

**METROPOLITAN BATTLEFIELDS:
URBAN TOPOGRAPHY AND THE WEAPONIZATION OF GOVERNANCE
IN BAGHDAD**

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ABSTRACT

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, challenges to the US-led reconstruction escalated into a complex conflict over control of the capital city of Baghdad. The Battle for Baghdad involved military combat, mass-casualty terrorism, extreme criminality, and communal strife, as well as welfare provision, civic outreach, economic development, and local politics. State and nonstate actors used bullets, bombs, and their ability to control the provision and denial of city services to residents in their attempts to achieve a range of strategic aims. During this battle, the city provided both the location for the conflict and the means to wage it – an arena and an arsenal.

This study constructs a theoretical framework for analyzing both the spatial and instrumental aspects of urban environments during conflict, demonstrating how governance operates across networks of physical installations and political institutions. Exploiting vulnerabilities to governance systems, combatants pursue organizational aims, compete against rivals, and challenge state authority.

The trajectory of the Battle for Baghdad was shaped by dynamic relationships among its belligerents and a complex urban topography of territorial, demographic, and infrastructural features. A three-part analysis of the Battle for Baghdad evaluates how the reconstruction policies of the US-led Coalition converged with the insurgencies of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Jaish al-

Mahdi (JAM) to produce a complex conflict in which these combatants weaponized governance to assert control over Baghdad's urban topography. Evaluation of combatant tactics produces a typology for categorizing efforts as catastrophic or concentrated denial, and legitimate, illicit, or alternative provision of services.

Reflecting new approaches to the analysis of urban environments and political violence, this study aims to build bridges between those who understand cities and those who understand conflict. Concluding with recommendations for future research, this study aims to inform discussions on order, conflict, and violence, by highlighting how systems of urban infrastructure influence complex conflict on a metropolitan battlefield.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DGs	Directors General
DoP	Director of Police
GoI	Government of Iraq
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IEDs	Improvised Explosive Devices
IIG	Iraqi Interim Government
IIP	Iraqi Islamic Party
IPB	Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield
IPS	Iraqi Police Service
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (previously known as SCIRI)
IZ	International Zone (aka Green Zone)
JAM	Jaish al-Mahdi
MDMP	Military Decision-Making Process
MNDs	Multi-National Divisions
MNF-I	Multi-National Forces – Iraq
MoDM	Ministry of Displacement and Migration
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OMS	Office of the Martyr Sadr
PC	Provincial Council
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (aka ISCI)
TNA	Transitional National Assembly
UIA	United Iraqi Alliance
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices
ZJAIs	Zakat-jihadist activist insurgencies

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

<i>Amanat</i>	institution responsible for municipal services
<i>Amin</i>	chief executive official in charge of Amanat
<i>beladiya</i>	district of urban governance
<i>Da'wa</i>	“the call,” political party <i>Hizb al-Da'wa Islamiyya</i>
<i>fatwa</i>	religious decree issued by cleric
<i>fedayeen</i>	militia units, commonly referring to Saddam loyalists after 2003
<i>husseiniyas</i>	Islamic schools and facilities
<i>jihād</i>	personal striving for improvement, or holy war
<i>nahia</i>	smaller district within a <i>qada</i> (akin to village or township)
<i>Sahwa</i>	“awakening,” name of movement seeing tribes turn against AQI
<i>salafī</i>	reform strand of Islamic belief based on traditionalism
<i>sharia</i>	traditional form of Islamic jurisprudence
<i>qada</i>	large administrative district within a province (akin to county)
<i>qa'im makam</i>	local executive official in districts
<i>zakat</i>	pious obligation to donate to the needy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

“War is the continuation of politics by other means.”

Carl von Clausewitz

“All politics is local.”

Tip O’Neill

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, challenges to the US-led reconstruction escalated into a complex conflict over control of the capital city of Baghdad. The Battle for Baghdad involved military combat, mass-casualty terrorism, extreme criminality, and communal strife, as well as welfare provision, civic outreach, economic development, and local politics. State and nonstate actors used bullets, bombs, and their ability to control the provision and denial of city services to residents in their attempts to achieve a range of strategic aims. During this battle, the city provided both the location for the conflict and the means to wage it – an arena and an arsenal. This study examines how the combatants of the Battle for Baghdad used control over the city’s infrastructural systems to weaponize governance in their efforts to challenge the state, fight against rivals, and support organizational goals.

The trajectory of the Battle for Baghdad was shaped by dynamic relationships among its belligerents and a complex urban topography of territorial, demographic, and infrastructural features. Reflecting new approaches in academic and policymaking studies to the study of urban

environments and political violence, this study is positioned to build bridges between those who understand cities and those who understand conflict.

Significant trends are driving new approaches to contemporary conflict, animating the search for new paradigms to better understand the shifting realities of contemporary conflict.¹ Episodes in which multiple modes of conflict, including conventional combatants and irregular forces as well as terrorism and widespread criminality, have been categorized as hybrid wars² by some and new wars³ by others. Urbanization also factors prominently in discussions on global insecurity. Analysts looking at future trends in political instability continue to focus on cities where critical infrastructures are unable to meet the demands of citizens.⁴

This study presents my effort to improve the understanding of conflicts a) in cities, b) involving different types of actors, and c) in which the actors use governance to achieve their aims. In this project I sought to make the most meaningful contribution to the conversations happening in academic and policymaking communities looking at trends in urbanization, governance, and security. I found myself navigating a very busy intersection where all three trends converge – on a metropolitan battlefield.

¹ David Kilcullen, “New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict,” *Small Wars Journal* (June 23, 2007).

² Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, 1.

³ Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 3rd Edition. Stanford. 2012, 2.

⁴ National Intelligence Council (US), ed. *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013), 51.

1.1 War in cities and cities in war

What are the conversations at this intersection? Among the many approaches to conflict studies, a notable strand involves placing greater attention on its spatial attributes. Recently, there has been a call for more research “to investigate the interconnectedness between space, peace, and conflict.”⁵ The major contention underlying this is a shift from considering space as a purely material condition to understanding it as a social product.⁶ Reflecting postmodernist and critical approaches across a number of academic fields, a strong critical strand within geography has offered reassessments “on the links between space and violence, moving from a classical geopolitical understanding towards a multidirectional perspective on space and violent conflict.”⁷ Doreen Massey sees spaces not as containers with a fixed, dehistoricized nature but as permeable structures contingent upon social relations.⁸ Space is not simply concrete and material, it is also “ideological and subjective.”⁹ Spatial approaches to peace and conflict studies are also questioning

⁵ Annika Bjorkdahl and Susanne Buckley-Zistel, “Spatializing Peace and Conflict: An Introduction,” in *Spatializing Peace and Conflict*, ed. Annika Björkdahl and Susanne Buckley-Zistel, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1.

⁶ Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 1989).

⁷ Bjorkdahl and Buckley-Zistel, 5.

⁸ Doreen B. Massey, *World City* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 154.

⁹ Barney Warf and Santa Arias, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Routledge: 2009), 3.

the value of seeing war and peace as a dichotomy, instead seeking to explore conflict as a continuum across an assemblage of social processes.¹⁰

Elements of this broader conceptual shift in spatial analysis are reflected in works that focus on urban environments. Michael Batty asserts that nothing less than a new science of cities needs to be constructed based:

on the notion that to understand place, we must understand flows, and to understand flows we must understand networks. In turn, networks suggest relationships between people and places, and thus the central principles of our new science depend on defining relations between the objects that comprise our system of interest...What you see is not what you get when it comes to cities. The idea that it is relations—or, rather, networks—between places and spaces, not the intrinsic attributes of place and space, that condition our understanding, is the first principle that we will use in our new science”¹¹

Batty’s suggestion to investigate the relationships between the various elements of an urban environment leads to a related construct for understanding cities. Bill Hillier proposes viewing them as complex socio-technical systems that consist of physical and human subsystems.¹² Understanding urban complexity means finding ways to link these technical systems of buildings and streets to the social activities involving movement, interaction, and activity. Hillier makes a crucial distinction between two basic processes in urban complexity. He contrasts spatial processes

¹⁰ Colin Flint, “Intertwined Spaces of Peace and War: The Perpetual Dynamism of Geopolitical Landscapes.” In: Kirsch S and Flint C (eds.), *Reconstructing Conflict: Integrating War and Post-War Geographies*. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 31–48.

¹¹ Michael Batty, *The New Science of Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 2.

¹² Bill Hillier, “The City as a Socio-Technical System: A Spatial Reformulation in the light of the Levels Problem and the Parallel Problem” in *Digital Urban Modeling and Simulation*, ed. Stefan Arisona, Gideon Aschwanden, Jan Halatsch, and Peter Wonka (Berlin: Springer, 2012), 24-48.

from functional processes. A vertical process reflects the emergence of a network of space by aggregating buildings to create the physical, or spatial, element of a city. Lateral interactions of this pattern with different types of economic and social activity creates the functional attributes of a city.¹³

Instead of looking at a city as a static environment of structures with a population, this perspective highlights the dynamic relationships between the material and functional attributes of an urban landscape. It offers a unique and powerful way to influence the broader conversation on conflict and governance in cities, along with new ideas shaping other fields.

One of the most significant characteristics of contemporary conflict is an inversion of the traditional model of warfare. Traditional, or Clausewitzian, warfare is a contest between the military forces of states who fight to determine the political order providing governance of the territory under dispute.¹⁴ Contemporary conflicts are inverting this model, making politics an embedded component of the contest. In other words, governance serves as a means of contemporary conflict, not just its end. Armies are using local politics to win wars.

In recent decades, trend lines for contemporary conflict put a focus on cities as the most likely locations for the emergence of an insurgent challenge to the state instead of the countryside, identifying another key inversion in conflict studies.¹⁵ Whereas a traditional view of insurgency

¹³ Hillier, 26.

¹⁴ Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-first Century Combat as Politics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4.

¹⁵ David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 104.

envision a rebellion born in the hinterlands and culminating in the capture of the nation's cities, our contemporary globalized and urbanized world is more likely to see eruptive challenges to political order emerging first from our cities.¹⁶

Intersecting trends in urbanization and political conflict increase the likelihood of conflict within cities, and the hybridization of those conflicts to involve terrorism, extreme criminality, militia factionalism, and other forms of violence. Urban populations are particularly vulnerable to disruptions of public service networks and the institutions that govern them.¹⁷ Therefore control over governance has major ramifications for conflicts in densely populated areas.

Thus, we arrive at the formulation of this research project. Traditionally, a battlefield is understood as a spatial dimension of conflict, or where it takes place. Yet in cases where factions are seeking to attack the authority of a state or control a population, they often seek to disrupt, corrupt, or coopt systems of governance. Considering how these systems of governance form a part of the environment in which these conflicts take place, they should also be seen as an instrumental aspect of conflict. Governance is used like a weapon against rivals. Aiming to examine both spatial and instrumental dimensions of complex contemporary urban conflict simultaneously, I focused on the Battle for Baghdad.

In the following sections, I introduce the major concepts that feature in the academic and policymaking literature that I am trying to bring together. There are many overlaps in this literature, and this section reflects that complexity. I review the literature from disparate fields like

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Stephen Graham, "When Infrastructures Fail," in *Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructure Fails*, ed. Stephen Graham (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 1-10.

military strategy, conflict studies, and public policy to identify the intersections where they can best help us understand episodes of complex conflict on a metropolitan battlefield.

1.2 Fighting over places and people, in cities

Traditional studies on urban warfare focus on how an urban landscape influences the ways and means that belligerents find and kill their enemies to assert ultimate authority over a city and its population. The presence of civilians is generally seen as just another complicating attribute of the terrain for belligerents to deal with, instead of producing a fundamentally different kind of conflict. This approach to urban warfare has been the dominant mode of thinking for the analysis of conflict in cities, particularly among military historians. The traditional paradigm for thinking about urban warfare is that cities are places that make it more difficult to command and control friendly units, identify and kill enemy forces, and avoid the killing of non-combatants. Fighting in a city impacts the types of weapons and vehicles that can be used, creates unique challenges for the provisioning and resupplying of forces, and allows a clever enemy many places to hide. According to this paradigm, fighting in a city is like fighting anywhere else, just harder.

New studies on urban warfare aim to reconcile these traditional views with a greater understanding of how the governance of a population may play a role in conflicts that feature insurgencies and other political conflicts. Works within this field engage with concepts pulled from traditional military studies, conflict studies focused on insurgency and other forms of political violence, and a growing body of literature on urban infrastructure. To build a conceptual framework that involve cities, fighting, and governance, we must review a few studies that deal

with only two of these concepts at a time – either cities and fighting or fighting and governance. Some of these works reflect a generalized view of conflict, and some are specific about urban terrain which is defined by a higher density of people and manmade structures.¹⁸

There are two basic ways to approach urban terrain’s influence in conflict. On one hand, urban terrain is a spatial aspect of the conflict. Terrain features function as a set of conditions that eases or complicates a belligerent’s attempts to defeat an enemy through the direct application of force. In military parlance, this is about “line-of-sight” or the ability to identify, shoot, and kill your enemy. Alternatively, terrain is an instrumental aspect of the conflict, providing a set of resources that can be used, either as a carrot or a stick, to shape a population to achieve strategic aims against your enemy. Gaining an advantage in influencing a population to support your efforts and stymie those of your opponent is a method of gaining “leverage” against an enemy on a battlefield.

These viewpoints reflect the most salient differences reflected in important recent debates about counterinsurgency as a mission for the US Army (discussed in more detail later). In the Army’s counterinsurgency debates, there are two major perspectives about how military force should be used. These perspectives animate debates that focus on whether military forces need to be more interested in defeating the enemy through line-of-sight dominance or by leverage. In other words, to what degree should the Army care about governance? This is one of the major points of contention between two major factions concerned with this question, the enemy-centric and population-centric camps. Those in the enemy-centric camp prioritize the application of deadly

¹⁸ Gian Gentile, et al., *Reimagining the Character of Urban Operations for the US Army: How the Past Can Inform the Present and Future* (Santa Monica, CA, RAND Corporation, 2017), 9.

force (kinetic operations) against an enemy over concerns about the governance of the population. Those in the population-centric camp prioritize support for political, social, and economic programs (non-kinetic operations) as the way to secure a more lasting victory. Neither side believes that ultimate victory rests on purely kinetic or non-kinetic operations, but when weighed in the balance the primary focus should be on one or the other. While debates over counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine found recent relevance due to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, they represent underlying issues that have been a part of military operations and conflict studies for a very long time.

A classic work in the field of urban conflict studies is Viollet-le-Duc's *Annals of a Fortress*, which takes a fictional approach to tracing the evolution of siege craft from ancient times to the late-nineteenth century conflicts of the Franco-Prussian War by imagining the history of a single fortress changing over time.¹⁹ A typical recent example of the genre provides a broad survey of military sieges from ancient times to the 1990s conflict in Sarajevo.²⁰ Greater specifics on the operational and tactical concerns of modern urban combat are provided by Louis DiMarco in a series of case studies from the Second World War to Iraq.²¹ The common thread connecting these

¹⁹ Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Annals of a Fortress: Twenty-Two Centuries of Siege Warfare* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publication, Inc., 2012).

²⁰ Paul K. Davis, *Besieged: 100 Great Sieges from Jericho to Sarajevo* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press on Demand, 2003).

²¹ Louis DiMarco, *Concrete Hell: Urban Warfare from Stalingrad to Iraq* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 15-26.

works is that the focus is on how, in the historical examples provided by each case, a military force dealt with the challenges of a conflict over an urban terrain with an organized enemy opponent.

The difficulty fighting in and over cities is commonly described in terms of how military performance in key areas was affected (and overcome if victory was achieved). Alec Wahlman's explicitness in his methodology for his case study review of US military performance is useful here, as it provides a solid overview to the essential military components of warfare. In each of his cases, he reviews how the specific urban environment affected US military performance in a) command, control, and communications; b) intelligence and reconnaissance; c) firepower and survivability; d) mobility and counter-mobility; e) logistics; and f) dealing with the population.²² These categories represent a prioritization of the spatial attributes of conflict.

Following the Second World War, the concept of "dealing with the population" moved up in concerns about armed conflict not involving nuclear weaponry. This era of decolonization and Cold War proxy conflicts produced several civil wars and insurgencies, leading to a reappraisal of the role of a population in warfare. This reappraisal is commonly presented as the classic dichotomy that pits the perspective of Mao Zedong, the Chinese revolutionary, against David Galula, a French military officer during the Algerian War. While Chairman Mao's writings²³ argued how a revolutionary insurgency can move from a nation's hinterlands to challenge the governance of its capital cities,²⁴ Galula's four laws of counterinsurgency proposed how Western

²² Alec Wahlman, *Storming the City: US Military Performance in Urban Warfare from World War II to Vietnam* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2015), 9.

²³ Mao, Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Champaign, Ill: First Illinois Paperback, 2000.

²⁴ Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains*, 16.

governments can use military power counter this process. Paraphrased, these laws are stated as 1) the aim of the war is to gain the support of the population rather than control of territory; 2) most of the population will be neutral in the conflict, support of the masses can be obtained with the help of an active friendly minority; 3) support of the population may be lost, so the population must be efficiently protected to allow it to cooperate without fear of retribution by the opposite party; and 4) enforcement should be done progressively by removing or driving away armed opponents, then gaining support of the population, and eventually strengthening positions by building infrastructure and setting long-term relationships with the population. This must be done area by area, using a pacified territory as a basis of operation to conquer a neighboring area.²⁵

Galula's ideas on population-centric warfare formed an important part of the COIN debates that factor into the conduct of US policy during the Battle for Baghdad, but also speak more broadly to how governance is viewed as an important component of contemporary conflict. A state's legitimacy is based, in part, upon its ability to provide certain services to its population. Its inability to do so effectively is a major element of impending state failure, as is a turn towards coercive and predatory behaviors by a regime towards its population.²⁶ Providing services to a population, either in the absence of the state or in competition to the state, is an effective technique used by some nonstate actors seeking to de-legitimize the state.²⁷

²⁵ Brett Reeder, "Book Summary of Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice by David Galula" Crinfo.org, <https://www.beyondintractability.org/bksum/galula-counterinsurgency>.

²⁶ Robert H. Bates, "State failure," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 1-12.

²⁷ Alexis Grynkevich, "Welfare as Warfare: How Violent Non-State Groups use Social Services to Attack the State," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 4 (2008): 350-370.

Insurgent groups may be described as pursuing state-consolidating or state-subverting strategies. A group may aim to win a rebellion and achieve its own statehood status, or just carve out a territorial space devoid of state interference.²⁸ This distinction forms the basis for debates about a supposed difference between old and new civil wars.²⁹ In this debate, an older model of ideologically and politically motivated civil wars is giving way to a new era of civil conflicts that instead feature greater predatory criminal violence. Taking the argument one step further, David Kilcullen argues that these new civil conflicts will largely take place within cities.³⁰

A proponent of population-centric COIN, Kilcullen was influential in shaping US policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, serving as Senior Counterinsurgency Advisor to MNF-I leadership in Baghdad. Kilcullen has written widely on irregular conflicts, and the need for Western militaries to focus more on the challenges of urban environments.³¹ In *Out of the Mountains*, Kilcullen presents his theory of competitive control to explain outcomes in irregular conflicts. He states that the “local armed actor that a given population perceives as best able to establish a predictable, consistent, wide-spectrum normative system of control is most likely to dominate that population and its residential area.”³²

²⁸ Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*, Cornell University, 2011.

²⁹ Stathis Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?,” *World Politics* 54, no. 1 (2001): 99-118.

³⁰ Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains*, 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 263.

³² *Ibid.*, 126.

Kilcullen lays out how this control is exerted across three major realms: the physical, the institutional, and the behavioral. Groups garner legitimate political authority, acquire resources to support their operations, maintain dominance over a specific neighborhood, or seek to completely destabilize the city and undermine the current regime to secure a stake in any subsequent political arrangement. All actions should be seen, in some way, as an effort to express control in that environment.

But what does it mean to create a system of control? To what degree does such a system consist of coopting legitimate government institutions versus replacing them with the informal impositions of a rebel group? Kilcullen's formulation challenged me to expand on this concept of control and look more closely at how systems may be constructed using components that may be formal or informal, licit or illicit, and either coercive or voluntary. What tactics are most effective for groups pursuing either state-subverting or state-consolidating strategies? Do we see obvious differences, or are there some general similarities in their behaviors?

In this section I presented a very brief sketch of the main concepts driving this study. Academic and policymaking fields looking at political conflict and military operations demonstrate a variety of perspectives on episodes that involve urban environments and urban populations. Differences among many of these perspectives involve urban governance and the debates about how systems of control are produced or disrupted by state and nonstate actors.

1.3 Governance and infrastructure, in cities

What is governance? Like most terms in the social sciences, governance is used in a variety of ways by different communities for different purposes. As this study brings together a range of different literatures, the definitional problems for using governance and other key terms are compounded. This section explores some of the main ways these terms are used in relevant literatures and offers some clarification on how I use them in this study. I start with governance and relate usages of that term to infrastructure, another term widely used in many contexts. Both terms are used to describe overlapping systems of control: of resources, of behaviors, and of the delivery of public goods and services. This conceptual and definitional review sets up later discussions on the utility of these terms in my analysis. I explain what governance is in order to demonstrate how it is weaponized.

An initial note of clarification seems in order about the adjective urban. Using terms like urban infrastructure or urban governance is not meant to imply that I am differentiating those concepts from non-urban or rural versions of infrastructures or governance. It is a modifier that aims to provide additional description, and not an entirely divergent category. It indicates that those services, systems, bureaucracies, and technical resources are located in, or serve the population of, a specific city.

Turning to the usage of the term governance, the primary debate is about whether it includes government or not. I favor a usage that does, and encompasses formal, legitimate systems of government as well as informal institutions. This position has all the advantages of relying on a broadly constructed, very inclusive concept, as well as its drawbacks.

According to Francis Fukuyama, governance is a “government’s ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services,”³³ relying upon a model of Weberian bureaucracy as the ideal form from which to measure how actual governments may be achieving their aims. Another broad rendering of governance defines it as “the means by which to infuse order, thereby to mitigate conflict and realize mutual gain.”³⁴ The *Institute on Governance* provides another phrasing: “the process whereby societies or organizations make important decisions, determine whom they involve and how they render account.”³⁵

Why a distinction between governance and government? Eugene McCann notes the relative novelty of the term governance, identifying its emergence in the 1980s and 1990s within urban studies literatures (and the *Urban Studies* journal) as a product of the neoliberal institutionalization of the Global North, and most evident in a number of trends reflecting new relationships between the public sector and a range of non-elected or non-governmental organizations.³⁶ He emphasizes a contrast between government by highlighting Erik Swyngedouw’s definition of governance as “an arrangement of governing beyond-the-state (but often with the explicit inclusion of parts of the state apparatus)... organized as [apparently]

³³ Francis Fukuyama, “*What is Governance?*” (Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, Working Paper Series 314, 2013), 3.

³⁴ Oliver E. Williamson, “Transaction Cost Economics.” In *Handbook of new institutional economics*, eds. Claude Ménard and Mary M. Shirley (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 41-65.

³⁵ *Institute on Governance*, <https://iog.ca/what-is-governance/>

³⁶ Eugene McCann, “Governing Urbanism: Urban Governance Studies 1.0, 2.0 and beyond,” *Urban Studies* 54, no. 2 (2017): 313.

horizontal associative networks of private (market), civil society (usually non-government organizations (NGO) and state actors.”³⁷

While it may serve the agendas of both critics and proponents of neoliberalism, the term’s flexibility to include legitimate state activity as well as other constructions of control provides utility in several other fields. Key strands of academic and policy prescriptive work concerning contemporary conflict scenarios include discussions about state and nonstate forms of governance, and the security implications of failed, fragile, and weak states. Stewart Patrick positions weak states as among the most significant challenges to global security.³⁸ Thomas Risse acknowledges the extent to which governments may be involved in the *de facto* governance of their populations in fragile and failed state environments³⁹ while Elinor Ostrom provides numerous examples of communal governance and situations where rules are enforced and services delivered that exist outside of direct state action, and through the agency of both formal and informal institutions.⁴⁰

An emergent theme that deserves more attention is metropolitan governance, and the degree to which weak cities are at the root of the weak state problem driving global instability.

³⁷ Erik Swyngedouw, "Governance Innovation and the Citizen: The Janus Face of Governance-Beyond-The-State." *Urban Studies* 42, no. 11 (2005): 1991-2006.

³⁸ Stewart Patrick, *Weak Links: Fragile States, Global Threats, And International Security* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³⁹ Thomas Risse, ed., *Governance without a State?: Policies and Politics in Areas Of Limited Statehood* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), 9.

⁴⁰ Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Notable theorists of state formation like Charles Tilly argued persuasively as to the crucial role urban areas served in the consolidation of the state. Concentrations of coercive power and capital wealth accrued in cities have been channeled by sovereigns into their state-making projects.⁴¹ This suggests that those looking at the phenomenon of state failure might be served by a greater focus on the role urban governance may be playing in the breakdown of these states. Saskia Sassen investigates the ramifications of how globalization trends are producing a new era of urban governance likely to challenge the dominance of the nation-state as the primary unit of international relations.⁴²

The study of nonstate governance in urban areas lags its study in other conditions. Variations on predatory behavior in the absence of state authority is found in the literature on warlordism, with debates about the degree to which these self-interested actors provide public goods (mainly security) to local inhabitants.⁴³ Yet another formulation of insurgency characterizes several areas of counter-state sovereignty where rebel groups perform extensive service provision embedded within the governance system of the *de jure* state.⁴⁴

Arguing that state weakness does not inevitably lead to governance by warlords, Jennifer Murtazashvili provides an argument for rethinking relationships between traditional and state

⁴¹ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

⁴² Saskia Sassen, "Urban Capabilities: An Essay on our Challenges and Differences," *Journal of International Affairs* (2012): 85-95. See also Jon Pierre, *The politics of urban governance* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 2011).

⁴³ Kimberly Marten, "Warlordism in Comparative Perspective," *International Security* 31, no. 3 (2007): 41-73.

⁴⁴ Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*.

governance, specifically in the case of Afghanistan.⁴⁵ Governance may be derived from a variety of local arrangements mediated through a range of institutions. While the reconstruction of Afghanistan differs in many ways from the case of Iraq, there are many reasons to make informative comparisons between the two. Major points that Murtazashvili makes in critique of institutional innovation in Afghanistan will be largely echoed in this study on Iraq. Murtazashvili effectively questions the necessity, utility, and ultimate viability of the novel institutions brought into being through foreign implementation without due regard for preexisting governance arrangements in the nation-building exercise undertaken in Afghanistan,⁴⁶ a theme of inquiry in this study focused on Iraq.

My view on the concept of governance echoes those found above, working in the fields that deal primarily with situations in which governments are facing unusual circumstances brought on by political violence. Governance starts with government but may encompass other forms of authority, brought on by competitors to the state. This is a broad definition, but a few additional concepts provide some refinement for its use in this study.

Steven Globerman and Daniel Shapiro define governance infrastructure as “public institutions and policies created by governments as a framework for economic and social relations.”⁴⁷ In their work, they aim to distinguish their use of the term governance infrastructure from other concepts such as physical infrastructure and human capital. They offer the conventional

⁴⁵ Murtazashvili, Jennifer Brick. *Informal Order and the State in Afghanistan* (Cambridge, 2016), 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁴⁷ Steven Globerman and Daniel Shapiro, "Global Foreign Direct Investment Flows: The Role of Governance Infrastructure." *World Development* 30, no. 11 (2002): 1899-1919.

perspective of physical infrastructure consisting of investments in the construction and maintenance of communications, transportation, and utility networks. Human capital entails “less tangible investments in people, mainly in the form of education and health;” however they concede that “to the extent that education and health are provided by government or influenced by public policy, human capital may be thought of as human infrastructure.”⁴⁸ Similarly, scholars who make distinctions between governance infrastructure and social capital, or the networks and shared values that encourage social interaction, may find overlaps because social capital “can involve public organizations such as schools or government agencies,” and thus also span across different systems of physical infrastructure.⁴⁹

Reacting to an “ongoing and expanding convulsion of the concepts of democracy and governance by academics, international institutions and policymakers,” Ryan G. Baird offers a stricter definition of governance infrastructure as “the core domestic institutions that facilitate government competency and economic efficiency” in order to rectify a situation in which governance “is a somewhat nebulous and very extensive concept, with no agreed-upon definition, while also being conceptualized in a mainly ad-hoc manner.”⁵⁰

I found the concept of governance infrastructure very compelling but have problems with the restrictive definitions presented above. Governance goes beyond institutions. It must include material aspects. Governance is conducted at physical installations and provides actual, tangible

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1901.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ryan G. Baird, "Unpacking Democracy and Governance: Conceptualizing Governance Infrastructure." *Social Science Information* 51, no. 2 (2012): 263.

resources in many cases. Turning to definitional discussions about infrastructure strengthens my argument.

The term infrastructure refers to any underlying framework or foundation of a system.⁵¹ It therefore can be used in an extraordinarily vast set of circumstances. The broadness of its use across different literatures and in different contexts allows for it to both draw very compelling comparisons between apparently diverse phenomena and bedevil instances when sharp distinctions are needed. It is a better term for lumpers than for splitters.⁵² Traditionally, infrastructure systems describe large-scale physical resources that provide for public needs. Commonly understood infrastructures include systems such as highway networks, communication systems, and electrical grids.⁵³ That this definition has redundancies is not lost on those who define the term. In some cases, it is clearly seen how infrastructure conveys resources for consumption while in other cases the infrastructure itself is considered a resource.⁵⁴

A broad categorization scheme of infrastructure types includes transportation systems (highways, railways, airports, etc.), communications systems (telephone, internet, postal services, etc.), legal systems (courts, police, political bodies, etc.), and basic public services (sewer, water,

⁵¹ Brett Frischmann, *“Infrastructure: The Social Value of Shared Resources* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3.

⁵² Referring to historian Peter Novick’s essential classification of social scientists as those who generally find similarity among different things to ‘lump’ them into a few broad categories, versus those who see differences among similar things in order to ‘split’ them up [Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, Cambridge (1988).]

⁵³ Frischmann, 3-4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

trash, power, etc.).⁵⁵ There is no definitive categorization of infrastructure types, and examples used across a variety of government and international institutions provide an array of variations. For example, the Department of Homeland Security classifies 16 categories of critical infrastructure systems.⁵⁶ The European Union provides a different organizational scheme.⁵⁷

These systems are comprised of both material and institutional components. Highway networks are made of concrete and asphalt, but also include the bureaucracies that build and repair them and enforce the rules of their use. Such traditional infrastructures are quite easily grasped as having a physical aspect with an institutional overlay. However, many infrastructure systems are largely institutional in nature and have very little presence in physical reality. Understanding how all these elements interact demonstrates my view of understanding what governance infrastructure means. I use the term to encompass the entirety of a complex set of institutions and installations that control resources, behaviors, and services for a population. This is not a static framework, but a dynamic set of relationships that constantly evolve as legal, political, bureaucratic, social, economic, and technological conditions change. I aim to make distinctions between the tangible, physical, constructed elements of a system, versus the rules-based, institutional systems that, overlaid upon the physical systems, provide for the delivery of goods and services within a political or economic system. This is a more holistic view than other perspectives presented in this study,

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, *Critical Infrastructure Sectors*. 2020, <https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors>.

⁵⁷ Resilens, *About CI Resilience*, European Union, <http://resilens.eu/about-resilience/critical-infrastructures/>.

but I believe this effort to pull together ideas about the dual nature of governance as having both institutional and material components enables it to make a novel contribution.

Typically, military planners make a distinction between “hard” and “soft” infrastructures, with the former referring to the large physical networks or capital assets of a state, and the latter referring to those services which are primarily institutional in nature. Military planners commonly refer to a package of critical infrastructure systems with the acronym SWET (sewer, water, electricity, trash) referring to the key services necessary for a population. In some cases, this concept is expanded to SWEAT-MSO to include more systems (sewer, water, electricity, academics, trash, medical services, safety, and other considerations).⁵⁸ The category of electricity commonly refers to energy production in its broadest sense. In Iraq, this included a focus on the production and distribution of oil and other petroleum products through the nation’s extensive infrastructural systems.

This hard-versus-soft dichotomy is something largely unexplored within these military discussions on infrastructure and governance, but something I intend to drill down on within this study. I assert that all infrastructures consist of both hard and soft elements, involving both installational and institutional components. Understanding the vulnerabilities of these systems to nonstate actors seeking to disrupt the governance infrastructure of a city requires a better knowledge of the overall degree to which a specific system is reliant upon its installational or institutional attributes, and how those installational or institutional networks are structured.

⁵⁸ John A. Nagl, James F. Amos, Sarah Sewall, and David H. Petraeus, *The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), Chapter 1-27.

To understand the US military perspective on infrastructure, we turn to the manual. Joint Publication 3-06, the doctrinal manual for US military urban operations, provides this overview on how an urban infrastructure may shape a conflict in an urban area, stating that a city's infrastructure:

...may include a transportation network, utilities, government buildings, hospitals, schools, food processing and distribution centers, and communications facilities. The infrastructure may be relatively simple, or it may be highly complex and sophisticated. For example, transportation infrastructure in one city may be a simple network of streets; in another city, it may consist of sophisticated port facilities, rail networks, airports, large highways, subways, bus systems, taxis, and other modes of public transportation...⁵⁹

This brings us back to the intersection of cities, conflict, and governance. When looking into questions of how urban infrastructure plays a role in political conflict, there are three main fields to consider: public policy studies, urban studies, and conflict studies. The first is the public policy realm, primarily interested in the technical aspects of infrastructural systems and their relationship to political systems and social life. Beginning in the early 2000s and instigated largely by concerns after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, public policy discussions surrounding disruptive attacks or natural disasters in major urban areas started to crystallize into a literature on critical infrastructures. Identifying vulnerabilities capable of producing mass disruption to urban life, these works focus on the interactions of local, state, and federal governments to prepare for, mitigate the damage of, and develop resilience to extraordinary emergency disruptions. Louise Comfort highlights the confluence of New Orleans' physical environment, its aging infrastructure, and declining economic and social structure in exacerbating

⁵⁹ Joint Publication 3-06, *Joint Urban Operations* (JP 3-06), I-2.

Hurricane Katrina's damage to illustrate the need for greater focus on building vital, resilient communities that can withstand extreme shock.⁶⁰ Todd LaPorte focuses on the unpleasant possibility of surprise facing our national and local institutions as they react to emergencies, both natural and intentional.⁶¹ The attention paid to both the regular and irregular threats (natural and manmade) to critical infrastructure systems shaped my thinking on both types of vulnerabilities in this project.

The second realm reaches across the fields of critical geography and urban studies. A primary focus of authors writing in this vein is to critically examine what Martin Coward states as the "reciprocal dynamic of security being urbanized and urbanity being securitized" or the urbanization of security.⁶² Coward posits a conceptual argument that presents the willful destruction of buildings by a belligerent as an assault on urbanism, or the heterogeneity and diversity that urban life represents.⁶³ In more concrete terms Stephen Graham excoriates what he sees as the new urban militarism found amongst the militaries and foreign policy establishments of the West, seeing the challenges of urbanization within the cities of the Global South as a new colonial frontier from which new threats to the neoliberal world order will emerge.⁶⁴ Graham states

⁶⁰ Louise K. Comfort, "Cities at Risk: Hurricane Katrina and the Drowning of New Orleans," *Urban Affairs Review* 41, no. 4 (2006): 501-516.

⁶¹ Todd R. LaPorte, "Critical Infrastructure in the face of a Predatory Future: Preparing for Untoward Surprise," *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 15, no.1 (2007): 60-64.

⁶² Martin Coward, "Network-centric violence, critical infrastructure and the urbanization of security," *Security Dialogue* 40, no. 4-5 (2009): 399-418.

⁶³ Martin Coward, *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction*, Vol. 66 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 51.

⁶⁴ Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2011), 1.

that his book *Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructure Fails* “is motivated by a paradox: studying moments when infrastructures cease to work as they normally do is perhaps the most powerful way of really penetrating and problematizing those very normalities of flow and circulation to an extent where they can be subjected to critical scrutiny.”⁶⁵

He asserts that his volume provides the first systematic social scientific study of the practicalities, politics, and implications of events where the circuits sustaining flows of energy, water, waste, sewerage, transportation, or communications within or between cities break down, are deliberately attacked, or become infused with malign infiltrations.⁶⁶ Revealing how the politics of city life respond to such crises, and how these crises can be manipulated for political ends, Graham intends for his book to raise major questions about the challenges of intensifying urbanization and an “ever-growing reliance on urban infrastructures to provide for the essentials of humanity.”⁶⁷ The focus on the vulnerabilities of urban populations to the disruptions of critical infrastructures paralleled my concerns about understanding the challenges faced during a post-conflict crisis like Iraq; however, Graham’s work and others within this field yielded little insight into formulating practical remedies for the situations described.

The third realm includes conflict studies and those within or intending to reach a more mainstream policymaking community audience with insights into understanding urban environments for managing contemporary conflicts. Paul Staniland addresses a need for theorists to start reevaluating assumptions about urban insurgency, seeing different ways that social

⁶⁵ Stephen Graham, “When Infrastructures Fail,” 1.

⁶⁶ Stephen Graham, *Disrupted Cities*, 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

mobilization takes place in cities that previous civil conflict theories would discount.⁶⁸ Alice Hills cogently explains the many reasons Western militaries are ill-prepared to cope with a future involving more instances of urban conflict:

the characteristics and tactical constraints of urban operations have remained remarkably consistent over the past 60 years. They emphasize that cities have a critical effect on the military activities taking place within them, influencing the conduct of operations to a greater extent than any other type of terrain...As a result, cities represent the most complex and challenging environment in which military actions occur.⁶⁹

What the West lacks, according to Hills, is a strategic logic for dealing with urban warfare. Instead, it treats various instances of urban warfare as a series of purely tactical challenges. Hills notes that even though the Desert Storm campaign of 1991 brought coalition forces to within 60 miles of Baghdad, the 1990s did not see “sustained or systematic attention to the military-strategic implications of cities.”⁷⁰ However, Hills provides effective case analyses of the three major contingencies faced by Western (and Russian) militaries in cities during the 1990s: policing, enforcement, and warfighting. From the relatively low-intensity policing of Kosovo to the enforcement of peacekeeping arrangements in Bosnia to the full-scale urban warfare on the streets of Grozny, the 1990s should have impressed upon policymakers the importance of treating urban conflict as a clear and present danger for future operations. Notably, in some corners the multifaceted nature of urban conflict took hold. Based on a comment made in a 1997 speech by USMC

⁶⁸ Paul Staniland, “Cities on Fire: Social Mobilization, State Policy, and Urban Insurgency,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 12 (2010): 1624.

⁶⁹ Alice Hills, *Future War in Cities: Rethinking a Liberal Dilemma* (London, UK: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004), 243.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 244.

Commandant General Krulak the phrase “three block war” took on a life of its own for how the Marines saw themselves preparing for future warfare:

In one moment of time, [USMC] members will be feeding and clothing displaced refugees – providing humanitarian assistance. In the next moment, they will be holding two warring tribes apart – conducting peacekeeping operations. Finally, they will be fighting a highly lethal mid-intensity battle. All on the same day, all within three city blocks. It will be what we call the three-block war.⁷¹

The need for contemporary warfighters to possess an understanding of the flexibility required to operate in different modes for different missions strongly influenced a newer generation of military leaders like General David H. Petraeus. Tasked with writing a new counterinsurgency manual for the Army, Petraeus incorporated much of this thinking into the new FM 3-24. Influencing this manual is Krulak’s concept of the strategic corporal, encompassing the idea that relatively low-level non-commissioned officers and soldiers would find themselves in crucial situations where their tactical interactions with locals on a contemporary battlefield may reverberate with strategic implications.⁷²

The RAND Corporation has issued many reports focused on urban operations, often using historical or more recent case studies to pull out relevant lessons to inform a policymaking audience on the growing importance of urban operations in foreign policy. Russell Glenn and Gina Kingston, working on the challenges of modern urban operations, note the gaps between military doctrine and the reality of recent complex operations in which a commander might cope with both

⁷¹ Charles C. Krulak, *The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War* (Leavenworth KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned Fort Virtual Research Library, 1999), 18-22.

⁷² Ibid.

a hostile, thinking enemy and a natural or societal calamity concurrently.⁷³ Most military-centric writings on urban conflict are, naturally, focused on a relatively narrow set of conditions that influence normal military operations. These include the difficulty of telling friend from foe, communicating with subordinates, and using violence to achieve ends – all constrained by the density of urban terrain.⁷⁴ While most RAND authors refer to these issues as mere challenges, Hills sees a fundamental paradox facing Western militaries: that war, or the use or threat of lethal destruction to achieve a political aim, often undermines the very values that Western interventions are intended to promote.⁷⁵

Joint Publication 3-06 presents the concept of the urban triad, defining urban areas as having three major characteristics: a complex man-made physical terrain superimposed upon a natural terrain, a population of significant size and density, and an infrastructure upon which the area depends.⁷⁶ It illustrates the many ways these three elements – terrain, people, and infrastructure – shape military operations in an urban area, from warfare to peacekeeping to post-conflict reconstruction.

Building on Kilcullen's research, analysts looking to provide a comprehensive mapping of the urban operational environment expanded on the concept of the urban triad to identify the networked nodes (institutions and structures) through which crucial flows (people, products,

⁷³ Russell W. Glenn and Gina Kingston, *Urban Battle Command in the 21st Century* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2005), 14.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁵ Hills, *Future War*, 245.

⁷⁶ JP 3-06, I-2.

resources, etc.) serve a city.⁷⁷ This approach uses the urban triad concept to demonstrate how understanding threats and vulnerabilities within an urban environment must include a consideration of a city's natural geographical features and built environment of structures, its array of institutions that govern resources and behaviors in formal and informal ways, and the demographic qualities of its population. It follows recent trends that engage with the concept of urban topography as a systemic environment, and not merely one of spatial qualities.⁷⁸ A city consists of physical, institutional, and demographic attributes that must be approached in an organized method to make threats to its governance intelligible.

Along these lines, an important strand of military thinking has emerged around the concept of “megacities” (population greater than 10 million) as a key theater of conflict for future operations. Whether or not forces of the US Army should prepare for conflict brought on by instability within the rapidly growing and densely populated cities of the Global South is the source of a major ongoing debate with the policymaking community, with proponents and opponents arguing vociferously in many professional journals over the past few years. Proponents of better preparedness for and understanding of these potential flashpoints of conflict have led the way in encouraging a serious look at the complexity of urban environments.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Mark Lodemico and Elizabeth M. Bartels, “City as a System Analytical Framework: A Structured Analytical Approach to Understanding and Acting in Urban Environments,” *Small Wars Journal* (2015).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Phil Williams and Werner Selle, *Military Contingencies in Megacities and Sub-megacities* (Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press: December 2016).

Each of the above fields has its strengths, weaknesses, and blind spots. Public policy literature often highlights the problem-solving aspects of harnessing political aims for societal benefit through comparative cases of successes and failures across polities, yet generally steers clear of how and why malign actors exacerbate these problems. Critical urban studies tend to fixate on the ideological implications of the misuse of power and authority, rather than discuss any pragmatic or productive applications of power or authority. Political science conflict literature often lacks an understanding of the technical aspects of urban life. Military studies have been constrained by thinking that posits, in its most simplistic rendering, that fighting in a city is like fighting elsewhere, just harder. In the next section I will tease out what I see as the fundamental debate underlying these viewpoints, review ways key works have started to reconcile the gaps I have identified, and how this study aims to build bridges between various communities.

In conducting this study, I aimed to follow Kilcullen and Simpson's examples of bridging the gap between practitioners in the field and the broader academic community. For both, personal experience in conflict situations yielded deep insights for ongoing discussions about contemporary warfare. This study starts with direct observations made while I was conducting military and diplomatic missions serving US counterinsurgency aims in Baghdad.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ My first tour in Iraq (2005-2006) was as an Army officer assigned to the civil affairs unit that formed the basis for the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). I was directly involved in the PRT's initial establishment and development as the interagency unit tasked to unify Army, State Department, and USAID efforts in Baghdad. In 2007, I returned as a State Department political officer and served until mid-2008 in leadership positions within the PRT, responsible for coordinating diplomatic and development efforts between Coalition forces, the US Embassy, and Baghdad's political leadership across national, provincial, municipal, and local institutions.

Over a period of months in 2007 and 2008, I participated in *Operation Clean Delivery*, a joint US- Government of Iraq (GoI) effort to ensure the effective operation of one Iraqi government service: the delivery of one product, kerosene, to one neighborhood, Karkh, without the interruptions of terrorists, the interventions of militias, or the interference by corrupt officials.

The campaign coordinated Coalition efforts with Iraqi officials within national, provincial, and local levels of government to successfully deliver a shipment of kerosene cooking oil to a Baghdad neighborhood where residents could purchase this commodity at the stated government price. While seemingly simple, this hard-won success was the result of an arduous mapping out of all the potential vulnerabilities to this one service and executing a range of strategies to mitigate its many threats. Among these threats were terrorist attack on the convoy, militia cooption of the product by coercion of local officials, and the weaknesses of a bureaucracy facing incredible resourcing hardships.

