Loyal allies or threats to the polity? A comparative analysis of the relationship between incumbents and ethnic defectors following state victory in civil war

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Loyal allies or threats to the polity?

A comparative analysis of the relationship between incumbents and ethnic
defectors following state victory in civil war

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1. Introduction

From 1981 to 2007, the vast majority of intrastate conflicts saw the participation in hostilities of armed groups that were neither part of the security apparatus, nor insurgents fighting against the government (Carey et al., 2013). They were pro-government militias (PGM's) colluding with the state in its struggle against the rebels. While the term includes a variety of actors with different characteristics, a PGM can be defined as "an armed group that has a link to government but exists outside of, or parallel to, the institutionalized security apparatus and has some level of organization" (Carey & Mitchell, 2017, p. 128). In the context of numerous civil wars fought between distinct identity groups, a particular type of PGM has been utilized by incumbents in their counterinsurgency campaigns, that of 'ethnic defectors'. Kalyvas conceptualizes ethnic defection as the process by which "individuals join organizations explicitly opposed to the national aspirations of the ethnic group with which they identify and end up fighting against their co-ethnics" (Kalyvas, 2008, p.1045). That is not to say that ethnic defectors assume a new identity, disregarding their old one. However, incumbents are able to divide the ethnic group between rebels and their supporters, and individuals perceived as 'moderates' or 'loyal' to the state with whom they collude (Kalyvas, 2008, p.1050).

While the operational advantages of employing defector militias in counterinsurgency are manyfold for the government (Peic, 2014), very little is known about what happens to PGM's in general, and defector armed groups in particular, following the rebel's defeat (Jentzsch et al., 2015). During an insurgency, the advantages that derive from employing defectors unambiguously augment the capacity of the state to deal with the insurgents. However, after the threat has subsided, how does the state choose to deal with its former allies? Does the identity incongruence between the ruling elites and their defector collaborators make the latter a threat that needs to be eliminated, or are they perceived as loyal allies that must be compensated? What explains different outcomes in the relationship between incumbents and ethnic defectors following relative state success in civil war?

Echoing a broader consensus amongst scholars, De Rouen and Sobek (2004) state that different civil war outcomes are followed by different post-war environments. They list victory by

either the government or the rebels, treaty, or truce as possible outcomes of civil wars. This thesis will focus on cases where the insurgency was either defeated by the government, or the rebels declared a unilateral cease-fire and a cessation of their armed struggle. While not a decisive victory, a unilateral cease-fire is considered a success for the state, given that it avoids both defeat and concessions to rebel demands (Fortna, 2015). By excluding cases where a rebel victory occurred, or an agreement between the warring parties was signed, the goal is to explore the rationale of the ruling elites when dealing with ethnic defectors absent the insurgent threat. Once the political challenge emanating from the insurgency has subsided, regimes have sought to redefine their relationship with their war-time defector collaborators, a process which generates different results across post-conflict contexts. In trying to explain this variation, this research has been grounded on Staniland's theoretical framework of 'armed orders' (Staniland, 2021). For the purposes of this thesis, three cases with distinct outcomes have been selected. First, the case of the Kadyrovtsy in Chechnya. Here, during the Second Chechen War and the subsequent counterinsurgency campaign, former Chechen rebels colluded with the Russian state and were later incorporated in the security apparatus once the insurgency had receded. Second, the case of the Kurdish Hezbollah[1], an armed group with whom the Turkish state cooperated in the context of its war against the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). In Turkey, while the state initially cooperated with Hezbollah against the PKK, it later altered its strategy, and persecuted its members en masse immediately following the PKK's unilateral cease-fire in 1999. Finally, the case of the Sunni Awakening movement[2] in Iraq. In this case, former insurgents switched sides to fight with the government and the international coalition against Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Their cooperation with the incumbents led to the formation of a militia known as Sons of Iraq (SOI). After the defeat of AQI, rather than being integrated into the state security forces as promised, many of its members

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[1] Hezbollah in Turkey is an Islamist organization that was inspired by the Iranian revolution of 1979 and initially wanted to establish an Islamic state. It is also known as Kurdish Hezbollah, so as to differentiate it from the better-known Lebanese Hezbollah. This is because its membership consists predominantly of Turkish Kurds. Even though its rhetoric is centered around religion, the question of Kurdish identity also plays a significant role in the discourse of the group, albeit from an Islamic, rather than nationalist point of view (Uslu, 2007).

[2] The insurgency in the Iraqi province of al-Anbar, from which the Awakening Councils originated, was an explicitly Sunni rebellion. It brought together nationalist forces and Al Qaeda affiliates who fought against the American occupation and the Shia dominated Iraqi government. Beginning in 2006, many Iraqi Sunnis defected to the side of the incumbents and clashed with the remaining insurgents (Clayton & Thompson, 2014). By doing so, they crossed a highly salient identity boundary. While sectarian and ethnic identities are not the same, the relevant literature identifies this case as one of ethnic defection because Sunnis collaborated with the Americans and the Shia to fight other Sunnis (Kalyvas, 2008; Staniland, 2012).

were persecuted and suppressed by the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, with their relationship becoming explicitly conflictual in the last years of al-Maliki's rule.

By answering the question of what explains different outcomes in the relationship between incumbents and ethnic defectors following state success in civil war, this thesis aims at enhancing our understanding of an important aspect of ethnic defection that has thus far remained unaddressed. The thesis continues as follows: first, I will examine the literature pertaining to different facets of ethnic defection as well as the relevant research on post-conflict environments. Second, I will provide the selected theoretical framework. Third, I will lay out my methodological approach. Penultimately, I will analyze each case study in order to account for their different outcomes by fusing my theoretical framework with other relevant research. Finally, I will examine whether the concept of armed orders can indeed explain the variance in state strategy towards ethnic defectors after success in civil war, followed by my concluding remarks.

2. Literature review

To date, the literature on ethnic defection focuses primarily on its causes, the operational value of different types of defectors, and the way they affect the internal dynamics of an ongoing conflict.

2.1. Causes of Ethnic Defection

In their effort to highlight the causes of defector collaboration, scholars have provided various explanations. For Kalyvas (2008), the capacity of the state to offer material benefits; the collaboration of local elites, which encourages the participation of their networks of patronage; and the grievances held against rebels for past acts of violence, all precipitate ethnic defection. For others, the formation of defector militias by governments is considered in itself a strategic decision geared towards both encouraging defections and bolstering the legitimacy of the state amongst the ethnic group the insurgents claim to represent (Carey & Mitchell, 2017; Voller, 2021). Other works focus on the internal dynamics of the insurgency to explain the phenomenon. Diverging political goals amongst factions can often lead to fragmentation, with hardliners continuing the struggle, while moderates cooperate with the government to achieve their demands (Kydd & Walter, 2002). Local struggles over the leadership of the insurgency and over resources can also push armed factions to defect (McCary, 2009). Lastly, non-state armed groups that are targeted by other non-state actors will choose to collude with the state as a means of protection against their former comrades (Staniland, 2012; 2021).

2.2. Effectiveness as Counterinsurgents

Another field of research has focused on the effectiveness of defectors as counterinsurgents. This line of research is situated within the classic counterinsurgency maxim of employing local forces against rebels (Galula, 2006). For Peic (2014), their enhanced knowledge of insurgents, their ability to isolate them from the local civilian population they rely upon for recruits and provisions, as well as their ability to divide the ethnic constituency the rebels claim to represent, increase the chances of state victory. Other works further advance the claim that defectors possess an augmented capacity to effectively deal with insurgents. In his research on the Chechen conflict, Lyal (2010) shows how the employment of Chechen counterinsurgents in sweep

operations resulted in a significant drop in rebel reprisals. Similarly, Souleimanov and Aliyev (2015) argue that the Russian state was able to overcome the challenge of a non-collaborating civilian population through the use of defectors that shared the same cultural values with Chechen society. Gurcan (2015) claims that in Turkey, the use of Kurdish Village Guards played an instrumental role in curtailing the influence of the PKK.

2.3. Types of Defectors in Counterinsurgency

Accounting for the diversity between different types of defectors, scholars have examined how armed groups with distinct characteristics and tactical utilities are employed by the state. Biberman (2018) differentiates between self-defense forces (SDF's) and death squads. SDF's are mobilized from local civilians and have a defensive utility. They are there to provide information on insurgents and deny them access to their territory. Death squads are comprised by individuals that have past experience with extrajudicial violence, such as former insurgents. The state employs them in contested territories with significant insurgent activity where they actively hunt them down (Biberman, 2018, p.753). Hughes and Tripodi (2009) divide defector collaborators between individual actors and forces. The former include informants and translators, while the latter are comprised of home guards, militias, counter-gangs, and pseudo-gangs. Home guards are static, and there to defend their localities. Militias are larger, more potent formations with greater mobility that operate alongside the security apparatus but are not formally part of it. Counter-gangs are small, agile formations, usually consisting of former insurgents that are trained and equipped by the state and actively target insurgents. Finally, pseudo-gangs are state-sponsored formations that either pose as insurgents for long periods of time in order to deceive or present themselves as independent from state control but still target rebels in cooperation with the government (Hughes & Tripodi, 2009, pp.4-5).

