A Tale of Two Cities

A comparative study of ISIS in Ramadi and Fallujah

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Abstract

ISIS attacked Ramadi and Fallujah in the early days of January 2014, and while Fallujah fell at once with no visible resistance, it took protracted fighting and a three-day surge by ISIS before Ramadi fell on May 17 the same year. Through the application of social movement theory to the cases, I argue that it is possible to provide an understanding of the processes that led up to the two different outcomes, by looking at the Sunni Protest movement in Anbar throughout 2013. I argue that to understand the rise of ISIS, it is important to look beyond the group itself. It is necessary to include environmental dynamics, intramovement relations and the influence of outside actors in the analysis.

This study finds that internal competition of frames caused Ramadi and Fallujah to develop differently. Fallujah was more receptive to extremist frames, while moderate frames resonated best in Ramadi. State repression and violence confirmed the dominant and extreme frames in Fallujah perfectly. The repression also affected Ramadi negatively, but not as much as in Fallujah. The radical flank effect increased the difference by affecting how the government handled the movement in general and how the government handled the cities specifically.

As the Iraqi security forces pulled away from the cities after clashing with protesters in late December, the local councils inserted themselves as the governing bodies of Ramadi and Fallujah. Because Ramadi had remained relatively moderate, it was not in its interest to cooperate with ISIS, thus siding with the Iraqi security forces in fighting the extremists. Fallujah, on the other hand, which had been increasingly radicalised throughout the year, had no problem cooperating with ISIS. Fallujah let ISIS into the city, and that is why ISIS was able to enter unopposed in January 2014.

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To my wonderful children Sofie and Sigmund: I hope you forgive me when you grow older and realise that it is unusual for 6 and 8 years olds to learn about Anbari tribal dynamics and insurgents over dinner.

To my supervisor Anne Stenersen: Thank you for all you help and interesting discussions. Your guidance has been invaluable.

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List of abbreviations

AQI: al-Qaida Iraq
GOI: Government of Iraq
ISF: Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS: Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JRTN: Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia (The Naqshbandi Army)

Introduction

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times [...]" (Dickens, 1949)

There was careful optimism at the beginning of 2013. Large parts of the Sunni community in Iraq had united around a common cause: Less governmental influence in the Sunni cities. No more discrimination. Protest sites were established in major Sunni cities and the Sunni Protest movement held demonstrations all over the country. However, as the protests intensified throughout 2013, violence became widespread and the Government of Iraq's handling of the situation became more and more heavy-handed. By the end of the year, one of the cities was still controlled by a faction loyal to the government. The other had descended into insurgency, in the hands of a faction willing to cooperate even with the most extreme group of all: ISIS.

The group I refer to as ISIS in this thesis has changed its name several times, along with its goals, geographic focus and organisational affiliation. Other names are the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Islamic State (IS) or Daesh. The latter is a derogatory term from the group's Arabic acronym (Stern and Berger, 2016). When I refer to other groups, I will use the names most commonly used in Western media.

Even though ISIS has been set back militarily over the last years and the flow of foreign fighters has decreased, it is unlikely that the group will be completely defeated in the near term. It will survive in one form or another, and according to NIS (2017), they are trying to create a base or conditions that will facilitate the rebuilding of the movement like they did when the Americans left Iraq in 2011.

ISIS attacked Ramadi and Fallujah in the early days of January 2014, and while Fallujah fell at once with no visible resistance, it took protracted fighting and a three-day surge by ISIS before Ramadi fell on May 17 the same year (Sowell, 2015). The current understanding is that the rise of ISIS in general, and the movement's success in Eastern Anbar, largely can be explained by a) the Sunni – Shia conflict, assuming that the Sunni population automatically sided with ISIS when faced by Shia dominated security forces, or b) ISIS' superior military power. Some also argue that ISIS was able to exploit the grievances in the Sunni population towards the repressive regime of Iraq's prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki (BBC, 2014a). However, none of these explains why ISIS was able to move straight into Fallujah without

resistance, while being rejected and defeated in Ramadi. The aim of this thesis is thus to answer the following question: *why was ISIS able to enter Fallujah unopposed, while being rejected and defeated in Ramadi in January 2014?*

Through the application of social movement theory (SMT) to the cases, I argue that it is possible to provide an understanding of the processes that led up to the two different outcomes, by looking at the context in Anbar throughout 2013. I argue that to understand the rise of ISIS, it is important to look beyond the group itself. By looking at the Sunni Protest movement as a social movement, it is possible to include environmental dynamics, intramovement relations and the influence of outside actors in the analysis, and this is important in understanding ISIS. But, before I get ahead of myself, I will have to give a short overview of how this study is constructed.

The first three chapters include a literature review, a chapter on the methodological issues and an introduction to social movement theory. These three chapters provide an understanding of how this study is situated in the literature and how it contributes to the current body of knowledge. I outline how the study is conducted and how I have made sure that it holds water. Lastly, the chapter on social movement theory explains how I apply the theory as well as describing its usefulness in this study. From the theory chapter, I am moving on to the analysis.

The last three chapters is the analysis. First, I conduct two separate case studies of Ramadi and Fallujah respectively, where I provide an understanding of how the two cities developed throughout 2013. Secondly, I conduct a cross-case analysis, trying to compare the two cities and point out why the outcome was so different.

ISIS has fascinated me for quite some time. Their brutality and lightning campaign in June 2014 surpasses fiction, and they have achieved unprecedented levels of media attention. Needless to say, a lot has been written about ISIS before. In order to find some aspect that had not already been covered, I conducted a thorough literature review of what had been written on the rise of ISIS.

Literature review

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the existing literature on ISIS. Because of the vast amount of publications on the topic, I will focus on the most important ones and highlight how these authors have covered different aspects of ISIS. I will then look at how a few scholars have used social movement theory to analyse ISIS. At the end of this chapter I present some perspectives and explanations on the outcome of ISIS approach in Ramadi and Fallujah. Through an increasingly focused literature review, from ISIS in general to ISIS in Ramadi and Fallujah specifically, I will highlight a gap in the existing body of knowledge, and my research question follows as a natural consequence of this gap.

Literature describing limited and specific aspects of ISIS

Ali (2015) looks specifically at propaganda and the recruitment of women, while Berger (2015) and Atwan (2015) describes ISIS' various recruitment strategies through social media. Stern and Berger (2016:XX) describes a propaganda video released in May 2014 showing the execution of unarmed Iraqi soldiers as "[…] possibly the most popular jihadist propaganda video of all time.". Violence has been an important factor in ISIS' recruitment of local and foreign fighters (Byman, 2016:143). The issue of foreign fighters in general is described by Stern and Berger (2016), McCants (2015) and Fishman (2016), while Arntsen (2016) made an important contribution with his book about the recruitment of Norwegian foreign fighters in specific.

McCants (2015) focuses on the apocalyptic aspect of ISIS and how it influences recruitment. The apocalypse is central to ISIS as a recruitment tool, portraying their fighters as defenders of the righteous (Byman, 2016:137). Whereas Al-Qaida downplayed the apocalyptic narrative, ISIS embraces the idea that they are currently fighting the unbelievers in the end of times (McCants, 2015). The apocalyptic narratives are also central in the propaganda, as they […] resonate among many Muslims today because of the political turmoil in the Middle East." (McCants, 2015:461).

The ideological aspect of ISIS is described by Byman (2016). While ISIS is highly ideological, the movement is still pragmatic and the ideology subordinate to strategic goals (Byman, 2016). This makes the ideology seem incoherent and contradictory, and as a

consequence, predicting ISIS' actions from their ideology is very difficult (Byman, 2016:136). Still, Byman (2016) also views ISIS in terms of agency by looking at strengths and weaknesses of the movement and not the conditions that shape it.

Literature describing the rise of ISIS

The Sunni – Shia conflict

The literature describing the rise of ISIS does so mostly in a historical context and with the Sunni- Shia conflict as the main explanation for its rise. Authors such as Weiss and Hassan (2015) and McCants (2015) argue that ISIS attacked the Shia population to escalate existing tensions and provoke a violent response against the Sunni community. The aim was to drag Iraq into a sectarian conflict. This way, the Sunni population would assess that their best chance of protection from Shia security forces would be to align with ISIS.

The Sunni - Shia conflict is very important in understanding the rise of ISIS. However, if used as the main explanation, it suggests that the course of events in Ramadi and Fallujah should have been quite similar, as both cities are Sunni-dominated. ISIS attacked both cities in the early days of January 2014, and while Fallujah fell at once with no visible resistance, it took protracted fighting and finally, a three-day surge by ISIS before Ramadi fell on May 17 the same year (Sowell, 2015). A purely military explanation, that Fallujah was somehow weaker and easier to target, seems less plausible. ISIS had 300 to 500 men in Fallujah (Cockburn, 2015, Abbas, 2014a), a city of 320 000+ inhabitants (PopulationData, 2015) and a history of strong resistance to hostile invaders (International Crisis Group, 2014, Sowell, 2015). Abbas (2014a) also points out that "Tribal gunmen surrounded the al-Qaeda gunmen as soon as they arrived." Armed tribal militias reside in and around both Ramadi and Fallujah, and in Ramadi the outcome shows that ISIS was an inferior force. ISIS would become a well-armed and equipped force, but this did not happen until it seized large amounts of heavy and modern equipment from the Iraqi army in May-June 2014 (Terrill, 2014). The point is that both Ramadi and Fallujah would have been able to withstand an attack by ISIS, which indicates that the outcome was the result of something else.

ISIS strategy

Many of the publications on ISIS have been written by experts on counterinsurgency (COIN) or other security studies. This is not surprising, as the United States considered Al-Qaida in

Iraq (AQI), ISIS' predecessor, to be a military opponent and fought a counter insurgency campaign against them for several years. Thus, military theorists became authoritative on how to deal with ISIS. However, this has caused the focal point of analysis to be ISIS as an organisation, studying issues such as strategy and military action. Brian Fishman's book "The Masterplan: ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory" (2016) serves as a good illustration of this. Researchers like Knights (2014) and Ryan (2015) also focus on ISIS as a military-like organisation in a military-strategic perspective. They conclude that ISIS strategy is decisive in their success. However, analysing ISIS detached from the local context, existing structures and political opportunities fails explain how ISIS could persuade and recruit as many fighters needed to take military control in Fallujah.

ISIS in Ramadi and Fallujah

Cockburn (2015) mentions that ISIS seized Fallujah and large parts of Anbar, while he in another book mentions ISIS being in control of Fallujah, but does not address the difference between the cities (Cockburn, 2016). Weiss and Hassan (2015) point out that both cities fell to ISIS and underline how much longer it took to take Ramadi. The book argues that discontent about Maliki's heavy-handed policies and the use of Shia militias ignited a Sunni insurgency that gave ISIS an opening. This explanation takes political opportunity into account, but does not explain the differences in Fallujah and Ramadi.

Knights (2014) looks at the different outcomes in Ramadi and Fallujah, and points to Fallujah's history as a rebellious and insular city. In Ramadi's case, he is arguing that the tribes in Ramadi rejected AQI to a larger degree than the ones in Fallujah, thus making Ramadi less susceptible to ISIS than Fallujah. Griffin (2016) argues similarly that the tribal authorities in Ramadi may have feared reprisals because of their participation in the Awakening, a popular Sunni uprising against ISI, ISIS predecessor, in late 2006. However, neither of these explanations are sufficient because the tribes were considerably stronger than ISIS in late 2013 and early 2014, and ISIS did not pose a military threat, although they did conduct several assassinations. The argument of Fallujah as an insular city is partly right, but it does not explain why ISIS seized the city at the time it did. Fallujah has always been an insular city, and still fought off AQI inn 2007.

Social movement theory and ISIS

Ryan (2015) uses social movement theory to present a net assessment of ISIS strengths and weaknesses. He provides insight into ISIS' framing of issues, how the movement manages political contention and how it builds networks. However, the focus is still on the movement and how it influences its environment. By leaving out political opportunity, the case study fails to address how political environment, mobilising structures and frames influence the development of ISIS.

Pelletier, Gardner, Ligon and Kilinc (2016) use social movement theory to analyse ISIS propaganda. Their aim is to investigate how ISIS uses Islamic Law to support strategic objectives. They find that ISIS frame messaging to strengthen areas where its strategy is consistent with mainstream Islamic Law, use existing contradictions in Islamic Law in ISIS' favour and reinterpret Islamic Law to mobilise the target audience. The study provides a conceptual framework for analysing ISIS framing in general, but does not take into account how ISIS framing has competed with other groups in providing the most "legitimate" narrative.

ISIS and the Sunni Protest movement

There are a few articles that describe ISIS in the context of the Sunni Protest movement that dominated the political landscape in Anbar throughout 2013. One of these is Sowell's *Iraq's Second Sunni Insurgency*. The article looks at the failure of the Maliki government in addressing political grievances and how religious, political and tribal factions take advantage of this situation to strengthen their own cause in Anbar. Further, violent events and repressive government actions deepens the divide, cements the struggle as sectarian, and Sowell argues that nationalist insurgents takes advantage of this to reignite a full-fledged insurgency. The article describes how the Sunni Protest movement was radicalised throughout 2013, and provides a more nuanced assessment of ISIS influence in Fallujah by the beginning of January 2014. Sowell provides a good description of the context in Anbar throughout 2013 and a historic account of the events. My study further contributes by using social movement theory to explain mobilisation and radicalisation of Fallujah, while Ramadi mobilises around moderate groups and structures.

The article *Make or Break: Iraq's Sunnis and the State* by International Crisis Group was written in August 2013 and, like Sowell's *Iraq's Second Sunni Insurgency*, it describes how

the Sunni Protest movement is radicalised through events in early 2013. It gives a good overview of the participants in the Sunni Protest movement and their bases of support. The article argues that the repressive policies of Maliki have caused a renewed spiral of violence and that this probably will continue towards the 2014 parliamentary elections. This turned out to be correct. The article also makes a point that is central to this thesis, namely that the increased radicalisation and internal conflicts of the movement were used by Maliki to justify the government's repressive strategy. However, as the article was published in August 2013, it does not explain just how differently the situations in Ramadi and Fallujah would evolve towards the end of the year.

There are many authors that have been cited so far and most of them have on thing in common; they focus directly on ISIS. Sowell's article *Iraq's Second Sunni Insurgency* is one of the few scholarly works that mainly focuses on the context in Anbar when ISIS resurfaced. He describes the Sunni protests as a movement, but does not apply social movement theory to analyse how the movement evolves. Sowell leaves out how ISIS worked to shape their own opportunities through action and framing of issues, and this is a weakness. Still, his article is central to this study, as it provides excellent insight into the political landscape at the time. He also provides interesting details about the dynamics between the Ramadi and Fallujah protest sites in an interview with Joel Wing, editor of the blog Musings on Iraq.

The scholars referenced in this chapter provide explanations for the rise of ISIS in a historic context and the group's strategy, in addition to looking at ideology, recruitment and use of social media. Some also point to possible explanations for the different outcomes in Fallujah and Ramadi. My study will contribute to the body of knowledge by analysing the cities using social movement theory, as opposed to a purely historic account of the events. Through the review of different publications it has become increasingly clear that it is necessary to provide a nuanced explanation for the outcome of ISIS' approach in Ramadi and Fallujah. I argue that studying these two cities is an important contribution to the current body of knowledge, because Fallujah was the first large city ISIS took control of, and central in their campaign to take control in Anbar province. Thus, the research question this thesis is trying to answer is: *why was ISIS able to enter Fallujah unopposed, while being rejected and defeated in Ramadi in January 2014?*

Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodological choices that have been made in order to answer the research question. This includes the choice of the case study method and why it is suited to provide insight in this study. Additionally, I will point out issues tied to the validity of the study, as well as the use of sources and other potential pitfalls. But before moving into any of that, I think it is essential to be clear about what the purpose of this study is.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the current body of knowledge on the rise of ISIS in Anbar, by explaining how ISIS was able to enter Fallujah unopposed, while being rejected and defeated in Ramadi in January 2014. The current understanding is that ISIS' success in Eastern Anbar mainly can be explained by a) the Sunni – Shiite conflict, assuming that the Sunni population automatically sided with ISIS when faced by Shiite dominated security forces, b) ISIS' superior military power, or c) that ISIS took advantage of, and rose, from the aggrieved Sunni Protest movement, a conflict that developed in Anbar throughout 2013. However, none of the explanations provide an understanding as to why the outcome was so different in the two cities.

