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ANBAR AWAKE: WHAT NOW?

by

Scott Vickery

Maj, USAF

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

Signature: _____

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Thesis Advisor: Dr. Vardell Nesmith, JFSC

ABSTRACT

The rise of the Awakening Movement and its subsequent role in the defeat of al-Qaeda in Iraq is the single most important development in Iraq since the 2003 invasion. However, unless the Awakening Movement is successfully integrated into Iraqi political, social and economic structures, this positive development will contain the seeds for future conflict. This thesis argues that the Awakening Movement can and must be coopted by the Government of Iraq and suggests a plan utilizing several logical lines of operation designed to enable that cooption. These lines of operation seek to address the fundamental goals and requirements of both the Awakening Movement and the Government of Iraq in such a way as to be sustainable after U.S. forces withdraw without crossing either's red lines.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
INTRODUCTION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER ONE: THE RISE OF THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER TWO: THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT TODAY	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER THREE: COOPTING THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT	Error! Bookmark not defined.
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Error! Bookmark not defined.
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INTRODUCTION

Short Background

By nearly all measures of merit, today's security situation in Iraq is significantly improved over 2005-07. The genesis of this improvement is found in a combination of increased numbers of U.S. and Iraqi security forces, improved counterinsurgency strategy and tactics and a rise of armed local groups opposed to extremist militias and foreign fighters. This last element (variously known as "Concerned Local Citizens," "Anbar Awakening," "the Awakening Movement" (AM) or most recently "the Sons of Iraq")¹ was particularly critical to securing Sunni heartland areas formerly considered to be at the core of the insurgency. Further enhancing its impact, the AM became self-replicating as it demonstrated its value in providing local security causing Iraqis beyond Anbar to establish their own Awakening Councils. Such was the Iraqi thirst for security that even Shi'a areas traditionally under the control of the Mahdi Army (the *Jaysh al Mahdi* or JAM) formed Awakening Councils.

Although it played a critical role in recent successes in Iraq, the AM was not originally part of Coalition strategy. The U.S. strategy for 2007, known as the Baghdad Security Plan (i.e. "the surge"), was to push enough additional forces into the Baghdad area to tamp down violence, establish a safe and secure Baghdad, and create the conditions necessary to expand stability out into the country at large over future years. The ultimate objective of this plan was to create conditions in which Al Qaeda in Iraq

¹ The changes in the name of the movement can be attributed to its constant morphing along both geographic and urban/rural divides as well as the challenges presented to U.S. forces in shaping an effective Strategic Communications message.

(AQI) could be defeated militarily, enabling Iraqi reconciliation efforts.² However, it was the rise of the AM in Anbar in general and Ramadi in particular that was the key to the general defeat suffered by AQI in 2007-2008. By pushing AQI out of Sunni territory, the AM deprived AQI of their two most critical infrastructure enablers, cover and concealment among the Iraqi Sunni population and the strategic depth afforded by safe basing areas in Anbar province. Additionally, by co-opting local Sunni nationalist insurgents, the AM effectively ended the Sunni insurgency in Western Iraq, further reducing U.S. casualty rates in Iraq and indirectly undercutting the legitimacy of the Sadrist JAM.

For all its successes, the rise of the AM is not without risk and may even carry the seeds of a significant future meltdown in Iraqi security. Approximately 100,000 armed Iraqi militiamen can be categorized as participants in the AM.³ Although instrumental in the recent dramatic improvement in Iraqi security, their ties to the Iraqi government remain uneven and in some areas tenuous. Instead, they are a creation of the U.S. military and maintain their primary loyalty to their tribal group or neighborhood. Consequently, they represent a potentially powerful centrifugal force that may destabilize Iraq over the long term. Exacerbating the problem, the Maliki government promised to disarm these groups soon, meaning that a potential crisis is looming that could bring about significant erosion in the security gains made in Iraq over the last 24 months. The potential of the AM to renew instability is a critical variable in efforts to further stabilize Iraq. Failure to effectively manage the challenges posed by the AM could easily undo the

² George Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," January 10, 2007, White House Archives, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html> (accessed March 28, 2009).

³ Allisa J. Rubin, and Damien Cave, "In a Force for Iraqi Calm, Seeds of Conflict," *The New York Times*, December 23, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/23/world/middleeast/23awakening.html> (accessed August 29, 2008).

recent gains in security. This, in turn, will significantly hamper U.S. ability to begin significant reductions in troop strength in Iraq, upsetting our ability to send badly needed reinforcements to Afghanistan. Therefore, this thesis seeks to identify how, in the absence of a common enemy, does the U.S. convince the AM and Government of Iraq (GOI) that cooperation and integration are in their respective interests.

Thesis Statement and Structure

The thesis of this paper is that the Government of Iraq must co-opt the Awakening Movement by addressing its most basic needs in order to ensure progress towards a stable and peaceful Iraq. To support this, Chapter One will present a review of the history of the AM and its role in reversing the course of the war in Anbar province and beyond. This chapter demonstrates that the AM represents the single most important development in Iraq since the 2003 U.S. invasion. Chapter Two continues with an examination of the current status of the AM, its relationships with other major elements of Iraqi society and its transition from a paramilitary force to a political movement. This chapter will show that the uncertainty of other elements of Iraqi society toward the AM as well as its own political inexperience are the main causes of difficulties in integrating it into Iraqi society. Chapter Three concludes the analysis with discussion of potential future courses of action for the AM and a proposed plan employing multiple logical lines of operations to successfully integrate the AM into Iraqi society. Finally, the thesis concludes with a brief synopsis of the arguments and a final discussion of the recommended way ahead.

Terminology

As discussed above, the nomenclature surrounding the AM can at times be confusing. This derives in part from a shifting series of names assigned by Multinational

Forces Iraq (MNFI) in their Public Affairs efforts to address the organization. However, it also represents the diverse and occasionally confusing makeup of the AM. This thesis will identify the entire phenomenon in Iraq as the AM. Beginning in Chapter Two, it will also incorporate terms designed to differentiate the AM's constituent elements when necessary. The first term, *Sahwat*, is the Arabic term for Awakenings (*Sahwa* is the singular) and applies to that element of the AM based primarily in rural areas and deriving its organization from Sunni tribal structures and traditions. The second term is Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs) which is used to identify those portions of the AM operating primarily in Baghdad and some of its suburbs. This portion of the AM bases its organization and loyalty less on tribal ties and more with neighborhood affiliation and includes a significant number of Shi'a members in contrast to the monolithically Sunni *Sahwat*.

CHAPTER ONE: THE RISE OF THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT

Introduction

This chapter details the course of the Sunni insurgency including the actions of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the rise of the AM, and the role of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) in enabling the spread of the AM from Anbar across most of western and central Iraq. Because of its decisive role in quelling the Sunni insurgency, the rise of the AM represents the single most important change in Iraq since the 2003 invasion. The thesis of this chapter is that the AM, generated by AQI's mistakes and nurtured by the BSP, was critical to the destruction of AQI and the stabilization of Iraq. The chapter sets the stage for later analysis of the current state of the AM and its role in Iraq's future.

In 2006, AQI appeared to be on the verge of a strategic victory. It operated openly in Sunni cities, U.S. and Iraqi forces took casualties whenever they ventured beyond their fortified compounds and the country teetered on the brink of sectarian civil war. Nowhere was the situation worse than al Anbar province where the Marine Expeditionary Force Senior Intelligence Officer (MEF G2) declared AQI so well entrenched as "the dominant organization of influence" that the situation seemed beyond recovery.¹ Even the Iraqi government seemed to have given up on the province with the Deputy Minister of the Interior admitting that "Anbar is controlled by terrorist groups" and that "the Anbar government has no authority...the ministries of Interior and Defense

¹ Thomas E. Ricks, "Situation Called Dire in Western Iraq," *Washington Post*, September 11, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/10/AR2006091001204.html> (accessed September 22, 2008) and Michael Yon, *Moment of Truth in Iraq*, (Richard Vigilante Books), 87. Yon provides illuminating quotes from the MEF G2 report including a statement that "the social and political situation has deteriorated to a point that MNF and ISF are no longer capable of militarily defeating the insurgency in Anbar...Underlying this decline in stability is the near complete collapse of social order" and that "nearly all government institutions from the village to provincial level have disintegrated or have been thoroughly corrupted and infiltrated by AQI or criminal/insurgent gangs. Violence and criminality are now the principal driving factors behind daily life for most Anbar Sunni; they commit violence or crime, avoid violence or crime through corruption and acquiescence, or become victims."

have no influence there.”² Today, in an amazing turn of events, AQI is almost completely destroyed, Anbar province is administered by the Government of Iraq (GOI) and violence is at all-time lows. Much of this is traceable to a combination of more capable Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), the Baghdad Security Plan and improved Coalition counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. However, the speed in which this reversal of fortune occurred is primarily traceable to the effects of the AM. For it was the rise of the AM that split indigenous Sunni insurgents from AQI, enabling the rapid destruction of critical elements of AQI’s infrastructure and exposing it to the full capabilities of Coalition forces in Iraq.

The Sunni Insurrection Up To Fallujah and the Genesis of AQI

The Sunni insurrection began in 2003 around the Anbar city of Fallujah.³ Initially, the insurgency was a native Iraqi phenomenon driven by a combination of nationalism, xenophobia and anger over Debaathification. However, increasing numbers of religiously motivated foreign fighters entered Iraq along a network established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his *Jama’at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* (Unity and Jihad) group. Because many of these fighters arrived hardened from insurgencies throughout the Islamic world, including Afghanistan, Zarqawi was able to target Coalition forces with a level of sophistication far exceeding the ability of indigenous Iraqi groups.⁴

² Megan K. Stack and Louise Roug, “Fear of Big Battle Panics Iraqi City,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 2006, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/jun/11/world/fg-ramadi11> (accessed September 22, 2008).

³ Kimberly Kagan, “The Anbar Awakening: Displacing Al Qaeda From its Stronghold in Western Iraq,” The Institute for the Study of War and *The Weekly Standard*, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/anbar-awakening> (accessed August 29, 2008), 2.

⁴ *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism*, “Al Qaeda in Iraq,” September 23, 2008, <http://www.janes.com> (accessed October 16, 2008) and Bill Roggio, “al-Qaeda’s Foreign Fighters in Iraq,” *The Long War Journal*, February 28, 2006, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2006/02/alqaedas_foreign_fig.php (accessed March 29, 2009). Few foreign fighters were initially in Iraq to resist the initial U.S. invasion.

By March of 2004, the Sunni insurgency was raging across Anbar province. Following the murder of four contractors, U.S. forces besieged Fallujah for six weeks until an agreement with local leaders ended the siege. During this battle, Zarqawi's group fought side-by-side with indigenous Sunni insurgents. This was followed by a second siege in November and December in which Zarqawi's group led the resistance until U.S troops reduced the city ending the insurgency in the area.⁵ Simultaneously, Zarqawi completed negotiations with Osama bin Ladin to merge the Unity and Jihad group under Al Qaeda (AQ). From this point, Zarqawi's group would be known as Al Qaeda in Iraq and he would be publicly acknowledged as bin Ladin's Emir in Iraq.⁶ The reputation earned by Zarqawi's group in Fallujah, its robust resources and the prestige of the AQ franchise tag made the organization the dominant group in the Sunni insurgency.⁷ This transformed the Sunni insurgency from a nationalist uprising to one with increasingly Salafist overtones with significant repercussions as the campaign developed.

Ramadi as Successor to Fallujah

Following Fallujah, AQI and other Sunni extremists reestablished their operations in Ramadi and Baqubah. Of these, Ramadi was the more important due to its utility as a logistics hub for fighters, weapons and other resources entering Iraq from the west.⁸ The city was so important to AQI that it declared Ramadi would be the capital of its Iraqi

⁵ Kimberly Kagan, "The Anbar Awakening: Displacing Al Qaeda From its Stronghold in Western Iraq," The Institute for the Study of War, and *The Weekly Standard*, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/anbar-awakening> (accessed August 29, 2008), 2.

⁶ *Jane's*, "Al Qaeda in Iraq."

⁷ Called the "Sunni" insurgency to differentiate it from various Shi'a groups such as the Badr Organization and the *Jaysh al Mahdi* (JAM) or the "Mahdi Army as the JAM is known in English.

⁸ Kagan, "Anbar Awakening," 2-3, and Niel Smith and Sean MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," *Military Review*, March-April 2008, 42. Whether approaching over desert highways from Jordan or along the Euphrates River, these lines of communications converged at Ramadi.

Caliphate once it was formally established.⁹ Following relocation, AQI established effective control over the local battlespace and, by the spring of 2006, a reinvigorated Sunni insurgency was raging in Anbar.¹⁰

At this point, AQI embarked on a focoist strategy designed to achieve a combination of objectives. First, it sought to prevent the extension of governmental control by attacking political institutions, economic targets and Coalition forces. Second, it sought to ignite a sectarian civil war by attacking Shi'a neighborhoods and holy sites. Third, it sought to unify all Sunni insurgent groups under AQI's leadership and impose Shari'a Law as the precursor to a Salafist Caliphate in Iraq.¹¹

Effects on AQI of the 2005-2006 U.S. Offensive

Despite its initial success, AQI faced serious challenges. U.S. forces, focusing heavily on destroying AQI's ability to operate in the Euphrates valley, forced relocation of AQI resources to Salah-ah-Din and Diyala provinces complicating AQI attacks on Baghdad. More crippling was a sustained campaign to destroy AQI's command and control (C2) structure. As AQI's C2 was eliminated, junior members were promoted resulting in a "less experienced, more undisciplined and increasingly brutal" command

⁹ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens," 41-42.

¹⁰ Kagan, "Anbar Awakening," 3.

¹¹ *Jane's*, "Al Qaeda in Iraq." AQI does not readily categorize in terms of revolutionary models because its Salafist ideology deemphasizes politics and nationalism in favor of the religious obligation of Jihad. It never enjoyed sufficient popular support to be described as an "urban insurrection." It does employ some elements of Maoist rural insurgency doctrine in its efforts to establish "no-go" areas for government forces. However, other than its semi-virtual Islamic State of Iraq, AQI never attempted to establish its own governmental control with social services and a system of public safety. This prevented it from establishing the necessary popular support to even inadvertently execute a Maoist strategy. The traditional model most closely resembling AQI is the "focoist" model in which a charismatic leader (al Zarqawi) attempts to create a successful insurrection not through popular support but rather through force of personality and excessive violence in the hopes of inciting a backlash from the government. This in turn causes the civilian population to turn to the insurgent leader for protection. Because of its lack of political ideology, it appears AQI did not even realize they were executing a focoist strategy. Instead, it seems likely they fell into it backwards which is fortunate for the Coalition as the focoist approach has only been successful once (in Cuba) and that was against a government so decrepit that it would have collapsed of its own accord even without an insurgency.

structure whose attacks were increasingly indiscriminate. Many of the local ‘emirs’ “...were little more than juvenile gang leaders with scant knowledge or understanding of Islam.”¹² Accelerating this process, al Zarqawi’s death left the organization bereft of a leader strong enough to operationally and ideologically unify the various local “emirs.”¹³ Without strong leadership from the top, local leaders turned to an often incomplete and inaccurate Salafist interpretation of Islam for guidance and legitimacy.¹⁴ A telling example of this is seen in the fact that AQI fighters defied orders from their senior leaders to avoid retribution against Sunni sheiks and civilians following the 2005 national election. This ultimately cost AQI significant local support and was among the first mistakes that cut the Sunni population away from AQI.¹⁵

AQI Oversteps its Bounds and Wears Out its Welcome

As a result of these changes, AQI’s tactics became increasingly crude, alienating other Sunni insurgent groups, particularly those whose ideology was fundamentally nationalist rather than Islamist. Previously Sunni insurgent groups were willing to cooperate and even align themselves with AQI out of either a sense of shared purpose or fear of being declared apostate. However, most now saw AQI’s methods as unnecessarily violent and ultimately harmful to the insurgent cause. These concerns were exacerbated by AQI’s public declaration of the Islamic State of Iraq on October 15, 2006 indicating AQI’s objective was not to aid in resisting foreign occupation but rather to establish AQI mastery of Iraq. Criticisms offered by the “Islamic Army” challenging

¹² International Crisis Group, “Iraq After the Surge I: The New Sunni Landscape” Middle East Report No. 74, April 30, 2008, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5415&l=1> (accessed October 9, 2008), 2-4.

