

and punishing adulterers and what the insurgents perceive as transgressors of moral values: shaving beards, smoking cigarettes/shishas, having satellite television, carrying mobile phones and so forth.²¹³ They also threatened civil servants with violence and imprisonment if they failed to attend their jobs or to do them well.²¹⁴ As one resident civil servant in charge of distributing the land tracts confiscated by the group on the grounds that they were owned by Shiites, Christians, and other non-Sunnis said, “These were my brothers, but we were forced to do it [that is, distribute agricultural lands confiscated by the insurgents].”²¹⁵ When this same civil servant tried to flee the city despite acknowledging that the streets were cleaner, ISIS insurgents knocked on his door with a receipt from a bank withdrawal he conducted an hour earlier in preparation of his fleeing.²¹⁶ The insurgents said to him, “[t]ry this again and we’ll kill every last one of you.”²¹⁷ Whilst this shows the brutality of the insurgents, it also shows that their institutional capacity is not only limited to tax collection and providing infrastructural services, but also includes fast and credible intelligence.

PMF’s Objective

The objective of the PMF is to roll back ISIS from Iraq.²¹⁸ It is comprised of a number of militias that are mostly Shiite oriented: 40-50 militias that amount to 141,000 fighters.²¹⁹ The

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ See for instance, a press conference by Nouri al-Maliki, June 10, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAVO7nbVJVw>, and United Nations Security Council, “Third report submitted by the Secretary General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2110 of 2013,” *United Nations*, 14 July 2014, available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/485; Ayatollah Sistan’s Office, “‘Marja’ Sistani calls on citizens able to carry arms and kill terrorists to volunteer with security forces in protection for their country, people and religion,” June 13 2014, <http://www.sistani.org/arabic/in-news/24908/>. As seen in Amnesty International, “Iraq report: turning a blind eye,” *Amnesty International*, January 5 2017, fn.2, 3, Accessed May 4, 2018, https://www.amnestyusa.org/files/iraq_report_turning_a_blind_eye.pdf.

²¹⁹ Hamza Hemdawi, “Fears in Iraqi Government, army over Shiite Militias’ Power,” *Associated Press*, March 21 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/9696d8589a774c33a2e29aaf9699330c/fears-iraqi-government-army-over-shiite->

militias have juridical cover from the Iraqi central state and the Shiite religious seminaries of the Najaf.²²⁰ Some of the militias of the PMF are non-Shiites, but the PMF's dominant Shiite orientation makes the PMF essentially Shiite.²²¹ The militias have strong political ties to the Iraqi politicians, and even overlap with the political class in some cases.²²² The militias also have strong ties with Iran²²³ and perhaps with other external states.²²⁴ That said, there are some minor differences in the *modus operandi* of some militias.²²⁵ For example, some might be more aligned to Iran and thus operate in Syria, while others may be more autonomous – albeit with external ties – and function only in Iraq.²²⁶ Despite these differences between the militias, the PMF umbrella group relies heavily on assistance from the Iraqi central government and external states such as Iran for funds, weapons, intelligence, etc. Some of the militias that make up the PMF were formed before 2003, some after 2003, and some after the PMF was established in 2014 as part of the counterinsurgency campaign against ISIS.²²⁷

militias-power. See Iraqi budget for 2016, <http://www.moj.gov.iq/uploaded/4394.pdf>. Popular Mobilization (al-Hashd al-Sha'bi), "Al-Asadi: 141 thousand fights from all national components in Hash," *al-Hashd al-Sha'bi*, December 9, 2016, <http://tinyurl.com/hosaxae>; General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, "Allocation of funds for "public mobilization" salaries," November 26, 2014, <http://cabinet.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=5475>, and General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers (GSCOM), "PM releases divan order concerning volunteers," June 14, 2014, <http://cabinet.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=4888>, as seen in Amnesty, "Iraq report," fn 5,6,7,8.

²²⁰ Margaret Coker and Falih Hassan, "ISIS Is Weakened, but Iraq Election Could Unravel Hard-Won Stability," *New York Times*, January 30, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/30/world/middleeast/iraq-election-abadi.html>. See press conference by al-Maliki, June 10, 2014, and UN Security Council, "Third report," Ayatollah Sistan's Office, "'Marja' Sistani," as seen in Amnesty, "Iraq report," fn 2,3.

²²¹ Farah Najjar, "Iraq's Second Army: Who Are They, What Do They Want?" *al-Jazirah*, October 31, 2017, accessed May 4, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/iraq-army-171031063012795.html>.

²²² Amnesty, "Iraq report," 15.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Reuters Staff, "Iraqi Shi'ite Leader Sadr Makes Rare Visit to Saudi Arabia," *Reuters*, July 31, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-iraq-cleric/iraqi-shiite-leader-sadr-makes-rare-visit-to-saudi-arabia-idUSKBN1AF0UN>.

²²⁵ Amnesty, "Iraq report," 14.

²²⁶ Amnesty, "Iraq report," 15.

²²⁷ Amnesty, "Iraq report," 13.

JRTN's Objective

JRTN's objective is to expel all foreign troops, overthrow the post-2003 political class from Iraq, and establish a state with a hybrid pan-Islamic and pan-Arab secular ideology modelled on the Ba'th party.²²⁸ However, JRTN does not seek territory beyond modern day Iraq. Most of the cadres of JRTN are members of the Ba'th party.²²⁹ For example JRTN's leader, Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, was Saddam Hussein's vice president of the Revolutionary Command Council.²³⁰ Unlike the PMF and ISIS, there are no data sets available on the use of violence by JRTN from January 2017 to February 2018. However, Stanford's *Mapping Militant Organizations* says the following about JRTN's choice of targets and strategies:

"The JRTN chooses its targets very carefully. It only targets fighters who operate in the name of the Maliki government, Iran, coalition forces, or insurgents groups that oppose the creation of a Ba'athist state in Iraq. The JRTN has explicitly forbidden its fighters from killing Iraqi citizens, regardless of their sectarian or ethnic affiliation.²³¹ In carrying out its attacks, the JRTN has used light and medium rifles, IEDs, anti- (sic)ta[n]k RPG-7s, RKG-3 grenades, and unspecified missiles."²³²

²²⁸ Michael Knights, "The next insurgency: Baathists and Salafis pool resources to fight Iraqi government," *Gulf States Newsletter*, 34, no. 885 (Sept. 17, 2010): 1-3, accessed August 31, 2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/4cb5e0af99213.pdf>. As seen in "Army of the Men of the Naqshbandi Order," *Wikipedia*, last edited May 2, 2018, fn.12, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_of_the_Men_of_the_Naqshbandi_Order#cite_note-Gulf_States_Newsletter-12

²²⁹ Michael Knights, "Saddam Hussein's Faithful Friend, the King of Clubs, Might Be the Key to Saving Iraq," *New Republic*, June 24, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/118356/izzat-ibrahim-al-douri-saddam-husseins-pal-key-stopping-isis>, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia (JRTN)," *Mapping Militant Organizations*, accessed May 5, 2018, fn.47. http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/print_view/75.

²³⁰ Knights, "Saddam Hussein's Faithful Friend."

²³¹ Michael Knights, "The JRTN Movement and Iraq's Next Insurgency," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, July 1, 2011, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-jrtm-movement-and-iraq-s-next-insurgency>; Paul Allum, "Sunni militant group, Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia, evolve in northern Iraq," *International Operations*, January 23, 2013, <http://unityresourcesgroup.blogspot.com/2013/01/sunni-militant-group-jaysh-rijal-al.html>, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," accessed May 5, 2018, fn.80.

²³² Knights, "The JRTN Movement;" Allum, "Sunni militant group," as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," accessed May 5, 2018, fn.82.

JRTN also sub-contracts other groups to execute its attacks, as the group does not want to alienate the local population.²³³

Where do the PMF, ISIS and JRTN operate and why is it important?

In Iraq, the insurgencies and militias operate both transnationally and nationally. This depends on which insurgency or militia we are writing about. For example, ISIS operates transnationally in Syria and Iraq, and launches attacks on a global scale.²³⁴ The PMF is also a transnational militia that has operated in Syria but not elsewhere.²³⁵ JRTN has only launched attacks in Iraq.²³⁶ However, all three groups are said to have received safe havens in neighboring states. The PMF cadres have been said to have received training in Iran.²³⁷ ISIS has been said to have received training in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.²³⁸ JRTN's leader ran their operations from Qatar while he was being treated for his sickness.²³⁹ Insurgencies and militias in Iraq received assistance from external states; this assistance comes with political ties. So these insurgencies and militias are driven by external support, not just local support. This is important because it demonstrates to us that rather than classifying the insurgencies and militias as Islamic, we can see that there are

²³³ Richard Tomkins, "Ba'athists aiding insurgent attacks," *Washington Post*, 4 June 2009, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/04/baathist-comeback-feared/print/>, "Jaysh Rijal," accessed May 5, 2018, fn.1.

²³⁴ Tim Lister et al., "ISIS goes global: 143 attacks in 29 countries have killed 2,043," *CNN*, February 12, 2018, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/index.html>.

²³⁵ Babak Dehghanpisheh, "The Iraqi militia helping Iran carve a road to Damascus," *Reuters*, September 22, 2017, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-nujaba>.

²³⁶ Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, Aymenn. "Naqshbandi Army: Islamic New Year Statement: Translation and Analysis." *Pundicity* (blog), October 30, 2014, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/10/naqshbandi-army-islamic-new-year-statement>; Knights, "The JRTN Movement."

²³⁷ Stephen Kalin and Jonathan Landay, "Go home, Tillerson tells Iranian-backed militias in Iraq," *Reuters*, October 22, 2017, accessed May 5 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-gulf-tillerson-iraq/go-home-tillerson-tells-iranian-backed-militias-in-iraq-idUSKBNICR0JR>.

²³⁸ Declan Walsh, "WikiLeaks cables portray Saudi Arabia as a cash machine for terrorists," *Guardian*, December 5, 2010, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/05/wikileaks-cables-saudi-terrorist-funding>.

²³⁹ Jack Murphy, "Leading Ba'ath party member, Izzet al-Douri Injured by US airstrike in Sinjar, Iraq," *BAS News*, 30 March 2015. <http://www.basnews.com/en/news/2015/03/29/saddams-former-vice-president-injured-taken-to-qatar-for-medical-treatment>, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," fn.64.

sub-groups within them. The most obvious differences within these sub-groups is that some of them operate transnationally, while others operate locally. This is important from the analytical perspective because it draws attention to the multiplicity of local and external actors involved in the conflict in Iraq.

Analysis²⁴⁰

Violence against civilians

The highest number of civilian fatalities was in Ninewa province. Most of the province, which includes Mosul, was under the control of ISIS. For ISIS, the violence used against civilians between January 2017 and February 2018 was for two main strategic reasons. First, from January 2017 to July 2017, ISIS was using violence against civilians as a means to keep the area under its control and away from the advancing government forces. During that time, ISIS was mostly engaging in hit and run activities to destabilize government positions in areas the government recently retook from ISIS. These hit and run activities had collateral damage – the civilians. Second, from July 2017 to January 2018, the ISIS hit and run attacks dramatically decreased. This is because by then, ISIS had lost most of its safe sanctuaries to government control. The sanctuaries provided a safe haven from which ISIS could launch and plan attacks.

Still in Mosul, the civilian deaths were highest in the period of March 2017 to June 2017. From January 2017 to February 2017 the fatalities dropped, but from February 2017 to March 2017, the fatalities rose dramatically. From June 2017 to July 2017, the fatalities dropped dramatically, and continued to drop afterwards to what became relatively negligible and constant levels compared to previous months. An explanation for the peak in fatalities between March 2017

²⁴⁰ The analysis draws from the quantitative data in the appendices, and the spreadsheet generated by ACLED as mentioned in the section “a note on the data.”

and June 2017 is that, as the government was advancing and closing in on areas under the control of ISIS, in Western Mosul the intensity of the battles was rising.²⁴¹ As a strategy to keep its territory, ISIS was killing all civilians trying to flee Western Mosul (under ISIS control then) to Eastern Mosul (under government control). One possibility is that ISIS sought to keep these locals in the areas under its control as human shields. Alternatively, if ISIS predicted it would win the fights against the government, then these locals would pay taxes to ISIS and be recruited and serve ISIS generally. Also, perhaps ISIS did not want the locals to flee as they could have provided valuable intelligence on ISIS if they reached government forces. We know for a fact that some civilians were killed because they refused to obey orders. For example, on April 4 2017, one local Imam was executed for not accepting ISIS' request to approve an execution ISIS sought to conduct. Another local Imam was assassinated by ISIS in Western Mosul on 27 March 2017. Although the reason for the assassination of the second Imam on 27 March 2017 is unknown, it is safe to consider that the Imam was killed because he refused to obey ISIS orders or opposed the group by working with the government – the former is more likely because in many instances the locals do not like either the insurgents or the militias. Another incident involved ISIS executing a family for refusing ISIS' request to mount a mortar installation on the roof of their home. Another incident was the execution of the family of a man who refused to be recruited by ISIS. There are a number of possible reasons why these civilians refused to cooperate with ISIS; the first could be for normative reasons. That is, the locals do not see ISIS as the “good guys,” but instead see ISIS as criminals trying to leech-off of the locals by pretending to share their grievances. Second, ISIS did not provide enough non-coercive incentives for the locals to obey ISIS. Rather, ISIS' widespread

²⁴¹ The government launched its operation to retake Mosul in November 2016. By January 2017, the government had already re-taken all of Eastern Mosul from ISIS. BBC News, “How the battle for Mosul unfolded,” *BBC News*, July 10, 2017, accessed May 6, 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-37702442>.

use of violence as a coercive measure to control the locals seemed to alienate them, especially as the battles raged between the government forces and ISIS, the locals found a window to flee. Third, as mentioned above in the beginning of the thesis, the locals prefer to be on the winning side. As the government continued to advance and ISIS lost territory, it was clear who was the winning side. So although the civilians may not like either the PMF or ISIS they might have chosen not to obey ISIS because they saw them as the losing side, and did not want to be associated with ISIS when the government re-took territory. The latter is the most probable explanation, as it has the advantage of also explaining why so many civilians were choosing to flee Eastern Mosul to Western Mosul, which the government controlled. But it is also very likely that the civilians were fleeing Eastern Mosul because they were simply scared for their lives, as the intense battle between pro-government militias and ISIS raged around them. It is noteworthy to mention that the five bridges connecting West Mosul to East Mosul were all destroyed by the Coalition forces so as to prevent ISIS from moving to the East.²⁴² The broken down bridges also made the journey East much harder if not impossible for civilians. Still, despite the broken down bridges, many civilians opted to navigate that crossing with the knowledge that it might end in death. For the civilians, this was a better alternative than being used or abducted by ISIS to be human shields or mere sources of local support.