During the many sessions between US and GoI officials that led to this operation, a fellow State Department official confided to me his insight about the ongoing fight for Baghdad. He proposed that much of this conflict could be seen as an effort to control “stuff.” He expounded that terrorists “blow up stuff” so nobody could have it, and militias “steal stuff” so only a few could have it. Within this simplistic rendering of the chaos and violence engulfing Baghdad at the time resides the basic idea that animates this dissertation. Clearly, these factions were using governance – the ability to provide and deny goods and services – as a weapon in this conflict, but they were doing it in very different ways.

My personal experience notwithstanding, the importance of the Iraq War in shaping academic and policymaking debates cannot be understated. Reacting to this event, many analysts have grappled with the complex issues faced in Iraq after 2003. The then-ongoing war in Iraq

looms over the edited volume in which Kalyvas, Shapiro, and Masoud direct students of politics to think critically about the relationship between conflict and order, and how “violence is employed by those who wish to upend an existing order and by those who want to sustain it.”⁸¹ Noting that scholars of order, conflict, and violence “rarely speak to each other,” the editors explained their efforts to bring together contributions from a range of perspectives and diverse methodologies as a corrective to this scholarly fragmentation.⁸² Taking inspiration from the diversity in perspective and content presented by this volume I embraced a somewhat esoteric approach in my own research, working on both the theoretical and pragmatic components that would enable me to grapple with the ways that order, conflict, violence, and urban topography combine to produce and alleviate instability.

I admit here at the outset that my enthusiasm for ideas has sometimes outpaced my capability to harness them. This study represents a flag planted more than a territory conquered. As I proceed to articulate the boundaries and content of this project, I aim to be upfront in acknowledging that a few concepts I propose could not be effectively operationalized using the data I had at my disposal. There is a lot to say about how the effort to stabilize Baghdad should inform our understanding of contemporary complex conflict, but several restrictions currently prevent a more effective appraisal. As with any recent event, time will enable a more thorough reflection at some point. I am hoping that this early effort suggests a useful roadmap for future exploration.

⁸¹ Stathis N. Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro, and Tarek Masoud, eds., *Order, Conflict, and Violence* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

⁸² Kalyvas, Shapiro, and Masoud, 3.

This introductory chapter continues with the fundamental problems and research questions that propel this inquiry and lays out the agenda for the rest of the dissertation. To review, I intend to use the Battle for Baghdad to demonstrate an analysis of the interactions between an urban environment and a conflict between belligerents. Following the initial invasion of 2003, a period of uncertainty gave way to the emergence of a complex insurgency that saw multiple armed factions seeking to determine the direction of Iraq's future.

The Battle for Baghdad emerged as these factions pursued efforts to extract organizational resources from the population, fight against rivals, and challenge the new government's authority as Iraq transitioned from occupational, to transitional, to full sovereignty. In this study I demonstrate how Baghdad's governance infrastructure was disrupted, producing vulnerabilities that were exploited by state and nonstate actors for strategic aims.

1.4 The Battle for Baghdad and the Surge debates

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 commenced on March 19 with an airstrike campaign intending to decapitate the leadership of Saddam Hussein's regime. While the term "shock and awe" generally accompanies any description of this initial wave of the Iraq War, in execution these initial phase attacks did not approach the degree of extensive demoralizing devastation of infrastructure systems envisioned by the original coiners of the term, Pentagon strategists Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade.⁸³ In March 2003, the US intent was regime decapitation, targeting

⁸³ James P. Wade and Harlan Ullman, *Shock and Awe—Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Good Press, 2019), XXIV.

high-ranking Ba'athist leaders but not seeking to cripple major infrastructure serving Baghdad, particularly oil fields.⁸⁴ An intense barrage of cruise missile and piloted aircraft bombings proved American technological prowess in reconnaissance, communications, and precision weaponry, yet not a single one of the top 200 Iraqi regime leaders was killed by an airstrike.⁸⁵ A ground invasion followed, and by April 10 Baghdad was in the hands of an occupying force. On May 1, President George W. Bush made his (in)famous “Mission Accomplished” declaration that major military operations in Iraq were over.

A period of small-scale skirmishes with *fedayeen* forces loyal to the Saddam regime evolved into more significant conflict into 2004 as the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) made plans to enable a transition back to sovereignty for a new Iraqi state. Local groups upset at, or taking advantage of, the breakdown of law and order emerged in both Shia and Sunni communities, challenging the legitimacy of the US occupation and the legitimacy of the transitional Iraqi government.

Efforts to rebuild Iraq and form a new sovereign Iraqi government began to unravel as lawlessness in the aftermath of the invasion opened the door to the emergence of a complex insurgency with numerous militant groups attacking US forces, each other, and elements of the new Iraqi government. Any sense of optimism over the relatively successful election cycle of 2005 vanished in early 2006 when the al-Askari mosque in Samarra, revered by the Shia community, was bombed by al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), igniting sectarian warfare across the neighborhoods of

⁸⁴ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2007), 190.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

Baghdad. A wave of mass-casualty terrorist attacks perpetrated by AQI and predatory militia extremism under Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) pushed the nation towards civil war, forcing the US to consider either abandoning Iraq or shifting its strategic aims from immediate handover to a more robust and holistic counterinsurgency effort. The Battle for Baghdad began in earnest during this crucial time and accelerated with the Bush Administration's decision to launch the *New Way Forward* (the Surge). The Surge supported the Baghdad Security Plan, or *Operation Fardh al-Qanoon*, Arabic for "enforcing the law," reflecting the joint MNF-I and Iraqi objective to secure Baghdad.

The Surge brought in more forces to secure Baghdad in 2007 while headway was made with tribal leaders to turn the tide against the al-Qaeda insurgency in Sunni regions of Anbar province and many of Baghdad's outlying rural areas. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's regime proved willing to take on JAM and militant extremism. A combination of factors led to a dramatic reduction in violence. Yet significant sectarian problems remained unsolved in Iraqi society and politics. Political and military fatigue from the conflict and the veneer of stability in Baghdad drove the US to pursue a course leading to a significant withdrawal after 2009.

As this brief overview of the war in Iraq illustrates, this conflict encompassed a wide range of conflict types. Academic and policymaking literature concerned with the Iraq War can be broadly categorized into the three major paradigms that delineate the most important strands of conflict studies, identified by combatant relationships: state versus state (war), state versus nonstate (e.g., rebellion, civil war, insurgency, terrorism, etc.), or complex substate conflict (e.g., weak state environments, militant factionalism, illicit power structures, extreme criminality, hybrid warfare, etc.). The most contentious debates in Iraq War literature involve the efforts to secure Baghdad.

Baghdad is “the center of gravity for the country. Everybody knows that...” said General George Casey in 2006, when he was the commanding general in Iraq.⁸⁶ Between 2003 and 2006, US troop levels deployed to Iraq hovered around 140,000. With the onset of the Surge strategy in 2007, an additional five combat brigades, roughly 20,000 troops, were sent to Iraq, the majority going to secure Baghdad. US troop commitment hit a peak of over 166,000 by late 2007.⁸⁷

The importance of Baghdad as the nation’s largest metropolitan area and political and cultural capital cannot be overstated. The duration and intensity of the Iraq War produced seismic shifts in the region and in US politics. It will likely remain prominent in policy discussions regarding US military, diplomatic, and development debates for the near future, as well as academic study on insurgencies, post-conflict societies, terrorism, and the humanitarian impact of war and civil conflict. The selection of Baghdad as the focus for this dissertation stems from its outsize importance in revealing crucial insights to a conflict involving conventional combatants, irregular forces, terrorist cells, and intense criminality, producing the environment seen by many as the epitome of contemporary complex conflicts.⁸⁸

Every serious analysis of the Iraq War, from a policymaking or academic perspective, needs to address the dramatic changes in the level of violence in Baghdad and attempt to account for the significant rise and fall in lethality over its trajectory. The periodic violence from 2003 into 2005 shifted into a major crisis in early 2006, following the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in

⁸⁶ “Battle for Baghdad: a ‘critical point’ in the war,” *NBCNews.com*, (October 5, 2006).

⁸⁷ “Chart: US troop levels in Iraq,” *CNN*, October 21, 2011, <https://www.cnn.com/2011/10/21/world/meast/chart-us-troops-iraq/index.html>.

⁸⁸ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 12.

Samarra, an historic town to the north of Baghdad. This brazen attack by al-Qaeda operatives on a site revered by the Shia community unleashed a Sunni versus Shia communal conflict that quickly engulfed Baghdad. Upsetting the plans of a Bush Administration hoping to disengage from its occupational responsibilities as a new Iraqi regime was forming, this massive uptick in violence led Bush to recommit to security in Baghdad and launch the Surge. This marks the beginning of the Battle for Baghdad.

In short, the Surge won the Battle for Baghdad. The enormous increase in sectarian violence hit a peak and then the general level of violence decreased to its earlier lower levels.⁸⁹ The standard interpretation of events attributes the arrest and decline of violence to the addition of US troops into Baghdad and a shift in strategy under General Petraeus towards population-centric counterinsurgency. Coalition forces focused on securing the population and supporting the rebuilding of governance institutions as major military objectives. But is this the most convincing interpretation?

The Surge and its impact on violence in Baghdad during 2007-2008 are central to the research assessing the effectiveness of COIN strategy in Iraq.⁹⁰ The widespread violence that erupted across Baghdad in early 2006 appeared to bring the nation close to all-out civil war and complete anarchy. The factors most commonly attributed to preventing this chaos are what are

⁸⁹ Michael E. O'Hanlon and Ian Livingston, "Iraq Index, Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq," *Brookings Institute*, August 30, 2011, 3.

⁹⁰ Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?" *International Security*, V37, No.1 (Summer 2012), 38.

generally referred to as the “new orthodoxy” narrative of the Surge.⁹¹ These factors include the addition of troops to Baghdad, the adoption of COIN strategy, and the leadership of General David Petraeus. This view represents the commonly accepted explanation for why Iraq got turned around by 2008.

However, ongoing research continues to challenge or refine this orthodox narrative of the Surge. Alternatives are presented by researchers looking at one or more of the major variables identified above: either troops, strategy, or leadership. Other researchers look beyond US policy to highlight alternative factors.⁹²

The location and disposition of troops is one factor commonly assessed, and among the simplest to measure. Joshua Thiel demonstrates an absence of strong connection between US troop increases and security improvements in a geospatial and statistical study. This leaves room, Thiel argues, for “other variables” to prove more crucial in explaining the Surge.⁹³

This gets to the heart of the debate over COIN, between its enemy-centric and population-centric advocates. The enemy-centric approach puts a high value on a focus on troop levels and the more traditional elements of combat outcomes over insurgent forces and terrorist cells. If the population-centric COIN strategy was the more important variable leading to the success of the surge, what evidence should we look at? One measure is the amount of money spent on

⁹¹ Douglas A. Ollivant, “Countering the New Orthodoxy Reinterpreting Counterinsurgency in Iraq,” *New America Foundation*, June 2011, 1.

⁹² Bernard Stancati, “Tribal Dynamics and the Iraq Surge,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2010), 89.

⁹³ Joshua Thiel, “The Statistical Irrelevance of American SIGACT Data: Iraq Surge Analysis Reveals Reality,” *Small Wars Journal*, April 2011.

reconstruction projects, providing insight into the overall value of service provision as an element of COIN strategy. US reconstruction spending in Iraq between 2003 and 2007 exceeded \$30 billion, ranging from massive capital-intensive infrastructure projects to short-term labor projects. Of particular attention to surge researchers is the \$2.9 billion spent by US Army and Marines units as Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds. The CERP program empowered local unit commanders to initiate small-scale reconstruction projects in the zones under their authority. Focusing on the effect of labor intensive CERP projects on insurgent violence, Iyengar, Monten, and Hanson find that a greater fraction of spending dedicated to work projects (with meaningful local Iraqi employment) is associated with a slight decrease in violence.⁹⁴ Asking "Can Hearts and Minds Be Bought?" Berman, Shapiro and Felter model a three-way contest among rebels, the government, and civilians and assert that "improved service provision reduces insurgent violence."⁹⁵

Other research stresses the normative aspects of service provision improvements that can cement a local population's support for either a counterinsurgent force, or their insurgent rival. Comparing the activities of Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Sadrist Movement, Erik A. Claessen notes the powerful combination of Islamic belief structures based on *zakat* and *jihad* produced support

⁹⁴ Radha Iyengar, Jonathan Monten, and Matthew Hanson, "*Building Peace: The Impact of Aid on the Labor Market for Insurgents*," NBER Working Paper No. 17297 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011).

⁹⁵ Eli Berman, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Joseph H. Felter. "Can hearts and minds be bought? The economics of counterinsurgency in Iraq," *Journal of Political Economy* 119, no. 4 (2011): 766-819.

for these groups in their efforts to challenge state authority.⁹⁶ *Zakat* refers to the pillar of the Islamic faith that sees donating wealth to the less fortunate as an act of purification and Muslim piety and justifies gifts to those engaged in *jihad* as being worthy of this assistance. Identifying the above groups as *zakat-jihadist* activist insurgencies (ZJAIs), Claessen assesses their effectiveness in shaping public perception and gaining support within local communities. Among the best strategies used by these groups were media campaigns stressing their purity and others' corruption, surreptitiously blocking others' attempts to provide relief, or taking credit for it when they do.⁹⁷

Debates over the Surge, and to what degree the role of service provision to the population should be a component of effective counterinsurgency strategy are likely to continue for some time. Arguments seeing no direct correlation between availability of essential services and violence⁹⁸ continue to be countered by others stressing the absolute necessity for support for the population-centric reconstruction programs employed in Iraq.⁹⁹ Others argue that viewpoints that focus primarily on US policy, whether enemy- or population-centric, are inadequate when

⁹⁶ Erik A. Claessen, "SWET and Blood: Essential Services in the Battle between Insurgents and Counterinsurgents," *Military Review* 87, no. 6 (2007).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁹⁸ Bruce Pirnie and Edward O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq 2003-2006* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008).

⁹⁹ Jeffrey Treistman, "Victory over Terrorism: Essential Services as Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 53 (2009): 100-115.

significant shifts in the conflict can be seen to have arisen despite, or independently of, American actions.¹⁰⁰

In this dissertation I do not intend to take a side on these Surge debates and merely, as Staniland would say, put a chalk mark in a “win, loss, or draw” column for this conflict.¹⁰¹ However, my focus on governance as part of the conflict, and the ripple effects that the intense military and political clashes produced in the complex infrastructures of the city, enables me to make an argument that is not often voiced in these Surge debates. The Battle of Baghdad turned when the bureaucrats went back to work. The combination of security improvements and focus on governance effectiveness brought on by *Fardh al-Qanoon* operations provided space for Baghdad’s bureaucracies to stabilize and improve their performance in delivering services.

Following the 2003 invasion, Baghdad’s bureaucrats faced enormous challenges. Regime change and de-Baathification induced a purge of many qualified civil servants. Iraq’s newly empowered political parties then sought to carve out their domains in the government with more focus on partisan loyalty than technical capability. Competent bureaucrats either kowtowed to these new parties, or faced elimination, by firing or other means.

The shift in US policy that accompanied the Surge provided a boost of confidence to Baghdad’s mid-level and largely apolitical civil servants that they could get back to the unheralded and often mundane work of running the city. Specific projects aimed at facilitating Iraqi intergovernmental coordination, backed up by US military protection and supported by US

¹⁰⁰ Aymenn Jawad, “Assessing the Surge in Iraq,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 15, No. 4 (December 2011), 27.

¹⁰¹ Paul Staniland, “States, Insurgents, and Wartime,” 245.

diplomatic and development efforts, gave Iraqi bureaucrats a degree of cover to go about the business of providing services to the residents of Baghdad in an environment of intense partisan rivalry and political uncertainty.

This is the area where the specificity of this case study and its wider applicability is most pronounced. Examining the Battle for Baghdad, I aim to pinpoint crucial moments of inflection when the dynamic relationships between combatants and environment shaped its trajectory. In doing so, I aim to present a broader argument about the need to better understand the vulnerabilities inherent in complex infrastructure systems and how these vulnerabilities shape the behaviors of belligerents aiming to control a city and its population.

1.5 Problems in contemporary conflict studies

A recent work by Paul Staniland¹⁰² expresses the major problems motivating this study. His study is focused on examining situations where governance serves as a major point of contention between state and nonstate actors, but not in the manner of a traditional civil conflict. His perspective falls in with many others in academic and policymaking fields aiming to speak to the complexity of contemporary conflict, where recent episodes of conflict are not fitting into traditional categories. Staniland looks at the “diverse interactions between states and insurgents

¹⁰² Staniland, “States, Insurgents, and Wartime,” 243-264.

that construct political authority and control”¹⁰³ and broaden how civil conflict is studied and understood by “aggressively engaging” with other academic and policymaking subfields.¹⁰⁴

Staniland builds a typology of what he refers to as wartime political orders. These orders emerge as patterns of cooperation between states and insurgents over different distributions of territorial control by these groups. His study, like many others in the field, is primarily focused on the relationships between state and nonstate actors operating within a specific arena of conflict. His key insight is that civil conflict is not just a matter of a state at war with an insurgency but that there is an array of potential arrangements between belligerents, from competition to collusion to tacit coexistence. What Staniland’s analysis does not quite capture is a scenario like the Battle for Baghdad. What if the nonstate actor is also part of the state? Or, what if there is more than one competing nonstate actor?

The first of these conundrums has been addressed within the policymaking community in a variety of ways. Michael Dziedzic is a proponent of using a model that identifies violent nonstate actor groups operating between licit and illicit governance as criminalized power structures (CPS) to explore problems in post-conflict scenarios and peacekeeping missions.¹⁰⁵ The CPS model builds on studies concerned with spoiler problems that permeate in post-conflict scenarios.¹⁰⁶ However, there remains a number of challenges is capturing the full reality of a conflict zone where

¹⁰³ Ibid., 243.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 255.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Dziedzic, ed., *Criminalized Power Structures: The Overlooked Enemies of Peace* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 1.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen John Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” *International Security* 22(2): 5 (1997).

nonstate actors play a significant role in legitimate state activity. The Battle for Baghdad is a scenario that does not conform to prevailing methodologies regarding the analysis of conflict involving one static, dyadic relationship between one state actor and one nonstate actor.

The second problem is deeper and less readily solvable, but greatly informs the shape and scope of this project. Recent works such as those of Staniland and Enrique Desmond Arias¹⁰⁷ highlight the fluidity of relationships between factions in conflict zones. It is encouraging to see these actor-centric approaches to political conflict embrace the complexity of relationships ranging from collusion to conflict. However, these actor-centric approaches often leave out a crucial component: how the battlefield influences the battle. This creates another blind spot in mainstream political science conflict literature. Does a fixation on the relationships between actors leave out the influence of environments?

In military studies, as well as the study of insurgency and terrorism, there are many reflections on the importance that geographical conditions have on the shaping of a conflict. The role of mountains in civil conflict has been explored,¹⁰⁸ and the preponderance of terrorism in urban versus rural areas is well known.¹⁰⁹ The field of geopolitics, premised largely on the idea that geography is a crucial driver of war and peace in world history, displays a predilection for

¹⁰⁷ Enrique Desmond Arias, "Criminal organizations and the policymaking process." *Global Crime* 19, no. 3-4 (2018): 339-361.

¹⁰⁸ Staniland, "Cities on Fire," 1624.

¹⁰⁹ Jörg Le Blanc, "The Urban Environment and its Influences on Insurgent Campaigns," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25, no. 5 (2013): 798-819.

macro-scale issues and great-power politics instead of constrained arenas of conflict such as cities.¹¹⁰

Lately, the most robust literature linking space and conflict in urban areas is seen in two fields. Critical studies offering postmodernist perspectives on issues of globalization, neo-colonialism, and the securitization of problems facing societies of the Global South take trends in global urbanization seriously and question existing paradigms in political conflict. On the other hand, works for or about US military-doctrinal approaches to a new era of urban conflict also engage willingly with innovative approaches to how cities shape modern warfare.

Yet both fields could be improved by an infusion of practical knowledge from public policy studies that deal more thoroughly with the day-to-day bureaucratic and technical issues involved with how cities actually operate. Recent US military manuals on counterinsurgency and urban operations discuss the need to unify military action with the delivery of good governance but could be improved with more understanding of critical infrastructure management.¹¹¹

Thus, the problems that motivate this study are that mainstream actor-centric paradigms of political conflict a) are not well suited to situations where nonstate actors are significant participants in the state, and b) avoid significant investigations of the places in which they take place. Furthermore, studies that do focus on urban spaces c) highlight critical, and/or macro-political issues to the detriment of other concerns, or d) display an enthusiasm for engaging in

¹¹⁰ Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics: A New Analytical Model* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 166.

¹¹¹ The major doctrinal texts most relevant to this study are JP 3-06, 3-24: *US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (FM 3-24), US Army Training Circular 2-91.4: *Intelligence Support to Urban Operations* (TC 2-91.4), and the *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (January 2009).

innovative approaches to a new era of cosmopolitan conflict, but often lose sight of some of the more mundane details of public services management necessary to understand the vulnerabilities facing governance in urban areas.

1.6 Central research questions and policymaking concerns

This study addresses each of these problems. First, in the chaotic post-conflict situation of Iraq, the boundaries between state and nonstate actors were fluid and permeable. Exploring the development of the factions most responsible for Iraq's trajectory illuminates this liminality. Secondly, this study highlights how conflict is shaped by its environment. An assumption of binary relationships in dyadic conflicts is insufficient to explain outcomes in contemporary conflict. State-versus-insurgent needs to give way to an entire spectrum of potential relationships. Secondly, understanding environmental conditions means moving beyond traditional geographical concepts and exploring a richer, more complex view of the potential structural factors that influence actor behaviors. Therefore, the relationships most pertinent to this study are not between actors in dyads but among actors and their environments. Lastly, there has to be a focus on the full complexity of an urban environment that encompasses a complete range of attributes including administrative law, political institutions, bureaucracies, technical installations, and delivery points for basic services.

Thus, this study asks how one develops a new methodology for an old problem: understanding how environmental conditions influence the behaviors of actors seeking strategic goals. Can recent shifts in thinking about cities as systems provide new ways to understand urban

areas as arenas of conflict? Can a deeper knowledge of the governance institutions and technical infrastructure that operate across a city enable a better comprehension of how competing entities and factions seeking to influence its population choose their strategies and tactics? I propose that an examination of urban topography, from its most tangible physical attributes to its fully abstract and institutional aspects, will demonstrate the viability of this pursuit. Moving from the abstract to the specific, I also aim to provide an alternative analysis of the Battle for Baghdad that highlights the role of governance in the conflict.

While I have framed this dissertation in terms of the problems and research questions found in the academic literature dealing with this topic, it is also fundamentally shaped by quite pragmatic concerns related to the on-the-ground experiences of those tasked with implementing policy in post-conflict Iraq, and how those policy decisions affected the day-to-day life of Baghdad's citizens. Parallel to the academically directed research questions posed above, I seek solutions for the real-world conundrums that bedevil communities in the throes of violence and political upheaval. Why does some stuff get blown up and other stuff stolen? What are the vulnerabilities in the institutions and infrastructures that serve the governance of a population, and what are best ways to prevent the exploitation of those vulnerabilities by malign actors?

The above academic and policymaking concerns that drive this study coalesce into two concrete research questions:

- 1) What factors produce vulnerabilities in governance systems during complex conflict?
- 2) How are these vulnerabilities exploited by actors pursuing different strategies?

1.7 Dissertation overview

In the chapter above, I presented the major ideas driving this research project. New approaches to the understanding of urban environments are likely to improve our understanding of complex conflicts. These conflicts feature an array of different actors using their ability to provide or deny services to a population to pursue a range of strategic ends. The Battle for Baghdad provides an important test case for a theory-building exercise intending to improve our understanding of that conflict as well as make broader statements about trends in contemporary conflict scenarios likely to emerge in the near future.

Chapter 2 starts with an in-depth introduction to the Battle for Baghdad as the case under study and provides the approach, methods, and theoretical perspective for an analysis of this case. Major military operations to invade and occupy Iraq commenced in March 2003 and concluded within a few weeks. However, the Iraq War continued to progress through several phases as combatants asserted themselves and reacted to their rivals. I first present an actor-centric view of the conflict and analyze how these groups, often labeled differently as interventionist, terrorist, and militia groups, can be situated within a traditional paradigm of insurgency. I then turn from an actor-centric perspective on the Battle for Baghdad to focus on its environmental characteristics.

I demonstrate how analysis of crucial terrain features, demographic characteristics, and infrastructural systems enables a better understanding of the complex and dynamic battlefield upon which this conflict took place. I also present the argument for why governance lies at the center of complex conflicts such as the Battle for Baghdad. The third and final part of this chapter articulates the components of my methodology.

Chapter 3 is the first of the within-case studies, presenting the Coalition's efforts to implement a radical reconstruction of the state of Iraq. These fundamental changes to the governance infrastructure of the state rippled out to impact the delivery of public goods and services at the local level to the residents of Baghdad. I demonstrate how major legal and political changes in the state of Iraq influenced the day-to-day operations of the most critical component of Baghdad's governance infrastructure, the *Amanat Baghdad*, the institution mandated to provide a range of basic services to the residents of Iraq's capital city and surrounding region.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide evaluations of the other major nonstate belligerents of the Battle for Baghdad, AQI and JAM. Both chapters review how these groups exploited infrastructural elements of Baghdad's governance to challenge the state, fight against rivals, and predate upon local communities. Each challenged the authority of the US occupation and Iraqi state apparatus through military action and major terrorist attacks or engaged in efforts to join and shape the legitimate political process. Each group also engaged in sectarian warfare and inter-factional rivalry to assert power across Baghdad. The tactical actions of each of these groups are categorized according to a typology that enables a better understanding of how governance is weaponized by different types of insurgencies.

Chapter 6 provides a conclusion connecting the dots between the various elements presented in this study. The within-case studies of the three major factions enables a deeper understanding of how each of these actors interacted with each other and a complex urban topography to produce the trajectory of the Battle for Baghdad. In this conclusion I evaluate how the framework and methodology of this study enables a comprehensive evaluation of complex conflict in an urban area, providing a way to assess how the overarching strategies of the three major belligerents were pursued, and what elements of urban topography were most consequential

in shaping their tactical behaviors. The results of this analysis on the Battle for Baghdad are then utilized in a review of the Coalition's reconstruction policies.

2.0 CASE AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the Battle for Baghdad as the case under study and provides the approach, methods, and theoretical perspective for an analysis of this case. Here I set the stage for an exploration of how the trajectory of the Battle for Baghdad was shaped by interactions between its belligerents and the city's territorial attributes, demographic characteristics, and its infrastructural systems of governance operating across networks of bureaucratic institutions and physical installations. This analysis merges an academic approach to methodology with that of a military assessment technique, intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), to produce a three-part within-case study.

The first section of the chapter introduces the case. Major military operations to invade and occupy Iraq commenced in March 2003 and concluded within a few weeks. However, the Iraq War continued to progress through several phases as combatants asserted themselves and reacted to their rivals. In early 2006, the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra triggered an escalation in the conflict, widely referred to as the Battle for Baghdad. While a complex array of state and nonstate actors engaged in kinetic and non-kinetic operations across the capital, it can be largely broken down into a triad of major competitors. This triad included a) the military and diplomatic efforts of the Coalition, supporting the Government of Iraq to stabilize and secure the nation, and the two most significant nonstate actor rivals, b) al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), and c) Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM). In this initial section I present an actor-centric view of the conflict and analyze how these groups, often labeled differently as interventionist, terrorist, and militia groups, can be situated within a traditional paradigm of insurgency. In doing so, we open a number of possibilities

in comparing their strategic aims and tactical behaviors. In their use of governance to achieve their aims, how do they differ and how are they similar? I present my argument for how I identify meaningful observations in the data collected for this study.

In the second part of this chapter, I turn from an actor-centric perspective on the Battle for Baghdad to focus on its environmental characteristics, presented as an analysis of its urban triad components. In the previous chapter I introduced the relative novelty of the urban triad concept in US military doctrine, and efforts to harness its utility to improve thinking about complex conflict scenarios, both practically and theoretically. The intuitive logic that there is an obvious interconnectedness between efforts to control the terrain, population, and infrastructure of a city in a conflict is apparent. However, explaining how this interconnectedness functions continues to be a work in progress. I demonstrate how analysis of crucial terrain features, demographic characteristics, and infrastructural systems enables a better understanding of the complex and dynamic battlefield upon which this conflict took place. In the section reviewing Baghdad's infrastructure I introduce several of the most significant government services under review for this study, and their utility in supporting my methodology.

I also present the argument for why governance lies at the center of complex conflicts such as the Battle for Baghdad. This is presented as a corollary to Kilcullen's theory of competitive control. I add another dimension to Kilcullen's theory by making a distinction between singular and general control. Nonstate actors may seek to control one person's behavior, or the behavior of an entire population. Making a distinction between acts intending either discriminate or indiscriminate control yields important benefits for analyzing complex conflicts.

The third and final part of this chapter articulates the components of my methodology, connecting the dots between the major concepts I have introduced. I discuss my effort to

operationalize the complicated concept as governance and make aspects of it more observable and empirically measurable. Forces engaged in insurgency and counterinsurgency obviously try to influence the delivery of services to a population to pursue their aims, but how? Is all governance the same? How is controlling electricity provision in a neighborhood different from controlling the local hospital, or police checkpoint? In this study I pursue various ways to break down governance into meaningful categories to enable more fruitful research.

One way involves turning to some basic economic principles of public goods provision to develop my variables. I explore the concept of excludability, or the intrinsic characteristics of a good or service that make it possible to deny its use, to examine how governance can be exploited in the pursuit of strategic aims. Economic theory in ideal conditions often differs from reality, where challenges to law and order undermine the perfect effectiveness of institutions. Major political conflicts, such as the Battle for Baghdad, produce non-ideal conditions that can dramatically affect the natural excludability of goods and services. I harness this insight to explore how the major disruptions to governance brought on by the Coalition's policies of post-conflict reconstruction led to the behaviors of the major nonstate insurgent groups in attacking and coopting Baghdad's services infrastructures. In some cases, they aimed to influence the provision of governance to a single individual, in other cases they intended to affect to the entire city. Assessing individual acts in the context of broader strategic goals enables me to produce a typology that reflects the main ways that governance was weaponized during the Battle for Baghdad.

2.1 The Battle for Baghdad as complex conflict

In 2019, RAND published the public version of a report to capture key lessons and retain institutional knowledge from the US Army's experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2016. A section discussing the Battle for Baghdad starts out by clarifying that unlike a typical historical example of combat in a major city, this episode consisted of "several sequential battles" with enemy and US forces adapting to each other's changing repertoires of tactics, techniques, and objectives.¹¹²

This report reflects broader trends in the literature on the Iraq war in several important ways. It is directed at a policymaking audience, it favors military strategy as the driving conceptual framework for its analysis, and its content was mainly derived from the experiences of US military and government personnel involved in the conflict. In writing this dissertation I have been mindful of defaulting to this perspective and have aimed to make points that might challenge, or at least round out an understanding of the conflict in Baghdad constructed from the dominant discourse regarding US policymaking debates on Iraq.

This section continues by looking at the trajectory of the Iraq War as it progressed from the 2003 invasion to the February 2006 bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra. This deadlier phase is generally recognized as the beginning of the Battle for Baghdad. Providing a brief

¹¹² David E. Johnson, Agnes G. Schaefer, Brenna Allen, Raphael S. Cohen, Gian Gentile, James Hoobler, Michael Schwille, Jerry M. Sollinger, and Sean M. Zeigler, *The US Army and the Battle for Baghdad: Lessons Learned-and Still to be Learned* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), ix.

overview to the overall trajectory of this conflict, I introduce the most important groups involved in this conflict as a triad involving the Coalition, al-Qaeda in Iraq, and Jaish al-Mahdi.

2.1.1 The emergence of a complex insurgency in Iraq

The aftermath of the 2003 invasion and the collapse of law and order in Iraq brought on by the lack of post-conflict planning by the US and poor policy decisions of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), have been well documented.¹¹³ However, it is worth noting that even amongst highly-placed officials responsible for the implementation of policy in Iraq, a clear-eyed retrospective evaluation of actions taken to ensure the proper policing of Iraq presents the enormity of miscalculations and wrongheaded decision-making at work.¹¹⁴ While the disbanding of the Iraqi Army by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer has often been cited as a trigger for the major breakdown in security, the US mismanagement of the Iraqi civilian police forces need also be highlighted. An incoherent approach to rule-of-law issues, with the State Department responsible for police forces, the Justice Department responsible for adjudication and confinement, and the Defense Department responsible for security, resulted in a bureaucratic “cacophony” while law and order in Iraq evaporated.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, Times Books, 2005.

¹¹⁴ James M. Dubik, LTG, US Army (Ret.), “Report 4: Best Practices in Counterinsurgency. Creating Police and Law Enforcement Systems,” *Institute for the Study of War* (2010).

¹¹⁵ Dubik, “Creating Police”, 5.

Fundamental questions about the future of governance and politics in Iraq fostered a climate of unpredictability that gave rise to a perception amongst Iraq's political factions that a zero-sum game was emerging. Shia groups with a long history of opposition to the Saddam regime suddenly found themselves in a position to gain political power. While experienced with opposition, they were largely unprepared to govern. A new Shia political class, reacting to injustices of the past, was suspicious of anyone associated with the previous regime. Retribution against former Ba'athists was widespread. This massive political upheaval, coupled with the overall breakdown in governmental authority and the humiliation of foreign occupation, led many to fight against the occupation and the fragile new government.¹¹⁶

What emerged can be best described as a complex insurgency. This type of conflict involves several factions employing a variety of strategies using violence to achieve their aims. Insurgency is a method to fundamentally alter the status quo of existing government authority.¹¹⁷ An insurgency consists of an armed, organized challenge to existing government authority and, as a faction, unwilling to participate in a meaningful way in legitimate politics until some set of conditions are met or they prevail in overturning existing order.

¹¹⁶ Domenico Tosini, "Al-Qaeda's Strategic Gamble: The sociology of suicide bombings in Iraq," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 35(2) 2010: 292.

¹¹⁷ US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02 Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (12 July 2007), 268.

Previously I have noted the wide-ranging terminology used in situations of sub-state conflict and debates over identifying combatant categories.¹¹⁸ Noting this complexity, I aim here to simplify the approach to belligerents in the Battle for Baghdad and position them in the context of insurgency. I build on Mohammed Hafez's depiction of Iraq's two "Sunni insurgencies" and add a third category to incorporate the challenge to the state presented by Jaish al-Mahdi, the Shia militia group serving the Sadrist faction.¹¹⁹

The two Sunni insurgencies varied in their religious and nationalist sentiments. Some groups ascribed to avowedly Islamist aims while others were largely made up of remnants of the Ba'athist regime with little regard for anything other than regaining power in Iraq. Many of these groups cooperated tactically on the battlefield, even though their strategic aims differed. What Hafez describes as the most critical distinction between the groups is whether their final objective was what he calls system reintegration, or system collapse.¹²⁰ Some insurgent groups fought to assert enough power to win back concessions from the new government and ensure a place in society for Sunnis left at a disadvantage after the political upheaval in Iraq. Other groups fought for nothing less than an all-out collapse of the existing order and the ability to forge a new regime of their own creation.

¹¹⁸ Timothy B. McCulloh, *The Inadequacy of Definition and the Utility of a Theory of Hybrid Conflict: Is the Hybrid Threat New?* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2012), 59.

¹¹⁹ Mohammed Hafez, *Suicide bombers in Iraq: the strategy and ideology of martyrdom*, United States Institute of Peace, 2007, 35.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

I refer to JAM and the Sadrists as a resistance insurgency due to their significant military and political challenges to the authority of the US occupation and nascent Iraqi state authority, at times working within licit bounds of social and political institutions yet also able to threaten significant military force against MNF-I and Iraqi security forces.¹²¹ Commonly labeled a militia group, JAM was indeed such, and more.

Within the Shia community, several militia groups emerged and used force to achieve their aims. Comparing JAM with other armed organized groups is useful seeing how they exceeded mere militia status. The Badr Corps (alternatively known as the Badr Army, Brigades, or Organization)¹²² served as the militia force supporting the agenda of a pro-Iranian Shia exile community that returned to Iraq to participate in shaping a future Iraqi state. Both groups had much in common, including support from Tehran, yet they sparred in the streets and smoky political backrooms of Baghdad jostling for control. However, JAM reached a threshold of armed opposition to existing state structures that Badr never did. I therefore put JAM in a separate category of resistance insurgency, reflecting their role as a faction that could challenge existing government authority while participating in it. I refer to the overall strategy pursued by this resistance insurgency as one of system cooption. Seeking to shape existing government authority,

¹²¹ Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada: Muqtada al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, Scribner, 2008.

¹²² The Badr Army was formed in Tehran in the 1980s as the Iranian revolutionary regime sought to unite Shia exiles from Iraq. Closely connected to the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) as its auxiliary militia unit, these entities have been through a number of name changes and rebranding campaigns since 2003. Badr rebranded as an Organization when it entered politics after 2005, whereas SCIRI dropped the ‘revolution’ from its name and became ISCI (Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq) in 2007.

the Sadrists used JAM's militia force to back its agenda and credibly threaten to escalate from resistance to revolution. Other militia groups like Badr never posed such a threat.

In the following sections I provide a brief introduction to each of these groups and illustrate their approach to governance as seeking system reintegration, system collapse, or system cooption. I first discuss reactionary insurgents. These groups, made up of Saddam loyalists, opposed the formation of a new government and fought to re-establish themselves within a power structure that had pushed them out. As these groups realized their reactionary aims were likely to fail, many of them turned to cooperation with the revolutionary agenda of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

The revolutionary insurgency, as pursued by AQI, was determined to fundamentally alter the status quo, and create something dramatically different from any pre-existing state. I intentionally steer away from labeling AQI as a terrorist group but instead see their use of terrorism, with catastrophic attacks against civilians, as a tactical method serving their greater strategy of system collapse.

I then turn to Jaish al-Mahdi. This force combined political and militia power to coopting existing government structures to its own purposes. As a resistance insurgency, JAM proved extremely effective at resisting Coalition efforts to reconstruct Iraq and greatly shaped the trajectory of a newly reconstituted Iraqi government.

Following this breakdown of the differences among nonstate actors involved in Iraq's complex insurgency, I review crucial ways that many of their tactical behaviors appear similar. All insurgent groups have organizational needs, like funding and recruitment. They often fight against each other, as well as challenge state authority. In the study of conflict, it is the tactics that are generally the more observable phenomenon, as specific actions, or attacks. Strategic goals are harder to ascertain as an observer. I discuss my categorization scheme that reconciles my

observations on tactical behaviors with the logic of strategic aims through an inductive methodology. This categorization scheme provides a way to compare the tactical actions of AQI to JAM as they each pursued divergent strategies.

2.1.2 A reactionary insurgency

Violent opposition to the occupation began with “localized and decentralized efforts by nationalists, disenfranchised Ba’athists, disgruntled soldiers, Saddam loyalists, and foreign jihadists” and soon coalesced around several groups with organization and resourcing skills.¹²³ Reacting to the humiliation of foreign occupation and a massive political upheaval, many Iraqi army officers, soldiers, and security service members sought to put their skills to use in opposing the new order.

Elements of the new Shia power structure put in place de-Ba’athification measures intended to punish members of the former regime as well as completely marginalize them from future political activity. These measures were wide-ranging and served to penalize not only high-ranking members of Saddam’s regime, but also many of the rank-and-file. These efforts were largely perceived as vindictive acts targeting the Sunni community at-large instead of a few high-placed individuals.

Insurgent groups emerged to counter this Sunni political disenfranchisement and the US occupation that was enabling it. Fearing a diminished role for Sunni Arabs in a new power structure that would surely feature greater participation by Kurdish and Shia populations, these groups

¹²³ Hafez, 36.

opposed the ongoing reconstruction process. They saw the foreign intervention of the US and the rise of a Shia political class with strong ties to Iran as destructive to Iraq's nationhood. They also opposed the federalism that would weaken the central state and leave the Sunni Arab population without access to the nation's oil wealth.

Groups such as the 1920 Revolution Brigades stressed their nationalistic and anti-colonialist stance, while others such as the Islamic Army in Iraq presented their opposition in terms of Islamic ideology. Both groups were similar in that their main objective was to rebalance the political power structure in the new Iraq.

Among the most committed insurgents in the early days of the occupation were the members of the Ba'athist regime who knew that they would never be permitted to return to active participation in a new Iraq. For them, the return to power was an all-or-nothing gambit. Their status as the inner circle of Saddam's followers and commitment to the Baathist project drove their ambition to fight against the US occupation forces and do everything in their power to create enough chaos in Iraq to convince everyone that a return to Baathist rule would be preferable to any other outcome. Facing the threat of defeat by US and Iraqi forces, many of these insurgent groups shifted from merely trying to turn back the clock in Iraq, to the possibility of gaining their objectives by siding with those pursuing a more radical agenda: the revolutionary insurgency.

2.1.3 A revolutionary insurgency

Several groups emerged with revolutionary aims of bringing radical political and social change to Iraq. Among the most potent of these groups involved transnational Islamic groups,

seeking “to replace regional governments and establish a base for permanent jihad.”¹²⁴ These Sunni jihadists are best represented by the actions of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Operating in Afghanistan at the time of the US invasion there in 2001, Zarqawi made his way to Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion. In October 2004, he affiliated his group with al-Qaeda, despite several differences in approach with Osama bin Laden and other key leaders of the headquarters cell of the organization (AQ Central).

Zarqawi espoused a *salafi*, or strict and traditionalist version of Sunni ideology, that was not only hostile to the American occupiers but also to Iraq’s Shia population. AQI went to great lengths to instigate sectarian civil war in Iraq, attacking coalition targets, journalists, foreign contractors, and anyone else deemed a collaborator with the occupation. Initially deeming the entire Shia population of Iraq as a legitimate target, AQI engaged in mass-casualty suicide attacks on public markets, city streets, and government institutions. The extreme anti-Shia sectarianism of Zarqawi’s agenda was a primary source of tension with AQ Central. Zarqawi adjusted tactics at times to bolster domestic support amongst other jihadist groups operating in Iraq.¹²⁵

To support its activities AQI turned to predation on local populations, using extortion, kidnapping, and other criminal acts. Yet AQI also presented themselves as providers of public goods to these communities, offering local security and *sharia* justice. In many cases, Sunni communities welcomed AQI presence as a stabilizing force amidst the uncertainty, but eventually

¹²⁴ Ibid., 64.

¹²⁵ US House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, *Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Islamic Extremist Threat* (Washington D.C: US House Committee on Intelligence, 2006), 13.

grew tired of the imposition. By 2006, many local tribal leaders in the largely Sunni province of Anbar turned against the foreign jihadists in their midst, marking the beginning of the *Sahwa*, or Anbar “Awakening.” The relationship between these insurgents and these local communities illustrates a defective version of a welfare-as-warfare strategy.¹²⁶ An over-reliance on predatory tactics to gain resources and maintain safe havens within local Sunni communities undermined AQI’s support from these populations. Once seen as a source of protection against a new Shia-dominated Iraqi state, AQI became a predatory burden and was rejected by these communities.

Zarqawi was killed by a US airstrike on June 7, 2006. His successors faced setbacks trying to maintain operational momentum for the organization as it faced internal disagreements and external pressures. One of the major turning points of the Battle for Baghdad occurred when the Awakening expanded from Anbar to Baghdad’s urban neighborhoods. The events in the Ameriya neighborhood during the summer of 2007, discussed in more detail later, signaled this significant transition. US forces constructed barriers around many Sunni neighborhoods to control access and limit the ability of rogue Shia militants to engage in sectarian attacks. However, this lack of mobility also constrained the AQI cell that was operating in the area and forced them to increase their predation on the local population. This was the tipping point for local leaders to turn to the US forces stationed in the area and request that they cooperate to clear their neighborhood of an element that had overreached in its predatory behaviors.¹²⁷ Successful operations in Ameriya set the stage for similar arrangements in other Sunni-majority neighborhoods across Baghdad.

¹²⁶ Alexis G. Grynkeiwich, “Welfare as Warfare: How Violent Non-State Groups Use Social Services to Attack the State,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31:4, (2008), 350-370.

¹²⁷ Dale Kuehl, LTC, US Army, “Testing Galula in Ameriya: The People are the Key,” *Military Review* 4: 2009.

2.1.4 A resistance insurgency

The challenge of JAM and the Sadrists to the Iraqi regime presents the most dramatic example of an armed and violent group with a political agenda to serve as an alternative to the state, in both its predatory capacity to acquire revenue and in the provision of security as a public good. Engaged in a variety of activities across the spectrum from legitimate political participation to the conduct of extreme sectarian violence, Sadrists emerged as a virulent obstacle to the viability of the Iraqi state. This was due to a comprehensive strategy of system cooption, where forces aligned (either ideologically or conveniently) with the Sadr movement of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr used militia forces to secure and control territory as well as provide a variety of public services, often coopted directly from state resources, to serve a preferred constituency. In this way, the Sadrists were highly effective in using predatory practices—on both a population and the state itself—to further its aims of domination. Tactical victories over Jaysh al-Mahdi in 2008 allowed the regime of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to rebalance authority in Iraq, but not completely. In fact, one must acknowledge that the viability of the Iraqi regime since 2008 is not so much based upon a victory over the Sadrist challenge, but as an accommodation with it.