¹³ *Jane’s*, “Al Qaeda in Iraq.”

¹⁴ International Crisis Group, “Iraq After the Surge,” 2-4.

¹⁵ *Jane’s*, “Al Qaeda in Iraq.”

AQI's credibility signaled a split between indigenous Sunni insurgent groups and AQI.¹⁶ This was followed by increasing reports of "red on red" fighting as indigenous insurgents skirmished with AQI forces. Ultimately, most Sunni insurgent groups were increasingly opposed to AQI and, by early 2007, were looking for ways to get out from under the group's shadow.¹⁷

Concurrently, AQI was losing support among Sunni sheiks and citizens.

Although the overwhelming majority of AQI fighters were Iraqi in origin, AQI was viewed as "foreign" by many Sunnis. This is because many of AQI's leaders were either from other parts of Iraq or were foreign Arabs who came to Iraq in pursuit of Jihad.¹⁸ Their ideas and customs were perceived as alien and even the Iraqis who filled the ranks and local leadership positions suffered guilt by association.¹⁹ Making matters worse, AQI's presence was often "bad for business." For example, many Sunni tribes engage actively in the "import/export" trade (i.e. smuggling) which became increasingly difficult to carry out due to AQI and Coalition operations. Additionally, construction firms and other businesses were unable to operate either because of AQI attempts to take over the firm or because raw materials and goods were no longer available due to AQI's disruption of the economy.²⁰ More damning still was AQI's doctrine of *harb al-rida* (war on apostasy) originally implemented by Zarqawi and continued following his death.

¹⁶ The Islamic Army (or Islamic Army in Iraq) is actually Ba'athist in its make up despite its Islamist name. This helps explain why it was one of the first Sunni groups to turn against AQI.

¹⁷ International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," 3-6.

¹⁸ Dave Kilcullen, "Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt," *Small Wars Journal*, August 29, 2007, <http://www.smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/08/anatomy-of-a-tribal-revolt/> (accessed October 18, 2008). The percentage of Iraqis in AQI may have been as high as 95%. However, they were largely restricted to fighter positions with the leadership overwhelmingly foreign in origin.

¹⁹ This tainting of Iraqi members of AQI was exacerbated by AQI's personnel system which often employed Iraqis far from their homes. This led to urban Iraqis operating in rural areas and rural Iraqis operating in urban areas with predictable results.

²⁰ Kilcullen, "Anatomy."

This doctrine compared uncooperative Iraqis to tribes that renounced Islam following the death of Mohammed. The resulting brutal executions of ordinary Iraqis for such minor infractions such as smoking a cigarette cost AQI enormously as average Sunnis began to see AQI's occupation as more burdensome than that of the U.S.²¹

AQI's greatest mistake, however, was its lack of respect for tribal leaders and traditions. Although some AQI leaders sought to work with the tribal system, most condemned it as un-Islamic and attempted to appropriate the sheik's traditional authorities. AQ's ideology discounts any other affiliation that placed tribal affiliation before Islam. Consequently, AQI leaders were doctrinally unprepared to deal with local tribal values and customs. With 85% of Iraqis claiming a tribal affiliation, this doctrinal intransigence proved to be AQI's undoing.²²

The final breakdown in relations between AQI and the local tribes began over women. AQ doctrine for years included the practice of marrying its fighters to the daughters of local leaders. This cements their place in society and exploits the tight bonds of family loyalty for cover from security forces. In Iraq, this ran face first into local custom that allows women to be given in marriage only within the tribe. When AQI attempted to compel local sheiks to violate this custom, the sheiks resisted. AQI responded by assassinating tribal elders, initiating a series of revenge killings by the tribes against AQI. This in turn provoked AQI to respond with excessive violence, killing children and family members of uncooperative sheiks, further increasing the local Sunni resentment against AQI.²³

²¹ *Jane's*, "Al Qaeda in Iraq."

²² Kilcullen, "Anatomy."

²³ *Ibid* and International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," 4-7.

Ultimately, by adopting practices that alienated large segments of Sunni population, AQI created conditions in which Iraqi Sunnis were prepared to radically reevaluate their relationship with the organization. Ideologically and doctrinally unable to adapt to Iraqi tribal culture, AQI alienated its natural support base creating conditions in which it could no longer rely on critical local support for logistics and sanctuary. This made AQI vulnerable in ways that would have been difficult to predict in 2005-06. This vulnerability would first be exposed in Ramadi in the early spring of 2007.²⁴

Ramadi: Birth of the AM

The AM's history begins in a most unlikely place. In September, 2006, Ramadi was arguably the most dangerous city in Iraq. AQI and local Sunni insurgents were so active that the number of attacks against Coalition and Iraqi forces per capita was three times higher than in any other part of the country. Insurgents enjoyed complete freedom of movement in the city and the Iraqi government's authority extended no further than the government center in the heart of downtown. U.S. and Iraqi forces in the area operated from large Forward Operating Bases in the area, patrolling periodically and then returning to base. This non-persistent presence failed to secure the population or provide protection for local leadership, allowing insurgents to retain control of the city. The ability of insurgents to operate with impunity allowed them to deploy extensive IED belts making the city even more forbidding for U.S. and Iraqi forces.²⁵

Early U.S. efforts in Ramadi focused on establishing political alliances with local political and tribal leaders designed to isolate and defeat the insurgency. In November, 2005, U.S. commanders met with local sheiks and convinced them to break with AQI.

²⁴ International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," 4-7.

²⁵ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens," 41-42.

Focusing on local resentment against AQI's heavy-handed tactics, local sheiks and Sunni nationalist leaders established the Al Anbar People's Council. In return for support from U.S. forces, the sheiks promised cooperation with Coalition forces and recruits for the practically nonexistent local police.²⁶ However, the U.S. presence in the city, limited to drive-by COIN ops, failed to provide the security necessary for those Iraqi leaders willing to stand against AQI. AQI responded by attacking a police recruiting drive killing 70 candidates as well as assassinating four local sheiks, causing many local leaders to flee for safety. Powerless to resist, the Council ceased to exist by February, 2006.²⁷

In mid-2006, AQI assassinated Sheik Abu Ali Jasim, a prominent Ramadi leader who earlier encouraged his tribesmen to join the local police.²⁸ Not satisfied to simply eliminate a rival, AQI violated Islamic custom by refusing to allow the family to bury the body for four days, outraging local Sunnis.²⁹ In response, Sheik Abdul Sattar abu Risha, brought together representatives from dozens of local tribes founding the Anbar Salvation Council in September 2006 to drive AQI from Ramadi.³⁰ Many of the sheiks who attended this meeting were suspected of prior association with the insurgency including Sheik Sattar. Sattar, who lost his father and three brothers to AQI, denied ever having been a supporter of the insurgency stating

I was always against the terrorists. They brainwashed people into thinking Americans were against them. They said foreigners wanted to occupy our

²⁶ Todd Pittman, "Sunni Sheiks Join Fight vs. Insurgency," *Washington Post*, March 25, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/25/AR2007032500600.html> (accessed September 25, 2008).

²⁷ Ricks, "Situation Called Dire," and Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens," 42. One tribal leader, Sheik Ali Abed Alaa, lamented "as chieftains, we have been helpless. The most we can do is condemn and denounce, but who is there to listen to us?"

²⁸ Kagan, "Anbar Awakening," 2.

²⁹ Pittman, "Sunni Sheiks."

³⁰ Institute for the Study of War, "Western Iraq," <http://understandingwar.org/region/western-iraq> (accessed August 28, 2008). Sattar was the 36-year old leader of the albu Risha tribe representing approximately 10% of the 400,000 residents of Anbar province.

land and destroy our mosques. They told us “we’ll wage a jihad. We’ll help you defeat them.”³¹

Make no mistake; in many cases the local sheiks had U.S. and Iraqi blood on their hands from the earlier nationalist phase of the insurgency.³² However, by this time, they hated the insurgency and the direction it was taking more than they hated the Coalition.³³

New U.S. COIN Tactics and the Survival of the AM

Had U.S. and Iraqi forces continued to utilize the doctrine and tactics prevalent in 2003-2006, the *Sahwa* would have been doomed to the same fate as its predecessor. However, in the summer of 2006, a Brigade Combat Team (BCT) based on the 1st Brigade of the 1st Armored Division moved into Ramadi as part of the normal rotation of forces deployed to Iraq. Its strategy centered on isolating Ramadi from enemy resupply and reinforcements, providing security for the people and consolidation of gains by building capability in local Iraqi Security Forces. Employing a modified ink spot strategy, the BCT gained control over entry routes into the city while simultaneously building five Combat Outposts (COPs)³⁴ in key neighborhoods. This established a permanent presence in these neighborhoods for the first time, enabling U.S. and Iraqi forces to work elbow-to-elbow with local citizens to deny AQI safe haven and freedom of

³¹ Pittman, “Sunni Sheiks.”

³² Eli Lake, “Meet Iraq’s Most Important Man,” *The New York Sun*, April 3, 2007, <http://www.nysun.com/opinion/meet-iraqs-most-important-man/51693/> (accessed September 25, 2008).

³³ Brian Katulis, Peter Juul and Ian Moss, “Awakening to New Dangers in Iraq: Sunni ‘Allies’ Pose an Emerging Threat,” Center for American Progress, <http://www.americanprogress.org> (accessed August 29, 2008), 3, and BBC News, “Iraqi Insurgents Kill Key U.S. Ally,” September 13, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6993211.stm (accessed August 29, 2008). Regarding Sheik Sattar, it is almost certain that he was never an active insurgent. He was, however, still a thug in his own right running an oil smuggling ring as well as bandit operations targeting travelers transiting Anbar. Unfortunately, Sheik Sattar suffered the same fate as his father and brothers. He was killed by an AQI IED near his house in September, 2007. However, by the time of his assassination, the AM movement was so well established that it survived the loss of its primary leader. In keeping with tradition, he was succeeded by his brother.

³⁴ A COP is a small company-sized base that allows U.S. forces a permanent presence in neighborhoods. It is used instead of or in addition to larger Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) that act as main bases.

movement. The impact on Ramadi was immediate as local citizens felt safe enough to resume facets of their ordinary lives. Ultimately, they felt comfortable enough with the Coalition presence to begin providing reliable and timely Human Intelligence (HUMINT) greatly increasing the efficiency of Coalition COIN operations.³⁵

Although local Anbaris felt more confidence in U.S. forces, few joined the Iraqi security forces largely out of fear generated by AQI's destruction of every police station in Ramadi in a single day earlier in the year.³⁶ The BCT responded by expanding the number of COPs to eight further enhancing their control over the city's neighborhoods. Building on this success, they initiated a focused campaign of precision raids against high value targets killing or capturing much of the experienced AQI leadership in the city. Additionally, the BCT increased security for Sheik Sattar's Iraqi tribal leaders, providing the protection necessary to prevent a repeat of 2005. This security led to a tremendous surge in police recruiting providing additional forces to support the strategy of clear and hold.³⁷

The combined effect of improved U.S. tactics and the rise of the AM was decisive. By January, 2007, violence in the city dropped drastically as Coalition forces forced AQI out of Ramadi into smaller towns and farms.³⁸ In February, firefights between U.S. troops and insurgents in Ramadi dropped 70% compared to the previous June. AM fighters were eliminating more AQI High Value Targets in Ramadi than

³⁵ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens," 41-42.

³⁶ Kagan, "Anbar Awakening," 2.

Recruiting figures for the Ramadi police totalled zero in March, 2006 and only 20-30 a month over the Summer. In August, 2006 there were only 300 of 3,000 authorized policemen in Ramadi.

³⁷ Kagan, "Anbar Awakening," 2. Recruiting numbers totalled 1,000 in December, 800 in January and 2,000 in subsequent months. Additionally, Iraqi security forces used the decline in violence to conduct a census in Ramadi allowing them an opportunity to establish who was a native and who was an outsider.

³⁸ Institute for the Study of War, "Western Iraq."

Coalition forces, capturing over 80 AQI insurgents including Saudis and Syrians.³⁹ By March, streets in Ramadi, previously the scene of daily gun battles, were now so calm that American troops openly walked the streets handing out soccer balls without drawing fire. Concurrently, the Ramadi *Sahwa* grew to include 41 tribes and subtribes. This constituted the majority of the local tribes.⁴⁰

In March, 2006, AQI firmly controlled Ramadi. By March, 2007, Coalition forces had displaced AQI, were in complete control of many parts of the city and enjoyed the support of the city's population. Because Coalition forces provided security to the people, the sheiks made the tough (and dangerous) decision not to just reject AQI, but to fight it openly. They placed thousands of their tribesmen in the Iraqi police increasing the force available to consolidate the ink spots created by the U.S. COPs. Ultimately, success in Ramadi caught the attention of tribal sheiks and U.S. commanders elsewhere in Anbar leading to an expansion of the *Sahwa* into a province-wide AM.⁴¹

Expansion to Anbar: A Province-Wide Counterrevolution

During the winter and spring of 2007, the AM movement slowly spread beyond Ramadi, placing pressure on AQI throughout Anbar.⁴² In January, 2007, *Sahwa* councils began standing up in Hit and Fallujah.⁴³ By the spring, the AM increasingly assumed the character of a province-wide counterrevolution becoming a viable force across the

³⁹ Edward Wong, Khalid al-Ansary and Helen Cooper, "The Struggle for Iraq: In Lawless Sunni Heartland of Iraq, a Tribal Chief Opposes the Jihadists and Prays, *The New York Times*, March 3, 2007, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9801E2DD1731F930A35750C0A96199C8> (accessed August 2, 2008) and Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens," 51 and *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, "Anbar's Sunni Militia: Fighting by Proxy," October 01, 2007, <http://www.janes.com> (accessed October 16, 2008).

⁴⁰ Pittman, "Sunni Sheiks."