After June 2017, the attacks on civilians by ISIS were less concentrated in Mosul and became more scattered around the province. We can observe a surge in fatalities in Tel Afar in July 2017, which coincides with the moment when the government launched a campaign to take the city from ISIS. For example, ISIS killed civilians in Tel Afar because it accused them of spying for the Iraqi government. Another example from Tel Afar, found within the data of violence against

²⁴² BBC News, "How the battle for Mosul unfolded."

civilians although not quite about civilians, is ISIS executing its own members in July 2017 for trying to flee battles. The other attacks on civilians by ISIS were mostly hit and run operations, in which ISIS targeted primarily the government forces and their supporters, journalists, civilians, policemen, etc. Here, the civilians were collateral damage. This is mostly because ISIS uses light and medium weapons in which the lethal zone is a couple hundred meters. The reason why ISIS was engaging in such attacks was classic insurgency style warfare, in which the insurgent seeks to weaken the government capacity (by killing its personnel) and delegitimize the government (killing civilians so as to show the government is weak and unable to protect locals, and thus less appealing to the locals who are coercively pushed into ISIS' arms).

We can also observe that very few civilian deaths took place in Shiite majority provinces: Babylon, Kerbala, and Najaf. This is because ISIS has no sanctuaries to operate in these cities, and the Shiite character of these cities makes it hard for ISIS to take refuge there. The hit and run attacks that occurred every couple of months by ISIS in these cities were merely symbolic, to make a statement that ISIS was present. We must also consider that ISIS has limited resources, so perhaps it chooses to conduct more hit and run attacks in a sustained and not dispersed manner (as in Najaf, Karbala, and Babylon) in areas where it does not have sanctuaries, such as Baghdad. Since Baghdad is the capital and the government seat, the attacks there carry more damage to the government both physically and psychologically (to the morale). Therefore, from ISIS' perspective, it is better to channel its weapons, recruits, and intelligence in areas where violence causes the most impact to the government – the capital.

In Baghdad the civilian death toll was also high, 158 from January 2017 to February 2018. Most of the attacks ISIS conducted involved booby traps and suicide bombers targeting areas heavily populated with Shiites, Sadr city for example. Other attacks were also aimed at mixed

Sunni and Shiite commercial areas, but mostly Shiite ones. The busy markets allows ISIS to inflict maximum damage on civilians. Other attacks in Baghdad by ISIS show a high level of intelligence-information sharing by ISIS. For example, ISIS targeted the convoy of the President of the Provincial Council which was passing in Adhamiyah, a Sunni-majority neighborhood if not exclusively Sunni. Other attacks by ISIS included colleges and universities which ISIS claimed were densely populated with a Shiite presence. There is no particular increase or decrease in the fatalities across the months in Baghdad. The months with the attacks causing the most civilian casualties in Baghdad took place in January 2017, February 2017, and January 2018. In the other months during that period, the attacks were consistent but low level – not causing a particular spike in the number of casualties. The attacks by ISIS in Baghdad are continuous from month to month; they do not stop like in Shiite majority provinces such as Babylon, Najaf, and Kerbala. In Baghdad, every couple of months there is one attack with a high number of casualties, while the rest of the months see consistent attacks with low casualties. As mentioned, the objective of these attacks is to destabilize the government by making it seem weak and less appealing to the locals. This objective is of course tied to the goal of weakening the government by making it lose its capacity, or divert more of its resources in protecting Baghdad, leaving less of the already stretched resources available to deter ISIS advances and attacks in other provinces in the periphery.

The by-month numbers of civilian fatalities in Anbar and Kirkuk are ad hoc. Anbar is a Sunni-majority province, whilst Kirkuk is a mixed province. We can observe that the incidents and fatalities generally drop over time. In Anbar, as time progresses, more incidents are required to cause fatalities. In Kirkuk, the number of incidents does not really affect the casualties. This is because the insurgents are badly trained and their hit and run operations are often faced without success. The number of fatalities in Salah al-Din, another Sunni-majority province, is also low.

ISIS lost Salah al-Din in 2016,²⁴³ so during the time period we are analyzing the violence in these months is mostly hit and run attacks also aimed at deterring local support from the government or attacking the positions of government forces. Although the number of civilian casualties in Salah al-Din is low, it remains higher than Najaf, Karbala, and Babylon. The deaths in Salah al-Din are spread across the time period and are consistent across attacks from January 2017 to February 2018.

Overall, we can observe that most civilian fatalities took place in areas where ISIS had previous control of. The exception being the capital, due to the high value that attacking targets in a capital holds for any insurgency. Also, the attacks in Baghdad were mostly aimed at areas densely populated by Shiites. The areas where ISIS previously had control are mostly Sunni cities, except Diyala and Kirkuk, which are mixed provinces with a substantial Sunni presence. Violence against provinces with mostly Shiite populations were relatively negligible and would occur once every couple of months. We can observe that the violence utilized by ISIS is consistent with the theory of why and how insurgencies operate. ISIS began by controlling peripheral areas in Iraq; however, as they lost territory they maintained hit and run attacks across the same cities – albeit with less power. The objective for using violence was to control the local population by either making it acquiesce or support ISIS. This was evident when ISIS was killing civilians trying to escape battle zones in ISIS controlled areas in Mosul, or those who refused to be recruited or to support ISIS. The second objective of the attacks in which civilian were killed was violence used against government targets. These attacks were meant to weaken the government and make it less appealing to the locals. Such attacks had collateral damage that claimed the lives of civilians, since the light to medium weapons that ISIS uses have a lethal zone of a couple hundred of meters (as

²⁴³ Columb Strack, “Islamic State in Decline,” *HIS Markit*, October 10, 2017, accessed May 15, 2018, <https://ihsmarkit.com/research-analysis/islamic-state-in-decline.html>.

mentioned above). Third, ISIS would use lethal violence against its own ranks if they attempted to defect or flee from battle. We conclude that while ISIS clearly targets Shiite civilians, it equally targets Sunnis who oppose the insurgents. In the data from which we have drawn our empirical findings, there is no evidence that ISIS was simply pillaging, raping, and killing. The violence was purely used for strategic reasons – gaining territory and establishing their own system of government. Violence in this context was used by ISIS to achieve these goals. Of course, there is ample evidence that ISIS used violence to impose its own moral codes on the local population. Lethal violence was mostly used for strategic reasons while non-lethal as well as lethal violence was used to maintain ISIS' view of what Islamic society should be like.

Compared to ISIS, who killed 3059 civilians, the PMF killed 11 civilians. The civilians killed by the PMF were exclusively Sunni. The strategies used by PMF against civilians are those of abduction, torture, and killings. The motive behind such killings seems to be sadism and strategic objectives. For example, the PMF killed two women in Mosul whom they accused of spying for ISIS. Another example is the PMF killing the son of an Islamic State Mufti in Tel Afar. The PMF abducted high school children. The PMF killed two Sunni leaders. While the PMF killed few civilians directly, it is likely that many civilians who were caught in the crossfire between the government and ISIS lost their lives; however, there are no reports on this. There are also unidentified armed groups who have a pattern of killing a grand majority non-Shiites, mostly Sunnis. For example, unidentified militants killed the mother, wife, and three sons of an ISIS member. The attacks by the PMF and unidentified armed groups are selective lethal attacks that target mostly Sunnis in areas where ISIS is active or was in control. While the majority of the lethal violence against civilians was caused by ISIS, according to a panel in the Carnegie Endowment Middle East Center, it seems that Internal Displacement is being used as a political

weapon by Iraqi central government.²⁴⁴ One speaker said, “displacement is being used [by the central government] as a method of demographic change.”²⁴⁵ That is, the Sunnis who have left their homes due to the battles with ISIS are either not being allowed to return to their homes, asked to go somewhere else, or they are allowed to return but are not provided with reconstruction so they would ultimately leave.²⁴⁶ The UN migration agency reports that out of the 5.8 million displaced due to the conflict with ISIS, 2.6 million have not returned to their homes.²⁴⁷ A Human Rights Watch report documents “through field visits, analysis of satellite imagery, interviews with victims and witnesses, and review of photo and video evidence, that militias looted property of Sunni civilians who had fled fighting, burned their homes and businesses, and destroyed at least two entire villages.”²⁴⁸

Remote Violence

The PMF killed 173 targets in 39 incidents. ISIS killed 2608 targets in 944 incidents. The PMF incidents only took place in Sunni majority provinces and mix Sunni-Shiite provinces. Most of this type of violence by the PMF was aimed at ISIS. However, there was one incident where the target was the home of a member of the Kurdish Democratic Party. Another incident was in the Green Zone, the seat of the Iraqi central government. In the attack against the Green Zone, Katyusha rockets were fired from Sadr city to the Green Zone. Another event involved the killing

²⁴⁴ Heydemann, “Politics of Post-Conflict,” accessed May 13, 2018

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ International Organization for Migration, “Number of Returns Exceeds Number of Displaced Iraqis: UN Migration Agency,” *Relief Web*, January 12, 2018, accessed May 13, 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/number-returns-exceeds-number-displaced-iraqis-un-migration-agency>.

²⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, “Flawed Justice: Accountability for ISIS Crimes in Iraq,” *Human Rights Watch Reports*, December 5, 2017, accessed May 13, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/12/05/flawed-justice/accountability-isis-crimes-iraq>; for other reports on human rights abuses by the PMF, see Human Rights Watch, “Ruinous Aftermath: Militias Abuses Following Iraq’s Recapture of Tikrit,” *Human Rights Watch Reports*, September 20, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/20/ruinous-aftermath/militias-abuses-following-iraqs-recapture-tikrit>; Amnesty, “Iraq Report.”

of two Sunni leaders in Mosul by snipers from the PMF. While the remote violence by the PMF is mostly aimed at ISIS, there are incidents where the targets were civilians, the government, and Kurds. The PMF targets members whose political agendas diverge from their own, even if their target is the Shiite-dominated government. Sadr's militias (part of the PMF) firing at the Green Zone was a symbolic move to tell the government that Sadr is present and does not approve of the government's corruption. Sadr is often vocal in how he disapproves of the way the government is managing the country. Targeting ISIS is obviously meant to incapacitate ISIS and the targets were drones, gatherings, cars, etc. Targeting a member of the Kurdish Democratic Party is also meant to incapacitate the Kurdish politicians, as there is a political rivalry between the Kurdish political class and the Shiite one. ISIS was the most frequent target by the PMF because it represents the biggest threat to the survival of the government, and thus the PMF. Most of the fatalities of remote violence utilized by the PMF took place in Ninewa and Salah al-Din – the two are predominantly Sunni cities. In Ninewa, the incidents took place between January 2017 and April 2017, the crux of the battles of Mosul, and from October 2017 to January 2018, the period related to the operations of Tel Afar. In Salah al-Din, the incidents took place between January 2017 and April 2017, and from June 2017 to August 2017. There were also incidents both in October 2017 and January 2017. There is no pattern in Salah al-Din as the province was liberated between 2015 and 2016.

ISIS is more reliant on remote violence than the PMF as a strategy to inflict damage and achieve its objectives. This is because by definition, ISIS is an insurgency and weaker than the government. Therefore, conducting attacks from afar without being physically present is advantageous for ISIS: it is cheap, easy, quick, and effective. For example, ISIS can conduct multiple remote violence attacks simultaneously across the country. All ISIS needs to do is plant an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) here and there, and detonate them. The primary target of

ISIS' remote violence is the government. As mentioned, ISIS seeks to weaken the government by undermining its capacity. This includes hitting it where it hurts most – the economy. For example, ISIS attacked an oil pipeline in Diyala that supplied Baghdad with oil. Here the capital Baghdad, the siege of the government, will be most affected and thus the effect of not receiving oil is directly palpable to the government. ISIS would attack busy markets mostly in Shiite areas, but also some Sunni areas. The objective of this strategy is to make the government less popular in the eyes of the locals. ISIS would attack both PMF and Tribal Mobilization Forces (a Sunni-parallel to the PMF) checkpoints. Again, this strategy is targeted at weakening the governing capacity by reducing its reach into zones ISIS seeks to destabilize or control. ISIS' remote violence mostly involved IEDs. This could explain also why a significant number of the fatalities of remote violence by ISIS are victims of Unexploded Ordnances (UXOs). Most of the casualties by far were in Ninewa. As time passed in Ninewa, from January 2017 to February 2018, the number of fatalities as a result of remote violence by ISIS decreased substantially. This is because ISIS was most active in remote violence when it had safe sanctuaries to launch such attacks. As ISIS lost territories in Ninewa, its remote violence in the province also decreased. Also in Ninewa, there is a sudden drop from April 2017 to May 2017. This is because as the battles between the government and ISIS were coming to a close, ISIS was becoming more engaged in the direct battles, giving it less resources to spare for remote violence. Understandably, as ISIS was losing against the government it was also losing its capacity and resources to conduct remote violence in Ninewa. In Baghdad the fatalities were highest in January 2017, February 2017, March 2017, May 2017, and August 2017. There were no attacks in Baghdad from October 2017 to January 2018. Again this shows ISIS' weakened position as time progressed. Only in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Ninewa, there were nearly continuous attacks across the months. These provinces are Sunni-

majority or a mix. There were also nearly no fatalities or incidents in Najaf and Muthana from January 2017 to February 2018 – both Shiite-majority provinces. There was one fatality in Najaf in January 2017, and no fatalities or incidents for the rest of the months. In Muthana, there was only one incident with zero fatalities in February 2018. Perhaps one would expect ISIS to conduct more attacks on Shiite-majority cities because of ISIS’ Sunni-oriented ideology. However, very few attacks took place in Shiite-majority provinces. This is because ISIS does not deem them important enough to attack in this stage of the insurgency warfare. ISIS would rather attack Baghdad and Shiite targets in order to inflict maximum damage. Perhaps ISIS is conducting an attack every once in a while in these Shiite provinces just to show the locals they are there – to instill fear in their opponents as a psychological strategy. The province of Salah al-Din, Sunni-majority, witnessed a consistent level of attacks across the months. The primary targets of Salah al-Din were the government forces and interests. The fatalities across the months as a result of remote violence in Salah al-Din remained more or less constant. This could be explained by the fact that ISIS has a strong presence in the province despite losing most of its territories in it. Anbar also had a steady number of fatalities across the months. However, the number of incidents was particularly high in July 2017, August 2017, October 2017, and November 2017. In sum, ISIS is more reliant on remote violence than the PMF, as evidenced by the fatalities caused by remote violence on both sides. This is because ISIS is an insurgency, thus remote violence is a classic strategy usually used by insurgencies who are fighting a government which is much stronger. Remote violence allows ISIS to inflict damage without being caught most of the time. It is also evident that relatively few attacks took place in Shiite-majority cities, with most attacks taking place in Sunni-majority or mixed cities. Baghdad, a mix city, is one of the primary targets of remote violence by ISIS, because attacking the government in its siege will weaken it the most by affecting

its administrative capacity, security, and morale. It will also make the government less appealing to the locals, who will perceive it as being less capable of protecting itself or its citizens. ISIS also attacks Sunnis in its remote violence. This is because ISIS believes that these Sunnis oppose its political agenda. The PMF does not conduct remote violence against Shiites. Except for the one incident where al-Sadr launched Katyusha rockets on the Green Zone, discussed above. However, this attack was more symbolic rather than having the expressed objective of inflicting pain, as we see with the sustained ISIS attacks in Sunni and mixed areas, but not Shiite ones.