I argue that a combination of the environment, other groups involved, ISIS' own strategic choices and the actions of the Iraqi government, are central in explaining this difference. To shed light on these dynamics, I argue that it is useful to analyse the outcomes using social movement theory because it provides a methodological middle ground between structural and rational choice models (Robinson, 2004:117). This is relevant in this analysis, because ISIS needs to be understood not just in terms of its own strategy and actions, but also how the environment shapes and influences ISIS.

Research design

My research design is based on the case study method. I will conduct a comparative study of two cases, including within-case analysis guided by the framework I outline in the chapter on social movement theory. According to (George and Bennett, 2005:20), there is an increasing consensus that the "[…] strongest means of drawing inferences from case studies is the use of

a combination of within-case analysis and cross-case comparisons within a single study […]".
The first case is how the situation in Ramadi developed throughout 2013 and into the first
days of January 2014 when militants attacked the city. The second case is how the situation
developed throughout 2013 in Fallujah and the reaction in the city when ISIS arrived in early
January 2014.

The two cities are located in Eastern Anbar along the Euphrates river, in an area considered
the sectarian borderland between the Sunni Arab world and Shia Arab Iraq, backed by Shia
Persian Iran (Sowell, 2015). Ramadi is the provincial capital, located about 100 km West of
Baghdad, while Fallujah is considered the second city, located about halfway between
Baghdad and Ramadi (see appendix A: Map of Iraq). What makes these cases interesting is
that even though the cities have a lot in common, the events unfolded differently when ISIS
approached them in January 2014; in Ramadi, the local militias sided with the Iraqi Security
Forces (ISF) in the fight against ISIS. While in Fallujah, ISIS was let into the city and
cooperated with local militias in the fight against ISF. When looking closer at these cases, it
becomes clear that an exclusively sectarian or military explanation for ISIS success in
Fallujah seems incomplete. Before getting further into the details, I will look at some of the
key concepts of the research methodology I have chosen; the case study.

The Case study

A "case" is the main subject of analysis in a case study, and defined by (Gerring, 2007a:19) as
a "[…] spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over
some period of time.". It is usually easier to define the spatial boundaries of a case, such as a
nation's borders, than the temporal boundaries (Gerring, 2007a:19). Still, in some instances
such as a terrorist attack, deciding spatial boundaries can be difficult (Gerring, 2007a:20).
Units can vary in size from individuals to nation-states, depending on what the study aims to
illuminate (Gerring, 2007a). The cases in this study were not chosen randomly as
representative of a population of cases, but by purposive sampling because they have different
outcomes. Spatially, the cases are limited to the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah. The period of
time under investigation in this study is from early 2013 to early January 2014. ISIS moves on
both cities in the first days of January 2014, after yearlong Sunni demonstrations in large
parts of Anbar escalate violently and cause government controlled security forces to leave
Ramadi and Fallujah to the tribes and local militias.

The definition of a case study is two-fold according to Yin (2014:16), covering both the scope and features of a case study. First, he points out that a case study can be defined as "[…] an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014:16). The intense study of one or a few cases is central to the understanding of the case study methodology (Gerring, 2007a). The method is particularly useful when trying to answer a research question beginning with "how" or "why", as these questions are largely explanatory and "[…] deal with operational links needing to be traced over time […]" (Yin, 2014:10). The case study rests on an assumption that there is a link between micro and macro level in social behaviour (Gerring, 2007a:1).

Secondly, the case study handles a specific situation with many variables that makes it necessary to utilise a wide selection of sources and to develop theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014:17). When looking at many sources it is important *triangulate*; to converge the data to determine the consistency of a finding (Yin, 2014:17). Developing converging lines of inquiry through the use of multiple sources makes a finding or conclusion more likely to be accurate (Yin, 2014:120).

Yin (2014) points out that case study methodology is especially suitable when it is hard to separate the phenomenon from the context. That is very relevant in the two cases in this study. ISIS' attack on Ramadi and Fallujah respectively happens in the context of rising tension and violence in Eastern Anbar, with several other groups manoeuvring the political and security domain simultaneously. Through Yin's definition of a case study and by using SMT, the study looks at both context and agency to explain the different outcomes in the two cases.

Even though Yin's definition of a case study implies a contemporary focus, it is also possible to conduct a case study of historic events, as the method actually relies on many of the same techniques (Yin, 2014). A history relies on primary and secondary documents, artefacts and other historic sources, that also can be used in case studies (Yin, 2014). What sets them apart is not the method itself, but rather the nature of the sources being used, as case study also can rely on direct observation of the phenomenon and interviews of persons involved (Yin, 2014). This is also possible with fairly recent historic events, and creates an overlap between a

history and a case study (Yin, 2014). My study belongs in the overlapping sphere between the two, as I will rely on a wide selection of documents.

Case study research can incorporate one (single case study) or several cases (multiple case study) (Yin, 2014:50). If there are so many cases that it is no longer possible to study them intensively, the focus shifts to a sample of cases (cross-case study or large-N study) (Gerring, 2007a). There is no specific number that signifies that the study has moved to a cross-case and it is better understood as a continuum, according to (Gerring, 2007a:20). I will look at two cases, placing my study firmly in the end of the continuum where it is possible to study the cases intensively. Conclusions drawn across multiple cases also makes the study more robust, compared to conclusions from a single case (Yin, 2014:57).

The case study research design has faced a lot of criticism and is viewed by many with "[…] extreme circumspection." according to (Gerring, 2007a:6). Nonreplicability, informal and undisciplined research design, biased case selection, nongeneralizable theories and subjective conclusions are among the main critiques (Gerring, 2007a:6). However, it is important to not mistake poorly implemented case study methods for a faulty methodology (George and Bennett, 2005:22). Case study research, like other research methods, has its strengths and limitations. It is important to understand the trade-offs and potential pitfalls, and not regard the case study as […] a license to do whatever a researcher wishes to do with a chosen topic." (Gerring, 2007a:6).

When discussing the strengths and limitations of the case study method, it is useful to contextualise by looking at certain key expressions. *Internal validity* is defined by Yin (2014:239) as the strength of a cause-effect link, in part determined by showing the absence of spurious relationships (events that wrongly seem to be causally related) and the rejection of rival hypotheses. *External validity* is "the extent to which the findings from a case study can be analytically generalized to other situations that were not part of the original study" (Yin, 2014:238).

Historically, the definition of case studies rested on the small number of phenomena being investigated, "small-n", as opposed to a statistical research design with a quantitative focus, "large-N" (George and Bennett, 2005:17). The strengths and limitations of case study research can be understood relative to large-N studies (Gerring, 2007a:37). Case studies are

usually limited to a dozen cases or less for practical reasons (Gerring, 2007b:96). As a case study includes only a small number of cases, the possibility to generalize the findings to a larger population is limited (Gerring, 2007a:43). The external validity of a case study is thus weaker than that of a large-N study. However, the internal validity is stronger in a study with few cases, because each case is studied more intensively and this often makes it easier to establish the truthfulness of a causal relationship within the case (Gerring, 2007a:43).

According to Gerring (2007a:12) the strongest defence of case studies is that they are quasi-experimental in nature, as the experiment relies on a small number of "cases" that are closely related and observed at a single point or over time. In an experiment the researcher is able to control the environment and the variables, but it still resembles a case study more closely than a large study with many units (Gerring, 2007a). In this study, the two cases can be viewed as the experiments. In both cases, ISIS tries to take territorial control over a Sunni-dominated city, and while the approaches to the cities are the same, the outcomes are very different.

Generalization is not achieved through a single experiment, but by experiments conducted several times, replicating the phenomenon under different circumstances (Yin, 2014:20). This approach can also be used to understand case studies, as the findings are not representative for a larger population, but can be generalizable to theoretical propositions (Yin, 2014:21). This means that there is no statistical proof that the results are valid in another part of the population, but that results through *analytic generalization* can be logically extended to other situations "[…] based on the relevance of similar theoretical concepts and principles." (Yin, 2014:237). This study includes just two cases, which limits the possibilities of extending the results to other situations not included in the study, the external validity.

Reliability is the possibility that other researchers can repeat the study with the same result (Yin, 2014:46). This is maintained through a complete bibliography and use of citations, a thorough description of the research study design and theoretical framework, and maintaining a chain of evidence that enables the external observer to logically link collection, evidence and conclusions (Yin, 2014:127).

Sources

Most of the sources that I have used in this study have been collected from the Internet. It would not have been possible to conduct this study without extensive use of online resources.

When using the Internet it is very important to be critical, and spend time investigating and evaluating the credibility of the sources, as well as the validity of the information they provided. At the same time, the Internet provides an amazing access to resources and information that has made this study possible.

I have used the blog by Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi (2014a) and Joel Wing's "Musings on Iraq" (2008) extensively throughout the study. They provide detailed knowledge about the events, overview over the groups involved and the relations between them. Wing and Tamimi both rely on their wide networks in Iraq and have conducted interviews with several of the insurgent leaders relevant to shed light on the events in Ramadi and Fallujah. Both blogs are cited extensively in newspapers, journal articles and books, and are considered reliable. However, it is important to stay critical and confirm the information through other sources as well where this is possible. Additionally, blog posts are not updated at a later point. This means that old blog posts can contain errors from the contemporary understanding of events that have been rejected later.

Information was spread in several ways during the protests. The most important sources of information were the Mosques, outdoor sermons, demonstrations and flyers that were distributed at the protest sites. Additionally, social media and conventional media, like newspapers and TV, contributed to spreading the information. I have used some contemporary electronic newspaper articles in my study. When it comes to the sermons, demonstrations, flyers, social media and TV-sources, I have not used any directly, but through secondary sources.

The Government of Iraq (GOI) denied journalists and diplomats access to Fallujah, thus, no international media has been able to report from the city (International Crisis Group, 2014:3). When trying to reach Fallujah, a BBC reporter told International Crisis Group that "[…] an Iraqi army convoy blocked us at the entrance of Anbar province." (International Crisis Group, 2014:3). Several bloggers and journalists conducted telephone interviews with eyewitnesses inside Fallujah. This has contributed greatly to my understanding of the events, but required triangulation with other sources.

An important newspaper article, *"Four armed groups fighting in Fallujah"* (Abbas, 2014a), provides detailed information from inside Fallujah after non-governmental armed forces have

taken control. This article is based on an interview with an anonymous member of the Tribal Revolutionaries' Council, one of the armed groups active in Fallujah. Abbas, the author, has written several articles on events in Iraq and Anbar, and if often cited in journal articles. Like Wing and Tamimi, he also has an extensive network in Iraq that provides highly detailed information. Some of these sources are described in terms of position or function, but most often they remain anonymous.

International Crisis Group (ICG) has written several reports on Iraq and the Sunni repression. Their analysts have conducted several interviews inside Iraq, and ICG relies less on secondary sources than most other foundations or think tanks. This makes their articles detailed and providing perspectives from civilians in the areas the events are taking place. With the blogs, journal articles and newspaper articles, it is possible to piece together a relatively detailed and (hopefully) accurate picture of what happened in Ramadi and Fallujah.

Conducting research on a geographic area in conflict creates several challenges. First of all, limited access to the area restricts the possibilities of direct observation and to conduct interviews with subjects who witnessed the phenomenon in question. Secondly, a highly violent and rapidly evolving situation such as an attack is in its very nature difficult to get a complete and coherent overview of.

Several of the groups involved in the Sunni Protest movement were violent, anti-governmental groups trying to obtain territorial control through various means, at the cost of the Iraqi government. In such an endeavour, secrecy is for obvious reasons essential. This means that most of the primary sources contain information that the groups *wanted* to share, propaganda. Other primary sources have been obtained through military raids and other forms of intelligence collection. Some of these have been made available to the public by institutions such as Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

The Sunni Protest movement's propaganda is conveyed through different means and in different languages. The propaganda used in this study is in English, either because it has been translated or because it was released it in English. As I am not an Arabic speaker, translated propaganda limits my ability to verify the information it contains. I have tried to use sources referenced by other scholars as much as possible to reduce the chance of misinterpreting the source. However, by relying on sources in English, I have been using the

same sources available to every other English-speaking scholar, thus possibly making the same mistakes as others before me and strengthening misconceptions.

The propaganda released in English suggests that it was meant for "the English-speaking world" and not necessarily for the inhabitants of Fallujah and Ramadi. This poses a validity challenge, as this information is obviously meant to portray the Sunni Protest movement, as it wants to be seen by the "outside" world. Thus, propaganda, and especially propaganda that has been released in English, can mainly be used as background information, to highlight different aspects such as ideology and narratives, and to build timelines. In all instances, the information must be checked against other sources.

Secondary sources, like academic articles and newspaper articles, face the same challenges regarding primary sources as described above. Additionally, journalists do not always reveal their sources, which makes it hard to verify the information and avoid circular reporting. Circular reporting occurs when information seems to come from several sources, but in reality only comes from one. Triangulation with circular reporting creates findings that seem methodologically strong, when they in reality are not. The source a journalist uses can also be biased, trying to establish a narrative that is positive for the tribe or other unity when they know their story will be conveyed to a large audience. Additionally, journalists often work on a tight schedule and in competition with other media. This time pressure can cause bias and factual errors in the reporting.

When using information provided by the state of Iraq, it is equally important to be aware of possible biases, exaggeration of success and underreporting of negative events. A solution to this could be to use secondary sources representing different parties to the conflict, like statements from the protesters, protest leaders and reports from independent observers such as Human Rights organisations.

With regards to sources, it is a weakness to my study that I have only used secondary sources. It would have been a strength to my study if I had been able to conduct my own interviews and study sources in their original language. However, this has not been possible because of limited time and language skills. Additionally, many of the sources have been collected from the Internet, with all its potential pitfalls. As a result, I have spent much time investigating the different sources, checking their credibility and the validity of the information.

Social movement theory

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an understanding of what a social movement is, its characteristics and why social movement theory is useful in showing how ISIS could take territorial control in Fallujah, through analysing how the Sunni Protest movement in 2013 evolved. Secondly, this chapter aims to provide the framework for the analysis by describing the political process model and the three dimensions political opportunity, mobilising structures and framing processes, and how these relate to each other.

The synthetic model

The idea of social movements as distinctive forms of political action is nothing new and can be traced as far back as the 1760s (Tilly, 2009:533). However, the research field became increasingly relevant in the 60s and 70s when the American civil rights movement, the women's rights movement and other forms of collective action and protest movements gained traction (della Porta and Diani, 1999:2). These movements increased the need to understand this new form of collective action of societal and political participation (della Porta and Diani, 1999:2). As the actors in the new conflicts were people who had taken little or no part in traditional politics (youth, women and the coloured) della Porta and Diani (1999) argue that it was difficult to understand them in the context of traditional political cleavages in an industrial society. Additionally, the principal frameworks for analysing social conflict at the time, Marxism and structural-functionalism, were unable to explain the revival of the biggest collective mobilisations since the 1930s. As a response to this, several perspectives on the analysis of social movements emerged, such as *collective behaviour*, *resource mobilisation*, *new social movements, and political process model* (della Porta and Diani, 1999:3).