Moqtada al-Sadr first gained prominence by giving voice to a Shia nationalist perspective in opposition to the US occupation of Iraq in 2003. Sadr's followers formed Jaish al-Mahdi to fill the security vacuum in the vast Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad and other Shia-majority neighborhoods across the communities of southern Iraq. During 2004, JAM launched a series of insurgent attacks against US military forces in Baghdad and elsewhere, but these failed to achieve long-lasting effects and resulted in the tactical defeat of the militants in most engagements. Turning away from direct military engagement, Sadr's movement, which consisted of the extensive social

welfare system built during the final years of the Saddam regime, began focusing on expanding social services and positioning itself to take part in legitimate political activities. This shift proved extraordinarily successful, as the organization raised the quality of life in some of Sadr City's worst slums, provided jobs, and doled out money to many needy Iraqis.¹²⁸ Supporters gained positions in municipal offices and helped direct official support towards loyal Sadrist neighborhoods in Baghdad, Basra, and other cities with significant Shia populations.

The Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS), the social service wing of the organization, served as the conduit for the distribution of largesse to needy constituents including payments to widows, jobs for young men, and other types of aid, in Sadr-controlled neighborhoods. JAM militants provided security, a public good not being adequately provided by either the Iraqi state or US occupation authorities. Sadrists were seen to be responsible for distributing a variety of other beneficial services to quiescent constituents. But in many cases, Sadrists went from merely filling a gap to actively trying to create that gap. Sadrists tried to undermine legitimate state institutions in many ways. They took control of local gas stations, controlled transport routes of goods and used official posts to collect extra fees from citizens in need of crucial documentation. Sadrists also resorted to kidnappings, theft, extortion rackets, and other predatory behaviors.¹²⁹ The extraordinary degree of predation performed by Sadrists and Sadr-affiliated militant groups not

¹²⁸ Kimberly Kagan, "Enforcing the Law: The Baghdad Security Plan Begins," *Institute for the Study of War: Iraq Report*, February 10- March 5, 2007, 7.

¹²⁹ Phil Williams, "Organized Crime and Corruption in Iraq," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 16, No. 1, February 2009, 115-135.

only served to raise revenue for continued operations but also threatened the viability of the Iraqi state.

With JAM and Sadrist groups largely in control of Basra, the critical node in Iraq's oil economy, after the announcement of the withdrawal of British forces from the city in 2007, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki decided to act decisively in a bid to shore up his political authority and break the Sadrists' corrupt grip on a lucrative stream of revenue for the state.¹³⁰

In March 2008, Maliki issued orders to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to seize control of Basra's neighborhoods; clashes with JAM fighters erupted immediately. This assault, called Operation Knight's Charge, was conducted independently of (and against the advisement of) MNF-I Commander General David Petraeus.¹³¹ After a rough beginning, ISF units stabilized the city and Sadr issued a call for his militia to stand down.

This contest between rival factions played out on both military and political realms. Sadr, thinking Maliki had overplayed his hand and would face political repercussions for launching an assault against a popular movement, started to whip up support in Sadr City. But Maliki was just warming up. Within days, Maliki directed ISF units to move directly into Sadr City, an episode covered in greater detail later. In brief, a protracted battle pitted ISF and supporting MNF units against JAM. Sadr was forced to call a cease-fire on May 12.

Methods used during operations conducted by US forces during the Battle of Sadr City differed greatly from those used in Fallujah in 2004, demonstrating a shift in US military thinking about urban warfare. Instead of conducting the block-by-block clearing operations that completely

¹³⁰ Marisa Cochrane, "The Battle for Basra," *Institute for the Study of War: Iraq Report*, May 31, 2008, 7.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

alienated Fallujah's population, coercive force was used to provide security for the local population and prevent predation by JAM.¹³² For example, barriers put in place by US forces and checkpoints manned by ISF disrupted JAM's ability to run extortion rackets at Jamila Market, a significant source of income for their Sadr City operations.

The actions in 2008 were a huge gamble for the Maliki regime that paid off. Maliki earned credibility in the eyes of much of the population, and US political leadership felt his actions fostered an environment in which US forces could credibly pull out without leaving a massive state collapse in the vacuum. Maliki's political coalition performed well in the 2009 provincial elections, largely because of his ability to show strength in the face of the Sadrist challenge and make deals with rival Shia factions.

2.1.5 Strategies aimed at profit, power, and authority

The previous sections provided an overview to the major nonstate groups participating in the Battle for Baghdad, and a scheme for understanding their overarching objectives. In this section, I delve deeper into the behaviors intended to support the attainment of these objectives and how these behaviors can be categorized and harnessed to improve our understanding of complex conflicts like the Battle for Baghdad. I intend to demonstrate how a scheme presenting a nonstate actor's pursuit of organizational resources, conflict with rivals, and challenges to state authority represents an effective way to comprehend the diverse tactical activities of these groups.

¹³² Johnson et al., "The 2008 Battle of Sadr City," 19.

Staniland notes that “conventional approaches [in political science] seek to find correlates of wins and losses in civil war or to explain fine-grained local variation in patterns of violence. They overlook the diverse interactions between states and insurgents that construct political authority and control.”¹³³ Aiming to rectify the weaknesses of these approaches, I pursued a path seeking to understand the cooperative and conflictive relationships that “shape patterns of violence against civilians, governance and economics, and post-war politics,” hoping to bridge the gap between large-N and small-N studies on political violence.¹³⁴ As stated before, a dyadic conflict between the state and a rebel is not the case for the Battle for Baghdad, so I intend to look deeper into the patterns of violence and conflict to produce a better analysis.

I was influenced by Joel Migdal’s analysis of post-colonial states and his methodology for exploring the state’s strength over a society to show how various competing factions behave to gain profit, power, or authority.¹³⁵ Both the state and nonstate factions may aim to penetrate and regulate a population, or they may aim to extract and allocate resources within that population. A faction may conduct a significant terror campaign to cow local leaders, and then enforce rigid code of public behavior to penetrate and regulate a village. With that power they can extort taxes from that village and then provide social welfare services to those showing the appropriate degree of loyalty to this quasi-regime. I adapted these concepts to explore the conflict in Iraq.

¹³³ Staniland. “States, Insurgents, and Wartime,” 245.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 245.

¹³⁵ Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

During this conflict, a wide variety of actors used violence to achieve their aims. In many cases, similarity in tactical behaviors diverged widely from strategic achievements. Groups like AQI pursued mass-casualty attacks to destabilize the state and challenge the occupation, but also sought territorial control and engaged in the kind of criminal racketeering commonly seen by JAM.

I aim to explore these tactical behaviors as serving three overall strategies: profit, power, and authority. At a basic level, groups need to fund themselves to maintain organizational integrity or enrich their leaders. Both JAM and AQI engaged in a variety of fundraising activities from foreign patronage to predatory criminal enterprises. Both groups sought to establish what Arias refers to as micro-level armed regimes¹³⁶ or self-enclosed neighborhoods where the groups could replace state authority with their own system of resource extraction and allocation. These groups often maintained an armed presence in a neighborhood or coopted local services like gas stations to exert power over a population, outside the bounds of licit governance.

These groups also engaged in turf wars against one another, in bids for power over different elements of Baghdad's urban topography. Various neighborhoods with critical demographic or territorial value served as arenas for conflict between these nonstate group rivals. In some cases, this rivalry entailed armed skirmishes, and in other cases it took place within institutions of governance. Both scenarios often involved degrees of violent thuggery as factions vied for power over Baghdad.

Lastly, I look at how both AQI and JAM launched significant challenges to the authority of the US occupation and its nation-building efforts with the GoI. These challenges involved fully

¹³⁶ Enrique Desmond Arias, *Criminal Enterprises and Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean*. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

kinetic operations that used military-level tactics and weaponry to undermine the objectives of the MNF-I mission and bring chaos to the newly reconstructed Iraqi state apparatus represent challenges to state authority.

Challenges to authority are also reflected in the decisions of factions to engage in the legitimate political process. While at times JAM pursued kinetic operations against state authority, the political wing of the Sadrist Movement simultaneously made moves to achieve legitimate authority within the state at the local, provincial, and national levels.

These three strategies are interlinked, and indeed sometimes they worked like steppingstones, as factions gaining power on the street converted the support of local populations into political loyalty. However, it is also important to note that not every tactical action perpetrated by individual members of a group reflected the overarching strategy of the group's leadership. Rogue operators, splinter cells, and entrepreneurial criminals complicate any effort to identify complete unity in these groups' behaviors. The trajectory of Jaish al-Mahdi is particularly instructive, as the organization evolved with a variety of internal factions at odds with each other, some pursuing profit and power, while others aiming for authority.

2.2 The Battle for Baghdad and the metropolitan battlefield

This section focuses on the underlying environmental factors that played a role in shaping the trajectory to the Battle for Baghdad. I use the military concept of the urban triad to break down Baghdad's crucial territorial, demographic, and infrastructural elements to identify the most useful variables for the case study analysis that follows. Reviewing these elements as the major

components of a metropolitan battlefield enables a better understanding of how these attributes were exploited by the combatants fighting the Battle for Baghdad.

I start by exploring the physical features that demarcate zones of residential, commercial, and government activity. This is followed by a discussion of its diverse population of ethnic, sectarian, tribal, socioeconomic, occupational, gendered, political, and individual identities. I then turn to Baghdad's governance infrastructure as the central arena of significant interactions for understanding the conflict.

Baghdad consists of a central metropolitan hub of several districts built on and expanding from its original historical setting and several outlying rural communities more recently incorporated to form the province, or governorate, of Baghdad. Home to the national government, Baghdad serves as the capital of Iraq and thus has a unique overlay of local, provincial, and national governance institutions. Legal ambiguity over Baghdad's status and jurisdictional boundaries between these institutions after 2003 provided opportunities for entrepreneurial political actors to exploit this uncertainty. At various times, those actors sought advantage over others by promoting Baghdad's urban, provincial, or capital identity. These legal distinctions led to conflicts affecting the delivery of services to Baghdad's population.

Aiming to provide solutions to the theoretical and practical challenges of operationalizing governance, I demonstrate my framework to produce a set of variables for this study. I re-introduce the concept of governance infrastructure and how it presents a way to evaluate and assess how the major upheavals brought on by post-conflict reconstruction policies in Iraq rippled through Baghdad's institutions and installations of service provision. Expanding this framework, I present a selection of crucial government services across an array of sectors to serve my methodology of analyzing the weaponization of governance during the Battle for Baghdad.

2.2.1 Urban topography: A conceptual framework for complex conflict

At the outset of this dissertation, I stated my overall aim for making this research project relevant to wider debates within academic and policymaking fields looking at the intersection of conflict and governance in urban areas. In this section I present my fundamental theoretical approach to complex conflict that undergirds this specific study and opens pathways for future research. Many of the ideas I present here form components of the methodology used in this study, while others represent a broader set of concepts that I intend to pursue more fully in later research.

I start by considering a city in its totality. If we want to think about a city as a battlefield in which every conceivable element may shape a conflict in some way, how would we do so? Then, having considered every element as a potential factor, how do we assess the relative relevance of each of these elements?

Previously, I introduced the urban triad as a relatively new component of the US military's IPB methodology, defining urban areas as having three major characteristics: a complex man-made physical terrain superimposed upon a natural terrain, a population of significant size and density, and an infrastructure upon which the area depends.¹³⁷ Working with this concept in the development of this research project, I found it useful, but also lacking in an important way. Here I build on this concept to improve this conceptualization of the totality of urban topography, giving it greater ability to produce observable variables for both military analysis and conflict research.

Urban topography, at its most abstract, consists of features that can be expressed as existing across two axes. The first is an axis of tangibility. Cities are built upon geographic features and

¹³⁷ JP 3-06, I-2.

consist of natural landforms and manmade structures. These are concrete things that possess absolute tangibility. Yet we must also acknowledge the intangibility of other aspects of a city, like the ideas, values, and behaviors of its citizens, and its societal institutions. We can shorthand this range of tangible to intangible characteristics as a spectrum that spans from “hard” material aspects to “soft” ideational components on an urban topography. I previously noted how infrastructure is a concept that spans both realms of hard and soft attributes. Within these complex networks, I differentiate between installations, an infrastructure’s material components, and institutions, its intangible rules-based elements.

The second axis reflects the fact that each of these components has a quality of discreteness, pertaining to its own individuality separate from the rest of the environment. Unique, individual elements, like a tree, differ from other large-scale components of the environment, like a forest. In other words, is this component specific or general in its basic nature? Do these components exist as discriminate elements, easily made distinct from others, or as indiscriminate elements, representing general characteristics at the broadest scale?

These two axes produce zones where we can identify major elements that make up the socio-technical topography of a city. Elements that are the most tangible and the most public involve geographical attributes, such as the elevation of the city, its position within a mountain range or along the coast, or in a temperate or tropical zone. At the far end of the spectrum the most intangible and most private elements of a city would reside within an individual citizen’s head, within the realm of ideas and motivations for behavior. Infrastructures reside at the intersection between the material and ideational, with “hard” interconnected material structures (installations) operating according to “soft” or rules-based frameworks (institutions).

A population consists of many individuals with their personal identities and beliefs. Similar identities and beliefs aggregate to reflect those of families, communities, and larger groupings all the way up to the entire populous. An individual may or may not obey and support the government. A critical threshold of many people doing so creates legitimacy for that government, or for the rebel group aiming to undermine that authority. Physical elements of an urban terrain may possess a singular, or private quality like an individual house, or a general, public component of the landscape like a major river system, or the elevation of the foothills that a neighborhood is built upon. In between these ends of a spectrum reside more middle-ground elements of urban terrain, such as a comparison between the east and west bank neighborhoods of a city divided by a river, or the suburban outskirts versus an inner corridor.

Demonstrating this rather broad concept as a graphic, we see the formation of matrix in the figure below (Figure 2.1). This matrix produces four zones that enable us to start conceptualizing some fundamental components of a city. We can see how private ideas (held by an individual) are different from public ideas (held by a group) and specific material objects can be differentiated from general aspects of a landscape.

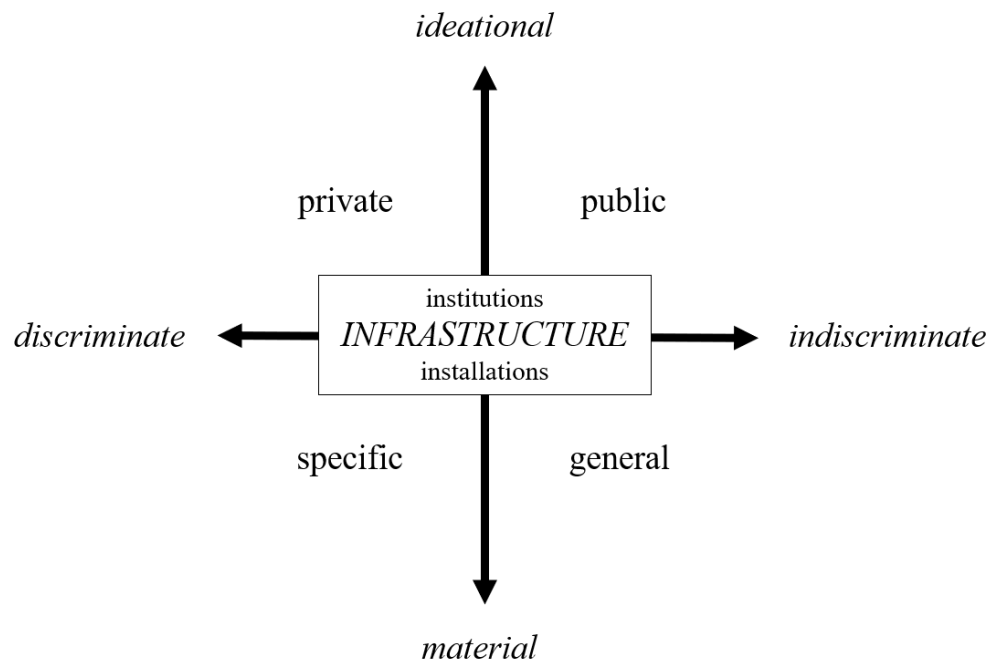


Figure 2.1. Fundamental attributes of an urban topography

Building on this basic idea, I incorporate the insights provided by both the urban triad and by David Kilcullen’s theory of competitive control. Aiming to explain outcomes in irregular conflicts, Kilcullen argues that the “local armed actor that a given population perceives as best able to establish a predictable, consistent, wide-spectrum normative system of control is most likely to dominate that population and its residential area.”¹³⁸ Following Kilcullen, we can see how actors aiming to control a city may be seeking normative control over the ideas and behaviors of a population, or physical control over places and features on a terrain. Efforts to control

¹³⁸ Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains*, 126.

infrastructure involve both physical control over installations and normative control over institutions – a fight over governance.

Urban conflict can be summed up as a) contests over the ideas and behaviors of individuals and groups, b) efforts to physically control specific objects of property and general territorial spaces, and c) efforts to control the provision of goods and services to individuals, families, neighborhoods, communities, and entire populations. At the center of these urban conflicts are infrastructures, existing as a system of nodes and networks of crucial terrain with both installational and institutional components.

Thus, belligerents may be fighting to achieve their aims across the three areas of the urban triad: terrain, population, and infrastructure. When they are seeking to influence the opinions and behaviors of individuals and a society, they may be seeking to harness the power of individual identity or group solidarity to legitimize their rule as a political entity. Normative control may be pursued at the personal level, within small groups, or among greater populations. However, they may also be behaving as criminals that profit from the theft of private property or militias that seek to establish strongholds in vulnerable neighborhoods so they can then control the flow of goods and services in a particular area. The contest over governance, or over the provision of goods and services by formal and informal institutions, can take place at a discriminate, or individual level, or indiscriminately across wide swaths of the population. The graphic below (Figure 2.2) represents my conceptual framework positing the major realms of complex conflict as contests over identity, legitimacy, property, territory, and governance.

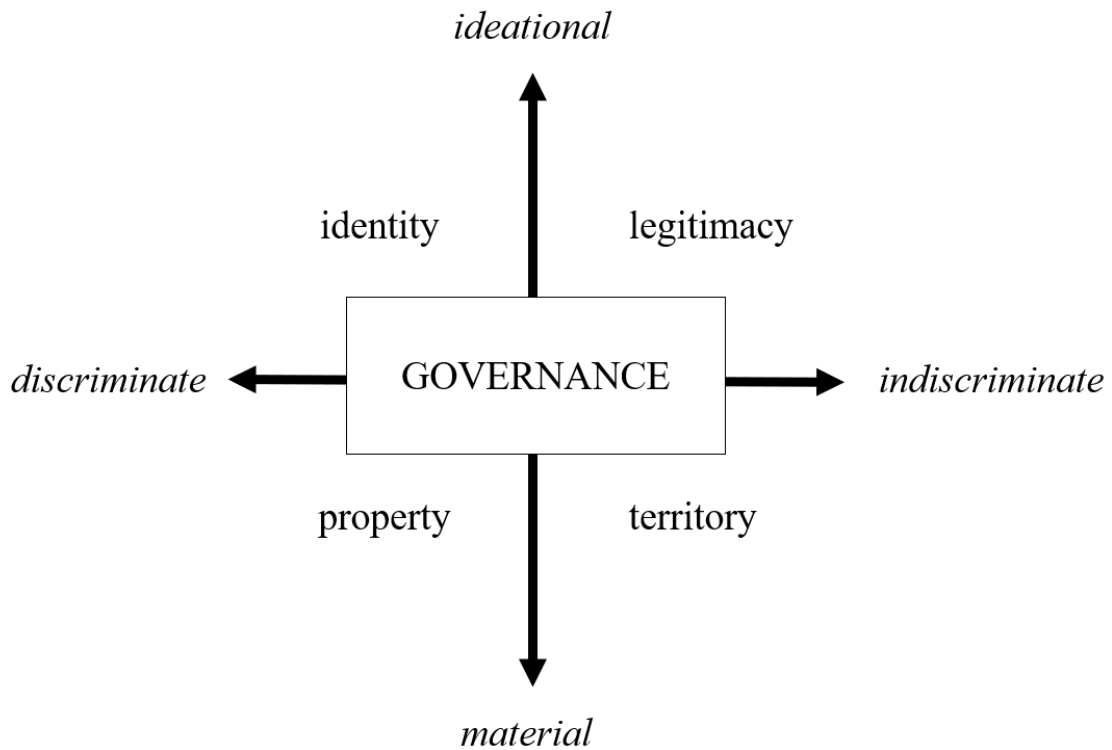


Figure 2.2. Contested features of an urban topography

Each of these contests figured prominently during the Battle for Baghdad, as state and nonstate actors used a variety of kinetic and non-kinetic tactics to shape people's individual behaviors as well as sway the opinions of communities, ethnic groups, and broader swaths of a population. These combatants also fought to control buildings, streets, bridge crossings, canals, vacant lots, and other aspects of the natural and manmade terrain of a city. However, the central contest involved fighting over control of Baghdad's governance infrastructure, and its ability to deliver services to a vulnerable population.

This section continues with an analysis of Baghdad's urban topography that evaluates crucial terrain features and important demographic characteristics before turning to a detailed

review of the infrastructural elements central to understanding the trajectory of the Battle for Baghdad.

2.2.1.1 Terrain: a landscape of natural and manmade features

Constructed on the banks of the Tigris River to serve as the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate in the 8th century C.E., Baghdad rose to become the greatest commercial, cultural, and intellectual center of the Islamic world. Following destruction at the hands of the Mongols in 1258, Baghdad experienced many periods of decline and rebirth until becoming a provincial capital of the Ottomans, a conquest of the British Empire, and eventually developing into a modern metropolis and the capital city of the nation of Iraq.

Situated on the Tigris at its closest point to the Euphrates, 25 miles to the west, Baghdad sits on an alluvial plain just 112 feet above sea level. Flood control and management of water resources is deeply embedded in the history of Baghdad. Periodic flooding of the Tigris, Euphrates, and Diyala, which joins the Tigris south of the city, greatly influenced the development of the city over its long history. In the 1950s, Baghdad underwent several major civil engineering projects to improve flood control and water management under the direction of President Abd al-Kareem Qassim. In 1956, the construction of a dam upstream of Baghdad on the Tigris near Samarra allowed for significant urban expansion to the east and west. In 1959, the Army Canal connected the Tigris and Diyala, intending to produce drinking water for the growing population in Baghdad's eastern districts. Bridge crossings across the Tigris, Diyala, and Army Canal provide crucial routes into, out of, and across the entire Baghdad region and served as significant points of contention for government and insurgent forces aiming to control flows of traffic.

The province of Baghdad is subdivided into many different units, serving different governmental functions or identifying discrete communities. As with most major metropolitan areas, Baghdad has evolved from an historical urban hub into a vast network of interconnected population centers. In 2006, there were 15 major political units within the province of Baghdad, commonly referred to as the nine city districts and the six rural qadas.¹³⁹ Districts and qadas are themselves subdivided politically into neighborhoods and nahias respectively. When describing Baghdad province, the terms qada and nahia generally refer to the outlying communities, akin to county and township.

The major districts of the city extend along the eastern and western banks of the Tigris as it winds south towards the Shatt al-Arab, the confluence with the Euphrates that discharges into the Persian Gulf near Basra, Iraq's crucial port city. It is common to refer to the entire western side of the city as Karkh and the eastern side as Rusafa, even though these are also names of more specifically bounded districts within the city. Rusafa consists of the city's major financial district, with longstanding copper, textile, and gold bazaars along Rashid Street. Its intersection with Mutanabbi Street is considered the center of old Baghdad, and the famous bookshops there are considered the heart and soul of the city's intellectual community. The riverfront boulevard of Abu Nuwas Street served as an entertainment hub for restaurants, hotels, and cafes until a major downturn during the difficult times under U.N. sanctions in the 1990s. South of Rusafa proper is the Karadah district, partly jutting out as a peninsula following a bend in the Tigris, home to an

¹³⁹ The usage of the terms *qada* and *nahia* in this study reflect a common usage by Coalition and Iraqi officials to indicate the outlying areas of suburban Baghdad, even though technically they define foundational administrative units within the city and across the rest of Iraq. Common usage also anglicized the plurals of both words, as qadas and nahias, instead of the correct Arabic *qadat* and *nahiat*.

exclusive residential area and the University of Baghdad. North along the Tigris is the Sunni-majority district of Adhamiyah, one of Baghdad's oldest neighborhoods and home to the sacred Abu Hanifa Mosque. Going east from Rusafa, Adhamiya, and Karadah are the newer neighborhoods of Sadr City (Thawra) and 9 Nissan. These vast, sprawling neighborhoods are the result of significant urban migration to Baghdad from Iraq's southern Shia-majority communities.

Baghdad's western districts are centered around Karkh. The district included the major governmental area that comprised much of the International Zone (IZ), commonly called the "Green Zone." Home of the Republican Palace (the seat of Saddam's government and then MNF-I headquarters after 2003) and other sites of monumental architecture, the IZ also included several Karkh residential neighborhoods. Leading from Assassin's Gate, a major checkpoint from the IZ into the rest of Karkh, the crucial Haifa Street district houses important governmental, residential, and commercial facilities and was the site of significant conflict in early 2007. North of Karkh is Kadhamiya, an historically Shia-majority neighborhood and home to the revered al-Khadahimya Mosque. Stretching west from downtown Karkh to the western outskirts of the city and the Baghdad International Airport, the Mansour neighborhood saw significant development during the Ba'athist era and housed a mixed population of affluent and well-connected residents. The al-Rashid district to the south of the city is an area of light industrial and residential zones that connects Baghdad to the agricultural hinterland of date farms and poultry production in the qada of Mahmoudiya, the southernmost district of Baghdad's provincial area, the outlying suburban communities that form the governorate of Baghdad.

The outlying qadas of Baghdad's suburban and exurban territory make up the rest of the province. To the west, Abu Ghraib serves as the major waypoint towards Anbar and the western desert of Iraq abutting neighboring Jordan. To the north, Taji, Tarmiya, and Istiqlal consist of a

number of communities along the Tigris. The vast Mada'in area to the southeast has a rich history of archeological sites and a Shia community with connections to Iraq's south and the Iranian borderlands.

2.2.1.2 Population: a range of ethnic, sectarian, and socioeconomic identities.

The shocking degree of ethnic and sectarian violence unleashed across Baghdad in the years following the 2003 invasion produced debates among scholars who saw it either as an outgrowth of pre-existing tensions within Iraqi society, or as an historical anomaly brought on by the invasion itself.¹⁴⁰ This section presents the demographic breakdown of Baghdad's population across ethnic, sectarian, and confessional communities, as well as key socioeconomic factors to provide some insight into the dispute mentioned above.

The major communities of Iraq include Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, and Kurds, with minority populations of Assyrians and Turkmen. Under British rule, Sunni Arabs were empowered as primary office holders within the state, leading to a closer alignment of that group's identity to overall Iraqi nationalism.¹⁴¹ During its formative decades as a state, Iraq faced rebellions from Kurds, Shia-led revolts, and perpetrated a massacre against a discontented Assyrian community. These early conflicts differ somewhat from contemporary episodes of inter-communal violence, as they consisted of fighting between communities *and* the Iraqi state, instead of fighting between communities *over authority of* the Iraqi state.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Stansfield, 54.

¹⁴¹ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, 2000).

¹⁴² Stansfield, 54.

The perception that the Sunni Arab community is more closely aligned to Iraqi national identity than other communities is common. However, some scholars of Iraqi history question a whole-hearted acceptance of this vertical construction of identity, that ethnic and sectarian divisions are the primary building blocks of Iraq. They counter by identifying crucial horizontal socioeconomic factors such as class distinctions, urban-rural divisions, and tribal allegiances that created more possibilities for identity construction in a rapidly modernizing Iraq over the mid-twentieth century, aside from traditional confessional and ethnic distinctions.¹⁴³ A compromise viewpoint sees Iraq's contemporary crisis as the resurgence of older, more-deeply embedded traditional vertical identities after the steady erosion of horizontal connections following years of dictatorship, warfare, and crippling sanctions. Post-invasion policy in Iraq provided a crucial catalyst for modern Iraqi society stripped back down to its traditional groupings, with lethal consequences.¹⁴⁴

Estimates and counting methods differ, but a basic breakdown of Baghdad's population by ethnic and sectarian community during the Battle for Baghdad can be seen in the table below.

Table 2.1 Baghdad's population by ethnicity (est. 2007)¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Hanna Batuta, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'athists and Free Officers*, (Princeton, 1978; reprinted Saqi Books, London 2004), 13.

¹⁴⁴ Faleh A. Jabar, "Sheikhs and Ideologues: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tribes Under Patrimonial Totalitarianism in Iraq, 1968-1998," in Faleh Jabar and Hosham Dawood (eds), *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East* (London, Saqi Books: 2003), 69-109.

¹⁴⁵ Dan Bisbee, "Baghdad Governance," Baghdad PRT Report, 3rd Edition, April 2007.

Total population	5-6 million in city, 7-9 million including outlying qadas
Sunni Arab	15%
Shia Arab	65%
Kurd	10%
Assyrian	5%
Turkmen	5%

Distribution of these populations across the city and province of Baghdad are of crucial interest for the trajectory of the conflict, particularly as it pertains to the Sunni-Shia sectarian divide and the dramatic change in make-up of many residential neighborhoods after 2006.

The Tigris serves as a major fault line between the Sunni west and north of Iraq, and the Shia east and south. Historically connected to the desert routes leading towards Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, the outlying qadas of Tarmiya, Istiqlal, Taji, Abu Ghraib, and Mahmoudiya are largely Sunni enclaves with key pockets of Shia residents, notably in southern Mahmoudiya and northeastern Istiqlal. To the east, Mada'in has a sizable Shia population and provides routes to the Iranian frontier.

Within the city, Baghdad's neighborhoods underwent a massive population shift between 2006 and 2008. Traditionally mixed residential areas transitioned to majority Sunni or Shia through violent coercion and voluntary resettlement in a remarkable episode of internal ethnic cleansing. Prior to 2006, only a few neighborhoods would have been considered majority-Sunni or majority-Shia, while the rest of the city's neighborhoods would be more easily categorized according to wealth or social exclusivity (i.e., members of the regime) and show a mixed sectarian makeup. Anecdotal evidence provided by discussions with local Iraqis supports the commonly

held view that Sunni-Shia intermarriage has been a longstanding and common tradition in Baghdad, influencing the idea that many neighborhoods should be classified as mixed during this time.

Both the central Karkh and Rusafa districts were mixed between Sunni and Shia populations. Beyond those neighborhoods, the general rule that Sunni-majority communities were more prevalent west of the Tigris and Shia on the east largely holds, except with two major exceptions. Shia-majority Khadhamiya is directly north of Karkh on the west bank and sits directly opposite Sunni-majority Adhamiya on the east bank. The Aamma Bridge connects these two communities and is the site of an annual religious pilgrimage honoring the famed mosques of each neighborhood. In August 2005, the Aamma Bridge was the site of unfortunate tragedy. A panic about possible suicide bombers caused a stampede amongst the participants of the Shia pilgrimage across the bridge, causing the deaths of nearly 1,000 as the crowd crushed many and forced others to jump into the water and drown.¹⁴⁶

The upper-class neighborhoods of Mansour tended to be Sunni, reflecting the makeup of favored Ba'athists under Saddam, and al-Rashid leaned Sunni-majority, but with several Shia-dominated pockets. Moving to the eastern districts, Shia-dominated areas were more prevalent due to the massive waves of urban migration undertaken by Shia from the south in the late decades of the twentieth century. Sadr City is one such Shia-majority district. Originally named Thawra, or Revolution City, this district was renamed in the aftermath of 2003 to the martyred Shia leader

¹⁴⁶ "Iraq stampede deaths near 1,000," *BBC News*, August 31, 2005.

Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr (father of Moqtada). Another district, 9 Nissan or New Baghdad, was also established as a home for many new Shia residents moving to Baghdad.

During the Battle for Baghdad, demographic shifts greatly changed the overall sectarian makeup of many neighborhoods across the city. Many mixed neighborhoods became much more homogenous, becoming either completely Sunni or completely Shia. In the west, previously mixed Mansour took on a markedly more Sunni composition. In the east, Shia districts expanded towards the city center, forcing pockets of Sunni communities to consolidate in areas of Adhamiya and Rusafa. Notably the Karadah peninsula, with its exclusive riverside housing normally reserved for regime favorites, shifted from Sunni to Shia, a reflection of the overall shift in power dynamics within Baghdad and in the new Iraq.

Where did this Sunni-Shia conflict come from? It is not uncommon to see this divide as emerging after the death of the Prophet Mohammed and arising from a fundamental schism between factions that supported a hereditary line of succession (the Shia) versus those that did not (the Sunni). However, it is important to note that the southern Iraqi tribes only converted to Shi'ism in the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁷ Many of them converted due to opposition to an Ottoman policy of forced tribal settlement near the holy sites of Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, and Samarra in 1831, and continued pressure on Shia landowners and tribal leaders. Ottoman governance, favoring Sunni Arabs and Turkmen, gave a class-based edge to the sectarian divide, instilling in the Shia a deep sense of second-class citizenship. When the British replaced Ottoman control, they continued these policies favoring Sunni dominance, reinforcing this divide.¹⁴⁸

The rise of Ba'athism also created a unique challenge to Shia identity within the Iraqi state. The rise of Arab nationalism was primarily a secular movement, and the rallying cry for a modern

¹⁴⁷ Stansfield, 60.

¹⁴⁸ Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 443.

politics to replace Islamic custom as the unifying force for nationhood under Saddam left many traditionalists within the Shia camp discontented.¹⁴⁹ As Iraq's modern state expanded, it encroached upon traditional roles and responsibilities of the clergy, such as justice, education, and taxation, weakening the authority of the religious establishment. Cultural connections to neighboring Shia-majority Iran put many Iraqi Shia at risk of being in cahoots with the Persian enemy, and many were deported on the eve of the Iran-Iraq War.¹⁵⁰

Several major strands of political activism emerged within the Shia community. In the 1950s, the Shia religious establishment formed *Hizb al-Da'wa Islamiyya* (commonly referred to as Da'wa) to articulate an Islamic, and specifically Shia, position on modern political life in Iraq. Da'wa continued as a political voice for the Shia community under Saddam's regime, wary of attempts to challenge Ba'athists too loudly or pointedly. While Da'wa represents a domestic Iraqi institution, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) emerged in Tehran as an umbrella organization to unite Iraqi exiles and resistance groups into a force that could serve to undermine Saddam's regime during and after the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. The Badr Army was formed to serve SCIRI in its efforts and received funding and training directly from the Iranian regime.

The Sadrist Movement is another offshoot of domestic Shi'ism in Iraq. Following the 1990 Gulf War, a failed uprising and the overall hardships imposed by the U.N. sanctions upon Iraq created additional difficulties for an impoverished Shia population. At first seeming to play along with Saddam to secure his position as a government-appointed cleric, Ayatollah Muhammed Sadiq

¹⁴⁹ Stansfield, 62.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 63.

al-Sadr began preaching more critically about the failures of Saddam's regime and ran afoul of the dictator. He was assassinated along with two of his sons in Najaf in 1999, leaving another son, Moqtada, to carry on the family legacy.¹⁵¹

The 2003 invasion provided opportunities for each of these strands to play crucial roles in Iraq's political development. An initial phase saw the US rely heavily upon leaders drawn from either the quietist Shia religious establishment, such as Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani (who survived under Saddam due to his position that clerics should not get involved in affairs of state), or exiles with dubious credentials such as Ahmed Chalabi and Ayad Allawi.

The Iranian-backed groups SCIRI and Badr made plays to secure important positions within the Ministry of Interior and other security-related ministries, reflecting the aims of Tehran to ensure that a new Iraq, even under US guidance, would not be a threat to Iran. Members of Da'wa took important positions of authority as compromise candidates between the other factions, building on their institutional longevity and lack of street-level militant force. The Sadrists changed strategies several times, ranging from outright insurgency to securing positions of power within Iraq's services and welfare-oriented ministries (aiming to steer clear of as much direct involvement with US personnel as possible).

Following 2003, Sunni politics was in disarray. Authorized by the CPA and aggressively pursued by a newly empowered cadre of Shia officials, de-Ba'athification policies posed extraordinary difficulties for politically active Sunnis. It was very unclear about where to place new political allegiances. As Ba'athism, the dominant political loyalty, was largely a secular and

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 64.

nationalist institution, the only other parties available to a newly vulnerable Sunni population were the Communists and Islamic religious factions, former opponents of the Ba'athists. Predictably, most Sunnis were left out of the initial political restructuring of Iraq, while Shia and Kurdish parties seized the opportunity. A widespread Sunni boycott of elections in 2005 put them at a severe disadvantage as the new Iraqi state took shape, and Shia and Kurdish parties offered few concessions as Sunni-based political entities, Islamic or secular, tried to rejoin the state during later electoral events.

Understanding the election cycle of 2005 requires an understanding of how victimhood animates both Sunni and Shia political identities.¹⁵² Shia victimhood stemmed from deep legacies of Ottoman, British, and Ba'athist state oppression under Saddam. Sunni victimhood blossomed after the 1990 Gulf War and that event's denial of Iraq's seemingly positive national trajectory since the rise of the Ba'athists and the oil wealth boom of the 1970s. With everything set up for their success, Sunni acceptance of any kind of failure seemed like a cruel joke and a miscarriage of historical justice. Misunderstanding of both Sunni and Shia perspectives on victimhood led to miscalculations by US strategists in several crucial instances during the postwar reconstruction.¹⁵³ Notably, the US misjudged the rise of Moqtada al-Sadr. He was underestimated in his ability to lead a full-fledged social and political movement capitalizing on Shia victimhood. As for the

¹⁵² Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

¹⁵³ John Hagen, Joshua Kaiser, Anna Hanson, and Patricia Parker, "Neighborhood Sectarian Displacement and the Battle for Baghdad: A Self-fulfilling Prophecy of Fear and Crimes Against Humanity in Iraq," *Sociological Forum*, 30, No. 3 (September 2015), 679.

Sunnis, their lack of participation in the 2005 elections reflected how untethered their political expectations for dominance reflected demographic reality.

A quote I overheard during a briefing in 2006 provides a gross over-simplification of how this deep sense of victimization skewed each community's perception of Iraq's unfolding political future. Suggesting that the sectarian conflict was likely to escalate, the briefer stated that both sides fundamentally misunderstood the new reality of the demographic situation in Baghdad. The simple fact driving the conflict was that 'the Sunni still think they can win, and the Shia still think they can lose.' Fomented and exploited by extremists, the sectarian conflict that accompanied the Iraq War was not the inevitable outcome of some deep-seated animosity brewing amongst these communities, but the result of strategic calculations – and miscalculations – by its belligerents.

2.2.1.3 Infrastructure: a complex network of socio-technical systems

This section provides an overview to understanding the critical components of Baghdad's urban infrastructure, and introduces the conceptual framework underlying the methodology of the case study analysis. My primary focus is on the provision of public goods and services by the state. During the Battle for Baghdad, state and nonstate actors sought to disrupt, corrupt, coopt, reconstruct, and replace systems of infrastructure in the pursuit of their aims. For example, the production and distribution of electricity to the residents of Baghdad was of crucial importance, driving state and nonstate actors to seek ways to influence the provision of this service, either in a positive or negative way. But how do we identify and categorize the ways this influence is manifested? This section presents a framework for breaking down these complex systems into meaningful elements that enable a better evaluation of how these acts of disruption, corruption, cooption, reconstruction, and replacement occurred.

In the introductory chapter I presented infrastructure as a concept serving a broad assortment of fields and as a term with extraordinary malleability. My discussion of its usage made three major points. One of these points explained how it commonly refers to large-scale physical resources that provide for public needs, such as highway networks, communication systems, and electrical grids.¹⁵⁴ Another argued that these systems inherently consist of both installational and institutional components, with “hard” interconnected material structures operating according to “soft” or rules-based frameworks.

I also pointed out the major overlaps between infrastructure and governance and identified my aim to harness the concept of governance infrastructure to my own purposes, despite fears of its conceptual nebulosity.¹⁵⁵ I suggested that Globerman and Shapiro’s idea of governance infrastructure¹⁵⁶ should be taken beyond a mere institutional framework to use it to convey a complex landscape of networks involving both institutions and installations involved in the provision of public goods for a city.

Here I present such a usage, demonstrating Baghdad’s governance infrastructure as a layered set of elements identifying key parts of interconnected socio-technical networks. The main unit of analysis is a discrete public service. In this study I have chosen to focus on a few important services like police, hospitals, and oil products. Understanding how services play a role during

¹⁵⁴ Frischmann, 3-4.

¹⁵⁵ Ryan G. Baird, "Unpacking Democracy and Governance: Conceptualizing Governance Infrastructure." *Social Science Information* 51, no. 2 (2012): 263-279.

¹⁵⁶ Steven Globerman and Daniel Shapiro, "Global Foreign Direct Investment Flows: The Role of Governance Infrastructure." *World Development* 30, no. 11 (2002): 1899-1919.

conflict requires putting services into a greater context of broader governance networks, as well as a developing a method for breaking individual services down into several constituent elements. I explain my method for observing how individual services can be influenced by both external and internal factors.

I first discuss the major realms of governance infrastructure, articulating how a combination of legal, political, bureaucratic, and technical attributes undergird service provision. I then address the various sectors of services, commenting on the various ways public goods provision may be categorized. Within these sectors, individual services are delivered through a combination of two infrastructural types: institutional and installational. Services involve rules-based organizations as well as physical structures, and either may serve as a target by combatants seeking to corrupt or disrupt that service. The architectures of these institutional and installational network components are generally designed as tiers, representing differences between production, transmission, and distributional activities. Mapping out how all these elements interact enables a better understanding of how they present exploitable opportunities for belligerents seeking to use them during conflict.

Articulating the elements of a governance infrastructure enables an understanding of the major components of governance, and how they interact. I use the following concepts in this assessment of selected services making up Baghdad's governance infrastructure:

- 1) *Realms*: fundamental components of governance infrastructure,
- 2) *Sectors*: broad categories of public goods and services,
- 3) *Types*: differences between institutional and installational components of a service,
- 4) *Tiers*: differences between the hierarchical components of a service.

The fundamental elements of a governance infrastructure consist of four realms, occupying territory on a scale between immaterial to tangible reality. First, we start with administrative law, consisting of the constitutional or foundational legal architecture for the mandate of a polity's institutions. Moving to politics, we observe the mechanisms by which the factions participating within these institutions negotiate differences in preference regarding the allocation of resources within these institutions. Another realm of bureaucracy demonstrates how effectively the political decisions are executed through the polity's service delivery systems. Finally, an institution relies on technology to delivery material commodities or enable the delivery of a service.

I use this four-fold framework of governance infrastructure as a starting point in the analysis of how governance was weaponized during the Battle for Baghdad. Understanding Baghdad's governance infrastructure during the Battle for Baghdad requires an awareness of the dynamic relationships between pre-existing and new institutions, factional conflicts, and changes brought on by physical destruction and reconstruction. This study is based on the premise that the entanglement of ideational and tangible elements that make up governance in the real world is not an intractable obstacle for meaningful study, but an opportunity to harness the inherent ambiguity within a concept such as infrastructure to make theoretical and practical insights into complex conflict.

- a) *Administrative law* – the constitutional or foundational legal architecture for an institution's mandate and authority,
- b) *Politics* – the factional priorities that shape resource allocation and personnel decisions for institutions responsible for delivering public goods,
- c) *Bureaucracy*– an institution's ability to implement the aims of its political leadership,

- d) *Technology* – the physical constraints of the installations that enable or inhibit an institution from discharging its directives.

This arrangement of fundamental realms of governance sets the stage for the next phase of analysis, a discussion of the discrete systems of governance infrastructure that delivered specific public services to the residents of Baghdad. In the introduction, I identified a variety of public services and the lack of consensus over a standardized categorization scheme.¹⁵⁷

For this study I have chosen to focus on several key public services serving Baghdad's population. Of course, the governance of Baghdad is far more complex than what can be shown by examining a few basic services, but I sought a way to develop a proof-of-concept framework that could be expanded in future research. This is not an exhaustive breakdown of every aspect of public service but represents an effort to identify a package of systems across different functional realms to pinpoint ways to better explain how these infrastructures shaped the conflict in Baghdad.

I focus on five specific services within these major sectors of Baghdad's governance infrastructure:

- 1) ***Public order***: This category consists of elements of the justice system including courts, jails, police, and prisons as well as fire and emergency response.
 - a. Police
- 2) ***Transportation***: Systems enabling movement of people and goods via ground, air, rail, and waterways.

¹⁵⁷ Frischman, 4.

