



## A Quantitative Study on the Terrorist Activities Related to Al-Qaeda in Iraq

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**Theme:** This ARI analyses where and how the attacks related to al-Qaeda in Iraq take place, as well as which are the preferred targets and the actual victims of this terrorist violence.

**Summary:** Terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq kills and injures mostly Iraqis, many of them Shiites but also Sunnis. No more than a quarter of its targets and victims are American. The strategy of groups and organisations perpetrating this Jihadist terrorism seems to be based not so much on fighting the US military contingent deployed in Iraq as on imposing its own dominance over a large portion of Iraqi territory, fuelling sectarian confrontation and exercising social control. The modus operandi of that terrorism tends to be rather conventional, but the frequency of attacks is extraordinary, causing an estimate of between 900 and 1,400 deaths per month. This terrorism occurs mainly in the provinces of the country where, despite having a mixed ethno-religious composition, most of the Sunni Arab population concentrates and where the Islamic State of Iraq, proclaimed by al-Qaeda's wing in the country, is presented as an alternative to the official authority. This situation raises important concerns about the possible withdrawal of the multinational force which invaded the country more than four years ago.

**Analysis:** Al-Qaeda currently has in Iraq one of its territorial extensions and several armed groups affiliated to this terrorist structure. That Iraqi wing is none other than the group known as Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (Qaida al Jihad fi Bilad ar Rafidain), in reference to the Tigris and the Euphrates, both of which run through the Mesopotamian plain. This was the name adopted in Autumn 2004 by 'Monotheism and Holy War' (Tawhid wal Jihad), which was set up the previous year and led by the Jordanian Abu Musab al Zarqawi, who became the top leader of the Iraqi extension of al-Qaeda until he was killed in a US military operation in June 2006. Shortly afterwards he was replaced by Abu Hamza al Muhajir, with the express approval of Osama bin Laden. By then, Zarqawi had assembled a series of armed Jihadist groups which early in the year set up the Mujahideen Shura Council and, a few months later, in October, following the incorporation of some other small organisations, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq. This umbrella entity is presented to the Sunni Arabs in the country as an alternative to the official authority and its recognition within the Islamic world is insistently being called for by Ayman al Zawahiri.

Although not integrated into the Islamic State of Iraq, run and sustained in practice by the branch of al-Qaeda in the country, Ansar as Sunna, whose rough translation to English would be Followers of Tradition, is another notorious armed group in the area which has declared its allegiance to Osama bin Laden, operating in partnership with al-Qaeda despite having an agenda of its own. Certainly, the groups and organisations linked one way or the other to al-Qaeda which systematically perpetrate terrorist attacks, regardless of whether or not they belong to the Islamic

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State of Iraq, are not the only violent actors opposing the current regime within the context of the widespread conflict raging in Iraq since shortly after the military invasion of March 2003. Collective violence in the country also comes, among others, from Shiite militias, Baathist and other insurgent organisations, and some Jihadist factions not openly aligned with al-Qaeda. Overall, it is a heterogeneous sector combining armed resistance and sectarian violence, possibly fomented to a considerable degree by neighbouring countries, in addition to serious criminality.

However, al-Qaeda, both via its Iraqi extension and through their associated groups and organisations, regardless of whether or not they are members of the Islamic State of Iraq, is currently an especially prominent actor, if not the most prominent of them all, in the context of the widespread conflict that is so far preventing stabilisation of the country. But how many terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq do take place and where? What kind of methods and procedures does this Jihadist terrorism is using? What are the preferred targets for this religiously inspired violence and who are its actual victims? Since its proclamation, the Islamic State of Iraq has claimed responsibility for all the attacks perpetrated by its member groups, including of course al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers. Consequently, to obtain well-founded responses to those questions it was unavoidable to compile reliable data regarding on all these incidents and also on those for which responsibility is claimed expressly by Ansar as Sunna, as they appear on the websites [www.tadjdeed.uk](http://www.tadjdeed.uk) and [www.muslim.net](http://www.muslim.net).

