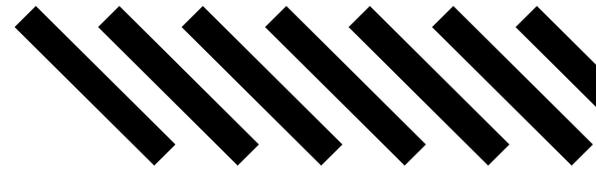# Attacks against Cultural Property as a weapon of war: An exploratory case study

Filippo Ristoldo

Master's in International Security

Academic year 2016-2017

INSTITUT BARCELONA ESTUDIS INTERNACIONALS

ABSTRACT

ISIL attacks against cultural property have gained international attention after the destruction of several ancient statues at the Mosul Museum in 2015, and since then they have been on the spotlight. However, even after the strong condemnation by the international community, the existence of international mechanisms in place for the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts, and the ICC and ICTY designation of attacks against cultural property as a 'weapon of war', the phenomenon has not ceased to exist. In addition, the subject is still currently under researched, from an international security perspective. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify under which conditions ISIL Attacks against Cultural Property (AaCP) are employed as a 'weapon of war'. This paper first builds a classification of two typologies to determine the kind of attacks against cultural property typology, and then it analyze them through three domains pertaining to: territory, organizational structure and context, in order to identify which indicators play a role, for each of the typologies, for having AaCP used as a weapon of war. This study's findings show that, both in Syria and Iraq, the strategic value of attacking local minorities' cultural property, ISIL complex multi-layered structure, which comprise information warfare units, and the context of Hybrid conflicts, are all potential indicators of ISIL using AaCP as weapon of war. Furthermore, these findings demonstrate how this method of analysis for attacks against cultural property can suggest new venues for future research.

Keywords: Attacks against Cultural Property, ISIL, Cultural Property, Hybrid warfare, Cultural Heritage

CONTENTS

Acronyms

AaCP - Attacks against Cultural Property

ISIL - Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

Media coverage of ISIL attacks against cultural property prompted an international outcry. Especially after the release of dramatic videos throughout 2015, in which ISIL affiliates are shown to brutally destroy ancient artifacts and buildings by smashing and bulldozing them, or even by blow them up, in order to remove any symbols of ancient idolatry from their territories. While not being a new phenomenon, these kinds of attacks, as in the case of the destruction of the Afghan Bamiyan Buddhas by the Talibans in 2001, or the more recent attacks against the Sufi mausoleums in Mali in 2012 by al-Qaida affiliates,[1] however, were considered to be just sporadic events. Instead, ISIL's systematic practices of damaging cultural property, is a phenomenon that had not been observed since the systematic intentional cultural heritage destruction happening during the Bosnian and Kosovo wars.[2]

After the Second World War, the *1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* and its subsequent protocols of 1999, provided for the first time an International legal framework of protection of cultural heritage.[3] However, the rise of new kinds of asymmetrical conflicts and warfare after the Cold War began to challenge several longstanding international norms and conventions of war. From this situation, cultural cleansing, destruction and trafficking of cultural property have arisen to new levels in the last few decades.[4]

The practices regarding the protection of cultural property during armed conflict are mostly based on the mechanisms of international cultural heritage protection and international humanitarian law.[5] Therefore, most of the academic literature on this topic is focused mainly on the interpretation of applicable cultural protection laws.[6] However, since the advent of ISIL attacks on cultural property in Syria and Iraq, these norms, so far, have shown to be of little to no use for containing this phenomenon. Thus, the international community led the several United Nations Security Council resolutions on the matter, has begun to tackle this issue from a security perspective, guided by an emerging process of securitization of cultural heritage.[7] The United Nations and International Law now consider the attacks against

---

[1] Joris D. Kila "Cultural Property Crimes in the Context of Contemporary Armed Conflicts," Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies 1, no. 4 (2013): 325.

[2] Serge Brammetz, et al. "Attacks against Cultural Heritage as a weapon of War," Journal of International Criminal Justice 14 (2016): 1145, doi:10.1093/jicj/mqw066

[3] Dacia Viejo-Rose, M.L.S. Sørensen "Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict: New Questions for an Old Relationship," in Waterton E., Watson S. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 284.

[4] Sigrid van der Auwera "Contemporary Conflict, Nationalism, and the Destruction of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict: A Theoretical Framework," Journal of Conflict Archaeology 7, no. 1 (2012): 61, doi:10.1179/157407812X13245464933821

[5] "Protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict," International Committee of the Red Cross, https://www.icrc.org/en/document/protection-cultural-property-armed-conflict (accessed 10/7/2017)

[6] Sigrid van der Auwera "Contemporary Conflict, Nationalism, and the Destruction of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict: A Theoretical Framework," Journal of Conflict Archaeology, 50.

[7] Alessandra Russo and Serena Giusti, "Monuments Under Attack: from Protection to Securitisation," Working Paper 2017/32 (European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Global Governance Programme, 2017), 13.

cultural property a 'war crime', and international courts such as the ICC and ICTY go even further in recognizing AaCP as a 'weapon of war'.[8]

The literature addressing the intentional attacks against cultural property during armed conflicts as a weapon of war is still in its infancy. Currently, the academic literature's gap regarding this phenomenon is very broad, since there are still no case studies, few comprehensive datasets (still under development), and no theoretical frameworks backed by empirical research. Therefore, it is important to begin to inquire about the role that AaCP play in being used as a weapon of war in the overall military strategy of the perpetrator. This paper will open this debate by examining *under what conditions and how AaCP are employed as a weapon of war in the perpetrator's overall military strategy*. In order to properly address this topic, this research will begin with the up-to-date scholarly literature review on this subject, which it will help us to better understand how the practices of AaCP are still under-researched from a security perspective, and how they lack a theoretical framework backed by empirical research. The research methodology will provide the justification of the case selection and provide the method of analysis. The case analysis section of this paper will dive then into the ISIL case study by strictly following the method of analysis, which first will split ISIL AaCP into two typologies and then examine them through three different domains related to: the strategic value of the territory in which AaCP were committed, ISIL's organizational structure, and the context of AaCP. Finally, the case analysis will assess the validity of its findings with a within-case comparison between the AaCP perpetrated in Iraq and in Syria and then present the overall case findings. The research will conclude by arguing how the original design of the case analysis was implemental for identifying the conditions under which AaCP is employed as weapon of war.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As already mentioned in the introduction, most of the literature regarding the attacks against cultural property is related to cultural protection practices, and about the interpretation of applicable cultural protection laws. However, some scholars in the past few years have finally begun to acknowledge and address the phenomenon from a security perspective, and produced a few preliminary studies on it.

Bevan's book *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* has been one of the first works that has tried to explore the phenomenon of intentional cultural destruction and its use as an instrument of warfare. In this work, Bevan addresses the relationship between direct attacks on people and the often

---

[8] Serge Brammetz, et al. "Attacks against Cultural Heritage as a weapon of War," Journal of International Criminal Justice, 1143; "Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, at the opening of Trial in the case against Mr Ahmad Al-Faqi Al Mahdi," International Criminal Court, https://www.icc-cpi.int/legalAidConsultations?name=otp-stat-al-mahdi-160822 (accessed 8/8/2017)

simultaneous attacks on their cultural identity, as part of an overall attempt by the perpetrator to erase the group's historical traces.[9]

Van Der Auwera instead, noting that few academic works contribute to a more theoretical understanding of the phenomenon,[10] approaches the issue from a constructivist approach, and focuses on the relationship between cultural property destruction and nationalism. She infers that due to the new nature of conflicts, nationalism plays an important role in shaping the dimension of the conflict, and identity is at the center of it.[11] Therefore, if the cultural heritage present in the occupied territory does not belong to the new ideology brought by the occupier forces, it is subject to damage and looting.