- a. Roads and bridges
- 3) ***Essential services***: This category covers critical public services and major utilities. As a crucial source of energy for government, business, and private consumption, the sprawling system of petroleum products delivers an essential service in Baghdad.
 - a. Oil
- 4) ***Expertise services***: Iraq, like many states, has a nationalized system for services like health care and education. I categorize these as expertise services to identify the major service being provided by the government through these systems, namely the expertise of professionals trained and licensed by the state.
 - a. Hospitals
- 5) ***Entitlement services***: Like most states, Iraq's government provides support to citizens according to a variety of criteria, including a monthly food ration basket, welfare assistance for widows of the Iran-Iraq War, payments to victims of terrorism, and assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).
 - a. Assistance to IDPs

In earlier sections I reiterated the importance of understanding infrastructural systems as comprising different combinations of hard and soft elements, or installations versus institutions. The five infrastructure sectors discussed here provide a sampling of these differences, which I refer to as a service's infrastructural types.

For example, when referring to a militia's attacks on the health care infrastructure of a city, it is important to differentiate between bombing a hospital (the installation) or intimidating doctors (the institution). Building on this concept, I also look at an entire system of public goods or service

delivery (such as health care) and indicate to what degree that service is made up of interconnected physical networks or interconnected institutional networks. In other words, to what degree is the overall system dependent upon primarily installational connections versus institutional connections. In the case of health care, a bombing at one hospital is likely to have an impact on another hospital due to their institutional connections (the organization must react to reallocate resources and patients accordingly) rather than their installational connections. Counter to this example would include an attack on a major transmission junction within the electricity system that has a major installational effect across that network as other points lose power, but little institutional effect within the offices of the Ministry of Electricity.

Here I present a comparison of the relative degree to which each infrastructural system relies upon installations (physical structures and facilities), or institutions (personnel operating within a bureaucratic administration).

Table 2.2 Comparison of infrastructural types within sectors

	PUBLIC ORDER	TRANSPORTATION	ESSENTIAL SERVICES	EXPERTISE	ENTITLEMENT
INSTALLATIONAL	Low	High	High	Low	Low
INSTITUTIONAL	High	Low	High	High	Low

On one hand, essential services systems are both heavily reliant upon physical components of infrastructure such as electrical grids, waterworks, and landfill facilities, and consist of an enormous amount of institutional capacity, from political bodies, to engineers, to clerks and other administrators, and regulatory agencies. Conversely, entitlement systems have relatively small

footprints within a governmental regime, consisting of an administrative network of offices capable of identifying and paying deserving citizens. Public order and expertise services are highly correlated as systems that have a large institutional presence, consisting of police forces, court systems, schools, medical boards, pharmacies, and other bureaucratic elements relative to importance of the physical structures that these institutions operate within. This does not mean that schools, hospitals, and police stations do not consist of a large amount of physical space within a city, but the relative importance of those structures versus the complex technical skills and expertise of the personnel operating within them means far less to the overall delivery of those services. Finally, transportation networks provide an example of an infrastructural type where the physical generally outweighs the institutional. For example, the existence and maintenance of an airport runway is a precursor to the effectiveness of any air traffic control institutions intending to monitor that facility.

This shorthand expression of differing degrees of infrastructure complexity leads us toward a more granular approach to understanding the vulnerabilities of these systems within a conflict zone. It provides insight into how and why these systems become targets of influence by malign actors. Asserting control over infrastructural resources in Baghdad included kinetic and non-kinetic tactics including targeting the physical facilities with bombs, stealing supplies from specific depots, coercing individual officials for favorable contracts, or directing resources to factional loyalists through legitimate political participation. Each of these actions represents a target choice for an actor that results in an impact on the overall excludability of that infrastructure.

The first insight suggests a degree of target density for each type of system, or category of services. There are more targets in highly complex systems, and fewer targets in less complex systems. Second, each system type shows a qualitative difference those targets, whether

installational or institutional. Systems that are more dependent upon installations of physical infrastructures face different threats than systems that are largely institutional. A clearer picture of how different infrastructural systems operated within Baghdad will enable a greater ability to pinpoint the most exploitable opportunities for these efforts to exert control to succeed. In a later section, I return to this analysis to explain how these relative differences influence each service's excludability, or the intrinsic ability to deny its use to a population.

The final aspect of my framework involves breaking down these services according to their tiers, reflecting how each system operates across a hierarchical architecture. These major systems consist of individual components, such as a single petrol station, connected to broader arrays of petroleum delivery services and bureaucracies, including national pipelines, regional trucking patterns, depots, and refineries. I introduce the concept of tiers to describe this hierarchical arrangement found within infrastructural systems. I have imported the supply chain concept to illustrate different components of a network or flow.¹⁵⁸ This basic concept allows for a categorization of specific features of an infrastructure as either an upstream, midstream, or downstream element of that system. While the concepts of upstream, midstream, and downstream nodes are quite easily grasped when discussing the infrastructure network of commodity services such as oil production and distribution, they are also usable with some abstraction across other networks within other realms.

The upstream part of a network deals with the nodes responsible for the generation of a flow (such as crude oil production) or at a network's most macro-level nodes where flows from

¹⁵⁸ Christine M. Harland, "Supply chain management: relationships, chains and networks." *British Journal of management* 7 (1996), S63.

that location can reach the widest number of potential downstream nodes. Midstream nodes relate to a meso-level of analysis, or the in-between linkages of a network. Downstream nodes relate to a micro-level analysis, or to the locations that most closely represent the termination of a flow at a specific individual. Institutionally, we find parallels between national, provincial, and local political bodies.

In many cases these tiers can be easily shown as political, bureaucratic, or technical components of ministries with responsibilities at the national, provincial, or local level. However, the complexity of Baghdad's specific situation bedevils such a clearly delineated scheme in many cases, so I have opted to use the abstraction of upstream, midstream, and downstream to capture some needed flexibility for my analysis. Innovations in governance structure after 2003 intending to promote greater independence for provincial and local authorities across Iraq produced many conflicts for service delivery infrastructure. The special status of Baghdad as the capital city also created significant problems, discussed in more detail later.¹⁵⁹

Crucial to note is that nearly every service-providing ministry in Iraq had its own methodology for organizing its network of facilities, so the creation of new polities at the provincial and local level did not clearly parallel the hierarchy of any single ministry's pre-existing (prior to 2003) architecture. For example, prior to 2003, a Ministry of Health office responsible for managing health care for the population living in Basra would have been understood as a national ministry office operating "in Basra." After 2003 debates raged to what degree that same office should be understood as a component "of Basra," meaning a component of its provincial

¹⁵⁹ Anna Lamberson, "A Capital Law for Baghdad: A Governance Framework for Iraq's Ancient Capital," *State and Local Government Review*, 2011, 151.

government. Replicating this idea across every national ministry across provincial, district, and neighborhood boundaries should provide a degree of understanding of just how difficult the implementation of new democratic and decentralized polities upon a traditionally very centralized governance system of national ministries.

2.2.1.3.1 Public order: Police The Iraqi Police Service (IPS) faced daunting challenges of providing law enforcement services in Baghdad. Under Saddam, police forces were at the bottom of the hierarchy of security forces and were often poorly trained and equipped, and widely considered brutal and corrupt by the general population.¹⁶⁰ The Coalition faced significant obstacles in rebuilding the capabilities of the IPS due to both the widespread physical destruction of police stations, vehicles, and equipment in the wake of the 2003 invasion, and popular misgivings about the legacy of policing under Saddam.

In a centralized state such as Iraq, all police are members of the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) and therefore are agents of the national government and not subject to any local community's authority. This changed somewhat with the innovations that strengthened provincial government after 2003, with provincial governors gaining some authority over the provincial Director of Police (DoP) within their province, but only through a negotiated process involving top MoI officials. The selection of the Baghdad DoP became a flashpoint for significant political drama in 2005 when the Baghdad Provincial Council (PC) abruptly fired the current DoP, who had built a strong relationship with the Coalition elements responsible for training and resourcing the IPS in Baghdad.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ James L. Jones, et al., *The Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq* (Washington D.C.), 93.

¹⁶¹ Baghdad PRT, "Point Paper: Background and recommendation on PC's removal of Chief of Police," Memo from Embassy LNO to MND-B Commander, January 20, 2006.

Policing in Baghdad suffered from the sectarian-based distribution of cabinet portfolios under the new Iraqi state. In 2005, the MoI came under the authority of Bayan Jabr Solagh, a former Badr commander who enabled a widespread infiltration of his fellow pro-Iranian militants into the various security services, significantly undermining Coalition efforts to build trust and respect for the new IPS. Allegations of secret torture cells, kidnappings, and murders by militants in IPS uniforms, likely operating under the directives of MoI leadership, darkened the view of police forces under Bayan Jabr's watch and under his successors.¹⁶²

The MoI is a complex organization with several bureaucratic divisions. Policing in Baghdad resides within the domain of several institutions, from traffic police to border enforcement. Police services in Baghdad consist of an infrastructure that accepts and trains new recruits, mans and operates police stations across the city, and maintains weapons and equipment necessary for law enforcement tasks. Institutional control over police services involves members of ministry leadership as well as the Baghdad Governor. Below these figures, we find the Baghdad Director of Police and the Provincial Council Security Committee. Major police unit divisions are also divided by geographical zones (Karkh and Rusafa) and function (station police, traffic police, patrol police, highway patrol). At the downstream level, neighborhood police stations and traffic checkpoints form a local level of this service's infrastructure.

¹⁶² "Iraqi Minister Says Torture Allegations Exaggerated," *RadioFreeEurope*, November 17, 2005.

2.2.1.3.2 Transportation: Roads and bridges Baghdad is a major metropolitan area with highways, railways, river transport, and an international airport bringing traffic and goods in and out of the city. Its citizens rely on the ability to transit the city for work, commerce, and daily life. Factions that controlled access in and out of the city, within its neighborhoods, or with the ability to conduct major attacks against spheres of public interaction found leverage in the Battle for Baghdad. Focusing on the physical layout of the highways, roads, and bridge connections we see how major highways form the upstream component, with the widest possible range of options for flows into the city. Crosstown avenues and bridges form the midstream linkages of this network, which then leads into specific neighborhoods and destinations within Baghdad. Responsibility for the maintenance of these elements fall within departments of either Baghdad's *Amanat* or the Ministry of Transportation.

Describing its installational attributes, this network involves several crucial components. Three main roads leave Baghdad to the north, two leading to Baquba in Diyala province and one through Taji on the way to Balad in Salah ad-Din province. Westward routes out of Baghdad pass the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) and head towards Falluja and the Sunni-majority Anbar province. South of Mahmoudiya, routes head towards the holy Shia cities of Karbala and Hillah. Heading southeast from downtown Baghdad key routes lead through Salman Pak on the way to Kut.

Major routes in, out, and through Baghdad became significant theaters of conflict between insurgent groups and the Coalition. Conflicts erupted over control of crosstown arteries running east-west over the Tigris river, as well as several of the broad shopping and travel ways running

north-south on either the Karkh (west) or Rusafa (east) side of the city. The Haifa Street corridor in Karkh is one such route that was highly contested by insurgents.

Points within specific neighborhoods are the terminal nodes of this network, notably in areas cordoned off by the major wall-building projects that sought to curb insurgent freedom of movement across the city and provide greater safety to communities threatened by sectarian attacks.

The importance of bridges to the overall functioning of Baghdad cannot be overstated. The vulnerability of existing structures and the status of repairs to damaged elements was a primary concern of Coalition reconstruction efforts. The map below consists of a typical briefing slide used to coordinate efforts among military and diplomatic efforts during the Surge, capturing the vulnerability of Baghdad's transportation network to interdiction at critical bridge crossings.

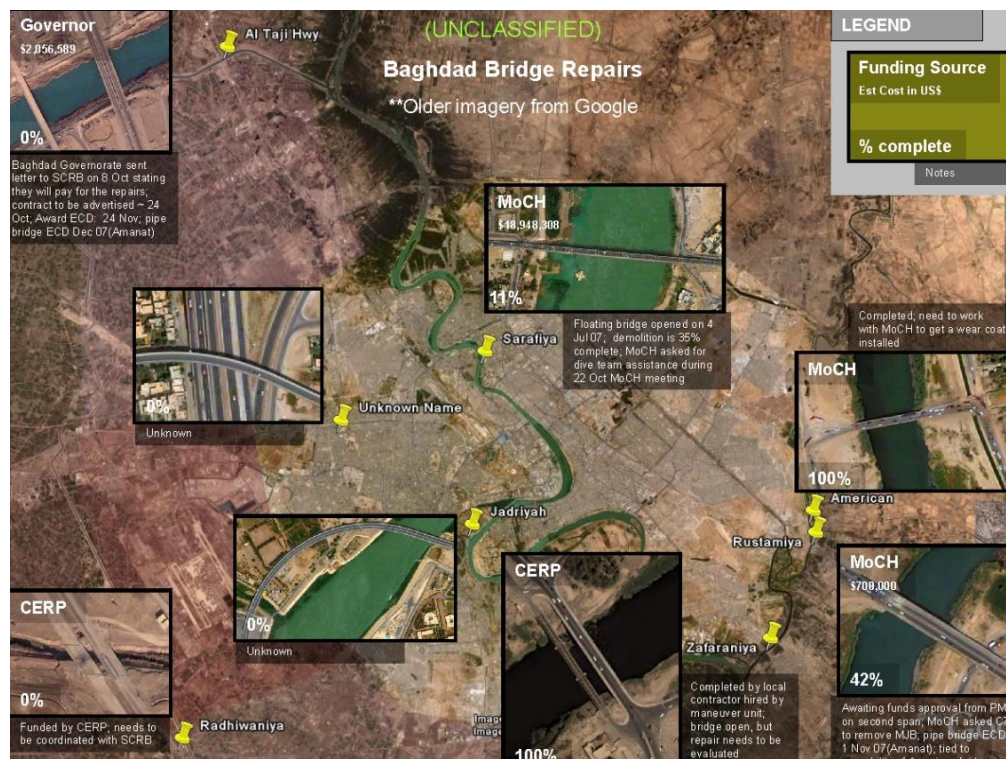


Figure 2.3 Bridge repairs in Baghdad (circa. 2007)¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Baghdad PRT Briefing Book, 2007.

2.2.1.3.3 Essential services: Oil The Ministry of Oil (MoO) is a sprawling component of Iraq's services infrastructure. It functions as a "fully integrated oil company"¹⁶⁴ with elements controlling the "1) exploration and production of crude oil, natural gas, and condensate, and gas liquids; 2) refining; 3) transportation and distribution of crude and finished products; 4) marketing and supply for crude oil or finished products; 5) security for MoO assets; and 6) representing Iraq to international bodies, as appropriate."¹⁶⁵

This service epitomizes the upstream, midstream, and downstream model of infrastructural systems, with clearly defined echelons of operations. Oil fields and wells form the upstream level, producing the raw products that are then sent to the midstream refineries. Refined products then move through the downstream elements of the network for distribution at terminals and service stations.¹⁶⁶ Possessing the third-largest oil reserves in the world,¹⁶⁷ Iraq lacked the ability to fully take advantage of its oil wealth due to technical difficulties in its refinement capability. Iraq needed to export most of its crude product, heavy fuel oil, to neighboring nations to trade for more refined products such as gasoline and kerosene to meet domestic demand for those products.¹⁶⁸

This lack of domestic refining capability produced exploitable opportunities for nonstate actor intervention. The extensive need for import and export trade made the transit points for these

¹⁶⁴ MND-B G5 report, ITG Council of Ministers, G-5-D-6 (Unclassified).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ SIGIR, *Hard Lessons*, 136.

¹⁶⁷ Energy Information Administration, *Department of Energy*, "Country Analysis Briefs: Iraq," August 2007, 2.

¹⁶⁸ SIGIR, *Hard Lessons*, 137.

products highly critical territory to control. The ports of Basra, and the major trucking routes north to Turkey and West to Jordan became vulnerable to illicit control and created highly profitable opportunities for private and factional corruption. Because the movement of product by tanker trucks is far easier to corrupt than product moving through pipelines, factions often sought the disruption of pipelines in order to increase reliance on trucks. This created seemingly strange opportunities for factional rivals like JAM and AQI to find methods to cooperate when presented with financial opportunities. This situation is discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

Gaining illicit control over distribution points formed a large part of JAM's strategy. Downstream control over petrol stations provided extensive profits for militants. The distribution of kerosene, the major fuel used for domestic cooking, was conducted by the MoO through agents at local councils. Local councils in Baghdad's neighborhoods operated depots where kerosene was delivered to be sold at an official subsidized government rate. Through thuggery or collusion with willing agents at these local councils, JAM seized the opportunity to set black market rates for kerosene, another lucrative source of income.

2.2.1.3.4 Expertise services: Hospitals The Ministry of Health (MoH) is responsible for the oversight, policy, planning, and operation of the health care system across Iraq. Serious challenges faced Baghdad in the reconstruction of this network, both institutionally and in its physical infrastructure. The Baghdad PC strategic plan of 2007 noted that the city had 79 hospitals, 300 other medical institutions, and 12 popular medical clinics.¹⁶⁹ Shortages of adequate equipment and medicines stymied health care, as well as a brain drain of qualified doctors and medical professionals who fled Iraq for neighboring countries with safer conditions and higher salaries. Iraq's pharmaceutical industry lagged international standards following years of war and sanctions. Even the showpiece of Baghdad's medical community, the teaching hospitals of Medical City in Bab al-Moatham on the downtown east bank of the Tigris, suffered significant shortages of supplies and personnel, broken air conditioners, and notoriously bad elevators.¹⁷⁰

Understanding the institutional network of the MoH provides significant insight into how legitimate political authority was coopted for a variety of criminal and sectarian ends by the Sadrists and Jaish al-Mahdi. At the highest level, Sadrists gained positions within MoH leadership positions. This enabled the authority to control selections of the DGs serving at crucial institutions across Baghdad, enabling more influence over local hospitals and clinics.

¹⁶⁹ "Baghdad Provincial Council Strategy Objectives (draft, English translation)." October 7, 2007, 37.

¹⁷⁰ Dahr Jamial, "*In Baghdad, Even the Hospitals Are Sick*," Antiwar.com (September 26, 2008).

2.2.1.3.5 Entitlement services: Assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) The

Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) is the body responsible for developing and implementing policies and programs addressing the care, repatriation, relocation, resettlement, and reintegration of Iraqi and non-Iraqi refugees and IDPs. A relatively small bureaucracy, the MoDM served largely as a coordination body for a variety of Iraqi ministries, United Nations groups, the Red Crescent, and other international aid organizations such as the International Medical Corps during the massive upheaval brought on by the sectarian conflict in Baghdad.

Needy populations requested support through a network operating from the local level to provincial and national ministry offices. To request aid, IDPs registered their presence in a new neighborhood at a local council, where their personal information was collected (names, previous residence, claims of violence, injuries or deaths) and reported to the PC Committee for Migration and Displacement. The PC forwarded these requests up to the national MoDM office. In 2007, an assistance payment to an IDP family amounted to roughly \$100. The PC coordinated with the Red Crescent and other international aid offices across Baghdad to provide additional sources of assistance for registered IDPs.¹⁷¹

Understanding the provision of this service requires a tracing of how national policies directed the MoDM to work with the PC Displacement and Migration Committee to provide resources to local councils and Red Crescent offices intended to serve IDP populations.

¹⁷¹ Baghdad PRT Report, “Saydiya Support Council Discusses Second Round of IDP Returns,” April 12, 2008.

Summary Chart of Current Displacement and Related IDP Locations

Governorate:

Baghdad

Date:

May 2006

Figures are estimates as displacements are occurring continuously. IMC is updating the figures on a continuous basis

No.	Location of Origin	Displaced to Location	No. of Families	Sect	Living Situation	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Notes and Comments
1	Al Horia	Al-Tarmiyah	908	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Sanitation	
2	Al Shulla	Al-Tarmiyah	274	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Sanitation	
3	Al Ghazalia	Al-Tarmiyah	96	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Sanitation	
4	Al Shaab	Al-Tarmiyah	147	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Sanitation	
5	Al Zafania	Al-Tarmiyah	15	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Sanitation	
6	Al Taji	Al-Tarmiyah	16	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Sanitation	
7	Al Housaynia	Al-Tarmiyah	24	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Sanitation	
8	Al Sula	Abu Ghareb	200	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Cooking Utensils	
9	Al Horia	Abu Ghareb	164	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Cooking Utensils	
10	Al Shaab	Abu Ghareb	50	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Cooking Utensils	
11	Hay Al Amil	Abu Ghareb	65	Sunni	Integrated with Host Families	Water	Healthcare needed	NFI in General	Food	Cooking Utensils	
Total No. of Families			1,959.00								

Figure 2.4 Sample IDP tracker for Sunni families displaced in May 2006¹⁷²

The above document is an example of raw data used to record IDP information at the local level during the crisis in Baghdad. International aid workers and members of Baghdad's local councils aggregated this raw data to justify the allocation of resources to needy neighborhoods with large IDP populations. Some neighborhoods saw an influx of hundreds of families seeking safety, stressing systems of infrastructure already challenged by the conflict.

¹⁷² "IMC Summary Chart of Current Displacement and Related IDP Locations," *International Medical Corps*, May, 2006.

2.3 The weaponization of governance

So far in this chapter I have discussed the Battle of Baghdad as an important episode of contemporary complex conflict, and the various theoretical and practical issues it presents to academic and policymaking fields. I articulated a pragmatic approach to the research questions I posed in the introduction regarding how armed actors use different types of urban networks to achieve their aims. The logic behind my approach reflects an effort to bring actor-centric analyses into more productive conversations with perspectives focused on the environmental aspects of conflict. This approach focuses on developing a methodology to demonstrate how the underlying governance infrastructure of Baghdad shaped the trajectory of the conflict as a dynamic, and not merely static, element of the battlefield. This section continues with a deeper look into how I operationalize the weaponization of governance.

Introducing the Battle for Baghdad, I identified the three most significant belligerents and their overarching strategic aims. The Coalition executed a regime-changing military invasion and then set about to fundamentally reconstruct a new system of governance for the Iraqi state. The reconstruction was opposed by the revolutionary insurgency of al-Qaeda in Iraq, seeking system collapse, and by the resistance insurgency of Jaish al-Mahdi, seeking system cooption. While the overarching strategies of AQI and JAM fundamentally differed, I explained that their tactical behaviors often appeared very similar. To reconcile these differences, I introduced the framework of profit, power, and authority as a method to differentiate these behaviors and take a deeper look at how these major belligerents interacted with each other and environment. These groups used the provision of public services in their efforts to support organizational goals, fight against rivals, and challenge the state. How did these groups weaponize governance? In this section I expand on my

methodological framework by incorporating some economic concepts related to the provision of public goods and services.

2.3.1 Non-ideal governance during complex conflict

In basic economic theory, a good (or service) can be said to be excludable if it has characteristics that make it possible to deny access to that good or service, and non-excludable if non-paying consumers cannot be denied access. The concept of excludability goes hand in hand with the concept of rivalry. Goods can be said to be rivalrous or non-rivalrous in their consumption, meaning that consumption by one party denies the ability of another party to consume that same good. These theoretical concepts produce an idealized typology for understanding different categories of economic goods (of which public services are one). However, there are important ways that theory differs from reality, and how clear-cut distinctions between these categories are often difficult to pin down.¹⁷³ Conflict scenarios like the Battle for Baghdad present situations where theoretical typologies break down, and the goods and services generally falling neatly into one or another category instead exist on a continuum across these categories.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Elinor Ostrom, "Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems," *The American economic review* 100.3 (2010): 641–672.

¹⁷⁴ Roy D. Adams and Ken McCormick, "Private goods, club goods, and public goods as a continuum." *Review of Social Economy* 45, no. 2 (1987): 192-199.

In the ideal world of basic economic theory, most goods fall into one of four major types.¹⁷⁵ Rivalrous and non-rivalrous goods can be either excludable or nonexcludable. Private goods are the simplest type of good to grasp as they are inherently both rivalrous and excludable. Tangible items like food or cars fall into this category. I can buy an apple, but if you don't have money, you can't buy an apple. I can eat an apple, but you cannot eat the same apple. The next category involves goods that be consumed simultaneously by paying customers and denied to nonpaying customers. These are often designated as toll (or club) goods. Going to see a movie involves consuming a good that is excludable but non-rivalrous. We can both pay to go see the same movie.

Nonexcludable goods, where consumption cannot be denied, make up categories of common pool resources and public goods. Everyone may have access to common pool resources like fish stocks, but if I catch all the fish, you won't catch any. This is different from national defense, a public good that benefits everybody in a nonexcludable and non-rivalrous way. These categories represent an idealized typology of the intrinsic qualities of these goods.

Table 2.3 Basic typology of goods

	NONEXCLUDABLE	EXCLUDABLE
NONRIVALROUS	<i>Public goods</i>	<i>Toll goods</i>
RIVALROUS	<i>Common pool resources</i>	<i>Private goods</i>

¹⁷⁵ Frischmann, 24.

Recognizing several ways that reality diverges from ideal theoretical conditions, economists have introduced variations to this typology. Both excludability and rivalrousness can be shown to produce flexible categories in some situations. Excludability is a characteristic that can be highly contingent upon other factors within an economy and can be shown to exist along a spectrum of “feasibility,” with some goods much more easily denied to consumers than others.¹⁷⁶ Some goods that may be purely non-rivalrous for small groups of consumers become rivalrous when large numbers of consumers are involved. This introduces an intermediate category of congestible goods. Access to public streets demonstrates the concept of congestibility. There is a limit to the amount of traffic that can share the use of these goods in a non-rivalrous way.

Combining this category of congestible goods with the continuum of feasibility to which we can ascribe differing levels of excludability introduces modifications to this basic typology.¹⁷⁷ Marketability represents the ability to make the good excludable. Purity and impurity represent degrees of rivalrousness that a good may demonstrate. Theoretically, pure public goods reflect absolute non-rivalrousness, or those that are “equally available” to all members of a community.¹⁷⁸ Impure public goods demonstrate some degree of rivalrousness.

¹⁷⁶ Adams and McCormick, 192.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 194.

¹⁷⁸ James M. Buchanan, *The demand and supply of public goods (The collected works of James M. Buchanan, volume 5)*, (Liberty Fund, Inc.: 1999), 48.

Table 2.4 Modified typology of goods

	NOT FEASIBLY EXCLUDABLE	FEASIBLY EXCLUDABLE
NONRIVALROUS	<i>Non-marketable pure public goods</i>	<i>Marketable public goods</i>
CONGESTIBLE	<i>Non-marketable impure public goods</i>	<i>Toll goods</i>
RIVALROUS	<i>Common pool resources</i>	<i>Private goods</i>

Why does theory differ from reality? In a nutshell, law and order. Conditions of peace, order, and good governance are basic assumptions underlying these idealized theoretical categories, and reality often presents situations where fundamental legal and political circumstances are either imperfect, or in upheaval.¹⁷⁹ The invasion, occupation and reconstruction of Iraq presents a unique opportunity to investigate how a fundamental upheaval in a state's governance infrastructure influenced the provision of public goods and services, distorting basic theoretical categories based on excludability and rivalrousness. A state's ability to maintain the necessary norms of law and order to provide a good's ideal condition of excludability is undermined by both its own weaknesses and the actions of nonstate actors deliberately trying to undermine the fundamental stability of these norms.

Following the invasion, the state of Iraq (a progression of several transitional regimes before full sovereignty as the Government of Iraq) faced major difficulties in establishing and

¹⁷⁹ Peter Drahos, "The regulation of public goods." *Journal of International Economic Law* 7, no. 2 (2004): 321-339.

maintaining positive norms of law and order, undermining effective governance in Baghdad. Challenges to law and order stemmed from several major sources. The dramatic political upheaval brought on by the Coalition's reconstruction efforts served as the primary source of disruption. Fundamental changes to the state of Iraq in the forms of constitutional and institutional transformation and a series of major electoral events fomented an environment of extreme volatility in governance.

Secondly, factions gaining power over governance institutions did not always operate those institutions in good faith, or in a manner that would demonstrate an effort to deliver services impartially to the population. Instead, power over governance institutions often served as the primary source of resources for these factions.¹⁸⁰

A third source of challenges to law and order were the actions of nonstate actors deliberately aiming to undermine its establishment. A last source would include the decrepit state of Baghdad's physical infrastructures and weaknesses in its institutions due to underfunding, lack of trained personnel, and other preexisting issues that made the already difficult task of running a major city even tougher. Taken all together, these factors upset the normal legal and institutional frameworks undergirding Baghdad's governance infrastructure. What resulted were shifts in the feasibility of excludability among goods and services delivered by this infrastructure.

In the aftermath of the invasion, the inability of the Coalition to provide law and order adequately and consistently for large segments of Baghdad's population led to the emergence of

¹⁸⁰ Dodge, Toby, "Back to the Future: The Failure to Reform the Post-War Political Economy of Iraq." In *Political Economy of Statebuilding: Power after Peace*. Ed. Mats Berdal and Dominik Zaum (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 196.

neighborhood militias. Locally based armed groups proved willing to assert their own version of law and order within their communities. This assertion of power sometimes extended to all members of the neighborhood, but sometimes stopped at the doorstep of a family belonging to the wrong ethnic group.

In this situation we could say that a quintessentially public good, security, both theoretically nonexcludable and non-rivalrous, became more feasibly excludable. Some consumers were favored over others. This dynamic produced pockets of security across Baghdad, referred to by Alice Hills as the “ghettoization of security” in Iraq.¹⁸¹ This provides a notable example of how the disruption to the governance infrastructure of Baghdad created a shift in the feasible excludability in public goods, creating exploitable opportunities for nonstate actors seeking strategic aims.

Previously, I identified five major services that I intend to focus on during the case study analysis. While they are not the only services I examine in this study, I explained how they provide me a basic package of infrastructure types. Now I explain their selection within the context of the theoretical approach I have outlined above.

Each of the five services I have selected fall within the categories of pure and impure public goods and reflect variations on the spectrums of rivalrousness and feasible excludability as presented above. I look at police in Baghdad, falling within the sector of public order, generally considered a pure public good and one that in ideal situations reflects non-rivalrous and nonexcludable attributes. Following Hills’ analysis, I look at ways that breakdowns in Baghdad

¹⁸¹ Alice Hills, “The Unavoidable Ghettoization of Security in Iraq.” *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 3 (2010): 301-321.

made this service more feasibly excludable than it otherwise, under ideal conditions, would be. Next, I identify access to roads and bridges, a component of Baghdad's transportation infrastructure. Transportation is generally categorized as an impure public good, and one that demonstrates attributes of congestibility. Similarly, the next area of service, hospitals, also reflects the congestibility of an impure public good within Baghdad's governance infrastructure. Looking at oil as a crucial commodity produced and delivered to residents as a marketable public good in a variety of forms (kerosene, petrol, etc.), it demonstrates a very feasibly excludable element of Baghdad's essential services infrastructure. Lastly, payments to IDPs reflects a unique type of service, an entitlement to members of a designated class identified by legislation. Anyone who qualified as a member of the class was eligible for the service, making it theoretically non-rivalrous but also quite feasibly excludable.

During the Battle for Baghdad, the lack of requisite norms produced non-ideal conditions, affecting the excludability of the provision of crucial public goods and services. Facing intense political upheaval and the challenge of insurgent groups, Baghdad's governance infrastructure did not operate according to the logic of idealized theoretical conditions, but instead reflected a messy reality.

Understanding this reality requires investigating the connections between the turmoil brought on by the Coalition's reconstruction policies and the opportunities available to AQI and JAM to pursue their objectives in weaponizing governance to achieve profit, power, and authority. While the state struggled to provide services, nonstate actors coopted, corrupted, and disrupted these services. Looking at the intrinsic nature of a variety of services provides insight into evaluating which services were the most difficult for the state to deliver, and which services provided the most lucrative targets for nonstate disruption.

2.3.2 Provision and denial of services for individuals and groups

Here I utilize the economic principles introduced above to create a workable shorthand for describing and mapping the patterns that I believe to be fundamental to understanding complex conflict. Above I discussed excludability and rivalrousness as intrinsic attributes of the services provided as public goods to the residents of Baghdad. The conflict in Iraq produced a wartime political order¹⁸² of significant complexity, with powerful nonstate actors vying for control over elements of Baghdad's urban topography. Under these conditions, the intrinsic attributes of these public goods manifested differently than in theoretically ideal conditions. Nonstate actors exploited these non-ideal attributes to influence the production and delivery of public goods. This section explains how I intend to operationalize these concepts.

First, I turn to excludability. Under conflict conditions goods are more feasibly excludable than under ideal conditions. Nonstate actors with the intent to control the provision or denial of these goods could more feasibly do so. Examining the delivery of specific services in Baghdad reveals ways that nonstate actors produced and took advantage of shifts in excludability. In an ideal state, these goods would have been produced and delivered to all deserving or paying consumers based on some legitimate institutional mandate. During the Battle for Baghdad, I look at instances where reality fell short of this theoretical ideal. Capturing excludability provided nonstate actors the ability to provide or deny access to services that under normal conditions they would not.

¹⁸² Staniland, "States, Insurgents, and Wartime," 243.

Excludability is not the same as exclusion. It refers to the ability to exclude, which may or may not be exercised. When nonstate actors exploit excludability, they are exploiting an intrinsic quality of a service in order to exercise control over that service outside the legitimate frameworks of governance. Conversely, every time a service is denied to a deserving consumer by a nonstate actor, it does not mean that a control of excludability was exercised. Groups disrupted the delivery of service through theft, destruction, and other methods of denial. When looking at the tactical behaviors of AQI and JAM, I look at instances of when these nonstate groups influenced the state's ability to produce and deliver public goods. In some instances, they illicitly took control over provision of services in a neighborhood to reap illegal profits. In others, they attacked major installations of physical infrastructure. The concept of excludability provides a way to compare the logic behind these different acts, as different service infrastructures present inherently different opportunities to exert control over the provision and denial of different public goods.

Another way to compare these acts is to assess whether they are directed at controlling the provision or denial of a service to individual or large groups of consumers. This adds another dimension to my analysis, incorporating the intuition that underlies the concepts of rivalrousness and congestibility, that there is a degree to which consumption by an individual can be differentiated from consumption by a group.¹⁸³

Previously, I identified the contest over control of governance as the central component of complex conflict on a metropolitan battlefield. This study presents the Battle for Baghdad as fundamentally a contest between state and nonstate actors over the provision or denial of public

¹⁸³ Buchanon, 50.

goods. This provision or denial occurred across a range of critical public services infrastructures intending to impact a discriminate or indiscriminate portion of the population. Presenting a visualization of these concepts creates the primary typology of tactical behaviors utilized in the within-case analyses that follow, as seen in the figure below.

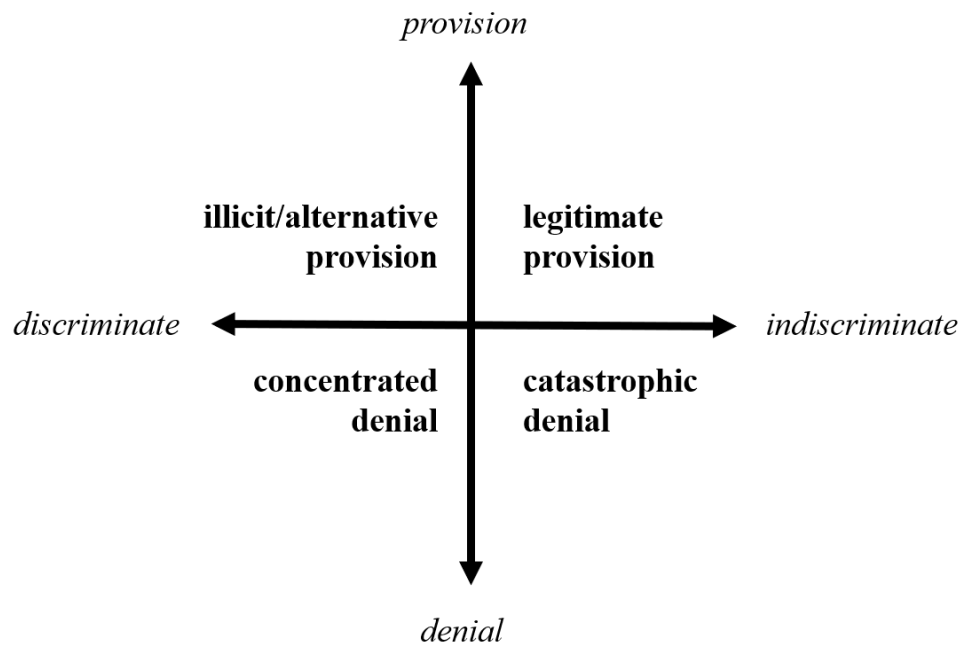


Figure 2.5 Competitive control of governance through provision and denial

Categorizing the most significant types of behaviors of the belligerents of the Battle for Baghdad creates the following four categories.

Legitimate provision: Theoretically, states intend to provide public goods in an impartial manner according to legal frameworks and institutional mandates that achieve equitable goals for the society they serve. The Coalition's stated aims involved reconstructing an Iraqi state able to discharge this ideal type of governance. The reconstruction of Iraq involved a variety of individuals

and factions not necessarily aligned with this idealistic objective. Of those engaged in legitimate political participation many sought to enable the indiscriminate and equitable provision of services, while others used the legitimacy conferred by electoral victory or civil service position to serve the goals of factional interest or pursue the individual benefits of corruption.

Catastrophic denial: Directly counter to the intent of enabling an ideal state to deliver services indiscriminately to a population is the intent to indiscriminately deny those services to the widest possible segment of the population. Attacks on the ability of the state to produce specific public goods undermines the legitimacy of the state and creates vulnerabilities within the population that can be exploited for factional aims. Tactics that involve targeting the upstream components of infrastructural systems responsible for the production and transmission of critical public goods fall within this category. These acts demonstrate an aim to deny the delivery of services not just to individuals, but to entire populations.

Concentrated denial: On a smaller scale, nonstate actors may also execute tactical operations that prevent the delivery of public goods provided by the state to be delivered to specific individuals or communities. Gaining control over the downstream elements of service delivery provided opportunities for factions to pursue several aims. On one hand, we observe the behavior of AQI as they sought haven in Sunni neighborhoods. Deliberately cutting off the ability of the Iraqi state to provide public goods in some areas served two aims, in undermining legitimacy for the state, and in producing demand for the alternative provision of services. On the other hand, the ability to control service delivery at the individual level afforded JAM opportunities to pursue sectarian goals by denying resources to Sunnis as well as make illicit profits on the black market.

Illicit provision: When nonstate actors gain the ability to control the consumption of a public good and turn the benefits of that control to the purposes of factional aims, this is illicit

provision. It is the misuse of a public resource for factional gain. A few examples help to clarify how illicit provision may or may not involve those engaged in legitimate governance. JAM militants often took control over neighborhood gas stations (a component of the nationalized oil industry) and decided that there was one price for Shia customers, and another for Sunnis. In some cases, this was the act of a local gang working independently, and in others the takeover was abetted by elected Sadrist officials within local and provincial institutions providing connections to Ministry of Oil resources. In either case the ability to benefit from the provision of retail access to public goods produced by the state forms this category of governance weaponization.

Alternative provision: The provision of public goods not produced by the state to consumers creates this category. Each faction involved in the Battle for Baghdad provided services to select residents and communities that did not involve relying on elements of Iraq's governance infrastructure. In neighborhoods controlled by AQI, a denial of public order services that involved the adjudication of disputes was accompanied by their offer of an alternative to the Iraqi state justice system through the provision of *sharia* courts. JAM provided social welfare services outside of legitimate state authority through offices of the OMS. Another form of alternative provision was produced by Coalition units using CERP funds to build service-providing infrastructural assets outside the bounds of legitimate Iraqi state authority.

The typology presented above articulates the major methods involved in the weaponization of governance. The array of tactical actions undertaken by the Coalition, AQI and JAM will be categorized as legitimate provision, catastrophic denial, concentrated denial, illicit provision, and alternative provision. An analysis of these tactics feeds into the overall analysis of how each of these factions pursues system reconstruction, system collapse, or system cooption.

2.4 Methodology

Because I am operating in an emerging field amidst a fusion of concepts and techniques from many other fields, I have sought to make this dissertation a theory-building exercise to make the most significant and novel contribution possible. It is structured as a three-part within-case study. Case study analysis is often seen as a preferred method when how or why questions concerning contemporary problems are under investigation.¹⁸⁴ Because I intend to look at how and why certain actors targeted various terrain features of this urban topography, this method is appropriate. Because I aim to discover contrasts and similarities across distinct nonstate actors within my case, a controlled comparison is the approach utilized.¹⁸⁵

A comparison of the ways that these major combatants used urban infrastructure to achieve their aims of profit, power, and authority follows the logic of finding crucial cases for qualitative study.¹⁸⁶ I have intuited a series of relationships among actors and their environments in a setting of high-intensity conflict within a city, and I formalize my findings about these relationships in the conclusion chapter. During this research I utilized a trove of recently declassified US State

¹⁸⁴ Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2003), 8.

¹⁸⁵ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 69.

¹⁸⁶ Alexander L. George, Andrew Bennet, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 253.

Department cables reporting on insurgent strategies and tactics in Baghdad,¹⁸⁷ a set of documents collected during my service in Baghdad,¹⁸⁸ and a number of other primary and journalistic sources and published datasets on the conflict in Iraq.

I have also integrated several elements of the US Army's methodology of intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), a method for collecting, organizing, and processing information relevant to a unit's area of operations that enables its military decision-making process (MDMP).¹⁸⁹ Recent operations like the war in Iraq have driven a new generation of revisions to doctrine regarding counterinsurgency and urban operations, and intelligence improvements as IPB methods continue to adapt to what the US military sees as significant trend lines towards more urban, and more complex conflicts.¹⁹⁰

The first within-case study differs somewhat from the second and third. In this initial study I focus on the Coalition's efforts to implement a radical reconstruction of the state of Iraq, and how fundamental changes to the governance infrastructure of the state rippled out to impact the delivery of public goods and services at the local level to the residents of Baghdad. One might regard the challenges of delivering services while fundamentally altering the legal and political

¹⁸⁷ Executive Order 13526 mandates that cables automatically become declassified upon the date specified by the original classification authority, which in most cases was set at 10 years from the date of publication. (Sec. 1.5), December 29, 2009. www.archives.gov/isoo/policy-documents/cnsi-eo.html.

¹⁸⁸ These are identified as either personal interviews conducted by the author, Baghdad PRT reports with or without individual authors identified, and other reports generated by the Baghdad PRT and other USG or GoI sources.

¹⁸⁹ Jamison Jo Medby and Russell W. Glenn, *Street Smarts Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield for Urban Operations*, RAND Arroyo Center, 2002, 11.

¹⁹⁰ TC 2-91.4, 1-1.

frameworks of service delivery as trying to steer a train as you rip up the tracks. In this component of my analysis of the Battle for Baghdad, I utilize the framework of governance infrastructure presented above to dissect the major elements of reconstruction policy and how they produced and exacerbated non-ideal conditions of law and order. These non-ideal conditions led to major challenges in the delivery of public goods to the residents of Baghdad. I demonstrate how major legal and political changes in the state of Iraq influenced the day-to-day operations of the most critical component of Baghdad's governance infrastructure, the *Amanat Baghdad*. The Amanat is the institution mandated to provide a range of basic services to the residents of Iraq's capital city and surrounding region. The Coalition's reconstruction efforts created seismic shifts to the state of Iraq that reverberated down to the delivery of basic services at the local level and produced opportunities for nonstate actors to exploit this disruption.

Tracing the impact of reconstruction policy on Baghdad's governance infrastructure sets up the following two parts of the within-case study. In each of these, the tactics of al-Qaeda in Iraq and Jaish al-Mahdi to use governance in their efforts to control features of urban topography during the Battle for Baghdad are analyzed. Each group is analyzed according to major efforts to achieve profit, power, and challenge authority. Their use of governance is assessed according to the fourfold typology introduced above, describing tactical actions as taking part in legitimate or illicit provision and concentrated or catastrophic denial.

The within-case study of three major factions, the Coalition, AQI, and JAM enables a deeper understanding of how each of these actors interacted with each other and a complex urban topography to produce the trajectory of the Battle for Baghdad. Each of these actors were identified as pursuing one of three different overarching strategies. The Coalition pursued system reconstruction, AQI pursued system collapse, and JAM pursued system cooption. In the

conclusion I evaluate how these strategies were pursued, and what elements of urban topography were most enabling to these pursuits.

3.0 SYSTEM RECONSTRUCTION: THE COALITION

Baghdad is a city, a province, and a national capital. In the aftermath of the 2003 invasion conflicts over these seemingly trivial descriptive aspects of Baghdad's status turned into lethal contestations. Each of these terms relate to a legal definition of a place that is in no way reflected in any material aspect of the city. So how did intangible ideas about a place create very real conflict? This question lies at the heart of understanding complex conflict involving governance.

In this chapter I focus on the Coalition's implementation of several key reconstruction policies in Iraq, and how these disruptions to governance infrastructure produced and exacerbated non-ideal conditions of law and order. These non-ideal conditions led to major challenges in the delivery of public goods to the residents of Baghdad. I present the major disruptions across these following four categories, previously introduced as the components of governance infrastructure.

- a) Administrative law – the constitutional or foundational legal architecture for an institution's mandate and authority,
- b) Politics – the factional priorities that shape resource allocation and personnel decisions for institutions responsible for delivering public goods,
- c) Bureaucracy – an institution's ability to implement the aims of its political leadership,
- d) Technology – the physical constraints of the installations that enable or inhibit an institution from discharging its directives.