Battles which lead to gaining of territory

The PMF regained territory in Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din, while ISIS only gained territory in Anbar and Ninewa. It is clear that the government has an advantage in retaking territory. In Ninewa, two villages were gained by the government on March 13, 2017, and part of a neighborhood in old Mosul was gained on July 7, 2017; the number of fatalities in all battles was eight. In Anbar, ISIS took part of a highway on April 24, 2017, and in other incidents took an area in Western Anbar after capturing a Commander of the Sunni Tribal Forces on June 6, 2017. We can observe that ISIS only overtakes territory in Sunni areas. The battles were relatively bloodless and the targets were Iraqi police. We can see that whether the forces opposing ISIS are Sunni or Shiite is of little relevance to ISIS when it decides to fight them. In comparison, the PMF regained five territories in Anbar (on November 3, 2017, October 31, 2017, October 27, 2017, September 14, 2017, and in June 2017). The PMF regained one territory in Kirkuk on October 3, 2017. Ninewa was the province where the PMF regained the most territory for the government. In Ninewa, the government gained 59 territories and there were 611 fatalities. Most of the territories in Ninewa were regained in May 2017. Ninewa holds special importance to both the government and ISIS because it is Iraq's second largest city. The battles in Ninewa were mostly in Tel Afar and Sinjar,

where the PMF regained territory. The last territory regained by the PMF was on December 9, 2017. It seems that the Iraqi forces did the brunt of the fighting to re-take Mosul. In Salah al-Din, the PMF liberated three zones on January 28, 2017, May 14, 2017, and February 7, 2018. The battles in Salah al-Din that took place on February 7, 2018, were between the PMF and the White Flags. The White Flags are an insurgency that opposes the Iraqi government and consists of ex-ISIS and Kurdish militants that are not affiliated with the Kurdish Regional Government.²⁴⁹

In Conclusion, the government has the upper hand in gaining territory. Both ISIS and the PMF were only gaining territory in areas that are either Sunni or mixed areas. None of the provinces were Shiite-majority. This is logical because the government already controlled all Shiite-majority areas. ISIS cannot gain territory in Shiite-majority areas because it does not have local support and/or ISIS does not have the capacity to do so. We observed earlier in the remote violence section that ISIS even engaged in less remote violence attacks in Shiite areas than Sunni-majority areas. For ISIS to conduct any type of violence in Shiite-majority areas, it must establish sanctuaries in Sunni or mixed areas, especially in Baghdad, in order to directly weaken the government. All in all, ISIS' gain of territory was negligible compared to that of the government. ISIS was not able to gain territory because it was too busy fighting the government that sought to regain territory from ISIS. Therefore, ISIS was in a defensive formation during that period, whereas the government was mostly in an offensive formation.

Strategic Developments

The strategic developments of the PMF mainly revolved around defusing IEDs and other devices that belonged to ISIS. For example, the PMF defused IEDs in Anbar, Diyala, Ninewa,

²⁴⁹ "White Flags," Wikipedia, last edited April 7, 2018, accessed May 8, 2018.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Flags

Salah al-Din, Baghdad, and Kirkuk. In essence, all the provinces where the battles with or the presence of ISIS was pronounced. Another strategic development of the PMF is when the leader Abu Fadl al-Abbas Brigade (a militia within the PMF) announced from Najaf the disbandment of his brigade on December 10, 2017, because ISIS had been defeated.

The most persistent phenomenon relating to the strategic development of ISIS is the Iraqi forces finding many mass graves that ISIS had dug in past months. The mass graves were present in nearly all provinces where the groups were active (Sunni areas). The bodies found in these graves belonged to Iraqi forces, policemen, and civilians, mostly Sunni and non-Sunnis. Another strategic development is that members of ISIS would have IEDs and booby-trapped vehicles explode on them as they were installing or working on them. This shows that ISIS is a badly trained insurgency at this stage despite it capturing Mosul in June 2014 and occupying it for three years. The IEDs exploding or firing back on ISIS members shows that the recruitment standards for ISIS dropped as time progressed. Another strategic development relating to ISIS is when ISIS chose to burn oil wells. For example, in Hawija (Kirkuk), on September 30, 2017, ISIS burned oil wells in order to obstruct aerial views of their positions and to prevent them from being targeted. In Salah al-Din, on October 2, 2017, ISIS burned oil wells “in order to cover for their withdrawal to Hawija.”²⁵⁰ Other strategic developments related to ISIS is their attacking Shiite gatherings. For example, on October 30, 2017, Islamic State insurgents “attacked two houses in Baquba (Diyala) for Ashura ceremonies with hand grenades.”²⁵¹ These ISIS attacks are symbolic and meant merely to pass a message that ISIS is present and opposes Shiites in their entirety. Finally, on May 12,

²⁵⁰ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, “Data Tool,” *Acled Data* (blog), accessed May 13, 2018, <https://www.acleddata.com/data>. Search conducted with the following parameters From: 01/01/2017; To: 28/02/2018; Event type: Strategic development; Actor type: Rebel forces; Country: Iraq; The remaining criterion in the search on the parameters remained unchanged.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

2017, “Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi withdrew from Mosul.”²⁵² On May 22, 2017, ISIS withdrew from the town of al-Qaim in Anbar. Other strategic developments involved ISIS mobilizing against government forces. For example, in Hawija, on June 21, 2017, ISIS mobilized in the thousands in “preparation for an attack by the Peshmerga.”²⁵³ Another strategy of ISIS was to destroy electric and water plants, and PMF equipment. This is perhaps to alienate the locals from the local government, or it might just be a criminal act with no express purpose except sadism. For example, in Mosul on January 19, 2017, ISIS burned a water power plant. In Diyala on January 23, 2017, ISIS attacked an electricity power plant which led to 80 villages losing power. On the 15th of November, 2017, ISIS cut off water to the village of Abu Karma by diverting a river.

Headquarters or base established

Neither ISIS nor the PMF established any bases or headquarters. ISIS was busy fighting to keep areas under its control, or launching remote violence or hit and run attacks. The PMF was most likely using the facilities in the areas it recently retook from ISIS without establishing permanent bases.

Battles no change of territory

For the PMF, killing Islamic State insurgents in Ninewa and Salah al-Din had the biggest fatalities with regards to battles with no change in territories. Ninewa had more than double the fatalities of Salah al-Din, since Mosul is Iraq’s second largest city and it is located in Ninewa. Salah al-Din contained relatively smaller cities and villages than Ninewa. The fatalities in Ninewa and Salah al-Din were followed by Kirkuk, Anbar, Diyala, Wassit, Babylon, Kerbala, and Missan (the latter two having an equal number of fatalities). It is noteworthy to mention that the Shiite-

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

majority provinces had relatively negligible levels of fatalities compared to the other provinces. This is because ISIS had no major strongholds in Shiite-majority provinces. The battles were most intense in Sunni or mixed provinces where ISIS previously had or continued to operate from safe sanctuaries. In Mosul and Salah al-Din from July 2017 onwards, the fatalities dropped gradually which meant the number of battles was also dropping, causing a decrease in the fatalities. In other provinces, the battles were more sporadic across the months with fewer battles and fatalities generally.

For ISIS killing PMF militiamen, the highest fatalities were also in Ninewa and Salah al-Din. The fatalities in Ninewa again were nearly the double of those in Salah al-Din. Again, as mentioned earlier, this is because Ninewa contains Mosul and ISIS controlled vast territories in the period we are studying – especially up to May 2017. However, in Salah al-Din ISIS lost much of its territory before the period we are interested in; however, the reason the rest of the fighting continued was because the insurgents maintained a strong presence in the province. In Anbar, Kirkuk, and Diyala, the total fatalities were similar to one another, around 300. In Najaf, Erbil, Babylon, Basrah, and Kerbala, the fatalities were relatively negligible. The only exception is the province of Thi Qar, where on September 24, 2017, two battles occurred with a total death toll of 84. We can definitely observe that the battles with ISIS are not active in Shiite-majority cities when compared to Sunni cities. In Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din, the battles were more consistent across the months. In the rest of the provinces, mostly Shiite-majority and one under the control of the Kurdish Regional Government, the battles and fatalities were more sporadic. Therefore, Sunni-majority cities involved chronic violence when compared to Shiite-majority cities. The Sunni cities are where ISIS was controlling territory and the PMF was launching to retake these territories. In this period, much of the battles was defined by this dynamic

where the militias led an offensive to retake territory from ISIS: mostly in Ninewa and Salah al-Din. In Salah al-Din, generally speaking and especially since July 2017, the battles and fatalities were dropping in a sticky manner (slowly), unlike in Ninewa where they dropped more quickly.

Non-violent transfer of territory

ISIS had only two events in which it took control of two villages near Tikrit in Salah al-Din. Perhaps ISIS did so because it could quickly empower the locals in such villages that were not then in the government's sight. Both incidents were in January 2017 which shows that as the battles progressed, ISIS lost much of its capacity to regain territory non-violently.

The PMF regained territories steadily from March 2017 to December 2017, with most of the territory being gained in October 2017. October 2017 is when the Iraqi central government retook Kirkuk from the Kurdish Regional Government (after the latter conducted a referendum), not from ISIS. The rest of the territories gained by the PMF was mostly in Ninewa, Anbar, two territories in Diyala, and one in Sulaymaniya (the latter being an operation by the central government in response to the Kurdish referendum). The reason why the PMF was able to recover territories was that ISIS was retreating, which indicates the insurgent group was crumbling from the inside as the battles raged on.

JRTN

ACLED does not have any data set on JRTN. Instead, we have conducted a search query on google by typing "JRTN" and setting the time parameter tool between January 1, 2017, and February 28, 2018, to remain consistent with the timeframe in ACLED. We have found nothing of relevance that can lead us to find patterns of violence as we did with ACLED. However, not finding anything on the violence of JRTN is itself of relevance. It will be discussed in the upcoming

chapter when we discuss the shifting alliances and internal polarizations between members of the Sunni insurgency and the Shiite militias.

A Note on the Data

The following data was entirely obtained from ACLED²⁵⁴ by searching with the following parameters set:

From: 01/01/2017

To: 28/02/2018

Event type: Battle government retakes territory, Battle no change of territory, battle non-state actor overtakes territory, headquarters or base established, non-violent transfer of territory, remote violence, strategic development and violence against civilians.

Actor type: State forces, rebel forces and militia groups

Country: Iraq

The remaining criterion in the search on the parameters remained unchanged.

A Note on the Appendices

The tables in the appendices were gathered from the spreadsheets ACLED generated. This was done to facilitate the task of finding patterns and strategies. There may be some minor inconsistencies between the original spreadsheet and the tables in the appendices due to mistakes here and there on behalf of the writer. However, we have considered that such minor mistakes in the numbers do not affect the overall pattern of the strategies of violence which is what this thesis addresses.

²⁵⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, “Data Tool,” accessed May 13, 2018.

Chapter 3

Political Developments that Challenge the Sectarian Explanation of the Conflict

In this chapter, I will argue that sectarianism is not an important factor in the dynamics of the Iraqi politics. To build this argument, I will draw from examples of Sunni and Shiite politicians.

First of all, there is an assumption that ISIS and the Sunni insurgencies are one and the same,²⁵⁵ that ideologically they are the same,²⁵⁶ and that in terms of behavior they are the same.²⁵⁷ This is not the case. For example, ISIS, JRTN, and other Sunni insurgency groups such as Ansar al-Islam and the Military Council of the Tribes of Iraq were allied in the operations that led to the capture of Anbar, Ninewa, and other areas in the North and West of the country.²⁵⁸ However, soon after these territories were captured from the government, the alliance between JRTN and ISIS came to an end.²⁵⁹ The reason behind the end of the alliance is that ISIS asked members of JRTN to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.²⁶⁰ JRTN refused to pledge allegiance;²⁶¹ the two insurgent groups had a small skirmish and they broke off.²⁶² The other explanation behind the split between JRTN and ISIS is that insurgents from both groups fought over a tanker of oil in Mosul.²⁶³ Whether the reason behind the split is economic or normative is unclear; nonetheless, the two insurgencies are not allies. What made ISIS and JRTN allies is a common enemy: the central Iraqi

²⁵⁵ Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Iraq Illusions," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, July 10, 2014, accessed May 12, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2014/07/10/iraq-illusions-pub-56130>.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Joel Wing, "The Rise of ISIS and the Fading Away of the Rest of the Iraqi Insurgency," *Assyrian International News Agency*, May 5, 2015, accessed January 13, 2018, <http://www.aina.org/news/20150504233630.htm>.

²⁶⁰ Wing, "The Rise of ISIS."

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ "Jaysh Rijal."

government and the KRG.²⁶⁴ JRTN has Kurds and Shiites among its ranks, and JRTN opposes ISIS' policy of killing Shiites whom ISIS considers apostates while also targeting other non-Muslim groups.²⁶⁵ Perhaps as we observe JRTN, the normative side of how some insurgent groups behave is a salient factor indeed. Another example we observed is while ISIS was able to control these large swathes in the North and West of the country where the population is mostly Sunni, the locals in these regions did not fight ISIS back. This is not because the locals agreed with ISIS' political orientation, but because the locals have been largely marginalized by the post-2003 state elite.²⁶⁶ Thus, it is likely that the locals in the Sunni-majority areas do not like ISIS and they do not like the central government; as we have seen in the theories on insurgencies in the first chapter, they just want someone who can provide security and give them public services (electricity, water, education, health, jobs, freedom, etc.). This becomes even clearer when we analyzed the evolution of the violence in the previous chapter. In particular, when the violence was raging in Mosul between March 2017 and June 2017, we see that the brunt of the civilians being killed by ISIS are in the Sunni-majority regions: they were targeted because they either disobeyed ISIS or were trying to flee the regions ISIS controlled into government-controlled areas. ISIS has even killed its own members who were fleeing battles as they intensified. For example, in Tel Afar ISIS insurgents were executed by ISIS because they were fleeing from battle.

Concerning the Shiite component, indeed we often assume the militias that make up the PMF to be a unified front. This again is not the case. For one, we can observe that seven main militias in the PMF were actually backed by the ex-prime minister al-Maliki in the formative

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. And Tuchman, "Iraq Illusions."

