Explaining support for fragmented and unified counterinsurgencies: Experimental evidence from a national survey in Iraq^{*}

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Abstract

A near-consensus exists that the outcome of counterinsurgencies critically depends on the success of each side to win the support of civilians. Recent studies contend that violence against civilians shifts victims' allegiance away from the perpetrator and toward its opponent. In this paper, we argue that an external military intervention that favors the incumbent changes this dynamic as long as there is widespread popular opposition to the insurgency. Specifically, we expect that harm against civilians that is inflicted by the government does not shift support away from the counterinsurgency and toward a loathed insurgency if an external intervener also fights this rebellion. Instead, we expect that governmentinflicted harm increases support for the external intervention, as long as that intervention is viewed as independent from the government that harms its citizens. Experimental evidence from a large national survey in Iraq, which was conducted at the height of the civil war in 2015, is consistent with this argument. List experiments reveal that popular support for ISIS was extremely low (at 1.4%) while support for U.S.-led international coalition airstrikes was substantially higher at 31.7%. Victimization by domestic counterinsurgents did not affect sympathy for the ISIS insurgency, but it did increase support for the international coalition airstrikes - except for those respondents who were experimentally induced to consider the close ties between Iraqi and foreign counterinsurgents. Thus, the perception of a counterinsurgency as fragmented (rather than unified) can help maintain popular support for the broad counterinsurgency effort even if one counterinsurgent is responsible for victimizing civilians.

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A surprising disjuncture exists between the prevailing theoretical models of violence in civil war, on the one hand, and the practice of third-party interventions that characterize most contemporary civil wars, on the other. These theoretical models have yielded many important insights, but they generally conceive of civil war as a contest between two sides: the incumbent and the rebellion (see, e.g., Berman, Felter and Shapiro, 2018; Balcells, 2010; Kalvvas, 2006; Wood, 2003).¹ Under this paradigm, the literature has found that violence against civilians inflicted by one side leads to a reduction in popular support for the perpetrator and an increase in civilian assistance to its opponent (see, e.g., Condra and Shapiro, 2012; Dell and Querubin, 2018); populations with in-group bias respond less negatively to violence by local rebels than to victimization at the hands of foreign counterinsurgents (Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2013; Lyall, Shiraito and Imai, 2015). However, in many contemporary and past civil wars (e.g., in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Somalia since 2006, Syria, and South Vietnam), external interveners fight a rebellion alongside a local government. When the fight against rebels is conducted by two actors - the local government and a foreign intervener the extant theory is less clear regarding how popular support would change in response to violence inflicted upon civilians by the government and its external comrade in arms.

This study is not the only one that questions the assumption in the extant literature on violence in civil wars that incumbent forces are unitary actors (see Byman, 2006; Ladwig, 2016; Christia, 2012, 4 for similar critiques), but it is the first to examine how the presence of an external intervention that fights the rebellion alongside the local government changes popular support for warring factions. It leverages original data from a national survey in Iraq to examine public opinion at the height of the civil war in 2015, when Iraq's government and an international coalition led by the United States confronted the ISIS insurgency. The survey experimentally manipulates the perceived distance between the two counterinsurgents by varying a cue about the Iraqi government's endorsement of the coalition airstrikes against

¹A number of studies depart from this conceptualization by examining how multiparty rebellions alter the intensity and duration of civil war while maintaining that the incumbent is a unitary actor (see, e.g., Cunningham, 2006; Bapad and Bond, 2012; Fjelde, 2018).

ISIS. While the recent literature suggests that violence against civilians committed by the government should lead to a shift in attitudes away from the counterinsurgency and toward the rebellion, we find that an external military intervention that favors the incumbent changes this dynamic - as long as the counterinsurgency is perceived as fragmented and not as unified. We show that Iraqi civilians do not engage in a binary choice between supporting the insurgency or the counterinsurgency. Our survey experiments reveal that victimization at the hands of government forces - one counterinsurgent actor - does not shift support away from the broad counterinsurgency. Instead, it is associated with stronger support for airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS - the other counterinsurgent actor - but only among respondents who view the airstrikes as independent of the Iraqi government. In contrast, victimization by government forces does not systematically affect support for U.S.-led airstrikes among those who are primed to view the strikes as tied to the Iraqi government. Victimization by domestic or foreign counterinsurgents does not increase support for ISIS, contrary to what the existing literature would expect.

This study makes three main contributions. First, our argument and findings do not negate the previous theory but add further complexity by illustrating that an external intervention in a civil war alters the dynamics of popular support for warring factions. We show that the relationship between counterinsurgents determines how civilians respond to harm inflicted upon them by one of them. Thus, we heed the call in Ladwig (2016, 100) to integrate issues of alliance behavior into studies of violence in civil conflict. Second, this study presents unique, new evidence on popular support for militancy and U.S.-led airstrikes from a large national survey that was fielded in Iraq in 2015. While most public opinion research in conflict theaters relies on direct question techniques, which likely yield biased responses to sensitive questions about attitudes toward specific warring factions, we leverage (to the best of our knowledge) the first survey experiments in Iraq that attain reliable measures of civilian attitudes about ISIS and anti-ISIS airstrikes.² This unique data enable

 $^{^2 \}rm Nanes$ (2020) and Christia, Knox and Al-Rikabi (2017) fielded survey experiments in Iraq to investigate different topics.

us to demonstrate asymmetric dynamics in support for civil-war parties, which run counter to existing public opinion research in rebellious environments. Third, this study provides attitudinal microfoundations for the effect of victimization by warring factions on civilian behavior (e.g., sharing of actionable intelligence with the counterinsurgent) in the civil war in Iraq. While Condra and Shapiro (2012) and Shaver and Shapiro (2016) show that violence against civilians affects civilian behavior and conflict dynamics in Iraq, we provide the first evidence on the crucial intermediary step in the causal chain: victimization by civil-war parties systematically alters the political attitudes of Iraqi civilian victims. Last but not least, our findings have important policy implications for counterinsurgents and their external supporters: being viewed by the domestic public as two independent alternatives to the insurgency can help maintain popular support for the broad counterinsurgency even if one counterinsurgent inflicts harm on the civilian population.