Viejo-Rose and Sørensen argue that when politics and culture come together under the form of cultural heritage and armed conflict, it is 'evident' that consequently, cultural heritage becomes an element of not only 'soft power' but also of 'hard power', based on the definition of these concepts described by Joseph S. Nye.[12] Viejo-Rose and Sørensen explicitly infer that cultural heritage can be used as an instrument of war for purposes such as: for propaganda, to elicit particular responses, to foster division among or between community/ies, and for the construction of the enemy other.[13]

Brosche' et al. recognize too that cultural heritage in armed conflict is a relatively new field of research. So, by combining the fields of Peace and Conflict research with heritage studies they have identified four, not mutually exclusive, broad groups of motives for targeting Cultural Property during armed conflict: "(1) attacks related to conflict goals, in which cultural property is targeted because it is connected to the issue the warring parties are fighting over, (2) military-strategic attacks, in which the main motivation is to win tactical advantages in the conflict, (3) 'signalling attacks', in which cultural property is targeted as a low-risk target that signals the commitment of the aggressor, and (4) economic incentives where cultural property provides funding for warring parties".[14]

These preliminary works of Baevan, Viejo-Rose and Sørensen and Van der Auwera, while they do not and cannot provide a common and comprehensive theoretical framework because of the limitations imposed by the lack of empirical data and consistent body of research on this phenomenon, they are nonetheless important, because if analyzed from an international security perspective, they all suggest that attacks against cultural property are used as a weapon of war during armed conflicts. Furthermore, Brosche' et al. go even further by providing us with a hypothetical classification structure that identifies four categories for the possible motivations for attacking cultural property during armed conflicts.

---

[9] Robert, Bevan "The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War" (London: Reaktion, 2006).

[10] Sigrid van der Auwera "Contemporary Conflict, Nationalism, and the Destruction of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict: A Theoretical Framework," Journal of Conflict Archaeology, 50.

[11] Ibid., 61.

[12] Dacia Viejo-Rose, M.L.S. Sørensen "Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict: New Questions for an Old Relationship", 289.

[13] Ibid., 289-292.

[14] Johan Brosche' et al. "Heritage under Attack: Motives for Targeting Cultural Property during Armed Conflict," International Journal of Heritage Studies, (2016): 2, doi:10.1080/13527258.2016.1261918

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methods Of Analysis

Since AaCP are still under-researched from a strategic-military perspective, as stated before, an inductive, exploratory approach has been chosen in order to provide the necessary flexibility, to detect which specific conditions may trigger the phenomenon. This research design will be instrumental for creating a detailed snapshot of the exogenous and endogenous conditions under which the perpetrator of AaCP decided to carry out the attacks as part of its military strategy.

In order to align this research with the rest of the academic body of work on this subject, the definitions of cultural property and attacks against cultural property will be drawn respectively from the *1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed* and from the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Therefore, "The term *'cultural property'* shall cover, irrespective of origin or ownership: (a) movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives or of reproductions of the property defined above; (b) buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property defined in sub-paragraph (a) such as museums, large libraries and depositories of archives, and refuges intended to shelter, in the event of armed conflict, the movable cultural property defined in sub-paragraph (a); (c) centers containing a large amount of cultural property as defined in sub-paragraphs (a) and (b), to be known as 'centers containing monuments'."[15] Regarding the definition of *Attacks against Cultural Property* (AaCP) will comprise: "… attacks against cultural property that connote the international crime of damaging or destroying cultural property, also often described as 'cultural destruction', 'heritage destruction', the 'destruction of cultural heritage' or the 'destruction of cultural property'".[16]

The collection of relevant data will come primarily from the "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App" database of the non-governmental organization *The Antiquities Coalition*, which collect and catalogue all the intentional cultural property attacks that have been reported by newspaper articles and by the reports of the two major NGOs that collect data from satellite and ground reports (from local affiliates), such as APSA (for Syria) and ASOR (both for Syria and Iraq).[17] In addition, data will also be drawn

---

[15] UNESCO "Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention 1954," Chapter 1, Article 1, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13637&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed 20/8/2017)
[16] Serge Brammetz, et al. "Attacks against Cultural Heritage as a weapon of War," Journal of International Criminal Justice, 1144.
[17] In collaboration with the U.S. department of State.

from ASOR weekly reports, Think Thanks and NGOs reports, major international newspaper articles, and from secondary sources from scholarly articles.

The case analysis will begin with an overview of the case study by making some preliminary observations from datasets and from media coverage, in order to get a preliminary understanding of the phenomenon. Then, the case will be divided into different typologies of the phenomenon, which will serve as the starting base for the case analysis. After having identified the different typologies, each type of attack will be examined thoroughly three general domains that have been deemed suitable for the sake of this research and which they have been identified from the international security literature.

The first domain, concerns the analysis of territories from a military strategic perspective in which AaCP have been carried out. This perspective of considering territory as a strategic asset comes from the Civil Wars literature.[18] The second one is related to the analysis of the organizational structure of the perpetrator, since according to Benedetta Berti's study of the three main non-state armed groups present in the Middle East shows how their structure play a key role in successfully carrying their operations on the ground.[19] The third domain involves the analysis of the surrounding context in which AaCP are carried out; Van Der Auwera claims the importance of how 'contemporary wars' may provide a fertile ground for destruction of cultural property.[20] Then, if deemed feasible, a within-in case comparison will be carried out, in order to provide validity to the findings. Lastly, there will be a discussion on the findings and an assessment regarding the suitability of the method of analysis for further studies on the phenomenon.

3.2 Case Selection

ISIL, as seen in the past few years on the news, has engaged in a large campaign of intentional cultural heritage destruction in Syria and Iraq. This phenomenon at first glance might resemble past wartime heritage destructions or may even be related to the phenomenon of iconoclasm.[21] However, the nature of these attacks involves quite different implications. ISIL AaCP differs from all the other recent AaCP cases (such as those ones committed during the Yugoslav wars, and the ones committed by the Talibans in Afghanistan and al-Qaida affiliates in Mali), in terms of serving multiple purposes and targeting different audiences. Moreover, ISIL's multi-layered structure and the type of armed conflicts in which it is involved, may illustrate how the practice of AaCP matches up with the new kind of non-state actors and hybrid warfare produced by the Iraqi and Syrian armed conflicts.[22] Since ISIL does not recognize

---

[18] Monica Duffy Toft "Territory and war". Journal of Peace Research 51, no. 185 (2014), doi:10.1177/0022343313515695

[19] Benedetta Berti "What's in a name? Re-conceptualizing non-state armed groups in the Middle East," Palgrave Communications, (2016), doi:10.1057/palcomms.2016.89.

[20] Sigrid van der Auwera "Contemporary Conflict, Nationalism, and the Destruction of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict: A Theoretical Framework". Journal of Conflict Archaeology.

[21] Omur Harmansah "ISIS, Heritage, and the Spectacles of Destruction in the Global Media," Near Eastern Archaeology 78, no. 3 (2015): 176

[22] Scott Jasper and Scott Moreland "The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter?," Small Wars Journal, http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-islamic-state-is-a-hybrid-threat-why-does-that-matter (accessed 1/8/2017)

borders, and it operates across Iraq and Syria in the same manner, this case study also provides the condition for running a within-case comparison in terms of geographical location and type of armed conflict. Furthermore, ISIL by the major perpetrator of AaCP in the entire region,[23] it helps us to illustrate a more accurate AaCP overall case population of both Syria and Iraq. However, since both the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts are still ongoing, the research can only obtain preliminary findings regarding the investigation of this phenomenon, thus, a future study at the end of both of the conflicts will be needed to confirm the preliminary findings. The timeframe of this case study will be based on ISIL intentional attacks against cultural property perpetrated between 2014-2015 in Syria and Iraq, since most of the attacks reported up until now have been carried out within this time frame.[24] Nevertheless, the limitations of this time frame are due to the fact that most of AaCP incidents recorded during this period of time cover ISIL's period of rapid territorial expansion. Therefore, the case does not allow to investigate, if AaCP were either mostly carried out during military expansion or retreat.