The Coalition's reconstruction efforts created seismic shifts to the state of Iraq that reverberated down to the delivery of basic services at the local level, including the day-to-day

operations of the most critical institution serving the capital city, the *Amanat Baghdad*. My focus on the Amanat's role during the Battle for Baghdad serves to bring different narratives on the Iraq War into conversation. Rarely featured as a primary component of the Surge, I intend to highlight the unlikely importance of bureaucracy in shaping the trajectory of this conflict.

3.1 Fundamental changes to Iraqi administrative law and politics

In early May 2003, the Bush Administration decided to make a change. A few weeks after putting LTG Jay Garner (ret.) and his Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) in charge of reconstruction policy in Iraq, Bush opted to change direction and install the more robust CPA under Ambassador L. Paul Bremer. While ORHA had been criticized for appearing sluggish to install a new Iraqi government, Bremer is now widely criticized for many brash decisions he made during the early months of the US-led reconstruction of Iraq. These decisions served an overall aim of transforming Iraq according to a Washington Consensus approach of neoliberal reform and targeted three main areas of Iraq's political economy: the ruling elite, the coercive capacity of the state, and the state's role in the economy.¹⁹¹

Four days into country, Bremer issued CPA Order 1, *De-Ba'athification' of Iraqi society*. This decree mandated the purging of government employees who held significant rank within the Ba'ath party, removing not only sycophantic supporters of Saddam, but also wide swaths of

¹⁹¹ Dodge, "Back to the Future," 196.

technically competent administrators needed to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure.¹⁹² Bremer followed this with another order disbanding the Iraqi Army, controversially alienating potential officers and soldiers with loyalties to the Iraqi nation beyond their fealty to Saddam. While many of Bremer's moves could be seen in the light of serving some broad neoliberal agenda, they also dovetailed closely with the aims of both exile and domestic Shia community leadership, many seeking personal payback against the Ba'athists who had imprisoned or murdered their families.¹⁹³

Over the summer of 2003, an Iraqi Governing Council, a 25-member advisory council, was constructed to represent Iraq's ethnic diversity. Its members consisted of 13 Shia, five Sunni, five Kurd, a Turkoman, and a Christian. These members were drawn from exiles and domestic representatives of a hodgepodge of Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish groups.¹⁹⁴ In September, this group divvied up the national ministries responsible for critical aspects of governance infrastructure according to the same sectarian mathematics of the Iraqi Governing Council, with Shia parties gaining the lion's share of crucial positions. This should be noted as a critical point in the reconstruction of Iraq, as it fundamentally cemented a politics based on a "primordial approach" of aligning political identity with ethnic and sectarian identity.¹⁹⁵ The die was cast; traditional

¹⁹² L. Paul Bremer, *Coalition Provisional Order Number One*, (May 16, 2003), http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAORD_1_De-Ba_athification_of_Iraqi_Society_.pdf

¹⁹³ Dan Bisbee, "Baghdad Key Leader Biography: Governor Hussein al-Tahan," Baghdad PRT Report, March 20, 2006. Tahan served on the De-Ba'athification Committee in Baghdad and displayed an unrepentant position towards persecuting former Ba'athists at all levels of party membership. In personal conversation with the author, he related several graphic instances of atrocities committed against his family members by Ba'athist agents.

¹⁹⁴ Dodge, "Back to the Future," 200.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

vertical identities would trump modern horizontal identities in Baghdad. Politics in the new Iraqi state would be driven by a three-way contest among Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish constituencies.

Pushed by Ayatollah al-Sistani, Bremer set a rapid timeline for full transition back to Iraqi sovereignty by June 2004. This put key electoral and administrative milestones on the calendar. An interim constitution, the Transitional Administrative Law, provided a roadmap for political transition and included elections by January 2005 for a Transitional National Assembly (TNA) and new provincial councils. Following that event would be a referendum on the new constitution (drafted by the TNA) by October 2005. Finally, elections for a new sovereign government were set for December 2005.¹⁹⁶ A series of fundamental changes shaped the state of Iraq during 2005.

The Interim Iraqi Government under the leadership of former exile Iyad Allawi (secular Shia) took over as the sovereign government of Iraq on June 28, 2004 and governed until the Iraqi Transitional Government formed under Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari (Da'wa) in May 2005.

In many ways, the Jaafari government proved a lame duck regime during a critical time for Iraq's political development. Knowing that electoral results in another round of elections would likely render moot any significant decisions made under his watch, Jaafari played it safe while more aggressive factions sought to shape politics in Baghdad. Over 2005, a new constitution was ratified, and another round of elections were held, paving the way for the regime of Nouri al-Maliki to begin taking over as the first non-caretaker government of a new Iraq in early 2006.

The wrangling over cabinet positions formed a major element of the political contests between factions, as control over bureaucratic territory strengthened factional control over the

¹⁹⁶ Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security," *CRS Report No: RL31339* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 11.

resources and authority flowing through these infrastructures. Rivalry was most acute over the crucial components of the Iraqi state apparatus, such as the ministries of interior, defense, oil, electricity, and planning. Other positions were divvied out amongst the factions as a way to build alliances.

3.2 A new plan for local governance in Baghdad

Under Saddam, governance in Iraq consisted of a system directed by Ba'athist leadership that delegated authority to Ba'athist bureaucrats to manage a system run by technocrats, serving a quiescent population. National ministries provided services according to the logic that best served those ministries, regardless of provincial or local boundaries. Political priorities flowed vertically down from higher bureaucratic leadership and then across to the technocratic managers at that level of governance.

After 2003, efforts to decentralize and democratize Iraq introduced political bodies at provincial, municipal, and local levels that had no pre-existing authority over the delivery of services by national ministries. These innovations developed over 2003 and 2004 as Coalition units worked with local Iraqis and the US Agency for International Development (USAID)'s *Local Governance Program I* (LPG I) to create a system of local councils to assist in the management of government services in what was intended to be a more decentralized Iraq.

In the 88 neighborhoods of metropolitan Baghdad and twenty villages in the outlying provincial area, the first local councils were formed during small-scale community elections run largely with the help of local military units. Representatives from these neighborhood councils

were chosen to form district councils, larger bodies that were to engage with officials responsible for providing services within their local area.

These councils were given ambiguous and conflicting authority over the pre-existing bureaucratic and technical structures of governance infrastructure. They faced considerable challenges in enforcing their will mainly because they did not possess taxation and budgeting authority over service delivery in their local communities. That remained within the purview of the national ministries. They were intended to introduce democratic input to the governance of Baghdad in an “advisory” capacity, influencing how bureaucrats of the national ministries delivered services to their communities. Instead, these local councils often relied upon local Coalition forces units to fund local reconstruction projects. Coalition units following the dictates of counterinsurgency theory proved willing to fund projects that gained them support in local areas.

This produced one of the underlying paradoxes of Coalition reconstruction policy. Local Iraqi leaders were often frustrated by the failure of the legitimate government to deliver needed public goods. Coalition units often sought to mollify discontent within their battlespace and empower cooperative local leaders. Coalition forces gained trust and goodwill in communities by supporting local governance, but these projects did not always align with an overall agenda to enable the Iraqi state to produce and deliver public goods to meet the needs of its population. This dynamic produced co-dependent relationships between local Iraqi leaders and local Coalition units. Reconstruction policy produced several such paradoxes where intended results were stymied by faulty incentive structures.

During this early period of the occupation, fundamental changes to administrative law reshaped the landscape of Iraqi governance intending to make it more decentralized and more democratic. Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) Article 55 gave the right of each province to

form a provincial council, name a governor, and form municipal and local councils. TAL Article 56 described the relationship of the provincial governments to the national government as one of assistance in coordinating the work of the federal ministries. Article 57 gave all powers not exclusively reserved to the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) to provincial governments, broadly defining the mandate of those governments' responsibilities.¹⁹⁷

These transitional elements of Iraqi law derived their authority from CPA Order 71, a fundamentally important component of reconstruction policy introduced to empower decentralization in Iraq. Order 71 had provided the basic blueprint for how a new Iraq would function, designating the broad outlines that would reshape the relationships between national, provincial, and local entities. Unfortunately, Order 71 was vague in its appreciation of Baghdad as the capital city of Iraq, and its unique history of municipal governance. Historically, the municipal governance of Baghdad was a primary concern of Iraq's national government, and key institutional relationships reflected this. The broad language of Order 71 put the city of Baghdad on par with any other city in Iraq, and subservient to its provincial government. Or at least that was one interpretation; other interpretations existed. The fundamental ambiguity of Order 71 rippled through the implementation of the TAL articles reconstructing local governance in Baghdad and had a lasting impact on the Battle for Baghdad. It produced significant legal and political conflicts and dramatically shaped bureaucratic and technical performance in the delivery of services to Baghdad's residents.

¹⁹⁷ Bisbee, "Baghdad Governance."

Under the authority of Order 71, three distinct institutions were created to govern Baghdad under a newly decentralized regime. All of Baghdad's local communities selected representatives for either an urban City Council or a rural Regional Council, and then those bodies selected a number of members to constitute an overseeing Provincial Council. The City Council would oversee the Amanat, the institution providing services in the city, and the Regional Council would oversee the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MMPW) providing services to the outlying qadas. The Provincial Council would possess vague authority over the governor of the province and provide general oversight of service delivery to both urban and rural communities of Baghdad.

This plan was largely undone in the aftermath of the 2005 elections. Decisions made in the name of expediency, seeking to hasten the disengagement of the Coalition from the responsibilities of governing Iraq, put many of its new institutional changes in jeopardy. The ambiguities in the new legal architecture of Iraq created an entirely new set of challenges in Iraq, between the institutions of legacy and novelty. The governance infrastructure of the partially reconstructed state of Iraq consisted of elements stretched between its traditional legal and institutional frameworks and those introduced after the 2003 invasion.

While it may have been a perception that the US-led occupation under Ambassador Bremer largely cleaned the slate of Iraqi governance to pave the way for a new order, this was never actually the case. Critical tensions existed between Iraq's legacy institutions and the novel innovations injected into Iraqi governance over several years of transitional political upheaval and a reconstruction policy that went through a variety of phases. Politicians ensconced in legacy institutions competed with those placed into new institutions created under occupation, regardless

of any factional allegiance. Reconstruction was also challenged by challenges created by the obsolescence, disrepair, wear and tear, and faulty operation of Iraq's physical infrastructure.

3.3 Dynamic tensions shaping Baghdad's governance infrastructure

Here I introduce a second framework for understanding governance infrastructure. I initially described it in static terms and operating across realms of administrative law, politics, bureaucracy, and technical attributes. I now present its dynamic characteristics. In situations where governance is under duress, it is subject to a number of specific tensions. Categorizing these tensions help us to understand the difference between governance infrastructure in an ideal state and the non-ideal states that exist in any number of conflict scenarios.

When looking at how the urban topography of Baghdad produced opportunities for exploitation by belligerents during the Battle for Baghdad, I present the following categories as a series of tensions that describe how the elements of a governance infrastructure are vulnerable to shifts from ideal to non-ideal relationships.

a) *Factional tensions* When discussing the Iraq conflict, the major conflicts between Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish factions have proven to be the most prominent. Factional tensions often dominate discussions about political conflict, as most researchers frame conversations about conflict as contests between political entities.¹⁹⁸ Generally these are inter-factional contests, but

¹⁹⁸ Gareth Stansfeld, *Iraq* (Polity Press, 2016), 59-65.

the conflict in Iraq also involved major intra-factional contests. The Shia community was divided between domestic and foreign elements, the Sunnis between the secularists and the Islamists, and the Kurds between two rival factions. The competition amongst and between these factions greatly influenced governance in Baghdad.

b) *Hierarchical tensions* Systems of governance in Iraq produced an array of vertical stovepipes. Tiers of governance delineated the difference between institutions responsible for the generation, transmission, distribution, and consumption of public goods. Hierarchical tensions between these echelons of authority were exacerbated by national, provincial, and municipal officials that did not see eye-to-eye on how best to execute their mandates, even if they were members of the same political party.

c) *Horizontal tensions* At any tier of an institution, differences emerge to create conflict among those responsible for the executive, legislative, bureaucratic, and technical delivery of services. Between the various bodies and actors responsible for services at the upstream, midstream, or downstream layer of service delivery in Baghdad we find differences between local executives, legislative bodies, and bureaucrats at each level.

d) *Temporal tensions* Post-conflict scenarios often involve the disruption of systems of governance by outside intervention. More focus needs to be put on evaluating the differences in governance between the pre- and post-conflict status of these conflicts. In the case of Iraq, I introduce the category of temporal tensions to explore these types of governance challenges. These are the challenges brought on by introducing novel institutions during reconstruction without fully dismantling Iraq's preexisting, or legacy, institutions. It also encompasses the obsolescence and damage facing Iraq's physical infrastructure. Iraq had a governance system before the 2003 invasion, and not every element of that system ceased to operate under the occupation. When the

Coalition started to wind down its presence in 2005, it introduced tensions between novel and legacy institutions within Baghdad's governance infrastructure.

Understanding how the Battle of Baghdad was fought on a metropolitan battlefield involves not just an understanding of specific static features, but also their dynamic interactions over the trajectory of the conflict. This chapter continues with an analysis of how these tensions shaped local governance in Baghdad. The major electoral events of 2005 rippled through Baghdad's institutions of governance, both old and new.

At the center of Baghdad's governance infrastructure of administrative law, politics, bureaucracy, and technology, the Amanat serves as one of the most critical features of Baghdad's metropolitan battlefield. It is the institution with administrative authority over basic municipal services in metropolitan Baghdad. It is one of the nation's largest employers, with over 14,000 employees serving in a variety of departments including potable water, wastewater management, trash disposal, urban planning and zoning, road maintenance, parks management, and licensing for building permits and street vendors, and other municipal governance functions.¹⁹⁹ The centrality and size of Baghdad made the Amanat one of the most critical components of the entire Iraqi government. Its chief executive is the *Amin Baghdad*, (the Amin) historically one of the most powerful members of Iraq's government.

A lack of appreciation for the institutional legacy of this position created numerous problems for the Coalition. The Amin was commonly but incorrectly referred to as the "Mayor"

¹⁹⁹ Bisbee, "Baghdad Governance."

of Baghdad by Coalition personnel. The Amin does not hold the same executive authority over the police department or other institutions of public order that a typical US mayor usually possesses, and even describing the role as a city manager also mischaracterized the office. More accurately, the Amin's role should be understood as the minister for municipal services within Baghdad, and as being on the same level as other national ministerial cabinet members in Iraq.

However, the ambiguity inherent in Order 71 put the Amin at the center of several legal, political, and bureaucratic conflicts waged between and among various factions seeking to control this incredibly important position. Was the Amin serving in a position of municipal, provincial, or national government? This debate played a significant role during the Battle for Baghdad, and understanding this nuance produces an understanding of the bigger picture of service provision across Baghdad, as its local institutions became an arena for conflicts driven by factional, hierarchical, horizontal, and temporal tensions.

3.4 Intended and unintended consequences of the 2005 elections

The electoral events of 2005 included elections for national and provincial assemblies in January, followed by a constitutional referendum in October, and then a second round of national elections in December. These represent major milestones in the democratic development of the new Iraq. These events accompanied another significant development in Iraq: retail politics.

The removal of the Ba'athists produced a vacuum that Shia and Kurdish parties rushed to fill, while leaving many Sunni residents unsure of where to place their political allegiances. The growth of sectarianism in Iraq's political landscape after 2003 produced political platforms among

the major Shia and Kurdish parties aimed at delivering to sectarian constituencies instead of outreach to the broader population. Choices for Sunnis included several Islamist parties, some technocratic nationalists, the parties of the former exiles like Ayad Allawi and Ahmed Chalabi, or the Communist party. Politics in Baghdad would be driven by several key factional tensions. Sunnis balking at participation within a new Shia-dominated system produced one set of challenges, while intra-factional rivalries among the Shia to control that system produced another set.

The elections of January 2005 set the stage for major changes to the initial plan to reconstruct local governance in Baghdad. These elections were held to select the Transitional National Assembly (TNA), the body charged with crafting a new constitution for Iraq. Based on the recommendations of the director of United Nations' Electoral Assistance Division, Carina Perelli, Bremer approved plans to run the election on a single-district proportional representation system. While technically simpler than other systems, analysts warned of the potential dangers of disenfranchising communities and fomenting greater sectarianism.²⁰⁰ Academic studies on post-conflict state-building provide many examples detailing how elections following interventions may increase communal conflict, particularly aggravating situations where levels of trust necessary for effective power sharing agreements are lacking, such as in Iraq.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Michael Rubin, "Iraq's Electoral System: A Misguided Strategy," *Arab Reform Bulletin* (September 2004). <http://www.meforum.org/article/634>

²⁰¹ Daniel Byman and Taylor Seybolt (2003) Humanitarian Intervention and Communal Civil Wars:, *Security Studies*, 13:1, 33-78, DOI: 10.1080/09636410490493859, 41.

Sunni political leaders, critical of the US and the interim government under Prime Minister Ayad Allawi after the intense operations in Fallujah in late 2004, worked to delay these elections until a different system could be developed. Failing that, they led a boycott of the elections. Many Sunnis followed their lead and refused to vote. However, voter turnout amongst Shiites was over 70% and ensured an overwhelming victory for a slate of Shia parties which had received the unofficial but widely known blessing of Ayatollah Sistani, Iraq's primary Shia cleric. In the new 275-seat National Assembly, a 140-seat majority was now in the hands of the parties of the United Iraqi Alliance, the leading Shia coalition.²⁰²

While the lack of Sunni representatives on this national body symbolically conveyed the increasing sectarian nature of politics in Iraq, this imbalance would soon prove to have very real consequences on the ground in Baghdad. Along with electing a national assembly, voters also cast votes for provincial councils (PCs), the parliamentary bodies serving each of Iraq's eighteen provinces. The Sunni boycott at the national level also created large Shia majorities at the provincial level, shaping Baghdad's municipal services institutions.

The January 2005 elections marked the abandonment of geographically defined representation and brought about a new PC in Baghdad determined by a single-district party-list vote. Voters in Baghdad chose which party they preferred for the National Assembly, and which party they preferred for the PC. Defending the choice of the ballot type, Perelli argued that the practical concerns facing the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) in managing an election with multiple districts drove the decision.²⁰³ While far easier to implement than multiple-

²⁰² Bisbee, "Baghdad Governance."

²⁰³ Rubin, "Iraq's Electoral System," par. 1.

district elections within the province, its simplicity is offset by its lack of transparency on individual candidates. After the election, party leaders select the representatives to fill the seats the party has won. Due to this party-list system, the new members rarely had any qualifications other than their loyalty to their party. They were beholden not to voters but to their party leadership, and they did not represent a specific geographic constituency. In the previous Baghdad, PC members represented the exclusive Karadah district, or the Sunni enclave of Adhamiyah, or the neighborhood of al-Mansour. The new council had members who largely possessed a sectarian concept of politics, aiming to serve their community of shared faith and experience of resistance to Saddam's regime.

The new Baghdad PC saw 45 of its 51 seats go to members of the major Shia parties, with 28 of those seats controlled by a single Shia coalition.²⁰⁴ Only one ethnically Sunni Arab was elected to this council, a member of the Communist Party. The major Shia blocs represented three strands of Shia political identity, those with affiliations with the Iranian exile community, the domestic Shia reformist parties, and several Sadrist-affiliated independents.

Leadership of the body went to the Iranian-sponsored SCIRI/Badr coalition. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (later dropping the Revolution in its name to become the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq, or ISCI) was aligned with the Badr Organization. Alternatively known as Badr Corps or the Badr Brigades, this group aimed to rebrand its image as a paramilitary unit into one of a political party. Members of domestic Shia parties, Da'wa and Fadhila, often served as the compromise bloc between ISCI/Badr and the Sadrists. While the

²⁰⁴ Bisbee, "Baghdad Governance."

Sadrists did not run as an official party during the 2005 elections, a few seats were won by independents with Sadrist affiliations. Despite this initial weakness, Sadrists would soon begin to rebalance political power in Baghdad, becoming the primary political rival to the ISCI/Badr bloc.

Whether intending to pursue a sectarian agenda or merely trying to consolidate institutional power in an extremely fluid environment, the new Shia-dominated PC embarked on a campaign that alienated large portions of the Sunni population, disempowered politically independent moderates and technocrats and reinforced sectarian politics in Baghdad.

In 2005, Baghdad's population of roughly 7-9 million was approximately 70% Shia and 30% Sunni, with a small percentage of Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians. But the sectarian divide is especially pronounced when comparing the urban core, which is largely Shia, to the surrounding qadas of Baghdad's provincial hinterland, which is primarily Sunni.²⁰⁵ While in general, rural areas are often less served by government services than urban centers, this perception of neglect became one of outright discrimination among outlying communities of Baghdad's periphery. Thus, geographical tensions compounded the sectarian divide in Baghdad. The Shia takeover of provincial politics in Baghdad added to the pre-existing frustrations of the outlying Sunni communities already underserved by Baghdad's governance institutions. Unfortunately, Shia partisans did little to dissuade Sunni citizens of these perceptions of bias and much to confirm them.

Throughout 2005, the Baghdad PC took a broad interpretation of their powers as defined under CPA legislation and began to consolidate their institutional authority at the expense of the

²⁰⁵ Bisbee, "Baghdad Governance."

other councils operating in Baghdad. The PC dissolved the City Council, executing a “municipal coup” to seize authority over the Amanat.²⁰⁶ On August 8, 2005, the sitting Amin, appointed to that position under the terms of CPA administrative law and a notably secular and nonpartisan technocrat, was forcibly removed from office. The PC placed the governor, a former high-ranking Badr commander, to fill in as interim Amin until the position was permanently filled with by PC member with Da’wa connections. City Council members were physically barred from the Amanat by Badr militants.²⁰⁷

Traditionally, the Amanat had served as an instrument of the national government because it provided services for the capital city. Because of the ambiguities in CPA Order 71 regarding Baghdad’s status, the provincial government declared its authority over the Amanat and began placing party loyalists in key positions. City Council officials appealed to the court system and the Prime Minister’s office. The political winds blew in favor of the Shia-dominated PC, allowing them to assert *de facto* control, even if the legality of the situation remained questionable. Despite a court ruling in the City Council’s favor, protestations by US State Department and Coalition leadership, the PC consolidated its control over the Amanat. The lame-duck national government under Prime Minister Jaafari (Da’wa) did little to interfere with the PC’s moves. Within a very short time the PC replaced many key technocratic officials within the Amanat with partisan loyalists connected to the council, notably dividing the Amanat’s offices between ISCI members and Sadrists. As an institution responsible for providing basic services to a quarter of Iraq’s population, as well as a source of lucrative reconstruction contracts and enormous patronage

²⁰⁶ U.S. Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), *Hard Lessons*, 248.

²⁰⁷ Bisbee, “Baghdad Governance.”

opportunities, and as one of the largest employers in Iraq, the Amanat became a major arena of intra-factional conflict in Baghdad.²⁰⁸

While officially forming a minority in the Shia alliance, Sadrist-aligned leaders emerged as one of the most potent forces in Baghdad politics. A low-level Sadr City district employee, Naeem al-Kaby was dramatically elevated to the position of Deputy Mayor for Municipalities, the second-most powerful position in the Amanat, with vast authority over the hiring and firing of municipal employees and influence over contracted work for the city.²⁰⁹

It was widely believed that Naeem's Sadrist connections to militant forces within Sadr City and the broader network of the OMS organization enabled his promotion.²¹⁰ In turn, OMS reportedly gained a crucial foothold in the realm of municipal contracts, as Naeem reportedly channeled an enormous amount of Amanat services contracts through the Sadrist organization. Whether skimming off the top of a government contract, or getting the inside track on major employment opportunities, the Sadrists used the Amanat connections of Naeem and his colleagues to further their aims of co-opting legitimate government services for factional advantage in the fight for political control over Baghdad.

US Army civil affairs officers working to assist the Amanat with managing reconstruction projects faced a range of challenges as control over the Amanat shifted. Coordination between American units was difficult enough, as Army forces spent CERP funds to make improvements in

²⁰⁸ US Embassy Baghdad, "ISCI/SADRIST contest in Baghdad; Lack of Baghdad law a problem," April 24, 2008.

²⁰⁹ US Embassy Baghdad, "ISCI/SADRIST contest."

²¹⁰ Ibid.

their local areas that were not always properly tied into broader city-wide projects.²¹¹ Yet sectarian concerns also drove many municipal decisions, as Sadrists and other Shia officials pursued a largely “Shia-first” policy, ensuring preferential treatment for projects improving Shia neighborhoods.²¹²

In an episode involving less thuggery but similar results, the PC eventually coopted the authority of the Regional Council and expanded its reach over the offices providing services to suburban Baghdad. The PC worked to undermine the Regional Council and forbid its leadership from serving as the liaison between the largely Sunni *qada* communities and the officials of the national ministries responsible for water, agriculture, housing and other services. This cadre of local leaders granted authority over CPA-era institutions were marginalized by urban Shia powerbrokers. While not as dramatic as the takeover of the Amanat, the PC’s dissolution of the Regional Council provided clear evidence to many in Baghdad that the new political order in Iraq’s democracy was not locally based but driven by the Shia parties in charge.

The PC also turned its sights on the District Councils. An effort was made to initiate a new round of elections so the major parties would be able to push out the remaining independent and non-sectarian (and often pro-American) members of these local bodies. Logistical challenges and pushback from the Coalition prevented these elections. District Councils remained the major conduit between MNF-I units and willing Iraqi partners, and the support of the US Army served to hold the PC at bay. Despite this victory, members of these CPA-era local councils became increasingly alienated from both the provincial and national governments due to sectarian party

²¹¹ SGT Samson Barini, “Baghdad PRT Infrastructure Report,” June 25, 2006.

²¹² SIGIR, *Hard Lessons*, 248

politics. Uncertainty about the longevity of Coalition support was also a major concern, as the electoral events of 2005 were intended to pave the way for a withdrawal from Iraq.

3.5 Chapter summary: Coalition strategy and the Battle for Baghdad

In December 2005, the PC held an emergency session during which PC Chairman Mazin Makiya (Da'wa) was voted out of office and Mueen al-Khademi (ISCI) was installed. The removal of Mazin reflected a new phase in the contest over governance in Baghdad, and between the ISCI/Badr bloc and the Sadrists. Factional horse-trading put an ISCI/Badr leader at the top of each major institution in Baghdad (PC Chairman, Amin, Governor) and a Sadrist in each of the three key deputy positions (PC Deputy Chairman, Deputy Amin, and Deputy Governor).

A culmination of the events set in motion with the January elections, this event demonstrates some of the fundamental dynamics shaping governance in Baghdad prior to the major eruption of conflict in 2006. The major Shia parties controlled Baghdad with Iranian-affiliated ISCI/Badr dominating and the Sadrists (with JAM) on the rise. Even if Sunni citizens regretted their decision not to participate in elections, they were now largely locked out of the political system.

After gaining electoral power in the January election that Sunnis sat out, the Shia parties consolidated control over Baghdad. They first turned on the CPA-era independents, taking advantage of the ambiguities in administrative law to marginalize CPA-era institutions. This allowed them to expand their control within key bureaucracies, where they turned on the technocrats. Many Sunni, Christian, and otherwise politically nonaffiliated officials serving as

bureaucratic managers and technical advisors within the Amanat and other ministries were replaced. A great deal of institutional knowledge was lost as the new Shia leadership started to clean house. The PC replaced many bureaucrats with loyalists, regardless of technical experience or ability. Often presented as serving the aims of de-Baathification, these moves generally served partisan agendas of building profitable fiefdoms within the state, controlled by loyalists.

Fighting over the spoils of Baghdad's governance infrastructure, these parties then turned on each other. ISCI and Badr worked diligently to maintain and increase their hold on power, trying to delay new elections or any structural changes that might weaken their position. Previously engaged in outright insurgency against the Coalition, JAM was now a part of a political movement, as Sadrists made moves to expand their power from the illicit realm of the streets to legitimate politics.

Here I summarize the major tensions that shifted Baghdad's governance infrastructure towards a non-ideal state, allowing nonstate actors to exploit this urban topography for various ends.

a) *Factional tensions* The elections of 2005 brought a relatively untested cadre of Shia parties to power, while leaving the Sunni community without significant representation in legitimate government. Secular and technocratic moderates were pushed to the margins of politics. Intra-factional rivalry among Shia parties produced intense competition between domestic and Iranian-sponsored groups. Control over national ministries provided resources for these factions to use in their competition to control Iraq.

b) *Hierarchical tensions* Efforts to decentralize Iraq produced uncertainty and introduced conflict between national, provincial, and municipal institutions. During the contest over the Amanat, officials at the provincial level defied national court rulings while asserting their self-

appointed authority to dissolve local bodies. Independents in municipal and local government lost ground to factional loyalists due to partisan control at the national level.

c) *Horizontal tensions* Factional leadership of ministries produced institutional cleansing of technocrats in favor of loyalists. Shia dominance in service ministries produces actual and perceived grievance in Sunni communities, reinforcing geographic disparities among Baghdad's districts. The changes in institutional mandates and political uncertainty produced tensions between local officials serving on councils, the local executives serving under the governor, and the bureaucrats within the ministries. When local councils felt like their concerns were not being heard through official channels, they often turned to Coalition units. This support sometimes created redundancies or conflict with other projects underway by both the Iraqi government and with other Coalition units operating according to the concerns of the local communities under their purview.

d) *Temporal tensions* The sequence of fundamental shifts in administrative law produced ambiguities between Iraq's legacy institutions and the newly created introductions to its governance system. With major electoral events on the horizon the lame duck officials of the transitional governments proved hesitant to weigh in on important issues affecting governance, such as the conflict over the Amanat during the tenure of PM Jaafari. Instead of waiting for guidance from the next regime, this induced provincial leaders to take matters into their own hands.

Tensions among institutions emerged even when controlled by the same party, at the same level. Officials within legacy institutions clashed with those in new institutions. The new Baghdad PC was empowered to appoint a provincial governor by Order 71. The position of governor was a longstanding element of Iraq's governance system, with traditional powers and responsibilities, while the PC possessed a vague and unprecedented mandate. Fairly soon after his appointment in

2005, the new governor began to exercise many of these traditional authorities, acting independently of the PC to engage directly with members of the national government as a governor would have under the Ba'athist system. He also utilized the traditional system of *qa'im makams*, or local mayors in Baghdad's districts, to exert power and bypass the authority of the CPA-era local councils. Both the PC and the local councils objected to this power grab but found themselves unable to rein in the governor because the vague language of Order 71 offered little in the way of corrective mechanisms for how to deal with such a situation.²¹³ When it came to respecting the authority of new or legacy institutions in Baghdad, the old maxim of "where you stand depends upon where you sit" proved entirely accurate.

In this chapter a review of the major reconstruction polities instituted by the Coalition demonstrated ways these disruptions to governance infrastructure produced and exacerbated non-ideal conditions of law and order. Following the elections of 2005, the most significant changes to administrative law began to ripple out through Baghdad's political institutions, bureaucracies, and infrastructures of service delivery. I presented a scheme to categorize how these disruptions produced dynamic challenges to Baghdad's governance infrastructure, identifying factional, hierarchical, horizontal, and temporal tensions.

This discussion of the turmoil within governance sets up the next two chapters, case studies on how governance was exploited by the major nonstate actor insurgencies during the Battle for Baghdad. An analysis of al-Qaeda in Iraq's pursuit of system collapse is followed by the system cooption methodology of Jaish al-Mahdi.

²¹³ US Embassy Baghdad, "Baghdad: Local councils and essential services," February 26, 2008.

4.0 SEEKING SYSTEM COLLAPSE: AL-QAEDA IN IRAQ

The previous chapter illustrated the key vulnerabilities in Baghdad's governance infrastructure produced by the non-ideal conditions for public goods delivery during the reconstruction of Iraq. This sets up the following review of how governance was exploited during the Battle for Baghdad. I now turn to a comparison of the two major belligerent groups exploiting these vulnerabilities for strategic aims, starting with al-Qaeda in Iraq. The chapter proceeds with a series of episodes evaluating AQI's efforts to achieve organizational viability, launch operational actions against other nonstate rivals, and pursue its overarching strategic goal of inducing systemic collapse of the reconstruction and state-building process underway in Iraq. The chapter concludes with a review of findings that highlight the role that various elements of urban infrastructure played in shaping AQI's tactical behaviors.

4.1 Seeking profit, power, and collapse of authority

In late 2004, Coalition units engaged in the heaviest combat operations since the initial invasion. During the Second Battle of Fallujah, Coalition units fought to control the Sunni-majority city of Fallujah. Located to the west of Baghdad in Anbar province, the city had become a haven for AQI insurgents. Clearing operations pushed AQI leadership and many of its fighters to migrate elsewhere in Iraq. This shift in the overall battlefield in Iraq had several major consequences. Throughout 2005, AQI repositioned itself to gain new ground in Nineveh in the north, areas of the

Euphrates valley in the southwest, and to make Baghdad its central focus of operations.²¹⁴ AQI operative Abu Ayyub al Masri, a specialist in producing vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), worked to forge greater ties with former Ba'athist elements and merged other insurgent groups into the organization forged by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,²¹⁵ discussed above in Chapter 2. Greater linkages between the global *jihadists* and domestic Sunni fighters greatly enhanced the ability of AQI to pursue its insurgent aims.

Zarqawi's aims of inciting sectarian warfare were enabled in no small part due to the activities of Shia death squads engaging in a deliberate campaign of sectarian cleansing across Baghdad. Brazenly kidnapping and then executing Sunni residents, often dumping the bodies in public spaces, these "death squad" activities were linked to the influence of Shia control of the Ministry of the Interior under former Badr commander Bayan Jabr. Badr Corps militants were incorporated into the Iraq's security forces, allowing this sectarian militia to engage in domestic terror and murder while wearing the uniform of legitimate Iraqi police service members. Death squad murders were reported in Sunni neighborhoods of West Rasheed in March 2005, and in the Iskan neighborhood in west-central Baghdad in July and August 2005.²¹⁶ A secret detention facility used by MoI police forces to imprison and torture Sunnis was discovered in November 2005.²¹⁷ AQI responded with more suicide bombing attacks, and launched reprisal death squad

²¹⁴ Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History*, (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2009), 5.

²¹⁵ "Press Briefing by Major General William Caldwell," MNF-I, Iraq, July 5, 2006.

²¹⁶ Patrick Gaughen, *Baghdad Neighborhood Project: Washash and Iskan*, Backgrounder #13 (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, 2007), 2-3.

²¹⁷ Sabrina Tavernise, "Baghdad Bolsters Security, but Firefights Still Crackle," *The New York Times*, June 15, 2006.

executions, attacking Shia families and targeting members of the Iraqi government who lived in the mixed Saydiyah neighborhood of southwest Baghdad over the summer of 2005.²¹⁸

Following the al-Askari mosque bombing in February 2006, the intensity of the sectarian conflict in Baghdad accelerated. Unable to prevent the December 2005 elections from taking place, AQI set out to undermine the establishment of the Maliki regime as the new prime minister prepared to take office in May 2006. AQI launched a series of attacks to seize territory and increase pressure on the new Maliki government, which was forced to declare a state of emergency in Baghdad in June.²¹⁹ While heralded as a victory over AQI, the June killing of Zarqawi unleashed a competition amongst his followers over potential successors. A series of car bombs during June indicated al Masri's bid for leadership, which was recognized in a tape by Osama bin Laden released on July 1. AQI was officially now led by al Masri, also known as Sheikh Abu Hamza al Muhajer, and he was encouraged by bin Laden to make Iraq the center of a larger Islamic caliphate.²²⁰ On July 2, AQI perpetrated a VBIED attack in a Sadr City market, killing sixty-two and wounding 120, one of the year's deadliest attacks.²²¹ The following week Baghdad was convulsed with bombings and militia reprisals. Following a car bomb attack at a Shia mosque, members of JAM rampaged through the largely Sunni neighborhood of Jihad, pulling people from homes in broad daylight and executing between thirty and forty Sunnis.²²² Another car bomb

²¹⁸ Gaughen, *Baghdad Neighborhood Project*, 4-5.

²¹⁹ Richard Sisk, "Lockdown in Baghdad," *Daily News*, June 24, 2006.

²²⁰ "Osama Backs His New Abu," *New York Post*, July 2, 2006.

²²¹ Edward Wong, "Car bomb Kills More than 60 in Iraq Market," *The New York Times*, July 2, 2006.

²²² Kirk Semple, "Baghdad Erupts in Mob Violence," *The New York Times*, July 10, 2006.

detonated outside another Shia mosque to the north of Jihad. Across Shia neighborhoods JAM elements erected a series of *ad hoc* checkpoints to prevent incursions by VBIED drivers, as Coalition forces and the Maliki government struggled to cope with the violence.²²³

Campaigns of suicide bombings, particularly the massive car bombs detonated in busy downtown areas, challenged the authority of Iraqi government authority and Coalition forces. Gaining safe havens to assemble and deploy these VBIEDs was of major concern for AQI operatives and led to their strategic use of transportation infrastructure to enable this effort.

Gaining a foothold in several Sunni neighborhoods allowed AQI to extract resources through criminality, augmenting any funding they received from international supporters of *jihad*. Local support from a frustrated Sunni population shut out of the new political process and lacking economic options provided a source of recruits. The major conflict on Haifa Street demonstrates the intensity of inter-factional warfare as AQI and JAM worked to exert power over the population of Baghdad and enforce sectarian divisions.

In contrast to the challenge of the Sadrists, discussed in the following chapter, AQI did not overtly take part in legitimate political activities. While suspicions of collusion between members of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and AQI were continually leveled by Shia politicians, gaining and leveraging a foothold within Baghdad's governance institutions was not meaningfully pursued by AQI. Yet campaigns of assassination, intimidation, and direct attacks against governance facilities greatly influenced the delivery of services in Baghdad.

²²³ Kagan, *The Surge*, 10.

Instead of legitimate participation, AQI relied upon a strategy of concentrated denial of the state's provision of public goods and then stepping in to offer the provision of alternative services, primarily in the form of austere *sharia* law, to local residents. While primarily existing in the western province of Anbar, several instances within the outlying qadas of Baghdad and within the urban neighborhood of Ameriya will also be addressed in this analysis.

AQI proved capable of significant military-style kinetic operations, demonstrated during the battle for Haifa Street in early 2007. A campaign of suicide bombings showed a strategic use of catastrophic damage to infrastructure not only for the exemplary effect on the population, but also in its instrumental value in severing major arteries of transport for tactical advantage. A review of the formation, and eventual dismantlement of a micro-level armed regime in Ameriya shows a methodology involving discriminate denial of infrastructures to gain localized territorial control in this neighborhood.

4.2 AQI against the state: Catastrophic denial of public order

Jordanian terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi formally pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden in October 2004.²²⁴ A deal was struck where al-Qaeda leadership accepted Zarqawi's strong anti-Shia stance to gain an official foothold in the prime battlefield of Iraq, and Zarqawi

²²⁴ Daniel Bynam, *Al-Qaeda, The Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know*. (New York: Oxford, 2015), 163-64.

gained access to AQ's channels of financial and manpower resources.²²⁵ Among AQIs aims were the removal of the occupying US forces and the establishment of an Islamic emirate based on Sunni orthodoxy.

Between March 2003 and August 2006, 514 suicide attacks took place in Iraq, largely targeting Iraqi security service personnel and civilians.²²⁶ A hallmark of AQI, suicide bombings in Iraq have differed from other campaigns of suicide terrorism. While previous campaigns such as those by Hamas and Hezbollah have tended to produce suicide bombers directly from the local community, most suicide bombers in Iraq (that have been identified) are not Iraqis but volunteers from abroad, coming from nearby Arab countries as well as North Africa and Europe. Suicide attacks on fellow Muslims, like those targeting Baghdad's public markets and gatherings for religious festivals, are also a unique feature of Iraq's terrorism phenomenon, a source of tension between AQI and AQ central leaders.²²⁷

Between 2003 and 2006, Baghdad experienced over 200 separate suicide attacks while no other Iraqi city experienced more than 50 attacks.²²⁸ Zarqawi encouraged attacks on Shia to trigger

²²⁵ Barak Mendelson, *The Al-Qaeda Franchise: The Expansion of al-Qaeda and its Consequences*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 123.

²²⁶ Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*. Hafez's datasets on suicide bombings in Iraq have been used by a number of researchers. For an expansion on Hafez's datasets see Katherine R. Seifert and Clark R. McCauley, "Suicide Bombers in Iraq, 2003-2011: Disaggregating Targets Can Reveal Insurgent Motives and Priorities," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26.5 (2014): 803-820.

²²⁷ Atiyya 'Abd al-Rahman, *Letter to Zarqawi* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2005). www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/atiyahs-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2.

²²⁸ Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*.

a sectarian civil war; an attack involving both suicide bombers and mortars targeted celebrants of the holy Shia day of Ashura in March 2004 in the Kadhamiya neighborhood of Baghdad and in Karbala, killing 181 and wounding hundreds.²²⁹ Waves of terrorist attacks in Baghdad often coincided with both Shia religious holidays and major political developments; the run-up to the elections of January 2005 involved a number of political assassinations and over 50 suicide attacks in the span of a month.²³⁰

Particularly hard hit by insurgency attacks were Iraqi police officers. Analyzing the information on the over 40,000 deaths recorded from 2003 to August 2006 by the Iraqi Body Count database suggests that nearly 4000, or 1 in 10, were Iraqi police.²³¹ Iraqi Body Count figures need to be approached carefully due to the extreme variations in reporting across different sources, but several general trends emerge from the substantial numbers of police casualties due to the insurgent attacks. Police officer was the most widely represented occupation listed in this dataset, having more deaths recorded than for politicians, religious leaders, and legal professionals. While not all were directly attributable to AQI, the numbers of police deaths due to attacks by insurgents form a considerable number. Attack data showing average numbers of insurgent attacks against Iraqi police and numbers of casualties, identifies a range between 50 and 100 casualties per month over 2004 before spiking to levels between 150 and 250 casualties per month by mid-2006.²³²

²²⁹ Jane Arraf and Brent Sadler, "Deadly Attacks Rock Baghdad, Karbala," *CNN World*, March 2, 2004.

²³⁰ Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*.

²³¹ Mathieu Deflem and Suzanne Sutphin. "Policing post-war Iraq: Insurgency, civilian police, and the reconstruction of society." *Sociological Focus* 39, no. 4 (2006): 265-283.

²³² Deflem and Sutphin, "Policing post-war Iraq," 275.

Attacks on new cadres of police recruits was a recurrent threat to training programs. On September 14, 2004 a bombing attack killed 59 recruits and civilians, and on February 28, 2005, a suicide car bomb killed 125 police and national guard recruits, and civilians present at the time.²³³ Despite these casualty rates, young men continued to join the Iraqi police as one of the few steady employment opportunities available to them.

4.3 Exploiting transportation: Roads, bridges, and car bombs

Early on the morning of April 12, 2007 a massive explosion boomed across Baghdad as the Sarafiya Bridge, one of the downtown spans over the Tigris River, was destroyed by the detonation of a truck loaded with explosives. Unfortunately, such an event was not altogether uncommon in Baghdad, but this event would carry enormous significance for the conflict raging in this city, and for the country of Iraq. At first glance, the destruction of a key piece of critical infrastructure serving the city seemed to fit into a pattern of recent attacks by AQI insurgents, following a strategy aimed at disrupting transportation at crucial points around and across Baghdad.²³⁴ The attack had severed a major transportation artery across the city, complicating the lives of cross-town commuters and striking a blow against the economic vitality of the city.²³⁵

²³³ Deflem and Sutphin, "Policing post-war Iraq," 276.

²³⁴ Joel D. Rayburn et al., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War, Vol 2: Surge and Withdrawal, 2007-2011* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2019), 209.

²³⁵ *BBC News*, "Explosion targets Baghdad bridge," April 12, 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6547361.stm

Yet the destruction of the Sarafiya Bridge was about more than just an attempt to prevent cars and trucks from crossing the Tigris. The bridge also crossed between a Sunni-majority neighborhood and a traditionally Shia neighborhood. Its destruction reinforced in a tangible way the symbolic sectarian divide that AQI aimed to foment within Iraqi society.

Built in the 1920s, the bridge was treasured as an historical artifact,²³⁶ offering tangible evidence of “something actually good that the British left for us,” as a member of the Baghdad provincial government drolly reflected, referring to an earlier period of foreign occupation and post-conflict reconstruction during the British Mandate in Iraq following the First World War.²³⁷

In the aftermath of its destruction, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announced a campaign committing his government to rebuilding the Sarafiya Bridge. Significantly, the reconstruction of this critical piece of infrastructure was one of the first major Iraqi-led reconstruction projects done without significant US military or government assistance, a noteworthy moment in his administration and in post-2003 Iraq. Despite numerous setbacks, Maliki opened the rebuilt Sarafiya Bridge during a ceremony on May 27, 2008. Public support for Maliki strengthened in 2008 and his electoral coalition performed well in the provincial elections held in January 2009.