⁴¹ Kagan, "Anbar Awakening," 12.

⁴² Institute for the Study of War, "Western Iraq."

⁴³ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens," 50.

eastern part of Anbar.⁴⁴ This enabled Coalition forces to quickly flush AQI fighters from their strongholds and inflict heavy casualties on them.⁴⁵

Faced with increasing pressure from Coalition forces and a decreased capacity to execute their campaign of terror, AQI sought to reconstitute their base in eastern Anbar and divert Coalition forces from the nascent Baghdad Security Plan.⁴⁶ However, rather than seek rapprochement and redress of tribal grievances, they escalated the assassination campaign against the sheiks and began launching large-scale suicide attacks against AM tribes further hardening Sunni resolve. One Anbari sheik, Younis Hamid Abid, told his tribe that AQI represented Satan and that they were compelled by Allah to “kill them because they killed our sons, burned our houses and destroyed our orchards and fields.”⁴⁷ Another sheik, Osama al-Jadaan, head of the influential Karabila tribe, stated that

we realized that these foreign terrorists were hiding behind the veil of the noble Iraqi resistance. They claim to be striking at the U.S. occupation, but the reality is they are killing innocent Iraqis in the markets, in mosques, in churches and in the schools.⁴⁸

Local Sunni tribesmen, who did not trust the predominately Shi’a Iraqi Army units in the area, began to see the AM as a means to control their own security. The sheiks encouraged their tribesmen to join the police boosting strength by 4,500 in the Ramadi alone. Additionally, they provided 2,500 additional men for SWAT-like paramilitary groups. Although primarily loyal to local sheiks, these units were approved by U.S. commanders and members were vetted and then trained by U.S. forces.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Pittman, “Sunni Sheiks.”

⁴⁵ Institute for the Study of War, “Western Iraq.”

⁴⁶ Kagan, “Anbar Awakening,” 1.

⁴⁷ *Jane’s*, “Anbar’s Sunni Militia.”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Pittman, “Sunni Sheiks.”

Ultimately, cooperation between Coalition troops, Iraqi Security Forces and AM fighters defeated the AQI counteroffensive depriving it of its most important base in Iraq.⁵⁰

The BSP, the AM Beyond Anbar and AQI's Response

Shaping operations in the Baghdad area as part of the BSP (i.e. the Surge) began in February, 2007 with Operation LAW AND ORDER. Throughout the winter and spring, five additional BCTs deployed into the Baghdad area providing the forces necessary to overmatch AQI. In June, these operations grew into a larger, corps-sized operation called PHANTOM THUNDER aimed at securing Baghdad, its suburbs and the provinces surrounding the capital.⁵¹ In hard fighting, Coalition forces cleared AQI's sanctuaries on the west side of Baghdad and in the suburbs including the strongholds of Baquba and Dora. Following the same doctrine utilized in Ramadi, they quickly built COPs to establish security in neighborhoods while interdicting AQI movement into and out of the capital. Additionally, they targeted Shi'a militias which, in conjunction with the defeat of AQI, significantly reduced sectarian violence in Baghdad.

PHANTOM THUNDER succeeded because it targeted all major AQI strongholds simultaneously. This prevented AQI from shifting reserves or reconstituting in safe havens thereby causing significant casualties and forcing survivors to flee Baghdad northward along the Tigris and Diyala River Valley. Another major cause for success was the additional troops provided by the Surge which provided U.S. forces the strength to enter and hold Sunni areas they had not patrolled for months. By staying and policing

⁵⁰ Kagan, "Anbar Awakening," 1.

⁵¹ Salah ad Din, Diyala, Babil, Wasit and Anbar provinces...the "Baghdad Belts."

their gains, U.S. and Iraqi forces prevented AQI from returning, thereby securing the population for the first time in years.⁵²

Operation PHANTOM THUNDER did not occur in a vacuum. That summer, the AM spread throughout central Iraq on a scale exceeding its origins in Anbar. Thousands of Sunnis, encouraged by the example from Anbar and enabled by the effects of the Surge, flocked to join security forces or to establish their own neighborhood AM Councils. In Abu Ghraib, a former insurgent hotbed, 1,700 Sunnis transitioned through the AM into the Iraqi security forces. The effect of U.S. offensive operations in enabling the expansion of the AM is striking. As Operation PHANTOM STRIKE⁵³ cleared the Diyala River Valley, tribal sheiks met and agreed to put aside their local differences to unite as a single tribe to fight AQI.⁵⁴ Additionally, the AM movement expanded into areas south of Baghdad. In October, 2007, mixed Sunni/Shi'a AM began operating along the Al Kut highway south of Baghdad harassing both AQI and Sadrist JAM forces along that route.⁵⁵

In Baghdad proper, target of the Surge, the AM enjoyed its greatest success in recruiting with over 43,000 members active by December, 2007. The AM gained its first foothold in Baghdad in Amiriya, an affluent neighborhood near Baghdad International Airport consisting largely of upper middle class Sunnis and a few Shi'a. It eventually expanded into almost all of the neighborhoods west of the Tigris (the Sunni side of the river) as well as to the Sunni enclaves scattered across the east side of the river. The

⁵² Michael R. Gordon, "The Former-Insurgent Counterinsurgency," *New York Times*, September 2, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/02/magazine/02iraq-t.html> (accessed October 18, 2008).

⁵³ A sequel operation to PHANTOM THUNDER.

⁵⁴ Kimberly Kagan, "The Tide is Turning in Iraq," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 9, 2007, <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110010580> (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁵⁵ Ben Hutto, "Successful Concerned Local Citizens Program Makes Way for Others," *Multinational Force Iraq*, October 24, 2007, <http://www.mnf-iraq.com> (accessed August 29, 2008).

suburb of Dora provides an illustrative example of the impact of the AM on Baghdad.

After the organization of the local council, attacks declined so rapidly that there were no attacks on U.S. troops between September and December 2007 in this area.⁵⁶

The success of the AM and the Surge forced AQI to pursue ever larger attacks in an effort to intimidate Sunnis and Americans and to mask press reporting of the progress being made in securing Iraq. AQI launched very large Vehicleborne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) attacks including chlorine gas tanks in an attempt to kill civilians with chemical weapons.⁵⁷ Initially reported in the Western press as a sign of increasing AQI strength and sophistication, these attacks were actually a signal of AQI's desperation. CENTCOM spokesman Brigadier General Robert Holmes described it well saying,

what we see is this violent and desperate enemy, as it will do these...very spectacular acts of violence in order to derail or to take the focus off of the good things that are happening. The spectacular events...are designed to create this mass effect for spectacular coverage in the media, to create chasms in national will and to create doubt in military forces.⁵⁸

Ultimately, AQI's efforts to intimidate the Sunni population and further stoke the fires of sectarian strife were unsuccessful. Continued Coalition operations prevented AQI from reconstituting in the Baghdad belts, blocked *Shi'ite* militias from occupying the vacated territory and destroyed fleeing AQI forces before they had a chance to

⁵⁶ Alissa J. Rubin and Stephen Farrell, "Awakening Councils by Region," *New York Times*, December 22, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/22/world/middleeast/23awake-graphic.html> (accessed September 25, 2008). Interestingly, because tribal structures break down in the urban environment, the AM morphed in Baghdad into neighborhood based entities meaning that economic class, professional background and education had more to do with local affiliation than tribal tradition.

⁵⁷ Kagan, "Anbar Awakening," 11-12.

⁵⁸ Melinda Larson, "Progress Continues in Iraq, Despite Singular Acts of Violence," American Forces Press Service, July 21, 2007, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticles.aspx?id=46804> (accessed September 25, 2008).

reconstitute. By the early Fall, AQI was in full retreat northwards with Coalition forces engaged in pursuit operations rooting AQI out of Babil and Diyala provinces for good.⁵⁹

Just as it expanded into areas cleared by PHANTOM THUNDER, the AM expanded behind PHANTOM STRIKE to the north. By December, 2007, it was firmly entrenched in Babil province with a little over 6,000 AM members in Babil Province. Prior to establishment of local AM councils, large parts of Babil were beyond the ability of security forces to control allowing AQI to use the area as a base for launching VBIEDs into Baghdad. By the end of 2007, AM members were active in manning checkpoints, identifying AQI members and squeezing AQI out of the province.⁶⁰

Fall 2007: AQI Retreats North and the AM Follows

Driven from Anbar and Baghdad, AQI retreated northward and eastward into Sala-ad-din, Diyala and Nineveh provinces in an attempt to regroup. However, it once again fell into its old ways of intimidation and ultra-orthodoxy rapidly alienating itself from local Sunni militias. These mistakes more effectively shaped the battlespace for an expansion of the AM than Coalition forces ever could. The trouble began when AQI fighters began assassinating leaders of Sunni nationalist and non-AQI Salafist groups in the area such as the 1920s Revolutionary Brigade, the Islamic Army in Iraq and Ansar al Sunna. Typically, this was for not recognizing AQI's leadership or for "apostate" behaviors such as improper hair styles. Ultimately, the 1920s Revolutionary Brigade went so far as to declare a truce with the Coalition in order to join forces against AQI.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Kagan, "The Tide is Turning."

⁶⁰ Rubin and Farrell, "Awakening Councils by Region."

⁶¹ *Jane's*, "Anbar's Sunni Militia," and Rubin and Farrell, "Awakening Councils by Region." After members of the 1920s Brigades reverted to criminal activity, a second AM process was initiated based on local tribal structure.

By October, 2007, there were over 4,000 members of AM councils in the Diyala River Valley. These personnel provided security in their neighborhoods and developed valuable HUMINT on terrorist and insurgent activities. Unlike Anbar, however, Diyala was not monolithically Sunni, consisting instead of Sunnis, Shi'a and Kurds. However, the AM movement adapted itself quickly with 25 of 28 tribes in the region joining. This diversity marked an evolution in the AM movement. Although still tribally based, it was now showing signs of being able to extend beyond Sunnis to other parts of Iraqi society.⁶² However, violence in the province did not fully abate, in part because AQI attempted to make a stand there.⁶³

Expansion into the northernmost provinces of Nineveh, Sala-ad-din and Tamim was slower with only about 3,000 AM members spread across the three provinces. The slowness of the expansion of the AM movement into the region can be at least partially explained by the tensions over the ethnic demarcation line between Kurds and Arabs in the area. Fears of Kurdish claims to Arab areas meant AQI still found enough local support in the area to prevent the AM from taking root.⁶⁴

The rapid expansion of the AM was both stunning and game-changing. By December, 2007, the movement could boast approximately 74,000 men in over 300 AM groups across 12 of Iraq's 18 provinces.⁶⁵ This included around 65,000 actively serving as well as 9,000 undergoing vetting. It also proved to be remarkably flexible. Despite its Sunni/rural genesis, more than half its members were to be found in Baghdad including

⁶² David Mays, "Concerned Local Citizens Vastly Improve Security in Iraq's Diyala Province," American Forces Press Service, October 12, 2007, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=47783> (accessed August 29, 2008).

⁶³ Rubin and Farrell, "Awakening Councils by Region."

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Bill Roggio, "Mapping Iraq's Concerned Local Citizens Programs," *The Long War Journal*, December 12, 2007, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/12/mapping_the_concerne.php (accessed August 29, 2008).

some 6,000 Shi'a.⁶⁶ Additionally, another 23,000 men had graduated from the movement into police units in Anbar.⁶⁷ Clearly, the AM had emerged as a major force to be reckoned with in Iraq.

Lesson Learned: The AM Counterrevolution Was Critical to the Destruction of AQI and the Stabilization of Sunni Iraq

By pushing AQI out of Sunni territory, the AM deprived AQI of its three most critical infrastructure enablers: cover and concealment, local recruiting and strategic depth. The loss of cover and concealment among the Sunni population exposed AQI to Coalition combat power against which it was unable to stand. Concurrently, the AM denied AQI its prime operating bases in Anbar disrupting the flow of fighters and supplies from Syria while denying AQI the opportunity to recruit replacements locally. This gutted its manpower rendering it combat ineffective.⁶⁸ Finally, the loss of, Salah-ad-din, Diyala and Nineveh provinces pushed AQI farther and farther from Baghdad, robbing it of its strategic depth while significantly degrading the organization's ability to foment sectarian violence and destabilize Iraq.

Between the beginning of surge operations and the extension of the AM beyond Anbar, AQI attacks declined 55% nationwide, civilian deaths declined 60%, coalition casualties declined 55% and Iraqi security forces losses dropped 40%. Of 72 arms caches discovered in October, 2007, 40 were found by AM groups and arms cache seizures were

⁶⁶ Rubin and Farrell, "Awakening Councils by Region."

⁶⁷ Roggio, "Mapping."

⁶⁸ William Selby, "Al Qaeda Leader's Diary Reveals Organization's Decline," Armed Forces Press Service, February 9, 2008, <http://www.defense link.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=48914> (accessed August 29, 2008).

more than double the previous year's rate.⁶⁹ An example of the impact of the AM on AQI can be found in the diary of Abu Tariq, an AQI commander operating near Balad. His command once consisted of five battle groups with around 600 fighters. By the time of its capture, the diary shows only 20 fighters remaining, blaming the decline on the AM. Other senior AQ leaders, including bin Ladin, recognized the impact of the AM on AQI, criticizing the movement for its cooperation with the Coalition.⁷⁰

In addition to flushing out and destroying AQI units, the AM accelerated the ink spot strategy by providing forces to hold areas cleared by Operations PHANTOM THUNDER and PHANTOM STRIKE. Most counterinsurgency theories hold that, in order to secure the population and pursue insurgent groups, the ratio of security personnel to civilians should be about 1 to 50.⁷¹ Given a 2007 Iraqi population of approximately 30 million, this ratio would require 600,000 security personnel. Prior to 2007, total security forces in Iraq never came close to that number. By providing tens of thousands of militiamen, the AM significantly closed the gap toward that benchmark in 2007. As one U.S. commander stated, "Concerned Local Citizens are part of the force protection plan; without them, AQI would move back into the region."⁷²

Lesson Learned: AQI Failed in Iraq Because of its Inability to Win the Populace

AQI failed to gain the support of the people primarily because it acted more as a reactionary foreign occupation than as a popular insurgency. Its efforts to dominate the insurgency, carve out an Islamic mini-state that would divide the country and impose a

⁶⁹ Jamie Findlater, "Concerned Local Citizens Groups Aid Progress in Iraq," American Forces Press Service, November 13, 2007, <http://www.defenselink.mil/newsarticle.aspx?id=48132> (accessed August 29, 2008).

⁷⁰ Selby, "Al Qaeda Leader's Diary."

⁷¹ Kenneth M. Pollack "Après Surge: The Next Iraq Debates," Brookings Institute, December 31, 2007, http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2007/1231_iraq_pollack.aspx (accessed August 29, 2008).