4. CASE ANALYSIS

Before going into the detailed analysis of the intentional attacks perpetrated by ISIL on cultural property in Iraq and Syria between 2014 and 2015, and because of the fragmentary nature of majority of the sources,[25] it is important to have beforehand a clear and general picture of the phenomenon in the selected case study. *The Antiquities Coalition 'Culture Under Threat Smart M.App'* database contains all the intentional reported attacks on cultural property attributed to ISIL in the Middle East region from 2011 up until March 2016 for a total of 178 incidents, of which 68 were recorded in Syria and 100 (+11)[26] in Iraq. From these datasets, it is possible to notice a spike of 49 incidents recorded between June and July 2014 in Iraq, and 30 incidents between February and August 2015 in Syria.[27] These spikes account for 44% of the total number incidents recorded between 2014 and 2015 in Iraq, and for 58% of the incidents recorded in Syria during the same time span. Besides the attacks on Palmyra in 2015, which are present in the Syrian spike of incidents, we do not find in these ranges all the other cases of attacks against cultural property initially reported by major newspapers nor the ISIL self-broadcasted attacks that have captured the attention of the international public opinion on this phenomenon. Furthermore, according to a 2015 article assessing the preliminary data collected by the ASOR CHI initiative, it was reported that the overwhelming majority (97%) of the intentional attacks on Cultural Property perpetrated by ISIL were against religious architecture and monuments.[28] These data provide a very different picture of the overall phenomenon in comparison to the one that has been covered by the

---

[23] *Database used in this study. Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App," The Antiquities Coalition (2016), https://theantiquitiescoalition.org/cultureunderthreat-smart-m-app/ (accessed 15/7/2017)

[24] Ibid.

[25] which come mostly from NGO reports and newspaper articles

[26] Since in one entry, it is stated that 11 churches have been destroyed in Mosul, according to the Iraqi Police spokesman.

[27] Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App".

[28] Michael D. Danti "Ground-Based Observations of Cultural Heritage Incidents in Syria and Iraq," Near Eastern Archaeology 78, No. 3 (2015): 138, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5615/

major news media outlets, in which most covered attacks, were reported to be against ancient (pre-Islamic) sites.[29] Therefore, in light of this divergence in the type of attacks perpetrated by ISIL, it is useful, for the sake of the analysis of this specific case study, to split the attacks on cultural property perpetrated by ISIL in two major categories. Hence, referring to them as 'type 1' -attacks on local minorities' cultural property-, the vast majority of the incidents recorded (including those within the 'spikes' of incidents), and as 'type 2' -attacks on world heritage-, only those cases pertaining to the UNESCO World Heritage sites that have been extensively covered by the news media outlets (including ISIL's ones). This typological differentiation of the AaCP will help the thorough analysis of the incidents by allowing to better identify and isolate the conditions under which AaCP are employed to contribute to ISIL overall military strategy.

4.1 Iraq

a) 'Type 1', Attacks On Local Minorities' Cultural Property

Observing the locations and the type of targets selected in the spike of attacks that happened between June and July 2014 in Iraq, it can be noted that almost all of the incidents reported were located across Tal Afar, Mosul and Bashir.[30] The timing of these attacks was likely not a coincidence. In fact, the time frame in which AaCP were carried out, matches with the first major offensive campaign in northern Iraq launched by ISIL in June 2014. In the campaign, ISIL militants were able to seize a vast part of the Iraqi northern region in just a few weeks, including the second largest city in Iraq, Mosul.[31] Most of the cultural properties damaged by sledge hammers, explosives and bulldozers, were religious architecture and monuments belonging to or affiliated with local Shia, Sufi, Christian, and Yazidi communities. Thus, ISIL was targeting all the non-Sunni cultural properties in those areas.[32] Additionally, right after ISIL was in control of the new territories they began to carry out a major campaign of abuses and selective killings against Iraqi minority groups in the region, causing the exodus of thousands of them.[33] Since ISIL simply justifies its policy of violence against the non-Sunni Iraqi religious minority by claiming they are following of the Salafi-jihadism ideology, it is also important to analyze the way it uses violence, especially against cultural property, from a military-security perspective.

Territory

The analysis of AaCP through the notion of 'territory as a strategic asset' can help to identify the direct and indirect objective/s of cultural property attacks. In Iraq the use AaCP as an 'instrument of violence' has been twofold. In the more evident and direct approach, AaCP was used as a method for carrying out

---

[29] Ibid., 139.
[30] Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App,".
[31] Bill Roggio "ISIS takes control of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city," Long War Journal, June 10, 2014 http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/isis_take_control_of.php (accessed 8/8/2017)
[32] Ibid.
[33] Terrence McCoy "The Islamic State's bloody campaign to exterminate minorities: 'Even Genghis Khan didn't do this'August," The Washington Post, August 7, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/08/07/the-islamic-states-bloody-campaign-to-exterminate-minorities-even-genghis-khan-didnt-do-this/?utm_term=.3d21cbe35f2f (accessed 8/8/2017)

a project of 'cultural cleansing' throughout the territories under ISIL control, in order to erase any symbol of the 'other' (communities/nations) that differed and/or were in contrast with ISIL ideology and narrative; and, at the same time, to deny any possible future attempt to reconstruct the former history of the community, as in Auwera theory.[34] It is interesting to note that reports indicate that ISIL carried out these types of campaigns right after it was able to control its newly acquired territories.[35] This could be an important indicator that shows that the AaCP under ISIL were carried out once the militiamen were in full control of the territory.[36] This would also in part explain, why ISIL has not carried out successful direct AaCP against other famous sacred Shia mosques like those one of Karbala and Najaf (targets of several attacks in the past),[37] which are located in areas that are neither in contested areas nor under ISIL control.[38] Therefore, this process of obliterating the cultural property of a specific community could serve as a necessary step for the future campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' aimed at making the territory more homogenous under an ethno-religious perspective.[39] These practices resemble much the use of AaCP in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo during the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990's, in which many religious buildings were attacked in order to erase the national identities of several local groups and communities.[40]

On the other hand, from a military-security perspective, the use of violence against civilians can also be used as a tool for territorial control. In this context AaCP could have allowed ISIL to maximize the level of territorial control of its newly acquired territories, as Kalyvas suggests that 'selective violence'[41] serves to establish and maintain control over a territory, generate collaboration of civilians and eliminate defection.[42] By taking a closer look at the surrounding areas of the locations of type 1 incidents in Iraq, it can be noted that most of these areas are in the proximity of oil fields, Iraqi army bases, and nearby major regional cities like Mosul and Tal Afar. ISIL with its successful June 2014 offensive was able to acquire U.S. and Iraqi army military equipment, loot several banks (including Mosul National's Bank) and take control of nearby oil fields.[43] The acquisition of these strategic resource-rich territories close to

---

[34] Sigrid van der Auwera "Contemporary Conflict, Nationalism, and the Destruction of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict: A Theoretical Framework". Journal of Conflict Archaeology; Robert, Bevan. "The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War".

[35] Humans Right Watch "Iraq: ISIS Abducting, Killing, Expelling Minorities," July 9, 2014, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/19/iraq-isis-abducting-killing-expelling-minorities (accessed 9/7/2017)

[36] See annex

[37] Ron E. Hassner "'To Halve and to Hold': Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility," Security Studies 12, no. 4, (2003): 21-22

[38] See annex

[39] Sigrid van der Auwera "Contemporary Conflict, Nationalism, and the Destruction of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict: A Theoretical Framework". Journal of Conflict Archaeology, 56

[40] Serge Brammetz, et al. "Attacks against Cultural Heritage as a weapon of War," Journal of International Criminal Justice, 1145

[41] The author of this research suggests that AaCP in the ISIL case, could be considered a form of both coercive and selective violence, similar to those ones described by Kalyvas in his book, since it can serve to eliminate the opposition and serve as a deterrence instrument.

[42] Stathis Kalyvas "The Logic of Violence in Civil War" Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2006): 196

[43] Bryan Price, Dan Milton and Muhammad al-`Ubaydi "CTC perspectives: al-Baghdadi's blitzkrieg, Isil's psychological warfare, and what it means for Syria and Iraq," Combating terrorism Center at West Point, June 12, 2014, https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/ctc-perspectives-al-baghdadis-blitzkrieg-isils-psychological-warfare-and-what-it-means-for-syria-and-iraq (accessed 29/7/2017)

the Syrian border are in line with Toft's Civil Wars notion of territory as an 'opportunity' for armed groups to improve their military power by consolidating their presence on the territory.[44] Thus, even if some cultural heritage sites do not have a military strategic value per se, the consolidation of recently acquired territories is instead of great importance for armed groups, and especially for ISIL, since most of its revenues come from the direct exploitation of the territories under its occupation.[45] Consequently, ISIL AaCP type 1 attacks in Iraq can be seen as a device for consolidating a newly acquired territory as they intimidate and deter other religious and ethnic minorities from challenging ISIL rule.