Despite the unambiguous value the aforementioned research has for understanding key aspects of defectors in counterinsurgency, very little has been written about the fate of these actors after the termination of conflict (Jentzsch et al., 2015; Carey & Mitchel, 2017). Given that this thesis focuses on cases where the state was able to overcome the challenge of a robust insurgency, important insights can be gained from the literature scrutinizing post-conflict environments and their prevalent dynamics. Therefore, a starting point in investigating this issue would be the

research on civil war outcomes, as well as the interrelated fields of peacebuilding and post-conflict justice (PCJ).

2.4. Civil War Outcomes and State Success

Before delving deeper into the literature on peacebuilding and PCJ, it is necessary to examine the question of civil war outcomes, for two key reasons. Firstly, distinct civil war outcomes lead to different post-conflict environments. Secondly, it is important to illustrate which outcomes exactly can be perceived as government success. As noted in the introduction, the literature on civil war termination identifies victory by either side or a draw as possible outcomes (De Rouen & Sobek 2004; Cunningham et al., 2009). In an effort to provide a clearer picture, Kreutz (2010) poses victory, peace agreement, cease-fire, and other outcome as civil war termination contingencies. The last category consists of cases where the conflict falls short of the 25 battle deaths threshold; the rebels decide to unilaterally lay down their arms and pursue a non-violent strategy; withdraw for tactical reasons; or lose support from an ally that severely inhibits their capacity to fight (Kreutz, 2010, p. 245). Similarly, Fortna (2015) lists victory, peace agreement, or the 'fizzling out' of the rebellion. The last category is closely related to Kreutz's 'other outcome'. While the rebels are not comprehensively eradicated, violence emanating from a formerly full-blown insurgency sharply decreases, and they cease to be an acute threat. Evidently, outright state victory against the rebels is considered a success. For Fortna however, political success needs to be considered as a continuum, rather than in absolute terms (Fortna, 2015, p.523). From the state's perspective, while complete victory would be the optimal outcome, the 'fizzling out' of the insurgency is also a positive result. By avoiding military defeat and a peace process that leads to concessions in at least some of rebel demands, the government is able to overcome the challenge and achieve its political goal of preserving the status-quo (Fortna, 2015, pp.523-524). Therefore, counterinsurgency campaigns that significantly degrade rebel capabilities and lead to sharp decreases in violence, as well as unilateral cease-fires that end, at least temporarily, an active rebellion, are considered government successes.

2.5. Post-conflict Environment Following State Success

The literature on the aftermath of civil wars correlates the post-conflict context with the outcome of the war. Amongst scholars, there has been a long-standing debate as to which civil war outcome leads to a more durable peace (Hartzell, 2009). Some scholars argue that a peace

agreement that includes broad power-sharing measures ensures a stabler environment because it gives the parties a stake in the state and makes it more difficult for them to reverse back to violence in order to change the negotiated status-quo (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2003; 2007). Others pose that it is victory either by the government or the rebels because this outcome degrades the organizational capabilities of the losing side, which in turn inhibits their capacity to challenge the victor in the future (Licklider, 1995; Mason et al., 2011). Quinn et al. (2007) claim that victory leads to a durable peace because it destroys Tilly's (1978) condition of 'dual sovereignty' within the boundaries of the state. The "condition of dual sovereignty exists when an opposition group has the organizational capacity and popular support to initiate and sustain an armed challenge to the incumbent regime's claim to sovereign authority in the nation" (Quinn et al., 2007, p.173). The authors note however, that government victories rarely address the underlying grievances that incited the insurgency in the first place. Therefore, the rebels can regain support, reorganize, and resume the conflict in the future. In short, anything less than the complete destruction of the rebel side will allow for a degree of the condition of dual sovereignty to persist in the post-conflict environment (Quinn et al., 2007, p.174). This situation is further exacerbated in ethnically divided societies since ethnic identity is a durable group characteristic that functions as a facilitator of dual sovereignty (Mason et al. 2011). The government on its part, after a relative successful outcome will try to root out any remnants of support for the insurgency through repression (Quinn et al., 2007). In her analysis of post-conflict politics, Toft (2010) finds a strong correlation between government victories and the increase of repression. The role of PGM's in these repressive activities has been examined by Carey and González (2021), who find that militias that have not dissolved are closely associated with repressive practices in the name of the state.

2.6. Post-conflict Justice

Repressive practices such as politically motivated persecutions, disappearances, and killings, bring forward the question of justice, and how it affects the post-conflict environment after government success. Situated within the broader field of transitional justice, post-conflict justice (PCJ) accounts for the measures implemented by actors following the termination of a conflict to address its legacies. Binningsbø et al. (2012, p.732), identify six PCJ measures, namely: amnesties, reparations, truth commissions, trials, exiles, and purges. The first three represent restorative justice, they shed light to atrocities committed during wartime and assist societies in

healing from the traumas of conflict. The latter are forms of retributive justice, they are implemented to hold individuals accountable for acts committed during the conflict, most often through a prosecutorial process (Cox, 2020, pp.467-468). Here again, the outcome of the conflict affects the implementation of justice measures. Amongst scholars of PCJ, there is general agreement that the selection and implementation of specific justice measures is motivated by the political goals of those in power (Rothe & Maggard, 2012; Kim & Hong, 2019). State success against insurgents usually means that those who directed the war effort retain their positions as incumbents (Kim & Hong, 2019, p.1170). What transpires, therefore, is the adoption of retributive forms of justice targeted at the defeated side, as a means of consolidating power and further disrupting the capacity of the latter to pose a threat in the future (Binningsbø et al., 2012; DeTommaso et al., 2017). Furthermore, given that the state and its allies were most probably complicit in abuses and atrocities during the conflict, governments will not be interested in truth commissions and reparations that expose their role in these activities, nor will they be interested in prosecuting those responsible (DeTommaso et al., 2017; Kim & Hong, 2019). Therefore, governments would not be inclined to prosecute their war-time allies out of fear of illuminating their own complicity[3].

2.7. Post-conflict Integration of PGM's

Besides PCJ, scholarly works on integration into the security services might provide further insights. Integrating former insurgents into the security apparatus holds a prominent role in the peacebuilding agenda. Yet, Glassmyer and Sambanis (2008) claim that such an endeavor should be situated inside a broader set of peacebuilding measures sanctioned by a peace agreement. Indeed, military integration of the rebels after a government victory has rarely occurred (Glassmyer and Sambanis, 2008, pp.379-380). Even though integrating insurgents after a government victory seems unlikely, the case is not the same for PGM's. However, while integration of PGM's is one of the instruments incumbents have used to address the fate of these actors, it is neither the only possible outcome, nor the most common one when it comes to ethnic defectors. In their research on the fate of victorious militias, Bolte et al. (2021) find that an identity

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[3] Be that as it may, since justice implementation is politically motivated, some war-time allies might very well be the targets of legal prosecutions, if the post-conflict calculus of the ruling elites dictates it.

cleavage between these actors and the people in power correlates to a higher chance of disintegration, rather than integration.

2.8. Ethnic Defectors in Post-conflict Environments

From the preceding review of the literature, it seems that certain insights can be extracted that can assist in explaining the diversity of outcomes in the phenomenon under investigation. When states are able to reach a sub-optimal but successful outcome against the insurgents, a varying degree of the condition of dual sovereignty will persist in the post-conflict period. This signals to the state that even though the threat has subsided, the conflict can reignite in the future. In such contexts, support and cooperation with ethnic defectors can serve a double purpose. First, by definition, they divide the constituency insurgents claim to represent (Kalyvas, 2008), thereby removing potential rebel supporters, and increasing the legitimacy of the state amongst the ethnic group (Carey & Mitchell, 2017). Second, keeping such armed groups active allows the state to rely on their counterinsurgency capabilities, both during the ensuing fragile peace and in the future, should the rebels resume their struggle in a more threatening manner (Aliyev, 2019b). In addition, the persistence of dual sovereignty also leads to increased state repression against the defeated, part of which is often carried out by PGM's. If the goal is to dissuade former insurgents and their suspected sympathizers from mobilizing or providing support in the future through repressive practices, then ethnic defectors can be perceived by incumbents as agents ideally suited for such activities. Their experience, enhanced knowledge of locals and their sympathies, as well as the veneer of plausible deniability for human rights violations they provide the government with, can all act as incentives for continued collusion (Carey & González, 2021, pp. 250-251). Furthermore, following government success in civil war, justice measures seem to be politically motivated and implemented to serve the interests of the victor. In effect this means that retribution will be sought against the losing side, but also, potentially, against former allies that have lost their utility to the state and are now considered a threat. Lastly, the integration of PGM's in the state security apparatus in post-conflict settings is an option that has been frequently exercised by incumbents (Bolte et al., 2021). However, when specifically scrutinizing the fate of victorious PGM's that do not share the same ethnic identity with the people in power, which by definition includes ethnic defectors, the most probable outcome seems to be disintegration, and not integration (Bolte et al. 2021).