⁷² Findlater, "Concerned Local Citizens."

harsh interpretation of Shari'a alienated the people. CIA Director Michael Hayden described its failure well stating "no one really liked their vision for Iraq's future" adding that the brutal tactics adopted by AQI caused most Iraqis to see the insurgency "more and more as a war of Al Qaeda against Iraq."⁷³ Losing public support destroyed its critical infrastructure, rendering itself highly vulnerable to Coalition combat power.⁷⁴

To succeed, insurgencies must enjoy the support, or at least the neutrality of the population. Metaphorically, this is the high ground that dominates the battlefield. Social structure; norms, mores, and values; and nongovernmental power structures of the local human terrain define the contour lines of that high ground. Understanding those contour lines provides the sand table on which to map a strategy to winning the local population.

AQI's narrowly formed Salafist ideology left them intellectually and doctrinally unable to adapt to the unique contours of the Iraqi human terrain. The rigidity of their doctrine allowed them only one method of operation: terror. When that failed, the only option was to escalate the level of terror. The belief that they were carrying out the will of Allah reinforced this rigidity, making it blasphemous to even consider altering their tactics. Finally, the belief that Allah ordained their victory further reinforced their belief in the soundness of their doctrine, preventing the type of analysis necessary to adapt to the environment in Iraq. These factors forced them unwittingly into a bankrupt "focoist"

⁷³ *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, "Al Qaeda Contained," July 04, 2008, <http://janes.com> (accessed October 18, 2008).

⁷⁴ International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," 7 and David H Petraeus, "Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq, 8-9 April 2008, http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/April/20080408125259eaifas0_1_9614984.html (accessed Sept 17, 2008).

General Petraeus, in testimony to Congress, stated an "important factor has been the attitudinal shift among certain elements of the Iraqi population. Since the first Sunni 'Awakening in late 2006, Sunni communities in Iraq increasingly have rejected AQI's indiscriminate violence and extremist ideology...With their assistance and with relentless pursuit of AQI, the threat posed by AQI-while still lethal and substantial-has been reduced significantly."

insurgency model completely incapable of achieving victory. Ultimately, the greatest indicator of AQI's fate can be seen in the fact that AQ has ordered its remaining senior leaders out of Iraq to Afghanistan in tacit acceptance of its defeat.

Because AQ's Salafist ideology provides no intellectual or doctrinal support for any other type of campaign, it may be possible that AQ is fundamentally incapable of ever toppling any but the most unstable regimes. Not at least without attaching itself to a surrogate such as the Taliban which can provide some semblance of local legitimacy. If so, this is a strong indicator of the future direction of the Long War, both in terms of escalating rates of violence and its eventual outcome.⁷⁵

Lesson Learned: Increased Coalition Forces as well as Improved Doctrine Were Critical to Allowing the AM to Germinate and Spread Across Iraq

A recurring theme in this chapter is that securing the local population is critical for security forces. Until 2006-07, the Coalition failed to secure the Sunni people. When the U.S. changed its tactics, local Iraqis felt safe enough to join the fight against AQI with telling results. The ink spot strategy of deploying COPs to Iraqi neighborhoods provided the consistent, lasting security previously lacking for Iraqi civilians. This allowed them to develop enough trust in U.S. and Iraqi security forces to provide passive support in the form of HUMINT and active support in the form of the AM.⁷⁶

Another important change in U.S. doctrine was the effort to embrace the tribal system. Prior to 2006, the U.S. held a very negative view towards tribal political

⁷⁵ *Jane's*, "Al Qaeda Contained." AQ's practice of franchising its name to regional emirs has exposed these doctrinal shortcomings costing the movement popular support across the Islamic world.

⁷⁶ *Jane's*, "Anbar's Sunni Militia," and Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens," 49. A good example of U.S. commitment to protecting the nascent AM can be found in November, 2006 when U.S. troops in Ramadi cancelled a major operation to go to the aid of the Albu Soda tribe which was under attack by 40 AQI gunmen. U.S. troops responded rapidly and inflicted heavy losses on the AQI gunmen. Another example can be found in Baghdad when U.S. troops helped local AM councils in Amiriya and south Ghazalia fight off AQI attacks. Perhaps the most visual example was an M1 Abrams guarding Sheik Sattar's front gate.

structures and militias. However, beginning in 2006, U.S. commanders realized that tribal structures offered a mechanism to engage Iraqis locally and regionally. As the commander of the BCT that pacified Ramadi in 2006 stated “No matter how imperfect the tribal system appeared to us, it was capable of providing social order and control through culturally appropriate means where governmental control was weak.”⁷⁷

Additionally, the Surge enabled the rapid growth of the AM beyond Ramadi. It is no coincidence that the first expansion was into areas where shaping operations occurred prior to PHANTOM THUNDER. This trend continued as PHANTOM THUNDER cleared Baghdad and as PHANTOM STRIKE pursued defeated AQI forces north.⁷⁸

Conclusion

This chapter examined the birth of the AM, its rapid expansion across central and northern Iraq and its role in the destruction of AQI. It is clear that the AM was critical to the destruction of AQI, the steep decline in violence across Sunni Iraq and the now complete transition of every Sunni province to the Iraqi governmental control. However, now that Anbar (and other provinces) are awake, what next? The next chapter examines the current status of the AM with an eye towards defining the challenges it poses to Iraq’s progress towards lasting stability. This will set the stage for a series of recommendations in chapter three on how to best manage the AM phenomenon to ensure Iraq’s future peace and stability.

⁷⁷ Smith and MacFarland, “Anbar Awakens,” 52.

⁷⁸ Petraeus, “Report to Congress,” 1. Additive to the Surge was the growing size and professionalism of Iraqi security forces. As General Petraeus pointed out in Congressional testimony “(l)ess recognized is that Iraq has also conducted a surge, adding over 100,000 additional soldiers and police to the ranks of its security forces in 2007.”

CHAPTER TWO: THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT TODAY

Introduction

Having discussed the AM's origins, it is now necessary to discuss its situation today as a precursor to determining its potential future. This chapter will accomplish that through analysis of the AM in today's Iraq. The thesis of this chapter is that, although almost all actors in Iraq welcome the effects of the AM, the nuances of a divided Iraqi society and polity make the AM's assimilation difficult. This is exacerbated by divides within the AM itself which, although often treated as a monolithic entity, is actually a polyglot movement of differing socioeconomic, geographic, and sectarian elements. However, before continuing, it is necessary to review the definitions surrounding the AM in order to more readily disaggregate it into its constituent elements.

***Sahwat* vs. CLC: A More Nuanced Definition of the AM**

The first chapter identified the entire counterrevolution as the Awakening Movement. It was appropriate to use one term because Chapter One focused primarily on the effects of the AM on the battlefield. Lacking a national structure, the AM is organized at the local or provincial level.¹ As a result, the organization's makeup is diffuse, such that no single leader or group of leaders speaks for the entire movement.² Detailed analysis necessitates a more nuanced delineation of the AM as an amalgamation of rural Sunni tribesmen, urban Sunni members of the former political elite, and Shi'a suburbanites. This requires a refinement of the definitions outlined in the Introduction.

¹ *Jane's Country Risk Daily Report*, "Awakening Council's Cash Recognizes Iraqi Stability," October 01, 2008, <http://www.janes.com> (accessed October 16, 2008).

² Carlos Pascual, "Iraq 2012: What Can It Look Like, How do We Get There?" Brookings, August 29, 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/testimony/2008/0403_iraq_pascual.aspx (accessed August 29, 2008).

The AM can be broadly divided into two groups. The first is the *Sahwat*, consisting of rural elements of the AM and deriving its organization from Sunni tribal structures and traditions. The second is the CLC, consisting of urban elements of the AM in and around Baghdad and deriving its organization from neighborhood affiliation.³ Understanding these differences and how they manifest themselves politically is critical to understanding the future of the AM.

Iraq Today

Iraq is significantly different from what it was at the end of 2006. The GOI assumed control of Anbar on September 1, 2008 and all remaining provinces on January 1, 2009.⁴ Additionally, Iraqi security forces now evidence a real capability for independent operations. More telling, a DoD report indicates a 77% drop in violence in the first three quarters of 2008 over the same period in 2007.⁵ Although the situation is much improved, AQI and other groups still operate in Iraq, albeit at a significantly reduced level. The culmination of the BSP combined with the planned U.S. drawdown over the next 19 months indicates the U.S. has accomplished what it will from kinetic operations in Iraq. Consequently, future success depends on continued development of Iraqi security forces, reconciliation, and effective integration of the AM into the Iraqi society. In order to effectively plan for AM integration, it is necessary to examine the relationship of the *Sahwat* and CLC with each other, the GOI, and Iraq's milieu of ethnic and sectarian groups.

³ Interestingly, the CLC includes a number of Shi'a in contrast to the monolithically Sunni *Sahwat*.

⁴ Lauren Gelfand and Mohammed Najib, "U.S. Hands Over Control of Key Province to Iraq," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, September 02, 2008, <http://http://www.janes.com> (accessed October 16, 2008) and Waleed Ibrahim and Tim Cocks, "U.S. forces under Iraq mandate, hand over Green Zone," Reuters, January 01, 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/homepageCrisis/idUSLV652899._CH_.2400 (accessed February 01, 2009).

⁵ *Jane's*, "Awakening Council's Cash."

Relations Between the GOI and the AM

Relations between the Shi'a dominated GOI and the AM are complicated. While the GOI appreciates the AM's contribution to security, it lacks trust in the formerly rebellious Sunni.⁶ This seeming schizophrenia arises in part because the Shi'a lack confidence in their newfound power. Farouk Ahmed astutely described the situation in Iraq as one where

...Sunni groups recognize they've lost the sectarian struggle and have decided to come to the table. Conversely, the Shi'a don't recognize yet that they've won and are not yet willing to accept what amounts to a negotiated surrender on the part of the former supporters and members of insurgent movements.⁷

As a result, the GOI is often unsure of itself vis-à-vis the AM and so frequently sends mixed signals. Prime Minister Maliki's statements provide an excellent example of this. Because of the AM's role in destroying AQI, the GOI arranged a special meeting between Sheik Sattar and Maliki where he lauded Sunnis who had "risen up and countered terrorism."⁸ However, he later gave an interview where he stated "we in the government, have intelligence information: the Ba'ath Party has ordered its members to join the *Sahwat*, and AQI has ordered its members to infiltrate the *Sahwat*."⁹ This

⁶ Brooks, Bradley, "Sunni Fighters Need Political Role," *USA Today*, December 24, 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/news/topstories/2007-12-23-17489794333_x.htm (accessed August 29, 2008) and Jane's, "Anbar's Sunni Militia." Many Shi'a worry about the presence of former insurgents and Ba'athists in the AM and assume the organization is organically opposed to the GOI and will eventually further divide Iraq along sectarian lines.

⁷ Farouk Ahmed, "Sons of Iraq and Awakening Forces," Institute for the Study of War Backgrounder #23, February 21, 2008, <http://www.understandingwar.org> (accessed January 21, 2008,) 12.

⁸ Brooks, "Sunni Fighters," and Pittman, "Sunni Sheiks."

⁹ Ramzy Mardini, "Uncertainty Facing Iraq's Awakening Movement Puts U.S. Strategy at Risk," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol 6, Issue 4 (February 22, 2008), <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373988> (accessed August 29, 2008). The secular political orientation of the AM also causes much anxiety in Shi'a religious circles. *Sahwat* leaders routinely speak out against what they perceive as excessive public power of religious leaders in Iraq. Commander of the *Sahwat* in Anbar, Kamal Hammad al-Muajal Abu Risha, said in an interview that Islam has "an active role in our society but we reject clerics' interference in politics. The power of the clerics should not exceed the mosques nor affect the political decision-making process." In part, this is an

schizophrenia manifests itself in the GOI's interaction with the AM. While the *Sahwat* in Anbar concerns the GOI, it is ultimately acceptable because it is far to the west of the capital in an area the GOI essentially wrote off in 2006. Conversely, Baghdad's CLCs are perceived as a serious threat because of their proximity to the seat of power. Consequently, the GOI takes a harder line towards the CLC than the *Sahwat*.¹⁰

GOI Assimilation of the AM

In an effort to gain some measure of control over the AM, the GOI announced plans in December, 2007 to integrate all *Sahwat* and CLC units into the Iraqi police. The announcement stated, "all tribal fighters in the different Iraqi provinces will be merged into the police forces within a national project to attract young men seeking jobs in the Iraqi police without any political interference."¹¹ While a positive development, it also ominously stated "the law is above all. There will never be armed groups outside the framework of the law."¹² Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Iraq's national security advisor, announced criteria limiting applicants to those born between 1977 and 1988 (20-31 years old at that time) and meeting specific literacy and educational requirements. He then added that, after security vetting, "some will go to the police and some to the army and

expression of the traditional conflict between the Sheik and the Imam both of whom vie for the loyalty of the people as well as a reaction against alien Salafist influences. But it is also an attack on the role of Shi'a Imams in politics. This deeply worries Shi'a clerics who in turn pressure politicians to oppose or limit the AM lest it become a rallying point for opposition to their influence.

¹⁰ Bill Roggio, "Standing Up The Concerned Citizens in Southern Baghdad," *The Long War Journal*, September 15, 2007, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/09/standing_up_the_conc.php (accessed August 29, 2008) and International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," 15.

¹¹ Major General Abdul-Kareem Khalaf al Kinani quoted in Roggio, "Mapping Iraq's Concerned Local Citizens."

¹² *Ibid.*

some to civilian jobs and some will stay at their regular stations.”¹³ Those not hired would be offered the opportunity to apply for civilian jobs in other ministries.¹⁴

The GOI’s plan is to integrate approximately 20-25% of AM fighters into its security forces with the rest receiving vocational training in hope of accomplishing two objectives. First, to keep these young men gainfully employed thereby preventing recidivism. Second, by bringing the largely Sunni AM into the security forces, it will encourage continued Sunni reintegration into the larger Iraqi body politic thereby cementing recent security gains. Despite having over \$300 million is available for this training, it does not appear the Iraqis have a viable plan to educate the numbers of currently unemployable fighters who will not receive positions in the security forces. Consequently, implementation of this policy is slow, especially near Baghdad where fewer than 5% of fighters have been offered positions in the security forces.¹⁵

The plan kicked off on October 1, 2008, when the GOI assumed administrative control of 54,000 CLC fighters in and around Baghdad.¹⁶ U.S. officials admit that GOI integration of the CLC is proceeding in ‘fits and starts’ and that, if the GOI chooses to demobilize the units, the U.S. will have no authority to block them. However, the GOI recently confirmed that the CLC units, now renamed the Guardians will remain in existence through 2009 in cities where AQI still operates.¹⁷

¹³ These birthdates conveniently block many CLC leaders (i.e. former Ba’athist officers) from applying preserving the best jobs for those (Shi’a) officers already in the security forces. It also helps prevent the current CLC leadership from leading these security units against the government in any future *putsch*.

¹⁴ Erica Goode and Mudhafer al-Husaini, “U.S. and Iraqi Officials Try to Reassure Citizen Patrols About Transfer,” *The New York Times*, September 08, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/09/world/middleeast/09iraq.html> (accessed September 09, 2008).” GOI control limited their authority to conduct independent operations and make arrests without other security forces present.

¹⁵ Brooks, “Sunni Fighters,” and *Jane’s*, “Awakening Council’s Cash.”