The key assumption in collective behaviour theory is that structural changes lead to psychological discomfort, which in turn causes collective action (Wiktorowicz, 2004:6). By assuming a linear, causal relationship, this approach was unable to explain why movements would rise in specific situations (Wiktorowicz, 2004:6). Resource mobilisation theory emerged as a response to this shortcoming, assuming that movements are rational, providing a structure for aggrieved individuals and providing resources for collective action (Wiktorowicz, 2004:10). New social movements would introduce the cultural factors of identity, framing and emotion to the field of SMT (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007:445). Framing had

largely been absorbed in the political process model by the end of the 1990s, and made the model less structurally focused (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007:445).

Morris criticises the political process model for being "[…] overly structural and contain[ing] rationalistic biases." (2000). He argues that the model's focus on external forces is its biggest limitation, and that it underestimates a group's capacity to generate collective action, even as political authorities unleashes heavy repression (Morris, 2000:3). Still, this model has become the dominant synthetic model within SMT (Morris, 2000). Theorists central in developing the political process model claim that these elements together "[…] account for movement origins, the power generated by movements, the energizing cultural content of movements, and movement outcomes" (Morris, 2000).

Definition

A social movement is defined by Gamson and Meyer (1996:283) as a:

> "[…] sustained and self-conscious challenge to authorities or cultural codes by a field of actors (organizations and advocacy networks), some of whom employ extrainstitutional means of influence."

Gamson and Meyer's definition highlights two aspects that are central to this study; that a movement consists of several actors and that these actors can pursue different strategies through different means.

Adding to the definition provided by Gamson and Meyer, della Porta and Diani (1999) argue that social movements are defined by four characteristics; *informal networks, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilise about conflictual issues, through the frequent use of various forms of protest*. Informal networks understood as the interaction between a network of networks, organizations and/or individuals is the basis of social movement. By creating and distributing resources, information and ideas, these networks facilitate mobilisation (della Porta and Diani, 1999:14). Secondly, shared beliefs and solidarity creates a sense of belonging needed in a social movement (della Porta and Diani, 1999:14). This creates the "[…] existence of a vocabulary and an opening of ideas and actions, which in the past was either unknown or unthinkable." Gusfield in della Porta and Diani (1999:14). The third trait is collective action focusing on conflicts of a social movement. It is the condition when the aforementioned actors or networks engage in a political or cultural conflict to oppose or

promote social change (della Porta and Diani, 1999:14). The fourth and last part of the definition is the use of protests. This is what sets social movements apart from other social and political actors, as it utilizes public protest and unconventional means of participation, including violence (della Porta and Diani, 1999:15).

I have chosen to include della Porta and Diani's view on the characteristics of a social movement, because it underlines the importance of shared beliefs, or frames, and the development of these in order to mobilise collective action. Combined with the definition provided by Gamson and Meyer, this accounts for the aspects of a social movement that are most important to this study and provides the best understanding of the Sunni Protest movement.

What makes the Sunni Protest movement a movement?

The Sunni Protest movement fits the definition of a social movement for several reasons. Even though it is convenient to refer to *the* Sunni Protest movement, it actually consisted of a field of actors. It was not a general mass of aggrieved individuals who spontaneously took to the streets like a mob, but "[…] an outgrowth of a core division within the organized part of the Sunni community going back to 2003." (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). On one side was the mainstream clerics, political parties and tribal leaders who had chosen to work within the established political institutions; on the other side, elements of the armed insurgency that lost the civil war from 2004 to 2007, who had survived and now resurfaced (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013, International Crisis Group, 2013).

This broad range of actors wanted to achieve different goals and thus followed different strategies, varying from moderate demands for Sunni influence in the political processes to overthrowing the central government and establishing a cross-national Caliphate under the rule of a supreme religious leader (Sowell, 2014, Wicken, 2013, International Crisis Group, 2013). The different strategies also included different means, where mainstream political actors argued in favour of negotiations, peaceful protests and sit-ins, the clerics would hold encouraging speeches during Friday prayer, while the more extreme elements proposed and executed blackmail, violence and other acts of terror (International Crisis Group, 2013, Sowell, 2014, Wicken, 2013).

Authors such as Pelletier et al. (2016) and Ryan (2015) have analysed ISIS using SMT. However, when trying to explain how ISIS prevailed in Fallujah and not in Ramadi, it is not sufficient to look at just ISIS, their framing and the structural conditions. To understand how ISIS could gain enough support to take control in Fallujah, it is useful to look at mechanisms such as radical flank effect, different goals and competing frames. These mechanisms will be described in detail later in this chapter but what they all have in common, is that they can explain how a movement evolves, assuming the movement is made up by several actors pursing different goals.

Relevance of SMT

The Sunni Protests evolve from peaceful protests to an insurgency in the span of 12 months, causing jihadist groups to take territorial control over large urban areas. Social movement theory can contribute to understanding this development by providing a framework for the analysis of collective action and mobilisation. SMT is useful in showing how existing structures like tribes, political parties and criminal or insurgent networks can frame current issues and opportunities to gain support within an aggrieved population.

SMT mostly uses groups as the unit in explaining collective action, because even though individuals make the choices, this happens does not happen in a vacuum (Robinson, 2004:117). Meso-level groups, like informal networks or organisations are the vehicles through which people mobilise and are the "[…] collective building blocks of social movements and revolutions […]" (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996:3). Structural changes are important in determining the success of a social movement, but they do not dictate the outcome (Robinson, 2004).

This thesis is trying to explain why the outcomes in Ramadi and Fallujah were so different. In this regard, the comparative aspect of social movement theory, largely developed by European scholars, has shown that SMT is useful in analysing how the same movement develops under different structural conditions (McAdam et al., 1996). Even though the European approach mainly has analysed how the same movement develop in different countries with different structural and political systems, I argue that this approach is relevant. Throughout 2013, the governmental control over the two cities is reduced, and in late December, the security forces pull out. This causes two structurally different factions to take

control: the Anbar Coordination Committee in Ramadi and the Military Council of the Tribal Revolutionaries in Fallujah.

How SMT can be used to study violent movements

By looking at how SMT has evolved through the works of della Porta (1995) and Wiktorowicz (2004), I argue that SMT can be useful in analysing the Sunni Protest movement. Even though SMT was developed as a response to mostly peaceful protest movements in Europe and North America, della Porta shows how SMT can be used to study political violence and terrorism in her book *Social movements, political violence, and the state: a comparative analysis of Italy and Germany* (1995). Her work primarily opens up for applying SMT to highly violent movements, but still in a Westernised context.

One of the most important contributors on social movement theory and Islamic activism is Wiktorowicz (2004) *Islamic Activism – A social movement theory approach*. He argues that Islamic activism can be considered a form of social movement, and that SMT is a useful framework for understanding Islamic activism, even though much of the SMT studies are dominated by research on the US and Western Europe. Wiktorowicz defines Islamic activism as " […] the mobilization of contention to support Muslim causes" (Wiktorowicz, 2004:2). He further states that the wide definition is a conscious choice, as it envelops a variety of movements, including "[…] terrorist groups, collective action rooted in Islamic symbols and identities, [and] explicitly political movements that seek to establish an Islamic state […]" (Wiktorowicz, 2004:2).

In the studies of Islamic activism there has been an inherent tendency to assume that grievances has been the most important driver behind mobilization, and that these grievances have been translated into religious symbols and idioms (Wiktorowicz, 2004:4). While various forms of grievances can play a part in mobilization, social movement theory researchers have shown that factors such as resource availability, framing resonance and changes in political opportunity structures are also linked to mobilization processes (Wiktorowicz, 2004:4).

The political process model

First of all, the focus of this study is how one part of the Sunni Protest movement became dominant, not how the movement first emerged. My argument is that ISIS in Ramadi and

Fallujah did not emerge as a singular movement or arrive as an external group, but is the outcome of how the Sunni Protest movement developed through 2013.

According to McAdam et al. (1996) there is an emerging consensus among researchers on social movements that three dimensions are central in analysing social movements. They are important both when a movement emerges and develop, but this study focuses on the latter. The three dimensions are:

1. Political opportunities: the structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement
2. Mobilising structures: forms of organisation (informal as well as formal), available to insurgents
3. Framing processes: the collective process of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action

The political process model is the most relevant analytical framework in my study because it includes both structural and cultural factors, and how they relate to each other. The latter part is also the hardest, as there exists many relationships between the three dimensions, and the importance of these are determined by the research question (McAdam et al., 1996:7). Although the dimensions are the same, there are some nuances in how they are being utilised in the analysis and how they relate to each other (McAdam et al., 1996).

When studying how and when a movement emerges, changes in the opportunity structure are important explanatory factors (McAdam et al., 1996:13). When explaining how a movement develops these changes are still relevant. However, as a movement has established itself and started to take action, the opportunities become, to a larger degree than before, the result of the movement's interaction with its environment (McAdam et al., 1996).

When looking at how a movement develops, the availability of mobilising structures is not the main focus, but rather the organisational profile of the groups involved in the movement (McAdam et al., 1996). In this study, these groups or structures, are the established political parties, former insurgent groups, mainstream religious groups and tribes that provided shelter, food and motivational speeches to the protesters. As the initial mobilisation is tied to established structures, new structures usually evolve to secure the sustainability of the movement; Social Movement Organisations (SMO) (McAdam et al., 1996). These groups are

specifically tied to the movement and become the main contestants within the movement as a whole. I argue that it is useful to analyse the main groups and the constellations they create at the different protest sites as SMOs within the Sunni Protest movement. In Ramadi the dominant groups create the Anbar Coordination Committee and in Fallujah the dominant groups create the Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries. This will contribute to the understanding of how the movement evolved differently in the two cities, and how one of the SMOs could become so radical that it was willing to cooperate with ISIS, while the SMO in Ramadi supressed extremists and fought off ISIS.

Political opportunity

The underlying assumption of political opportunity is that "[…] social movements and revolutions are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the national context […]" (McAdam et al., 1996:3). Even though both European and American social movement scholars focused on the relationship between the institutionalised, political system, and social movements, two distinct directions within SMT developed. The American direction, trying to explain the emergence of a specific social movement by looking at changes in informal power relations or the structure of a political system (McAdam et al., 1996:3). The European direction, also known as the new social movements tradition, trying to explain how different political systems influence how a social movement develops and its chances of success (McAdam et al., 1996:3). Several detailed historic accounts of single social movements have been produced by the American direction, while the European has added a comparative dimension to SMT by producing several studies on how the same movement has developed in different countries (McAdam et al., 1996).

Tilly (1978) argues that political opportunity structures influence mobilization, defining opportunity structures as being composed of opportunities and constraints. In other words, political opportunity structures can motivate or demotivate, and make it easier or harder to succeed when collective action is taken. The structures can be the international system, regional dynamics, national politics or even structures within the group itself (Robinson, 2004:116).

According to Morris (2000), movements are likely to gain strength when favourable changes occur. These changes can be a weakening state control, civil war, emergence of external allies or foreign intervention, or any other opening of new space in the political system. However, a

strict interpretation of this makes the theory overly structural, as this leaves the movement at the mercy of the changing environment and dependent on exploiting changes that occur (Morris, 2000:3). To avoid loosing sight of human agency Morris (2000) argues that collective action also can create political opportunity and clear way for further collective action.

McAdam (1996) identifies four dimensions in which the variables that determine political opportunity can be placed:
1. The relative openness or closure of the institutionalised political system
2. The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity
3. The presence or absence of elite allies
4. The state's capacity and propensity for repression

In this study the focus will be on number four, as the development of the Sunni Protest movement throughout 2013 is highly influenced by events caused by the central government's repressive strategy. The first three are related to the institutionalised political system, which was quite stable in this regard. There was little chance that a Sunni-dominated or very Sunni sympathetic party would sudden obtain power through the political process.

Constant and essentially fixed aspects of political opportunity that are deeply embedded in culture or the political system are not very useful when trying to understand mobilisation and demobilisation, as these are highly dynamic processes (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:277-278). Thus, the focus in this study will be on the volatile aspects of political opportunity, like shifts in public policy, change in alliances, breakdown of social control, public discourse and national mood (Gamson and Meyer, 1996). The volatile aspects are central in explaining political opportunity, emphasizing the interaction between opportunities and movement strategy (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:277). This is central *after* a movement has emerged, because the

> "[…] structure of political opportunities is now more a product of the interaction of the movement with its environment than a simple reflection of changes recurring elsewhere." (McAdam et al., 1996:13).

Mobilising structures

McAdam et al. (1996) argues that movements do not emerge spontaneously from the actions of marginal individuals in an unstructured context. Even though political and other institutionalised systems shape how and when social movements develop, this does not happen independent of the mobilising structures through which people organise (McAdam et al., 1996). Rather, movements exist and develop along the lines of existing organisations, institutions or informal networks, like ethnicities, tribes, political parties and even illegal organisations like criminal networks or terrorist groups (McAdam et al., 1996). The pre-existing networks recruit, socialise, indoctrinate and mobilise contention (Robinson, 2004:116). Further, if a movement is unable to allocate resources and direct collective action because of inappropriate organisational structures, it will lead to missed opportunities (Hafez, 2004:40). Morris (2000) argues that mobilising structures are central to understanding movements, because this is where rational actors and human agency figure most prominently in the political process model.

The radical flank effect

Movements sometimes develop a radical flank. A group within the movement that utilises radical rhetoric and radical methods, compared to the rest of the movement (McAdam et al., 1996). The radical flank effect is a dynamic within a movement and between a movement and a third party, in this case, the Government of Iraq. It can affect a movement in several ways, both positive and negative. The positive effect of a radical wing can be that the moderate part of the movement seems more reasonable and a more attractive party to negotiate with (McAdam et al., 1996). This way, the moderates are legitimised and bargaining position strengthened. McAdam et al. (1996) points out that funding the moderates is a way of undermining radical influence.

The negative effects of the radical flank can pressure the moderates to take a more radical stand than first anticipated. Popular pressure to be seen as active and strong, intensified by the media attention a radical flank often gets, can cause a radicalisation of the entire movement. Additionally, the presence of a radical flank can undermined the movements a whole, reducing outside support and legitimising negative attention from media and authorities.

The radical flank effect is important in the cross-case analysis in this study, because Fallujah develops several traits throughout 2013 that makes it stand out as the radical flank of the Sunni Protest movement.

Framing processes

Of the three dimensions in the political process model, framing processes is probably the least studied (McAdam et al., 1996). McAdam et al. (1996:6) argue that studying political opportunity and mobilising structures is "[…]inherently easier than trying to observe the social construction and dissemination of new ideas.". Additionally, the lack of precision when defining framing processes may have contributed to limiting the efforts to study of this dimension (McAdam et al., 1996).

To avoid confusing framing with any cultural aspect of a social movement, I will use the definition originally put forth by David Snow:

> "[…] the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action." (McAdam et al., 1996).

Additionally, this definition is useful as this study looks at movement development and outcomes. The actions of the different groups within the movement are more important in the developing stages, than when the movement emerges (McAdam et al., 1996).

Every society has a shared set of histories, truths and symbols that make up what can be called a "cultural toolbox" (Robinson, 2004). These cultural tools are interpreted and utilized in different ways by different groups and movements, creating "[…] a set of contrasting ideologies and sets of meaning in any given society" (Robinson, 2004:116). The political process model maintains that collective action, including mass violence, involves "[…] normative framing to facilitate the mobilization of resources and motivate individuals to sacrifice their time, money, energy, and lives" (Hafez, 2004:39).

Political opportunity and mobilising structures can only explain partly why and how social movements emerge, and does too little to account for human agency and culture (Gamson and Meyer, 1996). People's perceptions and ideas of what is possible must necessarily be advantageous to and inspire to collective action for a movement to emerge (Gamson and

Meyer, 1996:283). Framing processes is a social construction within a movement that is necessary for it to take advantage opportunities, because "[a]n opportunity unrecognized is no opportunity at all." (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:283).