1 Fragmented and unified alliances

Alliance fragmentation has both beneficial and detrimental implications for states in conflict. When allies bind themselves to each other they create a moral hazard problem akin to a risk insurance: weaker alliance members do not bear the full consequences of their actions, and thus they tend to become more aggressive and expose their partners to the risk of conflict escalation (Christensen and Snyder, 1990; Snyder, 1997; Yuen, 2009). In contrast, a loose relationship avoids this risk of entrapment. An ambiguous relationship between a local government and its external patron increases the latter's leverage over its partner, who is more likely to comply with demands tied to credible threats to withdraw support than with those linked to unconditional aid commitments (Berman and Lake, 2019; Ladwig, 2016). Moreover, fragmented alliances allow states to wage military campaigns that would be prohibitively costly if they were conducted through formal alliances; for instance, they can use other actors as proxies to weaken enemies without incurring repercussions (Fair, 2014; Jamal, 2009; Byman, 2005). For these reasons, states that face a common foe may opt to remain in a fragmented relationship rather than formally uniting forces.

On the other hand, weakly coordinated alliances tend to convey mixed signals of intent and resolve, which may cause miscalculation by the rival side and unintended escalation during militarized crises; monolithic alliances lack this problematic feature of fragmented alliances (Christensen, 2011). Moreover, the added resources from an alliance and the increased willingness of alliance members to fight back may lead rivals to refrain from initiating and escalating conflict. This deterrence effect of unified alliances may offset the moral hazard issues (Benson, Meirowitz and Ramsay, 2014).

The alliance literature has shown how fragmentation impacts the military strategies of states, but it leaves open the question how the relationship between two or more states that confront a common foe shapes the popular perception of violence that each one of them perpetrates. The next section of this paper presents a novel argument that helps answer this question and situates it in the literatures on violence in civil war and wartime public attitudes.

2 Alliance fragmentation, violence, and public attitudes

Civil war is often conceptualized as a contest over legitimacy, and therefore understanding popular support for warring factions is critical to comprehending conflict dynamics and outcomes (Mikulaschek and Shapiro, 2018; Berman and Matanock, 2015; Shapiro and Fair, 2010, 84). The literature has generally found that harm inflicted on civilians by one side pushes the victimized population to shift support away from the perpetrator and toward the opposing faction (Condra and Shapiro, 2012; Dell and Querubin, 2018). In addition, exposure to the negative externalities of militant violent activity is associated with lower support for rebel groups (Blair et al., 2013) and victimization during civil war leads to a longlasting rejection of the perpetrator's identity (Balcells, 2012). In-group bias leads civilians to respond more harshly to violence inflicted upon them by foreign counterinsurgents than they do when domestic rebels target them (Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2013; Lyall, Shiraito and Imai, 2015). In Afghanistan and Iraq, the mechanism that links violence against civilians to subsequent battlefield success is the actionable intelligence that civilians provide to the counterinsurgent: insurgent harm against civilians increases tips to the counterinsurgent (Wright et al., 2017) and civilian fatalities inflicted by the incumbent decrease the flow of information to the latter (Shaver and Shapiro, 2016). Studies of the wars in Iraq and Vietnam show that counterinsurgent violence against civilians increases insurgents' capacity to target the incumbent (Condra and Shapiro, 2012; Dell and Querubin, 2018) and augments the rebels' control of the conflict theater (Kocher, Pepinsky and Kalyvas, 2011). Anticipation of these effects has led ISAF in Afghanistan to compensate families of non-combatant victims, thus lowering the number of insurgent attacks in the wake of its civilian fatalities (Lyall, 2016), and it may explain why the Taliban enforce their code of conduct through courts to avoid backlash from violence against civilians (Giustozzi, 2014).

When the broad counterinsurgency is made up of multiple actors, the consequences of harm against civilians are less clear. If one counterinsurgent commits gross infractions against civilians, will this necessarily lead civilians to withdraw support from the entire counterinsurgency? Existing scholarship on violence in civil wars cannot answer this question, because it tends to make the assumption that incumbent forces are unitary actors (see Byman, 2006). Similarly, classic counterinsurgency theorists implicitly assumed that the goals and preferences of a local government and its external supporters are aligned (Thompson, 1986, cited in Ladwig, 2016, 101).³ This assumption is also reflected in the U.S. military's counterinsurgency doctrine (U.S. Army and Marine Corps, 2006), which "mentions the role of the host nation only in passing, without any serious discussion given to problems that may be encountered" by external interveners when the local counterinsurgent government abuses civilians (Byman, 2006, 80; see also Isaac et al., 2008 and Branch and Wood, 2010).⁴ This lack of attention to the role of alliances is surprising, because much of the U.S. experience

³Herring (1990) thus concluded twenty-five years after the Vietnam War that the burgeoning literature on that conflict neglected the issue of U.S.-South Vietnam relations.

⁴The updated 2014 doctrine has received similar criticism (Elias, 2018).

with counterinsurgency has involved collaborating with another government in combating an insurgency (e.g., in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Vietnam).

We argue that a military intervention by a foreign counterinsurgent in support of the local incumbent alters the effect of violence on popular support for warring factions. When the counterinsurgency is composed of two or more actors, violence against civilians at the hands of the government does not necessarily lead victims to shift their support from the counterinsurgency to the insurgency that the existing literature would expect. This is because civilians no longer face a binary choice between two sides when there are three or more violent actors involved.

We expect that the ties between the local and foreign counterinsurgents shape how civilians respond to harm they suffer at the hands of one of them. If civilian victims of the local government perceive the foreign intervention as independent from the domestic counterinsurgent that harmed them, they tend to view the foreign intervention as a silver lining. This is because the foreign intervention also fights the insurgency while at the same time causing less harm to civilians than the local government. In this case, the experience of victimization by the local government should not turn civilians into supporters of the insurgency. Instead, we expect civilians harmed by the local counterinsurgent to display higher levels of support for the external counterinsurgency intervention - as long as they do not view the latter as tied to the domestic incumbent that harmed them.

In contrast, violence against civilians perpetrated by one of the counterinsurgents should not increase support for the other one if the victims view these actors as closely allied. Instead, popular support for a counterinsurgent will be tainted by abuses perpetrated by its comrade in arms. This argument echoes the conjecture in Watts et al. (2014, 3) about U.S. counterinsurgency alliances with local governments in Pakistan and the Philippines that "there is the risk that the partner government will be abusive, potentially subjecting the United States to blowback from the populations that have been abused". This blowback implies that violence perpetrated by one of two closely aligned counterinsurgents will not increase popular support for the other one. In conclusion, civilians' perceptions of the ties between domestic and foreign counterinsurgents determines how the experience of being victimized by one of them affects their attitudes toward the warring factions.