ISIL use of AaCP, as seen in this context, along with its great array of insurgency devices that range from conventional to unconventional ones (such as AaCP), reflect ISIL peculiar use of warfare tactics. This indicates that ISIL hybrid organizational structure does not resemble that of 'classical' non-state armed groups. Hence, it is important to also take a look at the role that ISIL structure plays in AaCP attacks.

Organizational Structure

In 2014 CIA estimates disclosed that the number of ISIL fighters between Iraq and Syria ranged from 20,000 to 31,500 units.[46] ISIL has shown to be capable of governing a functioning quasi-state territory with a complex administrative structure, which it includes a civilian bureaucracy supervised by 12 administrators in charge of ISIL territories in Iraq and Syria, and a number of overseeing councils that handle matters such as: finances, media, and religious affairs.[47] Other indicators that show ISIL's flexible structure, come from the wide arrange of military tactics employed, which range from holding the ground and patrolling rural areas, semi-conventional defensive operations, and offensive operations as well.[48] Clues about how ISIL organizational structure shapes the way in which AaCP are carried out come once again by diving into the Iraq AaCP dataset. The high overall number of incidents reported indicates that ISIL has employed AaCP in a regular and systematic way. ISIL, in comparison with other AaCP perpetrators, has performed 169 attacks, which account for the 77% of all the attacks reported in Iraq and Syria between 2011 and March 2016.[49] To put numbers in perspective, the second highest number of AaCP comes from Jabhat al-Nusra with 17 incidents reported between Syria and Iraq (7% of the total number of attacks). Therefore, along with the fact that almost half of type 1 incidents were carried out during the 2014 summer military campaigns, these instances suggest that this complex and

[44] Monica Duffy Toft "Territory and War," Journal of Peace Research, 185–198, 187-188
[45] Seth G. Jones, et al. "Rolling Back the Islamic State," RAND Corporation, pp. 65, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1912.html (accessed 30/7/2017)
[46] Jim Sciutto et al. "ISIS can 'muster' between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters, CIA says," CNN, September 12, 2014, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq/ (accessed 30/8/2017)
[47] A.K. Cronin "ISIS Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat," Foreign Affairs, March/April 2015 issue https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group (accessed 27/7/2017)
[48] Benedetta Berti "What's in a name? Re-conceptualizing non-state armed groups in the Middle East," Palgrave Communications, 4
[49] Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App,"

multi-layered structure[50] had enabled ISIL to perform systematic and large scale attacks on cultural property.

Another important factor, regarding the role of ISIL organizational structure in their implementations of AaCP, is found in the presence of ex Baathist officers, from the Saddam Hussein era, in its military cadre. There are indications that since the beginning of 2008, ISIL came in contact, recruited and formed provisional partnerships with many ex Baathist loyalists from the former Iraqi Army and Intelligence forces.[51] Many of these ex officers have also been reported to be employed by ISIL in the June 2014 offensive, thus, this instance could have been an instrumental factor in the success of this and several other ISIL operations.[52] Furthermore, Baathist officers have already been known for carrying out the devastating 1988 'al-Anfal' military campaign against the Iraqi Kurdish minority, in which, along with committing several war crimes, they ordered the destruction of over 2000 mosques in Kurdish villages[53] as part of retaliation efforts in order to suppress the Kurdish Insurgency. This instance may have played in a key role in the systematic AaCP carried out by ISIL in their June 2014 offensive, and possibly in others (during the Syrian offensive campaigns), since the chosen types of target (mosques) and methods of destruction (by bulldozers and explosives)[54] strikingly resemble those employed in the al-Anfal campaign in 1988.

Since these types of AaCP[55] have shown to be employed in 'contemporary conflicts,' as mentioned before, it is important to understand how the context and the nature of the conflict can also potentially affect the decision of whether or not to engage in AaCP practices.

Context

The nature of recent armed conflict has been heavily debated in the field of the Peace and Conflict studies. Present debates over whether post-Cold War conflicts have to be considered 'New' or not, are still unsettled;[56] yet, the features of these conflicts are clearly identifiable. Clashes between different ethnic and/or religious groups, presence of powerful non-armed state groups, illicit war economies, human rights violations, conflict fought within the state (and often in weak or failed states), are all common features.[57] While the present armed conflict in Iraq presents all of these characteristics, it differs in terms of being partly connected with the Syrian Civil War (because of ISIL), and in terms of having a complex mix of local and international state and non-state groups operating over the two

---

[50] Scott Jasper and Scott Moreland "The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter?

[51] Seth G. Jones, et al. "Rolling Back the Islamic State," RAND Corporation, pp. 81

[52] Ahmed S. Hashim "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate," Middle East Policy 21, No. 4, (2014): 78.

[53] Trahan Jennifer "A Critical Guide to the Iraqi High Tribunal's Anfal Judgement: Genocide Against the Kurds", Mich. J. Int'l L. 30, (2009): 385.

[54] Ibid. 311.

[55] which can be considered a military tactic under the umbrella of hybrid warfare

[56] Stathis Kalyvas ""New" and "Old" Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" World Politics 54, No. 1 (2001): 99-118

[57] Mary Kaldor "New and Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 1-12.

borders. While the notion of Hybrid war is still debated the moment,[58] placing AaCP in this framework helps to contextualize the multilayered purpose that it can have in terms of 'hybrid warfare,'[59] both in the context of the Iraqi and Syrian conflicts. Therefore, AaCP can be seen, as a weapon of war both for the practices of 'cultural cleansing' and for consolidation of territory, which serve to accomplish the multi-layered ISIL conflict goals in this 'hybrid' context.

Concerning specifically the Iraqi historical context, it is also worth mentioning that practices of cultural property removal (both lawfully and unlawfully) have been carried out around the country for almost 30 years. While the use of AaCP during the Iraqi Army al-Anfal campaign has already been mentioned, it is also important to acknowledge[60] the heavily contested plan of 'De-Baathify' Iraq in 2007 by the Shia-Kurdish democratically elected government, which originally consisted in the removal of all the Baathist and Saddam Hussein era monuments in Iraq.[61] Thus, even if it is still difficult to draw a direct correlation between the Iraqi history of cultural property removal/cleansing and the AaCP performed by ISIL, it is still possible to suggest that these past events may have contributed in setting a precedent for ISIL future AaCP.

b) 'Type 2', Attacks On World Heritage

On February 26th 2015, ISIL released a video on its web channels portraying the destruction of several ancient artifacts inside the Mosul museum.[62] In this way, it began its media campaign covering the destruction of ancient artifacts deemed 'idolatrous'. While it is currently unknown if ISIL subsequent coverage of its AaCP was already planned, or if it was a strategic adjustment given the following the extensive worldwide media coverage that the video release received after this incident, ISIL began releasing videos and/or carrying attacks at UNESCO World Heritage sites on a monthly basis throughout the first half of 2015.[63] In 2015, ISIL released videos showing the intentional destruction of antiquities at the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Hatra[64] and Assur[65] (along with the Syrian ones, which will be discussed later), and additionally carried out other deliberate attacks to the UNESCO 'tentative' sites[66] of Nineveh[67] and of the Northwest Palace of Nimrud.[68] These attacks were, as in type

---

[58] Ion Panait "The Hybrid War Concept - Arguments for and Versus," Research and Science Today Journal, Supplement No. 3, (2015): 130-141

[59] Schroefl, Joseph; Kaufman, Stuart. "Hybrid Actors, Tactical Variety: Rethinking Asymmetric and Hybrid War". Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 37, no.10 (2014): 863

[60] Later on, the process was halted due to international diplomatic pressure

[61] According to the AaCP definition provided for this research, this process cannot be considered a form of AaCP. Benjamin Isakhan, "Heritage destruction and spike in violence: The case of Iraq," ed. Joris D. Kila, James A. Zeidler, Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 238-239

[62] Muna Fadhil "Isis destroys thousands of books and manuscripts in Mosul libraries," The Guardian, February 26, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/26/isis-destroys-thousands-books-libraries (accessed 16/7/2017)

[63] Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App,"

[64] Michael D. Danti et al. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 31," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-31-march-9-2015/ (accessed 02/09/2017)

[65] Michael D. Danti et al. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 42-43," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-42-43-june-2-2015/ (accessed 02/09/2017)

[66] Sites that are awaiting to be awarded the official status of UNESCO World heritage site

[67] Michael D. Danti et al. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 30," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-30-march-2-2015/ (accessed 02/09/2017)