In January 2007, the Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility for at least 601 attacks and Ansar as Sunna for another 203, so that groups and organisations linked to al-Qaeda in the country claimed responsibility for at least 804 acts of terrorism in that month alone. In order to verify these attacks and collect further information not referred to in the aforementioned Jihadist websites, since they focus on dates and locations that are not always precise and victims are often characterised to suit particular purposes, the data compiled was carefully cross-checked with almost 600 news items in English concerning violent incidents in Iraq during that month, which appeared in 36 media or news agencies of 11 different countries, both in the West and elsewhere, using the Factiva search tool. Furthermore, we also collected all the information on violent acts in Iraq, for the same period of time, offered by the TV broadcaster al-Jazeera on its Arabic language website.

Having cross-checked the Jihadist sources and those of the press, we obtained enough interesting data to analyse in detail up to 152 terrorist attacks related to al-Qaeda in Iraq during January 2007. These attacks probably account for between one-third and one-quarter of the total attacks which might be attributed to the groups and organisations linked with that terrorist structure, during the already mentioned month, in Iraq. These are, no doubt, much more than a significant sample of all the terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda which take place on a monthly basis in Iraq. Based on the available information, its subsequent systematization and due statistical processing, this work looks, first of all, at the scenarios and domains of these terrorist activities. Secondly, it describes and comments both the methods and the procedures that are common practice in terrorist attacks on Iraqi soil related to al-Qaeda. Lastly, it analyses the type of targets and the characteristics of the victims affected by this Jihadist terrorism amid the situation of widespread violence and civil strife currently existing in Iraq.

#### *Scenarios and domains of the Terrorist Activities Related to Al-Qaeda in Iraq*

In January 2007, almost half of all terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq took place in the province of Baghdad (Table 1). This can be deduced from the analysis of the attacks for which the Islamic State of Iraq or Ansar as Sunna claimed responsibility, cross-checked against international media sources. Since it is the area surrounding the country's capital, we can assume that both the large number of inhabitants and the density of the population in the metropolitan area, plus the fact that this is where numerous highly symbolic targets are located, make this province, despite being the country's smallest, the main focus for terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda. It is also where

most international media correspondents are based, which has perhaps enabled them to report more easily on the terrorist incidents there than elsewhere in the country.

This later circumstance possibly explains why, although groups and organisations aligned with al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for a notably higher number of attacks in the province of Baghdad in January than in any other Iraqi province, the proportion with respect to the total perpetrated over this period is somewhat lower than figures obtained after cross-checking these sources with media reports relating to the same incidents in international media and in the Arabic TV network al-Jazeera. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that Al Anbar, Nineveh and Diyala were the other three provinces worst hit by terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq during the same period of time, two of these precisely bordering the Baghdad province (see Appendix. Map of Iraq).

Adding to these data those referred to the other provinces of Iraq where terrorist attacks were perpetrated during January 2007, we find that all the incidents recorded once the two aforementioned information sources are cross-checked, occurred in just seven of the 18 provinces into which the country is divided, although provinces in which Jihadist terrorist attacks have taken place account for more than half of the Iraqi population. Overall, the geography of al-Qaeda related terrorism in Iraq extends over a contiguous area stretching from the centre to the north of the country. From another standpoint, this geography of terrorism coincides, at least in January 2007, with seven of the eight provinces in which the so-called Islamic State of Iraq was previously proclaimed.

**Table 1. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by provinces, January 2007**

Provinces	Checked with international press and Al-Jazeera		Claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Baghdad	75	49.3	281	36.0
Al Anbar	25	16.4	171	21.9
Nineveh	24	15.8	93	11.9
Diyala	16	10.5	178	22.8
Salahuddin	8	5.3	37	4.8
Tamim	3	2.0	12	1.5
Babil	1	0.7	8	1.0
Karbala	–	–	1	0.1
Total	152	(100)	781	(100)
Missing data:	0		23	

Source: the authors.