An important scope condition for this argument is that baseline support for the rebellion is low even among those civilians who are most likely to suffer at the hands of the incumbent government. Rebellions vary in the degree to which they seek - and succeed in obtaining popular support (Weinstein, 2007). Civilians in the conflict theater may support or resent insurgencies due to the rebels' ideological tenets, political goals, military tactics involving brutality against non-combatants, or other factors. In conflicts fought between factions that represent different ethnic or sectarian constituencies, some civilian communities would not support insurgencies (counterinsurgencies) by members of a different community even if they are targeted by a counterinsurgency (insurgency) whose ethnic or sectarian affiliation they share. When a rebellion is unwilling or unable to attract substantial support from the population, those who are victimized by one counterinsurgent will not shift sympathy away from the incumbent to the loathed rebellion. Instead, they will increase support for other counterinsurgents, who promise to defeat the despised insurgency while inflicting less harm on civilians than the incumbent government - as long as these other counterinsurgents are not closely tied to to abusive local counterinsurgents.

3 Context of the Iraqi civil war

This section demonstrates that the Iraqi civil war satisfies the scope condition described in the preceding paragraph, and it describes the ties between the main counterinsurgent actors, the Iraqi government and the international coalition against ISIS. After the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, the Iraqi government led by prime minister Nouri al-Maliki increasingly marginalized the Sunni Arab minority. ISIS, the successor of al-Qaeda in Iraq, was able to take advantage of the situation by capitalizing on the grievances of Sunni Arab tribal groups and militias when it militarily advanced through the north and west of the country in 2014. Under intense pressure from internal and external allies, al-Maliki announced his resignation on August 14 of that year. Roughly a month later, an international coalition led by the U.S. initiated major airstrikes against ISIS to halt and reverse the group's military gains. Over the course of the following three years, the coalition conducted almost 13,000 air and artillery strikes in Iraq (Airwars, 2018).

On the side of the insurgency, the main actor was ISIS. It accounted for the vast majority of militant attacks committed between 2014 and 2015 according to event data compiled by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (2017). Given the goals and beliefs of ISIS, Shia Arabs and Kurds would highly likely not be supportive of the insurgency under any circumstances. Additionally, while some Iraqi Arab Sunnis supported armed opposition groups like ISIS when the latter conquered the northern and western part of the country in 2014 (Mikulaschek, Pant and Tesfaye, 2019), it had become deeply unpopular across the country within the subsequent year. A survey conducted by ORB International found that, in July 2015, 5% of Iraqis (including 8% of Arab Sunnis) thought that ISIS had a positive influence (ORB International, 2015). By January 2016, opposition to ISIS rose to 99% of Iraqi Shiite Arabs and 95% of Sunni Arabs according to another poll (Al-Dagher and Kaltenthaler, 2016). Our own survey experiments confirm that support for ISIS was extremely low (see below) in mid-2015. We thus analyze a conflict where, across Iraq's ethnic and sectarian communities, as of mid-2015 ISIS was deeply unpopular among Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, and Kurds - one of the scope conditions of our argument.

While the insurgency was dominated by a single rebel faction, the counterinsurgency side included two groups: the Iraqi government and an international coalition led by the United States. The airstrikes conducted by the U.S. and its partners (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Jordan, Morocco, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Turkey) were explicitly approved by the Iraqi government. In June 2014, the government formally asked the U.S. to launch air strikes against ISIS (BBC, 2014). The formation of the international coalition to conduct airstrikes in September 2014 was greeted with approval

by Iraq's president (NINA, 2014b), speaker of parliament (NINA, 2014c), foreign minister (United Nations, 2014), and the Kurdish regional government (NINA, 2014a). Although the U.S.-led international coalition conducted airstrikes in partnership with the Iraqi government, the U.S. did not unconditionally support its local ally. For instance, in late 2015 the U.S. threatened to withdraw its support if Iraq also allowed Russia to carry out airstrikes (CBS, 2015). Moreover, the U.S. and its coalition partners waited for several months before they heeded the Iraqi government's call for airstrikes against ISIS. Therefore, the U.S.-led coalition displayed considerable autonomy from the Iraqi government in its operations. The ambivalent character of the alliance ties between the Iraqi government and the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS makes it possible to experimentally manipulate Iraqi citizens' perceptions of these ties to test our argument that the ties between counterinsurgent factions shape how civilians respond to wartime violence.

4 Research design

Our survey experiments enable us to study how framing the counterinsurgency as fragmented or unified affects its popular support when one counterinsurgent actor is responsible for harming civilians. Our argument implies that the popular perception of the counterinsurgents as independent or closely allied determines how civilians will respond to violence inflicted upon them by one of these counterinsurgents. If civilian victims of one counterinsurgent view the counterinsurgency as fragmented, they will respond by shifting support to the other counterinsurgent, given that the insurgency is broadly loathed. However, if they perceive the counterinsurgency as unified, harm inflicted upon them by one counterinsurgent will not increase support for the other counterinsurgent.

To test our argument, we leverage original data from a large, national survey conducted in Iraq between June and August 2015. This survey was fielded by 4points, an Iraqi survey company, for the humanitarian organization Mercy Corps. It was conducted in person, based on smart phones, and administered in Arabic and Kurdish to a sample that is representative of 17 of Iraq's 19 governorates; it could not be conducted in Nineveh and Anbar due to security concerns related to the presence of ISIS in these provinces. The sample size was 5,603, and respondents were chosen through a multi-stage cluster sampling method.⁵ Samples were allocated to governorates and districts based on the probability proportional to size (PPS) approach. Sub-districts were then randomly selected within districts. The KISH grid method was used to select respondents within a household.

A key issue with asking sensitive questions about political attitudes during a civil war is that it is hard to elicit truthful attitudes. Social desirability concerns might induce respondents to provide answers that are contrary to their true attitudes. Alternatively, fear of revealing honest opinions and beliefs may lead some respondents to choose not to respond to certain questions. Moreover, respondents' safety could be at risk if warring factions gain access to individually identifiable information about political attitudes. These concerns about social desirability bias, non-response, and respondent safety have led scholars to rely on indirect question techniques for asking sensitive questions in contexts of ongoing conflict (e.g., Blair et al., 2013; Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2013; Matanock and Garcia-Sanchez, 2017).

This study takes a similar approach by analyzing list experiments embedded in the survey to gauge attitudes toward ISIS and U.S.-led airstrikes. The list experiments are structured as follows. Each respondent is given a list of items and asked how many items (but not which specific item) they support. The control group gets a list of three non-sensitive items, while the treatment group is provided with the same three items in addition to a fourth, sensitive item. Treatment assignment is independently randomized for each survey experiment.

The first list experiment measured support for ISIS with the following vignette:

"Now I am going to read you a list with the names of different groups and individuals on it. After I read the entire list, I'd like you to tell me HOW MANY

 $^{^{5}541}$ responses (9.7%) had to be discarded since they completed the survey within 20 minutes or less, which makes it inconceivable that they expressed genuine attitudes. This approach follows the recommendation in Mutz (2011, 88-9) to drop responses that were provided at an unreasonable speed. An additional 76 responses (1.5%) had to be dropped since they were collected by an enumerator who gathered flawed survey data.