²⁶⁶ Tuchman, "Iraq Illusions."

period when ISIS was rising, early 2014.²⁶⁷ These militias were supported by ex-prime minister al-Maliki as a guarantor to keep power for himself.²⁶⁸ Then, when ISIS emerged on the scene these same seven militias joined the PMF.²⁶⁹ There are three different types of militias in the PMF.²⁷⁰ The PMF is largely Shiite but there are three types of Shiite militias: the pro-Khamenei, the pro-Sistani, and the pro-Sadr.²⁷¹ These factions are all different in terms of who they pledge allegiance to, the sources of their finances, and the way they are organized.²⁷² Indeed, after the battles with ISIS were over we could observe that the Shiite political parties and their leaders began talking more profusely about nationalist and anti-sectarian politics and anti-corruption. In so doing, these Shiite politicians appear to have started distancing themselves from their sectarian past, at least on the surface. For example, since 2003 al-Sadr had the Mahdi Army who killed a large amount of Sunnis, fought Americans, and his alliances were solely formed with other Shiite politicians.²⁷³ Members of his political bloc in the government have been blamed for pervasive corruption.²⁷⁴ Now, al-Sadr speaks like an ultra-nationalist and with his current new Sairoun coalition he made an alliance with the secular Iraqi Communist Party and other secular politicians.²⁷⁵ Another example is Hadi Al-Amiri, the head of the Badr Brigade. He is also accused of sectarian killings against Sunnis before and during ISIS, pervasive corruption, and he was and remains a staunch

²⁶⁷ Renad Mansour and Faleh A. Jabar, "The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iraq's Future," *Carnegie Middle East Center*, April 28, 2018, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2017/04/28/popular-mobilization-forces-and-iraq-s-future-pub-68810>.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Mehiyar Kathem, "Iraq's New Statesman," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 3, 2018, accessed May 12, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/05/03/iraq-s-new-statesman-pub-76244>; Krishnadev Calamur, "A Shia Cleric's Radical Vision for Iraq," *The Atlantic*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/iraq-moqtada-sadr/559499/>.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

ally to Iran and opponent to the U.S.²⁷⁶ Now, Hadi al-Amiri in his current campaign with his Fath coalition openly says mistakes were made in the past, Iraq needs American support, and that he is against foreign intervention in Iraqi politics.²⁷⁷ He even appointed Sunni politicians in his coalition.²⁷⁸

This is the pattern we are witnessing in the shift in discourse, in rhetoric, and alliances. While the Shiite politicians present themselves now as nationalist and anti-corruption, the majority of their electorates are Shiite provinces not the Sunni provinces.²⁷⁹ Some Shiite coalitions have included Sunnis in their groups to appeal more to the Shiite electorates as being better than other Shiite political blocs, since they even attracted Sunnis.²⁸⁰ Even now, the incumbent Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi and ex-prime minister Nuri al-Maliki of Dawa party are running on separate lists.²⁸¹ A member of the Dawa has said to the media that they both agreed to unify their lists once the elections are over.²⁸² This man of the Dawa was then called on to attend a disciplinary committee in the Dawa party.²⁸³ Basically, this man had essentially said that Abadi and Maliki are violating electoral rules: “since the electoral commission’s ruling in January [2018] that a party could not run on more than one alliance meant that Dawa had to publicly claim that its leaders were running as independents on separate lists.”²⁸⁴ Abadi and Maliki accused each other for the emergence of ISIS in 2014.²⁸⁵ Abadi's campaign platform is built on him trying to portray himself

²⁷⁶ Margaret Coker, “U.S. Takes a Risk: Old Iraqi Enemies Are Now Allies,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/11/world/middleeast/iraq-iran-election-enemies.html>.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Calamur, “A Shia Cleric.”

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Kirk H. Sowell, “Abadi’s Struggle to Maintain Campaign Narratives,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 18, 2018, accessed May 12, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/76111>.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

as the strong leader who was able to defeat ISIS, and he was able to act strongly when the Kurdish referendum was conducted in September 2017, and the Iraqi army retook Kirkuk in October 2017.²⁸⁶ Abadi is attempting to portray himself as a nationalist.²⁸⁷ But now that ISIS recently launched some attacks in Kirkuk, Sadr blamed the central government for failing to protect Iraq; Sadr even hinted that he is willing to mobilize a militia to fill that role.²⁸⁸

In conclusion, when we are talking about politics in Iraq we are not talking about identity politics, since identity politics are salient to a certain extent in that they only identify who the potential allies could be. As one analyst put it, this is not a theological conflict or a military conflict – it is a political conflict.²⁸⁹ However, what is more salient is whether the political agendas of the politicians, be they Sunni or Shiite, are converging or diverging. For example, we see that the Shiite parties tried to discredit one another as not being fit enough to represent and protect Shiites, and that in order to gain the Shiite electorate vote and the general Iraqi vote they must present themselves as anti-sectarian. Sunnis do not have a leadership like the Shiite parties, but we can focus on ISIS and JRTN. Both ISIS and JRTN are insurgents groups; however, ideologically, they are different. ISIS killed local Sunnis for opposing ISIS and killed Shiites for being Shiites, while JRTN did not kill locals nor did it kill Shiites for being Shiites. This brings us to why no data was gathered on JRTN: JRTN is a very small insurgency when compared to ISIS.²⁹⁰ The platform JRTN is running on is a mix between pan-Islamic and pan-Arabism in which Shiites, Sunnis, and non-Muslims are not the enemies; its strict adherence to such an ideology²⁹¹ in practice has perhaps not gained it the external support that ISIS and the PMF have received. This is why JRTN, with

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Tuchman, “Iraq Illusions.”

²⁹⁰ “Jaysh Rijal.”

²⁹¹ Ibid.

its low levels of external support and weak links to state patronage networks, relies heavily on the locals for protection, recruitment, and so forth. Which is why JRTN has not been observed to kill any civilians for disobeying it or for any other reason.²⁹² For example, JRTN does not attack markets that contain Sunni and Shiite civilians just to disrupt the economy like ISIS. JRTN's calculations are based on its high reliance on local support, and its size requires it to strictly attack government interests. Even when doing so, JRTN is careful to sub-contract other groups to utilize violence,²⁹³ perhaps so as to not alienate the local population.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

Conclusion

This thesis has addressed a central question with respect to the tragic conflict in Iraq: What explains the variations in the objectives and the strategic use of violence of the different sectarian affiliated groups in the country? To be sure, the conflict in Iraq is partially a result of discontent between Sunni and Shiites communities and sectarian identities are commonly perceived as at the root cause of the conflict. However, in this study I have shown that it is not only Sunni and Shiites groups but a wide range of sub groups have emerged as a result of Iraq's weak state and the shifts in alliance formation among and between these organizations clearly undermines the notion that the ongoing conflict stems primarily from culturally rooted inter-sectarian enmities. Indeed, it is not 'sectarian' discontent but wide-scale popular discontent which is driving the dynamics of the violent conflict in Iraq. Moreover, what is rarely pointed out is that Iraq's post-2005 constitution, which has institutionalized sectarian politics, is one of the primary reasons standing in the way of Iraqis organization themselves collectively across the sectarian and ethnic divide.²⁹⁴ Indeed, presently those Iraqis attempting to mobilize in a collective fashion are persecuted violently by both insurgent groups as well as organizations affiliated with the central government.²⁹⁵

The conflict in Iraq is better framed as one in which various political groups are seeking to carve out spheres of influence in the country in ways that would aid them in gaining political power as against their rivals. In this thesis I have outlined this complicated dynamic by presenting an alternative framework that explains the shifting motivations, strategies and alliance formation of key actors involved in the conflict. This framework transcends the reductive thesis that privileges

²⁹⁴ For more, see Sa'ad Naji Jawad, "Iraq from Occupation to the Risk of Disintegration," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 9, no.1 (2016): 27-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2015.1121621>.

²⁹⁵ For more, see Human Rights Watch, "Ruinous Aftermath: Militias Abuses Following Iraq's Recapture of Tikrit," Human Rights Watch Reports, September 20, 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/20/ruinous-aftermath/militias-abuses-following-iraqs-recapture-tikrit>.

the Sunni Shiite sectarian divide as the main variable underpinning the roots and dynamics of the conflict. The study has provided empirical evidence to my central argument by highlighting the political developments surrounding the recent battle of Mosul. To be sure, while most of the battles were in pre-dominantly Sunni areas and not the Shiite that is not necessarily reflective that no grievances are present in Shiite areas. This can be recently seen from the vast demonstrations, among whom many were violent, in mostly Shiite majority areas.²⁹⁶ I have also shown in rich detail that sectarian identity and grievances do not in themselves automatically determine the strategies employed by the actors in the conflict. Indeed, a central argument of this study is that sub-sectarian groups have taken different routes in terms of their strategies of violence and the formation of alliances as the conflict has progressed. It is important to point out that these shifting patterns and strategies began as early as 2003. However, for the purpose of parsimony and analytical clarity the analysis that makes up this thesis was restricted to a narrower chronological period rather than the entire whole post-invasion era.

One of the main underlying themes and messages of this thesis is that Iraqis have intermarried and cooperated for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.²⁹⁷ The people who have a relationship to this beleaguered land have lived mostly in harmony with one another with intermittent clashes as anywhere else in the world. As such, instead of focusing on sectarian identities as the main source of conflict when analyzing the present crisis in Iraq, we should examine more closely the political competition among multiple groups of organizations vying for political power and dominance in the context of the weak state that followed in the wake of the

²⁹⁶ Al Jazeera, "Iraq: Protests rage over poor public services, unemployment," *Al Jazeera English*, July 14, 2018, Accessed July 14, 2018.

²⁹⁷ For more, see Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael. "Entrenching sectarianism. How Chilcot sees Iraq," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 11, no. 1-2 (2017): 23-46, https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcis.11.1-2.23_1.

2005 invasion of the country.²⁹⁸ To be sure differences and violence often occurs between social groups belonging to different sects and ethnicity. However, these conflicts are rooted in real social and political grievances that are often instrumentalized through the lens of identity by the venal leaders of competing insurgent and militia organizations. Only when states are weak and unable to impose a monopoly of force over its entire territory, are these grievances expressed in collective action leading to high levels of violence.²⁹⁹ Interestingly the state represents the people in a democratic state.

At the root of the present violence in Iraq is clearly the authoritarian and non-democratic policies and institutions pursued by the leading political parties as well as the leaders of the insurgent organizations in the country. What has made matter worse is the imposition of a constitutional system that is not only non-democratic but, through the use of a sectarian quota system of political representation, has institutionalized sectarian competition engendering recourse to violence along sectarian lines among the organizations and communities in Iraq.³⁰⁰ Clearly, in the longer term, the only path towards a sustainable peace and stability in the country is the reformation of the political system that is truly democratic and one that institutionalizes a non-sectarian constitutional and electoral system that ensures transparency, accountability and genuine legitimacy across the sectarian and ethnic divides in the country.

²⁹⁸ For more, see Adeed Dawisha, "The Unravelling of Iraq: Ethnosectarian preferences and state performance in historical perspectives," *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 2 (2008): 219-230.

²⁹⁹ For more, see Adeed Dawisha, "The Unravelling of Iraq: Ethnosectarian preferences and state performance in historical perspectives," *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 2 (2008): 219-230.

³⁰⁰ For more, see Sa'ad Naji Jawad, "Iraq from Occupation to the Risk of Disintegration," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 9, no.1 (2016): 27-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2015.1121621>.

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Appendix A

Empirical findings of violence perpetrated ISIS

Violence against civilians

Province	Number of Incidents	First Incident - Last Incident	Fatalities
Anbar	38	25 Jan. 2017 – 13 Dec. 2017	245
Babylon	1	9 June 2017	32
Baghdad	16	2 Jan. 2017 – 23 Feb. 2018	158
Diyala	38	24 Jan. 2017 – 25 Feb. 2018	102
Erbil	1	20 Nov. 2017	1
Kerbala	1	9 June 2017	1
Kirkuk	55	10 Jan. 2017 10 Feb. 2018	433
Ninewa	107	1 Jan. 2017 – 27 Feb. 2018	2009
Salah al-Din	20	13 Feb. 2017 – 28 Jan. 2018	65
Thi Qar	1	14 Sept. 2017	13

Figure 1: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED³⁰¹

³⁰¹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, “Data Tool,” *Acled Data* (blog), accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.acleddata.com/data>.

Province	Ninewa	Kirkuk	Anbar	Baghdad	Diyala	Salah al-Din	Babylon	Erbil	Kerbala
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents									
January 2017	114 (14 incidents)	27 (5 incidents)	4 (1 incident)	80 (6 incidents)	1 (2 incidents)				
February 2017	58 (12 incidents)	10 (6 incidents)	23 (2 incidents)	24 (2 incidents)		6 (3 incidents)			
March 2017	396 (18 incidents)	20 (4 incidents)	3 (2 incidents)			26 (1 incident)			
April 2017	505 (20 incidents)	67 (8 incidents)	25 (3 incidents)	1 (1 incident)	2 (2 incidents)	2 (1 incident)			
May 2017	468 (16 incidents)	151 (6 incidents)	22 (7 incidents)	8 (4 incidents)	27 (2 incidents)				
June 2017	400 (8 incidents)	12 (3 incidents)	18 (2 incidents)		2 (2 incidents)		32 (1 incident)		1 (1 incident)
July 2017	23 (4 incidents)	14 (2 incidents)	27 (3 incidents)		3 (3 incidents)	5 (3 incidents)			
August 2017	27 (4 incidents)	57 (6 incidents)	12 (3 incidents)		1 (2 incidents)	5 (2 incidents)			
September 2017	1 (1 incident)	24 (4 incidents)	40 (8 incidents)		1 (2 incidents)	5 (1 incident)			

Province	Ninewa	Kirkuk	Anbar	Baghdad	Diyala	Salah al-Din	Babylon	Erbil	Kerbala
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents									
October 2017		3 (3 incidents)	18 (3 incidents)		1 (2 incidents)	7 (4 incidents)			
November 2017	2 (1 incident)	32 (3 incidents)	48 (3 incidents)		29 (8 incidents)	1 (1 incident)		1 (1 Incident)	
December 2017	6 (1 incidents)	14 (2 incidents)	5 (1 incident)		5 (3 incidents)	6 (3 incidents)			
January 2018	6 (4 incidents)	2 (2 incidents)		44 (2 incidents)	8 (5 incidents)	0 (1 incident)			
February 2018	3 (1 incident)	0 (0 incidents)		1 (1 incident)	22 (5 incidents)				

Figure 2: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED.³⁰²

Remote Violence

Province	Number of Incidents	Dates of First incident and Last incident	Fatalities
Anbar	141	4 Jan. 2017 & 28 Feb. 2018	188
Babylon	40	29 Jan. 2017 & 23 Feb. 2018	44

³⁰² ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed April 30 and May 1, 2018.

