



مركز البيان للدراسات والتخطيط
Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies

Determining The Nature of Threats in ISIS Sectors Inside Iraq Between the Years (2021-2022) And Trying to Prepare a Tool to Analyze the Patterns and Levels of Activities

Shaheen Fawzy



Al-Bayan Center Studies Series

About

Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies is an independent, nonprofit think tank based in Baghdad, Iraq. Its primary mission is to offer an authentic perspective on public and foreign policy issues related to Iraq and the region.

Al-Bayan Center pursues its vision by conducting independent analysis, as well as proposing workable solutions for complex issues that concern policymakers and academics.

Copyright © 2022

**www.bayancenter.org
info@bayancenter.org**

Since 2014

Determining The Nature of Threats in ISIS Sectors Inside Iraq Between the Years (2021-2022) And Trying to Prepare a Tool to Analyze the Patterns and Levels of Activities

Shaheen Fawzy *

This paper attempts to prepare an analytical tool to assess the nature of the threats that ISIS is trying to impose inside Iraqi territory, especially after the alarming increase in its operational activities and levels recently. The increase in these activities indicates a kind of vigilance, which means the growth of the level of planning, and this directly entails the escalation of the activity of military operations. The high flexibility in the movement with which ISIS has recently appeared in some sectors of its operations in Iraq may enable it to build a vital “area” through which it secures the necessary coverage for its military and logistical supply center; The pressure exerted by ISIS on our forces on the ground from October 2021 until January 2022 confirms that it has gained strength again, and at a time when we believe that its whims for field control have become unattainable, we affirm at the same time that securing a vital area is a cause for concern.

Given the diversity of the ever-changing security threats that ISIS is trying to impose and the complexity of the volume of information, we believe that developing the capabilities of data and information analysis is essential that contributes to more effective future measures to disrupt ISIS’s field activity and promote a better position suitable for forces on the ground.

This paper adopts inductive reasoning as a method and basic reference by analyzing the data to reach conclusions and possible predictions by analyzing the patterns and levels of activities and the similar relationships

* Researcher specializing in counter-terrorism affairs.

between them; The process of analysis based on inductive reasoning can predict the future field behavior of attacks and determine their nature, which reveals the similarities between them and the plans of military sectors and central strategic plans in general. This tool bases its analysis primarily on the official data and documents of ISIS itself. It is possible to test the effectiveness of this tool in data analysis by extracting potential effective results that can be judged during the experiment.

- Given the continuous growth of terrorism, the development of analysis tools is a real challenge like any security or military challenge, so a clear understanding of terrorist threats is a key and sensitive part of combating violent threats effectively.

We first collected and analyzed data related to field operational activity from “October 2021 to January 2022” examining trends related to it; In collecting data, this paper relied on the official documents of ISIS “Al-Naba newspaper” issued weekly. This paper covered the activity of ISIS from the number “299” to “314”, where the measures of the attack were divided into samples that determine the most effective types of attacks “raids and clashes” on the least effective measures taken by the enemy “targets with explosive devices and missiles” and “kidnapping or sabotage”. This data analysis methodology considers the broader strategic context in which the operations have occurred. Where we divided the so-called “Iraq Wilayat” into three circles, the first “high-level risks”, the second “with active medium-level and varying risks”, and the third “low-impact risks”

The first circle: Kirkuk – Diyala sectors.

The second circle: Anbar, North Baghdad, and Tigris sectors

The third circle: Nineveh – South sectors.

The first circle: included the sectors of Kirkuk and Diyala, which

are considered the most dangerous among the sectors in which ISIS strengthened its spread in Iraq. The reason is due to the nature of the tasks assigned to these two sectors, which can be referred to in some form in this paper rather than in detail.

During the detailed Inductive reasoning we conducted for the activity of the Kirkuk and Diyala sectors for three and a half months between 2021–2022; We noticed that the nature of the attacks launched by ISIS fighters in that sector is a “preemptive offensive”, where the “raids” against the fixed barracks and the “clashes” against the foot forces constituted the highest percentage of the total general activity – intending to cause mass casualties and massive damage to the forces deployed within the sector – and was followed by “indirect” targeting, represented by attacks via IEDs and mortars, in a lesser proportion, followed by the burning of farms and the destruction of private property in a less concentrated manner. Where the “raids” in the Kirkuk sector during the above-mentioned period of the total activity of ISIS, in general, reached 85%. While the “clashes” occupied 90% of the total activity of ISIS operations compared to the rest of the other percentages of activities. The Diyala sector came after the Kirkuk sector – and this may be attributed to the diverse physical and human terrain and the unique sectarian dynamics that gave this sector a somewhat independent and self-sufficient character distinct from the areas of insurgency operations – when it came to the fore with “raids” against the barracks of the forces by 30% and “clashes” by 20%.

So, what are the implications of this activity specifically?

The activity of attacks involving raids and direct armed engagements with forces on the ground entails a constant influx of fighters and money. In the sense that these two sectors, specifically and according to the nature of the tasks assigned to them, receive, beyond any doubt,

direct support from the central leadership of ISIS, unlike other sectors that derive their support from their activity based on “seizing” the logistical and military resources of the forces, and this is what we will detail later.