Note: The map displays the number of survey responses gathered in each province. The survey could not be administered in Nineveh and Anbar governorates due to security reasons related to the conquest of these provinces by ISIS. The sample is representative of the other 17 Iraqi governorates.

of these groups and individuals you broadly support, meaning that you generally have favorable views towards them. Please don't tell me WHICH ONES you broadly support; only tell me HOW MANY groups or individuals you broadly support.

- 1. Iraq's national football team
- 2. Associations that promote equal rights for Iraqi women
- 3. Iraqi Red Crescent
- 4. Daesh⁶ (omitted for control group)"

The second list experiment investigated attitudes toward U.S.-led airstrikes:

"Now I am going to read to you a list of recent events. After I read the entire list, I'd like you to tell me HOW MANY of events you favor. Please do not tell me WHICH ONES you favor. Only tell me HOW MANY of these events you favor.

- 1. The spread of cell phone service in Iraq in recent years.
- 2. The increase in the number of women in parliament.
- The increase in the number of women who marry between the ages of 14 and 18.

4. The air strikes conducted by the U.S.-led international coalition in Iraq/ ... which have been approved by the government of Iraq (*omitted for control group*)"

In this question, there is an additional layer of randomization with the fourth item. Respondents in the control group were only provided with a list of three items. "The air strikes conducted by the U.S.-led international coalition in Iraq" was added as a fourth item in the first treatment group. The second treatment group was also told that these airstrikes were approved by the Iraqi government. Thus, respondents in the latter group received a cue that prompted them to consider the close relationship between the domestic and foreign

 $^{^6\}mathrm{The}$ commonly used Arabic language acronym Daesh designates ISIS.

counterinsurgents while they formed an answer to this survey question. The other treatment group was asked to express an opinion about these same airstrikes without being prompted to weigh the government's approval of these strikes while choosing a response. This research design is similar to a number of recent studies that use primes in survey experiments to manipulate respondents' attitudes on violence and violent actors (Kupatadze and Zeitzoff, 2019; Denny and Driscoll, 2019; Hatz, 2018; Fair et al., 2018; Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2013).⁷

The list experiment technique mitigates the concerns about social desirability bias, nonresponses, and respondent safety since it allows respondents in the treatment group to honestly answer the question about the sensitive item while keeping all others from knowing their attitudes (as long as they did not choose all or none of the items on the list). To ensure that respondents understood the logic of the list experiment and the protection it afforded to them, enumerators briefly explained how list experiments help respondents keep their attitude toward the sensitive item confidential. Each respondent also participated in a practice survey experiment with a list of foods and drinks.

There are two potential threats to this research design. First, floor and ceiling effects can

⁷In addition to the priming effect, the cue about the Iraqi government's approval of international coalition airstrikes could potentially affect respondents' attitudes about the airstrikes through two alternative causal pathways: First, it might provide new information that is not available to respondents in the control group, which may include some individuals who did not know that the Iraqi government approved these strikes. We believe that this alternative explanation is implausible, because the civil war against ISIS dominated Iraqi news media coverage throughout 2014 and 2015. The Iraqi news media extensively covered the government's repeated requests of U.S.-led airstrikes in the summer of 2014 as well as public statements by numerous government representatives that praised the U.S.-led intervention in the fall of 2014 and in 2015 when the survey was administered. Some of these statements are mentioned above. In turn, virtually all Iraqis have access to the mass media, and satellite TV "is almost ubiquitous in Iraq, present in 97.3 percent of households" according to a national survey conducted by Gallup in 2014 (Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2015, 1). Thus, it is unlikely that it took Iraqi civilians to participate in this survey - and to be assigned to the treatment group - to learn that their government approved of the U.S.-led international airstrikes against ISIS. A second alternative explanation of the effect of the cue of government endorsement of the airstrikes would be based on social desirability bias. Specifically, some respondents who were victimized by the government might be afraid to honestly reveal a negative opinion about a foreign counterinsurgency effort if they are reminded that the government endorsed these strikes. This would be a plausible reaction by respondents who (1) do not understand that list experiments enable them to honestly reveal their attitude without identifying themselves as airstrike supporter or opponent and (2) are afraid of suffering at the hands of pro-government forces again if they voice opposition to government-endorsed airstrikes. For these respondents, social desirability bias would inflate support of government-approved airstrikes relative to airstrikes. Consequently, this bias would lead us to underestimate the actual negative effect of government approval of the strikes on popular support of the airstrikes among those who were victimized by the government. Our estimates would thus establish the lower bound of the true negative effect if such social desirability bias is present.

compromise the analysis. If a respondent in the treatment group were to choose none or all of the items, then we can directly infer how the respondent feels about the sensitive item. Second, there could be an issue known as a design effect if responses regarding the non-sensitive items change when the sensitive item is included. In that case, a respondent's answer about support of the non-sensitive items varies between treatment and control group.Fortunately, these issues do not affect our analysis, as we show below.

With regards to floor and ceiling effects, the non-sensitive items were chosen in such a way that respondents were likely to choose at least one of them but unlikely to choose all of them. For example, in the second experiment, it is improbable that those who support the increasing number of women in parliament would also favor the rise in the number of women who marry between the ages of 14 and 18 years. This approach maximizes the likelihood that respondents are in the intermediate categories where floor and ceiling effects are least likely. Moreover, the survey was piloted to ensure that there were no floor and ceiling effects. Finally, robustness tests reported below confirm that floor and ceiling effects are indeed unlikely to be a concern.

With regards to the design effect, we run tests to show that we fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no design effect in either list experiment (see Table III in the Online Appendix). This raises our confidence that the inclusion of the sensitive item did not alter respondents' choices regarding the non-sensitive items. We can thus rely on the list experiments to investigate how being victimized by the insurgency or by one of the counterinsurgents affects attitudes toward ISIS and U.S.-led airstrikes.

Victimization by warring factions is measured with the following three survey questions (collapsed here for convenience: "In the past year, have you or anyone in your family been negatively affected by an attack caused by the Daesh and other terrorist groups/ Government Forces and/or supporting militia/ coalition airstrike?" Respondents could choose one or more of the following response options: 'No, I have not been negatively affected.' 'Yes, my work/business was interrupted/closed.' 'Yes, I was forced to leave my home/migrate.' 'Yes, my property was damaged.' 'Yes, a family member was injured.' In our main models, we record a respondent as having been victimized by a warring faction if he/she selects any affirmative answer. Thus, we adopt a strategy that is similar to Lyall, Blair and Imai (2013, 687) who record direct exposure to harm at the hands of varying factions based on whether respondents reported that they or their families sustained physical injury or property damage.