Because a movement is not one unified actor, it does not make sense to look at the framing processes as something the movement does itself, rather, the framing processes is the sum of all the different groups pursuing their different strategies and trying to rally support around their own frames (Gamson and Meyer, 1996). Framing is an "[…] internal process of contention […] with different actors taking different positions." (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:283). This opens up for an internal debate in the movement about how opportunities are perceived and how to take advantage of them to create the best possible outcome (Gamson and Meyer, 1996). Through internal competition of frames among the social movement organisations, this process "[…] leads to changes in the dominant frames of a movement and a succession in [SMO] power and influence." (Zald, 1996:270).

Frames often focus on the promise of "[…] better policies, greater justice, and more human social life as alternatives which their actions can help bring about." (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:286). They are often exaggerated and overly optimistic with regards to the real opportunities and influence of the movement. They are convincing the participants of the realism in opportunities that are considered unrealistic to individuals outside the movement. Through mobilising collective action in accordance with the frame, a movement can create opportunities where there were none, "[…] making their opportunity frame a self-fulfilling prophecy." (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:287).

As the different actors in the movement follow different strategies, a normal conflict issue revolves around the means; whether to pursue the goals through institutional or extrainstitutional campaigns or actions (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:284). Gamson and Meyer (1996:284) calls this the "Worse is better" versus "Better is better" issue. Events are important drivers behind this debate, as they can reveal the movement's chances of success, through election results, political concessions, political repression, or any kind of signal from formal or informal institutions. If the opportunities in the institutional sphere is closing, then it will be easier for proponents of extrainstitutional means to gain support within the movement for their frames (Gamson and Meyer, 1996). Thus, the movement is also shaped by

how the mobilising structures or groups perceive the opportunities, and their relative chances of success through different kinds of actions.

Theory development

As a part of the framing processes within a movement, social movement organisations become more or less dominant as a result of the internal competition of frames. Social movement organisations:

> "[…] engage in an intramovement contest over tactics and goals. This intramovement process leads to changes in the dominant frames of a movement and a succession in [SMO] power and influence." (Zald, 1996:270).

Additionally, the framing process is a conscious effort by a group. This ties the culturally loaded framing process to the more physical concept of a group. Further, as groups necessarily are located somewhere or have more or less support in certain areas, I argue that certain areas also will be more open to certain frames. By extension of this, I have developed the following theoretical interpretation:

When a mobilising structure or SMO with specific traits are dominant in a geographic area, then certain frames will resonate better in this area. Through internal competition of frames in a social movement, proponents of certain frames will seek out the areas with the structures most receptive to their worldview. This increases the mobilisation to the structure in question. Additionally, the mobilising structure will actively engage in framing of contemporary events in accordance with its worldview, thus amplifying the existing frames and increasing mobilisation and recruitment to the mobilising structure. This strengthens the mobilising structure and increases its dominance at the expense of competing structures in the same area. Through this process, two different structures can dominate in two different areas, while still being part of the same movement.

In this study, the social movement theory has provided most of the theoretical framework. Additionally, I have utilised the interpretation described above to explain how two different social movement organisations could continually strengthen themselves at the same time, while still being part of the same movement. The interpretation was necessary in order to analyse the two SMOs as parts of the same movement.

Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter I will first analyse the two cases Ramadi and Fallujah. This part will focus on the two social movement organisations the Anbar Coordination Committee in Ramadi and the Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries in Fallujah, and their position in the respective cities. I will look at how mobilisation structures, political opportunity and framing processes influence the situation in the cities, the social movement organisations, and the result it leads to when ISIS arrives in the first days of January.

Secondly, I will conduct a cross-case analysis where I look at how the two SMOs influenced each other throughout 2013. In this analysis I will also include how the government of Iraq influenced the cities differently through repression and violence.

However, before I start the analysis it is necessary to address some key concepts and what definition of the concepts I will utilise in my study. I will provide an introduction to the Iraqi Security Forces, the tribes and the Sahwa, as well as giving a brief historic overview of the Sunni Protest movement throughout 2013.

Security forces

Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) will be used to describe a federal armed force, either army, police or special forces, loyal to the Government of Iraq.[1] This division is important because locally recruited paramilitary forces are usually more accepted by the local population. This becomes evident when the forces loyal to GOI pull out of Ramadi and Fallujah to reduce tension in December 2013. This does not mean that there were no security forces left, but that the forces that remained were loyal to their tribe and local structures, not GOI. These forces were typically local police or paramilitaries. I will not treat these as a separate group, but as a part of the armed forces controlled by tribes in Ramadi and Fallujah.

Tribes

The tribes of Anbar are central in the Sunni Protest movement. A tribe is not necessarily based on lineage, but rather "[…] a form of political identity based on common *claimed* descent." (Eisenstadt, 2007:16). This means that that identity and tribal connections are

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[1]The ISF in Anbar is organised under Anbar Operations Command (AOC). AOC should technically coordinate all security efforts in the province. However, because of limited resources and manpower, the command is focusing on defensive operations and unable to conduct effective offensives. Additionally, different parts of the security forces are organisationally linked to different ministries in Baghdad and have a stronger loyalty to their

dynamic and can change with opportunities related to security, economy or political influence (Eisenstadt, 2007:16). The tribe is important in self-identification and for an individual's possibilities to succeed in life, as tribes provide for its members through patronage. This makes tribes an important factor in Iraq's political process.

This study will not describe the intra- and intertribal relations in detail. It will focus on the most influential tribes in Ramadi and Fallujah, focusing on their history with regards to participation in the Sahwa. Tribes are composed of several sub-units, like clans and families, and there are literally thousands of clans (Eisenstadt, 2007). I will not distinguish between levels, but refer to all as "tribe". Thus, "tribe" is used to describe an identity-based group based on common claimed descent, loyal to a tribal leader, the Sheik. The tribes were central in defeating AQI in 2006-2007 through their participation in the Sahwa.

The Sahwa

The Sahwa, or Anbar Awakening, is the name of the popular Sunni uprising against ISI, ISIS predecessor, in late 2006 (Stern and Berger, 2016). At its largest, it consisted of more than 100,000 fighters (Gartenstein-Ross and Jensen, 2015). Several tribes in Anbar province formed the group Anbar Salvation Council (ASC), which formed an alliance with the United States in order to defeat ISI (Long, 2008). Relying on tribes to defeat ISI in Anbar was a success and the United States started to create similar alliances throughout Iraq (Long, 2008). This approach was central in marginalising ISI in Anbar.

The leader of ASC was Ahmed Abu Risha, a tribal leader from Ramadi. Other Sahwa forces were formed as well, like the one under control of Ali Hatem al-Suleiman, a tribal leader from Fallujah. However, Suleiman was not cooperating as closely with the U. S. as Abu Risha. Because of their prominent positions, both of them would become important personalities in the Sunni Protest movement.

The Sunni Protest Movement

Iraq's Sunni minority had dominated the political elite in since the country's independence in 1932, but faced a new reality when Shia groups took power after the American invasion in 2003 (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:283). The Shia domination continued throughout the period of American presence in Iraq, and a Shia party, State of Law Coalition (SLC) led by Nouri al-

Maliki, won the parliamentary elections 2010 (Whiteside, 2014). In forming the government, SLC and other Shia blocs merged into the National Alliance (NA) to avoid any form of Sunni influence (Sowell, 2014).

The Sunni population was increasingly marginalised through lack of real political representation, and grievances from illegal arrests and mistreatment in the legal system were on the rise (Sowell, 2014). This caused many Sunnis to start looking for a way to increase the influence over their own destiny and some wanted to establish an autonomous region through legal action in late 2011 (Sowell, 2014). However, the Government of Iraq (GOI) rejects this move and is unwilling to increase the Sunni influence.

In December 2012, GOI arrests several bodyguards and staff members of Iraq's finance minister Rafi al-Issawi, on charges of terrorism (Sowell, 2014). Issawi is a moderate Sunni, and a native of Fallujah, where peaceful protests broke out and quickly spreads to Ramadi. Through demonstrations, the Sunni population expressed a deep resentment towards the established political system that had excluded them for years. This forced notables such as clerics, tribal leaders and politicians to clearly choose a side, after alternating between supporting and defying GOI for several years (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). "Simply put, playing both sides became socially unacceptable." (International Crisis Group, 2013).

Protest sites were established in all major Sunni cities, including Fallujah and Ramadi (International Crisis Group, 2014). Clerics, politicians, tribes, other Sunni factions and even jihadists had one overarching goal in common; to end GOI control over Sunni towns (Abbas, 2014b). Demonstrations against discrimination, withdrawal of GOI security forces from Sunni-areas and reintegration of officers who had been fired for sectarian reasons were held in all larger Sunni cities (International Crisis Group, 2014).

According to Sowell (International Crisis Group, 2014) the protest sites were mainly controlled by factions within the protest movement that can be divided into two types: First, mainstream groups associated with a Sunni political bloc called Mutahidun, mainly present in Ramadi, and second, groups who were not part of the political process, several of whom were fronts for insurgent groups that had operated from 2003 to 2007 (Sowell, 2014). The second type had a large presence in Fallujah.

Despite the hostility between the protesters and the Maliki government, there were some negotiation efforts between GOI and the mainstream parts of the protest movement in 2013, but after losing seats in the Governorate elections in April 2013, Nouri al-Maliki concluded there was little to be gained by compromising with the Sunnis (Sowell, 2014). However, an event in Hawija would increase the distance between GOI and the protesters.

On April 23 2013, special forces under the direction of the GOI killed 44 and wounded 110 civilian protesters in a protest camp in Hawija, Kirkuk province (UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014). Even though Hawija is located about 220 kilometres North of Fallujah, the events had a negative impact on both Ramadi and Fallujah. This was a sense of injustice perpetrated by the state against the protesters and proved Maliki's malicious intent. Several groups in both cities called for the Sunni to take up arms against the government. Additionally, the group that was one of the dominant groups in Fallujah also controlled the protest site in Hawija. I will describe this in more detail in the chapter on Fallujah.

However, the Hawija event caused parts of the protest movement to conclude that violence was the only way to deal with GOI (International Crisis Group, 2014). As GOI increasingly intimidated Sunni protest leaders through threats, arrests and terrorism charges, the mainstream protesters and protest leaders were driven into an insurgency and the arms of extremist groups (Sowell, 2014).

One of the incidents that contributed to increasing the tension between GOI and the protesters was the arrest of Sunni MP Ahmad al-Alwani. On December 28 2013, ISF arrested Alwani of the Islamic Party, one of the Anbar Coordination Committee leaders (Sowell, 2014:60). Alwani's brother and sister were killed, and while GOI stated that the violence occurred when bodyguards had resisted the arrest, Alwani's family said the siblings were executed (Sowell, 2014). This incident is a good illustration of the increasing tension between the Sunni Protest movement and the government, but it is not central to my analysis. In the last days of December 2013, the ISF's move on the protest site is a deciding factor in releasing the violence and I will focus on this in the analysis.

The tension peaked December 30, when GOI shut down the cell phone network started to demolish the protest sites in Ramadi and Fallujah with bulldozers (Sowell, 2014). This caused several tribes to take up arms against ISF in both cities and Sunni parties still active in

Baghdad threatened to withdraw from the political process (Sowell, 2014). Maliki ordered the security forces to pull back, and a mix of tribal forces, insurgents and jihadists took over Ramadi and Fallujah (Knights, 2014). Several gunfights erupted in both cities, and when the security forces tried to return to Fallujah unidentified gunmen blocked them from entering the city. In Ramadi the tribes soon cooperated with ISF to stop the fighting and restore law and order (Institute for the Study of War, 2014).

The attack in Hawija, Maliki's disdain for the protesters, ISF's move on the protest sites and the siege of Fallujah are important events in explaining how the Sunni Protest movement evolved throughout 2013. Important events are framed differently by different groups in the movement, and serve as drivers of collective action through confirming existing frames and contributing to the development of new ones. Thus, the events are part of what shapes the movement.

Ramadi

Introduction

Ramadi is the largest city and the provincial capital of Anbar. It serves as the seat of the provincial political power and religious authority. It is the dominant city in a province largely marginalised and ignored by the government, the only city in Anbar that can claim to have some influence in Baghdad (West, 2005).

The governor from the Islamic Party and the provincial council are based in the city. The Islamic Party, that would become a part of the Mutahidun bloc, held office in Anbar from 2005 to 2009, but had little actual influence in the province. The Mutahidun bloc dominated the June 2013 provincial elections in Anbar and got the majority in the council, as well as the governor.[2] The Mutahidun moved closer to GOI in order to strengthen the bloc's position in front of the 2014 parliamentary elections (International Crisis Group, 2014).They hold power over the appointment of mayors and senior security officials in the Anbar cities, like police

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[2] The elections were planned for April, but were postphoned in because of the deteriorating security situation.

chiefs. The city is also the seat of the senior Sunni mufti[3] and the head of the Sunni Endowment. [4]

Both the clerical and political actors are connected to Baghdad, because much of their power is derived from the economic and political support of the government. Because the religious and political authority is gathered in Ramadi, it is considered a pivotal city. The situation in Ramadi provides a good indicator of who holds the most influence in the province. The government or other groups.

The two dominant groups in Ramadi during the protests in 2013 were the "Anbar Coordination Committee" headed by the MP Ahmad al-Alwani, and the "Popular Committees" headed by the Sahwa leader Ahmad Abu Risha (Sowell, 2014). Both Risha and Alwani were also political leaders in the Mutahidun bloc (Sowell, 2014:47). Because the two groups were so closely connected and both relatively moderate, I will treat them as one and refer to it as the Anbar Coordination Committee. Further, I argue that the Anbar Coordination Committee can be understood as a social movement organisation (SMO) within the Sunni Protest movement, because it is a collection of groups that work together and evolve into a new organisation, specifically tied to the Sunni Protest movement.

For an analysis of how the different SMOs gained influence within the framework of the Sunni Protest movement in Ramadi, the distinction between the two committees would be central, but that is not the point of this study. This study analyses how moderate and radical SMOs affected the Sunni Protest movement as a whole. Referring to two different, moderate SMOs in Ramadi is not central in showing the intramovement dynamics of radical flank effect and competing frames. Rather, it would obscure the analysis with unnecessary details.

When it comes to leadership structure in the Anbar Coordination Committee it is hard to verify who was the leader, or if there even was just one leader. Committees like this usually have several influential leadership figures with command over different parts of the committee. A tribal leader will command the fighters he brings to the faction, while a politician or cleric will bring organisational skills or religious authority (International Crisis Group, 2013). Either way, these roles are also often intertwined. Abu Risha, for example, is

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[3] Legal scholar in Islamic law.
[4] The Sunni Endowment is a quasi-governmental organ that oversees Sunni mosques.

both a tribal leader and politician, as he commands large amounts of votes with his influence as tribal leader.

Mobilising structures

The "Pride and Dignity Square" in Ramadi became the largest protest site and the symbolic centre of the Sunni Protest movement in 2013 (Whiteside, 2014). The dominant SMO was the Anbar Coordination Committee that contained important tribal leaders and was backed by two important pillars that provided legitimacy in the Sunni Arab community in Iraq; Sunni-based anti-Maliki political parties and the clerical establishment (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

Political parties

Sunni-based anti-Maliki political parties organised under Osama al-Nujafi's Mutahidun block became the main political actors in the Anbar Coordination Committee (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). Nujafi was the Speaker of Parliament, and central in bringing together most of the Sunni parties (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). Other prominent figures in the bloc were former Finance Minister Rafi Issawi and Ahmed al-Alwani of the Islamic Party (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). Said al-Lafi was the spokesman for the Anbar Coordination Committee (Wicken, 2013). He was a young religious scholar, and possibly a member of the Islamic Party (Wicken, 2013:28).