¹⁶ *Jane’s*, “Awakening Council’s Cash.”

¹⁷ Matthew Avitabile, “Iraq Reorganizes Awakening,” <http://www.worldthreats.com/?p=533> (accessed January 20, 2008).

Elsewhere, integrating AM members, largely *Sahwat* forces from Anbar, has proven much easier. As mentioned above, approximately 20,000 fighters from Anbar are already part of the security forces leaving only 4,000 fighters still on the *Sahwat*'s rolls. This is because in Anbar, the *Sahwat* rapidly filled the ranks of nonexistent local and provincial police forces. In comparison, there is tremendous difficulty in integrating large numbers of CLC fighters into police units in and around Baghdad. In part, this is because those units are already operating near authorized strength. However, it also results from Shi'a concerns over the threat of Sunni CLC militia in Baghdad.¹⁸

GOI Operations Against the AM

The difference in GOI treatment of the *Sahwat* and the CLC is not lost on CLC leaders. Many express concern that GOI control over the CLC will lead premature demobilization without adequate provision for suddenly unemployed fighters. Others express fears that the transfer will embolden the GOI to settle old scores against CLC leaders suspected of participating in the insurgency. As one commander of several CLC units in Baghdad stated, "I don't think that we'll have a contract with the Iraqi government because they consider us as militias. The Iraqi government won't give the same prerogatives as the Americans do."¹⁹ As it turned out, while the concerns about immediate disbandment were baseless, the fear of arrest was well founded.

Focusing largely on CLC units in Diyala Province, the GOI issued hundreds of arrest warrants in the Summer of 2008 for CLC members suspected of participation in the

¹⁸ Roggio, "Standing Up The Concerned Citizens" and Dexter Filkins, "U.S. Hands Back a Quieter Anbar," *New York Times*, September 01, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/02/world/middleeast/02anbar.html> (accessed September 02, 2008).

¹⁹ Goode and al-Husaini, "U.S. and Iraqi Officials," and Goode, "U.S. Military Will Transfer Control of Sunni Citizen Patrols" and Richard A. Oppel Jr. "Iraq Takes Aim at U.S.-Tied Sunni Groups' Leaders," *New York Times*, August 21, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/22/world/middleeast/22sunni.html> (accessed August 29, 2008).

insurgency or sectarian fighting.²⁰ These warrants resulted in the arrest of at least five senior CLC leaders primarily from the old 1920s Revolutionary Brigades. Another leader, Abu Marouf, who fled his home near Abu Ghraib for safe haven near Fallujah, complained of his fate stating his men

...sacrificed and fought against AQ, and now the government wants to catch and arrest them...Our men worked hard and deserve appreciation and not punishment from the government...For now, everything is stopped... America is the only one asking us not to fight.²¹

A barrage of inflammatory rhetoric from Shi'a leaders accompanied the warrants. "The state cannot accept the Awakening," cried Sheik Jaladeen al-Sagheer, a leading Shi'a parliamentarian. "Their days are numbered."²² These statements were followed by comments from Brigadier General Nassir al-Hiti²³ alleging the CLC would return to violence "like a drug addict who quits only to take up drugs again." He went on to say "these people are like a cancer, and we must remove them...They committed crimes and attacked the Iraqi Army and the American Army, there is no way to rehabilitate them."²⁴

While initially worrisome, the number of arrests was fairly limited in part because the action served purposes more nuanced than a simple effort to destroy the CLC. First, the GOI addressed legitimate security concerns by targeting more dangerous elements of CLC.²⁵ Second, following offensive operations against the JAM in Basra and Sadr City, Maliki demonstrated his willingness to provide the same treatment to Sunni militias with

²⁰ Filkins, "Quieter Anbar."

²¹ Oppel, "Iraq Takes Aim." Also targeted were former leaders and members of the Islamic Army, some of whom were only recently praised by U.S. officials for bringing peace to former insurgent strongholds west of Baghdad.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Commander of the Iraqi Muthanna Brigade responsible for executing many of the warrants

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Roggio, "Standing Up The Concerned Citizens," Filkins, "Quieter Anbar," and Oppel, "Iraq Takes Aim." It is not coincident that this happened at a point where AM leaders both in Anbar and around Baghdad were beginning to agitate for greater political influence.

insurgent histories. Third, the actions against the Sunni militias represented “red meat” for Shi’a voters in the run up to provincial elections.²⁶ Finally, this represented a bet by the GOI that it can now secure insurgent strongholds without the support of the insurgents themselves.²⁷

Relations Between the Kurds and the AM

Like other players in Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) views the AM with mixed feelings. The KRG welcomes improved security in Sunni Iraq. However, a major KRG objective is the execution of constitutionally mandated reversals of the Ba’athist ‘Arabization’ process in Kirkuk, Mosul and other disputed areas.²⁸ This creates tension around Mosul and Kirkuk as the Arab population perceives Kurdish encroachment as a preparatory move to annexation into the KRG or worse--ethnic cleansing of Arabs.²⁹ The Arab character of the *Sahwat* excites KRG fears of organized Sunni militias that could complicate their ability to regain lost territories. As a result, while it welcomes the establishment of the AM elsewhere in Iraq, it greatly opposes its formation within Kurdistan and those areas of Iraq it hopes to include within the KRG.³⁰

Relations Between the Sunni Establishment and the AM

Keeping with the trends outlined above, the Sunni political establishment views the AM with apprehension as a potential political rival. Until recently, Sunni politics were exclusively local. However, national-level parties with definable agendas are beginning to coalesce as the threat from extremist Islamist and Ba’athist groups wanes.

²⁶ Oppel, “Iraq Takes Aim.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Jane’s*, “Iraq’s Turnaround.”

²⁹ Ahmed, “Sons of Iraq,” 11.

³⁰ Mardini, “Uncertainty.” Another reason for the lack of an Awakening in the KRG is the effectiveness of Kurdish security forces in securing the region against AQI attacks.

The primary groupings appear to be forming along nationalist groups and religious lines. The *Sahwat* tribal groups are firmly in the nationalist camp along with former officers' movements and reconstructed Ba'athists placing them in conflict with Sunni Islamic parties.³¹ Additionally, the tribes' newfound influence causes resentment among urban elites who view the rural tribesmen as an alien, backwards presence.³²

The *Sahwat*'s main political rival, the Islamic Party (IP) came to power in Anbar in 2005 with only 2% of the vote because of Sunni boycott of the election. Starting in 2007, *Sahwat* members began criticizing the IP for their poor record on employment and social services while the IP countered with allegations of criminal and un-Islamic *Sahwat* behavior.³³ They also feuded over control of the province's security forces with the IP claiming that the provincial council was legal authority while the *Sahwat* claimed that the Iraqi Army was in charge.³⁴ In May, 2008 the provincial council attempted to relieve the provincial police chief, a prominent *Sahwat* member. He refused, citing his chain of command ran to the Interior Ministry in Baghdad and remained in power.³⁵

This tension between the *Sahwat* and the IP is mirrored at the national level. Established Sunni leaders such as Iraq Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi and Iraqi Accordance Front (IAF) leader Adnan al-Duleimi fear that the Sunni tribes will gain

³¹ Knights, Michael, "Struggle for Power – The Uncertain Future of Iraq's Sunni Arabs," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, January 01, 2007 <http://www.janes.com> (accessed October 16, 2008) and Mardini, "Uncertainty."

³² International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," 15.

³³ Mardini, "Uncertainty." Sheik Harith al-Dari, leader of the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars, charged, "many of those who have joined the *Sahwa* councils have been members in AQ. They joined AQ in the first place for the sake of money, and when more money became available in a different direction, they rushed to it."

³⁴ This is an interesting commentary on how divided the *Sahwat* and the IP are. In this case, we find a Sunni paramilitary using a Shi'a dominated army as a foil against a Sunni provincial council. The enemy of my enemy...

³⁵ "Anbar Dispute Between Sunnis Growing," in online blog "Musings on Iraq," July 18, 2008, <http://mujsinggsoniraq.blogspot.com/22008/07/anbar-dispute-between-sunnis-growing.html> (accessed January 20, 2009). Ominously, Sheik Abdul Jabbar Abu Risha stated that the *Sahwat* controls Anbar and that the IP is powerless to resist.

power at their expense and may even battle the IAF for influence nationally. In fact, the *Sahwat* has already threatened to do so. During a boycott by IAF ministers of the Iraqi government in 2007, the *Sahwat* indicated it would nominate candidates to replace the IAF ministers if they did not return to the government.³⁶ The IAF then attempted to coopt the *Sahwat* by claiming to represent them in the national government. In response, Sheik Hatem, leader of the National Front for the Salvation of Iraq, one of the two main *Sahwat* associated parties in Anbar, lambasted the IAF stating

Neither al-Tawafuq nor any other group represents the Sunnis...We represent ourselves...What has the al-Tawafuq Front done for us? What have they done for Sunnis? They have destroyed us. Things are clearer now about the true national forces that represent the Sunnis...The al-Tawafuq Front came for the sake of power when the Sunnis kept away from the elections...We are giving them a chance until provincial elections are held. After that, cauterization is the best treatment.³⁷

Jealousy is another driver of anti-*Sahwat* politics. Some tribes have benefited more from cooperation with the U.S. Sheik Sattar's tribe, for example was a minor player in Anbar prior to the rise of the *Sahwat*. Today, it is among the most important because of the influence it enjoys within the *Sahwat*, generating rivalry with traditionally influential tribes. As reconstruction funds, positions in the security forces and government employment flow disproportionately to tribes that were active early in the *Sahwat* movement, accusations of corruption, nepotism and an unholy collaboration with the invaders follow. Unfortunately, these feuds may play into the hands of the remnants of AQI and other insurgents.³⁸

³⁶ Mardini, "Uncertainty."

³⁷ Fayyad, Mu'id, "Iraq: National Front for Salvation of Iraq Leader Vows to Fight Islamic Party," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 24, 2008, http://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_240_1019_43/html (accessed September 25, 2008).

³⁸ International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," ii and 15-16.

Relations Between the U.S. and the AM

For obvious reasons, the U.S. government is highly supportive of the AM.³⁹ At all echelons, commanders agree that, while at times distasteful, security is greatly improved by the process of buying Sunni loyalty.⁴⁰ Because the relationship generates Sunni goodwill towards the U.S., American troops are often seen as effective and impartial arbiters of disputes among Iraqi tribes/groups or between AM units and the GOI. Despite progress in reconciliation between Sunnis and the GOI, trust is still a fragile thing. According to Sheik Sattar, U.S. troops must remain in Anbar to enable continued reconciliation saying

In my personal opinion, and in the opinion of most of the wise men of Anbar, if the American forces leave right now, there will be civil war and the area will fall into total chaos. If we complete the police and the army, if we make them strong enough, it'll be possible for American forces to go home, and they'll be friends of the Iraqis.⁴¹

In an effort to reward AM fighters for their service and to help normalize the AM units within the Iraqi security apparatus, U.S. commanders and policy makers support the GOI two-tiered plan for the AM. The U.S. would like to see as many fighters as possible integrated into the Iraqi army and police and are working with the GOI to make this

³⁹ Many journalists and academics, particularly those opposed to the Iraq war, raise concerns over the reliability of "rented loyalty" and the wisdom of arming and equipping another militia in Iraq. While their concerns are valid, there are no examples of entire *Sahwat* or CLC units reverting to anti-government activity. Additionally, the U.S. provides no weapons to the AM. Iraq is awash in weapons and local leaders did not need assistance to equip their fighters. In the interest of "fair and balanced reporting," journalist and academics who support the war often attempt to overplay the success of the AM giving it names like "the Gettysburg of Iraq" and portraying the Sheiks as closet Jeffersonians just itching to bring liberal democracy to their neighborhoods. The truth, as always, lies somewhere in between.

⁴⁰ Oppel, "Iraq Takes Aim."

⁴¹ Wong, al-Ansary, and Cooper, and Anna Badkhen, "We Were basically Hiring Terrorists," *Salon*, August 29, 2008, http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2008/06/sons_of_iraq/ (accessed August 29, 2008). Such confidence building is not limited to al-Anbar. In Baghdad, U.S. troops continue to pay CLC fighters but ensure the Shi'a dominated national police is part of the process. By building such processes early, U.S. commanders hope to quickly normalize relations between the Sunni AM and Shi'a security forces.

happen.⁴² Recognizing that there are not enough positions for the thousands of fighters still unassimilated into police and army units, U.S. officials have set a goal of 25% entering the security forces and 75% entering vocational education program followed by employment revitalizing the Iraqi economy. Units awaiting demobilization could be employed in such areas as rubble removal and other public works requiring unskilled manpower.⁴³ It is desired that this process would be tied to the continued expansion of the Iraqi security forces, meaning AM units would not demobilize until army and police units were available to replace them.⁴⁴

This policy is driven by fears of potential AM recidivism. Lessons learned indicate the AM could go the way of some tribal fighters in Afghanistan who initially aligned with the U.S. but later switched sides.⁴⁵ “‘If it is not handled properly, we could have a security issue,’ said Brig Gen David Perkins, the senior military spokesman in Iraq. ‘You don’t want to give anybody a reason to turn back to AQ.’”⁴⁶ One MNFI spokesman stated that “the program is seen as a way to engage more and more Iraqis in their own government.”⁴⁷ This was echoed by Ambassador Crocker who stated “we’ve always felt they had to link up to the government of Iraq. That’s got to happen or nothing good is coming down the line.”⁴⁸

⁴² Findlater, “Concerned Local Citizens.”

⁴³ Roggio, “Mapping Iraq’s Concerned Local Citizens.”

⁴⁴ Daniel Graeber, “Analysis: Marriage of Convenience in Iraq,” *Middle East Times*, 25, March 19, 2008, http://www.metimes.com/22008/03/19/analysis_marriage_of_convenience_in_iraq (accessed August 29, 2008).

⁴⁵ Alissa J. Rubin and Damien Cave, “In a Force for Iraqi Calm, Seeds of Conflict,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/23/world/middleeast/23awakening.html> (accessed August 29, 2008).

⁴⁶ Oppel, “Iraq Takes Aim.”

⁴⁷ Findlater, “Concerned Local Citizens.”

⁴⁸ Brooks, “Sunni Fighters.”

The CLC: Concerned About Self-Defense

The CLC perceives its situation today as tenuous. Unlike the *Sahwat*, the CLC does not enjoy cordial relations with the GOI and has been unable to place many of their fighters in the security forces. Consequently, they perceive they have little stake in the status quo and feel vulnerable to the Shi'a dominated GOI. This is exacerbated by GOI arrests of some CLC leaders as well as unexplained assassinations of others. Although it is highly likely they were killed by Sunni rivals, the lack of trust in the GOI and the typical Arab love of conspiracies, causes CLC rank-and-file followers to believe they were eliminated by security forces. Said one, "The Awakenings are being targeted by the government, Iran and AQ elements linked to Iran and other neighboring countries."⁴⁹

Even before the GOI began to crack down on the CLC, many fighters complained bitterly that the GOI has not kept its promises of positions in the security forces and other employment. Abu Marouf, a former leader in the 1920s Revolutionary Brigade stated "some people from the government encouraged us to fight against AQ, but it seems that now AQ is finished, they don't want us anymore."⁵⁰ This sense of betrayal is a destabilizing force undercutting the newfound accord between Sunnis and the GOI and must be checked before it becomes something more serious.