Province	Number of Incidents	Dates of First incident and Last incident	Fatalities
Baghdad	113	02 Jan. 2017 & 25 Feb. 2018	386
Basrah	3	19 May 2017 & 27 May 2017	26
Diyala	162	7 Jan. 2017 & 18 Feb. 2018	226
Erbil	1	26 August 2017	2
Kerbala	1	9 June 2017	9
Kirkuk	69	02 Jan. 2017 – 27 Feb. 2018	78
Muthanna	1	22 Feb. 2018	0
Najaf	1	1 Jan. 2017	6
Ninewa	254	3 Jan. 2017 & 20 Feb. 2018	1249
Salah al-Din	161	02 Jan. 2017 & 24 Feb. 2018	393

Figure 3: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED.³⁰³

Province	Anbar	Babylon	Baghdad	Diyala	Kirkuk	Muthanna	Najaf	Ninewa	Salah al-Din
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents									

³⁰³ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 1, 2018.

Province	Anbar	Babylon	Baghdad	Diyala	Kirkuk	Muthanna	Najaf	Ninawa	Salah al-Din
January 2017	5 (8 incidents)	1 (1 incident)	129 (28 incidents)	14 (4 incidents)	24 (4 incidents)		6 (1 incident)	381 (44 incidents)	32 (9 incidents)
February 2017	17 (10 incidents)	3 (3 incidents)	84 (16 incidents)	9 (6 incidents)	3 (3 incidents)			149 (46 incidents)	31 (6 incidents)
March 2017	7 (10 incidents)	2 (5 incidents)	48 (9 incidents)	1 (2 incidents)	11 (4 incidents)			226 (30 incidents)	18 (7 incidents)
April 2017	5 (8 incidents)	15 (4 incidents)	13 (7 incidents)	4 (3 incidents)	0 (1 incident)			203 (20 incidents)	1 (1 incident)
May 2017	11 (18 incidents)	3 (4 incidents)	58 (17 incidents)	17 (14 incidents)	1 (1 incident)			28 (10 incidents)	13 (11 incidents)
June 2017	6 (7 incidents)	1 (3 incidents)	5 (6 incidents)	1 (4 incidents)	4 (3 incidents)			75 (10 incidents)	14 (3 incidents)
July 2017	50 (22 incidents)	0 (2 incidents)	9 (10 incidents)	17 (19 incidents)	4 (2 incidents)			21 (10 incidents)	24 (19 incidents)
August 2017	17 (13 incidents)	13 (10 incidents)	29 (6 incidents)	8 (23 incidents)	6 (5 incidents)			26 (30 incidents)	20 (19 incidents)
September 2017	8 (8 incidents)	0 (1 incident)	2 (1 incident)	23 (18 incidents)	3 (3 incidents)			42 (10 incidents)	38 (21 incidents)
October 2017	15 (10 incidents)	5 (2 incidents)		18 (10 incidents)	1 (2 incidents)			19 (7 incidents)	33 (11 incidents)
November 2017	14 (9 incidents)			50 (25 incidents)	5 (5 incidents)			23 (12 incidents)	12 (9 incidents)
December 2017	6 (4 incidents)	0 (1 incident)		34 (12 incidents)	8 (10 incidents)			35 (14 incidents)	72 (incidents)

Province	Anbar	Babylon	Baghdad	Diyala	Kirkuk	Muthanna	Najaf	Ninewa	Salah al-Din
January 2018	7 (6 incidents)	0 (2 incidents)		16 (16 incidents)	3 (11 incidents)			17 (6 incidents)	61 (20 incidents)
February 2018	20 (8 incidents)	1 (0 incidents)	9 (13 incidents)	13 (6 incidents)	5 (15 incidents)	0 (1 incident)		5 (5 incidents)	24 (14 incidents)

Figure 4: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED.³⁰⁴

Battle ISIS overtakes territory

Incident Number	Date	Province	Fatalities
1	6 January 2017	Anbar	0
2	13 March 2017	Ninewa	0
3	24 April 2017	Anbar	0
4	7 July 2017	Ninewa	8

Figure 5: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED.³⁰⁵

Notes on Incidents:

1. “Commander of Sunni Tribal Forces, Nathim al-Jaghifi, has been captured so far in western Anbar between Haditha and Qaim after clashes with IS.”³⁰⁶
2. “[S]uspected IS militants recaptured the villages of al Buwaytir near Badush and the village of Dernagoukh in eastern Badush. Troops also destroyed an "Abrams" tank in the area.”³⁰⁷
3. “Islamic State militants took control over part of a highway in the town of Rutba after clashes with Iraqi police.”³⁰⁸
4. “Islamic State recaptured parts of the Maydan area, carried out a suicide bombing in Bab Lagash killing seven Iraqi federal policemen, and also wounded 20 others in clashes in Bab al-Toub, all in the Old City district of Mosul.”³⁰⁹

Headquarters or base established

On 23 May 2018, “[t]he Islamic State announced that they moved their headquarters from Mosul to Hawija after losing control of the Old City district in Mosul.”³¹⁰

³⁰⁴ ACLED, “Data Tool,” accessed May 1, 2018.

³⁰⁵ ACLED, “Data Tool,” accessed May 2, 2018.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

Strategic Development

Date	Province	Note
10-Jan-17	Ninewa	"Detonation: on Jan 10, 2 IS militants were killed by an IED that they were transferring in a vehicle near al-Resala district (al-Jadeda district), west Mosul."
11-Jan-17	Kirkuk	"Detonation: on Jan 11th 7 IS militants were killed when preparing a car bomb southwest from the city of Kirkuk in the town of Hawija."
19-Jan-17	Ninewa	"Property Destruction: 19 Jan 2017, ISIS burned Al-Guba water purification plant in Rashidiyah North (Al-Hadbaa district) of the Mosul city."
21-Jan-17	Sala al-Din	"Mass Graves: On Jan 21, a mass grave containing containing bodies of 89 victims of Camp Speicher massacre that were executed by the Islamic State, after capturing the city of Tikrit in June 2014."
23-Jan-17	Diyala	"Property Destruction: 23 Jan 2017, ISIS mounts attack on Qara Tepe electricity towers, cutting power supply to 80 villages."
24-Jan-17	Kirkuk	"Security Measures: on Jan 24, IS militants enforced a curfew in Hawija after the abduction of one of its leaders."
29-Jan-17	Ninewa	"Mass Grave: On Jan 29th, a mass grave with 27 bodies of Turkmen believed to be left by IS militants, was discovered in Mosul's Rashidiya area (al-Hadbaa district) in the northeast."
31-Jan-17	Ninewa	"Security Measures: on Jan 31, IS militants imposed a curfew on the civilians' movement in the neighborhoods of old Mosul (Old City district) from 5 pm to 5 am for unknown reasons; many speculated that it was for weapons transfer purposes."
31-Jan-17	Sala al-Din	"Detonation: on Jan 31, 2 IS militanst were killed accidentally by a bomb they were trying to plant at a road in the town of Shirqat."
08-Feb-17	Ninewa	"Security Measures: IS militants imposed a comprehensive curfew in Wadi Aqab (Al-Rabee district), west of Mosul; cutting off all roads leading to the area. The curfew was allegedly imposed amid intense movement of vehicles carrying blue barrels, suspected to contain explosive materials."
15-Feb-17	Ninewa	"Security Measures: on Feb 15, IS imposed a curfew in the majority of areas in Tal Afar, west of Mosul, amid intense spread of its armed detachments in main streets, they also started arresting their local leaders, after the failure of last Saturday's attack on al-Hashd al-Shaabi and losing dozens of leaders and members."
25-Feb-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: On Feb 25th, Iraqi forces have discovered a mass grave said to be the biggest yet, located five miles outside of

Date	Province	Note
		Islamic State (ISIS) controlled western Mosul in the Khasfa sinkhole, and is believed to contain the remains of 4,000 victims of the jihadist group; the victims include thousands of security personnel. Many of the killings are suspected to date back to the capture of Mosul."
26-Feb-17	Sala al-Din	"Detonation: on Feb 26, 3 IS militants died when a booby-trapped ambush they were trying to set up in Mutaibija exploded."
02-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants burned down Mosul Hospital (al-Jadeda district). No casualties reported."
04-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Detonation: 2 Islamic State militants were killed while trying to plant explosives in a house in western Mosul. No other casualties reported."
06-Mar-17	Sala al-Din	"Detonation: 4 Islamic State militants were killed while trying to plant a vehicle with explosives in the Sharqat district of Salahaddin."
08-Mar-17	Babylon	"Mass Graves: On Mar 08, a mass grave was found likely containing the remains of 19 civilians killed by IS in al-Fudailiya region in Jufr Al Sakhr."
11-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: The Popular Mobilization units announced earlier in the day they had discovered a mass grave at Badush prison containing the remains of at least 500 people executed by suspected IS militants. Not clear when executions occurred."
12-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: On Mar 12, a mass grave containing the remains of 20 Iraqi soldiers was found in Badush."
14-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants burned civilian homes in the al-Rafai (al-Rabee district) in western Mosul."
19-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants blew up 14 civilian homes south of Mosul."
26-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Detonation: A prominent Islamic State booby-trapping expert was killed with four of his aides while trying to booby trap a vehicle in Tal Afar district."
27-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: Iraqi troops discovered a mass grave of former police agents executed by Islamic State militants - source does not specify number of bodies found. Unknown fatalities coded at 10. Date of killings unknown."
01-Apr-17	Sala al-Din	"Detonation: Three Islamic State militants were killed by their own IED in the al-Mutaibija area of Salahuddin."
10-Apr-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: On Apr. 10, Iraqi security forces discovered a mass grave containing the remains of 1646 Yazidis killed by IS militants in Sinjar. Likely date back to the Sinjar massacre in August 2014."

Date	Province	Note
04-May-17	Ninewa	"Detonation: A top Islamic State leader (Abo Youssef al-Halabi) was killed with three of his assistants when a car they were booby-trapping exploded in Tal Afar."
11-May-17	Anbar	"Mass Graves: On May 11, Iraqi forces discovered a mass grave containing the remains of civilians and Iraqi security forces members killed by IS militants in Al-Azrahiyah, southwest of Fallujah (unknown fatalities coded as 10)."
11-May-17	Anbar	"Mass Graves: On May 11, Iraqi forces discovered a mass grave containing the remains of civilians and Iraqi security forces members killed by IS militants in Al-Karma, Fallujah (unknown fatalities coded as 10)."
11-May-17	Anbar	"Mass Graves: On May 11, Iraqi forces discovered a mass grave containing the remains of civilians and Iraqi security forces members killed by IS militants in central Ramadi (unknown fatalities coded as 10)."
12-May-17	Ninewa	"Movement of Forces: Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi allegedly withdrew from Mosul."
14-May-17	Anbar	"Detonation: on May 14, 4 IS militants were killed while attempting to booby-trap a car in central Al-Rawah district, western Ramadi city."
16-May-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: On May 16, PMU forces discovered a mass grave containing the remains of Yazidi civilians, suspected to have been killed IS militants in a Kuju village in Sinjar (fatalities coded as 10)."
16-May-17	Sala al-Din	"Mass Graves: On May 16, PMU forces discovered a mass grave containing the remains of Yazidi civilians, suspected to have been killed IS militants in Tall al Banat (fatalities coded as 10)."
22-May-17	Anbar	"Movement of Forces: Islamic State members evacuated its members and removed its flags from one of the group's major strongholds in the town of Al Qaim."
27-May-17	Sala al-Din	"Detonation: A top Islamic State explosive manufacturer was killed while he was planting an explosive charge in al-Subeyaath village in Salahuddin near Diyala's province."
30-May-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: A number of bodies were found in a public bathroom in Makkawi (Old City district) in Mosul's right bank. The people were believed to be killed by IS militants. Date of killings unknown."
31-May-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: A mass grave with 60 civilian bodies was found in the al-Shifa district (al-Rabee district), Mosul. The victims are suspected to have been killed by Islamic State militants. Date of killings unknown."

Date	Province	Note
10-Jun-17	Sala al-Din	"Mass Graves: A mass grave containing 300 corpses was found in the city of Tikrit. Fatalities attributed to Islamic State militants. Date of killings unknown."
15-Jun-17	Anbar	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants destroyed three electricity pylons resulting in power outages in Baghdadi town after placing explosives under them between the cities of Hit and Baghdadi."
21-Jun-17	Kirkuk	"Movement of Forces: Islamic State militants have mobilised thousands of gunmen in Hawija in preparation to attack Peshmerga forces."
09-Aug-17	Sala al-Din	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants burned four bulldozers of the Iraqi army in the area of al-Tayyub, rural Samarra."
21-Aug-17	Ninewa	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants set oil wells on fire to try to obstruct aerial views of their positions and prevent warplanes from targeting them in the Telafar district."
14-Sep-17	Diyala	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants burned two diggers of the popular mobilization the area of Hamrin in Diyala."
30-Sep-17	Kirkuk	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants set fire to oil wells in order to obstruct aerial views of their positions and prevent warplanes from targeting them in Haweeja district."
01-Oct-17	Kirkuk	"Detonation: An Islamic State militant was killed while in the process of launching a weaponized drone on the outskirts of Hawija."
02-Oct-17	Kirkuk	"Mass Graves: Units from the Federal police and the Popular mobilization found a mass grave containing the remnants of army and police personnel executed by Islamic State militants in the village of Adhirban, between Hawija and Baiji. Unknown number of fatalities coded as 10."
02-Oct-17	Sala al-Din	"Property Destruction: Islamic State set fire on three oil wells at the Alas oilfield, believed to have been done in order to give cover for withdrawal towards Hawija."
03-Oct-17	Diyala	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants attacked two houses in Baquba used for Ashura ceremonies with handgrenades."
03-Oct-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: Security forces discovered a mass grave containing the remnants of 11 Yazidis killed by Islamic State militants in the vicinity of Tall Qasab."
04-Oct-17	Kirkuk	"Mass Graves: Joint security forces discovered a mass grave in the village of Abu Sakhra south of Hawija. Unknown number of remains coded as 10."