However, considering the ethnic and religious cleavages which have characterised Iraq ever since its creation as an independent country, one might well enquire about the sociological composition which, concerning these differences, exist in the seven provinces where there were al-Qaeda related terrorist activities. In this regard, it is interesting to note, for January 2007, that almost eight out of every 10 of these incidents occurred in mixed ethno-religious zones, where no particular aggregate of the population enjoys a hegemonic majority (Table 2). On the other hand, this is the territory where Iraq's Sunni Arab population is concentrated. A 59.9% of the terrorist attacks took place in provinces where Sunni and Shiite Arabs live together and a 17.8% in areas where Kurds or Arab, both Sunni, are the principal collectivities.

These data are hardly surprising in respect of the ethnic distribution in Iraq, where close to 80% are thought to be Arabs and almost 20% Kurds, although in some areas there are significant minorities of Turkmen, Assyrians and other even smaller groups. However, even taking into account (subject to the variations depending on the source) that around 60% of Iraqis are Shiites, it is notable that in January 2007 it has only been possible to document one terrorist attack in all nine provinces where the great majority of the population is Shiite and which account for more than 35% of Iraq's total population.

**Table 2. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by ethno-religious domains, January 2007**

Ethno-religious domain	Frequency	Percentage
Mixed Sunni Arab and Shiite	91	59.9
Sunni Arab majority	33	21.7
Mixed Kurd and Sunni Arab	27	17.8
Majority Shiite Arab	1	0.6
Total	152	(100)
<i>Missing data: 0</i>		

Source: the authors.

Terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq has an especial incidence, according to the data compiled for this study, in three of the five areas mapped for military deployment by the international force present in the country since the occupation in February 2003 and then authorised by Resolution 1546 approved by the UN Security Council in June 2004 (Table 3). In early 2007, this multinational force totalled some 150,000 troops, most of whom were from the US, although there were much smaller contingents from more than 20 other countries, including 10 Europeans. Although the military divisions do not exactly follow provincial borders, they largely overlap with neighbouring provinces.

In January 2007, almost all these terrorist activities took place in military zones corresponding to the Baghdad Multinational Division, Multinational Division North and the Multinational Force West, all three of which are under US command. In contrast, Jihadist terrorism committed by supporters or sympathisers of Osama bin Laden was scarcely felt in the other two areas where occupying armed forces are deployed, namely the Central South Multinational Division and the Multinational Division South East. The former is under Polish command whereas the later is under British and Australian command.

**Table 3. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by military divisions, January 2007**

Military Division	Frequency	Percentage
Baghdad Division	75	49.3
Multinational Division North	51	33.6
Multinational Force West	25	16.4
Central South Multinational Division	1	0.7
Multinational Division South East	–	–
Total	152	(100)
<i>Missing data: 0</i>		

Source: the authors.

As well as examining the territorial distribution of terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq according to administrative or military demarcations, it is worth taking a brief additional look at the localities in the country where such violence is more frequent and the size in terms of habitat where attacks are more likely to occur. In this respect, the information compiled for January 2007 corroborates, firstly, the centrality of Baghdad as a preferred scenario for this Jihadist terrorism (Table 4). The figures for the country capital in that month match those already established for the province of Baghdad.

If we now add the figures for Mosul, Ramadi and Baquba to those of Baghdad, always for the same period of time, these four cities, which together account for 30% of the country's entire population, are the scenario of just over 80% of the Jihadist terrorist attacks for which responsibility was claimed by groups and organisations linked to al-Qaeda. Furthermore, consistent with the distribution of these attacks by provinces and military divisions existing in the country, three of these major cities are in the centre of the country and the other lies towards the north.

**Table 4. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by locality, January 2007**

City	Frequency	Percentage
Baghdad	73	51.8
Mosul	20	14.2
Ramadi	12	8.5
Baquba	9	6.4
Biji	4	2.9
Faluja	4	2.9
Hit	3	2.1
Hadiza	2	1.4
Riyad	2	1.4
Tal Afar	2	1.4
Other	10	7.0
Total	141	(100)

*Missing data: 11*

Source: the authors.