3. Theoretical Framework: Armed Orders

In an effort to rationalize the variety of interactions between incumbents and armed groups, Staniland (2021) proposes the theoretical framework of 'armed orders'. According to the author, an armed order is the political relationship between the state and an armed group at a specific point in time (Staniland, 2021, pp. 3-4).

3.1. Ideological Projects and Ideological Positions

From a state-centric perspective, the way a government chooses to interact with an armed group is dependent on how much of a threat it perceives the latter to be towards its own ideological goals and projects (Staniland, 2021, p.2). Ideological projects are the government's desired structure of politics (Staniland, 2021, p.18). While certainly not exclusive, the author identifies three key dimensions of ideological projects: nationalist inclusion/exclusion; the role of religion versus secularism in politics; and the government's position along the classic left-right ideological axis[4] (Staniland, 2021, p.11). What informs the perception of incumbents, therefore, is the way the activities of armed groups relate to these projects. Depending on their demands, their rhetoric, and the cleavages they mobilize, armed groups are categorized by governments into distinct ideological positions (Staniland, 2021, p.21). First, 'aligned' groups are actors whose actions and discourses tend to support the ideological tenets of the state. Second, 'grey zone' groups are those that use rhetoric and symbols that challenge the preferences of the state on one or more key dimensions, however their claims are not considered entirely unacceptable. Even though their ideological goals are not in congruence with those of the regime, they are not considered an existential threat by incumbents and there is room for negotiation, and even cooperation. Lastly, there are the 'opposed' groups. These groups fundamentally challenge the ideological project of the state on one or more dimensions, they are seen as subversive actors and pose an existential threat to the preferred structure of politics (Staniland, 2021, pp.28-29).

3.2. Tactical Interests

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[4] The author notes that the saliency of each vis-à-vis the other ones is dependent on the particular context of each case.

The second factor that determines the character of their relationship is the existence, or not, of shared tactical interests, or what Staniland calls 'tactical overlap' (2021, p.30). In a number of contingencies, civil wars chief among them, state and armed group tactical interests might coincide regardless of the ideological positioning of the latter. Operational advantages offered by armed groups to the state, government material resources provided to armed groups, and shared enemies who pose an acute threat to both, can all act as incentives that align tactical interests (Staniland, 2021, p.32).

3.3. Armed Group Political Roles

These two factors then, ideological position and tactical overlap, converge to determine the 'political role' of an armed group in the eyes of the state. Table 1 illustrates the political roles of armed groups (Staniland, 2021, p.32).

Table 1. Armed group political roles.

Ideological position	High tactical overlap	Low tactical overlap
Aligned	Armed ally	Superfluous supporter
Grey zone	Business partner	Undesirable
Opposed	Strange bedfellow	Mortal enemy

3.4. Armed Orders and their Characteristics

These political roles lead to armed orders with different characteristics, categorized by the author in four distinct forms: alliance, limited cooperation, containment, and total war (Staniland, 2021, pp. 3-4).

Alliance orders are observed between the state and aligned groups (Staniland, 2021, p.33). They are characterized by close cooperation between them, along with significant sharing of information and resources. The armed group operates in coordination with the security apparatus, in order to achieve common goals (Staniland, 2021, p.6). In limited cooperation orders the actors remain distinct and we see a delineation of authority along functional and/or territorial lines, which is the result of a formal or informal understanding between the parties (Staniland, 2021, p.5). To a degree, information and resources are shared, but occasional clashes do take place. However, the

parties tend to avoid open conflict, and a fragile, uneasy equilibrium characterized by constant bargaining ensues (Staniland, 2021, p.5). Collusion in the form of limited cooperation orders often takes place between states and groups that are not aligned but do share tactical interests[5] (Staniland, 2021, pp.35-36). Containment orders emerge when the state lacks the political will to pursue a decisive victory against an armed group whose claims and discourses do challenge the preferred ideological project but is not seen as an existential threat (Staniland, 2021, p.4). Aimed primarily at undesirables, these orders are characterized by limited violence and combat operations with the goal of wearing down the group and causing either its collapse or altering its ideological preferences, without investing heavily in military and financial resources for the purpose (Staniland, 2021, p.36). Finally, total war armed orders are targeted against mortal enemies. Here, the state is resolute in destroying the armed group and will not shy away from deploying significant military force, engage in leadership decapitation, and mass persecution in order to achieve its goal (Staniland, 2021, pp. 34-35).

3.5. How Armed Orders Change

Importantly, being dependent on the abovementioned factors, armed orders are dynamic relationships that can change over time (Staniland, 2021, p.3). As stated previously, converging tactical interests can lead to collusion even with non-aligned armed groups. Conversely, if events on the ground alter the state's tactical calculus, then the government strategy towards these actors can also change (Staniland, p.44-45). Aside from ever-shifting interests, changes in the ideology of both the state and the armed group can also alter their political relationship (Staniland, 2021, p.46). Regarding the state, the author identifies two pathways that lead to change. First, there are 'fundamental changes'. These are instances where a new regime takes power which has a radically different ideological project compared to the preceding one, and therefore an entirely different perception of threats. Coups, revolutions, and democratization processes can all have this effect (Staniland, 2021, p.48-49). Second, there are 'incremental shifts'. These are events and processes that do not fundamentally challenge the ideological tenets of the state; however, they do alter political discourses, leading to shifts of what is considered acceptable and part of the 'mainstream' (Staniland, 2021, p.50). Incremental shifts can be the result of leadership changes, government

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[5] As Staniland (2021) poses, tactical overlap is the key factor in limited cooperation orders. Once tactical overlap ceases to exist, then cooperative armed orders with non-aligned actors will most likely transform into conflictual ones due to them being perceived as a threat by incumbents.

transitions, and even coups, if the new ruling elite embraces a similar ideology as the one that was deposed (Staniland, 2021, p.50).

As with states, armed groups can also experience changes that alter their position along the spectrum. A sustained government campaign that employs selective violence while also providing an escape route if the group redefines its claims within the political space can lead to moderation and a more aligned ideological position (Staniland, 2021, p.52). Furthermore, internal dynamics of the armed group or of the broader movement that opposes the state can also alter the position of groups and factions. Whether as a result of state strategy or infighting between factions that leads to fragmentation, parts of the group can switch sides, assuming a more ideologically aligned position in the process (Staniland, 2021, pp. 53-54).

3.6. How Armed Orders End

Finally, armed orders can come to a definitive end, with the author identifying four ways by which this can occur: collapse, incorporation, disarmament, and absorption. Table 2 briefly states what characterizes each contingency (Staniland, 2021, p.7).

Table 2. Termination of armed orders.

Collapse	- Group unable to deploy organization in a sustained and coordinated way. - Regime unable to hold the capital and to deploy state security forces in a sustained and coordinated way.
Incorporation	- Actor ends as independent organization through a formal, or informal, mutual agreement with the state about demobilizing.
Disarmament	- Group lays down arms and order ends, without the group itself terminating as an autonomous organization.
Absorption	- Group becomes part of another group and no longer exists as a distinct organization.

4. Design and Methodology

The answer to the research question posed in the present thesis will be sought by testing whether the concept of armed orders can explain the variation in the phenomenon under investigation through a structured, focused comparison of three cases (George & Bennett, 2005).

4.1. Case Selection

The cases that have been selected share similar scope conditions but vary in their dependent variable. They all consist of civil wars where the state colluded with ethnic defectors and ultimately achieved a relative successful outcome, which, however, did not completely destroy the condition of dual sovereignty. They differ in the dependent variable because the strategy towards these actors following success has been either cooperative, as in the case of the Kadyrovtsy, or conflictual, as in the cases of the Kurdish Hezbollah and the Sons of Iraq. In regard to the selected theoretical framework, these cases consist of 'most likely' ones (George & Bennett, 2005). They are deemed as such, because the concept of armed orders explicitly deals with the relationship between incumbents and non-state armed groups. Therefore, it should be able to explain their trajectories in time. Table 1 depicts the scope conditions, time-frame of the period under examination, as well as the outcomes.