The nature of the activities in the Kirkuk and Diyala sectors is completely different from any activity practiced by any of the ISIS sectors in Iraq. Likely, ISIS is actually trying to build a new vital field or scope for its center of operations in Iraq, and it seems that Diyala and Kirkuk are the focal points of this scope, whether this is a logistical axis or a command-and-control axis, providing support, planning, and support for the rest of the sectors in addition to their tasks as sectors. Therefore, these two sectors should be classified as hot zones (red). The “Survey of Attacks” scale showed the Kirkuk sector strikingly distinguished by the stability of the level and nature of activities at the general level, as measurements show that “Kirkuk” has so far been resilient against the campaigns launched by the Iraqi forces on the ground. As for the level of danger, it was highly concentrated within the Kirkuk sector, specifically in the areas of “South Daquq”, then “Al-Rashad” and then “West of Tuz Khurmatu”. In Diyala, the areas of “Muqyadiya”, “Jawla” and “Al-Azim”, in addition to “Behzur”, were the most active centers. The attacks were concentrated in particular in the villages of (Sharwin, Al-Waqf, Al-Hashimiyat, Budjah, Al-Mukhaisah, and Qara Tabbah).

The second circle: includes the Anbar sector – northern Baghdad sector – Tigris sector, and it is the circle whose levels of activities are classified as medium and at the same time complex because they vary in behavior. Operations of obstruction, destruction, double compound ambushes, capture, and assassination operations drain the fixed and mobile forces at all levels, whether logistically or militarily. Therefore, it is very difficult to predict the nature of the activities in this circle,

but it is possible to predict the outcome of the total level of activity in this circle because it depends mostly “directly” on acquisitions and possessions (spoils). The type and number of seized munitions must be evaluated by sector officials to take security precautionary measures appropriate to the nature of the seized munitions.

The activities of the Second Circle, although complex, are largely avoidable. Thus, the forces deployed within that circle can assess the level and nature of attacks in direct proportion to what is captured overall. It is certain that ISIS does not rely only on spoils, as there may be support, but it is certain that it is limited and does not exceed the overall rate of targeting, and the spoils as a self-supporting resource can be adopted as a reference, primarily in that circle, to assess the level and nature of the activity.

There is a very important update that should be noted within the activities of the second circle within the “Al-Anbar sector”, which showed a relatively distinct appearance in the nature of the attacks, not their levels. Organized periodic attacks against border outposts, especially Trebil and Arar, have been observed, in a clear trend that may indicate deliberate damage to certain areas of the border strip to open a gap in the border wall.

Recommendations:

The decentralized system followed by ISIS at the present time – until the central command functions are restored – may provide a wide range of powers to sector officials in terms of providing support and plans independently, depending on security imperatives. One of the characteristics of the decentralized system is that it authorizes sector officials to define the sector’s strategy exclusively (ie, including its military tactics and support measures) and separately from other sectors. Therefore, the challenge in this system lies in the different strategies

followed from one sector to another, according to the circumstances and the variables decided by the sector officials. Thus, the task of analyzing strategies seems a very crazy task, as it obliges researchers to evaluate each sector separately and analyze the level of its activities in complete isolation. Therefore, it is not possible to define the parameters of a general strategy for ISIS in Iraq according to this system, except according to the method we adopted in analyzing the activities of the sectors in a separate and independent manner.

The “dynamic decline” from time to time of ISIS activities in Iraq may seem to represent an advanced stage of breaking the momentum of the insurgency wave in the Iraqi scene, and a sharp deterioration in the nature of activities, but it does not necessarily indicate a permanent and continuous deterioration in light of maintaining noticeable coordination of operations periodically. Reconciliation with the idea – The drift of ISIS from population and cities and the decline of its presence in a way that is restricted to deserts and other uninhabited environments is an impression of its fading because it rules only small parts of Iraq that most Iraqis can live without – may give an adequate impression of why the Islamic State has retained its offensive capabilities in certain parts of Iraq in particular.

Conclusion:

So far, ISIS still poses a real threat on Iraqi soil, but rather a real challenge among the threats facing the state of Iraq. Although the insurgency has seen a clear decline over the past twenty months, especially in urban centers. ISIS is once again trying to direct its operations “qualitatively” towards the cities despite the effective pressure operations that the Iraqi forces are constantly exerting against it.

Speculation about the future tactics that ISIS is trying to impose on our lands and reduce their danger is not the most we aspire to in the field of combating terrorism, but I think that we can effectively influence the nature and levels of these activities after trying to control them. The tactics that ISIS is trying to impose through its military operations, we can neutralize it by pressing into areas where it is forced to resort to a certain tactic. We know that it will force itself into it as an alternative option to continue the conflict and try to evade the pressure of the forces. What is written in this paper is not utopian at all, but rather necessary direct results that we can obtain if we develop a comprehensive plan to evaluate and analyze the activity of the organization periodically.

- This paper did not include extensive detailed data on the organization’s activity, because it was also written concisely, analyzing, auditing, and detailing. I hope that when reading it, the brief summary of the analysis will be taken into account, although I have tried very hard to make this summary unobtrusive, and I hope that it is indeed so.