Reviewing AQIs usage of their signature weapon, the VBIED, reveals key elements regarding their usage of urban topography to achieve their insurgent aims. The term IED entered popular usage during the Iraq War due to the prevalence of the wide variety and lethality of improvised explosive devices used by insurgent groups of all types. The relative chaos in the

²³⁶ “Suicide truck bomb collapses Baghdad bridge,” *NBC News*, April 10, 2007. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna18033283>

²³⁷ US Embassy Baghdad, “Where is Baghdad headed,” September 2, 2007.

postwar aftermath and dismantlement of the Iraqi Army left depots of unused bombs, artillery shells, and other explosives available across Iraq. Taking one or more of these pieces of ordinance and rigging it to a detonator of some kind enabled insurgents to build crude bombs they could leave embedded along roads where Coalition vehicles were likely to pass, causing damage, injury, and death to soldiers and unlucky civilians caught in the blast.²³⁸

Mounting these explosives in a vehicle, anything from a small passenger car to larger utility truck, enabled both a greater amount of explosive charge and the bonus of mobility for the device to reach its target. The drawbacks include the greater engineering skill and cost needed to produce these vehicle-borne bombs, and generally the loss of its driver if it was not left parked and remotely detonated. Suicide drivers often commanded these car bombs, willingly or unwillingly, making them effective cruise missiles for attacks on checkpoints or hardened entrances to government facilities. Although a suicide attack with a car bomb is often labeled as an (S)VBIED to make this distinction clear, I intend to use the broader VBIED term to cover all types of attacks.

While much attention is paid to the Surge strategy shifts under GEN Petraeus in 2007, notable credit for shaping the eventual successes in Baghdad started earlier under LTG Ray Odierno. As commander of MNC-I (Multinational Corps – Iraq), the Corps element of the Coalition and thus the overall commander of all ground forces in Iraq (the “MNDs” or Multi-National Divisions) Odierno directed the most significant operations taking place across Iraq.

MND-B was the designation for the unit responsible for Baghdad, and other parts of the country fell under the responsibility of other Coalition divisions. Odierno was the first Coalition

²³⁸ CJTF-7, “The IED and VBIED Threat,” OIF Smart Card 4. <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/ied-smartcard.pdf>.

commander to see the security of Baghdad as a group effort amongst all the divisions, and developed plans for the support for MND-B by focusing efforts of the other divisions on “interdicting accelerants to violence” traveling from outside areas into Baghdad.²³⁹ This was a recognition that transportation networks into and out of Baghdad would be considered critical terrain for the upcoming fight to secure the capital. However, the Coalition soon discovered that Zarqawi had previously already made this a fundamental component of overall AQI strategy.

On December 19, 2006, a Coalition patrol in Taji began investigating a suspicious car parked at a market, causing the men inside to flee on foot, one of them detonating a suicide vest after American forces opened fire. An inspection of the contents of the vehicle led to the discovery of a laptop computer containing data on AQI operations, and a hand-drawn map of Baghdad and its outskirts. The intelligence gained from these ‘Taji documents’ provided a better understanding of AQI’s strategy, clearly directed towards establishing and maintain control over the belts of Baghdad’s surrounding *qadas* and using these bases to enable greater attacks in downtown Baghdad.²⁴⁰ Cleansing the outer belts of Shia would cut the urban core off from support and resupply from the outside Shia regions to the south and east, and enable AQI to put maximum pressure on the Maliki government, causing it to collapse and the Coalition effort to fail. Before his death, Zarqawi had written the following note, “The most important battle, which is happening now, is the Battle of the Baghdad Belt.”²⁴¹

²³⁹ Rayburn et al, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War* (Vol 2), 56.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 59.

²⁴¹ Briefing, MNC-I, “Intelligence Fusion Brief,” February 7, 2007.



Figure 4.1 The Taji Map showing AQI's battle plan for the belts surrounding Baghdad²⁴²

The map and other intelligence gleaned from the Taji documents indicated that AQI saw three major theaters of operation in the belts: east, south, and north. Relatively secure to the west in Anbar, AQI needed to expand and maintain control along the communities of these three regions. The northern belt controlled access to routes following the Diyala River to nearby Baquba, the eastern belt sought to close off the Shia population from supply routes coming in from Iran, and the southern belt was of vital importance as a region of safe haven and VBIED production.

²⁴² Rayburn et al., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War* (Vol 2), 59.

Crucial to the achieving its aims was AQI's network of VBIED manufacturing and deployment. Coordinated assaults on Shia communities within the belts and in downtown neighborhoods were intended to produce waves of IDPs moving into districts known to have poor services infrastructure and overwhelm the Maliki regime.²⁴³ One of the most notorious AQI bombmakers, Abu Nur, was reported to have been involved in over 800 IED and VBIED attacks in and around Baghdad.²⁴⁴ Positioned within Rusafa, a community adjacent to his desired Shia targets in Sadr City and near a Sunni base of support in Adhamiya, Abu Nur sought to displace Shia populations from downtown neighborhoods into more vulnerable pockets in outer neighborhoods.²⁴⁵

In late 2006 and early 2007, Coalition efforts began to get a handle on the extent and functionality of AQI's VBIED industry and started shutting it down. This required careful collaboration with Iraqi forces, as the Coalition did not want to be seen as supporting a Shia-dominated government under Maliki enthusiastically attacking the largely Sunni communities of the outlying belts. Maliki attempted to assuage doubtful Sunnis by issuing statements reassuring residents of the nonsectarian nature of his campaign against 'outlaws' that threatened the stability of Baghdad.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Rayburn et al., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War* (Vol 2), 59.

²⁴⁴ Gerry J. Gilmore, "Al Qaeda Chief Foe of Anbar Residents, Says General," *American Forces Press Service*, May 18, 2007. https://www.army.mil/article/3263/al_qaeda_chief_foe_of_anbar_residents_says_general.

²⁴⁵ Rayburn et al., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War* (Vol 2), 59.

²⁴⁶ Joshua Partlow, "Iraqi Leader Plans Security Push; Premier Promises Nonsectarian Campaign Against 'Outlaws' in Baghdad," *Washington Post*. January 7, 2007.

Joint operations by MND-B and Iraqi forces conducted a series of patrols intending to discover and eliminate insurgent safe havens and weapons caches around Baghdad. One patrol discovered 400 mortar rounds at a northeastern neighborhood, and another located several caches in the southern Yusufiya village, one with over 1,100 high-explosive rounds. Over the week of February 3-9, MND-B units reported finding and destroying sixty weapons caches.²⁴⁷

Finding weapons caches of hidden armaments buried in farmer's fields or abandoned structures was just the first rung in the ladder up AQI's VBIED network. The next step led to the factories where the bombmaking activities were conducted. A pattern emerged for the locations of both parts of this system. Sunni communities positioned along the major highways leading into Baghdad from the west, south, and north started to emerge as the major source of bombmaking activity linked to AQI insurgents. Raids in southern Arab Jabour turned up car bomb components and weapons, including a truck-mounted rocket-launcher.²⁴⁸ Major caches and facilities further out along these routes led to smaller caches closer to the city, allowing insurgents to leave and pick up weapons and armaments at various points as they travelled in and out of the city.

The location of Arab Jabour along the banks of the Tigris just south of the city and along the major highway route following the Tigris into downtown was a popular haven for AQI insurgents. Several Coalition strikes targeted the area to hit a number of car-bomb making cells over 2006 and 2007.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Kim Kagan, "From 'New Way Forward' to New Commander," *Iraq Report*, Jan 10-Feb 10, 2007, 11.

²⁴⁸ Press Release, MND-Baghdad/MNF-I, Feb 11, 2007.

²⁴⁹ "Air strike targets senior al Qaida leaders near Arab Jabour," MNF-I Combined Press Information Center, February 2, 2007.

Further to the south, the sprawling qada of Mahmoudiya and its central village served as essential territory for AQI insurgents, providing safe haven and several car bomb production facilities. Largely a Sunni region, but with pockets of Shia in the main village, the area suffered sectarian violence from both AQI and JAM insurgents aiming to seize and protect key routes from Baghdad to the south.

From 2004 to 2006, AQI dominated Mahmoudiya through a campaign of terror and public beheadings, allowing it to control vital territory to the south of Baghdad and an important corridor to Fallujah. Fighters, weapons, and supplies could shift between Fallujah and Baghdad via this route, and AQI recognized its absolute importance to its survival. By 2007, JAM began to expand its influence into the outer belts of Baghdad province and also sought to control this region, as it provided important access to the southern holy cities of Najaf and Karbala and routes to Iran via Kut.

In June 2007, a crucial bridge six miles east of Mahmoudiya was destroyed by a truck bomb. While positioned along the main supply route that Coalition forces used to travel between Baghdad and Basra, it was likely that this bridge was targeted by AQI as part of a campaign to stymie further JAM encroachments onto turf AQI had long held.²⁵⁰

This attack near Mahmoudiya became the latest in a string of high-profile attacks on bridges serving Baghdad in 2007. Of these, the destruction of the Sarafiya Bridge in April, which opened this chapter, was the most prominent. This attack was within days of another suicide

²⁵⁰ Kimberly Kagan, *Al Qaeda in Attacks on Bridges, Backgrounder #1* (Washington D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, June 10, 2007), 1.

VBIED attack destroying a bridge across the Diyala River on the route to Baquba.²⁵¹ After the Sarafiya attack, a report compiled to assess Baghdad's bridge infrastructure showed the vulnerabilities of the fourteen major spans across the Tigris, five over the Diyala, sixteen crossings of the Army Canal, and seven cross-highway bridges serving the transportation network of the capital.²⁵² Coalition and GoI forces worked to secure existing spans, prevent new attacks, and develop reconstruction plans to secure these vital components of Baghdad's cityscape.

The degree of intergovernmental coordination necessary to conduct bridge repairs amid an insurgency was significant. Meetings between Coalition partners and Iraqi officials intending to discuss progress on critical repairs could quickly devolve into tense episodes of finger-pointing among government engineers, construction contractors, and both American and Iraqi military units. Following the destruction of two spans across the Diyala, a meeting facilitated by the Baghdad PRT infrastructure specialists in April 2007 was successful only in fostering a multi-lingual argument over who had responsibility for providing security, who was paying for the supplies, and who was actually in charge of the meeting.²⁵³

While the spectacular nature of these attacks on critical infrastructure is worth analyzing on its own, these attacks also signaled crucial changes occurring in the Battle for Baghdad. In retrospect, these major bridge assaults represented the beginning of the end of AQI's campaign of VBIED usage. Operations targeting the weapons caches and bombmaking factories were beginning to effectively dent AQI's output. Moreover, the Coalition's efforts to secure downtown

²⁵¹ "Suicide bomber destroys bridge in Iraq's Diyala," *Reuters*, June 11, 2007.

²⁵² "The Bridges of Baghdad," *IraqSlogger*, August 2007.

²⁵³ Jowell Parks, "Diyala Bridge Meeting at the PC," Baghdad PRT Infrastructure Report, April 30, 2007.

Baghdad with a massive wall-building project that closed down significant travel options for residents and insurgents alike prevented AQI from effectively targeting markets and other vulnerable public spaces in the city.

Known as the “Safe Markets/Safe Neighborhoods” initiatives, these massive construction projects were a component of the overall Baghdad Security Plan, or *Fardh al Qanoon*, campaign launched with the Surge of 2007. As conceived, they were intended to build protective walls to protect both Sunni and Shia populations, but in very different ways. Each sectarian community seemed to be facing a different set of fears. Shia faced the fear of suicide bombing attacks while out in public spaces during the day, and Sunnis faced the fear of death squads attacking them in their houses at night.²⁵⁴ The Safe Markets initiative built protective walls around several major downtown markets, and the Sunni neighborhood of Adhamiya was soon surrounded by a perimeter of T-walls intending to make it a Safe Neighborhood.²⁵⁵

There were a few obvious results of this strategy, and a few that were not apparent at the time. Travel in Baghdad slowed to a crawl, and the city showed signs of a kind of urban paralysis, with gridlocked traffic stuck between checkpoints at regular intervals across the capital. Publicly, Iraqi politicians railed against what was seen as an American imposition on Iraq’s sovereignty, some even going so far as to compare their plight to that of the Palestinians.²⁵⁶ Privately, many of

²⁵⁴ Joint Strategic Planning and Assessments (JSPA). “Integrated Population Management Strategy (Draft),” JSPA memorandum supporting Joint Common Plan (JCP), June 2007.

²⁵⁵ Multi-National Force-Iraq Press Release No. 20070604-02, “Construction complete on ‘Safe Neighborhood’ project in Adhamiyah,” June 4, 2007.

²⁵⁶ Tina Susman, “Military Officials defend New Barrier in Baghdad,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 2007.

these same politicians would admit that security within the city did seem to be improving, with the walls proving an effective measure.²⁵⁷

VBIED attacks in downtown Baghdad dropped measurably in the latter half of 2007, due in no small part to the reduced opportunities to maneuver car bombs far enough across the city to reach an intended target before hitting a checkpoint. VBIEDs were proving only effective at attacking checkpoints, or infrastructural sites on major routes like bridges.²⁵⁸

The dismantling of AQI's manufacturing ability and this reduction in viable targets turned the group back towards a focus on using SVIEDs, or suicide-vest improvised explosive devices, i.e., human suicide bombers. In 2007, the Sunni Awakening encouraged many local Sunni leaders and fighters to turn on their sometimes allies-of-convenience, AQI. In return, AQI launched a significant number of suicide bombers in retaliation, attacking and killing many prominent Awakening leaders.²⁵⁹ AQI also turned to the use of women as suicide bombers, in an effort to thwart the more rigorous screening of males at security checkpoints. On Friday February 1, 2008, two attacks within 15 minutes and four miles of each other killed over 60 and injured hundreds as two women bombers attacked two different markets popular with women and children, a pet bazaar in eastern Ghazal and a bird market in central Shorja.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ US Embassy Baghdad, "Where is Baghdad headed."

²⁵⁸ Eric Hamilton, *Backgrounder #24: Targeting the Diyala Suicide Bombing Network*. (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, 2008), 3.

²⁵⁹ Hamilton, *Backgrounder #24*, 4.

²⁶⁰ Hamilton, *Backgrounder #24*, 4.

While a large component of AQI's strategy during the Battle for Baghdad included indiscriminate attacks on civilians in order to produce a wave of sectarian warfare that would render the new Iraqi regime incapable of governing, key attacks on infrastructural elements formed a component of their strategy seeking systemic collapse.

4.4 Catastrophic denial of essential services for collapse... and profit

Attacks intending to sabotage major components Iraq's services infrastructure began in the months following the 2003 invasion. During August 2003, a major oil pipeline linking the northern oil-producing city of Kirkuk with the Turkish port city of Ceyhan was attacked multiple times, severely crippling the CPA's efforts to rebuild Iraq's economy.²⁶¹ Bremer announced that the shutdown of the pipeline created losses of \$7 million dollars a day to Iraq, and repairs could take nearly two weeks, putting the final bill for this one incursion in a remote part of Iraq's desert at \$100 million.²⁶² At the same time the repairs to the oil pipeline were getting underway, another sabotage attack ruptured a critical water pipeline; the Red Cross reported that it would deprive 300,000 residents of Baghdad drinking water until repairs could be made.²⁶³

²⁶¹ Ron Synovitz, "Iraq: Sabotage of Civilian Infrastructure Seen as Resistance Strategy," *RadioFreeEurope RadioLiberty*, August 18, 2003.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, par. 6.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, par. 9.

These attacks against vulnerable infrastructural components served the aims of insurgent groups seeking to undermine the Coalition's efforts to reconstruct Iraq and induce a collapse of the transitional government. Relatively easy and cheap to execute, sabotage attacks on installational networks produced outsized indiscriminate impacts in their disruption of services for a population. They created enormous challenges for the Coalition, requiring the application of resources that could have been used elsewhere. The hardships they produced exacerbated vulnerabilities within the population, providing openings for insurgent messaging to denigrate the failures of the new government and present their alternative vision for governance of Iraqi society.

In some cases, a logic other than pursuing system collapse was at work. While in much of the rest of this study the tactics of AQI are shown to be in direct opposition to JAM and other militant elements, there were a few cases in which the pursuit of organizational profit trumped strategic rivalry, producing interesting cases of collusion between seemingly diametrically antagonistic groups. Examining the incredibly complex and lucrative oil industry within Iraq reveals such a case.

There are two major ways that petroleum products are transported through Iraq, via pipeline or by truck. Trucking systems offer far more opportunities for corruption, producing an incentive among all like-minded nonstate actors to see pipelines get shut down. The Institute for the Analysis of Global Security compiled attacks on Oil Ministry pipelines, facilities, and personnel from 2003 to 2008. It recorded 469 attacks, covering areas where both Sunni and Shia militants operated.²⁶⁴ Investigations into the widespread sabotage of Iraq's oil pipelines reveal the

²⁶⁴ Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, "Iraq Pipeline Watch," IAGS and Oil and Gas Industry Terrorism Monitor, March 27, 2008. <http://www.iags.org/iraqpipelinewatch.htm>.

incredibly powerful economic incentives for disrupting that infrastructural system to shift the transmission of these goods into a different system, where individual trucks and drivers can be far more easily coopted into various nefarious schemes. As far back as the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq's national policy of subsidized fuel prices incentivized smuggling of crude and refined products across its borders, where favorable price differences could be exploited by entrepreneurial drivers and complicit border officials responsible for certifying loads, volumes, and licenses. In the chaos following the US occupation, the system expanded exponentially and produced incredible incentives for nonstate actors to get their fingers into this lucrative trade.

The massive Baiji refinery, located between Baghdad and the northern city of Mosul, and responsible for a third of Iraq's refining capacity, fell within territory largely controlled by Sunni insurgent groups and AQI. An attack on pipelines bringing crude to the refinery would make truck transport necessary, and therefore taxable by insurgent groups controlling road access. Conversely, refined product from Baiji traveling by truck passing through AQI-controlled territory would be subject to their protection schemes and other profit-taking opportunities.²⁶⁵ This unique situation produced an area of complicit interaction, as JAM-affiliated smugglers would make deals with AQI-affiliated militants, and vice-versa, to ensure their respective truckers got their profitable haul to the needed location.²⁶⁶ Strangely, each group's organizational need for profit rested upon the same set of tactics against the state, the interdiction of pipeline infrastructure.

²⁶⁵ James Glanz and Robert F. Worth, "Attacks on Iraq Oil Industry Aid Vast Smuggling Scheme," *New York Times*, June 4, 2006.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

Despite this odd situation of collusion, the primary relationship between these belligerents was one of violent opposition. In the next section, I present an episode that most clearly demonstrates the differences between AQI and JAM in the way they pursued control of the same neighborhood, at different times, through different means. Over a period of several months in early 2007, the Haifa Street neighborhood was alternately occupied by AQI, JAM, and eventually Coalition forces supporting the Baghdad Security Plan as part of the Surge. In a sense, it is a unique case that illustrates how these rival insurgencies compare in the conduct of kinetic and non-kinetic warfare as they sought to win leverage in a contest over the population, territory, and infrastructure of Baghdad.

4.5 Rivalry for control: The Battle of Haifa Street

Directly north of the International Zone in the Karkh district overlooking the west bank of the Tigris, a row of high-rise apartments offers fantastic views for lucky residents, and terrific line-of-sight opportunities for snipers and lookouts keeping an eye on the battlefield below. The Haifa Street corridor became prime terrain sought by both AQI and JAM. Both groups vied to seize and hold this neighborhood to serve their strategies of competitive control over territory. JAM had held the area in 2005 but was cleared out by MND-B units by the spring.²⁶⁷ Following Coalition procedures under Gen. Casey's plan to turn security back over to Iraqis as quickly as possible, US forces left Haifa under the control of local Iraqi units.

²⁶⁷ Louise Roug, "The Conflict in Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, January 10, 2007.

During 2006, sectarian cleansing by both AQI and JAM had dramatically reshaped Baghdad's neighborhoods as the Battle for Baghdad moved into a new phase. With most neighborhoods now either majority Shia or majority Sunni, the conflict shifted into contests over the fault lines between Sunni and Shia zones. Haifa Street represented one such fault line and earned a reputation for being "the most dangerous street in Iraq."²⁶⁸ Odierno was quite concerned about Haifa becoming a sectarian tinderbox.²⁶⁹

Moving in from the west, AQI sought to expand further into downtown Karkh. Historic Shia-majority Khadhamiya to the north served as a base for JAM seeking greater access to zones closer to the central IZ. Many of the professional class and wealthier residents of Haifa Street fled, leaving abandoned luxury apartments available for whoever could claim and hold them.²⁷⁰

AQI gained a foothold in several of the apartments and victimized the Shia residents they found. Many of these were in fact IDPs who had fled from other neighborhoods.²⁷¹ In mid-October MND-B forces conducting a patrol received sniper fire and grenade attacks from high-rise rooftops, and AQI intimidated the Iraqi Security Forces assigned to secure the sector.²⁷² On January 6, 2007 Iraqi troops discovered a fake checkpoint in the neighborhood manned by AQI;

²⁶⁸ Wesley Morgan, "Task Force Warhorse: Classical counterinsurgency on Haifa Street," *Long War Journal*, August 9, 2007. https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/08/task_force_warhorse.php.

²⁶⁹ Rayburn et al., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War* (Vol 2), 54.

²⁷⁰ Wesley Morgan, "Task Force Warhorse"

²⁷¹ Marc Santora, John F. Burns, and Iraqi employees of the New York Times, "U.S. and Iraqis Hit Insurgents in All-Day Fight," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2007.

²⁷² Kagan, *The Surge*, 22.

the ensuing shootout killed 30 insurgents. In retaliation, AQI kidnapped and executed 27 Shia, reportedly relatives of the local Iraqi police chief, and dumped the bodies in an alleyway.²⁷³ Emboldened, AQI gunmen roamed freely throughout the neighborhood for the next two days, distributing threatening leaflets to warn people away from their territory. The initial Iraqi Army unit dispatched to deal with the crisis found themselves overmatched and requested Coalition assistance. By January 9, a battle pitting US and Iraqi forces versus AQI insurgents was underway, and the complexity of the urban terrain was proving to be an exceptional advantage for AQI. Typical floor-to-floor, room-to-room clearing operations proved impossible to accomplish, and the AQI fighters displayed unusually effective fire and maneuver techniques during the battle. Only after close-air support from Apache helicopters and F-15s, and a barrage precision rocket artillery, did the battle swing to the Coalition, leaving a body count of over 50 dead insurgents to only 4 US and 2 Iraqi wounded.²⁷⁴

Again, the area was left under Iraqi security, but over mid-January AQI returned. MND-B and Iraqi forces conducted a second and more thorough round of clearing operations starting January 24, receiving mortar fire from across the river and facing more snipers from rooftops. A major weapons cache was discovered at a Karkh high school, more AQI insurgents were killed, and by early February Haifa Street was once again left under the protection of the Iraqi Army.²⁷⁵

This time it was JAM that moved in. During February and March, JAM exerted power over the local population, but in a much different way than previous AQI landlords on Haifa Street.

²⁷³ Michael Hastings, "Iraq: The Battle for Haifa Street," *Newsweek*, January 11, 2007.

²⁷⁴ Rayburn et al., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War* (Vol 2), 55.

²⁷⁵ Kagan, *The Surge*, 24.

Utilizing connections within Baghdad's services sector that Sadrists had accrued over the past few years, JAM was able to set up mafia style control over residents' access to water, electricity, and other commodities. JAM forced local businesses to pay for security, and hire militia loyalists, or face the consequences of disobedience.²⁷⁶ While presenting a generally intimidating and sometimes outright threatening stance similar to AQI's earlier reign of control, JAM control displayed that group's greater ability to deliver necessary services to a cowed population. This ability is examined in detail in the following chapter.

This moment, illustrating the differences in how AQI and JAM provided services to captive populations serves as a useful introduction to the overall shift occurring in the Battle for Baghdad. It was precisely at this point that the tide began to turn against AQI, and the Coalition began to realize the true extent of the Sadrist challenge to Iraq's stability. A few blocks from Haifa Street, Sadrists posted a banner proclaiming "Congratulations President Moqtada al-Sadr, for executing Saddam" hung on the wall of a Children's Hospital in Karkh, celebrating the recent hanging of the deposed dictator after a lengthy and controversial trial.²⁷⁷

The conflict on Haifa Street provided the backdrop for President George W. Bush's January 2007 announcement of the *New Way Forward* change in strategy in Iraq that would increase the number of US troops in Baghdad and shift their focus towards greater protection of the population. While the Surge called for additional reinforcements from US military units, it also authorized the Pentagon to extend the tours of Army and Marine units already in country. One of those extended units, 1st Squadron 14th Cavalry, "Taskforce Warhorse," was tasked with taking

²⁷⁶ Morgan, "Task Force Warhorse"

²⁷⁷ Hastings, "Iraq: The Battle for Haifa Street."

over the Haifa Street area in April. While 1-14 had recently faced JAM fighters in the southern city of Diwaniyah, it did not face significant attacks from JAM at its arrival and did not experience a significant attack from any insurgent group for weeks following. However, leadership of the unit knew that its efforts to improve services put them at odds with JAM and recognized the formidability of the Sadrist effort to control governance infrastructure.²⁷⁸

The differences between AQI and JAM in their ability to establish and maintain micro-level regimes within Baghdad neighborhoods is one of the more important factors in the overall outcome of the Battle for Baghdad. In the next section I analyze AQI's attempts to secure a safe haven in the Sunni neighborhoods of Ameriya, and its methods of controlling a local population and extracting profit for its organizational needs.

4.6 Concentrated denial and alternative provision in Ameriya

The growth of sectarianism in Baghdad's political landscape after 2003 left many Sunni residents without reliable champions within legitimate governance. The parties of the new Shia-dominated regime, both domestic and foreign-sponsored, showed greater concern for winning a greater share of the Shia population than performing outreach to Sunnis. The new Iraq offered very few options for Sunnis to voice their grievances. Engaging in legitimate politics forced Sunnis to choose between the Islamists, the exiles, the technocrats, and the communists.

²⁷⁸ Morgan, "Task Force Warhorse."

Understanding the trajectory of AQI as a viable faction during the Battle for Baghdad requires an appreciation of how Sunni communities construed their relationship to the Iraqi state. The initial upheavals of reconstruction put most Sunnis in a dire position. Lacking viable alternatives, many proved willing to support or at least acquiesce to local insurgent elements in their midst. As sectarian conflict erupted in 2006, communities accepted these insurgents as a bulwark against Shia death squads. AQI resisted an Iraqi state dominated by a Shia community bent on retribution.

Eventually, the luster of AQI's protection wore off and these neighborhoods determined that the cost of acquiescence was dearer than what they wanted to pay. The example of Ameriya provides enormous insight into the ability of AQI to exert concentrated denial and alternative provision of services to exert local control, and how their eventual failure to continue that control led to their expulsion in favor of the legitimate state.

On May 30, 2007, two prominent tribal leaders declared over loudspeakers blasting from their mosques that the time had come for the people of Ameriya to rise up against the al Qaeda thugs that controlled their neighborhood.²⁷⁹ By the time local Coalition forces arrived to see what was happening, small arms firefights had erupted and a band of locals told MND-B units that they had already killed several AQI members, and were organizing an effort to rid their neighborhood of the insurgent group. Locals eagerly provided intelligence tips on AQI weapons caches, hideouts, and leadership organization to US forces. Long known as an AQI haven, this turn of events in

²⁷⁹ US Embassy Baghdad, "Baghdad: Sunnis in Ameriya attack AQI – why there? why now?," June 3, 2007.

Ameriya caught Coalition and GoI by surprise and indicated that the trends that created the Anbar Awakening in the tribal villages of the western desert had begun to reach metropolitan Baghdad.

After their 2004 loss in Fallujah, AQI began to infiltrate Ameriya, a relatively wealthy neighborhood in western Baghdad and close to the Baghdad International Airport. Able to find safe haven amidst a nervous Sunni community fearful of Shia militants and the direction of the Shia dominated government, AQI used this initial foothold to begin shaping Ameriya to conform to their austere code of social behavior, enforced with horrific brutality. Targeting the local minority Shia community, families were forced to flee. Executions of Shia residents, with the bodies bound and mutilated and left in the street, were a common occurrence.²⁸⁰ Bodies were sometimes boobytrapped, preventing family members from retrieving the corpses.

Sunni residents were also terrorized if they did not conform to strict *salafi* customs. Women without headscarves were attacked with acid and disfigured.²⁸¹

Public brutality was a common first step in establishing normative control over a population in Baghdad. A study of Ameriya and other similarly occupied neighborhoods in Baghdad demonstrate a comprehensive methodology for the establishment and maintenance of small-scale territorial control by nonstate actors operating during the Battle for Baghdad.

²⁸⁰ Will Waddell, *Backgrounder #10. The Knights of Ameriya: Concerned Citizens in Baghdad*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, September 2007.

²⁸¹ Mansoor, *Surge*, 138.

4.7 AQI's organizational imperatives

In an attempt to comprehend the threat of insurgent control over local communities, US State Department political reporters were tasked to develop a guide to the common tactics used by militants to seize and control neighborhoods. Interviews with scores of Baghdad citizens across all socioeconomic and sectarian groupings created an extensive picture of the carrots and sticks used by these nonstate groups to exert quasi-state authority over localized areas. The situation in Ameriya had much in common with several other pockets controlled by AQI across the city, as well as a number of Shia communities under the sway of JAM. This guide provided a report detailing seven major tactics common to both AQI and JAM. I use this report to produce the following framework describing how these insurgent groups achieved their aims through control of people, terrain, and infrastructure.²⁸²

Tactic 1: Displace the Other. Demonstrated in Ameriya, the first step to controlling a neighborhood was establishing and increasing the desired sectarian majority through forcible evictions and public acts of murder and violence. Ameriya went from approximately 25% Shia to just a “handful.”²⁸³

²⁸² US Embassy Baghdad, “Baghdad: Seven tactics militants use to seize and maintain control of neighborhoods,” August 24, 2007.

²⁸³ Dan Murphy and Awadh al-Taei, “In the Struggle for Iraq, Tug of War over one Baghdad Neighborhood,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 2006.

Tactic 2: Intimidate Your Own. Strict traditional *salafi* codes of behavior were enforced in Ameriya, and AQI controlled the economics of the neighborhood by determining what shops were allowed to operate and what they could sell.

Tactic 3: Expel Government and NGOs. Even though relatively wealthy at the outset of the war, Ameriya suffered from poor services infrastructure and, as a Sunni community, an estrangement from the Shia-dominated municipal government. AQI intimidated local residents to prevent them from collaborating with Coalition forces aiming to rebuild local infrastructure and foster relationships with Amanat and PC officials.²⁸⁴

Tactic 4: Provide Services to Dependent Residents. AQI could reasonably claim that it was providing security to the community members and protecting them from Shia death squads, as well as a general sense of law and order under *sharia*-inspired rule. Residents of Ameriya reported that AQI provided basic commodities to assist the needy, bringing in fuel, water, and foodstuffs. All of the banks in the neighborhood had closed, so residents turned to AQI for financial services and support at times.²⁸⁵

Tactic 5: Control Religious and Political Rhetoric. In Baghdad, the clerics associated with local mosques served as incredibly vital sources of public information and were seen as trusted leaders in their neighborhoods. Militants of all kinds ensured that local imams and prayer leaders were reinforcing messages of support for the group's presence in the neighborhood. Many AQI members sought religious sanction for their actions and support from local mosque leaders. Traditionalists were often inclined to frame their messages as positive support for AQI's

²⁸⁴ US Embassy, "Baghdad: Sunnis in Ameriya."

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

revolutionary mission.²⁸⁶ Public signage, from political posters to graffiti was tightly controlled by militias. Residents also became fearful of discussing politics with friends and neighbors, knowing that a misstep might put them in danger of retribution.²⁸⁷

Tactic 6: Recruit by Offering Money, Membership, and Revenge. Joining a militia provided young men with instant material and social benefits, with little training or experience required for the job. Local sources explained the attractive deal offered to a new militia recruit, with an average starting pay of roughly \$200 per month, a \$100 signing bonus, and an AK-47 usually thrown in.²⁸⁸ Previous victims of sectarian attacks made good recruits, as their motivation for revenge could be harnessed for the group's aims.²⁸⁹

Tactic 7: Foment the Chaos to Perpetuate Dependency. In a slightly counterintuitive sense, these groups' ability to enforce order in these communities was a direct result of their ability to produce disorder. By ensuring a general sense of chaos and conflict threatened the community, these groups enhanced their standing as the only force capable of keeping other threats at bay. Blowing up vital infrastructure, shooting at garbage collectors, assassinating wealthy or prominent leaders, attacking schools and hospitals, and other acts of seemingly random violence fit into a pattern of sowing discord in order to perpetuate a local community's dependence upon militia control.

²⁸⁶ US Embassy, "Baghdad: Seven tactics."

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

4.8 AQI's reckoning: Ameriya pushes back

Using a combination of the tactics described above, Ameriya stayed under the control of AQI into the spring of 2007, when al Qaeda designated it the new capital of its Mesopotamian caliphate.²⁹⁰ A series of factors, some local, some driven by broader forces in Iraq, created the catalyst for the local citizens of Ameriya to rise up against AQI. While the rise of a nonstate group's ability to exert control across a battlefield is insightful, just as important is looking at the factors that put such a group into tactical and strategic retreat. Hitting a high-water mark in 2007, AQI faced a series of threats that caused them to fail in their ultimate aim of producing complete systemic collapse across Baghdad's governance topography. This section reviews these factors. They include push-back from the population, missteps in maintaining organizational unity, and tactical countermeasures taken by the Coalition and Iraqi forces to root out AQI from Baghdad's area of operations. Significant to the overall downfall of AQI was its inability and unwillingness to coopt any meaningful sectors of legitimate governance authority to maintain any sort of hold over the population once fissures emerged.

As mentioned above, the Awakening in Anbar saw many Sunni tribal leaders turn against AQI members in their midst. On September 9, 2006 Sheikh Abdul Sattar al-Rishawi gathered a group of fifty like-minded tribal leaders from villages across Anbar Province to form the *Sahwa al-Anbar*, or the Anbar Awakening, to coordinate their efforts to declare war on the "thugs and criminals" of al-Qaeda after years of humiliation and brutality.²⁹¹ They also sought to reach out to

²⁹⁰ Mansoor, *Surge*, 137.

²⁹¹ Mansoor, *Surge*, 126.

other nationalist insurgent groups, like the 1920 Revolution Brigades, and split them away from cooperating with AQI. In doing so, they gambled on winning over Coalition support to help them re-establish themselves in charge of Anbar – which they found easy – and making inroads into the Shia-dominated state under Maliki – which they found much more difficult.

Within Ameriya, the same tensions that drove Sheikh Abdul Sattar to form the Awakening brought former insurgent Saif Sa'ad Ahmed al-Ubaydi to the same conclusion. AQI notoriously planted huge and deeply buried IEDs on Ameriya routes to destroy Coalition convoys, and often produced extensive collateral damage, often lethal, to local residents and their property. After AQI buried one in front of his house, Saif Sa'ad requested that they remove it, and that was the last straw for his acquiescence to AQI.²⁹² Saif Sa'ad formed the *Farsan al-Rafidayn*, or the Knights of the Two Rivers, aka the Baghdad Patriots (names for these local groups often changed or were mistranslated). One of the benefits for Saif Sa'ad, and other likeminded Sunni leaders who turned on AQI, was the support and relative freedom of movement granted to them by local Coalition commanders. Success in Ameriya led to similar events in other Sunni neighborhoods. These events were largely welcomed by the Coalition, but raised large concerns for others, notably the Maliki regime, JAM, and other Shia groups.

Other local factors drove the turnaround in Ameriya. As a Sunni-majority community, Ameriya qualified as a candidate for the Safe Neighborhood initiative, and MND-B finished construction on a series of T-wall barriers around the neighborhood in April. Its relative safety made it a desirable refuge for IDPs fleeing from other parts of the city. The influx of a new and

²⁹² Mansoor, *Surge*, 138.

even more desperate population, estimated at 4,000, challenged AQI's already meager ability to provide services to the population, and diluted their overall authority. The recent arrest of a hardline imam and AQI enforcer also dented AQI's leadership.²⁹³

The T-wall barrier had another indirect effect on the Ameriya uprising. One of AQI's major revenue sources was kidnapping for ransom.²⁹⁴ With the construction of the T-walls and added checkpoints in place, AQI found it difficult to perform snatch and grab operations at will across Baghdad, and instead had recently turned to operating within Ameriya itself, kidnapping locals. Reportedly, victims included relatives of two sheikhs who then helped lead the uprising.²⁹⁵ At the time, Ameriya was one of only three Safe Neighborhoods completed in Baghdad. Noting these effects, MND-B decided to launch additional T-wall enclosures at 12 other Sunni-majority or mixed communities.²⁹⁶

AQI fought the Battle for Baghdad largely as a spatial contest, but with a discernable methodology concerning the instrumentality of controlling excludability of the public goods delivered through infrastructural systems. Catastrophic denial of services at the city-wide scale was accompanied by efforts to deny specific services in local areas, producing a reliance upon their provision of alternative governance. One of the most effective countermeasures employed by the Coalition was in re-shaping the networks of transportation infrastructure that allowed

²⁹³ US Embassy, "Baghdad: Sunnis in Ameriya."

²⁹⁴ Williams, "Organized Crime," 128.

²⁹⁵ US Embassy, "Baghdad: Sunnis in Ameriya."

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

movement across and within the city. A final analysis of AQI's efforts and ultimate failure to achieve their strategic aim of systemic collapse follows in the concluding section of this chapter.

4.9 Chapter summary: AQI during the Battle for Baghdad

The episodes above illustrated the major activities of AQI during the Battle for Baghdad. In an overall pursuit of collapsing the governance system of Iraq, AQI challenged state authority, engaged in inter-factional conflict, and asserted control over local populations for organizational imperatives.

Here I present my findings on AQI's tactics, highlighting the infrastructural networks under review and commenting on the various components of Baghdad's governance topography. I provide a brief compilation of the ways that elements of that topography shaped the tactics of AQI, either as an opportunity to exploit, or an obstacle to overcome. I assess these tactics as having a discriminate or indiscriminate impact. Discussing discriminate impacts, I address how AQI's tactics related to a very specific component of the overall system or enabled them to shape the behaviors of individuals or small groups of people in a local area. For indiscriminate impacts, I illustrate how attacking various components of these infrastructures had a relatively large impact on the entire system and affected many people within the city.

Public order: Attacking public order to foment system collapse was a major element of AQI strategy. This happened on the small scale of individual neighborhoods that AQI sought to use as safe havens, as well as at the broader level of undermining the Coalition's and the GoI's efforts to reconstruct Iraq.

Military-style assaults on local police units and checkpoints produced gaps in Iraq's delivery of police services by creating pockets of territory not protected by official state sources. Producing this vacuum, AQI was able to provide alternative services of law and order. AQI provided protection to residents from Shia militia attacks and provided legal services such as the adjudication of disputes through *sharia* courts.

Catastrophic attacks in public spheres like suicide bombings in downtown markets produced indiscriminate effects across Baghdad. Attacking the police services infrastructure by bombing cadet graduations and assassinating key leaders produced indiscriminate effects on the delivery of public order. Comparing the relative importance of attacking police infrastructures relative to other services ranks these systems as highly important to AQI strategy.

Transportation: Another highly important component of AQI's strategy involved control over the network of roads and bridges in Baghdad. Connected to their desire to possess territorial control over certain neighborhoods, they focused on shaping the use of critical transportation routes providing access and transit to and across specific areas. The employment of IEDs hindered the Coalition's freedom of movement through several neighborhoods. Shaping the behavior of Coalition and Iraqi forces enabled AQI's ability to use specific routes for the movement of weapons and fighters within and across theaters of conflict.

At the indiscriminate level, spectacular attacks on transportation networks produced both instrumental and exemplary results for AQI. The ability to sever crucial arteries of travel, such as bridges across the Tigris, served AQI's insurgent aims by controlling routes of attack by state and rival forces. These attacks also demonstrated weaknesses in the Coalition's ability to provide an overwatch of security for Baghdad.

Essential services: AQI's efforts to shape the delivery of essential services reflects a great ability to deny these services, but little ability to provide alternatives. At the discriminate level of local community control, AQI could attack, harass, and interfere with the delivery of services at the local level. But this largely worked at odds with their efforts to ingratiate themselves among local residents who were already suffering from a variety of depredations. Looking at the delivery of oil products, AQI's tactical behaviors reflect the pursuit of basic organizational aims and the need for funding the insurgency.

Acts of destruction at the indiscriminate level such as the interdiction of major pipelines served aims directed at undermining the Coalition's efforts to reconstruct Iraq, but also boosted a secondary system of truck transport of petroleum products. This system proved more vulnerable to actors seeking illicit control, including both AQI and JAM. Overall, attacks on essential services infrastructures may represent intent to upset the population's access to basic needs and undermine state authority, but generally reflect the pursuit of organizational goals like funding opportunities.

Expertise: AQI's strategy of system collapse included an approach to expertise services infrastructures like hospitals but it figures low in importance relative to the other services discussed here. The primary tactics employed to influence the delivery of health care include attacks on facilities and assassinations of skilled officials and workers within the field. Producing an environment of threats and insecurity, AQI's major success in interdicting this type of infrastructure was in increasing Iraq's brain drain.²⁹⁷ The departure of a hugely important segment

²⁹⁷ Jonathan Steele, "The Iraqi brain drain," *The Guardian*, March 23, 2006.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/mar/24/iraq.jonathansteele>

of the population, involving many skilled personnel in health care²⁹⁸ needs to be considered as a crucial component in the analysis of post-conflict governance.

Entitlement: Based on AQI's tactical actions it is apparent that its attacks did not intend to directly affect the delivery of government assistance to IDPs. While specific bombing attacks in various neighborhoods disrupted local governance, the influence of AQI attacks on this system of governance infrastructure mostly remained at the indiscriminate level. By inciting sectarian conflict, these attacks drove desperate families to seek government support. Forcing Sunni families to seek the support of a Shia government complicated the overall environment of governance during the Battle for Baghdad.

Table 4.1 AQI's tactics against services infrastructures

<i>Public order: Police</i>		Overall tactical importance: HIGH
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attacks on officers, units, checkpoints, facilities - intimidation of local forces - fake checkpoints 	
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assassinations - catastrophic attacks on training facilities 	
<i>Transportation: Roads and bridges</i>		Overall tactical importance: HIGH
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local barriers and checkpoints - roadside IED attacks on forces - need for localized movement, access to weapons, supplies, and safe havens - freedom of movement for criminal activity 	
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to use for operational movement across theaters - catastrophic attacks on bridges for instrumental aims - spectacular attacks on population and facilities for exemplary aims - security threats to reconstruction projects 	

²⁹⁸ Al-Khalisi N. "The Iraqi medical brain drain: a cross-sectional study." *Int J Health Serv.* 2013;43(2):363-78.

<i>Essential services:</i> Oil	Overall tactical importance: HIGH
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - murders of city workers and contractors - interference with local services and officials - security threats to reconstruction projects
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assassinations of officials - catastrophic attacks on pipelines and facilities for exemplary effect and profit motive
<i>Expertise:</i> Hospitals	Overall tactical importance: LOW
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attacks on facilities - interference with local services - provision of supplies and aid to dependent local populations
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assassinations of specialists - general climate of insecurity feeding brain drain - security threats to reconstruction projects
<i>Entitlement:</i> Assistance to IDPs	Overall tactical importance: LOW
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interfering with local government
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inciting sectarian cleansing driving need for service

5.0 SEEKING SYSTEM COPTION: JAISH AL-MAHDI

This chapter evaluates Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) in its efforts to achieve profit, power, and coopt authority in a constantly changing Iraq. Individuals operating for themselves as well as the greater good of the organization sought ways to extract profit from Baghdad's citizens and the state's resources. Actions that intended to shape the behaviors of citizens in significant ways, by influencing public and private life on Baghdad's streets and in its neighborhoods, illustrate the group's efforts to achieve power in Baghdad, as illicit and unofficial control over what people could do and where they could go. JAM activities supported Sadrist efforts to gain and exercise legitimately derived authority within Baghdad's institutions of governance at the national, provincial, metropolitan, and local levels. However, successes in legitimate politics created significant tensions between various factions within the organization and created dilemmas for the organization. This chapter proceeds with an evaluation of JAM's efforts to build and sustain an organization, fight rivals, and enable the overall Sadrist aim of becoming a significant power player in the new Iraqi state and in Baghdad. The chapter concludes with a review of findings that highlight the role that various elements of urban infrastructure played in shaping JAM's tactical behaviors.