Using the data from the list experiments, we can infer the average level of support by comparing the number of favored items in the treatment and control groups. To estimate the effect of pre-treatment covariates on the likelihood of support of the sensitive item we interact an indicator of treatment assignment with these covariates. Specifically, we estimate the following OLS model:

$$Y_{i} = \beta_{0} + \beta_{1} * T_{i} + \beta_{2} * V_{i} + \beta_{3} * V_{i} * T_{i} + \beta_{4} * X_{i} + \beta_{5} * X_{i} * T_{i} + \beta_{6} F E_{i} + \epsilon_{i}$$
(1)

 Y_i indicates the number of items supported by respondent *i*. T_i is a dichotomous variable that shows whether respondent *i* was assigned to the treatment or control condition.⁸ The vector V_i contains three variables that indicate whether respondent *i* had been victimized by progovernment Iraqi forces, ISIS, or international coalition airstrikes, respectively. X_i is a vector of pre-treatment covariates that describe individual-level socioeconomic characteristics (age, gender, education, ethnic and sectarian group affiliation, and size of hometown) as well as the local security situation at the time of the interview.⁹ In order to account for residual social desirability bias that might have persisted despite our indirect question technique, we control for respondent's degree of comfort with taking the survey and for whether the respondent was interviewed in the privacy of his/her home or not.¹⁰ We include district

⁸In Models 1 and 6-9 presented below the treatment consists in being assigned to a four-item list that includes airstrikes (Model 1) and ISIS (Models 6-9), respectively, while the list in the control condition omits the sensitive item. In Models 2-5 the treatment is getting a four-item list that includes Iraqi-government approved coalition airstrikes while the control condition's four-item list merely mentions coalition airstrikes without cueing the Iraqi government's approval of these strikes.

⁹To capture the local security situation, we include the number of insurgent fatalities, civilian deaths, and fatalities on the government side in the repondent's governorate on the day of the interview or the previous day. This data was recorded by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2017).

¹⁰Enumerators were instructed to conduct the interview inside the respondent's home unless he/she pre-

fixed effects FE_i into the model. The standard errors ϵ_i are heteroskedasticity-consistent. All covariates are demeaned. Table I in the Online Appendix reports descriptive statistics for all variables.

Our main quantity of interest captures how the randomly assigned cue about close ties between domestic and foreign counterinsurgents shapes the impact of government-inflicted victimization on support for airstrikes on attitudes toward insurgents and counterinsurgents. β_3 in equation 1 causally identifies this effect in models 2-5, which investigate how this experimentally varied prime alters the effect of harm inflicted by the domestic counterinsurgents on attitudes toward the foreign counterinsurgency intervention.¹¹

5 Results

Overall, our survey experiments indicate extremely low support for ISIS among Iraqi citizens and mixed support for airstrikes by a U.S.-led international coalition. Only 1.4% of respondents voiced sympathy for ISIS. Social desirability bias is an unlikely explanation of this low level of support since the list experiments enabled respondents to honestly reveal their attitude without having to identify themselves as ISIS supporters. At the same time, 31.7% of respondents favored the airstrikes against ISIS conducted by a U.S.-led international coalition.¹² Once again, social pressure to express support of the fight against ISIS cannot account for this result, because no one can derive individual respondents' attitudes from our survey experiments.

How does being victimized by the insurgency or by either counterinsurgent affect support for coalition airstrikes and ISIS? 24% of respondents were victimized by ISIS, 8% by the gov-

ferred a different location. 94% of respondents were interviewed at home. 91% of respondents were comfortable with all or most questions. Respondents' degree of comfort was assessed by the enumerator.

¹¹In contrast, β_1 estimates the effect of the randomized cue on aggregate support of all nonsensitive items combined, and β_2 indicates how victimization relates to views on these three items. These two coefficients are not of substantive interest, and neither is β_4 , which estimates how pretreatment covariates relate to support of the three nonsensitive items. β_5 captures the correlation between covariates and support of the sensitive item.

 $^{^{12}}$ This result is similar to the finding from another survey conducted in Iraq in July 2015, which indicated that 13% of Iraqis supported these airstrikes while 31% somehow supported them (ORB International, 2015).

ernment or pro-government militias, and 6% by airstrikes conducted by the U.S.-led coalition. As expected, the effect of victimization by the domestic counterinsurgent on support for the foreign counterinsurgents depended on respondents' perception of the fragmentation or unity of the counterinsurgency. Being a victim of government or pro-government militia forces was associated with higher support for coalition airstrikes among those respondents who were not primed to consider the alliance between domestic and foreign counterinsurgents while expressing their view about coalition airstrikes. In the subset of civilians harmed by the Iraqi government, 42% of respondents favored the coalition airstrikes, but support dropped to just 11% among recipients of the randomized cue about close ties between the local and international counterinsurgents. Two alternative models with different subsets of respondents confirm that this effect is statistically significant and substantively large (see Table I). Model 1 compares the attitudes of respondents in the control condition, who were given a list with three items, to those of respondents who were also asked about coalition airstrikes as the fourth item on the list. The positive and significant coefficient of the interaction between the treatment and victimization at the hands of the government indicates the effect of having been negatively affected by government forces on support for coalition airstrikes. The coefficient of victimization by the government in Model 2 provides an alternative estimate of the same effect, which is strikingly similar to other one. That model compares respondents who were asked about coalition airstrikes to those who also received the randomly assigned cue that the Iraqi government approved these strikes. In Model 2, the treatment consists in the prime of government approval of the coalition airstrikes. The statistically significant and positive coefficient of victimization by government forces indicates that harm by the domestic counterinsurgents increased support for airstrikes among those who did not get the cue about government endorsement of the airstrikes. At the same time, the negative coefficient of the interaction between the treatment and victimization by the government shows that the cue about the close relationship between the counterinsurgents significantly reduced the positive effect of harm inflicted by domestic counterinsurgents on support for international coalition airstrikes. Thus, being victimized by government forces only increased support for foreign counterinsurgents among those respondents who were not primed to think about the close ties between domestic and foreign counterinsurgents while they expressed their opinion about the international coalition airstrikes.