1, performed with sledge hammers, explosives and bulldozers. Due to the different type of targeted sites (ancient pre-Islamic), and in comparison with type 1 attacks, it is possible to detect the change of scope of the targeted audience for these AaCP, since by attacking UNESCO World Heritage sites, ISIL intended audience clearly then becomes wider and more international. As a likely consequence of this strategy, not only did it result in forcing the international community to strongly condemn these attacks,[69] but it also triggered an international process of securitization of cultural heritage led by the United Nations Security Council resolutions.[70]

Territory

While UNESCO World Heritage sites in Iraq carry an important emotional and economical value for the local people residing nearby, they do not directly reflect anymore the local population present day ethno-religious background (i.e. Palmyra). Thus, for ISIL, these sites potentially carry a lesser strategic value of coercion for subduing the adjacent local communities. Nonetheless, in comparison with type 1 cases, the intended strategic objective of these attacks no longer concerned anymore the physical control of the territory, but was more about 'holding' the ideological and the 'immaterial ground', which in these cases is represented by the 'International system.' Therefore, the targeting of all of the 'tentative' and official UNESCO World Heritage sites (which they encompass the concept of 'common heritage' for the international community)[71] under ISIL territory, was clearly not unintended. ISIL, in its online propaganda magazine *Dabiq,* exposes the direct connection between the western led archeological expeditions of the past, and the phenomenon of Colonialism, and still links the current archeological sites and expeditions as a byproduct of the new Colonialist agenda that serves to promote the western idea of statehood, which ISIL vehemently reject.[72]

Moreover, the attacks on these sites were still perpetrated under ISIL territorial control,[73] and in comparison with type 1 attacks, most of type 2 events were not associated with any major military campaign, since none were recorded in the area.[74]

Organizational Structure

Once again, through the analysis of the organizational structure domain, it is possible to attest how ISIL hybrid configuration allowed employing AaCP, both as Information Warfare and 'signalling' tactics to its own advantage. For instance, ISIL through the production and dissemination of their AaCP on the web and on social media platforms is able to support ISIL multi-layered structure in several ways. ISIL

---

[68] Michael D. Danti et al. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 36," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-36-april-13-2015/ (accessed 02/09/2017)
[69] Along with the looting and illicit trafficking of antiquities
[70] Alessandra Russo and Serena Giusti, "Monuments Under Attack: from Protection to Securitisation".
[71] UNESCO "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage," http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/ (accessed 02/09/2017)
[72] Chiara De Cesari "Post-Colonial Ruins: Archaeologies of political violence and IS," Anthropology Today 31, vol. 31, no. 6 (2015): 24-25
[73] See annex
[74] Antiquities Coalition. 2016. "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App," The Antiquities Coalition

media proficiency relies on an extensive media infrastructure that allows it to produce high-quality timely products in different languages to different audiences, in order to fit the narrative into the group to which it wants to convey its message.[75] ISIL propaganda videos showing its AaCP, serve to graphically parade its ideology, capabilities, commitment to build the caliphate, and to harshly contest the democratic state notion of the current international political order.[76] ISIL also skillfully employs the photographs and videos of its AaCP as a Psychological Warfare tactic to intimidate and shock local and regional neighbors, while also showing the impotence of the international community against ISIL AaCP. Therefore, in this way, it is able to present itself as a powerful organization to its audience and potential recruits.[77] This kind of propaganda circulates through the very active ISIL on-line 'community' of followers spread out around the globe, which according to 2015 U.S. Department of States preliminary estimates ,average about 90,000 daily interactions on social media platforms.[78] Furthermore, what also makes ISIL usage of the media so peculiar, according to Omar Harmansah, is not just the content that it produces, but the way it is produced. Suggesting that most of ISIL propaganda videos and pictures, including AaCP ones, are staged and choreographed as a 'Hyperreal Reality Show', in order to appeal to a wider group of potential new followers and sympathizers.[79]

Context

While the overall armed conflict context of type 2 events is nearly identical to that one of the types 1, it differs in terms of being perpetrated more in rural areas (since this is where most of the archeological sites are located), and in being carried out following a different time pattern. Between 2014 and 2015, type 2 AaCP do not seem to follow the type 1 pattern, since according to the attacks reported,[80] there were no instances of multiple attacks carried out within few weeks from each other, but instead they were perpetrated with almost a monthly basis throughout the first half of 2015.[81] Likewise, the battlefield context was also different, since in 2015 the Iraqi army began to counter attacks ISIL militias.[82] Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, the context of Hybrid warfare in the Iraqi conflict requires the actors involved to employ blended tactics; so, type 2 events, given their reliance on information warfare tactics, can also contribute to achieve ISIL multiple strategic objectives.

Regarding the cultural context associated with type 2 AaCP, there has been a tendency by most of the major international news media outlets to label these attacks, as 'barbaric acts' associated with the

---

[75] Muhammad al-'Ubaydi et al. "The Group that Call Itself a State," The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, (2014): 47, https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CTC-The-Group-That-Calls-Itself-A-State-December20141.pdf (accessed 16/7/2017)

[76] Benedetta Berti "What's in a name? Re-conceptualizing non-state armed groups in the Middle East," Palgrave Communications, 6

[77] Smith et al. "The Islamic State's symbolic war: Da'esh's socially mediated terrorism as a threat to cultural heritage," Journal of Social Archaeology, 174

[78] Ibid., 172

[79] Omur Harmansah "ISIS, Heritage, and the Spectacles of Destruction in the Global Media," Near Eastern Archaeology, 175

[80] Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App,"

[81] Then, type 2 attacks begin to be recorded mostly in Syria throughout the second half of 2015

[82] Seth G. Jones, et al. "Rolling Back the Islamic State," RAND Corporation, pp. 83

practice of iconoclasm based on fundamentalists' religious beliefs.[83] Since 2001 with the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban in Afghanistan, and ten years later in 2012 with the destruction of Sufi mosques and mausoleums in Mali by Al-Qaida affiliated extremists, these attacks have been justified by their perpetrators as an effort to eradicate idolatrous shrines.[84] Similarly, ISIL has justified their AaCP by deeming, along with other Islamic non-Sunni shrines, pre-Islamic sites and antiquities as idolatrous, since the Koran suggests (according to their own interpretation) it is in the best interest of a devote Muslim to engage in the practice of demolishing shrines.[85] However, several scholars like Watenpaugh and Harmansah argue that ISIL is merely deceiving its audience into believng that their actions are moved by its 'zealous religiosity' while instead its AaCP, as also shown so far by this case analysis, are mainly used to achieve its political and strategic aims.[86]

4.2 Syria

In light of what it has been found with the analysis of AaCP 1 and 2 typologies in Iraq through territory, organizational structure and context, this same pattern will be now tested in Syria, in order to compare it with the Iraqi area findings and to further test the ability of the research design to properly investigate the phenomenon.

Toward the end of February 2015, the Kurdish YPG forces launched an offensive in Northern Syria to recapture several key cities from ISIL occupation; however, this led to a large retaliatory offensive by ISIL in the areas west of Al-Hasakah that ended in the capture of several Assyrian small cities and villages around Tell-Tamer.[87] Immediately, after ISIL occupied the area, reports of human rights abuses (such as kidnappings and selective killings) against the Christian minority began to surface, along with reports of thousands of local inhabitants fleeing the areas controlled by ISIL.[88] Equally, as in the case of Iraq, the ISIL offensive produced several type 1 AaCP against the Assyrian minorities.[89] Differently, in the aftermath of the major ISIL Palmyra offensive in May 2015,[90] both AaCP type 1 against local area shrines[91] and type 2 against several monuments of the UNESCO archeological citadel were reported.[92] While, once again, the modalities of destruction still included sledgehammers, bulldozers and

---

[83] Chiara De Cesari "Post-Colonial Ruins: Archaeologies of political violence and IS," Anthropology Today, 23

[84] Joris D. Kila "Cultural Property Crimes in the Context of Contemporary Armed Conflicts". Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies, 325

[85] Smith et al. "The Islamic State's symbolic war: Da'esh's socially mediated terrorism as a threat to cultural heritage," Journal of Social Archaeology, 176-177; Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh "Cultural Heritage and the Arab Spring: War over Culture, Culture of War," International Journal of Islamic Architecture 5, no. 2 (2016): 249

[86] Ibid., 250; Omur Harmansah "ISIS, Heritage, and the Spectacles of Destruction in the Global Media," Near Eastern Archaeology, 176