The political organisations provided expertise in media relations and administration, and strengthened the Coordination Committee's organisation (International Crisis Group, 2013). This made the Committee well organised and effective in communicating their message through the media (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). Nujafi's political experience also made him central in making the 13 demands put forward by the Coordination Committee in January 2013. The demands called for cancellation of the capital punishment clause in the Counter-Terrorism Law, fair treatment from the security forces, freeing innocent detainees and for the Maliki government to adhere to the Constitution of Iraq (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

The Mutahidun bloc dominated the June 2013 provincial elections in Anbar and moved closer to GOI in order to strengthen the bloc's position in front of the 2014 parliamentary elections

(International Crisis Group, 2014). Mutahidun argued in favour of negotiations with Maliki, improving the relationship between local police and the army, and reactivate the Sahwa forces to protect the Sunni from ISIS (International Crisis Group, 2014).

The clerical establishment

The clerical establishment supportive of the Coordination Committee was led by Sheik Abdul Malik al-Saadi, who became a form of spiritual guide for the protesters (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013, International Crisis Group, 2013). Other dominant religious personalities within the Sunni community also expressed support to the Committee. Among them were Rafia al-Rafai, recognized as the head mufti by most Iraqi Sunni and Ahmad Abdul Ghafour al-Samarraie, leader of the Sunni Endowment(Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). Rafai was moderate and highly influential in his position as an important legal scholar. Samarraie appointed and held significant power over the Sunni clerics that preached in the Mosques in Iraq. Additionally, the Endowment was close to Maliki and was interested in keeping a good relationship with him.

The clerics "[…] bestowed religious legitimacy and a broader sense of communal belonging." (International Crisis Group, 2013:18). Friday's prayer attracted large audiences, where protesters could cement their unity and reiterate their demands, while clerics confirmed the righteousness of the demands and strengthened the protesters' resolve (International Crisis Group, 2013).

The protests also provided favourable conditions in which clerics could position themselves in an intra-clerical conflict (International Crisis Group, 2013:19). The conflict line was drawn between clerics who had been given benefits and perks from GOI in return for staying apolitical, and the rest of the clerics, with the former finding themselves on the defensive (International Crisis Group, 2013). The Sunni Endowment, a quasi-governmental organ that oversees Sunni mosques was criticised for not prioritising the Sunni population over their own interests, and playing into Maliki's hands by strictly adhering to the separation of religion and politics (International Crisis Group, 2013). This rhetoric was also very popular among the protesters and secured the anti-Maliki clerics support. Still, they argued in favour of working inside the political process and remained relatively moderate (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

The moderate clerics, often represented by Saadi, argued that the movement's goal should be to reform within the existing system to secure rights for the Sunni population (International Crisis Group, 2013:23). Even though many people wanted Saadi to issue a *fatwa*[5] to justify violent action against GOI, Saadi refused (International Crisis Group, 2013).

Tribes

Most of the tribes in Ramadi participated in the Sahwa and were key in defeating AQI in Anbar (Knights, 2014). As former Sahwa they had been allied with Maliki, and the return of ISIS could pose a threat to them, fearing retaliation for past actions (Knights, 2014).

Sheik Ahmed Abu Risha was one of the most prominent tribal leaders engaged in the Ramadi protest site (Sowell, 2014). Risha succeeded his brother[6] as the Sahwa leader and fought fiercely against AQI in 2007. Risha supported the protests from the beginning, but moved closer to Maliki towards the end of 2013, possibly under threat of terrorism charges (Musings on Iraq, 2014c, Sowell, 2014). Additionally, when Risha first sided with the protesters in early 2013, GOI funded a new Sahwa force and put one of Abu Risha's rivals in charge of it (International Crisis Group, 2014). Risha was also possibly co-opted by Maliki with promises of money, power and support for development projects (Musings on Iraq, 2014a).

One can argue that the reason for Risha's support to ISF and Maliki can be explained by his role as a Sahwa commander, and that he feared revenge for his fight against AQI, ISIS predecessor. However, there were also former enemies of ISIS in Fallujah, and here the group chose to strike a conciliatory tone (Knights, 2014). This pragmatic approach suggests that ISIS was interested in cooperating with just about anyone, and it is clear that an alliance with Abu Risha would have been a great propaganda victory, as well as a considerable contribution of fighters. Additionally, ISIS initially had just a few hundred fighters in the Ramadi and Fallujah area, and it is unlikely that they posed a serious threat to Abu Risha.

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[5] "[…] a formal ruling or interpretation on a point of Islamic law given by a qualified legal scholar […]" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2017).
[6] Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, tribal leader and "father" of the Sahwa. Assassinated in 2007 (Wicken, 2013).

Radical elements

There were also more extreme elements in the protest movement in Ramadi (International Crisis Group, 2013). The protest sites provided opportunity for clerics with ties to Salafi trends to gain followers and preach their understanding of Islam (International Crisis Group, 2013). There were also several clerics in their early 30s who wanted to make a name for themselves (International Crisis Group, 2013). Due to their lack of experience, their religious authority was considered insufficient to act as proper religious guides (International Crisis Group, 2013:19). However, their flaming speeches and active participation in demonstrations has earned several of these preachers support, especially from the younger generation of protesters (International Crisis Group, 2013:19).

Despite their popularity with the more radical groups and individuals, they did not have the authority to challenge Saadi and the more moderate clerics. They were still present and active in the protests, especially in the outdoor sermons[7]. However, the moderates dominated the Anbar Coordination Committee and supressed radical elements in Ramadi.

Mobilising structures conclusion

When looking at how a movement develops, the central point regarding mobilising structures is the organisational profile, not the availability of resources (McAdam et al., 1996). The Anbar Coordination Committee dominated the protests in Ramadi. The organisation was centrally controlled, mostly kept the protesters in line and with traits commonly associated with political parties. This, combined with the basic acceptance of the political process, willingness to negotiate and moderate goals, makes the movement in Ramadi a relatively moderate actor. Even though Ramadi was radicalised throughout 2013, the Committee's moderate image was strengthened by the Sunni Protest movement's radical flank in Fallujah. Additionally, over time, radical elements were supressed and rejected in Ramadi, several relocating to Fallujah where the general mood was more extreme and more open to radical rhetoric (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

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[7] Sermons held outside tended to be less moderate in nature, because the Sunni Endowment controlled the clerics preaching inside the mosques, thus being able to influence or even fire clerics they deemed too radical (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

Political opportunity

Maliki's government represses the Sunni Protest movement throughout 2013 in different ways. Harassment, threats and arrest warrants against protesters and protest leaders, as well as actual arrests brought the Sunni Protest movement to the boiling point at the end of 2013. Additionally, violent events such as the Hawija crackdown and the destruction of the protest sites and camps strengthened the hostility between Maliki and the protesters.

Maliki made some concessions in 2013 during negotiations with the Sunni Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq. This included reforming some of the repressive laws, but this process was sabotaged (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). Political rivals within the Anbar Coordination Committee did not want Mutlaq to succeed (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). This was an opportunity that was not exploited, because of conflict within the movement (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). Because of this, an opportunity for real progress on behalf of the Sunni population was left unused. This shows how some of the political actors were more interested in positioning themselves within the Sunni community, than actually working to achieve concessions that would benefit the wider Sunni population.

State repression

Hawija

This event strengthened the extreme groups in the Sunni Protest movement, even though it took place far away in Hawija, Kirkuk province. However, as the dominant structures in the Anbar Coordination Committee were moderate and the radicals were marginalised, the strengthening of extreme groups did not affect the Coordination Committee that much. On the other hand, the situation was very tense in Ramadi and needed to be handled with caution.

In Ramadi, Saadi did what he could to handle the situation constructively. He was also temporarily able to reduce tensions by taking an initiative towards negotiations with GOI (International Crisis Group, 2013:38). However, the initiative failed because of disagreements within the movement and lack of interest on the part of GOI (International Crisis Group, 2013:38). The event in Hawija was one of the things that contributed to a radicalisation of the Anbar Coordination Committee throughout 2013 (Sowell, 2014:56).

The protest site

Early in the morning on December 30 2013, ISF surrounded the protesters in Ramadi. Violent clashes between Abu Risha's forces in the Anbar Coordination Committee and ISF left several people dead, although the details are blurry as to exactly what triggered the fighting (Human Rights Watch, 2014). However, as a result of these clashes, ISF was ordered to pull back to reduce tension in the city. This opportunity was seized by insurgents who tried to take control of part of the city, but were quickly defeated by Abu Risha's tribal forces (Musings on Iraq, 2015). About 300 of the defeated fighters were ISIS-fighters, who then fled to Fallujah (Abbas, 2014a). The Anbar Coordination Committee was now in control of the city, although with some fighting still going on in the suburbs.

When ISF returned to Ramadi in early January, Risha and most of Ramadi's tribes realigned with Maliki's forces. They formed joint patrols with Risha's forces, and fought off the remaining ISIS-fighters and other extremist groups (Musings on Iraq, 2014c). The reason was that the Anbar Coordination Committee was still mainly interested in keeping the political order in Iraq, although with some concessions for the Sunni. This would have been impossible to achieve had they chosen to fight the ISF. On the other hand, the ISF chose not to use heavy-handed tactics and indiscriminate violence when they returned to Ramadi. This would have caused violent mobilisation against the ISF. They made this choice because they viewed the Anbar Coordination Committee as moderate and willing to negotiate, probably as long as no unnecessary violence was used against Ramadi.

Creating political opportunity

The militant, Baathist group JRTN stormed the Ramadi protest site on March 26 2013. Of the two cities, JRTN was mainly present in Fallujah throughout 2013, and will be described in more detail in the Fallujah chapter.

By moving into Ramadi, JRTN tried to create political opportunity for themselves and extremists in Ramadi by persuading or coercing the Anbar Coordination Committee into joining them in armed conflict with GOI (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). They were actively trying to recruit members to their militant group, and were hoping to co-opt the groups who were already involved in the protest movement. According to Sowell (2014:53), the JRTN had hoped to "[…] sway the crowd and push the political process-linked protest leaders out.". Because the moderate Anbar Coordination Committee was the dominant

structure, the JRTN was unable to gain much support for their cause. The Committee refused and JRTN decamped to Fallujah (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

Political opportunity conclusion

The Anbar Coordination Committee exploited the apparent political opportunity when ISF left Ramadi and took control of the city. The Committee had the support it needed from the clerics and the tribal leaders, in order to legitimise its rule. Although the Committee and the protesters had become more radical throughout the year, they decided that it was in their best interest to side with ISF against the militants. When ISF returned, they did not use heavy-handed tactics against the protesters in Ramadi, even though they had been clashing at the protest site just a few days earlier. This further ensured that the Coordination Committee remained a relatively moderate actor within the Sunni Protest movement. The moderate structures probably ensured that events like the Hawija incident, and the JRTN's attempt at recruiting in Ramadi, did not have a strong radicalising effect there – at least not as strong as in Fallujah.

Framing processes

The Anbar Coordination Committee is dominated by moderate mobilising structures and argues in favour of political process in trying to achieve less governmental influence in Anbar areas. Some attempts were made to seem non-sectarian, but there was a clear Sunni dominance. This moderation was reflected in the frames used by the Committee throughout the conflict, in spite of a certain radicalisation over time. That being said, there were anti-Shia frames in the Ramadi protest site, but not as many or as radical as in other protest sites. Stating that Maliki ran a sectarian government was not very radical, but a rather accurate description most scholars probably would agree on.

General frames

The Anbar Coordination Committee published a list of 13 demands directed at Maliki. They called for cancellation of the capital punishment clause in the Counter-Terrorism Law, fair treatment from the security forces, freeing innocent detainees and for the Maliki government to adhere to the Constitution of Iraq (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). These demands were difficult for Maliki to concede because of political reasons. With the 2014 elections just months away it would have been very unpopular to strengthen the Sunni at the

expense of the Shia politicians. However, the demands were still framed as a political act and signalised that the Anbar Coordination Committee understood and was willing to participate in a political process. On the other hand, Maliki initially rejected the demands and threatened to use force to disperse the protesters. Shia religious authorities rebuked Maliki and "[…] insisted that he meet protestor demands that were "consistent with the law and the constitution," […]" (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

The Anbar Coordination Committee argued that their struggle was not a sectarian one, but framed the protests as the rejection of unjust power in the hands of Maliki (International Crisis Group, 2013). However, a lot of the rhetoric in the protest site was clearly sectarian, and, "[…] even the more moderate Ramadi camps frames [the demands] in a way, which is very Sunni specific, and often too sweeping." (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

Throughout 2013 it became increasingly clear that there were extremist elements in the protest movement, and Risha argued that the protesters should support ISF's effort to eliminate radicals in the protest sites (Gartenstein-Ross and Jensen, 2015).

The moderate clerics, often represented by Saadi, argued that the movement's goal should be to reform within the existing system to secure rights for the Sunni population (International Crisis Group, 2013:23). Saadi worked hard to keep the protests peaceful and non-sectarian, even after the Hawija crackdown by Maliki's forces (International Crisis Group, 2013). After the incident in Hawija, Saadi called for the establishment of a "Defence Army", strictly meant to protect the Sunni and not calling for jihad or going on the offensive (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

Event specific frames

The violence in Hawija on April 23 2013 was portrayed as a security operation by GOI, while the protesters in Hawija and other protest sites called it a premeditated attack (International Crisis Group, 2013). One protester in Hawija stated "The government sent [ISF] forces from Baghdad to Hawija. They are all Shiites and they committed a massacre." (International Crisis Group, 2013:32). This extreme framing had some resonance in Ramadi, and several groups called for the Sunni to take up arms against the government. Some were even quite vocal when arguing in favour of armed conflict. Even though the moderate frames of the dominant

structures prevailed, the violence in Hawija clearly contributed to the radicalisation of Ramadi (Sowell, 2014).

When ISF cleared the protest sites December 30 2013, Saadi called for the Sunni to take up arms against the GOI and mobilise to stop ISF reinforcements from reaching Ramadi, for the ISF to disobey their orders, and for the Sunni political parties to boycott all political processes (Institute for the Study of War, 2014). His main concern was to end fighting in Anbar and to repel both terrorists and ISF (International Crisis Group, 2014). The mobilisation of the protesters and groups in Ramadi caused the ISF to pull out of the city to reduce tensions.

When ISF returned shortly after, there was little violence against the population in Ramadi. Thus, when ISIS and other militants attacked Ramadi in the first days of January, the Mutahidun bloc encouraged all citizens to cooperate with the ISF and fight off the extremists (International Crisis Group, 2014). The Mutahidun argued in favour of a centrist approach to bridge the divide between the protesters and the GOI (International Crisis Group, 2014). Additionally, they argued that the only way to defeat the rise of jihadists in Anbar was to re-establish the Sahwa forces and cooperate with the government (International Crisis Group, 2014).

The framing of ISF as an allied force that would support Ramadi in fighting terrorists was confirmed when ISF and the tribal forces worked together. Additionally, there was little violence when the ISF returned, and no random bombardment. This combination strengthened the moderate stand of the Anbar Coordination Committee within the Sunni Protest movement.

Framing processes conclusion

The dominant mobilising structures in Ramadi were relatively moderate. Because of this, moderate frames resonated well in the city and the Anbar Coordination Committee further strengthened the moderates by actively framing contemporary events in accordance with its moderate views. This marginalised and rejected extreme elements, causing several to leave the city, further strengthening the moderate. The Committee could utilise political frames of progress and influence through negotiations, because of Mutahidun's political authority. Additionally, what little influence and political connections they had to Baghdad could also be used to their advantage.

ISF's approach to Ramadi when the soldiers returned, confirmed the moderate view that the ISF was a useful ally. Additionally, it disproved the extremists who tried to frame the ISF as a force that would ethnically cleanse the Sunni. This marginalised the extremists in Ramadi further. Moderate clerics, politicians and tribal supported each other's messages and provided legitimacy to the Anbar Coordination Committees framing. This contributed to making the Coordination Committee the dominant structure in Ramadi.