5.1 Seeking profit, power, and cooption of authority

On March 23, 2008, the sound of rockets impacting across Baghdad signaled the beginning of a new phase in the conflict to stabilize Iraq. Launched from Sadr City, most of the rockets targeted the IZ (Green Zone), the walled city-within-a-city in central Baghdad that housed a number of GoI facilities and foreign embassies. Over the next few days, JAM fighters launched a campaign to overrun Iraqi checkpoints in and around Sadr City. In some cases, firefights broke out, but in most there was no shooting as JAM was able to assert control due to the cooperation of fellow Sadrist loyalists within Iraqi police units. Reversing a self-imposed cease-fire that he had placed upon his JAM forces the previous July, Sadr was embarking upon his most serious challenge to the status quo since his failed uprisings in 2004. Not only was Sadr using JAM to challenge the Coalition, but he was also throwing down his gauntlet to test the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

The Battle of Sadr City erupted due to factional and political tensions within and among the major Shia parties jostling to exert control over Iraq. Its trajectory and outcome serve as a starting point for an analysis of the Sadrist Movement's overall effort to control Baghdad and its population across a full spectrum of tactics ranging from armed militant violence and predatory government corruption to petty criminality.

Nouri al-Maliki became prime minister in 2006 as the compromise choice between the major parties of the Shia coalition. While sectarian warfare between Shia militants and Sunni insurgents threatened to spiral out of control, significant conflict also pitted rival Shia groups against one another for power. The Badr Corps, an Iranian-backed militia, fought for turf against JAM in the streets of Baghdad while their respective affiliated parties (ISCI and the Sadr Trend)

contested each other in the political arena. As the major Shia party without a militia, Da'wa served as a buffer between the others, and its candidate al-Maliki secured the appointment. However, Maliki proved a far more cunning politician than expected. His ascendancy coincided with the US strategic decision to launch the surge and more robustly utilize US military power to stabilize Baghdad. While serving to support the legitimacy of the Government of Iraq and the effectiveness of its security forces, in many ways it can be seen in retrospect that this enhanced US military power was coopted by Maliki to allow his regime to more effectively compete in the intra-Shia contest. The Surge gave Maliki access to a militia power that Da'wa never had. That militia was commanded by General Petraeus.

Throughout 2007, the levels of violence in Baghdad and other areas in Iraq (significantly Anbar) dropped.²⁹⁹ A major element of the surge strategy was the Baghdad Security Plan (*Fardh al-Qanoon*), the operational framework for the deployment of Coalition and Iraqi forces. Commonly known as the “clear, control, and retain” plan, it outlined the strategy of establishing joint security stations across Baghdad’s neighborhoods. An initial operation dedicated to clearing an area of insurgent elements would be followed by a period of full-time security presence that would eventually shift from a Coalition-led to an Iraqi-led mission.³⁰⁰ Significant decreases in catastrophic terror attacks by al-Qaeda in markets, streets, and other public areas enabled MNF-I and the Maliki government to turn their attention to another source of instability, the threat of militia criminality.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ O’Hanlon and Livingston, “Iraq Index,” 3.

³⁰⁰ Kagan, “Enforcing the Law,” 3.

³⁰¹ Johnson et al., “The 2008 Battle of Sadr City,” 3.

Aside from Baghdad, another location served as one of the primary battlefields of contestation between Iraq's major factions, the port city of Basra. Militias and factional mafia-like elements jostled for control over the transport of oil and a range of other products through Basra. Within this Shia-majority city, the Sadrists had achieved a major foothold. In the zero-sum game of Iraqi politics, the Maliki government was in a weak position so long as the Sadrists controlled the flow of oil through Basra. Tired of the leverage the Sadrists continued to hold over his regime, Maliki decided to launch an assault against any militants who resisted this re-assertion of official Iraqi government control over Basra.³⁰² Operation Knight's Charge was conceived and partly launched without MNF-I cooperation. When belatedly informed, Petraeus warned against an ill-prepared effort but committed US support.³⁰³ The initial moves of Iraqi forces toward Basra on March 23 was the inciting event that brought JAM to launch its barrage of rockets at the IZ in Baghdad. Sadr decided to ratchet up the pressure on Maliki by turning any fight in Basra into a two-front conflict that included Baghdad. On March 25, Iraqi forces faced JAM militants in the Sadrist stronghold of al-Tamiyah in western Basra and found the resistance much fiercer than expected.³⁰⁴ Meanwhile, it was becoming clear that a major confrontation in Baghdad, centered in Sadr City, was beginning.

Highlighting major developments of the Sadrist challenge in Baghdad reveals the full-spectrum nature of this multi-faceted organization. The events of the Battle of Sadr City in 2008

³⁰² Cochrane, "The Battle for Basra," 7.

³⁰³ Michael Gordon, Eric Schmitt, and Stephen Farrell, "U.S. Cites Planning Gaps in Iraqi Assault on Basra," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2008.

³⁰⁴ Cochrane, "The Battle for Basra," 8.

illustrate the capabilities of JAM in conducting military operations and engaging in urban warfare. At the same time its political and social welfare wings exerted significant influence over Baghdad's population, as did the criminal elements operating under its banner.

In each of these realms, the exploitation of vulnerabilities within infrastructures and institutions is examined, offering insight into the strategic and tactical choices made by Sadrists and those seeking to defeat or defend against them.

The idea that Muqtada al-Sadr would be able to influence events of such magnitude in the spring of 2008 was largely inconceivable to most in 2003. Following the US-led invasion of Iraq, this relatively unknown 29-year-old member of the renowned Sadr clan parlayed his family connections and the deep-seated resentments embedded in Iraq's Shia community into leadership of one of the most potent entities to emerge in post-conflict Iraq. However, this trajectory was far from assured. Sadr faced many setbacks and outright failures yet persisted. External foes, including the US military, often contemplated or attempted his removal from the scene while internal fissures within his organization produced an entirely different set of threats to his leadership.

The early months following the invasion and occupation of Iraq brought chaos, confusion, and uncertainty to the Iraqi population. Briefly returning to the era of the CPA under Ambassador Bremer, I review a few crucial milestones in the transition from occupation to sovereignty and demonstrate how reconstruction policy developments directly shaped the evolution of JAM and the overall Sadrist movement.

Bremer's CPA operated from May 2003 until a transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government on June 28, 2004. During Bremer's tenure several controversial acts influenced how the Sadrists and other key factions determined their degree of participation in the new state.

CPA orders dictating the disbanding of the Iraqi army and the de-Ba'athification of society were largely products of Bremer's reliance upon a cadre of former exiles who had returned to transform Iraq according to agendas shaped by their time abroad. Many served on the Iraqi Governing Council, an ad hoc creation of the CPA intended to invest the eventual transition to Iraqi sovereignty with some legitimacy. This Iraqi Interim Government served from June 2004 until elections in 2005 created the basis for the Iraq Transitional Government. The Interim Iraqi Government was greatly influenced by former exiles such as Ayad Allawi and Ahmed Chalabi, who vocally advocated for the removal of Saddam and then parlayed their connections to achieve positions to shape the new Iraq. Another important figure to shape Iraq's political future was Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani.

Sistani served as the voice of the establishment Shia religious leadership in Iraq, securing and maintaining his position as an authority figure to Iraq's restive Shia population since the 1990s by acquiescing to Saddam and seeking to avoid becoming a target for Ba'athist persecutions. This quietist tradition stood at odds with the more activist Shia strand of the Sadr family. Muqtada's uncle Muhammed Baqir al-Sadr and his father Muhammed Sadeq al-Sadr, both Grand Ayatollahs, advocated for government reform and were well-regarded for their compassion for the poor. Both were assassinated (along with two of Muqtada's brothers) for presenting a threat to Saddam's rule.

A combination of opportunism by the exile community, acquiescence by an establishment clergy, and a firm commitment to a hasty departure by the US all but assured that whatever new Iraq the Interim Iraqi Government created it would be beset by debilitating compromises. Left out on the periphery and feeling marginalized by the process, many communities faced the difficult choice of either accepting this new status quo or actively challenging it. Untrustworthy exiles,

foreign powers, and out-of-touch clergy seemed to be dithering about politics as the country was slipping deeper into chaos.

The legacy of the Sadrist family, and the community of largely impoverished or dispossessed Shia that it had served in the villages of southern Iraq and the slums of Baghdad, provided the platform for Muqtada to voice such a challenge. Muqtada tapped into the frustrations that many Shia, and Iraqis in general, felt. In the aftermath of the 1990-91 Gulf War, the United States had allowed Saddam to put down Shia and Kurdish challenges, and the United Nations “Oil-for-Food” program ensured the Ba’athists retained control while the rest of the nation suffered. Misgivings about any US plan to play honest broker in a new post-Saddam Iraq was a hard sell for many Shia, and the network that the Sadrist clan had previously built became the conduit for Muqtada’s anti-occupation resistance movement.

The core of what would become the Sadrist organization was the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS), the social welfare institution with a legacy of caring for the poor and providing for the needy. The OMS, named to honor the martyrdom of Muqtada’s father, served as an umbrella organization that dispersed funds, food, and other goods to its needy constituency. Supported by those donating for legitimate charity purposes, it also served to launder funds gained through the illicit activities of JAM and corrupt officials within the Iraqi government.

The militant wing loyal to Sadr became known as Jaish al-Mahdi, or the Mahdi Army. With many discontented young men and a surplus of arms and ammunition in Iraq, many responded to Muqtada’s appeal to resist the occupation and ensure for themselves the security of their families and communities in an increasingly chaotic Iraq. While the US seemed largely uninterested in the looting and violence that increasingly beset Baghdad and other areas, Muqtada’s call for the Shia population to protect themselves seemed quite logical. However, in

some ways it was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Muqtada himself had issued a *fatwa*, or decree, that looters could avail themselves of anything worth taking as long as they paid the requisite one-fifth (*khums*) of its value to their local OMS office and Sadrist-aligned imams.³⁰⁵

Upsetting both CPA leadership and mainstream Shia clergy like Sistani, Sadr put himself on a collision path with US forces in 2004, aiming to seize and maintain control of the Shia holy city of Najaf, as well as Basra and Sadr City. While ultimately a military failure for Sadr, the 2004 uprisings put JAM on the map and motivated Sadr to ensure that his militia would be powerful enough to hold its own against rival factional elements (like Badr) but not aim to take on the US directly. The lessons of 2004 would turn Sadr towards legitimate political participation in the new Iraq.

While initially disparaging of political participation as legitimizing the occupation, Sadr realized the benefit of having a say in how the resources of the Iraqi state were being divvied between the various factions. While the decision to enter legitimate politics may have been a personal epiphany, other sources indicate that this change in direction towards legitimizing the Sadrist legacy was driven by the suggestions of other voices within the movement.³⁰⁶

In the 2005 election cycle, a loose group of candidates ran as the National Independent Cadres and Elites party and earned seats in Iraq's new national parliament and provincial councils. It was widely understood that these candidates were Sadrist-affiliated, although many Sadrists also supported the broader Shia coalition endorsed by Ayatollah al-Sistani, the United Iraqi Alliance.

³⁰⁵ Cockburn, 230.

³⁰⁶ Dan Bisbee, "Meeting with Deputy Governor Qassim N'ima Al-Dragy," Baghdad Governance Report, December 19, 2005.

As a major figure of the Shia establishment, al-Sistani struggled to maintain a veneer of non-participation in politics, trying to find an appropriate middle ground between the theocracy promoted in Iran and the quietism that kept him safe under Saddam. A direct involvement in politics by religious leaders also presented potential problems by making them responsible for the failures of government to deliver services to the people, a troubling possibility.

Up until 2005, Sadr seemed to be adopting this playbook, trying to maintain plausible deniability between his movement's clerical and militant power. But by then a critical threshold had been crossed, and the decision was made to engage directly in politics. Sadrist-affiliated loyalists soon started filling official GoI positions and became such a significant force that the Sadrist Trend would soon become a registered political party. This political wing of the Sadrist movement serves as the third leg of the overall organization. Following the model of Hezbollah, Sadr intuited that the best strategy for his movement was to gain a foothold in the social service government ministries.³⁰⁷ This would enable access to crucial state resources that could be divvied out to factional loyalists or provided to citizens to gain political clout, while keeping Sadrists out of the competition over ministries such as defense or interior that would require significant interaction with Coalition leadership.

³⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, "Iraq's Muqtada Al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabiliser?" *Crisis Group Middle East Report* 55, 11 July 2006, 14.

5.2 JAM's organizational imperatives

Baghdad witnessed a surge of population growth and urbanization challenges in the mid-20th century, like many other major cities in developing nations. In 1959, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Qassim spearheaded a major development project in northeast Baghdad to cope with the growing city's housing crisis. Originally (and still officially) called al-Thawra, or "Revolution City," this neighborhood rapidly became home to many new migrants from Iraq's rural south seeking a new life in Iraq's bustling capital. Largely Shia, and mainly underclass, the population by 2003 numbered over 2 million, out of urban Baghdad's roughly 6 million inhabitants (estimates vary).³⁰⁸ While typically referred to as a slum, this designation causes some residents to bristle; the vast neighborhood (technically split into two separate administrative districts by city planners) has a number of pockets where nicer houses, cultural sites, and busy markets serve a population of wide-ranging socioeconomic status. In 1982 it was renamed Saddam City, and in 2003 residents started referring to it as Sadr City, in honor of the martyred Ayatollah Mohammed Sadeq al-Sadr.

Early on, Sadrists sought to isolate Sadr City from the reconstruction efforts of the Coalition, ensuring that the population would need to rely upon the offices of OMS for relief. The OMS, the social service wing of the organization, served as the conduit for the distribution of largess to needy constituents including payments to widows, jobs for young men, and other types of aid, in Sadr-controlled neighborhoods. Militants provided security, a public good not being adequately provided by either the Iraqi state or US occupation authorities and were seen to be

³⁰⁸ A common comparison relates the size and density of Sadr City to Manhattan; whereas Manhattan has 1.6 million residents in 59 square kilometers, Sadr City has 2.4 million in half of that space, roughly 35 sq. km.

responsible for distributing a variety of other beneficial services to quiescent constituents. But in many cases, Sadrists went from merely filling a gap to actively trying to create that gap. Sadrists tried to undermine legitimate state institutions in many ways. They took control of local gas stations in order to corner the black market in fuel, controlled transport routes of goods, and used official posts to collect extra fees from citizens in need of crucial documentation.³⁰⁹

The business of alcohol sales provides some interesting insight into the oftentimes contradictory way that JAM enforced local control within different neighborhoods. Historically, Iraq's government offered a concession to the traditional religious authorities with views on alcohol consumption as un-Islamic by developing policies that put alcohol sales in Baghdad under the purview of the Chaldean Christian community.³¹⁰ However, despite official religious sanction, beer, wine, and liquor was enjoyed by many Christians, Sunnis, and Shia in Iraq. During the early Saddam era of the 1980s, Baghdad's nightlife scene was notably liberal and cosmopolitan.

Post-invasion, a new generation of Shia leaders presented a greater respect for Islamic piety as a component of their political agenda. JAM militants were called upon to enforce behavior rules in Sadr City and other neighborhoods, cracking down on alcohol sales and consumption. Local sources reported, however, that in some areas where JAM publicly espoused no-alcohol policies, they privately controlled the distribution and sales of that lucrative product, as well as participated in its enjoyment.³¹¹

³⁰⁹ US Embassy Baghdad, "PRT Baghdad: Office of Martyr Sadr attempting to take over fuel distribution in Baghdad's Karada District," May 7, 2006.

³¹⁰ Dan Bisbee, "Booze in Baghdad: The word on the street," Baghdad PRT Report, January 29, 2008.

³¹¹ Bisbee, "Booze in Baghdad."

Sadrists also resorted to kidnappings, theft, extortion rackets, and other predatory behaviors.³¹² The extraordinary degree of predation performed by Sadrists and Sadr-affiliated militant groups not only served to raise revenue for continued operations but also threatened the viability of the Iraqi state. Physical and political barriers often stymied efforts by both the Coalition and the GoI to repair infrastructure and provide services to Sadr City. US Army civil affairs units assigned to oversee District Council activities in the two Sadr City districts went through periods of unpredictable contact due to the conflicting agendas of the original, usually nonpartisan members of these councils, and Sadrists who eventually wrested control away from them and broke off contact with MNF-I elements. Reacting to the illegal and outright thuggish manner by which the Sadrists seized control, non-Sadrists sometimes operated shadow councils, aiming to maintain relations with MNF-I and Embassy personnel. When reconstruction projects completed under Coalition authority successfully improved life in Sadr City, a common ploy utilized by the Sadrists was to re-brand that project as an OMS project, ensuring the Sadrists would get the credit in the public's eye for any improvements made in Sadr City.³¹³

One major source of income for JAM was through interdiction of the government's system of distributing oil products, particularly petrol (gasoline) and kerosene, commonly used in Iraqi households for cooking. Iraq's legacy of state subsidization created opportunities for rampant black market manipulation. Reports from local neighborhood council leaders explained the widespread practice of local agents selling kerosene at rates above the mandated government price, typically due to the agents being JAM members themselves, or under pressure from JAM through

³¹² Williams, "Organized Crime," 123-128.

³¹³ US Embassy Baghdad, "Baghdad: Militants take over where government fails," August 19, 2007.

protection racket schemes.³¹⁴ The overall system, with drivers to corrupt, physical deliveries to mismanage, paperwork to lose, identities and ration cards to fake, and individuals at each level of the process willing to look the other way, served to provide a lucrative source of easy revenue for JAM and other militants in the city.

In April 2004, JAM fighters ambushed a US Army patrol in Sadr City, initiating a sporadic conflict that lasted until June 25 when a ceasefire was agreed to with conditions that kept US forces largely out of Sadr City for the next few years. In early 2007, with the launch of *Fardh al-Qanoon* operations to secure Baghdad with the Surge forces, MNF-I units were once again permitted to launch offensive raids against criminal and extremist elements in Sadr City. As discussed in more detail later, this was allowed through the acquiescence of Sadr and senior Sadrist officials – at the time struggling to rein in some of the more roguish elements of their organization in order to clean house and more effectively seek legitimate political credibility.³¹⁵

Defining Sadr City's southeastern boundary from the rest of downtown Baghdad is the (in)famous Army Canal,³¹⁶ also a component of Prime Minister Qassim's 1959 urban development plan. Connecting the Tigris and Diyala rivers across a stretch of the eastern half of Baghdad, it was intended to provide drinking water for the city's rapidly growing neighborhoods of Rusafa but had

³¹⁴ Baghdad PRT Report, "The Mechanism of Kerosene distribution in Baghdad," January 2, 2008.

³¹⁵ Cochrane, "The Fragmentation of the Sadrist Movement," 31.

³¹⁶ The Army Canal was notorious as a dumping ground for bodies during the height of the sectarian conflict in 2005-06.

fallen into disrepair and stagnancy by 2003.³¹⁷ With a major highway also running along the length of the Army Canal, this boundary serves as an obvious division between Sadr City and the rest of Baghdad. Unlike Baghdad's older, more historic neighborhoods, Sadr City was developed on a grid system, with long straight streets intersecting at regular intervals with wide avenues providing prominent divisions between different wards. Building height is fairly uniform throughout as well, enabling clear line of sight and even travel over rooftops along long stretches of some blocks.

A few blocks northwest of the Army Canal runs al-Quds Street, one of the major boulevards that bisects Sadr City and allow access to one of the most significant pieces of real estate in Baghdad, the Jamila Market. This crucial wholesale center is one of the primary locations in the capital where goods arriving by truck are re-distributed to a wide range of retail vendors. JAM established a firm mafia-style grip over all business conducted at Jamila, extracting enormous profits from fees, shakedowns, and kickbacks. Control over Jamila was widely recognized as one of the most lucrative of JAM's criminal enterprises,³¹⁸ and contesting that control would become a major component of MNF-I strategy during the Battle of Sadr City in 2008.

As with AQI in the preceding chapter, the JAM tactics to exert normative control within Sadr City can be reviewed through the lens of the seven major tactics used by militants in Baghdad identified through US State Department reporting.

Tactic 1: Displace the Other. While Sadr City was always a Shia-majority area, JAM saw itself in competition with other Shia factions for control, notably Badr. Notable flare-ups between

³¹⁷ In late 2008, a major rehabilitation project was announced to great fanfare as a component of *Fardh al-Qanoon*. See Scott Flenner, "Canal project to 'change the face of Baghdad,'" U.S. Central Command, December 3, 2008.

³¹⁸ "Anbari Trucks, Mahdi Guns & High Volume Trade," *Iraqslogger*, October 2, 2007.

the groups erupted into shooting violence, signaling shifts in the turf wars over Shia neighborhoods.

Tactic 2: Intimidate Your Own. A compelling question for understanding how neighborhoods can be controlled by militants is the question of manpower – how many thugs do you need to control a neighborhood? Conversations with locals indicated that numbers are not the primary factor. One respondent replied, “Some neighborhoods live in terror because of five sadistic bullies.”³¹⁹ JAM certainly did not lack for manpower, but cases of exemplary brutality also enabled their control over the population.

Tactic 3: Expel Government and NGOs. A major component of the Sadrist strategy involved the substitution of OMS services for every practicable aspect of aid provided by government or NGO groups. Not only did JAM target NGO aid workers directly, but it also threatened those seeking aid from NGO groups instead of going through OMS.³²⁰

Tactic 4: Provide Services to Dependent Residents. OMS developed into an extensive institution, with a complex infrastructure including components responsible for economic, social, and educational services.³²¹ A corollary to this tactic would state that if you cannot provide the service yourself, make everybody think you can. On a number of occasions reconstruction projects completed under Coalition of GoI authority would be re-branded as OMS projects, a simple but effective tactic to bolster the Sadrist enterprise.

³¹⁹ US Embassy Baghdad, “Baghdad: Seven tactics.”

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ US Embassy Baghdad, “Baghdad: Militants take over.”

Tactic 5: Control Religious and Political Rhetoric. The religious credentials of Moqtada were not significant when he ascended into the public sphere, but he proved an effective operator within the Shia clerical hierarchy and improved his reputation. Mosques within Sadr City aligned their messages with Sadrist objectives. To further bolster its religious standing, OMS launched call centers out of local *husseiniyas* (religiously affiliated schools and facilities) that offered help lines for citizens in need of social services. As *husseiniyas* are commonly places for IDPs or other needy people to visit, the OMS presence was calculated to provide them some greater religious legitimacy.³²²

Tactic 6: Recruit by Offering Money, Membership, and Revenge. The appeal of JAM across broad swaths of the Shia population's vast supply of underemployed young men was compelling. Many former members of the Iraq's military forces found new employment within JAM's ranks. College students with little likelihood of finishing their studies found new purpose and a new community in JAM.³²³ The loose-knit nature of JAM's structure enabled different groups to develop their own sense of mission, from basic neighborhood watch duties to a more entrepreneurial usage of force to achieve private wealth and power status within their communities. Membership in militia groups indeed had its privileges, as members often received special access to fuel, electricity, and rations to assist their families. Families of militia members were also granted immunity from the typical extortion, robbery, and attacks that many others in the

³²² US Embassy Baghdad, "Baghdad: Seven tactics."

³²³ Amir Taha, "Turning ex-combatants into Sadris: explaining the emergence of the Mahdi Army," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 55:3, 363.

community faced from the group.³²⁴ Those with special talents also found a home within JAM, as the group showed a knack for music and video production, creating and distributing original songs, often accompanying video montages of recent battlefield footage. JAM needed recruits to help them engage as social media influencers.³²⁵

Tactic 7: Foment the Chaos to Perpetuate Dependency. Like the activities of AQI in the neighborhoods they controlled, JAM actively undermined the efforts of legitimate government agencies or the Coalition to engage in meaningful efforts to improve service delivery. Keeping legitimate governance out increased the need for the alternative and illicit services that JAM could provide.

5.3 JAM against the state: The Battle of Sadr City

On October 12, 2008, *60 Minutes* aired a segment called “The Battle of Sadr City” detailing the tactics employed by MNF-I forces in the weeks following the March 2008 attacks by JAM.³²⁶ The segment focused on details provided by the brigade headquarters of the unit most directly involved in the fight and featured an interview with then-commander of MNF-I General Ray Odierno. The segment highlighted the two most salient aspects of the operation: the high-tech use of UAVs to identify and target enemy fighters, and the low-tech use of concrete barriers to shape

³²⁴ US Embassy Baghdad, “Baghdad: Seven tactics.”

³²⁵ Taha, 365.

³²⁶ Leslie Stahl, “The Battle of Sadr City,” *60 Minutes*, October 12, 2008.

the battlefield. This episode has not received a high degree of scholarly scrutiny and rarely figures into overall discussions of the efficacy of the Surge, but is recognized by some within the policy community as a significant source of insight for the future of urban operations involving irregular combatants.³²⁷ Here, a review of the kinetic operations centered on Sadr City is followed with a detailed analysis of how this period of intense urban conflict in one part of the city dramatically affected the rest of the city and its population, a largely underexamined phenomenon.

Another major element of this chapter involves the follow-on efforts of Coalition and GoI entities to re-establish governance and services in affected areas of Sadr City. While a crucial component of both general counterinsurgency theory and indeed the actual handbook utilized by MNF-I forces during the Surge,³²⁸ large gaps exist in the attention paid and the analysis brought to bear on these non-kinetic elements of urban warfare. The Battle of Sadr City presents a uniquely overlooked recent case through which to explore contemporary urban warfare across a complex topography of infrastructures.

The initial response to the rocket attacks on the IZ in March 2008 arose from a series of basic tactical issues. Indirect fire weapons like rockets and mortars have a discrete range and require a certain amount of space to launch. Based on the maximum range of the 107-mm rockets fired into the IZ, al-Quds street in Sadr City marked the furthest east from which JAM teams could be firing. Al-Quds also served as the major thoroughfare to the Jamila Market, the epicenter of JAM criminality in Baghdad. This street, codenamed Route Gold by MNF-I, became the frontline in the conflict to remove the threat of indirect fire into the IZ and cut off a major source of profit

³²⁷ Johnson et al., “The 2008 Battle of Sadr City.”

³²⁸ FM 3-24.

for JAM.³²⁹ The Battle for Sadr City began as contest over control over access to the neighborhoods between the Army Canal and Route Gold and then became a test of wills as MNF-I forces constructed a physical wall along Route Gold, separating JAM from both its primary source of income and the best launch points to attack the credibility of Maliki regime and its American support base.

The conflict involved two phases. In the first phase,³³⁰ US forces attacked into the neighborhoods south of Route Gold, Ishbiliya and Habbibya, to find and neutralize any possible rocket-firing positions. JAM fighters in prepared positions stood their ground, and resistance was heavier than expected.³³¹ Utilizing hidden IEDs and attacking convoys directly with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), JAM took out six Stryker vehicles within the first week of the fight. The Stryker units were then reinforced with heavy armor units with M1 Abrams tanks and M2 Bradley fighting vehicles, in a significant escalation of force. Heavy armor had rarely seen action since the early days of the invasion and was widely seen as overkill in conducting the regular missions of urban conflict, with limited mobility within the confined spaces of Baghdad's neighborhoods and weaponry capable of extreme collateral damage. However, the greater protection afforded by these heavier weapons platforms significantly reduced the effectiveness of JAM attacks. By April 6, the initial US operation enabled a follow-on force of Iraqi Army forces to fight their way into position and prepare to take over the primary security role in Ishbiliya and Habbibya.

³²⁹ Johnson et al., "The 2008 Battle of Sadr City," 6.

³³⁰ *Operation Striker Denial*, (March 26-April 14).

³³¹ Johnson et al., "The 2008 Battle of Sadr City," 8.

Concurrent with the fight below Route Gold, Sadrist uprisings and JAM attacks engaged Coalition units in the areas west and north of Sadr City. It became clear to Coalition leadership that freedom of movement across Route Gold allowed JAM units to coordinate their operations of launching indirect fire attacks on the IZ, emplacing IED ambushes, positioning snipers, preparing small unit fighting positions, fomenting public uprisings, and maintaining their grip on their criminal enterprises at Jamila Market and elsewhere. The BCT commander Colonel Hort directed his units to begin construction of a concrete barrier wall the entire length of Route Gold, effectively separating Ishbiliya and Habbibya from the rest of Sadr City. This second phase of the battle³³² saw 3,000 T-wall sections emplaced along a path over 2.5 miles, under constant hostile fire. Clearly recognizing the threat to their operational ability, JAM resistance to the construction of the wall was remarkably intense.³³³ JAM snipers converged to attack the cranes and engineers emplacing each 12-ft tall, 9-ton wall section, and US forces responded with a counter-sniper campaign.³³⁴

Technology in unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) has progressed rapidly since 2003, and while the criticality of the Iraq theater as a primary US interest ensured the most advanced craft in the US arsenal were available to commanders at the highest levels of Coalition leadership, the Battle of Sadr City produced unprecedented access to these systems by a brigade commander.

While commanding his unit to engage in one of warfare's oldest techniques of siege warfare – the construction of a wall – Colonel Hort was synergizing that effort with one of the most technologically advanced methods ever utilized to find and kill enemy forces. Continuous

³³² *Operation Gold Wall*, (April 15-May 15).

³³³ Johnson et al., "The 2008 Battle of Sadr City," 10.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

feeds from Shadow drones broadcast surveillance video of daily life in Sadr City to monitors in the brigade tactical operations center. Upon a radar or sensor notification of a rocket or mortar launch, a Shadow could be sent to the location and then follow the JAM team responsible from the point of the initial attack to wherever they went next. Depending upon the mission needs, COL Hort's tactical operations center could coordinate for an Apache helicopter attack or a Predator drone strike on the militants. Predators, with the ability to watch and follow groups of militants for hours, were highly effective at strikes that hit JAM headquarters facilities. Brigade battle staff learned to exercise greater patience and wait to attack militant groups until after they linked up with other teams at supply points or command locations.³³⁵

Despite fierce resistance at the beginning of the hostilities, JAM was eventually worn down and lost the ability to resist after a few weeks of high-intensity conflict. JAM likely lost over 700 fighters, as well as significant amounts of weaponry, supplies and ammunition necessary to maintain effective operations. US strikes had taken a great toll on JAM's offensive capability, and the presence and commitment of Iraqi forces to secure and restore order in Sadr City had enabled a shift in the public's perception in the effectiveness of the Maliki government and an outpouring of sentiment – and useful intelligence – from Iraqis that had grown weary of JAM's depredations on their neighborhoods.³³⁶

On May 12, 2008 Moqtada al-Sadr declared a unilateral cease-fire by JAM, an apparent recognition that his gambit had failed, both in Basra and in Baghdad. A large segment of JAM's

³³⁵ Ibid., 16.

³³⁶ Johnson et al., "The 2008 Battle of Sadr City," 17.

tactical leadership had already fled into neighboring provinces or into Iran, and this statement enabled Sadr to spin this loss in the best possible way to both the public and his own followers.

5.4 JAM within the state: Coopting public order and other services

As it progressed, the Battle of Sadr City raged with both kinetic and non-kinetic warfare. During the intense period of conflict from late March until early April, Baghdad PRT officials utilized their extensive network of personal connections with Iraqis from all walks of life to construct a picture of Baghdad under intense duress. Concurrent with the commencement of major hostilities in Sadr City on March 25, JAM militants across Baghdad made their presence felt. In Shia-majority neighborhoods, JAM units seized checkpoints and took control of movement through major streets and thoroughfares, limiting movement within and between Baghdad's districts. In what appeared to be a well-planned operation, JAM forced the closure of schools, markets, shops, and occupied major public spaces within the city.³³⁷ Reports flooded in from local sources that JAM was implanting improvised explosive devices (IEDs), emplacing snipers, and stockpiling weapons and ammunition at various public and private places across the city. Coordinated attacks on Coalition bases, Iraqi security units, and the IZ were surprisingly robust. The apparent high degree of planning and execution of these operations led many to believe to the

³³⁷ US Embassy Baghdad, "JAM controlling Baghdad's Shia neighborhoods," March 27, 2008.

main perpetrators were not run-of-the-mill local JAM units, but the so-called Special Groups who received more specific training and were better resourced.³³⁸

The intra-Shia conflict dynamic was readily apparent to most Baghdad residents, who plainly saw that the Sadrists' main ploy was to undermine the Maliki government. One of Maliki's recent political maneuvers was to create an alliance of convenience with the ISCI/Badr faction, which greatly enhanced his ability to take on the Sadrists in Basra. Sadr was fighting back with a powerful strategy of his own: to completely shut down Baghdad.

Along with the actions of JAM and the Special Groups to seize and control major chokepoints around the city, Sadr was urging "civil disobedience" by the population, aiming to produce large crowds protesting in the streets and forcing Maliki's capitulation as the capital city became unmanageable.³³⁹ While some gatherings appeared in a few Shia-majority neighborhoods, most Baghdadis went home, locked their doors, and tried to avoid the conflict. For a period of eight days (from the initial attacks on March 23 to April 1) normal day-to-day activities in Baghdad all but ceased. Government-enforced curfews and vehicular restrictions kept movement by regular civilians to a minimum.³⁴⁰

Evidence of the full range of tactics Sadrists were employing to undermine Maliki's government was on display when a team of militants arrived at the home of GoI spokesman Tahseen al-Sheikhly. They killed several bodyguards and kidnapped al-Sheikhly. Serving as the public face of the Baghdad Security Plan, al-Sheikhly was a highly visible member of Maliki's

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ US Embassy Baghdad, "Baghdad situation report: April 9, 2200 local," April 9, 2008.

³⁴⁰ US Embassy Baghdad, "JAM in Baghdad – how strong is it?," April 4, 2008.

inner circle, well known on media outlets and a popular liaison with US Embassy officials due to his fluent English and his outsized personality.³⁴¹ Al-Sheikhly was released on March 31 in what was thought to be quite extraordinary circumstances. His captors, who he described to Embassy officials as “a bunch of criminals and mobsters who I have to admit treated me rather well,” released him to his brother on the steps of the Iranian Embassy, a few blocks from the popular Assassins Gate into the IZ.³⁴² Likely members of JAM, or at least Sadrist-affiliated goons, the kidnappers did not receive any ransom money, and said they chose the Iranian Embassy because it seemed like the only place in Baghdad they were not likely to be arrested by Americans. Whether the kidnap was directed from higher up or presented itself as an entrepreneurial opportunity to the gang was never clear, but al-Sheikhly’s release seemed to serve as a gesture of goodwill from the Sadrists. Sadr’s rhetoric shifted to a more reconciliatory tone as the battle was clearly starting to swing against JAM after its initial successes.³⁴³

Another component of Sadrist strategy was to force the issue of personal loyalty to the forefront and make people take sides in the conflict. Public statements to mobilize civil unrest were more effective in those Shia neighborhoods where significant JAM presence served to motivate the less enthusiastic. Locals witnessing unrest in the 9 Nissan, Khadhimiya, and Shula neighborhoods (majority Shia) reported that many residents felt caught “in the middle” of the conflict and often declared their loyalties to protect themselves from the wrath of more zealous neighbors.

³⁴¹ Garcia-Navarro, Lulu, “An Iraqi Spokesman Reflects on His Captivity,” *NPR*, April 6, 2008

³⁴² US Embassy Baghdad, “Surreal end to kidnapping of GoI spokesman,” April 1, 2008.

³⁴³ US Embassy Baghdad, “JAM in Baghdad”

Graffiti appearing in public spaces reflected the political tensions affecting the city. Locals in Sadrist areas reported numerous additions of anti-Maliki and anti-Hakim (leader of ISCI/Badr) messages painted in highly visible locations.³⁴⁴

Many Iraqi Police in the Sadr City vicinity decided it was wiser to abandon their posts rather than face what might possibly be friends and relatives in JAM units. Most likely many of them in fact returned to fight on behalf of JAM. Iraqi Army units faced less desertion and stood their ground in more cases than the Iraqi Police in eastern Baghdad, although they were more likely to request and receive Coalition support.

Sadrist rhetoric continued to hammer home a nationalist message to paint themselves as true Iraqi patriots, and Maliki's regime as subservient to Iranian and American interests. While Da'wa was also a homegrown Iraqi party, the fact that Maliki had decided to team up with the overtly Iranian-backed ISCI/Badr faction enabled Sadr to more convincingly label him a stooge of foreign influence, under the thumb of both Americans and Iranians.

Sadr himself was increasingly the beneficiary of Iranian support through its assistance to JAM, but he always sought to keep his distance and maintain his "Iraq for Iraqis" nationalist position. In private, Baghdad deputy governor Qassim al-Duraji repeatedly painted his fellow Sadrists as more nationalistic and "authentically" Iraqi than their ISCI rivals during the crisis.³⁴⁵

One of the few top-ranking Sadrists to directly engage with Embassy personnel, al-Duraji even went so far as to suggest that the US had chosen the wrong side in the conflict. The US and the Sadrists shared "common goals" in supporting the rule of law and limiting the influence of

³⁴⁴ US Embassy Baghdad, "Provincial politics in Baghdad: Another kind of war," April 27, 2008.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

Tehran in Iraqi politics. Al-Duraji explained that the infiltration of the Ministry of Interior by Badr affiliates was such an open secret in Baghdad that it must have been condoned by the Americans. Therefore, he and many other rank-and-file Sadrists believed that it was obvious the US had merely decided to support one militia group over another and picked the Iranians instead of the Iraqis. When pressed, he conceded that he and other Sadrists had extensive Iranian connections. He also acknowledged JAM's reputation for criminality, admitting that rogue actors within his movement sought to profit from the chaos.³⁴⁶

Other public officials in Baghdad also willingly or unwillingly felt the need to express their loyalties. Notably, one of the more publicity-loving members of Baghdad's provincial government, Governor Hussein al-Tahan (Badr) remained conspicuously silent during the crisis. When pressed, his media advisor explained that al-Tahan was choosing to hold his cards close so as to not have to take a position that might weaken him politically however the fight turned out.³⁴⁷

Baghdad PC Chairman Mueen al-Khademy (ISCI) made a direct appeal to the citizens of Baghdad on March 27, asking them not to side with the "criminals and outlaws" destabilizing the city. Mayor Saber al-Essawi went on the radio to reassure citizens that the Amanat would continue to provide city services to all neighborhoods during the crisis, but that people should have patience because Amanat employees were also "suffering" under the curfews and restrictions.³⁴⁸ As previously described, a tenuous power sharing agreement between the ISCI/Badr faction and the Sadrists in Baghdad provincial politics often reflected, and influenced, the wider national-level

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ US Embassy Baghdad, "JAM in Baghdad."

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

contest between these parties. Just a few weeks prior to the Sadr City flare up, the PC (led by Mueen and his ISCI majority) made the bold move of firing the Sadrist-affiliated Deputy Mayor Naeem Aboub al-Kaby.³⁴⁹ While publicly presented as push-back by the ISCI/Badr faction against the brazen abuses of power and corruption perpetrated by Sadrists within the Amanat, it was clearly an act of desperation by a faction fearful that they were losing a grip on the resource-rich and crucial power center of city hall. The fact that the firing only led to al-Kaby temporarily changing titles within the Amanat while the issue elevated to the Prime Minister's desk indicates the degree to which this factional feud was capable of bringing Baghdad to a standstill.

Beyond the violence perpetrated between its combatants and the collateral damage to those unfortunate enough to get in the crossfire, the Sadr City battle took an enormous toll on daily life in Baghdad. Prices on basic foodstuffs and commodities rocketed higher across the city. The price for a typical package of tomatoes in Sadr City increased by 500%. Markets and vendors across the city struggled to stay open with enough products to sell.³⁵⁰ Fuel prices jumped, and scarcity drove black market activity. Hospitals shut down services, only admitting emergency patients in some cases. Due to the movement restrictions, many Amanat employees were unable to report to work and perform basic city services. Mountains of trash piled up across the city. Concerns that the Sadr City conflict would confront Baghdad with a dire humanitarian crisis, above and beyond what the city was already facing, greatly occupied Embassy and GoI officials.³⁵¹ Many residents from Sadr

³⁴⁹ US Embassy Baghdad, "Baghdad: Rivalry heats up among Shia parties," February 28, 2008.

³⁵⁰ US Embassy Baghdad, "Baghdad situation report: April 9, 2200 local."

³⁵¹ Baghdad PRT Briefing, "Sadr City response," April 2008.

City fled their homes to find shelter with friends and relatives in other parts of the city or ended up in one of Baghdad's many already-swelling IDP camps.³⁵²

Sadr had succeeded in dialing up an enormous amount of pressure on Baghdad, but by April 1 the tide began to turn against him. Despite repeated exhortations to rise up as one against the Maliki government and its foreign backers, Sadr was unable to garner the widespread "public disobedience" campaign he had aimed for. Shia-majority neighborhoods continued to roil, and Sadrist-backed demonstrations percolated every few days, but most districts saw a tentative return to business-as-usual once they saw the commitment of the US military to back the Iraqi government. Sunni areas in western Baghdad reported comparative calm, and residents credited their local Sons of Iraq militia as providing a sense of safety in their neighborhoods.³⁵³

In an ironic reversal of fortune, several of the fault-line mixed neighborhoods that had witnessed the brunt of the sectarian warfare of the previous year were generally now much calmer than their neighboring Shia-majority communities. A local reported her preference to avoid the Shia areas she once traveled through and instead chose to go through Sunni areas where "nine months ago they were slaughtering people."³⁵⁴ In fact, many began to blame Sadr and JAM outright for creating the hardships and anxiety that they had experienced over the previous week. Sadr made another bid for a massive show of public resistance by announcing a march of "millions" that would bring Baghdad to a standstill on April 8. When the march was abruptly called

³⁵² Baghdad PRT Report, "IDP Camp at Shaab stadium functional, most families wish to return when security conditions in Sadr City improve," May 17, 2008.

³⁵³ US Embassy Baghdad, "JAM in Baghdad."

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

off, many saw it as sign that Sadr had realized his position was weaker than imagined. Evidently, the Sadrists had banked on being able to bolster their numbers by bussing in a crowd of young protesters from Iraq's southern provinces, which Maliki was intent upon disallowing. According to a local official in Sadr City, it was clear at this point that GoI pressure was weakening the Sadrists.³⁵⁵ The Sadrist challenge to Maliki's authority would not engulf the entire capital, it would stay contained within Sadr City, in a battle that JAM was clearly starting to lose by mid-April.

Unlike AQI, the overall Sadrist strategy involved working within legitimate government in Baghdad to achieve its aims. The overall complexity of the Sadrist movement meant that direct connections to JAM could be overt, in that some officials openly espoused their membership in JAM, or covert, in that they deliberately masked any affiliation. Or, in many cases, the connection to JAM was only tenuous because participation in Sadrist politics did not necessarily indicate membership in JAM, or even complicity with the group's behavior. JAM itself developed into a polymorphous network of variously incentivized and dedicated individuals, cells, and units. All said, it is important here to highlight three significant government institutions that enabled the overall Sadrist movement, and therefore JAM, to benefit from control over various aspects of infrastructural resources flowing through Baghdad.

³⁵⁵ US Embassy Baghdad, "Baghdad situation report: April 9, 2200 local."

5.5 Exploiting expertise: Coopting hospitals

The Sadrist takeover of the MoH was one of their earliest, and perhaps most significant moves as an organization. Modeling much of their movement off the example of Hezbollah, Sadrists sought to gain authority over institutions that would a) provide them the ability to distribute largess and social benefit to loyalists, and b) keep them away from Americans, heavily concerned with the future of Iraq's security architecture.³⁵⁶ Even as early as 2004, when JAM was taking US forces on directly, Sadrists moved into positions of legitimate power within the MoH. From there, they began a campaign of institutional cleansing, similar to that described above in the Amanat, where factional rivals, independents, and all others not in line with the Sadrist agenda were forced out. Many doctors fled, or were murdered by JAM.³⁵⁷ In 2005, Sadrist control of the MoH was cemented through the parliamentary assignments divvied out under the Ja'afari government, and hardened again in 2006 when Sadr backed Maliki. Sadrists also infiltrated and took control of the state-run company responsible for procuring, importing, and distributing drugs and supplies to Iraq's hospitals, Kimadia.³⁵⁸

This section evaluates JAM influence over the MoH to demonstrate how this type of service is vulnerable to cooption by nonstate actors and can be exploited to exert control over a population. The essential quality of this type of service is that it is a public good that relies upon

³⁵⁶ SIGIR, *Hard Lessons*, 250-251.

³⁵⁷ Clea Caulcutt, "Iraq's deadly brain drain," *France24*, November 5, 2008. www.france24.com/en/20080511-iraqs-deadly-brain-drain-iraq.

³⁵⁸ Charles Levinson, "Sadrists' Grip on Health Care Takes Toll," *USA Today*, March 27, 2008.

the state's licensing and support for a certain type of expertise that improves society. The public good provided is the expertise of licensed practitioners, with access to a variety of technical systems to apply their expertise. This service is vulnerable to denial, in a catastrophic or indiscriminate sense when these practitioners and the facilities in which they operate are attacked and destroyed. However, its primary vulnerabilities for denial are of the discriminate type, where specific locations or individuals are targeted, shaping the ability of practitioners to demonstrate their expertise in needed scenarios.

More lucrative for nonstate actors involves a methodology leading to profiteering from this type of service's structure. Control over the behaviors of the licensed practitioners provided certain benefits, but control over the infrastructures producing the substances and equipment needed by those practitioners to deliver this public good also provided rich profit opportunities.

Access to the extensive infrastructure of the MoH and Kimadia provided three major elements important for JAM's fight during the Battle for Baghdad: patronage, preference, and profit. Control of the MoH led to control over hiring at hospitals and an enormous opportunity for patronage, with Sadrists filling the MoH payroll with JAM members. Estimates put JAM employees of the MoH at nearly 70,000.³⁵⁹ Control over hospitals also served a factional agenda.