Table 1. Scope conditions and outcome variation.

Civil war	Ethnic defectors employed	Relative successful outcome	Persistence of dual sovereignty	Post-conflict time-frame under investigation	Post-conflict relationship
Russian government-Chechen secessionist movement	Yes	Decrease in violence	Yes	2006[6]-present	Cooperative
Turkish government-Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK)	Yes	Unilateral cease-fire	Yes	1999-2002	Conflictual
American occupational forces/Iraqi government-Sunni insurgency	Yes	Decrease in violence	Yes	2009-2013	Conflictual

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[6] There are different opinions regarding the point in time where a successful outcome was reached. Some authors point to 2006 as the year when violence in Chechnya began to sharply decrease, while others point to 2009 since this is the year when the federal government claimed its 'counterterrorism' operation in Chechnya achieved its mission and ended (Schaefer, 2010; Aliyev, 2019)

The employment of ethnic defectors in all three cases during the conflict points to a cooperative armed order. Table 2 illustrates the constituent parts that formed each particular armed order during the conflict.

Table 2. Relationship during conflict

Conflict	Armed actor	Ideological position	Tactical overlap	Political role	Armed order
Chechnya	Kadyrovtsy	Aligned	Yes	Armed ally	Alliance
Turkey	Kurdish Hezbollah	Opposed	Yes	Strange bedfellow	Limited cooperation
Iraq	Sons of Iraq	Aligned/grey zone	Yes	Armed ally	Alliance

4.2. Diversity in Outcome

In all of the cases, the post-conflict environment has brought change in the existing armed order. The Kadyrovtsy in Chechnya have remained armed allies of the Russian state, however a substantial number of them have been incorporated into the security apparatus, pointing to an end of the previous armed order. In Turkey, cooperation gave way to an order resembling containment during the conflict, which then decisively transformed to a state strategy of total war against Hezbollah shortly after the 1999 unilateral cease-fire of the PKK. In Iraq, the previous alliance between incumbents and ethnic defectors turned into a containment order under the government of Nouri al-Maliki. Table 3 illustrates these changes.

Table 3. Relationship after conflict

Conflict	Armed actor	Ideological position	Tactical overlap	Political role	Armed order
Chechnya	Kadyrovtsy	Aligned	Yes	Armed ally	Alliance/partial incorporation
Turkey	Kurdish Hezbollah	Opposed	No	Mortal enemy	Total war

Iraq	Sons of Iraq	Gray zone	No	Undesirable	Containment

4.3. Causal Expectations

Based on the chosen theoretical framework, for an armed order to end[7] or transform into a different one, a change must occur in its constituent parts (Staniland, 2021). Accordingly, the theoretical expectations responsible for an alteration in the prevalent armed order are changes in one or more of the following: the tactical interests of incumbents[8]; changes in group ideology that alter their position along the spectrum; fundamental changes that radically transform the ideological tenets of the state, and incremental shifts that also bring about a degree of change in the threat perception of incumbents. Table 4 illustrates these causal expectations.

Table 4. Theoretical expectations responsible for armed order change

State	Armed group
- Tactical interests - Fundamental change - Incremental shift	- Group ideology

4.4. Data and Limitations

For the examination of the cases, qualitative data in the form of secondary sources comprising of academic articles and books have been used. This has been done in order to delve deeper into questions of ideology, as well as the dynamic and complex context of each case. The sources will assist in depicting how events unfolded, and hopefully illustrate how the abovementioned intervening variables can explain different outcomes.

As with all research, there are limitations to this endeavor. Regarding the theoretical framework, there are certain issues that need clarification. First, it is sometimes difficult to reach such a fine-grained point of analysis so as to explicitly place an armed order in a particular category

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[7] Regarding incorporation specifically, the tactical overlap that resulted in alliance does not necessarily need to change. On the contrary, incorporation can be the result of continued tactical utility of former non-state armed groups for incumbents.

[8] More specifically, I will examine whether reaching a successful outcome in itself altered the tactical interests of incumbents.

(Staniland, 2021). While alliance and total war orders are clearly distinguishable categories, a relationship that oscillates between containment and total war is at times difficult to definitely pin down as belonging to one or the other. Second, the key ideological dimensions posed by the theory are certainly not exclusive. Other issues can also prove to be salient (Staniland, 2021). Lastly, it is important to note that the explanations offered here are of a provisional character. Alternative explanations based on causes that this research omits might also account for differences in the dependent variable.

5. Case Study I: Kadyrovtsy

5.1. Overview

The conflict in Chechnya was a result of the quest for Chechen independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. For its successor state, the Russian Federation, the secession of Chechnya was an unacceptable political goal, which resulted in the First (1994-1996) and Second Chechen Wars (1999-2009). During the conventional phase of the Second War and the subsequent counterinsurgency campaign in the region (1999-2005) (Schaefer, 2010, p. 195), the Russian state was able to coopt various Chechen actors who switched sides and fought against the separatist movement in Chechnya (Souleimanov et al., 2019, p.99). Amongst these groups were the Kadyrovtsy, paramilitaries loyal to Akhmad Kadyrov (Šmíd & Mareš, 2015, p.654-655), a prominent separatist commander and chief Mufti of Chechnya prior to 1999 (Ratelle & Souleimanov, 2016, p.1294). The causes of their new alignment with the federal state lay primarily in the ideological split within the secessionist movement between nationalist oriented Chechens and those influenced by Salafist ideas. The increasing power and influence of the latter group in Chechen affairs was becoming a growing concern for the former (Schaefer, 2010, p.171). For others, the threat to their physical survival due to declared blood feuds[9] precipitated their decision to join the Kadyrovtsy as a means of protection, while others joined for the material benefits a position within these paramilitary formations brought with it (Šmíd & Mareš, 2015, p.659). The Kadyrovtsy were employed to fight against the rebels and proved effective counterinsurgents (Lyal, 2010). Their enhanced information on rebels, their supporters and their relatives proved essential to the ability of the federal state to degrade the capabilities of insurgents and curtail the threat of secession. By 2005, the Kadyrovtsy had replaced the federal security apparatus as the main counterinsurgency force in Chechnya (Souleimanov & Aliyev, 2015, p.689).

Beginning in 2005, violence in the former break-away republic began to sharply decrease (Souleimanov & Aliyev, 2016, p.393), with the federal state in 2009 declaring it's counterterrorism[10] operation in Chechnya as over (Lyal, 2010, p.2). The alliance between the Russian state and the Kadyrovtsy has remained in place ever since they defected in 1999. What has transpired from 2007 onwards is the gradual incorporation of the Kadyrovtsy into the security

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[9] The custom of blood feud is a persistent characteristic of Chechen society. A declared blood feud means that an individual who has been wronged, as well as their relatives, will at some point in the future seek to exact revenge on the offender and their relatives.

[10] The military intervention in Chechnya was not characterized as a war by the Russian state, but rather as an operation to exterminate Islamist terrorists (Campana & Légaré, 2010, p.51).

services of the Chechen Republic, as is the official name of Chechnya. The term 'Kadyrovtsy' originally meant the non-state armed group loyal to Akhmad Kadyrov. Over time, it expanded to include various formations, some operating without a legal status, while others staffing the pro-Moscow Chechen security forces that were created from 2000 onwards (Šmíd & Mareš, 2015). The latter units served a dual purpose. First, they precipitated further defections by providing material benefits to former rebels who made use of the various amnesty initiatives instigated by the Russian state during the conflict (Souleimanov & Aliyev, 2016, p.399). Second, they served as a vehicle for the Kadyrov family to consolidate its power within Chechnya under the auspices of the federal government, first by Akhmad Kadyrov, and since 2004 by his son Ramzan[11] (Meakins, 2017).

5.2. Tactical Interests

The successful outcome for the federal state did not signify an end to the utility of its war-time collaborators. On the contrary, dual sovereignty has persisted in the republic and it is the pro-Moscow Chechen authorities that are tasked with combating the remaining insurgents (Souleimanov et al., 2019, p.89). This delegation is consistent with the Russian strategy of 'Chechenization', which sought to transform the conflict from an inter-ethnic civil war fought over the question of independence, to an internal Chechen affair fought between local groups adhering to competing ideologies (Schaefer, 2010, p. 212). As such, the employment of ethnic defectors to combat the rebels both during and after relative success has been a central aspect of 'Chechenization' (Lyal, 2010, p.3). The regime of Ramzan Kadyrov has used excessive repression against suspected rebels, their relatives, and sympathizers in order to deal with the threat. Torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings have been common throughout his rule. By delegating these activities to local actors, the federal state can plausibly deny its knowledge or involvement in them (Ratelle & Souleimanov, 2016, p.1299).