Ramadi conclusion

The Anbar Coordination Committee was centrally controlled, mostly kept the protesters in line and with traits commonly associated with political parties. This, combined with the basic acceptance of the political process, willingness to negotiate and moderate goals, makes the movement in Ramadi a relatively moderate actor. Even though Ramadi was radicalised to some degree throughout 2013, the dominant mobilising structures in Ramadi remained relatively moderate. Because of this, moderate frames resonated well in the city and the Anbar Coordination Committee was further strengthened by actively framing contemporary events in accordance with its moderate views. This marginalised and rejected extreme elements, causing several to leave the city, further strengthening the Committee.

The violence in Hawija and the extreme framing of it had some resonance in Ramadi, and several groups called for the Sunni to take up arms against the government. Some were even quite vocal when arguing in favour of armed conflict. Even though the moderate frames of the dominant structures prevailed, the violence in Hawija clearly contributed to the radicalisation of Ramadi (Sowell, 2014).

The Anbar Coordination Committee exploited the apparent political opportunity when ISF left Ramadi and took control of the city. When ISF returned, they did not use heavy-handed tactics against the protesters in Ramadi, even though they had been clashing at the protest site just a few days earlier. Although the Committee and the protesters had become more radical throughout the year, they still were not radical enough to cooperate with ISIS and instead decided that it was in their best interest to side with ISF. In Fallujah, however, the situation would evolve very differently.

Fallujah

Introduction

With an estimated number of over 500 mosques, Fallujah is often called "The City of Mosques". It is the home of Sunni Muslim tribes who are largely conservative in religious matters and tribal customs, wielding considerable fighting power through tribal militias (Habib, 2014, West, 2005, Fishman, 2016). A city where "[…] all the people in the city have at least one weapon in their home." according to one tribal leader (Habib, 2014). Fallujah had a tough reputation and after the Baath party took control in 1968, the city became a "[…] source of enforcers for the ruling Sunni-dominated Baath Party." (West, 2005:13).

From 2003, Fallujah was the base of operations for Tawhid wal-Jihad (TWJ), AQI's predecessor, under the leadership of Zarqawi (Tønnessen, 2015). TWJ was one of several groups operating in and out of Fallujah, and conducted attacks against Shia targets and U. S. forces (Ware and Guttentag, 2015, Warrick, 2015). After four U. S. contractors were killed and mutilated in Fallujah in 2004, the city became the scene of some of the hardest fighting U. S. forces had ever taken part in as The Marine Corps conducted an offensive to take control of the city later the same year (West, 2005).

The Sahwa did not gain strong support in Fallujah, and many of the tribes chose to join the local police forces instead (International Crisis Group, 2014). The local police are usually more loyal to local structures than the provincial or governmental level. Additionally, the population in Fallujah did not reject AQI to the same extent as the population in Ramadi in 2006 and 2007 (Knights, 2014). Still, the tribes of Fallujah did contribute to driving AQI out in 2007 because of the group's brutality and extremist interpretation of Islamic law.

The Mutahidun bloc dominated the June 2013 provincial elections in Anbar and gained influence in councils and governing bodies in all the cities, including Fallujah (International Crisis Group, 2014). They grew closer to GOI throughout 2013 in order to strengthen the bloc's position in front of the 2014 parliamentary elections. This was highly unpopular in Fallujah, where former Baathists, Salafi groups and anti-government tribes were strong factions.

The dominant factions will first be described individually under mobilising structures. Later they will be treated as a unity, the *Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries*[8], even though they did not formally unite until ISF left Fallujah. However, treating them as one will make it clearer how social movement theory can explain the radicalisation in Fallujah. I argue that the Military Council can be understood as a social movement organisation (SMO) within the Sunni Protest movement, because it is a collection of groups that work together and evolve into a new organisation, specifically tied to the Sunni Protest movement.

Mobilising structures

The skills, access and strategy of the mobilising structure, the organisational profile, is a very important factor in how a movement develops. Access to particular networks or resources, the skills to utilise them and a strategy that decides the direction is central when a movement is developing (McAdam et al., 1996).

The Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries

The Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries was a council that was assembled in the first days of January 2014 and took control in Fallujah when ISF left the city. It consisted of former insurgent groups and tribes from the Fallujah area. The Naqshbandi Army and the Dulaimi tribe were most influential actors in the Military Council. The Naqshbandi and the tribes allowed ISIS to join the council when they arrived a few days later.

Groups thought to subscribe to incompatible ideologies, Sufi, Salafi and the Muslim Brotherhood, coexisted and were able to cooperate within the framework of the Military Council (International Crisis Group, 2014). Motivated by the goal of keeping the ISF and GOI out of the city, the council directed military and security operations, aided civilians and recruited new followers (International Crisis Group, 2014).

Both the Dulaimi tribal leader Ali Hatem al-Suleiman and Abdullah al-Janabi have been mentioned as the leader of the Military Council. Janabi, a Salafi cleric, was exiled in Syria after leading Fallujah's Mujahedin Shura Council during 2004 and the fight against U. S. forces (Sowell, 2015). Suleiman supposedly led the Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries because of his central position in the Dulaimi tribe (Gartenstein-Ross and

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[8] Not to be confused with the "General Military Council of Iraq", an insurgent group consisting of 1920s Revolutions Brigade and JRTN that would become active in Mid-January (Sowell, 2014:62).

Jensen, 2015). There is probably truth in both views, as the new coalition depended on support from both tribes and clerics.

There were no mainstream political actors in the Military Council, because these had been marginalised in Fallujah throughout 2013. However, the Mutahidun bloc was present from the beginning of 2013, although with decreasing influence towards the end of the year.

Political parties

Political parties are important mobilising structures, because they have experience in traditional political work like media handling, public speaking, arranging rallies and lobbying. If there is access to the political world through a political party and traditional political skills, then this will be utilised. If the SMO knows how to lobby, then it will try to do that.

The moderate Mutahidun bloc dominated the 2013 provincial elections in Anbar, and gained the majority in the provincial council (International Crisis Group, 2014). This gave the Mutahidun great political power and influence over the appointment of police chiefs and mayors in Anbar (International Crisis Group, 2014). Even though the Mutahidun had little local support in Fallujah, they appointed Mutahidun-affiliated officials to these important positions. The Mutahidun-affiliated officials recruited fighters from outside the city to serve in the police force, and excluded the city's former leadership from decision-making processes on local and provincial levels (International Crisis Group, 2014). By doing this, the Mutahidun had neither a local political base, nor a local armed base. By excluding the former leadership, the Mutahidun became very unpopular among the city's urban elite.

Because of the lack of a local base and support, and essentially a foreign element, there was no mobilisation around the Mutahidun political bloc in Fallujah during the protests. The bloc was marginalised, and had no influence in how radical or moderate the Military Council would become or which means it would utilise.

Tribes

The tribes are important in mobilising for several reasons. First, tribal loyalty enables the Sheik to mobilise people at his command. This means that convincing a Sheik to mobilise his tribe can have a huge effect on mobilisation. Secondly, some of Iraq's tribes consist of millions or hundreds of thousands of people, giving the Sheik a wide reach. However, this

does not necessarily mean that the Sheik can command everyone in his tribe to join in a demonstration, but his position enables him to spread his message through tribal networks and councils. Additionally, the tribes, like many others in Iraq, have access to weapons. This way, the Sheik also commands a fighting force, his own private army, which is also his power base and source of legitimacy.

Ali Hatem al-Suleiman is the head of the most prominent tribe in Fallujah, the Dulaimi, one of Iraq's largest (Spencer and Malouf, 2014, Hassan, 2007, Habib, 2014). He contributed with resources like food and tents for protesters, as well as mobilising large parts of his tribe in the protests. Suleiman supported the Sunni Protest movement from the beginning and started off giving mainstream speeches in line with the demands put forth by the Coordination Committee in Ramadi (Musings on Iraq, 2014d). However, his rhetoric grew increasingly inflammatory and anti-Shia, and soon he accused Maliki of being a puppet of Iran (Musings on Iraq, 2014d). Suleiman supported the division of Iraq into three separate states (Gartenstein-Ross and Jensen, 2015). He also argued in favour of arming the protest sites and taking on the government (Musings on Iraq, 2014d). Because of his increasingly hostile attitude towards the GOI, a warrant was issued for Suleiman's arrest (Musings on Iraq, 2014d). The threat of arrest on terrorism charges caused Suleiman to head for Erbil, where he continued to work against Maliki, unlike his rival Abu Risha who would grow closer to GOI throughout 2013 (Musings on Iraq, 2014d).

Suleiman was one of several tribal leaders who resented Abu Risha's ascent to power during the Sahwa (Gartenstein-Ross and Jensen, 2015). They were both Sheiks that gained power after the U. S. invasion, heading the two main Sahwa factions, where Risha's was the one closest associated with the U. S. forces (Musings on Iraq interview with Ali Hatem al-Suleiman, 2008). Their rivalry was apparent, and became even more explicit throughout 2013. While Abu Risha called for the protesters to support ISF in removing the most radical elements and give the political process a chance, Suleiman would encourage the protesters to continue and to defend themselves against ISF (Gartenstein-Ross and Jensen, 2015).

According to Warrick (2015), the Dulaimi tribe and ISIS created an alliance in the first days of January, that subsequently drew support from other Sunni tribes. This seems likely, as Suleiman in June 2014 stated officially that he and his tribe was allied with ISIS, and that they would not break that alliance until Maliki stepped down as prime minister (Spencer and

Malouf, 2014). Alternatively, he said, he would have to "[…] march a hundred thousand men on Baghdad […]." (Spencer and Malouf, 2014).

The mobilising of Suleiman's tribal networks contributed heavily to the protests and the Military Council in Fallujah, as he commanded a large armed force. Additionally, the ability to mobilise and allocate resources effectively made it possible to maintain mobilisation throughout 2013, and even in the conflict with GOI. Further, when Suleiman decides to be a part of the Military Council and creates an alliance with ISIS, his influence also causes other tribes to join, increasing the mobilisation.

Former insurgent groups

The former insurgent groups in Fallujah had been active in fighting against the U. S., but had been marginalised after being defeated by or recruited to the Sahwa or other armed groups. The mobilisation of these groups provided access to networks that formerly had been used to fuel an insurgency. Additionally, the skills these groups provided were also mostly related to some kind of armed struggle against a foreign invader, and when combining the resources and skills, the result was a capable fighting force.

Nationalist groups

The Naqshbandi Army

The Army of the men of the Naqshbandi way (Jaish Rijjal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandiya, JRTN) is a group consisting of former Baathist insurgents, remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime (UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014). Fallujah was the only city in Anbar where JRTN was permanently present (Sowell, 2014) It was probably the strongest of the former insurgent groups in Fallujah and wielded a considerable amount of fighters. The group was led by Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri who was Saddam Hussein's right-hand man during Saddam's reign (al-Tamimi, 2014b).

Members of the Naqshbandi Army deny any connection to the former regime, but there is a consensus that many of the former Baathists have found JRTN to be the group closest to their ideology (International Crisis Group, 2013). Many of the former high-level Baathists are

unemployed as a result of the de-Baathification law[9], and felt that they had been robbed of work, influence and status for themselves and their family by the governing Shia (International Crisis Group, 2013). The sense of injustice was further strengthened by seeing former Baathist, who happened to be Shia, regaining positions in the army by pledging allegiance to GOI (International Crisis Group, 2013).

Even though the Baathist political ideology is predominantly secular, the JRTN subscribes to the conservative Sunni Islamic Sufi order called Naqshbandi, and not the prevailing Salafi currents in Sunni dominated areas of Iraq (International Crisis Group, 2013, UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014). This contributed to their ability to mobilise among the urban elite in Fallujah, as they came off as more secular and modern than other insurgent groups. However, they often used jihadist rhetoric to strengthen the religious legitimacy. Even though they were ideologically far from ISIS extreme Salafi interpretation of Islam, several sources state that they cooperated from early January 2014 (UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014, International Crisis Group, 2013).

1920s Revolution Brigade

The 1920s Revolution Brigade[10] is a Sunni Islamic, nationalist militia that consists mostly of former Iraqi Army soldiers, and was active in the insurgency during the U. S. occupation (al-Tamimi, 2014a, International Crisis Group, 2014). Several authors point out that the group has clear tendencies towards the Muslim Brotherhood (International Crisis Group, 2014, UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014). Even though the group has a nationalist outlook, its propaganda contains Islamist "language" (al-Tamimi, 2014a, UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014). Their goal is an "[…] independent Iraqi State on an Islamic basis." (UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014:3). They want to rewrite the constitution and remove sectarian and ethnic quotas by establishing a new political system (International Crisis Group, 2014). Their goal of a new political system is quite similar to the demands of the JRTN (International Crisis Group, 2014).

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[9] Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the first U. S. -established governing body after the invasion in 2003, published its Order Number 1, dismissing individuals with the position of director general and above, regardless of party affiliation. Additionally, everyone in the top four ranks of the Baath party. This was essentially barring the Sunni population from public life and politics (International Crisis Group, 2013).

[10] The name refers to the Iraqi nationalists that revolted against the British rule in the 1920s (al-Tamimi, 2014a).

The nationalist insurgent groups consisted of, and were able to mobilise large parts of the city's urban elite. The access to administrative and governing skills, combined with a large fighting force, made the nationalists the strongest and most influential group in the Military Council, together with the tribes.

Salafi jihadist groups

The Salafi trend had always been strong in Fallujah (International Crisis Group, 2014). There were several Salafi jihadist groups active in Fallujah during the U. S. occupation, but the Sahwa and tribal forces marginalised them in 2006 and 2007. However, the Salafi became more popular during 2013 and the protests provided a good opportunity to preach and recruit.

The Islamic Army in Iraq

The Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI) is a conservative Salafi jihadist group established in 2003 as a response to the U. S. invasion (International Crisis Group, 2013). During the insurgency, it grew into an alliance of several groups "[…] with a highly Salafi narrative with patriotic undertones." (International Crisis Group, 2013:23). The protests in 2013 were an opportunity to continue the fight against a foreign invader, formerly the U. S., replaced by the Iranian backed Maliki-regime (International Crisis Group, 2013).

IAI's goal was to establish a Sunni region and conduct jihad to protect the Sunni from Maliki and Iran (al-Tamimi interview with leader of Jaysh al-Mujahideen, 2014). However, it did not necessarily argue in favour of changing the entire political system, like ISIS, JRTN and Jaysh al-Mujahideen (al-Tamimi interview with leader of Jaysh al-Mujahideen, 2014). In fact, IAI set up political wing after the U. S. withdrawal from Iraq, called the Popular Sunni Movement, or Sunni Hirak, that was supposed to work within the political process. This move was criticised by other groups, and the initiative failed as a political project (al-Tamimi interview with leader of Jaysh al-Mujahideen, 2014). However, the Popular Sunni Movement became increasingly active in the protests in Ramadi after the Hawija event. As their goal was the establishment of an autonomous Sunni region, they found a common cause with the more moderate groups in Ramadi (Sowell, 2014).

Although the Salafi groups were weaker than JRTN, they were able to mobilise the supporters of the Salafi trend that was gaining popularity in Anbar. Fallujah had a history of Salafi groups and the legitimacy of Salafi clerics was important in mobilising Salafi supporters.

Their patriotic and nationalist focus enables them to find common ground with the Naqshbandi, even though there traditionally is a large ideological distance between the Sufi and the Salafi trends.

ISIS

About 300 ISIS-fighters arrived in Fallujah on 3 January 2014, after being rejected or defeated by the forces of the Anbar Coordination Committee in Ramadi (Abbas, 2014a). They were met by local ISIS members, sleeper cells and sympathisers from areas closer to Baghdad (Abbas, 2014a, Abbas, 2014c). However, they were still just a few hundred fighters, inferior in numbers compared to the Military Council and were surrounded by tribal forces when they arrived (Abbas, 2014a, Habib, 2014).

The presence of ISIS sparked mobilisation among the youth, because ISIS included them and gave them weapons and influence in the organisation. They recruited among the disillusioned and angry young men who had known nothing but war their entire life. Also, their reputation as capable and experienced fighters contributed to the decision to let them stay and join the Military Council.