Status of the *Sahwat* Today

In comparison, the *Sahwat*'s position in Iraq is far more secure by virtue of the political advantages accrued from early alignment with the U.S. and GOI. Because the

⁴⁹ Sam Dagher, "Sunni Proponent of Reconciliation is Killed," *New York Times*, September 14, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/15/world/middleeast/15iraq.html> (accessed September 15, 2008). One such leader, Fouad Ali Hussein, a CLC leader in the Jihad neighborhood of Baghdad was killed in his driveway by a bomb. It is entirely likely he was assassinated by rival Sunnis because he preached for moderation at local mosques. But his followers disagree and blame the attack on the GOI.

⁵⁰ Oppel, "Iraq Takes Aim."

Anbar elements of the Iraqi Security Forces were largely an empty shell in 2007, *Sahwat* leaders successfully obtained large numbers of positions for their followers in the police.⁵¹ Additionally, *Sahwat* leaders are also very effective in distributing other forms of patronage. In the first 18 months of the AM, Sheiks in Ramadi received over \$220 million for distribution through their tribal networks.⁵² As a result, today's *Sahwat* is well-organized, maintains acceptable relations with the GOI and trusts local security forces (largely because those security forces are an extension of the *Sahwat* itself).

Despite these successes, there is still unfinished business in the eyes of Anbari sheiks. They repeatedly express their concerns over the performance of the IP as well as perceived alien (Iranian) influence over many Shi'a parties. In fact, many *Sahwat* fighters joined the movement in part out of what they felt were patriotic motives to resist Iranian influence over Iraq.⁵³ As a result of these concerns, the *Sahwat* initiated an effort to organize politically for provincial and national elections.⁵⁴

The *Sahwat* Organizes Politically

On the heels of their military success, *Sahwat* leaders in Anbar declared their intention to transform their militia into a political movement representing the tribes of Anbar.⁵⁵ By translating their new found legitimacy into political representation for Iraq's Sunnis, they hoped to solidify the role of tribes in Iraqi politics. This effort can be divided into two semi-allied wings that emerged following the September, 2007 assassination of *Sahwat* founder Sheik abd al-Sattar abu Risha. The first is the

⁵¹ Roggio, "Mapping Iraq's Concerned Local Citizens."

⁵² Katulis, Juul, and Moss, "Awakening," 5.

⁵³ Ahmed, "Sons of Iraq," 22. The 1920s Revolution Brigades explained its decision to cooperate with the U.S. as necessary to resist Shi'a colonization.

⁵⁴ Brooks, "Sunni Fighters."

⁵⁵ Ahmed, "Sons of Iraq," 8-9.

Awakening Conference of Iraq, is led by Sheik Ahmed Abu Risha who succeeded his brother in accordance with tribal tradition.⁵⁶ The second is the National Salvation Front, led by Sheik Ali Hatem al-Suleiman, who leads the al-Anbar Tribal Council.⁵⁷ Although amicable, this split represents a competition between two very different clans of the traditionally dominant Dulaim tribe. Abu Risha represents the clan of the albu Risha⁵⁸ sub-clan, a traditionally minor player in Anbari politics until his Sheik Sattar thrust it to the forefront with his bold move establishing the *Sahwat*. Conversely, Sheik Hatem is the Grand Sheik of the al-Dulaim tribe and descends from family lines that led the region in the early 20th Century when it was still known as al-Dulaim province. Hatem's goal is to reestablish the position of his family as the power broker in the region while abu Risha seeks to consolidate his dead brother's gains on behalf of the sub-clan.⁵⁹

Election Run Up and Aftermath

As discussed previously, politicization of the *Sahwat* brought conflict with the existing Sunni political elite, the Islamic Party. In the run up to the January, 2009 provincial elections, both the Awakening Council of Iraq and the National Salvation Front clashed verbally with the IP and its parent, the al-Tawafuq Front. Sheik Hatem, a firebrand with a penchant for headline grabbing quotes claimed

We are waging a battle of destiny against the Islamic Party. AQ does not pose any danger to Iraq anymore and it is finished. The real danger are those that fight us in the name of legitimacy and religion, I mean the

⁵⁶ Katulis, Juul and Moss, "Awakening," 5.

⁵⁷ "Iraqi Weekly Interviews, Sheik Ali Hatem al-Suleiman of the Anbar Awakening," Musings on Iraq, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2008/11/iraqi-weekly-interviews-sheik-ali.html> (accessed January 20, 2009).

⁵⁸ Yes, the spelling is different.

⁵⁹ Ali, Fahid, "Sunni Rivalries in al-Anbar Province Threaten Iraq's Security," *Terrorism Focus*, Volume 5 Issue 10, March 11, 2008, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4779](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4779) (accessed February 10, 2009).

Islamic Party. Had it not been for the intervention of the government and the U.S. forces, this party would not have lasted for two days in Anbar.⁶⁰

Hatem did not limit his rhetoric to the IP and the Al-Tawafuq Front. In an effort to establish his movement's nationalist Arab credentials, he also launched verbal attacks containing language that veiled criticism of the Shi'a government for allowing Iranian⁶¹ influence to enter the country.

We the sons and tribes of Al-Anbar do not want a chance to the Islamic or sectarian parties. We want to preserve our tribal identity and our national unity...The National Front for the Salvation of Iraq consists of Iraqi tribes...it is open to all nationalist Iraqis to join it...our alliance welcomes our brother Shi'a. They are Iraqis first and foremost...Our front's goal is to crush the sectarian sedition, confirm our Arab identity, and restore Iraq to its Iraqi identity distant from alien sectarian dissensions."⁶²

He also gave warning to the IP and the GOI saying
...any side that thinks of clashing with us will be the loser. It is not in the interest of the government to confront us. Regardless of whether it has leveled accusations against us, we have fought AQ and triumphed over it and the government that supported us.⁶³

2009 Provincial Election in Anbar

In late January, 2009, provincial elections were held in most Iraqi provinces including Anbar. Despite an extensive get-out-the-vote campaign, only 7.5 million voters turned out nationwide (around 51% of eligible voters with lower percentages in Anbar). Initial results indicated Iraqi voters leaving religious parties associated with sectarian violence in favor of more nationalist tickets. Nationwide, the elections occurred without major violence or disruption. However, its aftermath in Anbar was not as smooth.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Fayyad, "Iraq: National Front."

⁶¹ i.e. Persian, not Arab

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Mark Kukis, "Iraq Vote Goes Smoothly, but Results Are Another Story," *Time*, February 01, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1876201,00.html> (accessed February 10, 2009) and Kim Gamel, "Iraqi Military Puts Anbar Province Under Curfew," Associated Press, February 02, 2009,

Trouble began almost immediately after polls closed when the IP claimed it had won enough seats to maintain control of the council. *Sahwat* political leaders quickly accused the IP of ballot stuffing and other irregularities. The IP responded, denying the allegations and accusing Sheik Ahmed abu Risha of practicing “intimidation and extortion” and calling him a bandit and thief.⁶⁵

Sheik Ahmed’s party quickly filed a complaint with the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq claiming significant fraud on the part of the IP including the addition of approximately 100,000 fraudulent votes.⁶⁶ They also claimed that the Awakening Councils’ exit polling indicated the IP was trailing when polls closed.⁶⁷ Other *Sahwat* leaders stated that their polling indicated the IP lacked the votes to gain even one seat in the provincial council.⁶⁸ The commission confirmed its receipt of Sheik Ahmed’s complaint along with many others from the province. A commission official told Reuters that some of the complaints were “serious” and could, if upheld, alter the results of the vote in Anbar significantly.⁶⁹

While the *Sahwat*’s resort to the electoral commission could be considered a great day for democratic rule of law in action, their actions that followed punched democratic rule of law in the nose. Anbar Salvation Council official Mohammed Mahmood Nutah

http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hwK_CSpBxsNuVUEaDuOwmSSCiqGwD963MF801 (accessed February 10, 2009).

⁶⁵ Steven Lee Myers and Sam Dagher, “After Iraqi Elections, Next Big Test Is Acceptance,” *New York Times*, February 09, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/10/world/middleeast/10anbar.html> (accessed February 10, 2009). Which may actually be true. But that is beside the point.

⁶⁶ Mark Kukis, “Charges of Vote-Rigging in Anbar,” *Time*, February 04, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1877019,00.html> (accessed February 10, 2009) and Liz Sly, “Who are Big Winners in Iraq Election? Depends on Whom You Ask,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 4, 2009, http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-anbar_04feb04,0,7621891.story (accessed February 10, 2009).

⁶⁷ Gamel, “Iraqi Military.”

⁶⁸ Kukis, “Charges.”

⁶⁹ Ahmed Rasheed, “Iraq Investigating Serious Vote Fraud Allegations,” Reuters, February 4, 2009, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUKTRE51336F20090204?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0> (accessed February 10, 2009).

warned "I can assure you that the people of Anbar are just like a volcano now. We are sitting on top of it to prevent an eruption. If the results show that the Islamic Party has gotten the most votes, it will be a disaster."⁷⁰ Sheik Hameed al-Hayes, an ally of Sheik Dulaim, stated "if the results don't reflect what the people want, we cannot control the streets of Anbar."⁷¹ He went on to say "we will make Anbar a graveyard for the IP and its allies."⁷² While Sheik Hatem is usually the more vocal firebrand among *Sahwat* leaders, it was Sheik Ahmed who elected to lob verbal Molotov cocktails. "If the percentage is true, then we will transfer our entity from a political to a military one, to fight the Islamic Party and the commission," he warned.⁷³ He went on to say "don't blame us if we threaten to resort to the use of arms. This is destiny. It is to be or not to be...This is not democracy. It is an abuse of democracy."⁷⁴ Responding to these rhetorical signals, many *Sahwat* members and tribal loyalists took to the streets in violent protest.

Unsurprisingly, the IP dismissed the charges as sour grapes by "political groups who did not fare as well as they had hoped."⁷⁵ Another piled on saying "we condemn this threat of arms that some people have made against us. This uncivilized and threatening behavior will take us back to the Middle Ages."⁷⁶ In response to the threats of violence emanating from Anbar's political factions, the Iraqi Army instituted a brief curfew while most IP incumbents went into hiding.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Kukis, "Charges."

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Gamel, "Iraqi Military."

⁷³ Ned Parker, Caesar Ahmed and Saif Hameed, "Absent Election Results, Iraq Parties Stake Claims," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2009, <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iraq-waiting4-2009feb04,0,3595467.story> (accessed February 10, 2009).

⁷⁴ Sly, "Big Winners."

⁷⁵ Gamel, "Iraqi Military."

⁷⁶ Sly, "Big Winners."

⁷⁷ Gamel, "Iraqi Military."

The Political Way-Ahead in Anbar

Following intervention by the GOI and U.S. troops, *Sahwat* leaders began to ratchet down the violent tone of the rhetoric and look for peaceful ways to achieve their goals aided by initial results discounting the IP's claim of a major victory.⁷⁸

Concurrently, Iraqi security forces lifted the local curfew and lowered their security posture. As of the writing of this thesis, the decision of the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq is still forthcoming and may take months to sort out. However, the commission appears focused on lowering *Sahwat* expectations of a reversal of the election results while warning against efforts to discredit the electoral process out of political frustration.⁷⁹

Because it appears that no party won more than 17.6% of the vote, the *Sahwat* parties will attempt to form a ruling coalition that excludes their rivals the IP. However, this process is complicated by the lack of democratic experience among Anbari tribal politicians. In the words of Sheik Hatem, whose Tribes of Iraq party is challenging its 4.5% showing, "we were born yesterday when it comes to politics." Still, Sheik Ahmed abu Risha, who's party came in second (and ahead of the IP), has toned down his rhetoric as he tries to build a coalition that will block the IP from power while consolidating his own position as the new head of the Anbari tribal world. "We are armed by papers and evidence,' he said of his party's official complaints, 'and paper is the strongest weapon. That is the weapon we will use.'"⁸⁰ Ironically, he'll likely have to form a coalition with former Ba'athists who took 17.2% of the vote, tops in initial GOI reporting.⁸¹ This will

⁷⁸ Myers and Dagher, "Iraqi Elections."

⁷⁹ Kukis, "Charges."

⁸⁰ Myers and Dagher, "Iraqi Elections."

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

certainly concern more dogmatic Shi'a parties who will see this alliance of convenience as proof of the *Sahwat*'s sectarian agenda. While apparently heading for a peaceful conclusion, the rapidity with which Anbari sheiks threatened violence shows the danger of conflict involving the *Sahwat* remains real in Anbar.⁸²

Conclusion

The emergence of the AM has shaken Iraqi politics like nothing else since the 2003 Coalition invasion. Because of the fluidity of the situation, the many divisions that rend Iraqi political life and the immaturity of the Iraqi democratic system, efforts of the AM to integrate itself into Iraqi society and politics have been difficult. Simultaneously welcomed and feared by almost every major actor in Iraq, the AM senses opportunity and danger equally on all fronts. This, combined with its diffuse makeup, political immaturity, and the fractious nature of the tribal politics that dominate its most important element make integration of the AM a complex challenge in the years ahead. While this process will be difficult and emotional, the rapid devolution of the *Sahwat* parties following the 2009 provincial elections indicates the importance of integrating the AM in order to counterbalance its potential centrifugal effects on Iraqi society and security.

⁸² Mark Kukis, "A Quiet Election Masks the Iraqi Option for Violence," *Time*, February 08, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1878047,00.html> (accessed February 10, 2009).

CHAPTER THREE: COOPTING THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT

Introduction

Having discussed the AM's origins and current status, it is now possible to look toward its potential future. The intent of this chapter is to demonstrate that the AM must be coopted by the GOI by addressing the principle aspirations of the AM while creating a security situation acceptable to the GOI. This chapter will explore that through course of action (COA) analysis followed by a recommended strategy on how best to manage the normalization of the AM into Iraqi society. Containing multiple logical lines of operation (LOOs), the plan seeks to identify and satisfy both the AM's and the GOI's primary needs while avoiding red line issues for both. In the end, no player will be perfectly happy, but by satisfying the great majority, the plan seeks to divide those elements of the AM that can be pacified from those that cannot. That hard core will have to be dealt with in other ways.

COA 1: Best Case

In the best case scenario, the AM in all of its elements (*Sahwat* and CLC) embraces or at least acquiesces in the new Shi'a dominated order in Iraq. Additionally, AM fighters and leaders not accepted into the Iraqi security forces enter GOI programs that provide honor, prestige and economic opportunity. Finally, the *Sahwat* based political parties in Anbar accept the results of democratic elections without resorting to violence, intimidation or chicanery to achieve their desired ends.