[87] Jennifer Cafarella "Syria Situation Report: February 24 - March 2, 2015," Institute for The Study of War, https://iswresearch.blogspot.com.es/2015/03/syria-situation-report-february-24.html?m=0 (accessed 30/8/2017)

[88] Laura Smith-Spark and John Vause "Activist: ISIS holds 150 Christian hostages, will threaten to kill them," CNN, February 25, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/25/middleeast/isis-syria-iraq/ (accessed 29/7/2017)

[89] Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App,"

[90] Kareem Shaheen "Palmyra: historic Syrian city falls under control of Isis," The Guardian, May 21, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/20/syrian-city-of-palmyra-falls-under-control-of-isis (accessed 17/7/2017)

[91] Michael D. Danti et al. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 46," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-46-june-23-2015/ (accessed 30/08/201)

[92] Antiquities Coalition. 2016. "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App".

explosives attacks, the latter were preferred, especially for type 2 attacks (along with the public executions performed within the archeological citadel)[93] in order to produce dramatic events for propaganda video purposes, as in the case of the 'spectacular' destruction of the temple of Bel.[94]

Concerning the strategic value of the territory, even in these cases, for both campaigns, the surrounding area in which the AaCP were perpetrated (after ISIL secured them) held a significant strategic value for ISIL. Since in the Al-Hasakah counter offensive the territories occupied held as in the case of the Al-Hasakah counter offensive, and as in the Palmyra offensive for the presence of nearby oil fields and military installations.[95] Regarding ISIL organizational structure in Syria, no significant differences were found, since ISIL central military command structure is the same one for both Syria and Iraq.[96] The major differences, however, between the Iraq and Syrian wars are to be found in their different armed conflict contexts. Since the Syrian civil war had a dramatic evolution since its breakout in 2011, starting as a 'classical' intrastate asymmetrical armed conflict until foreign state and non-state actors became involved, which then transformed it into a more complex multi-layered hybrid conflict. This peculiar context produced several other actors involved in AaCP (such as Jabhat al-Nusra); nonetheless, ISIL still perpetrated the great majority of them, since out of the total of 67 incidents recorded in Syria between 2014 and 2015, 49 have been attributed to ISIL, accounting for the 73% of the overall AaCP reported.[97]

4.3 Discussing a potential sub category: the looting and illicit trafficking of antiquities

The practice of looting antiquities during armed conflicts has been known to be a common practice throughout history; however, with the expansion of the Antiquities illegal market, due to increasingly stringent regulations, the practice has expanded considerably.[98] The looting and trafficking of antiquities, although it is not considered for the purposes of this research a typology of AaCP per se, can be considered as sub-category since it is a criminal act associated with both type 1 and 2 AaCP, and because of its partial contribute to ISIL finances.

Through the inquiry of Iraq and Syria from an archeological point of view, it cannot go unnoticed that both countries sit in the historical Mesopotamia region, which hosted several prominent ancient civilizations. As a result, the area is rich in archeological sites that have been excavated since the 19th

---

[93] Kimberly Hutcherson "ISIS video shows execution of 25 men in ruins of Syria amphitheater," CNN, July 5, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/04/middleeast/isis-execution-palmyra-syria (accessed 27/7/2017)
[94] Michael D. Danti et al. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 57-58," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/asor-cultural-heritage-initiatives-weekly-report-57-58-september-2-2015-september-15-2015/ (accessed 30/08/201)
[95] Syria Direct "IS launches full-on assault of Palmyra", May 13, 2015, http://syriadirect.org/news/is-launches-full-on-assault-on-palmyra (accessed 15/8/2017)
[96] Ahmed Hashim "The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate." Middle East Policy 21, no. 4 (2014): 74, doi:10.1111/mepo.12096.
[97] Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App".
[98] Erik Nemeth "Cultural security: The evolving Role of Art in International Security," (London: Imperial College Press, 2007): 15-19

century, and most likely has several others, still to be unearthed.[99] Satellite data reveals that ISIL has been very active on this front, since looting considerably increased under its controlled territories.[100] While, looting and illegal trafficking of antiquities was an already wide spread phenomenon in the region,[101] under ISIL it transformed into large-scale efficient business operation. ISIL took advantage of this phenomenon by employing pre-existing criminal and local looting networks and even charging a tax on the monetary value of the artifacts unearthed.[102] This again shows the importance of having an hybrid organizational structure that allows ISIL to engage in numerous criminal activities at the same time, in order to finance its military and governance operations. Kaldor and other scholars in the past few years have identified a consistent trend (after the Cold War) of increased development of illicit war economies among actors involved in intra-state armed conflicts.[103] Therefore, the current context of the armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq may also have played a role in this phenomenon. Likewise, Van der Auwera argues that in 'contemporary conflicts', illicit war economies support the spread of looting and trafficking of antiquities, since non-state actors cannot count on state resources, and so need to profit from any possible source of revenues.[104] For instance, data collected from the analysis of satellite imagery from 2012 to 2015 shows that 212 archeological sites in Syria were looted, of which 38.7% (82) were in ISIL controlled areas, 29.7% (63) in opposition areas, 16.5% (35) in Syrian regime areas, and 15% (32) in Kurdish areas.[105] Yet, at the moment, it is still hard to measure the exact impact of this phenomenon on the overall military strategy and finance 'portfolio' of the armed groups that engage in these practices, and especially in the case of ISIL, due to the lack of data and proper empirical studies on the subject.[106]

4.4 Case Analysis Discussion

Given the findings produced by the analysis of this case study, it can be observed that overall, in both Syria and Iraq, ISIL performed AaCP mostly in the same manner by using sledgehammer, explosives and bulldozers, and its attacks were always carried out in territories under its direct control.

Regarding the typologies of the AaCP perpetrated by ISIL, type 1 attacks on local minorities' cultural property constituted the vast majority of all of the AaCP perpetrated and, were carried out mainly in the aftermath of major offensives military campaigns as in the cases of: the June 2014 northern Iraq

---

[99] Johan Brosche' et al. "Heritage under Attack: Motives for Targeting Cultural Property during Armed Conflict," International Journal of Heritage Studies, 8

[100] Andreas Dittmann and Hussein Almohamad "Devastation of Cultural Heritage and Memory in Syria and Iraq: Component of a Multi-Level Provocation Strategy?," International Journal of Humanities and Social Science 5, no.11, (2015): 30

[101] Sigrid van der Auwera "'New wars' and Heritage Destruction", Selected Papers (Ename Center for Public Archaeology and Heritage Presentation, 2007), 245

[102] Smith et al. "The Islamic State's symbolic war: Da'esh's socially mediated terrorism as a threat to cultural heritage," Journal of Social Archaeology, 180

[103] Mary Kaldor "New and Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era", 1-12

[104] Sigrid van der Auwera "Contemporary Conflict, Nationalism, and the Destruction of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict: A Theoretical Framework". Journal of Conflict Archaeology, 59

[105] Andreas Dittmann and Hussein Almohamad "Devastation of Cultural Heritage and Memory in Syria and Iraq: Component of a Multi-Level Provocation Strategy?," International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 29

[106] Losson Pierre "Does the International Trafficking of Cultural Heritage Really fuel Military conflicts?" Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 40, no.6, (2017): 484-495

campaign, the February 2015 Al-Hasakah counter offensive campaign, and the May 2015 Palmyra offensive. These AaCP were also carried out along with human rights violations, thus, contributing to the abuses committed on local minorities, which then caused these to flee from ISIL-held territories, with the result of ISIL having a firmer control over these territories of significant military strategic value. The analysis of ISIL organizational structure has shown, instead, how ISIL multi-layered structure and presence of ex Baathist officers (accustomed with AaCP practices) in its cadre, has contributed to the successful large-scale implementation of type 1 AaCP. Furthermore, due to the complexity of hybrid conflicts, such as those in Iraq and Syria, matters such as: the necessity of non-state actors of employing both conventional and unconventional warfare, sectarian violence, presence of several groups of different local minorities and involvement of multiple state and non-state actors, ensued that the use of AaCP resulted to be an efficient tactic of hybrid warfare. Hence, type 1 attacks in Syria and Iraq were carried out on a large-scale, alongside with human right violations, with the intent of achieving total control of the territory and to deter potential defectors by also engaging in a process of cultural cleansing.