Overall, the effect of the randomized cue on the attitudinal response to victimization by Iraqi pro-government forces was not only statistically significant but also substantively large. Model 2 predicts that victims of the local counterinsurgents were 52 percentage points less likely to support the international counterinsurgent intervention if they received the signal of close ties between these anti-ISIS forces than they were in the absence of this cue. Harm inflicted by pro-government forces increased support for the international coalition airstrikes by 45 percentage points, on average - but only if respondents were not primed to consider the Iraqi government and the international coalition as acting in unison. Figure 2 compares the effect of victimization by pro-government Iraqi forces on support for coalition airstrikes among respondents who were primed to consider the close partnership between the foreign coalition and the Iraqi government to the corresponding effect among respondents who did not receive that cue. The difference in outcomes between these groups amounts to the impact of this randomized prime on the attitudinal effect of government-inflicted harm.

More disaggregated analyses in Models 3-5 and Figure 2 suggest that the same patterns generally hold for the subsets of districts with Shiite Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish majorities. While the coefficient of the interaction between victimization and the randomized cue about the counterinsurgents tends to be larger for Sunni Arab-majority and Kurdishmajority districts than for areas with Shia Arab populations, it is imprecisely estimated and insignificant for these smaller Sunni Arab and Kurdish subsets due to insufficient statistical power. In the larger subset of Shia Arab-majority districts, the weakly significant coefficient of the interaction term suggests that the cue about the counterinsurgents tended to have a negative impact on the effect of victimization by government forces on support for the airstrikes.



Figure 2. Estimated effect of victimization by government forces on support for coalition airstrikes

Note: The four panels display the effect of victimization by Iraqi government forces on support for airstrikes conducted by a U.S.-led international coalition (light blue circles), on airstrikes conducted by a U.S.-led international coalition that have been approved by the Iraqi government (dark blue triangles), and the difference between these two effects (black squares). 95% confidence intervals are plotted around the point estimates. The estimates are derived from Models 2-5. Results for the full sample are displayed in the upper-left panel; those for the subset of Shia Arab-majority districts are shown in the upper-right panel, those for districts with a Sunni Arab majority are indicated in the lower-left panel, and the lower-right panel shows results for Kurdish-majority districts. A comparison of the y-axes shows that the point estimates are larger in Sunni-Arab and Kurdish areas than in Shia Arab majority districts. At the same time, insufficient statistical power for the Sunni Arab and Kurdish subset analyses implies that the estimates are imprecisely estimated for these smaller subsamples.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Control Group	Baseline	Airstrikes	Airstrikes	Airstrikes	Airstrikes
Treatment Group	Airstrikes	Govtlinked	Govtlinked	Govtlinked	Govtlinked
Sample	Full	Full	Shia	Sunni	Kurd
Treat	-0.942***	1.200***	0.862*	1.040**	-0.327
	(0.356)	(0.420)	(0.462)	(0.436)	(0.703)
ISIS Victimization	0.046	0.041	0.113	-0.103	0.022
	(0.086)	(0.108)	(0.139)	(0.241)	(0.298)
Govt Victimization	-0.001	0.452***	0.511***	0.277	0.187
	(0.116)	(0.148)	(0.169)	(0.462)	(0.428)
Airstrikes Victimization	0.197	-0.269	-0.477**	-0.041	0.409
	(0.123)	(0.171)	(0.188)	(0.550)	(0.415)
Treat*ISIS Victimization	-0.004	0.011	-0.063	-0.042	0.093
	(0.138)	(0.145)	(0.189)	(0.323)	(0.375)
Treat*Govt Victimization	0.453**	-0.521**	-0.470*	-0.621	-0.729
	(0.188)	(0.203)	(0.248)	(0.525)	(0.522)
Treat*Airstrikes Victimization	-0.466**	0.300	0.391	0.163	0.568
	(0.211)	(0.237)	(0.282)	(0.633)	(0.525)
Observations	2.261	2.273	1.064	867	344
R-squared	0.253	0.268	0.168	0.395	0.238

Table I. Support for airstrikes against ISIS: results from district fixed-effects OLS models

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p < .01; ** p < .05; *p < 0.1. The Baseline group are those respondents who were only provided with the three nonsensitive items. The Airstrikes group are those respondents who were provided with the three nonsensitive items and the sensitive item of U.S.-led airstrikes. The Govt.-linked group are those respondents who were provided with the three nonsensitive items and the sensitive item of U.S.-led airstrikes that were approved by the Iraqi Government. The Shia Sunni, and Kurdish samples are respectively respondents from districts that are majority Shia Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish. Socioeconomic covariates, local violence levels, and district fixed effects are included in all models.

While harm inflicted by one counterinsurgent increased support for other counterinsurgents that were not closely tied to the abusive actor, it did not shift support from the counterinsurgent to the insurgency. Thus, being victimized by the government or coalition airstrikes did not augment sympathy for ISIS. This finding is consistent with our argument but contrary to what the previous literature would expect. Model 6 in Table II estimates support for ISIS by comparing respondents in the control condition, who were presented with a three-item list, to those in the treatment condition that also included ISIS as a fourth item. The insignificant coefficients of the interactions between the treatment and victimization by counterinsurgents show that being harmed by domestic or foreign counterinsurgents did not

	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Control Group	Baseline	Baseline	Baselines	Baseline
Treatment Group	ISIS	ISIS	ISIS	ISIS
Sample	Full	Shia	Sunni	Kurd
Treat	-0.280	-0.302	0.194	-0.389
	(0.454)	(0.437)	(0.378)	(0.708)
ISIS Victimization	-0.053	-0.149	-0.210	0.384*
	(0.082)	(0.098)	(0.192)	(0.202)
Govt Victimization	0.043	0.129	-0.805**	0.424**
	(0.107)	(0.126)	(0.346)	(0.215)
Airstrikes Victimization	0.014	-0.019	0.130	-0.116
	(0.113)	(0.129)	(0.395)	(0.211)
Treat*ISIS Victimization	0.016	-0.009	0.289	-0.236
	(0.111)	(0.136)	(0.252)	(0.285)
Treat*Govt Victimization	0.092	0.023	-0.010	-0.069
	(0.152)	(0.164)	(0.647)	(0.407)
Treat*Airstrikes Victimization	-0.076	-0.120	0.332	0.209
	(0.161)	(0.175)	(0.530)	(0.405)
Observations	2,976	1,409	1,118	456
R-squared	0.258	0.241	0.224	0.423

Table II. Support for ISIS: results from district fixed-effects OLS models

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p < .01; ** p < .05; *p < 0.1. The Baseline group are those respondents who were only provided with a list that included three nonsensitive items. The ISIS group are those respondents who were provided with the three nonsensitive items and the sensitive item of ISIS. The Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish samples are respectively respondents from districts that are majority Shia Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish. Socioeconomic covariates, local violence levels, and district fixed effects are included in all models.

increase support for ISIS. Models 7-9 do not detect effects of counterinsurgent harm on victims' support for the insurgency in separate models of districts where most respondents are Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, and Kurds, respectively.