Date	Province	Note
04-Oct-17	Kirkuk	"Property Destruction: Islamic State set fire on seven of the group's media centers in the southwest of the Hawija Judiciary."
07-Oct-17	Kirkuk	"Mass Graves: PMFs announced they had found 10 mass graves with remains of soldiers and civilians including woman and children killed in Hawija by the Islamic State, in addition to 5 other mass graves discovered in recent days (unknown number of bodies in mass graves coded as 10 each for a total of 50 fatalities). Date of killings unknown."
08-Oct-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: Security forces discovered a mass grave in the Hasan Kawi neighborhood of Tal Afar, the mass grave contained the remnants of 60 civilians most likely executed by Islamic State militants. Date of killings unknown."
27-Oct-17	Kirkuk	"Mass Graves: A mass grave containing 50 bodies of Iraqi army and police personnel was found in the village of al-Bakarah near Hawija. Date of killings unknown."
07-Nov-17	Babylon	"Detonation: A suicide bomber equipped with an explosive belt made a failed attempt to target a Imam Hussayn mourning procession in the area of Uwayrij, south of Baghdad."
12-Nov-17	Kirkuk	"Mass Graves: Security forces discovered massgrave sites containing remnants of around 2000 bodies on the outskirts of Hawija and southwest of Kirkuk. Date of killings unknown."
15-Nov-17	Diyala	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants cut off the water flow to the village of Abu Karma by diverting the river that passes through the orchards of Mukhisa."
20-Nov-17	Kirkuk	"Mass Graves: The Popular mobilization discovered a mass grave inside deserted oil wells near the village of Adhirban, the mass grave contained the remnants of an unspecified number of civilians executed by the Islamic State."
22-Nov-17	Kirkuk	"Mass Graves: A mass grave containing the bodies of dozens civilians abducted and executed was found in the area of Laylan, southeast of Kirkuk, presumably victims of the Islamic State."
26-Nov-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: A mass grave containing the remnants of 98 Yazidis executed by the Islamic State discovered in the Baaj district."
02-Dec-17	Diyala	"Property Destruction: Islamic State militants burned houses and cut electricity lines in the village of Qartuba east of Mandali."
02-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: The Popular mobilization discovered a mass grave containing 80 corpses including women and children, most of them Yazidi, the mass grave was found in the Jazira Compound in the south of the Sinjar district. Another detachment of the Popular mobilization discovered a second

Date	Province	Note
		mass grave in the village of Qabusi, containing the remains of 20 women and dozens of Yazidi (total fatalities coded as 112)."
04-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: Security forces discovered a mass grave in the Shura district south of Mosul, containing 70 bodies including women and children executed by Islamic State militants at the time of the liberation operations."
13-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: A mass grave containing more than 400 Yazidi civilians executed by Islamic State militants was discovered in the Sinjar district. May date back to the Sinjar massacre in August 2014."
16-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: Iraqi forces, Yazidi mobilization and local residents discovered two mass graves in the Sinajr district containing remnants of 90 Yazidis killed by Islamic State militants. Date of killings unknown, but believed to date back to August 2014."
21-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: Ninewa police found three mass graves containing the remnants of 20 individuals who attempted to escape the violence of Islamic State militants in the village of Ahlila, west of Mosul. Date of killings unknown."
27-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: Security forces found 12 massgraves in the area of Kujar, Sinjar district. Unknown number of fatalities coded as 120. Date of killings unknown, but believed to date back to August 2014."
23-Jan-18	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: Security forces found a mass grave containing 20 decomposed bodies of civilians executed by Islamic state militants in the al-Houd village, south of Mosul. Date of killings unknown."
25-Jan-18	Diyala	"Detonation: An Islamic State militant was killed while planting an IED on a road in the Zur basin, near Mansuriyah."
26-Jan-18	Kirkuk	"Mass Graves: Security forces found a mass grave containing the remains of residents from western and southern Kirkuk province executed by Islamic State militants. Date of killings unknown."
02-Feb-18	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: The Iraqi Federal police found a mass grave in Qahtaniya containing the remains of 70 Yazidis mostly older and young people killed by Islamic State militants. Date of killings unknown, but believed to be around August 2014."
11-Feb-18	Kirkuk	"Property Destruction: On Feb 11, suspected IS militants threw a grenade at the house of the brother of an abducted cleric in Daquq District, south of Kirkuk, causing only material damage."
16-Feb-18	Kirkuk	"Detonation: on Feb 16, an IS militant on a motorcycle tried to blow up an IED in central Daquq city, however, the IED exploded prematurely, amputating his hand. No civilians were harmed."

Date	Province	Note
17-Feb-18	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: On Feb 17, military forces discovered a mass grave containing the remains of more than 100 people (civil servants from the Nineveh elections commission office and security personnel), allegedly killed by IS militants at al-Ramdaniyah village near Qayyarah, south of Mosul, during their 3-year occupation of Mosul."
21-Feb-18	Ninewa	"Mass Graves: On Feb 21, Iraqi security forces discovered a mass grave containing the bodies of 90 unidentified civilians, believed to have been killed by IS militants in al-Haj village near Qayyarah town, south of Mosul."

Figure 6: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED.³¹¹

Battle no change of territory

Province	Anbar	Babylon	Baghdad	Basrah	Diyala	Erbil	Kerbala	Kirkuk	Najaf	Ninewa	Salah al-Din	Thi_Qar
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents												
January 2017	11 (3 battles)				8 (3 battles)		0 (1 battle)	16 (1 battle)	0 (1 battle)	391 (31 battles)	37 (6 battles)	
February 2017	22 (5 battles)		1 (1 battle)		0 (1 battle)			8 (2 battles)		30 (7 battles)	12 (4 battles)	
March 2017	34 (5 battles)				19 (5 battles)					123 (21 battles)	53 (4 battles)	
April 2017	29 (5 battles)		2 (1 battle)		30 (3 battles)					118 (13 battles)	83 (5 battles)	

³¹¹ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 2, 2018.

Province	Anbar	Babylon	Baghdad	Basrah	Diyala	Erbil	Kerbala	Kirkuk	Najaf	Ninawa	Salah al-Din	Thi_Qar
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents												
	battles)				battles)					battles)		
May 2017	72 (12 battles)		17 (2 battles)	16 (1 battle)	28 (6 battles)			49 (8 battles)		134 (17 battles)	23 (7 battles)	
June 2017	14 (1 battle)		3 (1 battle)		4 (2 battles)			31 (6 battles)		114 (10 battles)	89 (4 battles)	
July 2017	58 (12 battles)	6 (4 battles)			16 (5 battles)	1 (1 battle)		25 (5 battles)		195 (27 battles)	60 (18 battles)	
August 2017	55 (5 battles)	1 (2 battles)			11 (6 battles)			18 (6 battles)		60 (19 battles)	55 (24 battles)	
September 2017	27 (5 battles)	21 (3 battles)			42 (11 battles)	3 (1 battle)		41 (7 battles)		42 (7 battles)	80 (21 battles)	84 (2 battles)
October 2017	3 (4 battles)	8 (3 battles)			8 (3 battles)			18 (4 battles)		12 (3 battles)	63 (17 battles)	
November 2017	1 (battle)	0 (1 battles)			8 (7 battles)			23 (7 battles)		6 (1 battle)	46 (9 battles)	

Province	Anbar	Babylon	Baghdad	Basrah	Diyala	Erbil	Kerbala	Kirkuk	Najaf	Ninawa	Salah al-Din	Thi_Qar
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents												
December 2017	2 (3 battles)				23 (11 battles)			22 (6 battles)		27 (5 battles)	32 (9 battles)	
January 2018					5 (5 battles)	2 (1 battle)		16 (10 battles)			4 (4 battles)	
February 2018	2 (3 battles)				8 (5 battles)	2 (1 battle)		64 (12 battles)		4 (1 battle)	37 (battles)	

Figure 7: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED.³¹²

Province	Date of First Battle & Last Battle	Total Number of Battles	Fatalities
Anbar	8 Jan 2017 & 18 Feb 2018	65	330
Babylon	21 July 2017 & 9 November 2017	13	36
Baghdad	22 Feb & 9 June 2017	5	33
Basrah	19 May 2017	1	16
Diyala	14 Jan 2017 & 25 Feb 2018	73	210

³¹² ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 2, 2018.

Province	Date of First Battle & Last Battle	Total Number of Battles	Fatalities
Erbil	16 Jul 2017 & 24 Feb 2018	4	8
Kerbala	2 Jan 2017	1	0
Kirkuk	2 Jan 2017 & 26 Feb 2018	74	331
Najaf	1 Jan 2017	1	0
Ninewa	1 Jan 2017 & 18 Feb 2018	163	1256
Salah al-Din	2 Jan 2017 & 23 Feb 2018	141	674
Thi Qar	14 Sep 2017	2	84

Figure 8: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED.³¹³

Non-Violent Transfer of Territory

Province	Note
Salah al Din	"02 Jan 2017, ISIL takes control of the village of Azweya to the North of Baiji."
Salah al Din	"Islamic State militants took control of the village Dar Sabah, 30km east of Tikrit."

Figure 9: This data was gathered from the excel sheet generated on ACLED.³¹⁴

³¹³ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 2, 2018.

³¹⁴ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 2, 2018.

Appendix B

Empirical findings of violence utilized by the PMF

Violence against Civilians

Province	Number of incidents	First incident & last incident	Fatalities
Anbar	5	24 Apr 2017 & 7 Dec 2017	7
Diyala	1	15 Jun 2017	0
Ninewa	6	9 Jan 2017 & 3 Feb 2018	4
Salah al-Din	2	24 April 2017	7

Figure 1: This data was gathered from ACLED.³¹⁵

Province	Anbar	Diyala	Ninewa	Salah al-Din
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents				
January 2017			2 (2 incidents)	
February 2017				
March 2017			0 (1 incident)	
April 2017	7 (3 incidents)			7 (2 incidents)
May 2017			0 (1 incident)	
June 2017		0 (1 incident)		
July 2017				
August 2017				
September 2017				
October 2017				

³¹⁵ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 3, 2018.

Province	Anbar	Diyala	Ninewa	Salah al-Din
November 2017			2 (1 incident)	
December 2017	0 (2 incidents)			
January 2017				
February 2017			0 (1 incident)	

Figure 2: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³¹⁶

Remote Violence

Province	Number of Incidents	Dates of First incident and Last incident	Fatalities
Anbar	3	4 Jan 2017 & 4 Oct 2017	11
Baghdad	1	11 Feb 2017	0
Diyala	4	5 Feb 2017 & 12 Jul 2017	17
Kirkuk	1	5 Nov 2017	0
Ninewa	19	9 Jan 2017 & 28 Jan 2018	80
Qadissiya	1	15 Feb 2018	10
Salah al-Din	11	19 Jan 2017 – 25 Jan 2018	56

Figure 3: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³¹⁷

Province	Anbar	Baghdad	Diyala	Kirkuk	Ninewa	Qadissiya	Salah al-Din
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents							
January 2017	1 (1 incident)				2 (2 incident)		10 (1 incident)
February 2017		0 (1 incident)	10 (2 incidents)		8 (2 incidents)		6 (1 incident)

³¹⁶ ACLED, “Data Tool,” accessed May 3, 2018.

³¹⁷ ACLED, “Data Tool,” accessed May 3, 2018.

Province	Anbar	Baghdad	Diyala	Kirkuk	Ninewa	Qadissiya	Salah al-Din
March 2017			1 (incident)		11 (6 incidents)		3 (2 incidents)
April 2017					17 (4 incidents)		7 (1 incident)
May 2017							
June 2017	2 (1 incident)				10 (2 incidents)		10 (1 incident)
July 2017			6 (1 incident)				10 (1 incident)
August 2017							0 (1 incident)
September 2017							
October 2017	8 (1 incident)				10 (1 incident)		10 (1 incident)
November 2017				0 (1 incident)	13 (1 incident)		
December 2017					0 (1 incident)		
January 2018					10 (1 incident)		0 (2 incidents)
February 2018						10 (1 incident)	

Figure 4: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³¹⁸

Battle PMF overtakes territory

Incident Number	Date	Province	Fatalities
1.	28-Jan-17	Sala al-Din	0
2.	25-Feb-17	Ninewa	10
3.	07-Mar-17	Ninewa	0
4.	12-Mar-17	Ninewa	0
5.	05-Apr-17	Ninewa	5
6.	24-Apr-17	Ninewa	0
7.	25-Apr-17	Ninewa	0
8.	25-Apr-17	Ninewa	0
9.	26-Apr-17	Ninewa	0
10.	28-Apr-17	Ninewa	0

³¹⁸ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 3, 2018.

Incident Number	Date	Province	Fatalities
11.	12-May-17	Ninewa	0
12.	12-May-17	Ninewa	36
13.	12-May-17	Ninewa	77
14.	12-May-17	Ninewa	0
15.	13-May-17	Ninewa	2
16.	13-May-17	Ninewa	1
17.	13-May-17	Ninewa	2
18.	14-May-17	Ninewa	0
19.	14-May-17	Ninewa	0
20.	14-May-17	Ninewa	23
21.	14-May-17	Sala al-Din	0
22.	15-May-17	Ninewa	0
23.	16-May-17	Ninewa	31
24.	16-May-17	Ninewa	31
25.	17-May-17	Ninewa	0
26.	18-May-17	Ninewa	0
27.	18-May-17	Ninewa	55
28.	18-May-17	Ninewa	0
29.	19-May-17	Ninewa	0
30.	21-May-17	Ninewa	0
31.	21-May-17	Ninewa	10
32.	21-May-17	Ninewa	0
33.	23-May-17	Ninewa	54
34.	25-May-17	Ninewa	38
35.	26-May-17	Ninewa	0
36.	26-May-17	Ninewa	0
37.	27-May-17	Ninewa	13
38.	28-May-17	Ninewa	21
39.	28-May-17	Ninewa	0
40.	29-May-17	Ninewa	0
41.	01-Jun-17	Ninewa	15
42.	02-Jun-17	Ninewa	0
43.	02-Jun-17	Ninewa	10
44.	04-Jun-17	Ninewa	37
45.	05-Jun-17	Anbar	37
46.	10-Jun-17	Ninewa	0
47.	19-Jul-17	Ninewa	0
48.	20-Aug-17	Ninewa	10
49.	21-Aug-17	Ninewa	20
50.	22-Aug-17	Ninewa	0

Incident Number	Date	Province	Fatalities
51.	22-Aug-17	Ninewa	0
52.	19-Sep-17	Anbar	10
53.	03-Oct-17	Kirkuk	10
54.	17-Oct-17	Ninewa	9
55.	27-Oct-17	Anbar	1
56.	31-Oct-17	Anbar	17
57.	03-Nov-17	Anbar	0
58.	09-Dec-17	Ninewa	10
59.	07-Feb-18	Sala al-Din	16

Figure 5: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³¹⁹

Incident Number	Note
1.	"On Jan 28, PMU forces recaptured al-Hleiwat village and a distance from the village to a local railroad west of al-Zab region (northeast of Salahuddin) from IS after suspected clashes; they also defused 15 IEDs, nine landmines and two booby-trapped vehicles."
2.	"On Feb 25, PMU liberated al-Aziziyah village south of Tel Afar from IS militants, killing a number of militants (unknown fatalities coded as 10)."
3.	"PMF forces with the support of Iraqi forces liberated the Al-Thalja village in west Mosul."
4.	"On Mar 12, PMU forces liberated Qaryat al-Subeih, west on the right side of Mosul (Badush), from IS."
5.	"PMF forces liberated the Beyoot al-Teen village west of Badush from Islamic State militants killing 5 IS militants in operations."
6.	"On Apr. 24, PMU liberated the village of Ain Sadeed in Hatra from IS militants following suspected clashes."
7.	"On Apr. 25, PMF dislodged IS militants from several villages south of Mosul in Al-Hatra district, south of Mosul; including the villages of Aliba, Saadan, Saidiya, Huwaydra and Salah Sheikh among others."
8.	"On Apr. 24, PMU captured the villages of Aleeba Shirqya, Ain Sadid, Tal Hilal, Oulaieba, Al-Elwani, and Aleeba Gharbeeya SW Mosul from IS militants following suspected clashes."
9.	"On Apr. 26, PMF recaptured the city of Hatra following clashes with IS militants."
10.	"On Apr. 28, PMU captured the following villages from IS militants as part of their military operation to clear the Hatra area and surrounding villages; near Hatra region: Umm Al-Ajareej, Ancient Ruma site, Tareeta; and Im Shurak."