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[11] Aside from the Kadyrovtsy, initially there were other defector armed groups who were not under the control of the Kadyrov family but were loyal to different commanders. For the federal state, their independent character acted as a check on the power of the Kadyrovs. However, between 2006 and 2009, Ramzan Kadyrov was able to eliminate these rival commanders in a series of targeted assassinations, without any intervention from the federal government. Most of the fighters of these armed groups would be incorporated into the Kadyrovtsy, primarily in the institutionalized security services of the Chechen Republic (Šmíd & Mareš, 2015).

5.3. Group Ideology

The Kadyrovtsy have remained ideologically aligned with the federal state on the most salient issue of the conflict, that of independence. As mentioned earlier, the ideological rift between nationalist oriented Chechens adhering to the traditional form of Islam practiced in the North Caucasus, Sufi Islam, and those espousing Salafist ideals brought to the region by individuals who had come to Chechnya to fight against the Russian state during the First War, was one of the main reasons for the defection of many to the side of the government (Schaefer, 2010, p.171). Akhmad Kadyrov himself was a vocal opponent of Salafism prior to 1999 (Ratelle & Souleimanov, 2016, p.1294). By defecting to the side of the state, Kadyrov and his loyal supporters accepted federal sovereignty over Chechnya which, however, would enjoy a considerable degree of self-government (Mulcahy, 2005, p.179). This degree of self-government has translated into the delegation of political authority to local elites, namely the Kadyrov family. Delegating political authority to elites that would safeguard Chechnya's position within the Russian Federation has been the second pillar of the 'Chechenization' strategy (Ratelle & Souleimanov, 2016, p.1291). Since assuming power in 2000, the Kadyrovs have presented themselves as the defenders of Chechen traditional values and culture against those who adhere to a foreign, extremist ideology (Schaefer, 2010, pp.211-212). The federal government, on its part, does not seem hostile to the promotion of the particular cultural characteristics that make up Chechen identity. Rather, it endorses it. By colluding with local allies who share these characteristics with the previously rebellious ethnic constituency, the state serves its goal of maintaining control over Chechnya. Indeed, Ramzan Kadyrov's tenure has seen the revival of Chechen identity through cultural, religious, and educational programs which have allowed the pro-Moscow authorities to claim that the republic has attained a degree of independence and freedom unprecedented in its history (Schaefer, 2010, pp. 258-259).

5.4. Fundamental Changes - Incremental Shifts

In the case of the Russian state, there have neither been fundamental changes, nor incremental shifts following relative success. However, a narrative constructed during the Second Chechen

War which has persisted in the post-conflict period, has altered the political discourse around Chechnya and is connected to the continuation of the alliance between the federal state and its defector collaborators. Consistent with the strategy of 'Chechenization', from the early stages of the Second War the Russian government reframed the conflict as a fight against international terrorism (Campana & Légaré, 2010, pp.51-52), rather than a fight against the aspiration of a distinct ethnic constituency for independence. Within this narrative, the federal state is not the aggressor, but the protector of the Chechen people and their culture. Therefore, the state's struggle is directed against those subversive, extremist actors who do not represent 'true' Chechen identity and aspirations. On the contrary 'true' Chechens, such as the Kadyrovtsy, understand that Chechnya is an integral part of the Russian Federation, embrace that fact, and cooperate with the federal state in order to secure the population and safeguard their distinct identity from these subversive actors (Schaefer, 2010, pp.223-225).

5.5. Conclusion

In the case of the Kadyrovtsy, it seems that several factors contributed to their defection to the side of the federal state. The ideological split within the insurgency, the fear of violent reprisals by other Chechens, and the capacity of the state to offer material benefits, all precipitated collusion with the incumbents in the form of an alliance. The post-conflict continuation of this alliance has been grounded on the tactical interests of the state, as well as ideological alignment. More specifically, effective counterinsurgent capabilities and acts of repression that limit support towards the rebels remain crucial for incumbents, and the Kadyrovtsy are ideally suited to carry out these tasks. This is coupled with their acceptance of the state's position regarding the unity of the Russian Federation, and the state constructed narrative that presents the incumbents as the defenders of Chechen identity, a narrative whose credibility by definition rests on continued collusion with Chechen actors.

6. Case study II: Kurdish Hezbollah

6.1. Overview

The conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) began in the mid 1980's with the goal of creating an independent Kurdistan in the historically Kurdish populated regions of southeast Turkey. It is a protracted conflict that has fluctuated between periods of significant insurgent activity and cease-fires, one that has remained unresolved. From the early stages of the conflict, the Turkish state sought to recruit and cooperate with ethnic defectors[12] in order to bolster its counterinsurgency capabilities and weaken the connection between the PKK and its support base. (Aydin & Emrence, 2015, p.104; Işık, 2021a, p.54). The 1990's was a period of intense hostilities (Işık, 2021a, p.43). Until the middle of the decade, the state covertly colluded with the Kurdish Hezbollah, an armed group which fundamentally challenged its own ideological project (Biberman, 2018, p.768). Their cooperation was a direct consequence of a common, and more pressing threat, namely the PKK (Işık, 2021b, pp.238-239). Indeed, the nationalist oriented PKK and the Islamist Hezbollah were vying for influence over the same constituency, which had resulted in a violent rivalry between the two (Aydin & Emrence, 2015, p.122). Under the auspices of the state, Hezbollah targeted suspected PKK members and sympathizers primarily in urban centers throughout the Kurdish regions, with hundreds of enforced disappearances and killings allegedly committed by the group (Biberman, 2018; Aras & Bacik, 2002, pp.153-154).

During the first part of this decade, their relationship was one of limited cooperation. On many occasions, state representatives denied any links between the state and Hezbollah (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Furthermore, many of its members were arrested due to their actions against civilians, many of whom were not connected to the PKK (Işık, 2021b, p.238). However, numerous detainees were subsequently quietly released (Human Rights Watch, 2000). The apparent immunity they enjoyed earned the group the nickname 'Hizb-i-Kontra', due to the widely held view that they colluded with the state's counterinsurgent forces popularly known as 'kontragerilla'[13] (Van Bruinessen, 1996, p.22). There is evidence to support that this cooperation

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[12] Aside from the Kurdish Hezbollah, the state employed captured or surrendered former insurgents known as 'repentants'. It also created the Village Guards, a militia recruited from the local population to deny insurgents access to their territories, provide accurate information, and divide the Kurdish constituency, thereby bolstering its own legitimacy (Işık, 2021a).

[13] The cooperation of the state with Hezbollah, although never officially admitted, is generally accepted by analysts (Aras & Bacik, 2002, p.153)

ended in the middle of the decade, giving way to a conflictual armed order[14]. The reasons behind this change lay in an alleged cease-fire agreement between the PKK and Hezbollah (Işık, 2021b, p.237) which ended the tactical overlap between the latter and the state, as well as the perception of Islamism as a growing threat by parts of the state, primarily the powerful Turkish Armed Forces (Aras & Bacik, 2002, p. 155)**.** The year 1999 was an important milestone for the conflict. Following the capture of the PKK's leader Abdullah Ocalan in February, the organization declared a unilateral cease-fire in August and evacuated Turkish territory (Balta et al., 2020, p.9). Shortly after the cease-fire, the Turkish authorities instigated a massive crackdown on Hezbollah. In January 2000, its leader was killed during a police raid, and by 2002, six thousand members of the organization would be arrested on terrorism charges and incarcerated through a nation-wide campaign, thereby crippling the organizational capabilities of the group (Uslu, 2007, p.128).

6.2. Tactical Interests

Colluding with Hezbollah in the 1990's served important interests of the state. First, by fomenting intra-Kurd rivalry along ideological lines (nationalist-Islamist), it could divide the ethnic constituency, thereby removing potential supporters from the PKK's support base (Aydin & Emrence, 2015, p.122). Second, by delegating repressive activities to Hezbollah, the state could claim deniability while continuing to inflict damage on the insurgency and terrorize civilians sympathetic to its cause (Işık, 2021a, p.44). However, this was a limited cooperation order with an ideologically opposed group primarily dependent on the pressing threat of the PKK. Accordingly, once tactical overlap ceased to exist, so did collusion, giving way to a conflictual relationship. Contrary to other ethnic defector armed groups that remained in alliance with incumbents following the cease-fire[15], reaching a relative successful outcome signified the adoption of a total war strategy vis-à-vis Hezbollah. Some have claimed that it was this successful result in itself that altered the tactical calculus of the incumbents. With the cease-fire, it became necessary to purge

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[14] The evidence includes a surge in arrests, as well as gradually escalating numbers of security operations targeting the group (Nugent, 2004). While certainly conflictual, I cannot definitively place this relationship in a specific category. It seems however, that the state pursued a strategy of containment while focusing on the PKK, before it escalated to total war following the cease-fire of 1999.