If we look at the type of habitat where for al-Qaeda related terrorism in Iraq occurs, it appears that its incidence in rural areas seems to be nonperceptible, although perhaps those missing cases for which the precise location of attacks has been impossible to establish, since they took place on local roads or close to unidentified centres of population, might well correspond to that type of habitat (Table 5). Furthermore, again, always according to figures for January 2007, around a quarter of these incidents took place in small or medium-sized cities, 15.4% in larger urban areas, like Mosul and Kirkuk, and just over half in the metropolitan area of Baghdad.

**Table 5. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by size of habitat, January 2007**

Inhabitants	Frequency	Percentage
Between 10,001 and 50,000	12	8.8
Between 50,001 and 200,000	17	12.5
Between 200,001 and 500,000	12	8.8
Between 500,001 and 2,500,000	21	15.4
More than 2,500,000	74	54.5
Total	136	(100)

*Missing data: 16*

Source: the authors.

In short, these are terrorist activities which occur in provinces which, despite their mixed ethno-religious composition, concentrate most of the Sunni Arab population and where the so-called Islamic State of Iraq, proclaimed by al-Qaeda's extension in the country, is presented as an alternative to the official authority. Furthermore, al-Qaeda related terrorism in this Middle-Eastern country seems to have adapted to the characteristics of a society in which seven out of every ten people live in areas which according to its size of habitat can be described as urban, which incidentally is a common pattern in modern terrorism. Fact is, that Jihadist terrorism takes place mostly in just a few major Iraqi cities.

#### *Methods and Procedures for Terrorist Activities Related to al-Qaeda in Iraq*

In January 2007, almost half of the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Iraq by organisations belonging to the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the group Ansar as Sunna consisted in detonating explosive substances, while just over one-third were basically ambushes and fights (Table 6). Individual murders did not exceed one tenth of the total of incidents and the rest on record, though in very small percentages, include the action of snipers, other uses of weapons and a few incidents combining two or more methods of violent action. In short, the attacks related to al-Qaeda in Iraq are quite conventional in terms of the standard methods usually corresponding to a repertoire of terrorist violence.

In a situation of a widespread armed conflict, with a number of different contentious parties involved divided into more than two broad adversary factions with various different populations of reference often also territorially segmented, and considering the situation of the country following the military occupation and the spiral of destruction unleashed in its wake, it can hardly be

surprising that ambushes and fighting, which are more reminiscent of guerrilla warfare, account for many of the acts of violence. Nevertheless, in percentage terms, these remain almost twenty points below detonation of explosives, this later being a method paradigmatic of the terrorist phenomenon at present, in particular of international terrorism.

**Table 6. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by method, January 2007**

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Detonation of explosives	75	49.7
Ambushes and fighting	46	30.5
Individual killings	14	9.3
Action of snipers	7	4.6
Other uses of firearms	5	3.3
Combined methods	4	2.6
Total	151	(100)

*Missing data: 1*

Source: the authors.

In the case of Iraq, terrorist methods used by groups and organisations linked to al-Qaeda are in line with the procedures which, overall, are the standard *modus operandi* for collective actors having the same Jihadist orientation when operating in the context of the internal conflict raging in Iraq for the last four years, and still unresolved. Up to 46% of the attacks recorded in January 2007, in other words nearly half of the total of terrorist activities during that month, involved explosive devices, while in one out of every ten cases on record these were bombs attached to some kind of vehicle, generally cars but, to a lesser extent, also vans and trucks (Table 7). Medium-sized and light firearms were used, especially in ambushes and fighting or individual killings, in almost one-third of cases.

Furthermore, data concerning procedures points to a somewhat guerrilla approach in terms of the limited but notorious use of missiles, rockets and mortars, which is hardly surprising either in a situation like that of Iraq, where weapons are constantly on the move and which is brimful of heavily-armed foreign military contingents, which are also the target of insurgent violence. However, in seven out of every ten occasions in which this kind of weapon was used, the terrorists affected local neighbourhoods, markets and other public spaces closed to their allegedly designated objective, which was supposedly military or police. Overall, common procedures in attacks related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, as well as their methods, are more typical of terrorism than other kinds of collective violence and they coincide with the procedures and methods observed in other countries or conflict zones by diverse groups and organisations belonging to the global Jihadist movement.