Mobilising structures conclusion

The dominant structure the Protest Movement mobilised along in Fallujah, the Military Council, is religiously conservative and quite radical. JRTN is militarily strong and capable because of experienced army officers, and together with the 1920s Revolution Brigades, Jaysh al-Mujahideen, ISIS and the tribal forces under Suleiman, they wanted to see Maliki's government fall and establish a new political order (Sowell, 2014). The groups had this in common, but they differed on the question of what the end state should be: a Caliphate, an Iraq with a new political system or splitting Iraq into three new states. The only exception is IAI who would fight for the Sunni and establish a Sunni region within the frame of a united Iraq. Towards the end of 2013, none of the groups argued in favour of working within the political process. They were not co-opted or threatened into cooperation with Maliki.

When looking at how a movement develops, the central point regarding mobilising structures is the organisational profile, that is – the access, skills and strategy of the movement (access to particular networks or resources, the skills to utilise them and a strategy that decides the

direction) (McAdam et al., 1996). In Fallujah, the organisational profile of the Military Council can partly explain why the movement became so violent.

From the outset, there were relatively radical elements present in Fallujah. The Military Council consisted of former insurgent groups who rejected any form of political process. This structure directed the contention that is already simmering in the Sunni Protest movement against the GOI and ISF to achieve their radical goals. They provided an opening for more radical individuals to join, and socialised and indoctrinated them further. The structures were fine-tuned to conduct insurgent operations, and the same networks were being used to facilitate collective action and allocate resources. This was enhanced further by how they interpreted events through framing processes, which will be dealt with later. First, which political opportunities were present in Fallujah?

Political opportunity

Maliki's government repressed the Sunni Protest movement throughout 2013 in different ways. Harassment, threats and arrest warrants against protesters and protest leaders, as well as actual arrests brought the Sunni Protest movement to the boiling point at the end of 2013. Additionally, violent events such as the Hawija crackdown and the destruction of the protest sites and camps strengthened the hostility between Maliki and the protesters.

Because changes the political opportunity and how they are exploited, can contribute to explain the shift in movement success, I will first look at how the presence or absence of state repression mobilised the protesters and population of Fallujah and how it was exploited as opportunities by the Military Council in Fallujah. Secondly, I will look at how the Military Council and its groups created opportunity to operate in.

State repression

The protest site

ISF moved on the protest site in Fallujah on 28 December 2013. Internet and cell phone networks had been shut down and heavily armed personnel started bulldozing the camp. The situation caused the tribes and the groups that would become the Military Council to mobilise, and together with the protesters, they fought the ISF. It is unclear whether they actually drove back the ISF or if ISF was ordered to pull back to reduce the tension. However, the ISF move

against the protest site and their repressive tactics mobilised large parts of the local population, creating opportunity for anyone who was able to direct this mobilisation towards their goals. The Military Council exploited this opportunity to increase their support in the local population and causing the ISF to pull out of Fallujah. They were able to this because they had the organisational structures, logistics and communication to effectively counter the ISF.

ISF leaves Fallujah

The massive mobilisation caused by ISF's move on the protest site in Fallujah, caused ISF to pull completely out of the city on 30 December. They left behind a volatile situation with a security vacuum. This was an apparent opportunity that the Military Council took advantage of by filling the vacuum and inserted itself as the governing body: a coalition of tribal leaders, clerics and insurgents (UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014). They took control of administrative and security related matters, and further exploited the opportunity to include new forces in the defence of the city.

ISF returns to Fallujah

When the ISF tried to return to Fallujah, they were met by roadblocks and skirmishes one the edge of the city (Knights, 2014:9). They settled down on the outskirts of Fallujah, effectively besieging it (Knights, 2014:9). On January 4, ISF started firing artillery shells into the city, killing somewhere between eight and thirty civilians (Musings on Iraq, 2014b, BBC, 2014a). This mobilised the population and groups inside Fallujah to the defence of the city. Additionally, to further strengthen the defence of the city, the Military Council decided to ally itself with ISIS (International Crisis Group, 2014).

In sum, it is clear that the Military Council exploited the opportunities as they rose. They framed incidents of state repression in order to gain followers. However, the most important opportunity rose when ISF left the city and the Military council immediately moved in to fill the vacuum.

Creating political opportunity

Another aspect of political opportunity is the movement's ability to create opportunity through collective action (McAdam, 1996). It can happen in two ways: first, it can happen directly through action that opens up space for the movement to mobilise and take action.

Secondly, through actions that triggers a response from a third-party. The response has unintended consequences and triggers mobilisation. First, I will look at how the groups in the Military Council created opportunity directly.

ISIS had assassinated about thirteen hundred Sahwa fighters and leaders between 2009 and 2014 (Weiss and Hassan, 2015:193). Bombings and drive-by shootings had reduced the number of Sahwa fighters directly, and many more had quit or deserted in fear of the on-going assassination campaign. Additionally, Maliki had neglected the Sahwa forces and even prosecuted Sahwa leaders to avoid having them challenge his power. These leaders were the ones who could pose the most serious challenge to ISIS, and the combination of Maliki's and ISIS actions increased hostility between former Sahwa fighters and GOI (Weiss and Hassan, 2015:193). This contributed to political opportunity by creating a security vacuum that the Military Council could fill. Additionally, because many of the former Sahwa leaders were dead, turned anti-GOI or had lost their fighters and power base, none of them were able to challenge the Military Council for power in Fallujah. This made the Military Council the dominant force in the city and enabled the Council to take control of the city when ISF left.

When the ISF left Fallujah, the Military Council took advantage of that opportunity to insert itself as the governing body in the city. To strengthen their position and increase their opportunity to govern, the Military Council expelled the Mutahidun officials that were left, and their associates, labelling them as agents of GOI and saboteurs "[…] helping the government "impose control over Anbar" in coordination with [Sahwa] traitors." (International Crisis Group, 2014:13). This way, the Military Council created and widened political opportunities for itself, by completely removing the moderate influence in Fallujah.

Hawija
The second way a movement can collective action to increase political opportunity, is to do something that triggers a response with unintended consequences. This is exactly what happened in Hawija.

The JRTN had tried to take advantage of the protest since the beginning and had conducted several attacks throughout 2013. They targeted ISF and GOI targets, and tried to provoke a violent reaction from the ISF that could mobilise the wider Sunni population in Iraq and create outside sympathy for the cause, while discrediting ISF and Maliki. They also tried to

create provoking situations in protest sites, to make the ISF react heavy-handed against the protesters. They had tried in Ramadi and other cities, but failed. However, they succeeded in Hawija.

On 19 April 2013, an ISF checkpoint outside the Hawija protest site was attacked by gunmen and the ISF suffered several losses (Musings on Iraq, 2016). On April 23 ISF raided the protest site fighting and erupted. According to UNAMI (2014), 44 people were killed and 110 were wounded when ISF opened fire on the protesters. According to Intifada Ahrar al-Iraq, one of the Naqshbandi Army's front groups that was the dominant group in the Hawija protest site, 114 people were arrested in addition to the casualties (Musings on Iraq, 2016).

The plan had worked perfectly and Maliki had played right into JRTN's hands. In Fallujah, this incident strengthened the Military Council and mobilised more people to the Council and against Maliki. The incident gave a "[…] green light to former resistance groups to stage a series of armed retaliations." (International Crisis Group, 2013:32).

Political opportunity conclusion

The presence of state repression when ISF moved on the protest site mobilised the population in Fallujah. The Military Council exploited this mobilisation to rally support around their cause, and directed the discontent against the government and the ISF. This caused violent confrontations and ISF retreated from the city, leaving behind a vacuum. This apparent opportunity was then seized by the Military Council, who took control of Fallujah and inserted itself as the governing body.

It was possible for such an extreme faction to take control in Fallujah for two reasons. First, moderate political actors and possible military challengers had been marginalised through active targeting before and after the Military Council took control. Secondly, the population of Fallujah had been radicalised throughout 2013 by repression and violence, and in combination the ISF's actions in Fallujah and Hawija, this legitimised the violence advocated by the Military Council. This radicalisation was amplified by framing processes, which is the next subject I will look at.

Framing processes

As I have already described, the mobilising structures in Fallujah were religiously conservative, with strong tribal loyalty and anti-GOI sentiments. This influenced how they interpreted and framed current events, and their own role in these events. The radical actors will be treated as a unity, even though they did not formally unite until ISF left Fallujah.

General frames

The general frames in Fallujah are dominated by the worldview of the dominant structures in the Military Council: the Baathist Naqshbandi and Salafi jihadists, both former insurgent groups who have been revived by the protests. The general frames in Fallujah are predominantly anti-Shia, jihadist and nationalist.

True Islam, the Sunni and Fallujah were all under attack by the "Safavid alliance", GOI and Iran. The alliance wants to destroy Fallujah and ethnically cleanse the Sunni, and the only way to survive is to fight and establish a new political system. As one Salafi jihadist said: "The Safavids are allies of the Jews and Crusaders in the war on Islam." (2014).

When the Naqshbandi joined the protest, the group stated: "[…] the people of Iraq and all its nationalists and Islamic forces support you until the realisation of just demands and the fall of the Safavid [Persian] alliance." (International Crisis Group, 2013). The "just demands" referred in this statement is probably the demands put forth by the Coordination Committee in Anbar and is a moderate statement. The second part, however, is clearly an anti-Shia statement. JRTN uses clearly anti-Shia rhetoric, referring to the "Safavid alliance", pointing out GOI's close connection to the Iranian Shia regime.[11] As one member said in an interview with International Crisis Group (2013): "We seek to liberate the country from the U.S. and Iran, and defend its unity and sovereignty".

The nationalist, jihadist and anti-Shia frames that are dominating in Fallujah mobilises large parts of the population. The nationalist frames are popular among the former Baathists with a secular ideology and the Salafi who want to establish a Sunni region. The anti-Shia frames resonate well with Baathists who feel marginalised after the de-Baathification and also among the radical Salafi who are opposed to the Shia by principle.

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[11] "Safavid" is a historic denotation for Persians. Used in a derogatory way by protesters.

During the protests, the Mutahidun in Fallujah would champion negotiations with the government, while at the same time degrading the population of Fallujah by belittling popular demands. This weakened the little support they had, and increased the distance to the groups that would form the Military Council. The Mutahidun's framing of the protests created an outright hostile environment between the Mutahidun, the local population and the other groups. This segmentation increased support to the Military Council and marginalised the moderates even further.

Event specific frames

As previously described, the violence in Hawija was portrayed very differently by GOI and the protesters. "The government sent [ISF] forces from Baghdad to Hawija. They are all Shiites and they committed a massacre." one protester in Hawija said (International Crisis Group, 2013:32). This resonated very well with the extreme frames of the groups in Fallujah and further strengthened them, and gave a "[…] green light to former resistance groups to stage a series of armed retaliations." (International Crisis Group, 2013:32).

After the incident in Hawija, a JRTN front group called the Intifada Ahrar al-Iraq voiced the need to end peaceful protests and prepare for armed jihad (al-Tamimi, 2014b). The incident resonated very well in Fallujah and amplified the anti-Shia frame that was already very strong. This increased mobilisation and radicalised the population in Fallujah. Additionally, the security forces that were used to raid the protest site answered directly to Maliki, it was very easy to blame him for the misdeeds of the ISF.

ISF violence in Fallujah

ISF's indiscriminate shelling of Fallujah added to the perception of Sunni persecution and confirms the existing frames of the radical groups. The aerial bombardment and artillery fire supposedly targeted terrorists, but most of the firing seemed random. This radicalised the population in Fallujah, and strengthened the Military Council. Additionally, by using heavy-handed tactics, ISF left the population in Fallujah no choice but to defend themselves and support the militant groups (Musings on Iraq, 2014b). This meant that even if people were negative to the Military Council to begin with, they were forced into a position where fighting alongside the Military Council was the best chance of keeping ISF out of the city. This also meant that they would be cooperating with ISIS.

ISIS arrives in Fallujah

On the morning of 3 January, about 300 ISIS members arrive in Fallujah, after being defeated by Sahwa forces in Ramadi (Abbas, 2014a). ISIS already had some presence in Fallujah and surrounding areas (Musings on Iraq interview with Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, 2014). The newcomers were surrounded by tribal fighters upon arrival, the tribal fighters being superior in numbers (Abbas, 2014a). A deal was made with ISIS and the group was allowed to would also join the Military Council, but their influence was limited to military affairs (International Crisis Group, 2014:15). ISIS also agreed "[…] not to hold rallies or try to govern the city […]" (Abbas, 2014a).

ISIS aspirations of world domination and the establishment of a Caliphate were downplayed, but that did not mean that the goal had been abandoned (al-Tamimi, 2014b). Upon arrival in Fallujah, one ISIS fighter announced that they had come to protect the people of Fallujah and "[…] uphold the banner of Islam." (Abbas, 2014a). One eyewitness also claims that the ISIS fighter said: "We will implement your orders. You are the people of the city and you are the tribes of this city." (Habib, 2014). This fits very well with the dominating frames in Fallujah, because ISIS frames their presence as a being part of the force that will defend the Sunni and Fallujah, while respecting the tribes.

Framing processes conclusion

The dominant groups in Fallujah are Salafi jihadist and Baathists utilising Islamist rhetoric. They can credibly draw on repertoires and frames associated with uncompromising armed struggle against the "Safavid alliance". The Salafi were anti-Shia for religious reasons, while the Baathists were anti-Shia for political reasons. Together, they could draw on large parts of the population in the their common anti-Shia cause. Sowell points out that "[…] calls for a declaration of jihad are an everyday occurrence in Fallujah." (2013).

The repression throughout 2013, the events in Hawija and ISF's actions in Fallujah all contribute to confirming the frames that were already present in Fallujah; that the GOI and Iran wants to destroy Fallujah and ethnically cleanse the Sunni, and the only way to survive is through armed jihad. This further attracts radical elements with the same worldview, several of these coming from the Ramadi protest site. The radical groups' active framing of issues radicalises Fallujah and by the end of 2013, the city and the Military Council willingly lets ISIS into the city.

Fallujah conclusion

The social movement organisation in Fallujah, the Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries, consisted of religiously conservative and radical groups. They were former insurgent groups, the Baathist JRTN being the strongest, but also with Salafi jihadists and eventually ISIS. The goal was to destroy the political order of Iraq. The Military Council had access to the resources, knowledge and experience in conducting violent operations, and used this actively in the direction collective action.

The dominant groups in Fallujah utilised Islamist rhetoric. They could credibly draw on repertoires and frames associated with uncompromising armed struggle against the "Safavid alliance". The repression throughout 2013, the attack on the protest site in Hawija and ISF's indiscriminate violence in Fallujah all contributed to confirming and amplifying the frames that were already present in Fallujah; that the GOI and Iran wants to destroy Fallujah and ethnically cleanse the Sunni, and the only way to survive was through armed jihad. This radicalised the protesters and population of Fallujah, and further attracted radical elements with the same worldview.

The radicalisation of Fallujah through the amplification of extremist frames made it possible for the Military Council to take control of the city when the opportunity rose. Through the mobilisation of protesters, the Military Council caused the ISF to leave Fallujah, thus creating political opportunity. With no one to challenge its authority and largely being accepted as legitimate by the radicalised population, the Military Council willingly let ISIS into the city and included them in the Council.

The most important part is not the opportunity itself. Opportunity requires that someone realises the potential, frames it as an opportunity to mobilise others, and has the will and capacity to exploit it. The Military Council did this in Fallujah.

This study has shown that ISIS did not take control of Fallujah in the early days of January 2014 like Fishman (2016) and Cockburn (2016, 2015) claim. Rather, through a process of increasing radicalisation, brought on by repression, opportunity and the effective framing of events, the population accepted a radical SMO, the Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries, as the legitimate governing body. The Military Council accepted ISIS into the city and let them join the fight to protect Fallujah. What happens in the next couple of

months, when ISIS becomes the dominant actor in Fallujah, will have to be the subject for another study.