[15] Namely, the Village Guards. The decision to retain this armed group was directly connected to the persistence of dual sovereignty. With the possibility of further conflict in the future being very much alive, the state needed a way to ensure long-term local collaboration. The Village Guards were conceived for exactly that purpose (Balta et al., 2020, p.16).

and dispose of a 'pawn organization' that had served its purpose (Aras & Bacik, 2002, p.153). However, the evidence suggests that tactical overlap ceased to exist prior to 1999, as a result of Hezbollah's own agency. In any case, once Hezbollah stopped targeting their common enemy, the armed order transformed from limited cooperation to one resembling containment, before the state escalated to total war immediately after reaching a successful outcome against the PKK[16]

6.3. Group Ideology

The ideology of the group did not change following the 1999 cease-fire. Hezbollah was created in the early 1980's in southeastern Turkey by Sunni Kurds (Gurbuz, 2016, p.36). Motivated by the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and other texts centering around the struggle for Islam, Hezbollah sought to establish an Islamic state in Turkey through violence (Uslu, 2007). This rhetoric and political goal fundamentally challenged the staunchly secular ideological project of the state, whose Armed Forces had safeguarded since the creation of the Republic in 1923. Indeed, one of the key tenets of Kemalism, the state ideology, was the explicitly secular character of the polity and the exclusion of religion from public affairs and the political process (Uslu, 2007, p.129). The ban of Islamist political parties and military interventions in order to defend Kemalism have characterized the history of the country since Independence (Gurbuz, 2016, p.43).

6.4. Fundamental Changes - Incremental Shifts

Between 1999 and 2002, there were no fundamental changes or incremental shifts. However, certain events that transpired in the years leading to late 1999 did alter the threat perception of incumbents, thereby effecting the status-quo between them and Hezbollah following relative success. Initially, the authorities had recognized Hezbollah as a threat (Uslu, 2007, p.128),

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[16] As some have claimed, this can be explained by the finite coercive resources available to the state, which were focused on the larger threat of the PKK. Therefore, the massive crackdown against Hezbollah that ensued after 1999 is explained by the state's ability to shift its focus on it (Uslu, 2007, p.128). State capacity to deal with threatening armed groups can certainly be a factor that informs their relationship both during and after conflict. While not explicitly dealing with the level of state coercive capabilities, Staniland suggests that containment orders emerge due to the state's reluctance to bear the financial, military, and political costs of total war (Staniland, 2021, p.36). If this reluctance (or inability) was a result of the already costly conflict against the PKK, then its defeat, together with the perception of Islamism as a rising threat, would make resources readily available and reinforce the state's political resolve to pursue a total war strategy.

but it was not seen as threat serious enough to challenge the regime's hold on power (Aras & Bacik, 2002, p. 159). Gradually, the 'fundamentalist threat'[17] was becoming a growing concern for the self-proclaimed defenders of secularism in Turkey, the Armed Forces (Aras & Bacik, 2002, p. 155). In what has been dubbed a 'post-modern coup', in February 1997 the military forced the resignation of the government of the Islamist Necmettin Erbakan (Uslu, 2007, p.125), banned his political party, and introduced a new set of restrictions on religious rights and freedoms[18] (Aras & Bacik, 2002, p. 158). This was followed by the decision in late 1997 to proclaim Islamism as the greatest threat to internal security, replacing separatism (Nugent, 2004, p.71). Finally, one month after the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, in March 1999, a raid on a Hezbollah safehouse led to the discovery of thousands of documents that revealed the true capabilities and extent of the group's expansion throughout the country. Indeed, Hezbollah had followed the Kurdish exodus from the war-torn southeast from the mid 1990's and had established itself in various centers outside of the Kurdish regions (Uslu, 2007, p.128)

6.5. Conclusion

Hezbollah's defection and collusion with the state was driven by the activities of a threat common to both of them. As a limited cooperation order with a strange bedfellow, this armed order was grounded primarily on tactical overlap. Once Hezbollah ceased to serve the tactical interests of the state, incumbents altered their strategy to one resembling containment. Subsequently, several factors played a role in further altering the threat perception of incumbents, thereby facilitating the adoption of a total war strategy against the group. The incremental shift process which reinforced secularism made Islamism the primary threat against the polity. The success against the PKK allowed the state to focus its attention and resources on Hezbollah. Finally, the discovery of the extent of Hezbollah's expansion produced a clearer picture of the true reach and capabilities of the group. In response, the state targeted its former allies by conducting security

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[17] By this term the secularist military primarily referred to mainstream parties representing political Islam and other religious movements, not extremist armed groups such as Hezbollah. However, the military's discourse connected these diverse actors, claiming that the former supported the latter. The violent activities of extremists were used to legitimize the subsequent actions of the Armed Forces (Aras & Bacik, 2002, pp.155-158).
[18] This event is situated within a broader incremental shift process that reinforced the secularist character of the state.

operations which lead to leadership decapitation and by instigating consecutive waves of mass judicial persecutions, with thousands of Hezbollah members being incarcerated in the process.

7. Case study III: Sons of Iraq

7.1. Overview

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 was followed by a robust Sunni[19] insurgency in the country. Indeed, as early as 2004, the U.S. military unofficially acknowledged that the Iraqi province of al-Anbar, the epicenter of insurgent activity, had been politically and militarily lost (Clayton & Thomson, 2014, p.924). Under the unifying goal of fighting against the American occupation and Shia political dominance, the insurgency had brought together various actors. On the one hand, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) fighters[20]. On the other, ex-Baathists[21] and local tribal sheikhs[22] (McCary, 2009, p.43). This alliance began to unravel in late 2005 and throughout 2006. While there were also divergent political goals amongst these actors[23], the loss of political and economic control in al-Anbar led many tribal leaders to denounce AQI and defect to the side of the incumbents in what has been called the Anbar[24] Awakening (McCary, 2009; SIGIR, 2011, p.2). This cooperation with the Awakening movement (Sahwa in Arabic) would translate into a new militia called the Sons of Iraq (SOI)[25], directly financed by the United States, and tasked with providing information on AQI insurgents and security in their localities (Clayton & Thomson, 2014). The newly formed alliance that originated in al-Anbar would soon expand to other Iraqi provinces with significant Sunni populations such as Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Baghdad, with the number of SOI fighters surging to more than one hundred thousand by 2008 (SIGIR, 2011).

The defection of the SOI was an essential element of the success against AQI (Benraad, 2011, p.121). By 2009, AQI had been expelled from territories it previously occupied and violence dropped significantly relative to the previous years (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, p.266). Following this success, a key issue regarding the SOI was their integration into the security services and administration of the Iraqi state. Indeed, it had been made clear to the SOI that their positions were

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[19] In Iraq, the Sunni population consists primarily of Sunni Arabs and Sunni Kurds. In this case study, when I refer to 'Sunnis' I am referring to the Sunni Arab population.

[20] Initially led by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, AQI's ranks included many foreign jihadis who provided training, expertise, and finances to the insurgency (McCarry, 2009, p.43).

[21] These were individuals that staffed the Baath-era security apparatus in Iraq. Following the fall of the previous regime, many joined the insurgency. Their military experience, access to weapons and finances, and local networks, played a significant role in the initial success of the insurgency (Al-Marashi, 2021, p.447).

[22] Tribal affiliation is a powerful form of identity in many parts of Iraq. As a consequence, tribal leaders, or sheikhs, have been influential actors in the country's social fabric. Through their influence and networks of patronage, they are able to mobilize support (Benraad, 2011, pp.125-129)

[23] Contrary to the transnational aims and Salafist ideology embraced by AQI, many Sunni insurgents were nationalists who fought for local, Iraqi aims (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, p.242)

[24] Also called Sunni Awakening.