**Table 7. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by procedure, January 2007**

Procedure	Frequency	Percentage
Various explosive devices	54	36.2
Medium-sized and light weapons	49	32.9
Missiles, rockets and mortars	23	15.4
Vehicle bombs	16	10.7
Combined and others	7	4.8
Total	149	(100)

*Missing data: 3*

Source: the authors.

The *modus operandi* of terrorism related one way or another to al-Qaeda tends to be associated, regardless of its location worldwide, with attacks involving suicide bombers. However, based on the data for January 2007 concerning violent acts committed in Iraq by groups and organisations linked to the terrorist structure headed by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri, it would seem that the proportion of suicide attacks is lower than often assumed. This is perhaps due to the disproportionate attention which suicide bombings receive in the media as compared with the coverage of other attacks. This is why a certain number of suicide attacks may not only meet the objectives for which the person willing to die killing others was recruited in any Islamic country within Muslim communities abroad, but may also serve functions of publicity or propaganda.

According to statistics based on news reports in the international media and the Qatari television Al-Jazeera's website, no more than 11% of all terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq during January 2007 involved suicide bombers (Table 8). If the figures based on the claims of the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna only refer to what they define as martyr operations in just 4% of the attacks, it is perhaps because they sometimes claim responsibility for this kind of attacks in other, more specific publications. In conclusion, suicide terrorism is far from salient, in terms of frequency, in the usual *modus operandi* of those collective actors which act in Iraq and are somehow or other aligned with al-Qaeda's extension in the country. In January 2007 they were a significant but small part of all attacks by al-Qaeda linked groups, which are not the only armed groups in Iraq that make use of this method.

**Table 8. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by suicide bombings, January 2007**

Suicide bombers	According to Western press and Al-Jazeera		According to the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	11.3	6	4.0
No	134	88.7	145	96.0
Total	151	(100)	151	(100)
Missing data:	1		1	

Source: the authors.

Although it is also common to associate the terrorist procedure of al-Qaeda and the global neo-Salafist movement overall with multiple attacks, where a series of explosions against linked or relatively closely located targets are perpetrated normally within half an hour or so, fact is that this modality, which is recurrent outside major conflict areas, does not seem to be the pattern in Iraq, at least according to the data compiled for January 2007. During this period, there are records of only three incidents which might be classified, due to their degree of complexity, as multiple attacks (Table 9), while the rest of terrorist activities responsibility for which was claimed by Islamic State of Iraq or Ansar as Sunna, based on a cross check of the information they offer and the news carried by the international press, were single episodes.

**Table 9. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by complexity, January 2007**

Complexity	Frequency	Percentage
Single	149	98.0
Multiple	3	2.0
Total	152	(100)
Missing data: 0		

Source: the authors.

Now, what are the death tolls for acts of terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq? Based on information on terrorist attacks in January 2007 as reported by the international press and Al-Jazeera, the average number of deaths per terrorist attack is two, and the average number of wounded people is five. Therefore, this is a relatively low death rate, although the extraordinary frequency of the attacks makes the overall monthly number of victims very high. In the above mentioned month, terrorist violence related to al-Qaeda in Iraq may have caused, extrapolating the figures for the 152 attacks analysed here to an approximate estimate for the overall total, between 900 and 1,400 deaths, and between 1,900 and 3,000 wounded. These estimates are in line with a United Nations report made public early this year, which states that almost 35,000 people died in Iraq in 2006 as a result of violence in the country. Thus, terrorism related to al-Qaeda would be causing at least 40% of these violent deaths.

During the month of January 2007, as many of 80% of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by groups and organisations linked to al-Qaeda in Iraq caused between one and five deaths, while close to 90% caused at least 10 wounded (Table 10). However, there are some especially deadly attacks which cause more than 10, 20 or even 50 fatalities, as well as numerous wounded, which receive considerable media coverage. In January 2007, and in Baghdad, one of these particularly bloody attacks regularly committed by groups belonging to the Islamic State of Iraq or by Ansar as Sunna, this time a multiple attack, resulted in 70 deaths.

