



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

Armed non-state actors in conflict: strategic decision-making in the 2014 IS-KRI conflict
Berge, W. van den

Citation

Berge, W. van den. (2024, November 22). *Armed non-state actors in conflict: strategic decision-making in the 2014 IS-KRI conflict*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4150279>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4150279>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Propositions

accompanying the thesis

Armed non-state actors in conflict. Strategic decision-making in the 2014 IS-KRI conflict

by Wietse van den Berge

1. In 2014, Islamic State and the Kurdistan Region in Iraq favored short-term strategic successes, which prevented both these armed non-state actors from achieving their long-term policy goals.
2. The Kurdistan Region in Iraq's 2014 strategic decision to support Syrian Kurdish fighters in Kobanî can only be understood by taking into account internal and external multi-level and multi-directional processes.
3. Islamic State's policy goals required an aggressive military strategy.
4. Abu Bakr Naji's *The management of savagery* heavily influenced Islamic State ideology. The unrealistic scope of the work could only lead to a flawed grand strategy.
5. International Relations, as well as media outlets, need to move away from overly simplistically treating armed non-state actors' strategic actions as a given while ignoring the unique multi-level and multi-directional processes, that made these actions the outcome of strategic decisions.
6. A shared enemy that poses an existential threat, does not necessarily have a unifying effect.
7. Concerning strategic decision-making in international relations, the rational actor paradigm, the organizational behavior paradigm, and the governmental politics paradigm are obsolete.
8. Non-linearity expresses a disproportional relationship, in which effects cannot be directly linked to variables. Acknowledging the complexity of international relations, non-linearity should be the standard in International Relations analyses, implying increasing overlap with other fields of study.
9. Although Western idealism suggests otherwise, modern-day conflicts, such as between Islamic State and the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, between Russia and Ukraine (2014-present), or between Israel and Hamas (2023-present), confirm Mao Zedong's dictum that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.'
10. The contemporary risk of inter-state conflict creates power vacuums, which offer opportunities for armed non-state actors to thrive. Thus, the risk of conflicts involving armed non-state actors increases. Therefore, armed forces should prepare for the whole spectrum of armed conflict, not just for inter-state – or intra-state – warfare.