[25] Various sources refer to the 'Sons of Iraq', 'Awakening fighters', and 'Sahwa fighters' interchangeably to describe the same actors.

temporary, and they would later either be incorporated in the security sector or receive vocational training and absorbed into the ministries through a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process (Harari, 2010, p.1). This scenario was strongly favored by the United States (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, p.252). If accomplished, it would bring the prevailing armed order of alliance to an end through incorporation. However, the Shia dominated government of Nouri al-Maliki was reluctant to the idea of incorporating tens of thousands of Sunnis into the institutions of the state (Rayburn, 2014, p.276). The transfer of control over the SOI from the US military to the Iraqi state began in late 2008 and was completed in early 2009 (SIGIR, 2011). The government had initially committed to integrate all of the SOI by the end of 2009. By that time however, about forty percent were actually incorporated, and further employment ceased[26] (SIGIR, 2011, p.16). Shortly after control was transferred to the Iraqi government, a policy of marginalization was instigated. Aside from excluding members from further integration al-Maliki stopped providing resources to the group. Furthermore, many members were arrested on terrorism and illegal weapons possession charges[27] (Benraad, 2011, p.124-125), while others were killed in violent showdowns with state security forces (Malkasian, 2017, p.167). Thus, the previous alliance which led to a process of incorporation would be reversed, transforming into a containment order. By the middle of 2013, the armed order between the government and various Awakening groups was bordering total war. Throughout that year, Sunni uprisings in different parts of the country resulted in open clashes between government forces and Sunni militias. This rift would provide fertile ground for a resurgent ISIS, successor to AQI, when it reemerged in Iraq in 2013 and 2014 (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, p.281).

7.2. Tactical Interests

During the conflict, tactical overlap was a key factor for the alliance between the SOI and the incumbents. From an American point of view, tactical overlap continued to exist. It was necessary to incorporate these actors so as to ensure Sunni representation and curtail the threat of

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[26] While suspicion due to their sectarian identity played a role, the Iraqi state also lacked the capacity to incorporate almost one hundred thousand young, uneducated males into its institutions (SIGIR, 2011).

[27] These crackdowns allegedly sought to eliminate AQI and ex-Baathists who had infiltrated the SOI, a claim that cannot be entirely disregarded as a fabrication. However, the employment of this narrative also sought to discredit the SOI (Benraad, 2011, 125).

a future insurgency via the allocation of material benefits. It was well understood that one of the causes that precipitated the previous rebellion was the disbandment of the Baath-era security services immediately following the invasion of 2003, which were primarily staffed by Sunnis. Their disbandment left hundreds of thousands unemployed and feeling excluded (Al-Marashi, 2021). Furthermore, even though ejected from the territories it previously held, AQI was not completely eradicated from the country. Indeed, throughout the post-conflict period under examination, the group remained active in Iraq, altering its strategy to one that focused on terrorist attacks and targeted killings of Awakening members and other representatives of the state, so as to ready the ground for a potential resurgence (Whiteside, 2016). Therefore, the continued provision of security in the face of dual sovereignty was also a pertinent factor.

As previously mentioned, this assessment was not shared by Prime Minister al-Maliki and the Shia elites supporting him. In fact, from early on they perceived the Awakening movement as a potential threat rather than an ally of the regime, albeit not as serious as that posed by AQI (Malkasian, 2017, p.131). The previous period of civil war had hardened sectarian identities in the country, reinforcing mutual suspicion and distrust. In their eyes, the SOI were a Sunni militia of former insurgents that was independent of state control and hostile to their own interests (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, pp.243-245). For the Iraqi government, tactical overlap ceased to exist, if it ever existed in the first place.

7.3. Group Ideology

Due to their composition[28], it is difficult to ascertain the precise ideology of the SOI, if indeed it existed. What is clear is that those that defected to the side of the incumbents relied on a nationalist, anti-occupational rhetoric to mobilize support during their time as insurgents (McCary, 2009, p.49). Underlying this was the perceived loss of Sunni power under the new political situation in Iraq and their exclusion from the networks of state patronage (Al-Marashi, 2021, p.442). What is also clear is that after 2008, certain Awakening leaders sought to participate in the new political system of the country, a notable change from the previous outright rejection of this system[29]. While certainly courting the support of the Sunni constituency whose interests they claimed to represent, this shift should have, at least in theory, altered their position from opposed to more aligned actors who accept the new state of affairs[30]. However, this engagement with politics coincided with the growing authoritarianism of al-Maliki and his increasingly sectarian politics[31] (Boduszynski, 2016, p.114).

7.4. Fundamental Changes - Incremental Shifts.

While not occurring after 2008, it is important to note that the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime was a fundamental change that radically altered the balance of power in Iraq and the ideological project of the state. From a secular[32] dictatorship grounded on Sunni dominance, Iraq

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[28] The unifying factor behind the formation of the SOI was the threat posed by AQI. However, the Awakening movement, as a movement formed by different tribes, was prone to factionalism and internal rivalries. This state of affairs made it impossible for them to provide a clear political project for Iraq. Rather than a unified political goal for the future, in many cases local interests and power relations proved to be more salient factors (Benraad, 2011, pp.125-129).

[29] They had been part of the Sunni majority that rejected occupation and the new system during the initial years, opting to fight against it rather than be part of it (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, p.228).

[30] By 'more aligned' here I mean not explicitly opposed. From an incumbent point of view, a grey zone position seems more likely.

[31] That is not to say that there were no working relationships between the government and certain Awakening leaders. Nonetheless, the sectarian polarization witnessed especially during al-Maliki's last years in power made these relationships untenable in the face of Sunni grievances (Malkasian, 2017, pp.169-173).

[32] Officially, the Baathist regime from the beginning ascribed to Arab nationalism and a leadership Iraqi role in Arab affairs. Increasingly however, and especially after the Gulf War of 1990-1991, religion played a growing role in the discourses and symbols employed by the regime. By 2003, Islam was an important ideological feature of Saddam Hussein's rule (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, p.193).

became a multiparty democracy, which actually meant Shia dominance[33], with the Kurds being empowered as well (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, pp.202-204).

Following 2008, certain overlapping incremental shifts caused increased sectarian polarization in the country, thereby affecting the relationship of the state and the SOI. First, al-Maliki's effort to consolidate power translated into the formation of a security sector whose members were tied to the regime through kin-ship and sectarian bonds (Krieg, 2016). This was coupled with the elimination of political rivals, some of whom were prominent Sunni politicians, by employing the judicial mechanisms of the state (Malkasian, 2017, pp.168-169). Second, especially after the elections of 2010[34], the determination of Shia and Kurdish political elites not to allow the resurgence of anything resembling the old Baathist regime in Iraq (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, pp.273-276). In that respect, de-Baathification[35] became central to their political discourse (Boduszynski, 2016, p.115). Through the process of de-Baathification, many Sunnis were purged from the administration and the security sector, a major cause of Sunni grievances against the central government (Dodge, 2012, pp.155-156). After 2010, al-Maliki also relied heavily on a political discourse that highlighted sectarian differences, with (Sunni) terrorism, past Baathist injustices against the Shia, and historical references to the distant Islamic past becoming mainstream themes (Parker, 2012).

7.5. Conclusion

The causes of Sunni defections in Iraq lay primarily in ideological differences within the insurgency and the loss of sources of revenue to AQI. With the Americans playing a crucial role, this led to an armed order of alliance and a process of integration following AQI's defeat. However,

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[33] Even though itself politically fragmented, the Shia majority became politically dominant in Iraq outside of the Kurdistan region in the north.

[34] As stated earlier, many Sunnis initially rejected the new political system in the country, which became evident with their boycott of the 2005 elections. In contrast, the elections of 2010 saw an enhanced participation of this constituency, with many supporting the Iraqi Nationalist Movement coalition. The ranks of some of the political parties that made up the coalition included former Baath bureaucrats and military officers. Their involvement exacerbated the fears of the Shia and the Kurds of a potential Baathist resurgence, especially after the unexpected electoral success of the Iraqi Nationalist Movement (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017, pp.270-271).

[35] De-Baathification was conceived as a transitional justice measure to dismantle the state structures of the Baath party and promote national reconciliation in Iraq following the American invasion of 2003. Inevitably, it disproportionally affected the Sunni population in the country. During al Maliki's tenure, it was employed as a tool that served to exclude Sunnis from the institutions of the state, with many being purged in the process (Mako, 2021).

this process would end, giving way to a containment order between the state and the SOI. Various factors contributed to the emergence of this containment order. Firstly, it is important to note that from the perspective of the Iraqi government, the defeat of AQI signaled the end of the tactical utility not of an ally, but of a business partner. Distrust and reluctance characterized the process of the SOI's incorporation from the beginning. Aside from the end of tactical overlap between the incumbents and a non-aligned actor, incremental shifts that occurred in the period under examination, also informed their relationship. The fear of a Baathist resurgence felt by Shia political elites coincided with Prime Minister al-Maliki's efforts to consolidate power, making de-Baathification not only central to their discourse, but also a tool through which many Sunnis were purged from state institutions and were replaced by loyalists sharing kinship ties to the incumbents. Being dependent primarily on the Shia vote for his own hold on power, al-Maliki also employed a divisive political discourse that indirectly legitimized security operations against SOI members and politically motivated persecutions of Sunni political rivals. Sunni grievances emanating from these practices led to uprisings which saw open violence between Awakening groups and government forces, immediately before ISIS swept through Iraq in late 2013 and 2014.