MoH leadership made personnel and resourcing decisions that had ripple effects across the city, but JAM control of hospitals sometimes took on a more direct, and thuggish aspect. Episodes of JAM takeovers at hospitals were regularly reported to Coalition and Embassy personnel, with militants showing up after raids with injured comrades and demanding doctors give them priority

³⁵⁹ *“ATCHLEY et al, v. ASTRAZENECA UK LIMITED, et al.,”* Case 1:17-cv-02136, District Court, District of Columbia. 2017. 4.

care. Fearful that even the hospital guards, or FPS (Facility Protection Service), were on the JAM payroll, doctors and nurses had no option but to comply. Other cases in which hospitals were actually used by JAM to torture Sunni prisoners were reported.³⁶⁰

Huge profits were skimmed from the government money that flowed through the MoH, notably through Kimadia import contracts, as drug sales filled JAM's coffers.³⁶¹ Following the trail of money flowing through Iraq's MoH leads to a number of unsettling revelations about the international pharmaceutical industry, state-run enterprises, and their intersection with violent nonstate actors. In 2017, a suit was filed in the US District Court for the District of Columbia claiming families of American service members and civilians killed or wounded in Iraq through engagements with JAM militants had a right to sue five major Western pharmaceutical and medical services companies for damages under federal Anti-Terrorism Act statutes.³⁶² Plaintiffs in the case described the longstanding knowledge of corruption within Iraq's health care system by these international companies dating back to the Saddam era, and a continued willingness to look the other way as the Sadrists expanded their political control over the Ministry while receiving direct assistance from the terrorist group Hezbollah to train and equip JAM to attack Coalition forces.

³⁶⁰ US Embassy Baghdad, "Human rights NGO alleges JAM torture in hospital, reports increased Sunni militia activity," November 22, 2006.

³⁶¹ "*ATCHLEY et al, v. ASTRAZENECA UK LIMITED, et al.*," Case 1:17-cv-02136. 22.

³⁶² "*ATCHLEY et al, v. ASTRAZENECA UK LIMITED, et al.*," Case 1:17-cv-02136, 1. The five defendant companies included AstraZeneca, General Electric, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, and Roche. On July 17, 2020, the court ruled to dismiss the plaintiff's complaint for failure to state a claim under the Anti-Terrorism Act. This ruling was under appeal at the time of this writing in early 2021. More information on the case can be found at <https://terrorismcase.com/iraq-case/>

The suit contended that these companies knowingly paid “commissions” of up to 20% of a contract’s total value through JAM agents to win sales contracts within the MoH.³⁶³ The companies also allowed MoH contracts to contain unreasonable commercial clauses that provided funds for additional after-sales support and services but in reality served as a method for corrupt MoH officials to build slush funds for JAM.³⁶⁴ According to an MoH insider, Kimadia was the goldmine that JAM used to finance their empire in Iraq.³⁶⁵

Despite the obvious wealth that was flowing through the MoH, local health care officials often appealed to US forces and the Baghdad PRT for assistance in meeting the significant needs of a city in crisis. As national control by Sadrists consolidated within the MoH, local health care officials interacting with US government officials reported on important trends present within the health care system, and often related stories of bureaucratic mismanagement at all levels.

Local doctors criticized bottlenecks in their system created due to the unawareness of MoH officials in understanding the true needs of the medical staffs working within their units.³⁶⁶ Requests for US financial assistance due to apparent gaps in Iraqi budgeting for medical services were common. Meetings with the chairman of the PC’s Health Committee revealed the extent of confusion over how budgeting by the Iraqi government would impact local service provision in Baghdad, as this official expressed complete unawareness of crucial services being provided by

³⁶³ Ibid., 2-3.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ MSG Broderick Harper, “Medical City Situation Site Visit,” Baghdad PRT Report, April 17, 2008.

Coalition entities providing prosthetics for victims of terrorist acts.³⁶⁷ Health care officials at the Medical City Morgue reported on the challenges of keeping up with the arrival of an average of 150 new bodies per day. Providing identification services for family members and other forensic duties produced a workload that far outstripped the capability of the facility and its personnel, according to a report in May 2008.³⁶⁸

While the strains on Baghdad's health care infrastructure were not merely the result of its political takeover by the Sadrists, it is important to see how widespread the impact of cooption within legitimate institutions can be, from the multimillion dollar contracts with international corporations to the ability of local doctors to provide needed services in their neighborhoods. In one such example, a Sadr City gynecologist reported that JAM threatened him, telling him male doctors were no longer permitted to treat female-related health concerns.³⁶⁹ Vulnerabilities within the Baghdad's health care system demonstrates the complex array of threats to the provision of expertise services.

³⁶⁷ MSG Broderick Harper, "PC Health Committee Chairman Meeting," Baghdad PRT Report, May 12, 2008.

³⁶⁸ MSG Broderick Harper, "Medical City Morgue Assessment," Baghdad PRT Report, May 7, 2008.

³⁶⁹ Baghdad PRT Report, "Sadr City Doctor," May 10, 2007.

5.6 Exploiting entitlement: Sectarian violence for profit

While not as significant as the Amanat or the MoH in the overall scheme of Baghdad's institutional topography, the system by which IDPs made claims and received aid is important to review, to see how and why it could be manipulated by insurgents such as JAM.

The IDP crisis in Iraq added immeasurably to the complexity of the conflict. While refugees are a common result of warfare, the scale and rapidity with which a full-blown crisis emerged in Baghdad is remarkable. On March 12, 2006, the Baghdad PC reached out to Embassy personnel to inform the Coalition of the scope of the problem that was just beginning to emerge across Baghdad's neighborhoods following the Samarra bombing of a few weeks prior. The PC memo consisted of a five-page list of names and home districts of families that fled their homes.³⁷⁰ US and international aid organizations, Coalition military units, and every layer of Iraqi government struggled to cope with an issue that far outstripped the abilities of any single entity. A small institution, the MoDM became the epicenter of a truly daunting catastrophe.

The essential components of this infrastructural system boil down to a few key items, categorized as a) methods of individual identity verification, b) methods of household identification, and c) methods of providing assistance to the entitled parties. Seemingly simple, these elements prove much more difficult to manage in a city in the throes of a brewing sectarian civil war. JAM found ways to exploit the weaknesses of all three components of this system.

The difficulties of identity verification reflected the overall destruction of Iraqi government effectiveness over the past years and even decades. Legacy systems had out of date census data,

³⁷⁰ Dan Bisbee, "Displacement in Baghdad," *Baghdad Governance Report*, March 12, 2006.

and ID cards could have been lost or stolen, and replacements unable to be procured. Fraud was rampant within the IDP assistance program, as the difficulties in verification provided greater incentives to double dip, or make false claims, or forge documentation. The PC IDP Committee chair estimated in February 2008 that of the 130,000 IDP claims she had processed, she suspected 25% were fraudulent.³⁷¹ While many false claims came from individuals, local contacts reported that JAM had elevated the process to a science. JAM also intimidated and stole aid from NGOs to push them out of the aid game and make more room for OMS.

JAM also had an interest in destroying records of home ownership, as homes vacated by Sunnis put JAM in the real estate business, gaining houses for loyalists or becoming landlords over new Shia tenants arriving from other parts of town.³⁷² While not a direct aspect of the IDP process, this incentivized the willful destruction of documentation at government facilities that proved personal identity or property ownership. The role of real estate entrepreneurship as one of the driving forces behind sectarian cleansing in Baghdad is worthy of greater attention in conflict studies literature.

5.7 JAM's reckoning: Sadrists caught between politics and predation

In the previous chapter, the failure of AQI to achieve its ultimate aim of collapsing Iraq's governance system demonstrated how push back from a population, organizational failures, and

³⁷¹ Baghdad PRT Report, "Meeting with IDP Committee," February 4, 2008.

³⁷² Bisbee, "Displacement in Baghdad."

the Coalition's counterstrategy of controlling transportation infrastructure put that group back on its heels and largely out of play during the final phase of the Battle for Baghdad as the events of 2008 played out. In the case of JAM, a quite different type of group failure played out. In many ways this can be seen as a strategic success for the overall movement that JAM served. The Sadrist leadership indeed achieved success by becoming a significant player in Iraq's legitimate political landscape.

However, this political success was derived through a weakening of JAM's illicit power on the streets of Baghdad, caused by several factors. Like AQI, the predations of JAM produced backlash within populations tired of militancy overreach, and Sadrist leadership saw advantage in cutting some ties with their more thuggish elements, offering them up for removal by the Coalition, serving both parties' aims.³⁷³

Returning to the events of early 2007, and tracing internal JAM politics up to the Battle of Sadr City which began this chapter, exposes how the internal fissures within the Sadrists were exploited to induce shifts in the organization's political leadership away from militancy towards legitimate political participation. It retraces some of the episodes presented in previous sections but puts the internal dynamics of JAM at the forefront to produce unique insight into how dynamic factors on the battlefield changed the strategic logic for the Sadrist movement, to the detriment of JAM's tactical position within the conflict. Coalition strategy sought to produce incentives for Sadrist elements to support legitimate participation, and disincentives for JAM militants to stay outside the system.

³⁷³ Cochrane, *The Fragmentation of the Sadrist Movement*, 22.

In January 2007, Muqtada issued an order for JAM forces to stand down rather than fight Coalition forces. The likely explanation is a fear of a replay of the setbacks of 2004, as well as a gambit to enable his leadership cadre to re-establish central control over JAM and to punish or expel those who had engaged in gratuitous violence or were unduly exploitative of the Shiite population. Several distinct factions of JAM had very different reactions to Sadr's calls for a ceasefire.

According to Marisa Cochrane, the "first group included mainstream JAM led by the Najaf-based clerical leadership and the Baghdad-based political leadership. This group believed the movement had been heavily infiltrated by criminal elements and Iranian influence."³⁷⁴ While mainstream JAM "generally obeyed Sadr's orders to stand down," other parts of the movement were much more unruly.³⁷⁵ Consequently, the leadership formed a review committee and "established an elite group of fighters to purge rogue members of JAM — often violently."³⁷⁶

Sometimes called the Golden Battalion or Golden JAM, this group was set up to restore discipline by punishing or eliminating rogue elements.³⁷⁷ The leadership in Najaf reportedly dispatched Golden JAM to Baghdad to "hunt down, punish, and even assassinate rogue members of the militia before [Coalition Forces] can capture and interrogate them."³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 25.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 26.

A second group of loyal Sadrists began to work with US forces to get rid of the unruliest elements in the movement. According to Cochrane, the group, “known as ‘Noble JAM,’ opposed the criminal gangs and death squads” and believed that JAM could most effectively be purged of these elements by seeking “Coalition assistance.”³⁷⁹ This collusion between the Sadrists and the Coalition emerged after a series of back-channel negotiations that neither side desired to publicize, according to General Petraeus’ counterinsurgency advisor David Kilcullen.³⁸⁰ However, both sides saw pragmatic benefit to the new opening and warily pursued parallel strategies serving different agendas.

A final group, criminal gangs, also ignored Sadr’s call to stand down. Fighters with large personal stakes in the criminal rackets they had worked long and hard to establish, and which generated substantial income through exploitation of local populations, saw little reason to adhere to such a stand down. Consequently, they became prime targets of Coalition Forces and “Noble JAM.”³⁸¹ By the end of 2007, the traditional Sadrist leadership had made serious efforts to re-establish control over JAM but had only partially succeeded. Criminal activities and inter-militia rivalries continued, especially in Basra. The Special Groups with their pro-Iranian agenda had not been purged but had become overtly independent from JAM.

The US military was now explicitly differentiating between irreconcilable rogue members of JAM and others with whom they could engage. One colleague suggested in jest that there were “many flavors of JAM” operating in Baghdad. The Coalition sought out methods to determine

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Interview with David Kilcullen, September 19, 2014.

³⁸¹ Cochrane, *The Fragmentation of the Sadrist Movement*, 27.

ways to discern those who could be integrated into the political process from irreconcilable elements which were “as bad as AQI” and “criminal elements that use JAM as their cover.”³⁸² Enabling this purge, Muqtada extended the ceasefire he had put into place in August 2007 to last until February 2008. But a month later JAM was the target of a major offensive by the Iraqi government and Coalition forces.

In March 2008, faced with continuing militia unrest in Basra, Maliki launched a military offensive to take back the city. The offensive initially appeared to be a debacle, with many government forces deserting rather than fight their fellow Shia. Facing the possibility of a high-profile defeat in what was the first major Iraqi security initiative since the 2003 invasion, “Maliki and the Iraqi government flooded resources into the city.”³⁸³ Assisted by US surveillance and air power, the tide gradually turned in favor of government forces. JAM resisted vigorously but was significantly weakened by the time a truce was brokered.³⁸⁴ The ultimate outcome was a significant reduction in JAM-influenced crime and violence in Basra, as well as an enhanced stature for Maliki and the Iraqi security forces.

The battle of Basra was soon followed with the offensive in Sadr City. This phase was provoked by the persistent rocket fire attacks launched at targets within the IZ in Baghdad, mainly from the Special Groups.³⁸⁵ Despite strong resistance, about 700 JAM militiamen were killed and

³⁸² Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable with Colonel Martin N. Stanton, Chief of Reconciliation and Engagement, Multinational Corps-Iraq via Teleconference, Federal News Service, November 2, 2007.

³⁸³ Richard Iron, “The Charge of the Knights,” *The RUSI Journal*, 158:1, (2013), 57.

³⁸⁴ “Iran’s Invisible Man,” *The Middle East*, Aug/Sept 2008, 28-31

³⁸⁵ Johnson, et al, “The 2008 Battle of Sadr City.”

Sadr requested another ceasefire.³⁸⁶ A week later Iraqi forces moved in to take control over Sadr City. The battle had reduced JAM's military strength, removed a safe haven for the militia, and severely undermined both JAM's social control and its dominance in criminal markets.

The military defeats in 2008 were the result of many factors. The increasing effectiveness of the Maliki regime in harnessing the Iraqi state's security apparatus, aided by Maliki's deal-making with the other Shia factions with militant capability, was one factor. Coalition firepower against JAM also proved decisive. Coupled with the ongoing Coalition strategy to target various irreconcilables with Sadrist affiliations, 2008 proved to be a turning point for Sadr and his organization. Whether out of necessity or out of choice, the military defeats of JAM allowed him to disengage from those militant parts of the movement where he lacked control and to re-energize other elements such as his social and religious programs.

In June 2008, a Sadrist cleric read a letter from Muqtada providing guidance that JAM would largely be transformed into a civilian movement dealing with "religious, social and cultural affairs."³⁸⁷ Weapons were to be restricted to "an armed force of experienced fighters labeled the special companies... and pointed exclusively at the occupier."³⁸⁸ The letter promised continued resistance to the occupation while also promising to disown "anyone in the Mahdi Army who disobeyed" Sadr's new commands.³⁸⁹ In November 2008, Sadr created the Promised Day Brigade

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Anthony H. Cordesman and Jose Ramos, *Sadr and the Mahdi Army: Evolution, Capabilities, and a New Direction*, (Washington D.C.: CSIS, August 4, 2008), 13.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 23.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

as his personal militia, although one that was also permitted to fight against US troops. Sadr sought to maintain his anti-occupation and nationalistic credentials but pursue an agenda that emphasized the social, religious, and political aspects of his movement.

While JAM was effectively diminished from its high point as a significant threat to stability within the new Iraq, the Sadrist goal of coopting large parts of the state's governance system for partisan aims was achieved.

In the months before the March 2010 elections, Sadr played up his nationalistic side, urging Iraqis to participate at the polls to end the foreign occupation.³⁹⁰ Given the battlefield setbacks the Sadrists had previously suffered, they did remarkably well in the elections, winning 40 of the National Iraqi Alliance's 70 seats in the 325-member Parliament, proving the Sadrists had significant political power relative to the rest of the major Shia factions. After the departure of US forces in December 2011, Sadr took notable steps to position himself as a leader with broad appeal, speaking in favor of social justice, the rule of law, and against sectarianism.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ Isakhan, B. (2013). "Despots or Democrats?: Sistani, Sadr and Shia Politics in Post-Saddam Iraq" (p. 167-188), In Kumar, R. & Nizar, N. (Eds.) *Islam, Islamist Movements and Democracy in the Middle East: Challenges, Opportunities and Responses* (Delhi: Global Vision), 186.

³⁹¹ Mustafa al-Kadhimi, "The New Muqtada al-Sadr Seeks Moderate Image," *Al-Monitor*, March 13, 2013.

5.8 Chapter summary: JAM during the Battle for Baghdad

Here I present my findings on JAM's tactical exploitation of systems of public goods provision. Like the preceding chapter, I highlight the type of infrastructural network under review and present a brief review of the ways that JAM exploited this element of Baghdad's topography. When practical I discuss the ramifications of exploitation at discriminate and indiscriminate scales, or specific vulnerabilities at upstream, midstream, and downstream components of these infrastructural networks.

Public order: JAM engaged in significant military operations against Coalition and GoI forces, presenting a number of threats to public order. Initially filling a perceived gap in police services provided to local neighborhoods following the initial invasion, militant groups expanded their ability to control areas like Sadr City and worked to prevent the re-establishment of authority by legitimate police forces and opposed the presence of Coalition units.

On the broader indiscriminate level, the population's respect for and cooperation with police units was challenged by a widespread perception that militants had infiltrated the MoI, and police forces served mainly to pursue factional objectives, not the impartial protection of Baghdad's residents. JAM operated fake checkpoints and conducted death squad operations wearing IPS uniforms. Assassinations and kidnappings of rival political leaders and key officials such as judges by JAM operatives further undermined the delivery of law-and-order services.

Transportation: Connected to the efforts to undermine the legitimate security forces of Iraq and their Coalition supporters, JAM engaged in tactics to control access to Baghdad's network of roads and bridges. Focused on denying Coalition access to Sadr City and other key Shia enclaves, JAM employed upgraded IEDs with explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) along key routes.

Developed by Hezbollah and brought to Iraq through Iranian networks, EFPs posed a significant threat to Coalition forces. More than just a modified bomb, the superheated explosion of these devices produces a metallic dart capable of penetrating even the most advanced armor systems of Coalition vehicles.³⁹² Shaping the usage of major routes by Coalition forces enabled JAM to reposition and reallocate forces within and across theaters of conflict.

Responding to a new-found ability to express their religiosity, the Shia community expanded the scale and scope of their traditions. The number of public holidays skyrocketed under the new Shia leadership in Iraq. Often involving the use of public spaces and routes between different shrines, JAM displayed tactical motivations related to control access to crucial transportation resources.

Essential services: Control over essential services played a major role in JAM strategy. The ability to exploit vulnerabilities in Baghdad's governance structure enabled JAM to exert influence at the downstream, midstream, and upstream components of oil services infrastructure, providing enormous opportunities for organizational profit. Militants in local neighborhoods operating independently or with the collusion of willing or coerced officials gained control over the illicit provision of gas stations and kerosene distribution, creating lucrative black-market opportunities.

Gaining a foothold in black market activities, JAM militants were incentivized to make further incursions and disruptions to oil delivery services. Assassinations of local officials and

³⁹² Robert Bryce, "Surge of danger for U.S. troops," *Salon.com*, January 22, 2007.

disruptions of repair and reconstruction projects exacerbated the non-ideal conditions of governance that produced the demand for products through the black-market economy.

Joining the legitimate political process afforded the Sadrists more opportunities to channel state resources for factional aims. Contesting for control over the Amanat, Sadrist politicians with JAM affiliations used access to contracting and patronage to enrich themselves and loyalist partisans.

Expertise: The political takeover of the MoH by the Sadrists was a critical turning point in the Battle for Baghdad, enabling the movement's turn towards gaining a foothold in legitimate governance. Control of the MoH provided enormous resources through access to a large bureaucracy with contracting and patronage opportunities, especially through the pharmaceutical division. This upstream control was gained in parallel to JAM's targeting of hospitals at the local level through concentrated denial and illicit provision. JAM denied access to care for sectarian purposes and normative control of neighborhoods and used intimidation to secure the usage of facilities for factional purposes.

Like AQI's campaigns of intimidation and assassination of Iraq's professional class, JAM's activities against doctors and other health care workers contributed to the brain drain crisis in Baghdad. Expertise services were especially hard hit by the activities of extremists seeking to exploit and exacerbate vulnerabilities in Iraqi society.

Entitlement: The ability to exploit this service for factional ends seems to represent a target of opportunity for entrepreneurial members of JAM. Taking advantage of this infrastructure providing cash payments to specifically entitled recipients required a similar skill set as the corruption of other commodity-based services. Either through intimidation or collusion with officials responsible for its distribution, JAM proved able to control this service through

concentrated denial and illicit provision. Fraudulent identifications enabled the channeling of these government funds to factional loyalists or profit-hungry militants.

At the indiscriminate level, JAM was responsible for exacerbating the conditions of sectarian conflict that produced the society's demand for this service. This demonstrates one example pointing to the double-edged difficulty of bringing factions like the Sadrists into legitimate political participation in post-conflict scenarios. On one hand the political wing of such a movement may be advocating in good faith for legislation promoting an entitlement to support the needy. Meanwhile its militant wing may in fact be responsible for causing the need in the first place, and also possess the capability to divert those payments to factional aims.

Table 5.1 JAM's tactics against services infrastructures

<i>Public order: Police</i>		Overall tactical importance: HIGH
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attacks on officers, units, checkpoints, facilities - intimidation of local forces - fake IPS checkpoints 	
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assassinations/kidnappings of key leadership figures - terror operations disguised as IPS - infiltration of police units 	
<i>Transportation: Roads and bridges</i>		Overall tactical importance: HIGH
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local barriers and checkpoints - roadside IED/EDFP attacks on forces - need for localized movement, access to weapons, supplies, and safe havens - freedom of movement for criminal activity - influence on ability to launch death squad attacks 	
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need for larger operational movement across theaters - critical terrain for inter-factional conflict - access for religious celebrations crucial to faction 	
<i>Essential services: Oil</i>		Overall tactical importance: HIGH
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - murders of city workers, contractors 	

- Indiscriminate:*
- interference with local services and officials
 - rich source of profit for individual and factional corruption
 - security threats to reconstruction projects
 - massive theater of conflict among rival factions
 - officials within legitimate offices enabled illicit provision at local level
 - ability to control sectarian distribution of services

<i>Expertise:</i> Ministry of Health		Overall tactical importance: HIGH
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attacks on facilities - interference with local services - illicit provision to dependent local populations 	
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deliberate strategy leading to brain drain of qualified personnel - legitimate political takeover leading to massive corruption of state resources - ability to shape sectarian distribution of service 	
<i>Entitlement:</i> Assistance to IDPs		Overall tactical importance: LOW
<i>Discriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interfering with local government - fraudulent claims for factional corruption 	
<i>Indiscriminate:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inciting sectarian cleansing driving need for service 	

6.0 CONCLUSION

I stated out the outset that one of my primary objectives in this study was to build bridges between those who understand cities and those who understand conflict. Incorporating new approaches in academic and policymaking studies to the study of urban environments and political violence, I focused on how the Battle for Baghdad was shaped by dynamic relationships among its belligerents and a complex urban topography of territorial, demographic, and infrastructural features. I assembled these elements into a usable framework and tested its applicability to understanding a metropolitan battlefield: a complex conflict scenario in an urban environment where systems of governance form a major component of how the conflict is waged. Driving this study were my two underlying research questions:

- 1) What factors produce vulnerabilities in governance systems during complex conflict?
- 2) How are these vulnerabilities exploited by actors pursuing different strategies?

The framework I developed to answer these questions rested upon several theoretical insights drawn from different perspectives on conflict, urban studies, and governance. Pulling from these different fields I sought to construct an approach that engaged with both the agents of conflict and the environments in which they fought. My underlying assumption was that I could contribute to the study of conflicts like the Battle for Baghdad by deliberately seeking to balance a focus on its belligerents with a focus on its battlefield, developing a methodology to capture both static and dynamic elements.

The case of the Battle for Baghdad offered a unique episode for study based upon previous

personal experience, which presented a grounding for the theoretical insights I hoped to demonstrate. In this conclusion, I seek to evaluate the value of this study in two parts. First, I reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology utilized in its pursuit as I present my findings in the case study. Second, I offer practical recommendations for application of these concepts to improve US military approaches to interventions and urban conflict.

6.1 The weaponization of governance

Previously I asserted that new approaches to the understanding of governance in urban environments are likely to improve our overall understanding of complex conflicts. These conflicts feature an array of different actors using their ability to provide or deny services to a population, or the weaponization of governance, to pursue a variety of aims. The approach I utilized for this study begins with the proposition that a city represents a socio-technical system across a topography of population, infrastructure, and terrain. Aspects of this system exist along spectrums of physical tangibility to ideational intangibility, and from specific individual components to general elements. Infrastructure plays a unique role on this topography as it encompasses both physical installational components and rules-based institutional elements.

Conflicts in a city therefore consist of competitions to control elements of this topography, whether specific or general, material, or ideational. Belligerents fight to control things and places, and to control the behaviors of individuals and groups. They may also be fighting over systems of governance, which provide connections between these four other realms of conflict. Control over

aspects of governance provide methodologies for states and nonstate challengers to assert control over populations.

This established the weaponization of governance by belligerents as the central element on a metropolitan battlefield. From this basic observation I turned to developing the methodology I pursued in the case study analysis. To examine the weaponization of governance, I proposed a scheme for understanding the basic elements of governance, and how disruptions to these elements produced exploitable vulnerabilities.

First, I introduced the concept of governance infrastructure to illustrate the interconnections between administrative law, politics, bureaucracy, and technology in the production and delivery of public goods. This concept proved very useful in demonstrating the ripple effects that specific events, like the 2005 elections, may produce across an entire system of institutions and physical networks. Along with this static concept, I presented four major dynamic tensions as a useful way to categorize the interactions between various components of governance infrastructure. While most studies on political violence focus on factional tensions as a driver of conflict, I proposed several alternatives. Conflict can erupt between hierarchical components of institutions, among elements organized horizontally, and even temporally, as evidenced by the contests between Iraq's legacy institutions, the CPA-era councils, and the post-2005 government.

Next, I turned to the identification of specific services to determine how a deeper understanding of the logics of public goods provision could improve this study. The lack of consensus around categorization schemes presented an initial problem, but I believe that my focus on public order, transportation, essential services, expertise services, and entitlement services as a useful grouping of public goods permitted effective comparisons among these different types.

Understanding the intrinsic nature of these goods provided additional insight into the tactics and methods used to exploit them in the pursuit of factional aims. Along with the exercise of mapping out the underlying infrastructures responsible for delivering these services, I believe that a much more comprehensive view of the ways governance systems were disrupted and coopted was possible. This led to my overall categorization scheme of identifying tactics as catastrophic and concentrated denial, and legitimate, illicit, and alternative provision.

While typically conceived of as a pure public good and therefore ideally nonexcludable, public order was disrupted in notable ways during the Battle for Baghdad. Excludability of police services was enabled by the territorial control of neighborhoods by insurgent groups. Both AQI and JAM achieved something close to monopoly control over the use of violence in specific areas over certain time periods. With state authority pushed out through concentrated denial of police services, each of these groups then engaged in alternative provision of law and order, albeit incomplete versions. This was the case for AQI in Ameriya and JAM in sections of Sadr City. A competition over territorial control during the battle over Haifa Street demonstrated similar agendas between these groups, but with different forms of implementation.

The intrinsic congestibility of transportation as an impure public good served a role in enabling and constraining insurgent tactics regarding the control over roads and bridges in Baghdad. AQI was able to create mass disruptions to day-to-day life for Baghdad's residents through campaigns of catastrophic denial of bridges and access to downtown zones of commerce. During the 2008 Battle of Sadr City, JAM was also able to assert control over transportation networks by using militant forces at critical concentrated points to dramatically shut down traffic across Baghdad. Both AQI and JAM shaped access to certain areas of the city through campaigns of IED attacks against Coalition and Iraqi security forces.

The complexity of oil infrastructures in Iraq offered a variety of ways for each of these groups to disrupt and coopt this service. The tangibility of oil products gave them a high degree of feasible excludability, setting the conditions for exploitation by both AQI and JAM. Attacks on pipelines and other methods of shifting product movement through trucks enabled both groups' opportunities to engage in the concentrated denial and illicit provision of goods for organizational profit. JAM possessed a greater ability to control this service, and other essential services, first through campaigns of intimidation and collusion with local services offices and then through legitimate channels as the Sadrists expanded their reach into politics.

Hospitals provided opportunities for both AQI and JAM to assert control over local populations through concentrated denial of this expertise service. Because this type of service is largely based on human capital in the form of the knowledge and experience of skilled practitioners, it was exceedingly vulnerable to the threat of brain drain. Assassinations and intimidation of workers formed the major tactical methodology for disrupting and coopting this type of service, by both AQI and JAM. However, again JAM gained a greater ability to shape the legitimate and illicit provision of this service through entry into the political arena. Political control over the Ministry of Health by the Sadrists enabled an extensive takeover of the resources of a critical bureaucracy in Baghdad.

The entitlement payments to IDPs, consisting of a largely institutional infrastructure and several installations, faced concentrated denial through the basic use of violence and intimidation to prevent the interactions at local offices where the good was distributed to its consumers. Yet the fungible nature of the good, as a cash payment to an identified individual, provided incentives for JAM militants to devise ways to coopt the service. Coercion or collusion at these distribution sites enabled JAM to fraudulently channel these payments in an exercise of illicit provision.

Incorporating the final element of my framework involved connecting tactical behaviors to broader operational and strategic aims. In the introduction to the case, I pointed out several notable ways that studies on the Iraq War described and categorized the various factions like AQI and JAM. A major difference was presented in their overarching objectives as system collapse and system cooption. With these different objectives identified, a natural assumption about the tactical behaviors each group would engage in would put AQI pursuing system collapse only through methods of denial, and JAM pursuing system cooption only through tactics leading to illicit provision. Wanting to explore the full complexity of the conflict and not relying on preconceived assumptions about these groups, I introduced the element of my methodology that would enable me to compare and contrast tactical behaviors as aiming to challenge the state, compete with rivals, and extract resources for organizational benefit. Breaking down the behaviors of AQI and JAM in this way enabled several unique observations about the trajectory of the Battle for Baghdad, demonstrating ways that groups pursuing very different objectives often use very similar tactics.

AQI's strategy of seeking system collapse is most clearly seen in its campaign of bombings targeting major elements of Baghdad's public order and transportation infrastructures. Attacks on the Iraqi police at local checkpoints, key leadership positions, and the pipeline of new academy recruits intended to completely disrupt the state's ability to provide this service to its population. Destruction of bridges and disruption of major arteries of travel inflicted indiscriminate harm on the economic life of the city, stymied Coalition and Iraqi efforts to provide security, and produced widespread doubt about success for the post-conflict reconstruction agenda.

At the local level, AQI favored a methodology that did not see them take illicit control of the state's public services, but instead sought to deny them in order to provide alternative services. AQI leaders replaced state-produced public order with alternative versions that brought versions

of *sharia* jurisprudence to discriminately controlled territories.

The ability of JAM to project significant militant power in Baghdad during the early months of the occupation provided the overall Sadrist organization the clout to pursue a parallel political agenda, gaining them access to crucial components of Baghdad's legitimate state institutions. Gaining power at the upstream, national level of the health ministry provided significant opportunities to indiscriminately influence the delivery of this expertise service across its infrastructural network. Seeking political control over the Amanat's delivery of essential services to Baghdad formed another major component of JAM's agenda. The importance of this institution in serving the overall Sadrist aim of gaining the ability to coopt control of a significant chunk of Baghdad's governance topography cannot be understated.

JAM tactics at the local level involved an enormous effort to disrupt and corrupt the flow of the state's legitimately produced public goods to use that control over excludability to produce illicit profits and affect individual and community behavior. Taking advantage of the economic opportunities produced by state policies subsidizing kerosene, petrol, and other oil products, JAM found multiple ways to shape the delivery of legitimate goods for illicit ends. However, JAM also utilized alternative provision in places like Sadr City, where the offices of OMS provided welfare in the form of basic goods and cash payments to needy Shia families.

This brief rundown of the major activities of AQI and JAM provide broad support for seeing system collapse as primarily directed at catastrophic denial, and system cooption directed at illicit provision. However, looking the methodologies these groups used to control local neighborhoods and gain organizational resources there are similarities in their tactics, and even collusion in some cases. Both used concentrated denial to pursue sectarian aims, forcing massive internal displacement of Sunni and Shia families caught in the wrong neighborhoods. Both

engaged in the pursuit of black-market profits in Iraq's oil economy. Both engaged in campaigns of kidnapping for profit, and in shakedowns of local businesses for the purposes of extortion.

The major distinction in behaviors, as noted numerous times above, was the pursuit of legitimate political engagement by the Sadrists. This dramatically increased their power to shape governance in Baghdad and solidified their role as a major player in Iraqi politics as the Battle for Baghdad ended. From this comparative analysis of AQI and JAM, I turn to a commentary on some of the lessons learned about the Coalition's role in the fight over governance in Baghdad.

6.2 Evaluating the reconstruction of Iraq

It can be said that the US-led effort aimed for hitting a trifecta of reconstructing, democratizing, and decentralizing Iraq. In reality, progress in each of these aims undermined the efforts to achieve the others. Optimistically, the best that should have been hoped for was two out of three. The technical necessities of reconstructing Iraq's infrastructure to effectively satisfy its population ran counter to the political innovations of democratization and decentralization that gave hope to regional, provincial, and local governance bodies and their constituents that they would have greater autonomy from the central state. A state with one major revenue source: oil; a commodity inherently inclined to benefit centralized power. The inability to overcome this fundamental paradox at the heart of US reconstruction policy produced a political environment rife with sectarianism, corruption, and ineffective governance.

The challenges faced by the Coalition in stabilizing and reconstructing Iraq were incredibly daunting. Critical immediate security concerns were constantly pitted against longer-term

development objectives. Initial Coalition efforts that sought to radically decentralize governance in Iraq and significantly alter previous institutional arrangements were often at odds with later efforts that sought to stabilize an Iraq veering towards civil war, aiming to prop up whatever seemed to be working at any given time. State-building efforts were in direct tension with the expediencies of counterinsurgency.

This source of tension can be clearly seen as the plan to radically decentralize Iraqi governance ran into obstacles. Locally created councils were supposed to democratize the local delivery of services. As Baghdad's institutions were merely branches of a network of centralized national ministries, these councils failed to influence the degree that factional elites with interests far removed from local concerns would have on Baghdad's services systems.

The political priorities of the elites in charge of the national ministries were wholly disconnected from those of local leaders attempting to give voice to local concerns. Mid-level ministry officials, who actually had the most ability to improve Iraq, kept their heads down trying not to run afoul of party elites, militants, and angry demagogues in the local councils, if they hadn't already been replaced by less competent party loyalists. Governance paralysis emerged when turf wars between new CPA-era institutions and traditional Iraqi bureaucratic institutions erupted, leaving gaps for actors to exploit the uncertainty.

US counterinsurgency efforts primarily focused on local security conditions and high-level deal-making: the street and the elites. This left the middle level of Iraq's governance bureaucracy constantly buffeted by policy shifts driven by either bottom-up or top-down factors. The inherent difficulties of reconstructing a mid-level sector requiring technical expertise and a degree of insularity from partisan politics during a period of instability and institutional ambiguity contributed to the overall dysfunction of Iraq's new democracy.

A primary example of how top-level decisions about government architecture influenced downstream effects within services infrastructures is found in the realm of public order. Reconstituting the security sector so Iraqi forces could effectively take on the responsibility of protecting and defending the nation and its citizens became the primary focus of US reconstruction efforts, and there are numerous lessons to be taken from this experience. Specifically, notable instances where the security mission took priority over rule of law efforts – while understandable in the context of the extreme violence faced in Iraq – can be seen to have paved the way for a turn towards greater authoritarianism in the absence of significant US restraints on extralegal behaviors, as seen in the behavior of the Maliki regime following the successes of the Surge.

Apparent victory in the Battle for Baghdad over both AQI and JAM solidified control for the Maliki regime, which went on to win convincingly in the elections of 2009. However, during his tenure Maliki displayed increasingly authoritarian tendencies and constructed a vast patronage network that, with the withdrawal of US forces in 2011, hollowed out the capability of Iraq's security forces through extensive corruption.³⁹³ Despite all the good intent that supported Maliki during the Surge, his regime was largely responsible for fomenting the vulnerabilities in the new Iraq that led to the rise of the Islamic State insurgency of 2014-2015.³⁹⁴

While AQI appeared to be largely defeated by 2008, it had merely gone to ground for a few years and re-emerged when the Arab Spring incited the civil war in Syria. The sectarianism and ineffectiveness of Maliki's government provided an opening for the Islamic State to take up

³⁹³ Dan Bisbee, "Iraq: The Rise Fall and Persistence of the Maliki Regime," in Michael Dziedzic, ed., *Criminalized Power Structures: The Overlooked Enemies of Peace* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 2.

the mantle of revolutionary upheaval in Iraq. This time, they would embrace the idea of governance provision in ways that earlier AQI fighters had not.³⁹⁵

Concurrently, after Sadrist leadership seemingly disavowed its roots in militancy in favor of legitimacy, the fervor that had animated JAM took hold in other groups. Shia militancy emerged again in an array of other Shia factions not beholden to legitimate state structures. While AQI and JAM were effectively disempowered as groups during the Surge, the forces driving their initial creation and development were still present.

Understanding this later dynamic in Iraq's trajectory requires a return to several initial conditions in Iraq following the invasion of 2003, and how the failure to provide conditions enabling comprehensive public order and the rule of law fundamentally undermined Coalition objectives.

The early decision to disband the Iraqi Army and security services under the CPA and reconstruct a new Iraqi army as primarily a border patrol of 44,000 soldiers without tanks or artillery reflected the US intent to ensure that Iraq would not soon replicate its ability to destabilize its neighborhood and flout international norms.³⁹⁶ Over 2004, however, the growing Sunni unrest in Anbar and the Sadrist militant challenge in the south changed the strategic logic of the US, driving the formation of the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I) responsible for rapidly and expansively increasing the combat potential of Iraqi forces. Spending

³⁹⁵ Colin P. Clarke, *After the Caliphate: The Islamic State & the Future Terrorist Diaspora* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019).

³⁹⁶ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Baghdad's Green Zone* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 85.

over \$24.5billion to rebuild its military forces, the US oversaw a re-militarization of the Iraqi state in which, by 2012, roughly 933,000 people were employed in the security forces of the MoD, MoI, and the Prime Minister's Counter-Terrorism Force.³⁹⁷

Overseeing the rapid growth of the Iraqi security forces from mid-2007 to mid-2008, US Army LTG James Dubik commanded MNSTC-I during the crucial surge phase. Significant strides were made in fielding Iraqi forces and improving the capacity of the MoI and MoD to perform their institutional mandates. However, Dubik has since identified a lack of coordination between his efforts at MNSTC-I and the overall rule of law capacity building efforts as an important gap in US reconstruction plans.³⁹⁸ Rule of law responsibilities between State, Justice and Defense departments were not clearly delineated and a paucity of capacity within the civilian agencies left Defense with an outsize role in managing rule of law efforts.³⁹⁹ In many cases, this ensured the “short-term security necessarily took priority over long-term realization of the principles underlying the rule of law,”⁴⁰⁰ notably during the period of the Awakening. Political bargains brokered between Sunni tribal leaders and the Iraqi government by Coalition forces saw arrest warrants against former insurgents not served in order to secure these reconciliation accommodations. Mass transfers of detainees, mostly Sunnis, from US detention centers to Iraqi

³⁹⁷ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), *Quarterly Report and Semiannual Report to the United States Congress*, January 30, 2012, 68.

³⁹⁸ Panel comments by General James Dubik (U.S. Army, ret.) at “Policing Iraq,” conference hosted by USIP, February 29, 2012. <http://www.usip.org/publications/policing-iraq>.

³⁹⁹ Richard Pregent, “Rule of Law Capacity Building in Iraq,” *International Law Studies*, Volume 86, 343.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 326.

facilities also occurred during this time, but in circumstances that did not comply with Iraqi judicial process, a seemingly expedient compromise of rule of law integrity in the service of security objectives.⁴⁰¹

This turmoil afforded opportunities for AQI to take advantage of the ambiguity in this governance situation and expand their influence by shutting out legitimate governance and offer alternatives to captive local communities. The mission to reconstruct Iraq came into direct competition with the mission to fight a revolutionary insurgency like AQI.

The US strategy in Iraq was always trying to catch up with the realities on the ground. Understanding both the deeper history of the Sadrists and its internal organization could have enabled more effective strategies to counter its influence earlier. At the outset of the occupation, there was little understanding by US officials of the key role of the Sadrists in Saddam's Iraq. This included the sacrifices the family had made as well as the popularity and legitimacy enjoyed by Sadr as the heir to this tradition. Nor was there much understanding of the intra-Shia rivalries that positioned the exiles who had returned to Iraq after the collapse of the regime as an opposition force to those who had stayed and incurred the wrath of Saddam.

While Sadr was unlikely to ever overtly support the occupation, his hand was strengthened when security conditions rapidly declined, and Shia communities felt a need for local protection that the Coalition was proving increasingly unable to provide. Sadr's narrative of grievance stemming from US actions and UN sanctions prior to the invasion was easily converted into one of grievance and resistance to an apparently ineffective post-intervention occupation.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 329.

A major lesson to be drawn from the case of JAM is the need to examine the make-up of potential spoilers, identifying possible political fissures or organizational differences within such groups and how they may be disaggregated into elements that may be reconciled and brought into the political process and those likely to remain irreconcilable. Encouraging and exploiting such fissures can provide important opportunities. In the case of the Sadrists and JAM, this was made easier by the damaging consequences for the aspirations of the leadership of its loss of control over rogue and criminalized actors and the obvious overreach with which zealous and militant elements engaged in extraordinary predation upon wide swaths of the Iraqi population.

In many post-conflict environments, stability is often achieved through the negotiation of elite bargains between the most potent factions. In the case of Iraq, these elite bargains provided the conditions that drove the nation's trajectory towards kleptocracy instead of democracy. Through the political bargaining that made up the formation of national unity governments in Iraq, notably in 2006 and again in 2010, parties winning electoral support were rewarded control over ministries in an effort to give them a stake in the governance of the nation. With nearly exclusive control over the bureaucracies they won, parties treated their respective ministries as fiefdoms from which to extract rents and reward loyalists. A purge of technocrats and independent civil servants in favor of inexperienced party loyalists, followed by efforts to bloat payrolls and increase the patronage possibilities of each captured ministry office dramatically, and negatively, affected governance and undermined citizens' trust in the state.

In theory parties can place checks on rivals' behaviors ensuring that a system while rife with patronage can still be held accountable and weed out the most egregious offenders. The Iraqi parliament dithered for eight years to repeal an article of the criminal code that, in essence, gave each party exclusive domain over corruption prosecutions within the ministries they controlled,

allowing a minister to prevent investigations of political appointees within their administration.⁴⁰²

Despite great pressure from inside and outside of Iraq since 2003, the law was only changed in 2011, evidence that closing such a loophole was not of primary interest to political factions who clearly preferred to turn a blind eye to rivals' malfeasance as long as the favor was returned.

Elite political bargains that seek to build national unity through shared governance, such as those seen in Iraq, must be crafted with an open eye to the incentive structures of the political factions engaged in the bargain and how their control over bureaucracies can be utilized in ways that undermine the stability of the state. Capacity building efforts in Iraq intending to improve ministerial effectiveness and accountability have been extensive, with major initiatives launched by USAID and other international partners to improve Iraqi state functioning. The USAID-sponsored Iraqi Administrative Reform Project, *Tarabot*, provided a package of initiatives aimed at improving Iraq's national ministries and provincial administrative institutions in planning, regulatory reform, public policy, education policy, procurement, project management, and a range of other assistance initiatives.⁴⁰³

Despite the years and billions of dollars spent on these programs, significant doubts about the effectiveness of these programs have been raised. The overall report card on US reconstruction efforts in Iraq has been dismal. Of the \$61 billion spent by the US for reconstruction from 2003 to 2011 (representing only a portion of the overall amount of \$213 billion spent by the US, other nations, and Iraq), most went to the rearming and training of Iraqi security forces, and much of

⁴⁰² Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future*, 200.

⁴⁰³ USAID, *Tarabot* program. <http://tarabot-iraq.org/>

what was left was lost to profiteering, waste, and fraud, or to projects launched for short-term counterinsurgency purposes by local commanders.⁴⁰⁴

Iraq's recent history has been one of extraordinary political and social upheaval, war and foreign occupation, insurgency and terrorism, and crime and communal violence. To better understand this history, I developed this research project focused on identifying and explaining the vulnerabilities of governance systems on a metropolitan battlefield. During the Battle for Baghdad belligerents exploited opportunities presented by the complexities of urban terrain to exert influence over the city and its people. May any lessons gleaned from my endeavor to better understand this conflict enable efforts to mitigate or avoid others in the future. *Ne Frustra*.

⁴⁰⁴ Catherine Lutz, "Reconstructing Iraq: The last year and the last decade," *Watson Institute for International Studies*, Brown University, March 8, 2013.

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