Type 2 attacks on ancient heritage have been mostly carried out on pre-Islamic archeological sites that were deemed 'common heritage' by the international community through their inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage site lists (both final and tentative). Thus, the scope of these AaCP was not related anymore with the physical notion of territory but instead with the intangible one of the 'International Community'. Through the analysis of ISIL organizational structure, it was possible to discern that type 2 attacks were employed, thanks to ISIL hybrid structure, as an information warfare tactic. These type of attacks contributed to spread ISIL propaganda material through media outlets, in order to promote ISIL ideology, recruit new members, and signal to the international community their capabilities and commitment to their 'armed struggle' of achieving the Islamic Caliphate.

The phenomenon of the looting and illicit trafficking of antiquities has been speculated to have the purpose of fueling the conflicts in Syria and Iraq by providing abundant revenues to ISIL. However, as shown in the case analysis, at the moment it still not possible to verify these claims due to lack of empirical data and sound research on the matter.

Lastly, both type 2 attacks and the looting and illicit trafficking of antiquities have generated a swift worldwide process of securitization of cultural heritage led by the UN Security Council resolutions.
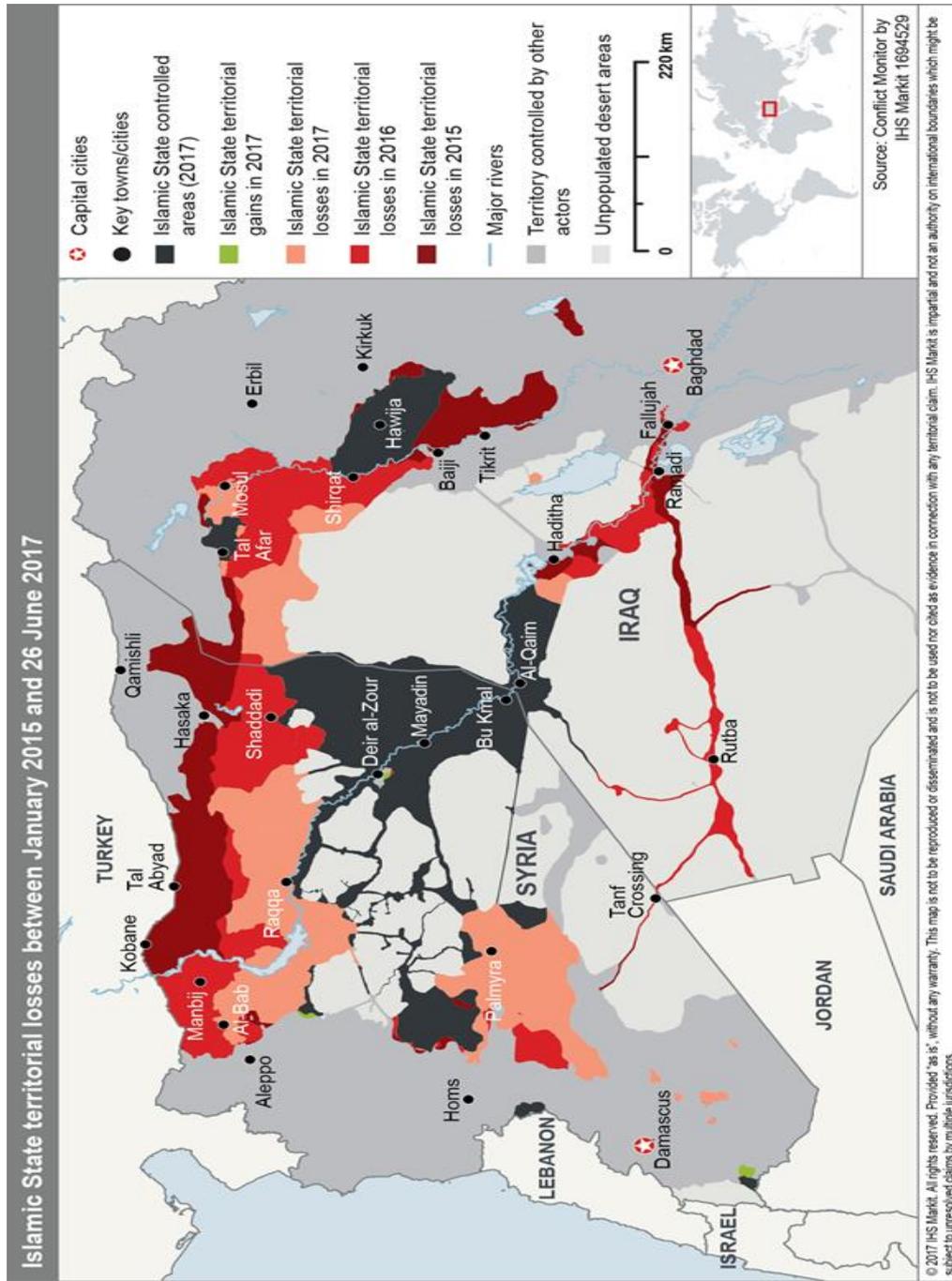
5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

This study explored under what conditions attacks against cultural property play a role in the overall military strategy of the perpetrator. While at the beginning of the study the notion of the phenomenon was too broad and general in order to properly conceptualize it, now, with this study, it is finally possible to draw some considerations about it. Early, from the preliminary analysis, it emerged that ISIL carried out two typologies of AaCP. The first types of attacks were directed against the local minority by targeting their cultural property, and were usually carried out right after major offensive campaigns. The second type instead, by targeting UNESCO World Heritage sites, was a clear signal that this typology of attacks was carried out against the International Community.

These findings are important because they indicate that ISIL, when attacking a cultural property, does have in mind who would be the targeted audience and thus, attempting to achieve a specific purpose or to send a specific 'signal'. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is then necessary to examine these typologies through the analysis of the territory and context in which the AaCP were committed, along with the organizational structure of their perpetrator. The territorial dimension revealed that, ISIL always carried out its type 1 of AaCP in Iraq and Syria after it was able to control the territory. Thus, given ISIL need of exploiting its territories to acquire a constant flow of revenues, this study shows how AaCP strategically contributed, along with human right abuses, to eradicate and deter potential defectors among the local population. The organizational structure dimension, instead, was able to identify the importance of ISIL multi-layered structure in employing type 2 attacks, as a tactic of information warfare and for propaganda purposes in both Syria and Iraq. Moreover, insights on the composition of ISIL military cadre revealed that some of its officers, by being already employed in AaCP during the Saddam Hussein era, might have helped to shape the large-scale campaigns of attacks against local minority's cultural properties. Lastly, the analysis of the context dimension indicated how both type 1 and 2 AaCP in Syria and Iraq are well suited for the context of Hybrid armed conflicts.

In conclusion, while this case study had clear limitations resulting from analyzing an under-researched phenomenon, relying on preliminarily and scarce data, and from impossibility of generalization, these factors did not hamper the possibility of acquiring new insights and findings on this phenomenon. In fact, the findings just presented related to the conditions under which AaCP are employed as a weapon of war in the overall military strategy of ISIL, produced by the identification of the two typologies and by their subsequent analysis thorough the selected dimensions, demonstrate how the design of this method of analysis for attacks against cultural property can properly asses the phenomenon and even suggests new venues for future research. Additionally, this case study presents an empirical corroboration of ISIL employing AaCP as a war instrument of hybrid warfare, due to their portable capabilities.

When more data will be available, forthcoming studies should also consider researching this phenomenon beyond 2015, in order to capture and to analyze the AaCP committed by ISIL while losing territories, and to compare it with the findings of when AaCP is carried while gaining territory (like those ones presented in this research). Furthermore, future research efforts should also begin to focus on producing both single and comparative case studies in order to produce more empirical findings for building common comprehensive theoretical frameworks, while awaiting the publication of large data-sets on the phenomenon.