³¹⁹ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 3, 2018.

Incident Number	Note
11.	"Fighters from the Popular Mobilization Forces managed to regain control of a village near the city of Tal Afar from the Islamic State following clashes."
12.	"PMF forces back by the Iraqi air force recaptured the villages of Tel Hajem, Um-Shababit and Mekeibra near al-Baaj/Qayrawan regions from Islamic State militants. 36 IS militants were killed in offensives."
13.	"PMF brigades liberated Sadkhan and East Sabaya villages in Al-Qairawan neighborhood from the Islamic State. Xinhua reports that the PMF liberated around 21 villages in the area on May 12 with Islamic State fatalities at some 77 militants."
14.	"Popular Mobilization Forces have liberated Abu al-Haf village south of Al-Qairwan and near the border with Syria from the Islamic State following fierce clashes."
15.	"PMF units backed by the Iraqi army advanced on Islamic State held areas near the border with Syria including the towns of al-Qairawan and Baaj and freed at many villages (including Tal Ezzo, Tal Ha'et, Mohammed Zeid, Hozeil, and Tal Banat) destroying at least five suicide car bombs and two vehicles during clashes."
16.	"PMF units backed by the Iraqi army advanced on Islamic State held areas near the border with Syria including the towns of al-Qairawan and Baaj and freed at many villages (including Tal Ezzo, Tal Ha'et, Mohammed Zeid, Hozeil, and Tal Banat) destroying at least five suicide car bombs and two vehicles during clashes."
17.	"PMF units backed by the Iraqi army advanced on Islamic State held areas near the border with Syria including the towns of al-Qairawan and Baaj and freed at many villages (including Tal Ezzo, Tal Ha'et, Mohammed Zeid, Hozeil, and Tal Banat) destroying at least five suicide car bombs and two vehicles during clashes."
18.	"PMF forces took control of the main street in Qairawan from Islamic State militants."
19.	"Popular Mobilization Forces isolated the Sinjar mountain range from the Islamic State, while under attack with car bombs and other ambush tactics."
20.	"Hashd Shaabi units backed by army helicopters freed the villages of Khailo and Tal al-Qasab near the Islamic State held town of al-Qairwan and killed 23 IS militants."
21.	"Popular Mobilization Forces backed by the Iraqi air force engaged in clashes with Islamic State militants in the Yezidi village of Tal Banat liberating 10 villages in the area including Tal Banat."
22.	"PMF forces have recaptured three more villages (including the Sultan village, the Karkash area, Sultan, Tal al-Sheikh, and Khazna al-Shamalia) in al-Qairawan near the Syrian border from the Islamic State. PMF forces also invaded the village of Mabhal al-Mahdi north of Qayrawan."
23.	"PMF forces announced the retaking of 35 villages from the Islamic State along the Syrian border. Xinhua General News Service notes 31 IS deaths after clashes in the region."
24.	"PMF backed by Iraqi Army helicopters liberated three more villages from the Islamic State in north and south of the town of al-Qairwan killing 31 militants."

Incident Number	Note
25.	"PMF forces captured the village of Thari Karah west of Mosul from the Islamic State after clashes."
26.	"The PMF has established complete control over Washington military airport and six villages (Khalaf Idris, al-Khamisah, al-Madinah, and Ayn Fathi) west of Mosul from the Islamic State after clashes. Coded across 2 events (only Ayn Fathi located)."
27.	"The PMF recaptured 8 villages from the Islamic State north of IS-held al-Qairwan resulting in the deaths of 54 militants and a cameraman for the PMF."
28.	"The PMF has established complete control over Washington military airport and six villages (Khalaf Idris, al-Khamisah, al-Madinah, and Ayn Fathi) west of Mosul from the Islamic State after clashes. Coded across 2 events (only Ayn Fathi located)."
29.	"PMF forces retook Cairo village from the Islamic State as the continue to achieve more territorial gains in Qairawan region west of Mosul."
30.	"PMF forces recaptured the village of Norther Ayn Fathi west of Mosul after clashes with Islamic State militants."
31.	"The PMF liberated Tal Qasab village north of Kairouan from the Islamic State. 10 militants were killed in clashes."
32.	"After clashes with Islamic State militants, the PMF established full control over al Mesabas, al Niliya, Sadet Zawbaa, and Thara al-Owaiset villages south of the Qayrawan region. Ayn Ghaza, north of Qayrawan, was also recaptured."
33.	"PMF forces with the support of air force units recaptured the centre of the Al-Qayrawan district including the villages of Khansi, Um Amer and Hazil from the Islamic State. At least 13 PMF forces were killed in clashes and 9 injured, 41 IS militants were killed in clashes."
34.	"After fierce clashes, PMF forces gained control over the villages of Al-Wahbi, Arfie, Arfie Awwal, and Amlihat, a road linking al-Adnaniyah and al-Ba'aj, the villages of Kojou and Tel Ghazi, and Northern and Southern Biski from the Islamic State. Xinhua reports 38 Islamic State fatalities in battles."
35.	"After clashes with Islamic State militants, PMF recaptured the Sinjar military base, four villages, and an apartment complex in Baaj."
36.	"PMF forces liberated the Yazidi village of Kujo west of Mosul from the Islamic State after clashes with IS militants and handed control to the Yazidis."
37.	"PMF forces liberated the villages of al-Adnaniyah, West Rambous, and al-Qabosiyah north of the town of Baaj after engaging in clashes with Islamic State militants resulting in 13 IS fatalities."
38.	"PMF forces regained control of the Qahtaniyah town (Kar Izir) and the villages of Taro and Wadi al-Midar located near Baaj from the Islamic State resulting in at least 21 IS fatalities."
39.	"PMF fighters have recaptured al-Adnaniyah village in northern Al-Ba'aj from Islamic State militants."

Incident Number	Note
40.	“PMF forces captured the centre of the town of Baaj and a strong of small villages on the border with Syria from the Islamic State after clashes.”
41.	“PMF forces cleared the village of al-Khubra and Ghelfas village and al-Jair village south of Baaj from Islamic State militants. 15 IS militants were killed in al-Jair.”
42.	“PMF Forces liberated the Mosul border village of Chair Qalfas from the Islamic State after clashes.”
43.	“PMF forces retook Al-Saggar residential compound south of Al Baaj after fierce clashes with Islamic State militants. Significant IS losses were reported (unknown fatalities coded as 10).”
44.	“PMF forces (Hashd Shaabi units) have captured the centre of Baaj and the villages of Be'r al-Osaibei, Aliyah, Sharji al-Raqi, Tal al Noufeli, Tal al-Msaraj, Karaan, Um Hajarrah, Hamd al-Madloul, Marzoukah, Touman, Raqbah al-Forces, Khirbet al-Arizah, Tale'ah al Markab and Farkhouh from the Islamic State. Clashes resulted in some 37 IS fatalities.”
45.	“PMF forces continued to make territorial gains against the Islamic State towards the al-Waleed border crossing in the the Ar-Rutba distric. The Badr Organization reported that at least 37 IS militants were killed in the area during clashes.”
46.	“The Iraqi army started a new operation to take Tal Afar allowing 2 brigades to seize six villages east of Tal far from the Islamic State after clashes.”
47.	“The Iraqi army backed by the Popular Mobilization Forces and the U.S.-led coalition recaptured the village of Imam Gharbi after being held for two weeks by the Islamic State following an armed assault on the village. During the fighting that took place Islamic State claimed destroying a Humvee of the Iraqi army by the use of an RPG while U.S. aircrafts engaged Islamic State units on the ground.”
48.	“Popular mobilization units supported by the Iraqi army recaptured the village Tal Sambak and the southern part of the Zambar heights after inflicting human and material losses on the Islamic State militants, they also managed to prematurely detonate a would-be Islamic State SVBIED, killing the driver in the process.”
49.	“Combined units of the popular mobilization and the federal police recaptured Mulla Jasim from the Islamic State on the outskirts of Tal Afar city. 20 Islamic State militants were killed and two booby-trapped vehicles destroyed in the operation.”
50.	“The popular mobilization recaptured the village of Tirmi northwest of Tal Afar and also seized medium weapons and rockets after clashes.”
51.	“Parts of Al-Nur neighborhood in Telafar were recaptured by popular mobilization units after fierce confrontations with Islamic State militants.”
52.	“Popular mobilization forces continued their advances along the axis Akashat - al-Qaim, the Islamic State militants dispatched a suicide bomber that targeted a gathering of popular mobilization fighters, the attack resulted in dead and wounded, and a number of vehicles, the militants also blew up a booby-trapped camp inflicting more casualties, although these attempts did not prevent the popular mobilization units to recapture a 40km long stretch along the border.”

Incident Number	Note
53.	"The Popular mobilization recaptured the village of Hameria east of Hawija from the Islamic State inflicting heavy material and human losses in the ranks of the militants. Unknown fatalities coded as 10."
54.	"Peshmerga forces and Popular mobilization clashed near the Mosul Dam, due to lack of prior coordination, eight PMF fighters including a senior commander and one peshmerga were killed in the fighting and four peshmergas wounded, the popular mobilization subsequently took control of the dam after Peshmerga withdrew."
55.	"Amidst the launch of the second phase to liberate al-Qaim and Rawa from the Islamic State, the Popular mobilization continued clearing the road linking Akashat and al-Qaim, in the process it destroyed 3 booby-trapped vehicles, 100 IEDs and also detonated an SVBIED, the PMF units also captured several strategic locations including an Islamic State communications center, the 70 Rest area and the 70 Water station, meanwhile the War media cell announced that the army recaptured the cement factory."
56.	"Iraqi forces recaptured the district of Ubaidi and killed 17 Islamic State militants and seized four vehicles in the process."
57.	"Popular mobilization brigades and joint forces forces reached the southern hills adjacent to the center of al-Qaim district, and continued advancing from multiple sides in preparation for entering the city. Other Popular mobilization units brigades then advanced from the southern side towards Wadi Jabriya, Islamic State positions on the outskirts of the town were also shelled with artillery amidst the advances."
58.	"The Popular mobilization announced that its forces supported by the Iraqi air force recaptured Tall al Mujammaah from the Islamic State and inflicted heavy losses in the ranks of the militants (unknown fatalities coded as 10)."
59.	"On Feb 07, military/PMU forces liberated 3 villages (one of which was al-Kalkhani al Soghra) east of Tuz Khurma in Salahuddin province from the White Flags group, and killed 16 White Flags militants and destroyed a booby-trapped vehicle, and seized 4 other vehicles."

Figure 6: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³²⁰

Headquarters or base established:

No data was found³²¹ because most likely the PMF only utilized the pre-existing institutions in place in areas they controlled after battles with ISIS which the latter retreated from.

³²⁰ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 3, 2018.

³²¹ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 3, 2018.

Strategic Developments

Date	Province	Note
19-Jan-17	Anbar	"Defusal: on Jan 19, PMU forces defused more than 1000 IED and other explosive devices in a combing operation in the Sakrah area in Anah."
19-Jan-17	Anbar	"Defusal: on Jan 19, PMU forces defused more than 1000 IED and other explosive devices in a combing operation in the Zawiya area in the Haditha district."
06-Feb-17	Diyala	"Detonation: on Feb 06, a member of the PMU was killed in an accidental IED blast, belonging to the forces, near al-Masuriyah."
10-Feb-17	Anbar	"Defusal: on Feb 10, PMU forces defused several IEDs, and other explosive material (belonging to IS) in the Subayhat area, southwest Karma district, south of Fallujah province. They also seized 400 gallons of material for making explosives (belonging to IS)."
05-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Property Destruction: Iraqi security forces destroyed a number of Islamic State vehicles inside a farm in Tel Afar district."
13-Mar-17	Ninewa	"Detonation: PMU forces destroyed a suspected IS militant car bomb, after the driver fled; no injuries reported."
16-Apr-17	Ninewa	"Defusal: On Apr. 16, PMF dismantled 72 explosive devices, that were planted in the agricultural land west of the Tal Afar district, near Ain Talawi village."
18-Apr-17	Sala al-Din	"Defusal: On Apr. 18, PMF dismantled 22 explosive devices in the Sikariat area (Baiji district) in Salahuddin."
19-Apr-17	Sala al-Din	"Property Destruction: PMF forces staged an offensive against the Islamic State in the al-Zaqia region deactivating a booby-trapped vehicle and damaging another armored vehicle belonging to the group. Not clear if any clashes occurred."
07-May-17	Anbar	"Weapons Seizure: on May 07, PMU forces seized an IS lab for booby-trapping vehicles on the outskirts of the Hit district in Anbar province."
14-May-17	Ninewa	"Weapons Seizure: on May 14, PMU forces discovered a hideout containing IS weapons and a factory for manufacturing IEDs on the outskirts of Al Qayrawan city."
17-May-17	Sala al-Din	"Weapons Seizure: on May 17, PMU forces seized a large weapons cache belonging to IS hidden in a home near Hamrin mountains in southern Diyala."
18-May-17	Baghdad	"Mass Graves: 17 Iraqi forces bodies were discovered in Baghdad. The Baghdad Post reports that these officers were

Date	Province	Note
		all Sunnis and killed by fighters associated with the PMF. Date of killings unknown.”
10-Aug-17	Sala al-Din	“Detonation: Popular mobilization forces managed to detonate an Islamic State car bomb (VBIED) on the road between Shirqat and Naml, along the provincial border of Salahuddin and Kirkuk.”
04-Oct-17	Kirkuk	“Detonation: Popular mobilization forces detonated a parked Islamic State car bomb on a street in Hawija.”
04-Oct-17	Anbar	“Defusal: The Popular mobilization dismantled 27 booby-trapped houses including clearing and defusing IEDs, and also took control of 3 booby-trap factories in the area of Akashat.”
08-Oct-17	Diyala	“Detonation: The popular mobilization destroyed five Islamic State safe houses and seized explosives in villages north of Muqdadia.”
10-Oct-17	Kirkuk	“Detonation: Popular mobilization engineering units dismantled two car bombs equipped with heavy machine guns to the north of the central Hawija district, the car bombs were likely to be used by 2-man teams. A stack of weapons and other equipment were also found and number of IEDs amidst the clearing operations in the aforementioned area.”
13-Oct-17	Kirkuk	“Detonation: The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Directorate of the Popular mobilization announced on Friday that it cleared over 1000 IEDs, and detonated 22 VBIEDS, 7 VBIED workshops, and 6 tunnels in Hawija.”
14-Oct-17	Kirkuk	“Ceasefire: The Mayor of Tuz Khurmato, Shalal Abdul announced that a ceasefire between the Popular mobilization and the Peshmerga had entered into force after clashes the day before.”
01-Nov-17	Anbar	“Defusal: PMF units defused a number of booby-trapped houses in the desert of al-Qaim, and also transferred the residents in the area to safe places and provided them with medicine.”
06-Nov-17	Anbar	“Defusal: An EOD team of the Popular mobilization discovered a VBIED factory in al-Qaim and also defused a number of IEDs of various types.”
06-Nov-17	Ninewa	“Defusal: Engineering units of the Popular mobilization cleared and destroyed 35 IEDs and 8 pressure plates in the village of Karemlash”
08-Nov-17	Anbar	“Defusal: EOD units of the Popular mobilization defused 20 booby-trapped houses in al-Qaim.”