Cross case analysis

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the conclusions from Ramadi and Fallujah and to show how the cities developed differently and how they affected each other. I will also include how the GOI actions and rhetoric strengthened the split between the cities and contributed to the outcome in the beginning of January.

Mobilising structures and framing

Internal competition of frames and radical flank effect

Social movement organisations within a movement

> "[…] engage in an intramovement contest over tactics and goals. This intramovement process leads to changes in the dominant frames of a movement and a succession in [SMO] power and influence." (Zald, 1996:270).

The internal competition of frames between the moderate and the more extreme factions within the Sunni Protest movement leads to the development of two different social movement organisations in Ramadi and Fallujah respectively. In Ramadi, the moderates are more successful in framing the current events in accordance with their worldview, and the Anbar Coordination Committee came to dominate the city. In Fallujah, the dynamic is markedly different. Here, the extremists prevail, effectively marginalising the moderate forces.

The Anbar Coordination Committee in Ramadi and the Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries in Fallujah had very different views of what the goal of the Sunni Protest movement should be and how they should achieve these goals. The Coordination Committee championed a Sunni region within the frames of the existing Iraqi state, while the Military Council wanted to destroy the government and establish a new political order. Both social movement organisations had in common that they framed their intra-Sunni conflicts as a Sunni-Shia conflict, thus taking advantage of the existing contention by directing it towards their own goals.

This competition strengthened both SMOs at the same time, but in different ways. Ramadi's moderate stance in strengthened, while Fallujah's radical stance in strengthened. This happened because elements sought out the area with the worldview most in accordance with their own. Thus, radicals went to Fallujah after failing to get a foothold in Ramadi. On the other hand, more moderate elements from Fallujah, like the Popular Sunni Movement, established a presence in Ramadi after being marginalised in Fallujah.

Additionally, the structures recruit and indoctrinate further, thus strengthening themselves and the traits they already had, be it moderate or extremist. In the words of Sowell (2013): "[…] the Fallujah protest camp has gradually come to resemble nothing so much as an island of fanatical Ramadi rejects, al-Qaeda, the Baathist [Intifada Ahrar al-Iraq], and the Sunni Popular Movement in Iraq […]." (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013). Through this separation into one moderate and one radical SMO, the radical flank effect comes into action.

Radical flank effect

While the internal competition of frames causes the two SMOs to develop differently, the radical flank effect increases the difference. I will first look at how the radical flank effect influenced the Sunni Protest movement as a whole, before I look at how it affected Ramadi and Fallujah specifically. An important aspect of the radical flank effect is that it also influences how third parties treat the different SMOs in the movement. Thus, I will also look at how the government of Iraq chose to handle the movement generally, and the two SMOs specifically.

The Sunni protest movement

The presence of a radical flank in Fallujah, the Military Council, affected the Sunni Protest movement both negatively and positively. Negatively, the violent actions and jihadist rhetoric of the Military council undermined the Sunni Protest movement as a whole and made it easier for Maliki to label the entire movement as radical and violent. Secondly, it made it impossible for third parties to support the Sunni Protest movement, even though there were outside forces that were sympathetic to their cause.

Thirdly, the radical flank was able to radicalise the entire movement to some degree, by redefining normality and acceptable means for the protesters. However, even though the

entire movement is radicalised, extreme groups did not become dominant in the Sunni Protest movement as a whole. Radical groups controlled the Fallujah protest site, but because the Ramadi site is a lot bigger, the largest part of the Sunni Protest movement remained moderate (Sowell interview by Musings on Iraq, 2013).

On the positive side, the radical flank made it impossible for Maliki to ignore the grievances and demands of the protesters, as the violent actions of the Military Council gained a lot of media attention. This contributed to pressuring Maliki into negotiations with the movement, mainly the moderate SMO, the Anbar Coordination Committee.

The Anbar Coordination Committee

The radical flank in Fallujah affects the Anbar Coordination Committee positively by making the Committee come off as more reasonable and moderate, even though it has been radicalised. When it seems like the most moderate SMO in the Sunni Protest movement, the Committee becomes a more attractive negotiations partner and its bargaining position with Maliki is strengthened. However, when the moderates entered negotiations throughout 2013, they are portrayed as traitors by the Military Council, thus increasing the distance between the two SMOs.

Maliki's actions

Because the dominant SMOs in Fallujah and Ramadi were different, then events and government actions were framed and resonated differently in the two cities. Maliki did also in some cases treat the cities different. First, I will look at what he did to the Sunni Protest movement and how his framing and actions affected the two SMOs. Secondly, I will look at how he treated the cities differently.

Throughout the demonstrations, Maliki claimed that the Sunni Protest movement consisted of terrorists, Baathists and al-Qaida supporters who were only trying to destabilise Iraq (Gartenstein-Ross and Jensen, 2015). Some argue that Maliki wanted to label the protesters al-Qaida or ISIS in order to legitimise his own war on terror and strengthen his position (International Crisis Group, 2014).

The effect of Maliki's frames was different in Ramadi and Fallujah. In Ramadi, these frames did not resonate well with the majority of the population and the Coordination Committee did

not actively try to strengthen the frames. However, it did contribute to radicalise the city to some degree because it strengthened the extreme elements. These were marginal, but still present. In Fallujah, however, Maliki's framing fit perfectly to the existing frames: Maliki called them terrorists so that he could use indiscriminate violence against the city. This amplified the existing frames, strengthened the Military Council and radicalised the population in Fallujah.

Events

The violence in Hawija on April 23 caused several groups to call for the Sunni to take up arms against the government. The extreme framing had some resonance in Ramadi, because the event was so clearly a violation on Maliki's part. Even though there was radical rhetoric in the protest site, it did not spark violent actions. Since the moderate structures dominated, the more extreme elements were unable to persuade the rest of the movement to take a more extreme path. However, even though the moderate frames of the dominant structures prevailed, the violence in Hawija clearly contributed to the radicalisation of Ramadi (Sowell, 2014). In Fallujah, this violence fit very well into the dominating worldview and created mobilisation and further radicalisation. Additionally, the JRTN, who also was central in provoking the incident, actively framed the event to mobilise and recruit followers.

The Hawija incident caused the cities to react differently, while the move on the protest sites caused a quite similar reaction in both cities. This is an indication of how an event, when not being observed directly, is interpreted as well as being the subject of active framing by groups. In turn, how well the frame resonates or how well the event is framed is central in deciding how the groups react. In Ramadi, the Hawija incident resonated to some degree, but as the main structures were moderate, no violent action was taken. The groups in Fallujah reacted quite differently, and set about a wave of bombings as a result, as well as strong jihadist and anti-Shia rhetoric in the protest site.

The violent bulldozing of the protest site in Ramadi on December 30 2013 caused violent clashes between the protesters and the ISF. This happened despite the fact that the city was relatively moderate and the Coordination Committee interested in working within the political process. The same violent approach against the protest site in Fallujah caused violent clashes with the protesters and the Military Council. It is not surprising that violent bulldozing of a protest site was met with violence from the protesters. However, it is an indication of just how

important the actions of the GOI was in this conflict. This is further underlined when ISF returned to Ramadi and Fallujah, using very different approaches.

When the ISF returned to Ramadi in the early days of January, they were welcomed into the city and cooperated with the Anbar Coordination Committee in fighting the radical elements that had taken to the streets with weapons. This confirmed and amplified the moderate frames in Ramadi and mobilised the population in support of the Coordination Committee and ISF. However, it is unclear whether ISF used a relatively careful approach when they returned because they knew the city was moderate, or if the Coordination Committee let ISF back into the city because the ISF refrained from using heavy-handed tactics against the city. It was possibly a combination, as framing goes both ways. The different groups had an understanding of what the other group was like, and acted accordingly. This became very clear in Fallujah.

When ISF tried to return to Fallujah, they were blocked by gunmen and forced to withdraw. Next, they surrounded the city and besieged it, in an attempt to isolate what they labelled terrorists. Shortly after, they proceeded to fire artillery shells into the city, killing several people. This approach was the ultimate confirmation of the dominating frames in Fallujah. ISF is only interested in destroying the city and killing the Sunni. This mobilised the population and radicalised the city. Like in Ramadi, it is unclear if the approach of the ISF was a result of their expectations of how the terrorists in the radicalised city would react to their presence. That the Military Council was irreconcilable and that there was no point in trying to use moderate means. Or, if the city's expectation of the ISF's genocidal goal caused the Military Council to clash violently with the ISF as they were trying to return. It is clear, however, that the mobilising structures' goals, means and active framing of events were central in creating opportunity and in deciding how opportunity was exploited.

Conclusion

The research question this study set out to answer was: w*hy was ISIS able to enter Fallujah unopposed, while being rejected and defeated in Ramadi in January 2014?* Through analysing the dynamics between mobilising structures, political opportunity and framing processes in Ramadi and Fallujah separately, and then doing a cross-case analysis, this study has shown that:

The internal competition of frames caused the social movement organisations in Ramadi and Fallujah to develop differently, thus they framed events differently and were more or less open to certain frames. Fallujah was more receptive to extremist frames, while moderate frames resonated best in Ramadi. State repression and violence confirmed the dominant and extreme frames in Fallujah perfectly. The repression also affected Ramadi negatively, but not as much as in Fallujah.

The radical flank effect increased the difference in two ways. First, by affecting how the government handled the movement in general, which in turn was framed differently by the SMOs. The GOI's violent handling of Hawija and the protest site fit perfectly in the extremist worldview, while not so much with the moderates. Secondly, how the government handled the SMOs specifically. The approach in Fallujah was much more heavy-handed than in Ramadi, thus confirming and amplifying existing frames, in addition to the groups' own active framing. This strengthened the extremists at the expense of moderates in Fallujah, and the other way around in Ramadi.

The continued strengthening of the two structures made them the dominant forces in their respective cities. They decided how to create political opportunity and how to exploit it once it appeared, and as the ISF pulled away from the cities, the Coordination Committee and the Military Council the inserted themselves as the governing bodies of Ramadi and Fallujah. Because the Coordination Committee had remained relatively moderate, and had the establishment of a Sunni region within the framework of the existing Iraqi state as its goal, it was not in its interest to cooperate with ISIS, thus siding with ISF in fighting the extremists.

The Military Council and the city of Fallujah, on the other hand, had been increasingly radicalised throughout the year, and as the goal was to destroy the government of Iraq and create a now political order, cooperating with ISIS was not a problem. The Military Council let ISIS into the city, and that is why ISIS was able to enter Fallujah unopposed in January 2014.

However, ISIS did not immediately take control of the city, as stated by Stern and Berger (2016), Fishman (2016) and Cockburn (2015, 2016). They continued to work within the framework of the Military Council, which, as described earlier, was a coalition of groups.

Over time, ISIS was able to become the dominant group in the Military Council and take control of Fallujah, but the processes leading up to that should be the subject of further research.

Further research

One suggestion for further research is to use social movement theory to analyse how ISIS became the dominant group within the Military Council in Fallujah. I would do this by analysing ISIS as an SMO within the context of the Military Council as a movement from early 2014 to ISIS has complete control of the city in March-June the same year. I believe many of the same dynamics that radicalises the Sunni Protest movement are relevant in Fallujah, and that ISIS as the most extreme group is able to become the dominant group because of their radical framing, their ability to mobilise resources from outside Fallujah and Maliki's continuation of shelling and indiscriminate attacks against Fallujah.

Initially I looked at this study as two cases where an external force, ISIS, attacks or moves against two different cities. Then, I thought that by looking at political opportunity, mobilising structures and ISIS framing, I would be able to explain why Fallujah did not fight against ISIS while Ramadi did. However, through this study it has become increasingly clear that this approach was not very suited to explain the differences and that I had made the same mistake I have criticised others for; a group centric approach with too little focus on the context. For further analysis of the rise of ISIS, I recommend paying more attention to the environment that shaped ISIS and the groups that are less known, but possibly central in explaining how such a large part of Iraq and Syria could fall prey to the black flag.

Appendix A: Map of Iraq[12]
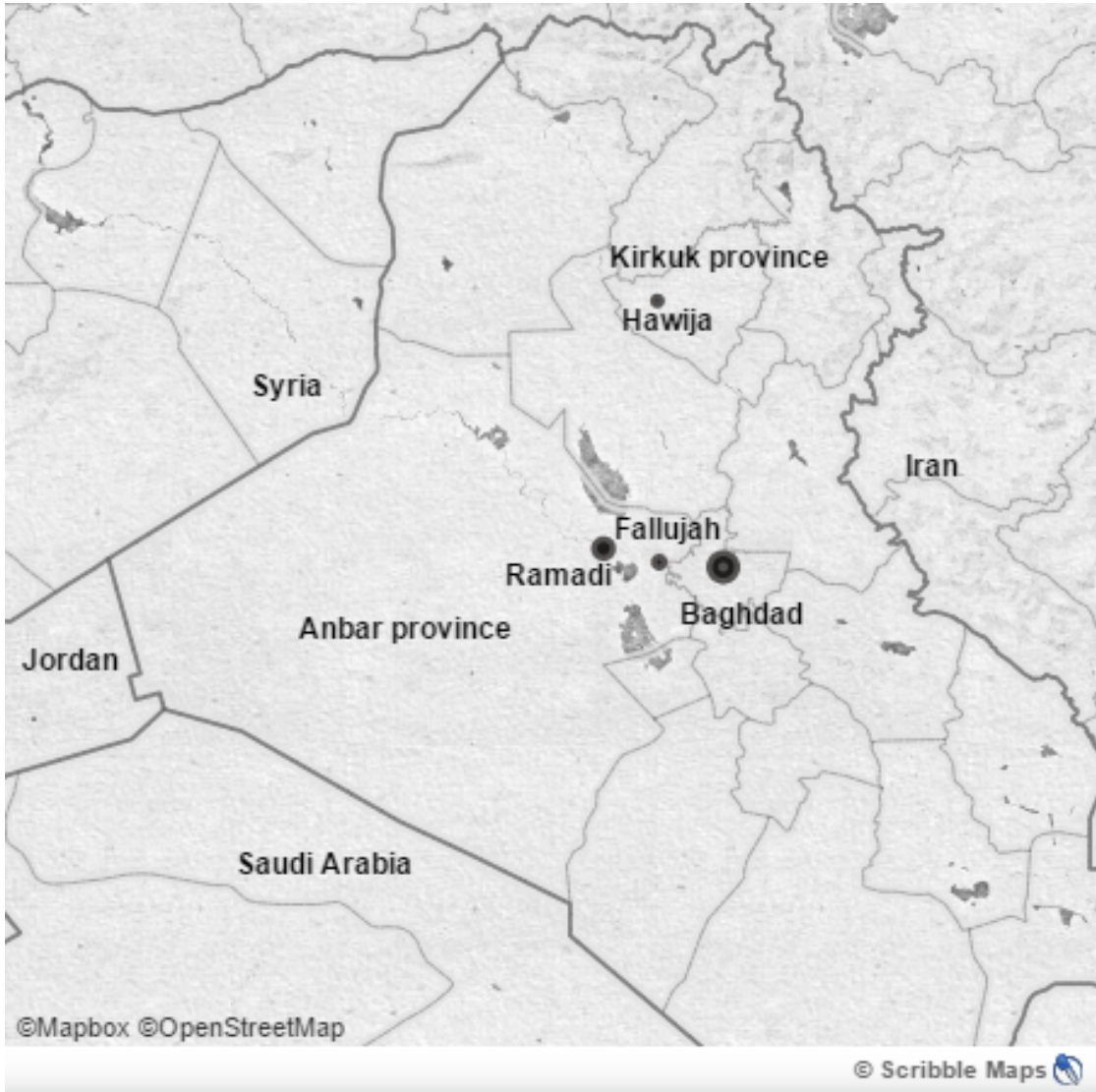
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