**Table 10. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by casualties, January 2007**

	Dead		Injured	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
None	21	15.0	48	38.1
From 1 to 5	112	80.0	55	43.6
From 6 to 10	3	2.2	10	7.9
From 11 to 15	2	1.4	3	2.4
From 16 to 20	–	–	3	2.4
From 21 to 50	1	0.7	5	4.0
More than 50	1	0.7	2	1.6
Total	140	(100)	126	(100)
<i>Missing data:</i> 12			26	

Source: the authors.

At all events, what the figures reveal in the case of Iraq is a pattern of standard targeting for al-Qaeda linked terrorist violence in particularly intense conflict zones which the organisations' leaders consider to be of priority focus. Currently in Iraq the frequency of attacks is very high but the average death tolls are lower than they would normally be, per single terrorist attacks, in other different locations, such as in Western countries, although they do at times match and even surpass them too.

#### *Targets and Victims of Terrorist Activities Related to Al-Qaeda in Iraq*

What are the main targets of terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq? According to the analysis which it is possible to perform after collecting, systematising and processing the data from carefully selected international press sources and the Arabic news channel Al-Jazeera, regarding the attacks perpetrated by groups and organizations linked to the global terrorist network in Iraq in January 2007, there are three main kinds of target for this Jihadist violence: military personnel and facilities; police personnel and facilities; civilians and the population at large (Table 11). While the first of these targets accounts for more than one-third of the attacks, the other two are each hit by one-quarter of the terrorist incidents.

Overall, all three kinds of targets, which when taken separately would account for approximately between 39.8% and 23.8% of the total, together encompass 88.5% of all attacks related to al-Qaeda in Iraq during the period under study. However, sources of both the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna coincide that they do not actually address the violence towards civilians and the population at large. According to their version, based on the balance of the various kinds of target, they attacked almost 25% more military targets than reported in international press sources. The definition of the terrorism they perpetrate is such that they present military and police personnel as their main targets.

**Table 11. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by type of target, January 2007**

Target type	According to international press and Al-Jazeera		According to the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Military facilities and personnel	57	38.8	78	63.4
Police facilities and personnel	38	25.9	29	23.6
Civilians and population at large	35	23.8	–	–
Other governmental targets	10	6.8	5	4.1
Educational facilities and personnel	3	2.0	1	0.8
Shiite militias	–	–	5	4.1
Peshmerga	–	–	3	2.4
Other targets	4	2.7	2	1.6
Total	147	(100)	123	(100)
<i>Missing data:</i>	5		29	

Source: the authors.

As for the nationality of the targets of terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, there are also evident discrepancies in the figures deriving from one source and another. Although, this time, whatever the source used to draw up the statistics, again for January 2007, one can only conclude that

currently most of the targets hit by the groups and organisations which systematically perpetrate this kind of Jihadist terrorism are Iraqis (Table 12). Around a quarter of the targets, on the other hand, were identified as American. Targets of terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq are mainly Iraqi police or military facilities or personnel, or other governmental facilities and the Iraqi population in general. Violence of this kind against Western targets (Americans, in the specific case of the month under consideration here) is secondary.

**Table 12. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by target nationality, January 2007**

Nationality of target	According to the Western press and Al-Jazeera		According to the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Iraqi	106	71.1	84	82.3
US	43	28.9	17	16.7
Other	–	–	1	1.0
Total	149	(100)	102	(100)
<i>Missing data:</i>	3		50	

Source: the authors.

If the analysis of the victims of terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq is based on international press sources and the al-Jazeera news network, 44.5% of deaths are civilians, 33.6% military and 21.9% police (Table 13). The Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna offer, in contrast, figures which state that six out of every ten deaths in their attacks are military. While the information offered by the press tends to come from correspondents or reporters on the ground, the groups and organisations linked to al-Qaeda tend deliberately to ignore or minimise the impact of their attacks on the Iraqi civilian population and, above all, to exaggerate the impact of this kind of violence on military targets, probably in order not to undermine their image among the country's Sunni Arab population.