In line with findings from the existing literature, victimization by coalition airstrikes reduced support for these airstrikes. Model 1 shows that the effect was significant and large. Disaggregated analyses detect similar results in subsets composed of Shia Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish majority districts (see Models 3-5). Due to insufficient statistical power in the Sunni Arab and Kurdish majority subsets, the effect of harm from coalition airstrikes was only significant in the Shia-majority sample, but the coefficient was more than twice as large in areas with a Sunni majority, which is the main constituency of ISIS. In contrast, victimization by ISIS did not significantly increase support for U.S.-led coalition airstrikes (see Model 1). Nor did it systematically change support for ISIS itself (see Model 6). This null finding also holds among ISIS' purported constituency in Sunni Arabmajority districts (Models 4 and 8) as well as in Shia Arab and Kurdish majority areas (Models 3, 5, 7, and 9). While Sunni Arabs displayed a considerable amount of sympathy for the insurgency in mid-2014 when ISIS took over northern and western regions of Iraq (Mikulaschek, Pant and Tesfaye, 2020), the insurgent group had become deeply unpopular over the course of the following year among all segments of the population - even among those who did not personally suffer harm from the insurgency. The insignificant effect of victimization by pro-government forces on support for the insurgency is consistent with our argument, because we expect that civilians who are harmed by Iraqi counterinsurgents do not become sympathizers of the insurgency but instead shift support to foreign counterinsurgents that are not tied to the government.

6 Robustness

6.1 Restricting analysis to respondents who passed the manipulation checks

The results reported above are robust to restricting the sample to the set of respondents who paid sufficient attention to pass the manipulation checks. 68% of respondents were able to recall whether the list of three or four items they heard in the airstrikes experiment included airstrikes conducted by a U.S.-led international coalition. Moreover, 47% of the respondents in the treatment condition who were asked about government-endorsed airstrikes passed a second and more challenging manipulation check. When asked who approved of these strikes, they correctly stated that it was the Iraqi government (as opposed to choosing one of the incorrect answer options, i.e. the United Nations, the Arab League, 'don't know' or refusing to answer). Model 10 in Table II in the Online Appendix replicates Model 2 with a smaller subsample of respondents who passed these manipulation checks, and it shows that the main results hold. The significant positive coefficient of government-inflicted harm indicates that violence at the hands of the domestic counterinsurgent significantly increased support for international coalition airstrikes. At the same time, the sum of this coefficient and its interaction with the treatment of government-endorsement of the strikes is insignificant. This shows that being victimized by Iraqi pro-government forces did not significantly increase support for coalition airstrikes for those respondents who were primed to consider the close ties between counterinsurgents while answering the question.

Our main models reported in the previous section include the respondents who did not pass these manipulation checks. Thus, they estimate an intention-to-treat effect (ITT), which is more conservative than the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT), which is estimated for the subset that absorbs the treatment and reported in this section (Barabas and Jerit, 2010). Thus, the intention-to-treat effect approximates the impact of the cue that we would observe in a realistic non-experimental setting where a similar signal of a close or distant relationship between counterinsurgents is conveyed through the mass media and only five to seven in ten citizens who are exposed to this message absorb it.

6.2 Investigating floor and ceiling effects

The validity of inferences from list experiments also depends on the so-called 'no-liars' assumption. This assumption is violated in the presence of floor and ceiling effects where some respondents in the treatment group suppress their answer to the sensitive item if they fear their honest response would reveal their true feeling towards the sensitive item. Using the method developed in Blair and Imai (2012), we can adjust our estimates for the potential presence of ceiling and floor effects.

Models 11, 12, and 13 in Table III in the Online Appendix show our results when the sensitive item is support for airstrikes, government-endorsed airstrikes, and ISIS, respectively. Model 11 shows that there is still a significant positive association between being victimized by the government and supporting the airstrikes even after accounting for potential ceiling

and floor effects. In Model 12, the associations between each of the victimization variables and support for ISIS remain insignificant. Model 13 compares respondents assigned to the baseline group with three non-sensitive items and those in the treatment condition that also includes Iraqi government-approved coalition airstrikes as a fourth item. If the argument holds that framing the coalition airstrikes as being tied to the government leads to those victimized by the government to not increase support the airstrikes, then we should see an insignificant association between government victimization and support for governmentendorsed airstrikes, which is the case in Model 13. In sum, the results in Online Appendix Table III demonstrate that our results are also robust to accounting for floor and ceiling effects.

7 Conclusion

This study presents unique new experimental evidence from a national survey conducted in Iraq at the height of the civil war in 2015. We rely on survey experiments to show that support for ISIS was extremely low, with only 1.4% of Iraqi respondents expressing a favorable attitude toward that terrorist group. Fear of revealing support for an insurgency during an ongoing civil war is an unlikely explanation of the low level of support, because list experiments enabled respondents to honestly answer the survey questions without identifying themselves as supporters or opponents of either civil-war party. Support for the airstrikes against ISIS that are conducted by a U.S.-led international coalition stood substantially higher at 31.7%.

This study examines how the experience of victimization by one counterinsurgent (Iraqi pro-government forces) affects support for the other counterinsurgent (the international coalition that conducts airstrikes against ISIS). The existing literature on violence in civil wars generally assumes that the incumbent in an intrastate conflict is a unitary actor. This assumption does not hold in many recent or contemporary insurgencies where a foreign intervener fights a rebellion alongside a local government (e.g., in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Syria, and South Vietnam). While existing studies expects that violence against civilians by one side reduces popular support for the perpetrator and increases support for its opponent, we argue that this dynamic does not hold if a counterinsurgency is composed of two actors that are viewed as independent from each other and if the insurgent is widely despised. Under these circumstances, support for an unpopular insurgency does not even increase when the domestic counterinsurgent harms civilians. Instead, violence against civilians at the hands of the local government reduces support for the domestic counterinsurgent and increases sympathy for the less abusive foreign counterinsurgent, as long as the two counterinsurgents are not viewed as closely tied to each other.

Evidence from survey experiments embedded in an original, national survey in Iraq is consistent with our argument and inconsistent with the conventional wisdom. It shows that Iraqi civilians who were harmed by pro-government Iraqi forces were more likely to support the airstrikes against ISIS that were conducted by a U.S.-led international coalition. At the same time, this effect of being victimized by one counterinsurgent on support for the other counterinsurgent evaporated among those survey respondents who were cued to consider the close ties between domestic and foreign counterinsurgents while they chose their response to the question about support for the international coalition's airstrikes against ISIS.