For this to happen, success is required in several areas. First, the GOI and the AM must successfully engage in mutual confidence building measures including an amnesty for all but the most heinous crimes committed by AM members during the

insurgency. Second, the GOI, the U.S. and a combination of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international governmental organizations (IGOs) must launch a series of well-funded, vocational training programs coupled with large-scale rebuilding and infrastructure projects designed to provide employment to the AM rank and file and lucrative contracts to AM leadership. Third, Iraq's secular parties, Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish, must nurture the nascent *Sahwat*-based political movement providing political training to organize this secular Sunni force. This in turn will help cement the emerging defacto alliance between the *Sahwat* parties and Maliki's secular-led coalition limiting Iranian influence and creating a national reconciliation front worthy of the name.

COA 2: Worst Case

In the worst case scenario, the GOI fails to reintegrate the AM in terms of security structures, economics and political life. The ensuing frustration on the part of some AM leaders and much of the rank and file leads to significant recidivism on the part of entire AM units and leads to a second Sunni insurgency. This second insurgency, similar to the repeated Israeli-Palestinian cycle of *Intefadas*, so firmly polarizes the sectarian communities in Iraq as to prevent reconciliation for a generation. Worse yet, it allows the reintroduction of destructive outside influences, either in the form of a resurgent AQI or through more direct interference by an adventurous Iran and concerned Sunni Arab Gulf states causing Iraq to degenerate into an endless proxy war similar to Lebanon.¹

COA 3: Most Likely Case

In the most likely case, the AM will pose a manageable challenge for the GOI but one that will not be handled flawlessly. There will be some successes and many (more

¹ *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, "Iraq's Turnaround," January 16, 2008, <http://www.janes.com> (accessed October 18, 2008), Graeber, and International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," 15.

noticeable) points of conflict. However, the successes will generally outweigh the conflicts as the GOI and AM trend towards accommodation and integration. In each area of concern (security, economics and politics) there are positive and negative trends.

There is good news supporting this COA. From a security standpoint, the *Sahwat* appears to be largely coopted directly into the security forces at either the national, provincial or local level. Additionally, it appears that the GOI is backing off from the pressure it placed on former insurgent leaders from groups like the 1920s Brigades and the Islamic Army.² However, much work remains in terms of recruiting CLC fighters into normalized police and army units and in terms of confidence boosting measures between Sunni neighborhoods and largely Shi'a security forces. While some success will continue in that area, it appears likely that, especially around Baghdad, confidence building and mutual trust will advance by fits and starts delaying the type of full rapprochement necessary for sustainable stability.

Similarly, the first steps have begun to provide training and contracts for AM fighters and leaders. Unfortunately, this area lags in large part because the Iraqi government is still developing the structures and expertise to execute its budget and carry out significant projects in areas recently secured by the AM and the Surge. Further hampering efforts is a general lack of educational infrastructure such as vocational and trade schools as well as the higher levels of illiteracy in western Iraq. It is worrisome that this area lags behind because without economic opportunity, it is likely that many individual fighters will slip back into illegal activity of some sort in order to provide for

² It appears that at least some of the motivation for the warrants against former insurgent leaders was to provide a sense of fairness as the Maliki regime was simultaneously moving against extremist Shi'a groups such as the JAM. Even while issuing arrest warrants, the government continued quiet dialogue with many leaders and did not move to pursue them as they fled west into Anbar.

their families. This in turn will cause misunderstandings between the GOI and the AM and between Sunnis and Shi'a creating another source of friction in the process of full reconciliation and reintegration.

In the political arena, the news is more positive. *Sahwat*-based parties in Anbar are ready to form a coalition capable of excluding the IP from power at the provincial level. This will go far towards defusing political tensions in the province in the short term. In the long term, they will need to master the skills necessary to work together to prevent the splits along tribal lines that almost cost them the provincial election in January, 2009. This may be possible now that Sheik Ahmed abu Risha's party outperformed Sheik Hatem's party cementing the new role of the albu Risha clan as a major player in Dulaim tribal politics. More importantly, they will need to learn tactical patience so that their first response to adversity is not to threaten to take to the streets with weapons as they did earlier this year. This will take time and will not be without further hiccups. Also, now that they appear to be on the cusp of power, the *Sahwat* parties will have to address their constituents' desires including basic services, economic growth and good governance. The real test in their political maturation will be when they are confronted by legitimate grievances from their constituents over problems that will be difficult to solve rapidly.³ However, it appears for the moment that Maliki is committed to a course that limits the role of religious parties and, while recognizing Iranian influence, seeks to hold it at arm's length. This should make political cooperation between the *Sahwat* parties and the Maliki coalition possible easing the process of political integration for Sunnis.

How to Integrate the AM—A Plan

³ International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," 16.

Any plan must start with a desired endstate. For the U.S. the desired endstate is an AM that is fully and peacefully integrated into Iraqi society.⁴ Fortunately, this desired endstate is not incompatible with that of the GOI or the AM. The GOI's endstate is for the AM to not pose a threat to the GOI or to the safety of its citizens (especially the Shi'a) while maintaining the security gains made possible by the AM. The AM's desired endstate is to maintain security in its constituent areas while converting military/security gains into political and economic status within post-Saddam Iraq. Fortunately, while there are important differences between these goals, none are mutually exclusive.

To progress further, it is necessary to identify the interests that serve the desired endstate.⁵ For purpose of structure, this analysis draws on Dr. Harry R. Yarger's model for Strategic Appraisal. For the U.S. in Iraq, there are four primary interests at play in regards to the future of the AM, three of which can be classified as vital and one as important. The first (which is vital) is an AM that is friendly or at least neutral in its stance towards the U.S. It is critical that the U.S. not face a second Sunni insurgency as it attempts to decrease its footprint in Iraq and the posture of the AM will be the primary determinant of success in that area. The second (vital) interest is an AM that is at peace with the GOI. Any extended armed conflict between significant elements of the AM and the GOI will inevitably draw the U.S. in on one side or the other significantly complicating U.S. efforts to draw down in Iraq. The third (vital) interest is an AM that continues to prevent the return of AQI and other foreign elements to Sunni Iraq. A significant reinvigoration of AQI activities will seriously disrupt most of the progress

⁴ It may be considered that an acceptable (as opposed to the most desirable) endstate is an AM that does not represent an unmanageable threat to a peaceful and stable Iraq regardless of how well it is integrated.

⁵ Harry R Yarger, *Strategy and the National Security Professional: Strategic Thinking and Strategy Formulation in the 21st Century*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008, 51-67.

made in Iraq in the last 24 months and seriously compromise U.S. interests in Iraq and in the greater Global War on Terror. The final interest (rated as important) is an AM that is at peace with itself. As discussed elsewhere, the AM is far from a monolithic entity and contains numerous fault lines and fractures. A breakout of violence between AM groups, particularly along tribal lines within the *Sawhat* movement, would damage U.S. interests in Iraq and have repercussions among the three vital interests discussed above.

Continuing with Yarger's framework, it is necessary to identify strategic factors and then key strategic factors affecting the realization of these interests. For the sake of brevity, this thesis will only focus on those factors identified as key strategic factors in the author's analysis. The key strategic factors for the peaceful integration of the AM into Iraqi society are listed along with associated measures of effectiveness below:

Table 3.1. Key Strategic Factors and Associated Measures of Effectiveness

An AM Friendly/ Neutral Towards the US (Vital)	An AM and GOI at Peace with One Another (Vital)	No Return of AQI (Vital)	An AM at Peace With Itself (Important)
The level at which the AM views U.S. intentions as positive towards AM and Iraq	The level to which the AM trusts the GOI	Ability & desire of AM leaders to control former insurgents & leaders in the AM	Ability & desire of AM leaders to prevent schismatic feuds
	The level to which the GOI trusts the AM		
The level at which the AM views U.S. as impartial	The level to which the AM views its partnership with the GOI as beneficial	The ability and willingness of the AM to oppose the return of AQI and other foreign influences to Sunni Iraq	The ability of the AM to develop itself beyond a military phenomenon into a successful political movement
	The level to which the GOI perceives cooption of AM as beneficial.		

Objectives and Measures of Performance

Ultimately, each of these key strategic factors becomes the basis of an objective with an associated measure of effectiveness. These are outlined in the table below.

Table 3.2. Objectives and Associated Measures of Performance

Objective	Measure of Performance
The AM views U.S. intentions as positive towards AM and Iraq	• AM public statements towards the continued role of the U.S. in Iraq.
The AM views U.S. as impartial	• AM statements concerning the role of the U.S. as an arbiter between the AM groups or the AM and the GOI • Frequency with which the AM asks for U.S. arbitration in AM associated disputes.
The AM trusts the GOI	• AM rhetoric towards the GOI. • AM willingness to negotiate with the GOI. • AM stockpiling of heavy weapons. • Acts of violence by the AM against the GOI. • Arrests by GOI of AM leaders/members for crimes committed before 2007. • Percentage of AM members recruited by Iraqi security forces.
The GOI trusts the AM	• GOI rhetoric towards the AM. • GOI willingness to provide resources through AM leaders. • Acts of violence by the AM against the GOI. • Number of arrests of AM leaders/members for crimes committed before 2007. • Percentage of AM members recruited by Iraqi security forces.
The AM views its partnership with the GOI as beneficial	• Degree to which the GOI provides AM leaders the resources to improve the lives of AM leaders and rank and file members. • Unemployment rate in Sunni areas of Iraq. • Level of basic human services provided by GOI to Sunni citizens.
The GOI perceives cooption of the AM as beneficial.	• Degree to which the GOI perceives the AM as loyal to the new Iraqi state. • Degree of AM cooperation with the GOI on security matters • Willingness of AM leaders to acquiesce in arrest of criminal elements within the AM
AM leaders willing and able to maintain control of former insurgents & leaders in the AM	• Level of violence perpetrated by foreigners Sunnis.
An AM willing and able to oppose the return of AQI and other foreign influences	• Level of violence perpetrated by indigenous Iraqi Sunnis. • Level of violence perpetrated by Sunnis against Shi'a.

to Iraq	
AM leaders willing and able to prevent internal conflict from developing into schismatic feuds.	• A unified ticket of <i>Sahwat</i> candidates. • Violence or threats of violence between subclans of the Dulaim Tribe in Anbar
A successful <i>Sahwat</i> political movement.	• Results from regional and local elections. • Threats and acts of violence by <i>Sahwat</i> members following adverse election results. • Responsiveness by <i>Sahwat</i> associated parties and leaders to constituent concerns.

Ways

In order to successfully achieve these objectives, it is necessary to approach the AM not as a monolithic whole but rather as a polyglot mass of groups and individuals with differing backgrounds and desires.⁶ Metaphorically, it is an onion, comprised of many layers, all forming a single whole but easily disaggregated from one another with the proper instrument. Viewing it as such, this plan seeks to peel the onion of the AM one layer at a time by attempting to satisfy the needs and desires of individual groups, leaders and fighters, peeling them away in order to isolate any potential incorrigible elements from the strength and protection of the larger group. This will allow for them to be neutralized individually without attracting the wrath of the whole. To be successful, this effort must coopt leaders and the rank and file by utilizing regional and local hierarchical structures resident within the AM, i.e. neighborhood CLCs and their leaders in Baghdad and other urban centers and tribal structures among the *Sahwat* in Anbar and other rural areas. By respecting the status of local leaders and providing them the means of patronage (jobs, contracts, educational opportunities etc.), the GOI can bring the AM

⁶ Ahmed, "Sons of Iraq," 11 and Roggio, "Standing Up the Concerned Local Citizens." "The mix of Sunni and Shi'a enclaves and the interrelationships between the tribes and sects created a more complex problem set than the homogenous Sunni Anbar province. The Concerned Local Citizens groups were not centrally formed, as the Anbar Salvation Council was. The groups in southern Baghdad and northern Babil provinces popped up in local communities, and while tribal leaders reached out to their neighbors, there is no governing council to provide central direction."

leadership to a position where they trust the GOI and believe they have a stake in its success. If local leaders feel isolated by the GOI, they are likely to turn the rank and file against the GOI with potentially negative results for all parties.

To succeed, this effort in turn must focus on providing for the critical needs of rank and file AM members, namely employment, dignity and social status. Many, if not most fighters enlisted with the AM because it gave them the means to provide for their family, prestige as a defender of the tribe/neighborhood and the dignity of controlling their own destiny. Any solution that does not address these three critical requirements is doomed, leading to excessive recidivism on the part of AM fighters and units.

It will also be necessary to convince the GOI that coopting the AM is in its best interests. Although direct discussions may achieve this goal, the U.S. should be prepared to offer both the carrot and stick in order to convince the GOI to expend energy and resources away from its primarily Shi'a constituency. This can range from positive steps such as matching funds spent on AM integration to putative measures such as withholding funds in other areas. While such an effort is important to the success of this plan, it should be primarily addressed within the larger Iraq campaign plan where its effects can be synchronized with the general plan for engagement with the GOI rather than within this plan's LOOs. It will be addressed as necessary within the objectives and LOOs of this plan in order to allow a mechanism for gauging its effectiveness.

Lines of Operations (LOOs)

To operationalize these "ways," this thesis proposes activities along seven logical LOOs designed to bring the "means" of money and other resources to bear in such a way as to affect the measures of effectiveness listed above and thereby achieve the objectives

stated in this plan. The following table⁷ identifies the recommended lines of operations and where they are expected to interact with the plan's objectives:

Table 3.3. The Intersection of Lines of Operations and Objectives

	Economic Integration	Security	Ed/ Trng	Reconciliation & Confidence	IO	Hydro-carbons	Political Integration	Kinetic Ops
AM views U.S. positively	X	X	X	X		X		
AM views U.S. as impartial		X		X		X		
AM trusts the GOI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
GOI trusts the AM		X		X	X	X	X	X
AM views GOI as beneficial	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
GOI views AM partner as beneficial		X		X	X		X	X
AM controls former insurgents	X	X	X	X		X		X
AM halts foreign influences		X				X		X
AM stops schismatic feuds						X	X	
Sahwat politics are stable	X		X			X	X	

Line of Operations: Economic Stimulus for AM Members and Leaders

This Line of Operation targets the two things that the average AM member (whether leadership or rank and file) desires most: economic prosperity and societal prestige by employing economic opportunity to provide a) patronage opportunities for AM leaders and b) employment for AM members. Its foundation is built on construction contracts let to or through AM leaders. This rewards leaders for risks taken with business

⁷ The table changes the names of the objectives and lines of operations slightly for the sake of providing a more visually useful table.

opportunities and provides them jobs to pass on to their fighters as a reward for their loyalty. Additionally, it provides the GOI economic leverage over AM leaders and causes the AM leaders and rank and file to view the GOI as a benevolent partner. A second element of this LOO is a series of benefits similar to the post World War II GI Bill of Rights for all AM members. This should include stipends to AM members for a period of time following demobilization, educational benefits to pay for vocational and (if needed) basic literacy training and microgrants providing craftsmen the opportunity to set up their own small businesses. A small pension at age 65 should also be included but made conditional on a lack of recidivism on the part of the individual AM member as an incentive for good behavior. Resources for this can come from the U.S. through MNFI and/or USAID, the GOI and contributions from Sunni Arab Gulf States. However, all funds should be disbursed through the GOI to the AM members and leaders directly in order to help cement the bonds of trust between the AM and the GOI.