**Table 13. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by victims' condition, January 2007**

Condition of victims	According to the international press and Al-Jazeera		According to the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Civilian	61	44.5	6	5.8
Military	46	33.6	63	60.6
Police	30	21.9	28	26.9
Other	–	–	7	6.7
Total	137	(100)	104	(100)
<i>Missing data:</i>	15		48	

Source: the authors.

However, even when those perpetrating acts of terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, in other words the groups belonging to the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna, insist via their websites that their preferred victims are military, they do not seem to be so keen to admit the nationality of those killed or wounded in the attacks for which they claim responsibility. As with targets, the information available for January 2007, regardless of the source, leaves little doubt as to the fact that the vast majority of the victims of that Jihadist terrorist violence, between 74.1% and 84.9% depending on the source of the data used for the analysis, are Iraqis (Table 14).

**Table 14. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by victims' nationality, January 2007**

Victims' nationality	According to the international press and Al-Jazeera		According to the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Iraqi	103	74.1	79	84.9
US	36	25.9	14	15.1
Total	139	(100)	93	(100)
<i>Missing data:</i>	13		59	

Source: the authors.

In line with the evidence concerning the nationality of the victims of terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, the breakdown in terms of which civilisation they belong to or to what civilisation they can be ascribed to is, logically, equally revealing (Table 15). Despite the anti-Western rhetoric of al-Qaeda's leadership since at least the mid-nineteen nineties, which are echoed by the other components of the global terrorism network, the fact remains that its wing in Iraq, and the groups and organisations linked thereto, including Ansar as Sunna, kill and wound people who, based on their nationality and on the majority religion in Iraq, can generically be described as Islamic.

**Table 15. Terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, by victims' civilisation, January 2007**

Civilisation	According to the international press and Al-Jazeera		According to the Islamic State of Iraq and Ansar as Sunna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Islamic	103	73.0	79	67.5
Western	38	27.0	38	32.5
Total	141	(100)	117	(100)
<i>Missing data:</i>	11		35	

Source: the authors.

It is very likely that more than a substantial portion of the Muslims who are victims of terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq are Shiites. When Abu Musab al Zarqawi led al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers and became an emblematic personality for the global Jihadist movement even outside Iraq, the Shiites and their symbols were already a preferred target for his terrorist campaign, in a bid to incite sectarian violence. This is a local feature of the terrorist activities of the Iraqi wing of al-Qaeda, which implies contradictions with the discourse of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri, and which has opened well-documented rifts. Nevertheless, in March 2007 the Islamic State of Iraq published a document concerning its guiding policy and principles, which shows the extent of the hostility of the groups and organisations aligned with al-Qaeda in Iraq towards Shiites, whom they do not consider to be Muslims. Suffice to say that the very first of the principles listed reads literally that "Shiite Islam is a form of polytheism and apostasy."

However, this same document lists a series of circumstances, from support for secular ideologies to any behaviour which might be interpreted by the Islamic State of Iraq as aiding the occupation or refusal to help the Jihad, which, in accordance with the exclusive and bellicose definition of Islam shared by the groups and organisations that belong to that entity, make any Sunni, whether Arab or Kurdish, an infidel or even an apostate. Accordingly, it is most likely that terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq is currently making victims, due to ambitions to achieve social predominance, out of significant segments of the Sunni Arab population, which in theory is its own population of reference and where the grassroots base for its support lies. Interestingly enough, since the summer of 2006 tribes in Al Anbar province have united against the Iraqi wing of al-Qaeda and its associates, challenging its control in that region of the country. In turn, this has made this coalition against Jihadist terrorism a target of its attacks.