A caveat about this finding is that we cannot directly speak to how long the attitudinal effect induced by the randomized cue persists. We believe that this is an important question for future research. In contrast, this study aimed to first establish whether a subtle prime about the relationship between the counterinsurgents can alter popular attitudes about warring factions. Even if the observed effect of this modest cue is temporary, its magnitude and significance suggest that similar cues that are delivered through mass media on a daily basis may have a sizable impact on public attitudes toward warring factions in Iraq.

Our findings have an important policy implication for counterinsurgents and their external supporters: being viewed by the domestic public as two independent alternatives to the insurgency can help maintain popular support for the counterinsurgency even if one counterinsurgent inflicts collateral damage on the civilian population.

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Online Appendix for: Violence against civilians and support for fragmented and united counterinsurgencies: Experimental evidence from a national survey in Iraq

September 12, 2022

Variable	Ν	Mean	St. dev.	Min.	Max.
Dependent variables					
Support for airstrikes and 3 other items	3,454	1.53	1.01	0	4
Support for ISIS and 3 other items	3,022	1.57	0.93	0	4
Independent variables					
Treatment: airstrikes as sensitive item	$2,\!480$	0.49	0.50	0	1
Treatment: govt-approved airstrikes as sensitive item	2,520	0.50	0.50	0	1
Treatment: ISIS as sensitive item	3,285	0.51	0.50	0	1
ISIS victimization	4,983	0.24	0.43	0	1
Government victimization	4,983	0.08	0.28	0	1
Airstrikes victimization	4,982	0.06	0.25	0	1
Sunni Arab	4,986	0.30	0.46	0	1
Kurd	4,986	0.13	0.34	0	1
Female	4,986	0.44	0.50	0	1
Age	4,901	37	13	21	62
Urban: pop. 250k - 1 million	4,986	0.23	0.42	0	1
Urban: pop. 50k - 250k	4,986	0.24	0.43	0	1
Urban: pop. <50k	4,986	0.17	0.38	0	1
Rural district	4,986	0.20	0.40	0	1
Education: junior high school	4,948	0.19	0.39	0	1
Education: senior high school	4,948	0.25	0.43	0	1
Education: univ./academy	4,948	0.33	0.47	0	1
Respondent interviewed inside home	4,986	0.94	0.23	0	1
Respondent's degree of comfort during interview	4,986	2.57	0.75	0	4
Civilian deaths just before interview	4,986	1.26	4.64	0	30
Deaths on government side just before interview	4,986	0.49	1.36	0	10
Deaths on insurgent side just before interview	4,986	1.83	8.21	0	80

Table I. Descriptive statistics

Note: The table displays the descriptive statistics of the variables included in the main models. Ndesignates the number of respondents who neither refused to answer the question on which the measure is based nor chose the answer option "Don't know". Note that the number of responses to the question on 'Support for airstrikes and 3 other items' greatly exceeds the number of observations assigned to the two treatment conditions of the airstrikes experiment. This is because the descriptive statistics of the outcome variable describe the pooled set of respondents in all three treatment conditions (control group with three survey items; treatment group with airstrikes; treatment group with government-approved airstrikes) while the descriptive statistics for the two treatment conditions in the airstrikes experiment only include respondents in the control group and those in the respective treatment. The number of observations for the pre-treatment covariates exceeds N for the experiments' treatment and outcome measures since they also include respondents assigned to additional treatment arms. While the descriptive statistics table displays untransformed variables, all pre-treatment covariates in the OLS models were de-meaned. The measures of ethnic and sectarian affiliation (Sunni Arab and Kurdish) are mutually exclusive, and Shia Arabs are the omitted baseline category. Urban areas with a population above 1 million are the omitted baseline category of the measure of the urban/rural character of respondents' place of residence. Primary school education or no formal education are included in the omitted category of the education measure. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2017) coded the three measures of fatalities in the respondent's governorate (province) on the day of the interview or the previous day. To construct the measures of the local security situation at the time of the interview, we assumed that fatalities or casualties that resulted from multi-day violent events were evenly distributed over the course of these events.

	Model 10		
Control Group	Airstrikes		
Treatment Group	Govt-linked		
Sample	Full		
Treat	1 290*		
11000	(0.659)		
ISIS Victimization	0.095		
	(0.125)		
Govt Victimization	0.455***		
	(0.169)		
Airstrikes Victimization	-0.018		
	(0.199)		
Treat*ISIS Victimization	-0.254		
	(0.111)		
Treat*Govt Victimization	-0.134		
	(0.264)		
Treat*Airstrikes Victimization	0.077		
	(0.316)		
Observations	1,309		
R-squared	0.258		

Table II. Support for the airstrikes against ISIS among those who pass the manipulation check: results from district fixed-effects OLS models

Note: Coefficients indicate relationship between victimization variables and selecting the sensitive item. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p < .01; ** p < .05; *p < 0.1. The Airstrikes group are those respondents who were provided with the three nonsensitive items and the sensitive item of U.S.-led airstrikes. The Govt.-linked group are those respondents who were provided with the three nonsensitive items and the sensitive items and the sensitive items and the sensitive items of U.S.-led airstrikes that were approved by the Iraqi Government. Socioeconomic control variables, local violence levels, and district fixed effects are included in the model.

	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13
Control Group	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Treatment Group	Airstrikes	ISIS	Govt-linked
Sample	Full	Full	Full
ISIS Victimization	0.072	-0.135	0.105
	(0.132)	(0.112)	(0.128)
Govt Victimization	0.338*	0.075	0.025
	(0.192)	(0.150)	(0.180)
Airstrikes Victimization	-0.323	-0.091	-0.158
	(0.212)	(0.161)	(0.206)
Observations	2,261	2,976	2,295

Table III. Support for ISIS and international coalition airstrikes against ISIS: Results from floor and ceiling effects OLS models

Note: Coefficients indicate relationship between victimization variables and selecting the sensitive item. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p < .01; ** p < .05; *p < 0.1. The Baseline group are those respondents who were only provided with the three nonsensitive items. The Airstrikes group are those respondents who were provided with the three nonsensitive items and the sensitive item of U.S.-led airstrikes. The Govt.-linked group are those respondents who were provided with the three approved by the Iraqi Government. The ISIS group are those respondents who were provided with the three nonsensitive items and the sensitive item of U.S.-led airstrikes that were approved by the Iraqi Government. The ISIS group are those respondents who were provided with the three nonsensitive items and the sensitive item of U.S. Socioeconomic control variables, local violence levels, and governorate fixed effects are included in all models.

References

Uppsala Conflict Data Program. 2017. UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Version 17.1. Uppsala: Uppsala University.