8. Analysis – Theory Implications

As the case studies show, there are reasons to support the view that the armed orders concept can explain outcome variety in the phenomenon under investigation by scrutinizing for changes in its constituent parts.

8.1. Tactical Interests

Consistent with the theory's claim, tactical interests are a key factor in the selected state strategy towards an ethnic defector armed group. The continued utility for the Russian state of the operational capabilities and repressive activities of the Kadyrovtsy has been one of the main reasons for their post-conflict alliance and partial incorporation of the latter[36]. Conversely, the absence of tactical overlap between incumbents and defectors in the cases of the Kurdish Hezbollah and the SOI played a crucial role in altering the prevalent armed orders from cooperative to conflictual ones. In Turkey, the diminishment of tactical overlap led from limited cooperation to containment, and then to total war following state success against the PKK. In Iraq, the defeat of AQI ended the tactical utility of the SOI for the Iraqi government, thereby having an effect in the gradual transition from a process of incorporation to an armed order of containment[37].

8.2. Group Ideology

The degree of alignment with the state's ideological project has also contributed to the observed differences in outcome. Essential for the continued alliance between the federal state and the Kadyrovtsy has been the acceptance by the latter of the incumbent's position regarding the unity of the Russian Federation. In contrast, Hezbollah's unacceptable goal of establishing an Islamic state through violent struggle made it an acute threat to the preferred ideological project

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[36]The partial incorporation of ethnic defectors in this case further reinforces the theory's capacity to explain different outcomes. As Staniland (2021) poses, incorporation occurs when the armed group is either an armed ally or a superfluous supporter of the state, and not a grey zone or opposed actor.

[37] As stated in the case study analysis, the fragmented nature of the Awakening movement resulted in incumbent cooperation with some Awakening groups and conflictual relationships with others following the defeat of AQI. However, the SOI in general were not perceived as an ally that should be incorporated but as a threat to incumbents (Malkasian, 2017, p.131).

of the staunchly secular state. Lastly, in Iraq, the perception of the SOI as undesirables rather than armed allies informed the selected government strategy following success against the insurgency.

8.3. Fundamental Changes - Incremental Shifts

Fundamental changes and incremental shifts that occur both prior to and after state success do alter the way defector groups are perceived by incumbents, thereby potentially leading to changes in the armed order between them. The Russian narrative of fighting against Islamic extremists, rather than Chechens aspiring independence, altered the discourse surrounding the conflict. This discourse made it possible for the Kadyrovtsy to become, and remain, allies of the state who fight alongside it in order to protect the population against subversive actors. In Turkey, the elevation of Islamism as the most serious threat to the Republic by its self-proclaimed defenders reinforced the secular character of the state and played a role in the adoption of a total war strategy against Hezbollah. Finally, the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime radically altered the balance of power in Iraq and the threat perception of the new incumbents. Following a civil war that had made sectarian identity increasingly salient, the new ruling elites tried to exclude perceived supporters of the previous regime from the administration and security services through de-Baathification, a fact that disproportionately affected the Sunnis (Mako, 2021). This was coupled with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's efforts to consolidate power, which included politically motivated persecutions of Sunni rivals and a reliance on a divisive political discourse that legitimized violence against Awakening groups and further polarized society along sectarian lines.

8.4. Other Salient Factors

While it is possible explain different outcomes by examining the constituent parts of the armed orders concept, the selected case studies also point to other factors that have an effect on the political relationship between incumbents and ethnic defectors. In the case of the Kadyrovtsy, their post-conflict partial incorporation was driven both by the federal state's desire to keep a localized, potent security apparatus that would maintain control over Chechnya, but also by Ramzan Kadyrov's own ambition to consolidate power within the Chechen Republic. Therefore, even though this incorporation was aligned with the interests of the federal state, it was also a result of the agency of the defector armed group's leadership. Similarly, as noted elsewhere, tactical overlap between the Turkish state and Hezbollah ceased to exist due to an alleged cease-

fire between the latter and the PKK. Thus, it was not the state's decision to end collusion and pursue containment due to the defeat of their common enemy, but rather, containment emerged as the state reacted to actions taken by an ideologically non-aligned armed group whose agency did not allow for continued cooperation[38].

Perhaps more crucially, the Iraqi case points to the influence of external actors in informing this relationship. It is very possible that the armed order of alliance between the incumbents and the SOI against AQI would not have materialized if not for the American presence and direct involvement in Iraqi affairs. Similarly, neither would the process of incorporation following AQI's defeat. It is also entirely possible that if the US had continued to exert such influence in Iraq in the post-conflict period, the SOI would have indeed been incorporated into the state apparatus, even though the Iraqi government of the time did not view them as an aligned actor. Indeed, the waning of American influence, and eventual withdrawal in 2011, has been cited as a factor that facilitated Sunni marginalization and exclusion from the institutions of the state by ruling elites fearful of a possible Sunni resurgence, a fact that had a direct effect in the relationship between incumbents and the SOI (Malkasian, 2017, p.167).

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[38] In the cases of both the Kadyrovtsy and Hezbollah, we see that changes in their relationship with the state were driven, at least partially, by their own agency. As Staniland (2021) admits, the agency of armed groups is a weak spot in his theoretical construct of armed orders.

9. Conclusion

The present thesis has sought to shed light on what explains different outcomes in the relationship between incumbents and ethnic defectors following relative state success in civil war. By examining the literature pertaining to the characteristics of post-conflict environments after state victory, it placed ethnic defectors and their relationship with the state within the broader parameters prevalent in such contexts. Then, it tested whether the concept of armed orders can explain diverse trajectories across time and space through a structured, focused comparison. While itself a general framework covering the relationship between states and armed groups both during conflict and peacetime, this thesis has shown that it can be adequately employed to elucidate the reasons behind the rupture, or continuation, of war-time alliances with ethnic defectors once the threat of insurgency has receded.

Based on the analysis of the three case studies, it becomes evident that one of the primary drivers of the selected post-conflict strategy towards defector groups are the tactical calculations of the state. The perceived operational utility of defectors as counterinsurgents and agents of repression does point to a continuation of cooperation following state success. Conversely, the absence of such a perception can lead to a conflictual state strategy against war-time collaborators. However, the operational utility of defectors alone cannot account for the variance in relationship outcome. A second very pertinent factor seems to be the degree of defector ideological congruence with incumbents. Indeed, this degree of alignment seems crucial in explaining the character of the relationship, even though the ideological tenets of states and political issues of importance can vary greatly depending on the particular context. As state ideological projects, political discourses, and issues of saliency change in importance over time, so does the threat perception of ruling elites. This variance in ideology, discourses, and salient issues signifies that the existing identity cleavage by itself does not necessarily lead to repression or elimination. Indeed, it can be either irrelevant, or even an asset for incumbents wishing to curtail the influence of insurgents and augment their own legitimacy in the eyes of the ethnic constituency. However, it can also become a cause for violence and politically motivated persecutions, when states pursue exclusionary policies along

hard identity boundaries, such as ethnic or sectarian affiliation. In addition, as a dynamic relationship between two actors, its trajectory is not only directed by the objectives and goals of incumbents. Aside from group ideological change that narrows or widens the degree of ideological congruence, the actions of defector groups can also become a factor that alters their interactions with the state. Whether these actions align with state interests, thereby further solidifying an existing alliance, or force an alteration in state strategy towards the group, their own agency is an element that can drive events on the ground. Lastly, the character of the relationship can also be affected by third parties, such as external actors who exert substantial influence in the internal affairs of states. When such parties perceive themselves to be stakeholders invested in the internal security of a given country, their actions and preferences can influence the fate of ethnic defectors, regardless of the threat perception of incumbents.

In its effort to answer its research question, the present thesis has contributed to an enhanced understanding of an aspect of the phenomenon of ethnic defection that has remained unaddressed. It has done so by connecting the fate of these actors following state success in civil war with different post-conflict research fields. In that respect, it has shown that as with other PGM's, in the face of the persistence of dual sovereignty ethnic defectors can retain their value to incumbents as counterinsurgents and agents of repression. It has also highlighted how the political motivations that underpin PCJ can lead incumbents to employ justice as a tool in order to purge and persecute perceived threats, regardless of their war-time affiliation. Furthermore, even though the most probable outcome for militias that do not share the same ethnic identity with incumbents is disintegration (Bolte et al., 2021), the present thesis has touched upon the conditions that can lead to defector post-conflict integration into the state security apparatus. Finally, by fusing the insights gained through examining post-conflict research with the concept of armed orders, it has provided a clearer picture of why, and how, different outcomes manifest themselves across contexts.

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