It is also illustrative that, as mentioned earlier, terrorist activities related to al-Qaeda in Iraq, in January 2007, took place in seven of the eight provinces declared by the Islamic State of Iraq as territory within which it plans to consolidate as the alternative to the official authority. These are precisely the provinces which concentrate most of the country's Sunni Arab population, despite their mixed ethno-religious composition. Against this backdrop, the rivalry between insurgent factions may be benefiting groups and organisations linked to al-Qaeda, which, via the Islamic State of Iraq, threaten whoever opposes them. It is possible that the terrorist attacks in these regions focus on individuals and groups of other religious beliefs, such as Shiites or, in much fewer numbers, Christians. But if we look at Baghdad, whose ethno-religious composition is clearly mixed, six out of every ten attacks perpetrated in January 2007 in the capital by groups and organisations aligned with al-Qaeda took place precisely in districts which are nowadays mostly populated by Sunni Arabs.

**Conclusion:** Terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq currently kills and injures more Iraqis than people from any other nationality. Many of them are Shiites, but there are also Sunnis. No more than a quarter of the targets and victims of this Jihadist terrorism are American. Based on this and other empirical evidence, it can be argued that the strategy of these groups and organisations which systematically perpetrate acts of terrorism in the Middle Eastern country seems to focus less on opposing the US military contingent deployed in Iraq than on imposing its own will over a large portion of the Iraqi territory and society. This terrorism is rather conventional in its *modus operandi*, although Abu Hamza al Muhajir said in September 2006 that he was in favour of the use of “non conventional bombs, be they biological or dirty, as they are call them [sic]” in what he described as the “battlefields of Jihad”. But the frequency of terrorist attacks related to al-Qaeda in Iraq is extraordinary, such that per month, if we are to extrapolate from our study about January 2007, this violence is killing between 900 and 1,400 people. These attacks are primarily occurring in the part of the country that is under US military command and which, despite a mixed ethno-religious composition, concentrates most of the Sunni Arab population. It is precisely the population to whom the Islamic State of Iraq, established in these provinces by al-Qaeda’s wing in the country, presents itself as an alternative to the official authority.

Attacking US targets and causing US victims, for both al-Qaeda in Iraq and the groups and organisations linked to it, legitimates their activities as part of a defensive Jihad. It was the US-led international invasion of the country which made it possible for al-Qaeda to develop a widespread presence in the territory, making Iraq a preferred operational scenario for current international terrorism. Beforehand, al-Qaeda had no such presence in the country, and nor was it a preferred theatre of conflict for the Jihadist terrorist structure. The purpose of attacking Shiites is to deepen the existing ethno-religious cleavages in Iraqi society and thus foment sectarian confrontation, in the short and medium term preventing any political normalisation in the country. Lastly, the terrorism related to al-Qaeda in Iraq which directly targets Sunni Arabs serves to exercise effective social control upon this ample segment of society which both al-Qaeda and the Jihadist groups linked thereto consider its population of reference. Accordingly, attacks on different targets serve different but mutually complementary purposes for the groups and organisations linked to al-Qaeda in Iraq.

All things considered, if the multinational forces currently stationed in Iraq under a UN mandate, which comprise mostly US troops, were to withdraw in the absence of internal and regional arrangements affording Iraq the necessary stability, the groups and organisations linked to al-Qaeda which operate there would subsequently suffer constraints but they would also be presented with critical opportunities. On the one hand, they would no longer be able to attack the targets which likely win them support or enable them to mobilise resources both inside and outside the country, elsewhere in the Islamic world and within Muslim communities in Western societies for instance. At the same time, however, they can be expected to benefit from portraying their own action against the invaders as a success in the event of a withdrawal of US troops, and they could be afforded an excellent chance to advance with fewer obstacles towards the consolidation of the Islamic State of Iraq. Developments such as these would not be free of implications in terms of security for other countries in the region and even, in terms of future terrorist threat, for European societies. Consolidating that entity as an alternative to the already-weakened government is a goal which, as evidenced by the Iraqi targets and victims of terrorism related to al-Qaeda in that country, is at the top of the Jihadist agenda both in Iraq and elsewhere. Ayman al Zawahiri has been quite clear in his reiterated statements on the matter.

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## Appendix

### Map of Iraq



Source: the authors