Date	Province	Note
10-Nov-17	Anbar	"Defusal: The Popular mobilization defused 25 booby-trapped houses and 14 IEDs west of Qaim near the Syria border."
12-Nov-17	Ninewa	"Defusal: Field engineering units of the Popular mobilization dismantled 38 IEDs in the Hamdaniya district."
10-Dec-17	Najaf	"Surrender: Aws al-Khafaji, the Secretary General of the Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas Forces part of the Popular Mobilization announced the disbandment of the brigade in the wake of the announced victory over the Islamic State in Iraq."
14-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Defusal: Engineering units of the Popular mobilization defused more than 30 IEDs containing chlorine in the area of Addayah, southwest of Mosul."
14-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Defusal: Engineering units of the Popular mobilization defused at least 25 IEDs in the area of Sahaji, southwest of Mosul."
15-Dec-17	Kirkuk	"Movement of Forces: Turkmen forces of the Popular mobilization announced the deployment of additional troops to Tuz Khurmato and Daquq following repeated attacks against civilians and security forces in the region."
19-Dec-17	Sala al-Din	"Detonation: The Popular mobilization discovered an Islamic State IED factory in Mutaibija, an EOD-team destroyed it by controlled detonation."
22-Dec-17	Anbar	"Defusal: Popular mobilization forces seized a booby-trapped vehicle in the area of Mashari near al-Qaim, an EOD-team dismantled the vehicle."
25-Dec-17	Ninewa	"Defusal: Engineering units of the Popular mobilization dismantled 30 IEDs planted by Islamic State militants in the area of Tal Asfuq near the Syria border."
29-Dec-17	Anbar	"Defusal: The Popular mobilization dismantled dozens of IEDs and booby-trapped objects on various locations in the districts of Qaim, Rawa and Ana in western Anbar."
29-Dec-17	Anbar	"Defusal: The Popular mobilization dismantled dozens of IEDs and booby-trapped objects on various locations in the districts of Qaim, Rawa and Ana in western Anbar."
29-Dec-17	Anbar	"Defusal: The Popular mobilization dismantled dozens of IEDs and booby-trapped objects on various locations in the districts of Qaim, Rawa and Ana in western Anbar."
04-Jan-18	Anbar	"Defusal: Popular mobilization forces dismantled a booby-trapped transmission tower in the Qaim district."
07-Jan-18	Sala al-Din	"Defusal: The Popular mobilization announced that its engineering units dismantled dozens of IEDs between Baiji

Date	Province	Note
		and the Makhul mountains, and that they also seized an explosives cache.”
08-Jan-18	Diyala	“Detonation: Popular mobilization forces destroyed three Islamic State shelters and dismantled and destroyed a number of IEDs by controlled detonation in the area of Hawi al-Adhaim.”
10-Jan-18	Kirkuk	“Defusal: The Popular mobilization dismantled dozens of IEDs and discovered a number of mortar shells amidst clearing operations in Hawija and surrounding villages.”
18-Jan-18	Anbar	“Weapons Seizure: The Popular mobilization discovered three tunnels containing IEDs and anti-tank grenades in the area of Karabila, a booby-trapped house was also dismantled.”
30-Jan-18	Kirkuk	“Explosives: The Popular mobilization discovered 13 IEDs buried underground in the Hawija district.”
03-Feb-18	Diyala	“Property Destruction: The Popular mobilization burned two Islamic State pickups in the Hamrin mountains on the provincial border between Salahuddin and Diyala.”
08-Feb-18	Sala al-Din	“Property Destruction: On Feb 08, PMU forces destroyed a number of vehicles belonging to IS militants and destroyed a clinic of theirs in an operation carried out in the Hamrin mountains (unidentified province).”

Figure 7: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³²²

Battle no change of territory

Province	Anbar	Babylon	Diyala	Kerbala	Kirkuk	Mission	Ninawa	Salah al Din	Wassit
Fatalities per month per total # of incidents									
January 2017	13 (3 battles)		14 (4 battles)			1 (1 battle)	145 (11 battles)	56 (9 battles)	

³²² ACLED, “Data Tool,” accessed May 3, 2018.

Province	Anbar	Babylo n	Diyala	Kerbal a	Kirkuk	Missa n	Ninew a	Salah al Din	Wassi t
February 2017			8 (1 battle)		1 (1 battle)		285 (12 battles)	35 (6 battles)	
March 2017	6 (1 battle)		3 (2 battles)	0 (1 battle)			243 (16 battles)	83 (11 battles)	
April 2017	15 (5 battles)		10 (3 battles)				285 (16 battles)	160 (17 battles)	
May 2017	39 (4 battles)		0 (3 battles)		1 (1 battle)		102 (13 battles)	30 (5 battles)	7 (1 battle)
June 2017	25 (4 battles)		16 (4 battles)		2 (1 battle)		40 (6 battles)	121 (8 battles)	
July 2017	1 (1 battle)		1 (1 battle)	1 (1 battle)			101 (13 battles)	38 (7 battles)	
August 2017					3 (1 battle)		30 (8 battles)	3 (2 battles)	
Septembe r 2017		2 (1 battle)			16 (1 battle)		70 (7 battles)	24 (6 battles)	
October 2017	10 (2 battles)				55 (7 battles)		14 (9 battles)	47 (7 battles)	
Novembe r 2017			0 (3 battles)		48 (6 battles)		32 (4 battles)	4 (2 battles)	
Decembe r 2017	5 (1 battle)		13 (1 battle)		25 (6 battles)		20 (5 battles)	0 (2 battles)	
January 2018			16 (3 battles)		27 (5 battles)		36 (5 battles)	12 (5 battles)	

Province	Anbar	Babylon	Diyala	Kerbala	Kirkuk	Missan	Ninawa	Salah al Din	Wassit
February 2018					15 (4 battles)		19 (4 battles)	7 (3 battles)	

Figure 8: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³²³

Province	Date of First Battle & last Battle	Total Number of Battles	Fatalities
Anbar	1 Jan 2017 & 22 Dec 2017	21	115
Babylon	30 Sep 2017	1	2
Diyala	7 Jan 2017 & 25 Jan 2018	25	82
Kerbala	11 May 2017 & 26 Jul 2017	2	1
Kirkuk	21 Feb 2017 & 28 Feb 2018	33	193
Missan	19 Jan 2017	1	1
Ninawa	9 Jan 2017 & 22 Feb 2018	129	1422
Salah al-Din	2 Jan 2017 & 27 Feb 2018	90	620
Wassit	1 March 2017	1	7

Figure 8: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³²⁴

Non-Violent Transfer of Territory

Date	Notes
08-Mar-17	"The PMF retook the Humaydan area in Badush district from IS forces."
08-Mar-17	"The PMF retook Tal al-Zukref village in the right side of Mosul from IS forces."
09-Mar-17	"PMF forces retook the Badush power plant and two neighbouring towns."
30-Apr-17	"On Apr. 30, the PMF liberated Um Shrak village (from IS militants) and cleared it of improvised explosive devices and remnants of war north-west of Hadhar district, south of Mosul."

³²³ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 4, 2018.

³²⁴ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 4, 2018.

29-May-17	"PMF forces pushed to the border line with Syria from the newly-freed town of al-Qahtaniyah making their first arrival to the border line south of Sinjar mountain. The latest advance is part of an offensive to cut off IS supply routes between Mosul and Raqqa."
10-Jun-17	"PMF forces and Syrian army and its allies reach Syrian-Iraqi border north-east of the Tanf border crossing in dual efforts to secure border from Islamic State militants."
03-Oct-17	"The Popular mobilization recaptured the village of Tall Idah and continued advancing towards Albu Sibah in the Daquq district."
06-Oct-17	"In the northeast of Hawija, popular mobilization forces recaptured the village of Hama (Milhe) from the Islamic State."
06-Oct-17	"In the northeast of Hawija, popular mobilization forces recaptured the village of Marata Kabira from the Islamic State."
06-Oct-17	"In the northeast of Hawija, popular mobilization forces recaptured the village of Sayyidiya from the Islamic State."
06-Oct-17	"In the northeast of Hawija, popular mobilization forces recaptured the village of Marata Saghira from the Islamic State."
06-Oct-17	"In the northeast of Hawija, popular mobilization forces recaptured the village of Sheikh Mazhar from the Islamic State."
16-Oct-17	"The Popular mobilization retook control of the whole Qara Tabbah district and imposed Iraqi government authority."
17-Oct-17	"The Popular mobilization retook control of the whole Khanaqin district and imposed Iraqi government authority."
17-Oct-17	"Popular mobilization forces took control of the of the Penjwin-Bashmaq border crossing with Iran."
17-Oct-17	"Popular mobilization commanders Karim Al-Shuwaili and Abdulraheem Al-Shammari raised the Iraqi flag on top of a building in the border town of Rabia, north of Tal Afar."
17-Oct-17	"Popular mobilization forces entered central Sinuni and took over the district following the withdrawal of Peshmerga forces."
18-Oct-17	"Popular mobilization regained control of the village of Batnaya, north of Mosul. The small Assyrian town was previously under the control of Peshmerga."
01-Nov-17	"Popular mobilization forces recaptured several villages in the area of al-Mazari (farms) near the Syria border."
11-Nov-17	"The Iraqi army recaptured the whole district of Rummana from the Islamic State."
13-Nov-17	"Units from the Iraqi army recaptured six villages west of Rawa after Islamic State members escaped to the desert."
23-Nov-17	"The Popular mobilization recaptured the villages of Shaykhan and Shaykha, south of Hatra."
25-Nov-17	"Popular mobilization forces recaptured the area of Tall al Hadid and the main road linking Hatra and Rawa."

08-Dec-17	"The Popular mobilization recaptured the village of Daham in the depth of the Jazira desert."
08-Dec-17	"The Popular mobilization recaptured the village of Atmakhiyat in the depth of the Jazira desert."
09-Dec-17	'The Popular mobilization announced that its forces had fully recaptured Badiyat al Jazira, the vast desert stretching from the Salahuddin Province to the Syrian border, it also announced that it had taken control of the border and had begun fortifying the border, and that the clearing operations resulted in the discovery of Islamic State explosives factories, warehouses and arms depots.'

Figure 8: This data was gathered from the spreadsheet generated from ACLED.³²⁵

³²⁵ ACLED, "Data Tool," accessed May 4, 2018.

Appendix C

The data on the violence by JRTN

“Although the JRTN was known to be carrying out attacks prior to 2009, none were verifiably documented. This may be in part due to the JRTN’s strategy of subcontracting other militant organizations to carry out the attacks that it organizes and finances.

1. 2009: A child recruited by JRNT threw an RKG-3, an anti-vehicle grenade, at a passing US convoy in the Kirkuk province. The attack was taped and circulated on the Internet. (Casualties unknown).”
2. February 2009: Hamas Iraq troops used Rocket Propelled Grenades to attack US forces in Baqouba, the provincial capital of Diyala. It was not until the Hamas Iraq cell was apprehended that the U.S. discovered that the cell had been subcontracted by the JRTN, which was responsible for planning, financing, and facilitating the attack. (Casualties unknown).”
3. August 31, 2010: The JRTN claimed responsibility shooting and killing a US soldier in the city of Tikrit in Iraq's Salah ad Din province. (1 killed, 0 wounded).
4. October 4, 2010: The JRTN made a statement on Al Jazeera claiming responsibility for attacking a US soldier in Baghdad on an unspecified date. However, the claim could not be independently verified. (0 killed, unknown wounded).
5. February 18, 2011: Senior commander of JRNT accused of being involved in an IED attack in a car showroom in the town of Muqdadiyah. (7 killed, unknown wounded).

6. June 10, 2014: The JRTN played a critical role in IS's capture of Mosul and was responsible for seizing control of the five bridges that connect the western and eastern sections of the city. (Unknown Casualties).
7. June 21, 2014: JRTN soldiers clashed with IS fighters in the city of Hawija near Kirkuk. Reports differ as to whether the skirmish occurred because there was disagreement over which group would assume control of several captured oil tankers or because the JRTN fighters refused to lay down their weapons and swear fealty to al-Baghdadi. (17 killed, unknown wounded).
8. January 3, 2015: The JRTN used a RKG-3 to target an Iraqi Army convey west of Mosul. (0 killed, 3 wounded).
9. June 6, 2015: According to the JRTN's official website, the group was responsible for launching several rockets into the city of Hawija near Kirkuk. (Casualties unknown).³²⁶

³²⁶ Tomkins, "Ba'athists aiding insurgent attacks," As seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en.84; Justin Naylor, "Child Recruited by Terrorists Kills Five Police in Kirkuk," *Military Family Network*, May 14, 2009, emilitary.org, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en.85; "Suspected JRTN militant kills US soldier in Iraq's Salah ad Din," *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, September 1, 2010, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en.87; "JRTN claims attack on US soldier in Iraq's Baghdad," *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, October 5, 2010, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en.88; "Security forces detain alleged senior JRTN commander in Iraq's Diyala," *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, February 22, 2011, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en.89; Shree Wood, "Jaysh al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia," *Next Century Foundation* (blog), June 26, 2015, <http://ncfiraq.blogspot.com/2014/07/jaysh-al-tariqa-al-naqshbandia.html>, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en.90; Aymenn Jawad al-Tamini, "Enemy of My Enemy: Re-evaluating the Islamic State's relationship with Ba'athist JRTN," June 2015, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en.100; Allum. "Sunni militant group," as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en.92; Qiyada, "Statement by the Men of the Naqshbandi Army on the process of rocket fire into the city of Hawija," *Website of the Men of the Naqshbandi Army* (L. Newby, translation) June 6, 2015, <http://www.alnakshabandia.net/army>, as seen in "Jaysh Rijal," en. 93, all accessed May 13, 2018.

Since we found no data on violence between January 1, 2017, and February 28, 2018, we are going to assume that JRTN's patterns remained more or less the same. That is, that JRTN did not execute Shiites, kill or displace non-Muslims, nor attack civilians.