6. ANNEX

Islamic State territorial losses between January 2015 and 26 June 2017

Legend:
- ✪ Capital cities
- ● Key towns/cities
- ■ Islamic State controlled areas (2017)
- Islamic State territorial gains in 2017
- Islamic State territorial losses in 2017
- Islamic State territorial losses in 2016
- Islamic State territorial losses in 2015
- Major rivers
- Territory controlled by other actors
- Unpopulated desert areas

0 — 220 km

Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit 1694529

7. REFERENCES

Al-'Ubaydi M. 2014. "The Group that Call Itself a State," The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 47, https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CTC-The-Group-That-Calls-Itself-A-State-December20141.pdf (accessed 16/7/2017)

Antiquities Coalition "Culture Under Threat Smart M.App," 2016. The Antiquities Coalition, https://theantiquitiescoalition.org/cultureunderthreat-smart-m-app/ (accessed 15/7/2017)

Berti B. 2016. "What's in a name? Re-conceptualizing non-state armed groups in the Middle East," Palgrave Communications, 1-8, doi:10.1057/palcomms.2016.89.

Bevan R. 2006. *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*. London: Reaktion.

Brammetz, S., Hughes K., Kipp A., Tomljanovich. 2016. "Attacks against Cultural Heritage as a weapon of War," Journal of International Criminal Justice, 14: 1143-1174, doi:10.1093/jicj/mqw066

Brosche' J., Legner M., Kreutz J., Ijla A. 2016. "Heritage under Attack: Motives for Targeting Cultural Property during Armed Conflict," International Journal of Heritage Studies, 1-13, doi:10.1080/13527258.2016.1261918

Cafarella J. 2015. "Syria Situation Report: February 24 - March 2, 2015," Institute for The Study of War, https://iswresearch.blogspot.com.es/2015/03/syria-situation-report-february-24.html?m=0 (accessed 30/8/2017)

Cronin A.K. 2015a. "ISIS Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat," Foreign Affairs, March/April 2015 issue https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group (accessed 27/7/2017)

D. Danti M. 2015b. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 57-58," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/asor-cultural-heritage-initiatives-weekly-report-57-58-september-2-2015-september-15-2015/ (accessed 30/08/201)

Danti M. 2015c. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 30," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-30-march-2-2015/ (accessed 02/09/2017)

Danti M. 2015d. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 31," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-31-march-9-2015/ (accessed 02/09/2017)

Danti M. 2015e. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 36," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-36-april-13-2015/ (accessed 02/09/2017)

Danti M. 2015f. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 42-43," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-42-43-june-2-2015/ (accessed 02/09/2017)

Danti M. 2015g. "ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Weekly Report 46," The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-46-june-23-2015/ (accessed 30/08/2017)

Danti M. 2015h. "Ground-Based Observations of Cultural Heritage Incidents in Syria and Iraq," Near Eastern Archaeology, 78 (3): 138. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5615/

De Cesari C. 2015. "Post-Colonial Ruins: Archaeologies of political violence and IS," Anthropology Today, 31 (6): 24-26.

Dittmann A. and Almohamad H. 2015. "Devastation of Cultural Heritage and Memory in Syria and Iraq: Component of a Multi-Level Provocation Strategy?" International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 5 (11): 30.

Fadhil M. 2015. "Isis destroys thousands of books and manuscripts in Mosul libraries," The Guardian, February 26, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/26/isis-destroys-thousands-books-libraries (accessed 16/7/2017).

Harmansah O. 2015. "ISIS, Heritage, and the Spectacles of Destruction in the Global Media," Near Eastern Archaeology, 78 (3): 170-177.

Hashim, Ahmed S. 2014. "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate," Middle East Policy, 21 (4): 69-83.

Hassner R. E. 2003. "'To Halve and to Hold': Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility," Security Studies, 12 (4): 1-33.

Humans Right Watch. 2014. "Iraq: ISIS Abducting, Killing, Expelling Minorities," July 9, 2014, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/19/iraq-isis-abducting-killing-expelling-minorities (accessed 9/7/2017).

Hutcherson K. 2015. "ISIS video shows execution of 25 men in ruins of Syria amphitheater," CNN, July 5, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/04/middleeast/isis-execution-palmyra-syria (accessed 27/7/2017).

International Committee of the Red Cross "Protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict,", https://www.icrc.org/en/document/protection-cultural-property-armed-conflict (accessed 10/7/2017).

International Criminal Court "Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, at the opening of Trial in the case against Mr Ahmad Al-Faqi Al Mahdi," https://www.icc-cpi.int/legalAidConsultations?name=otp-stat-al-mahdi-160822 (accessed 8/8/2017).

Isakhan B. 2013. *Heritage destruction and spike in violence: The case of Iraq*. ed. Joris D. Kila, James A. Zeidler, Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs, pp. 219-247. Leiden: Brill.

Jasper S. and Moreland S. "The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter?," Small Wars Journal, http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-islamic-state-is-a-hybrid-threat-why-does-that-matter (accessed 1/8/2017).

Jennifer T. 2009. "A Critical Guide to the Iraqi High Tribunal's Anfal Judgement: Genocide Against the Kurds", Mich. J. Int'l L. 30: 385.

Jones S. G. "Rolling Back the Islamic State," RAND Corporation, pp. 65, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1912.html (accessed 30/7/2017).

Kalyvas S. 2001. ""New" and "Old" Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" World Politics, 54 (1): 99-118.

Kalyvas S. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kila, J. D. 2013. "Cultural Property Crimes in the Context of Contemporary Armed Conflicts," Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies, 1 (4): 319-341.

Losson P. 2017. "Does the International Trafficking of Cultural Heritage Really fuel Military conflicts?" Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 40 (6): 484-495.

Mary Kaldor 1999. *New and Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era*". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCoy T. 2014. "The Islamic State's bloody campaign to exterminate minorities: 'Even Genghis Khan didn't do this'August," The Washington Post, August 7, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/08/07/the-islamic-states-bloody-campaign-to-exterminate-minorities-even-genghis-khan-didnt-do-this/?utm_term=.3d21cbe35f2f (accessed 8/8/2017)

Nemeth E. 2007. "Cultural security: The evolving Role of Art in International Security", pp. 1-27. London: Imperial College Press.

Panait I. 2015. "The Hybrid War Concept - Arguments for and Versus," Research and Science Today Journal, Supplement, 3: 130-141.

Price B., Milton D. and al-`Ubaydi M. 2014. "CTC perspectives: al-Baghdadi's blitzkrieg, Isil's psychological warfare, and what it means for Syria and Iraq," Combating terrorism Center at West Point, June 12, 2014, https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/ctc-perspectives-al-baghdadis-blitzkrieg-isils-psychological-warfare-and-what-it-means-for-syria-and-iraq (accessed 29/7/2017).

Roggio B. 2014. "ISIS takes control of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city," Long War Journal, June 10, 2014 http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/isis_take_control_of.php (accessed 8/8/2017).

Russo A., Giusti S. 2017. "Monuments Under Attack: from Protection to Securitisation," Working Paper 2017/32 (European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Global Governance Programme), pp. 1-17.

Schroefl J. Kaufman S. 2014. "Hybrid Actors, Tactical Variety: Rethinking Asymmetric and Hybrid War". Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 37 (10): 862-880.

Sciutto J. 2014. "ISIS can 'muster' between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters, CIA says," CNN, September 12, 2014, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq/ (accessed 30/8/2017).

Shaheen K. 2015. "Palmyra: historic Syrian city falls under control of Isis," The Guardian, May 21, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/20/syrian-city-of-palmyra-falls-under-control-of-isis (accessed 17/7/2017)

Sigrid van der Auwera. 2012 "Contemporary Conflict, Nationalism, and the Destruction of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict: A Theoretical Framework," Journal of Conflict Archaeology, 7 (1): 49-65, doi:10.1179/157407812X13245464933821

Smith-Spark L. and Vause J. 2015. "Activist: ISIS holds 150 Christian hostages, will threaten to kill them," CNN, February 25, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/25/middleeast/isis-syria-iraq/ (accessed 29/7/2017).

Syria Direct. 2015. "IS launches full-on assault of Palmyra", May 13, 2015, http://syriadirect.org/news/is-launches-full-on-assault-on-palmyra (accessed 15/8/2017).

Toft M. D. 2014. "Territory and war". Journal of Peace Research, 51 (185): 185-198, doi:10.1177/0022343313515695

UNESCO "Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention 1954," Chapter 1, Article 1, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13637&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed 20/8/2017)

Viejo-Rose D., Sørensen M.L.S. 2015. *Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict: New Questions for an Old Relationship,* in Waterton E., Watson S. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Watenpaugh H. Z. 2016. "Cultural Heritage and the Arab Spring: War over Culture, Culture of War," International Journal of Islamic Architecture, 5 (2): 249.