Line of Operations: Integration into Security Institutions

In many ways, this LOO is the most advanced of the seven suggested. Because much of the *Sahwat* is already incorporated into the Iraqi security forces operating in Anbar, there is little left to accomplish in that area. However, in and around Baghdad, there is still the unfinished promise of recruiting 20% of CLC members into the national police and the army. Completing this goal will help but may not be enough. Therefore, it is recommended that another 30% of CLC members be recruited into local police units organized at the municipal level or be given some sort of “reserve” status within the Iraqi national police for the foreseeable future. This will have the advantages of providing some means of support to former fighters while they transition into the civilian economy,

provide elasticity to the strength of the national police, and actively tie a larger portion of the former CLC members to the intelligence capabilities of the Iraqi security forces. As an added benefit, it will allow the GOI to actively track members as part of the pay system associated with reserve status.

Line of Operations: Education and Training

As Anthony Cordesman said “You’ve got to move a lot of these young men back into the economy because not everybody under 25 in Iraq can be a policeman.” However, with official unemployment around 18% and underemployment at 38%, not all of these young men are going to find jobs right away.⁸ This LOO focuses on two important requirements. The first is to keep AM members who cannot be integrated into the Iraqi security forces or absorbed directly into the economy busy for a while so as to discourage recidivism. The second is to develop a more skilled work force capable of sustaining the rebuilding efforts, infrastructure improvement and expansion of the oil industry necessary to allow Iraq to begin to flourish. This effort focuses largely on vocational and literacy training for AM fighters and other young Iraqis. This provides collateral benefits including employing the educational and support staff necessary to provide instruction as well as driving additional job creation through the reconstruction and refurbishment of vocational education facilities. A smaller part would be focused on providing university educations to a percentage of former AM members as a means of training them to enter the Iraqi bureaucracy as well as to begin rebuilding the Iraqi professional class gutted by years of insecurity and economic instability. Such education would occur in Iraq, at institutions in secular Arab states and in the West.

⁸ Brooks, “Sunni Fighters.”

Line of Operations: Integration into Political Institutions

This LOO seeks to ease Sunni Arab fears of marginalization by ensuring Sunni nationalists in general and AM members in particular that they are able to participate in the ruling of Iraq both through elected office and as members of the bureaucracy. The first element of this LOO is to continue the reversal of Ambassador Paul Bremer's disastrous De-Ba'athification policy launched in the Summer of 2003. Although some reversal of the policy is already complete, it needs to go further in order to meet the economic and political needs of the AM.⁹ This includes amending the January 2008 DeBa'athification Law to allow former Ba'athists who committed no crimes to regain their positions in government as well as fully implementing the February 2008 Amnesty Law.¹⁰ This will go far in redressing Sunni grievances as well as providing a pool of trained technical experts and bureaucrats to an Iraqi government still facing challenges in executing its day-to-day responsibilities.

The second half of this LOO focuses on ensuring that AM leaders are afforded every opportunity to participate and succeed in the democratic process of government in Iraq. As evidenced in to January 2009 Provincial Election process, the *Sahwat's* internal divisions prevent it from effectively managing a democratic political campaign. To counter this shortfall, it will be necessary to provide basic political education to sheiks on how to run a campaign and how to administer effectively if elected. Such training can be accomplished by a combination of civil affairs troops, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, State Department resources and instructors from democratic Islamic states including Indonesia and Pakistan.

⁹ *Jane's Intelligence Review*, "Iraq Opens Doors to Former Ba'athists," December 01, 2006, <http://www.janes.com> (accessed October 16, 2008).

¹⁰ International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," iii.

Additionally, AM leaders, once elected, must be assured of receiving sufficient budgetary authority to help revive the region economically and enable the formation of local government institutions and security forces. To achieve this, oil revenues must be evenly shared across the provinces. The recent Hydrocarbons Law appears to meet this need and will enable leaders to enjoy some semblance of success if they rule wisely.

Line of Operations: Reconciliation and Confidence Building

This LOO seeks to improve trust between both the GOI and the AM as well as to defuse hatred generated by the worst offenses of the insurgency and the sectarian fighting of 2006-07. The first element of this LOO is to ensure that the corrosive effects of sectarianism are limited to the greatest extent possible. For this to occur, the U.S. must press the GOI to remove officials guilty of sectarian behavior from government, especially the military, police and intelligence services whenever they are identified. Where the GOI refuses to do this, the U.S. should draw a lesson from the implementation of Plan Colombia and make training and support for units and ministries conditional on their human rights record, professionalism and demonstrated non-sectarianism. It should also refuse to deal with (or at least strongly limit interaction with) sectarian commanders and government ministers in order to get this message across. The U.S. should also strive to ensure that AM-based police units receive sufficient GOI oversight in the form of leadership and inspectors general to ensure that the GOI feels confident that it maintains full visibility into the actions of these forces.

The second element of this LOO is a concerted campaign drawing on lessons from such former hot spots as Northern Ireland and South Africa. First, the U.S should continue to press Iraqi factions to reach a comprehensive settlement. This must include

use of all elements of national power as well as political engagement by the UN, Arab transnational groups and the Saudi government on behalf of the Sunni minority.¹¹ This could be enabled by some form of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions so successful in South Africa. In most cases, aggrieved individuals want some sense of closure. By giving them a peaceful venue for this action, such commissions can be instrumental in releasing tension without a continuation of tit-for-tat retaliation. In ethnically mixed areas, U.S. troops can act as impartial arbiters and mediators as they are still routinely seen as such anyway.¹² Such activities do not have to represent a total cleansing of the Iraqi soul or some sort of sweeping forgiveness for atrocities committed since 2003. As Anthony Cordesman said, “Political accommodation is not reconciliation. It is whether the factions in Iraq can learn to live with each other.”¹³

Line of Operations: Information Operations (IO)

Lack of information and the traditional Arab love of conspiracy theory are a dangerous combination that will be exploited by those who wish to see rapprochement between the AM and the GOI fail. To oppose this, an IO LOO is necessary. To be successful, it should focus primarily on a Public Affairs style campaign designed to inform AM members of reintegration programs, progress in these programs and chances for AM members to participate. It should seek to inform them of the opportunities presented in several of the LOOs above in order to maximize participation in those LOOs and thereby their effectiveness. It should also seek to defeat misinformation campaigns by those forces opposed to GOI/AM reconciliation.

¹¹ International Crisis Group, “Iraq After the Surge,” iii-iv.

¹² Jack Keane, Frederick W. Kagan and Kimberly Kagan, “The Endgame in Iraq,” *The Weekly Standard*, September 22, 2008, Vol 14, Issue 02, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/content/public/articles/000/000/015/559qlsot.asp> (accessed October 18, 2008).

¹³ Brooks, “Sunni Fighters.”

In parallel, the GOI should carry out an IO effort targeting public perception of the AM, especially in majority Shi'a areas. It should paint the AM as patriotic Iraqis loyal to Iraq and opposed to the U.S. led invasion who abandoned that resistance and turned on AQI when AQI targeted their (Shi'a) Iraqi brothers. It should seek to emphasize the fact that the great majority of the AM share the average Shi'a Iraqi's moderate view of Islam and Iraqi patriotism. This effort would serve to encourage reconciliation by differentiating between the Sunni resistance against the Coalition and the AQI sectarian campaign against the Shi'a.

Line of Operations: Hydrocarbons

This may be the most interesting of the LOOs because of its potential to completely transform the economic situation in Sunni Iraq over the long term. During Saddam's regime, Iraqi petroleum operations focused on exploiting the most readily accessible reserves. These were typically located in the Shi'a areas in southern Iraq and Kurdish areas in the north. Because oil reserves surveyed in Sunni areas are typically heavier and deeper than elsewhere in Iraq, the Sunnis saw little local benefit from oil production. In fact, the four predominately Sunni provinces are historically assessed to contain less than 10% of Iraq's oil reserves. However, because of the lack of modern seismic surveys of Anbar and other Sunni regions, it is actually difficult to say whether the Sunnis are not in fact sitting on large, unexplored reserves. Over 200 geographic structures of interest are known to exist in Anbar along with large proven reserves of natural gas. It is estimated that Anbar may in fact be sitting on top of over 21% of Iraq's undiscovered oil reserves.¹⁴

¹⁴ Michael Knights, "Fueling the Economy – Can Oil Provide for Iraq's Sunni Arabs?" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 01, 2007, <http://www.janes.com> (accessed October 16, 2008).

Exploitation of these reserves could be the engine of long term sustainable economic growth in the Sunni portion of Iraq. Such exploitation would provide vital revenues for the provincial governments of the Sunni region. More importantly, it would create a wealth of jobs and lucrative construction contracts for tribesmen and their sheiks, assets we have already identified as critical to the successful integration of the AM into Iraqi society. Such economic development could provide long-term economic opportunity for the AM getting the GOI past the “bridge loan” phase of redevelopment and infrastructure improvement jobs. Additionally, the Akkas natural gas field near Qaim along the Syrian border contains an estimated trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves. The gas could be used to generate electricity, for use in chemical plants and for export to a Europe looking for alternatives to Russian supplies.¹⁵ The resources necessary to develop these fields could come from the GOI, Western oil companies, or from the Sunni Arab states to the south who have a huge vested interest in a stable and secure Iraq and who have a cultural tie to the Sunni Arabs of Iraq viewing both as a bulwark against Persian Shi’a imperialism.

Line of Operations: Kinetic Operations

In the end, a small number of AM members will simply be unwilling or unable to integrate into Iraqi society. This can occur for many reasons including criminal tendencies outside the bounds of the AM, an unwillingness to compromise resulting from the violence of the previous six years in Iraq, or just plain bad luck. In any event, it will be necessary for U.S. or Iraqi forces to eliminate these elements after they have been separated ideologically and physically from the majority of the AM by the LOOs listed above. This will have the twin effect of increasing the GOI’s confidence that it can trust

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the remainder of the AM and will make it easier on AM leaders to maintain control of their cadres by eliminating the most radical elements from the movement. Such actions should be carefully planned to limit collateral damage and should not take on the impression of extrajudicial activities lest the majority of AM members and leaders believe it is part of a coordinated, covert campaign to destroy the AM itself.

Conclusion

Transforming the AM into a viable partner with the GOI fully integrated into Iraqi society will require more than providing some with jobs in the security forces and others with jobs as construction workers. It will require a comprehensive plan designed to provide AM members what they desire (employment and prestige), provide the GOI what it wants (the ability to fully trust the AM) and must do so in a way that is sustainable over the long haul without becoming a crushing sustainment burden on the GOI. This plan provides a starting point for Defense and State Department planners to construct a campaign plan designed to provide both the AM and the GOI what they crave. It does it in such a way to minimize the disruption associated with integration and does so by generating buy in from all parties concerned including the Sunni Arab Gulf states. In the end, not all players will be made happy but by satisfying the great majority, the plan will strip away those who can be pacified from those who cannot, allowing them to be neutralized without creating conditions that may result in massive backlash by the AM.

CONCLUSION

The road to lasting peace in Iraq appears at times to be a Gordian Knot of intertwined problems. Federalism vs. devolution of powers, distribution of hydrocarbon profits, the future of Kirkuk, and reconciliation are all major challenges. Generally, none can be solved without solving all. While the AM is not directly tied to any of these issues, it is impacted by all of them. More importantly, the failure to manage the AM can potentially derail progress on any and all of these issues. Therefore, the AM must be coopted in order to buy time for a more thorough Iraqi national reconciliation. The current level of security offers an opportunity to accomplish this but the window of opportunity must be extended to the greatest extent possible.¹

This thesis described the incredible effect of the AM on the Iraqi security situation as the single most important development in Iraq since the 2003 invasion. It then demonstrated that most major players in Iraq are conflicted in their position towards the AM. This complicates relations between the AM and other elements of Iraqi society making reintegration more difficult and creating potential fault lines for future conflict. Finally, it demonstrated that the potential centrifugal effect of the AM can be successfully addressed by the U.S. and the GOI by coopting the AM through a variety of ways and means employed via traditional power structures. Fortunately, this is within the realm of the possible. Although the major players (the AM, the GOI and the U.S.) have differing interests, their desired endstates are sufficiently compatible to enable cooperation easing the tensions of reintegration of the AM into Iraqi society.

The key here though, is that such reconciliation is manageable, not automatic. This thesis concluded by presenting a plan outlining multiple lines of operation to

¹ International Crisis Group, "Iraq After the Surge," i.

provide that management. This will ensure that the AM is integrated with as little disruption and conflict as possible. By going beyond the typically “big hand, small map” recommendations of recruitment for some into the security forces and vocational training for everyone else, it seeks to address the actual needs and desires of the AM, the GOI and the U.S. in such a way as to provide a sustainable, long-term future for Iraqi stability. Success in meeting these requirements will fix the AM in place as a centripetal force for stability in Iraq rather than as a centrifugal force for instability.

Fortunately, the AM is not in and of itself an existential threat to the GOI. It is not a self-sufficient, monolithic force but instead a collection of armed groups with some common interests and many divergent ones. However, it is a significant threat to Iraqi stability which is a vital national interest of both Iraq and the U.S. The AM remains largely dependent on its U.S. benefactor for support, protection and, to some extent, guidance. Were this support to suddenly end, it is likely the AM would seek another sponsor.² This plan aims to make that sponsor the GOI rather than some malevolent force and seeks to implement that sponsorship in such a way as to transform the AM from a military movement to a much smaller political movement.

The good news is that the AM phenomenon is entirely within historic norms for such areas of instability. Typically, a successful counterinsurgency begins when security is provided for the people. The AM and the Surge accomplished just that. This security prompts local leaders to make agreements and initiate truces allowing local economic activity to regenerate. This in turn creates expectations on the part of the people that compel national leaders to achieve reconciliation or risk replacement. The situation in Northern Ireland in the late 1990s is a good example. Following significant success in

² International Crisis Group, “Iraq After the Surge,” 15.

securing the population, the British were able to encourage economic and political development that ultimately led to national reconciliation. “It is worth remembering that Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness were every bit as savage in their chauvinism as Moqtada al Sadr and Abu Musab al Zarqawi in Iraq.” Only after their leadership was threatened by the peaceful expectations of their constituents did they interest themselves in reconciliation.³

Ultimately, the worst case for Iraq’s future will occur if the U.S. and the GOI fail to plan for the integration of the AM while distracted by the flashier issues of national reconciliation, economic crisis and large-scale troop withdrawals. The historical record also provides normative examples of what happens when counter-insurgency and stabilization efforts are terminated too rapidly.

³ Pollack, “Après Surge.”

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VITA

Major Vickery entered the Air Force in 1996 as a distinguished graduate of Air Force ROTC. He has served in a variety of intelligence operations and staff positions from the tactical to the national level including assignments at the squadron, Numbered Air Force, MAJCOM and national agency level. His experiences also include operational deployments to Southwest Asia and the Balkans. Most recently, he was Director of Operations for the 451st Intelligence Squadron where he oversaw execution of a number of national-level missions including support to combat search and rescue. He is a graduate of Louisiana State University, McNeese State University, and the Joint Military Intelligence College.