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THE SUNNI TRIBES OF IRAQ

Tribal consolidation, through turbulent years 2003-2009

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I would like to dedicate my thesis to the memory of my late grandfather Ivan Dimov.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Crystal Ennis, who guided me throughout this process and whose help was invaluable.

I would also like to thank my family for their unquestionable support, help and motivation throughout the hard times.

And finally, I would like to say thank you to Elitsa Karamitreva, without whom I would not have had the opportunity to study in Leiden University.

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To anyone who ever reads this thesis, I would like to send this message to you that guided me through some of the most challenging times of my life:

Whenever you fall down in life, and you will, never forget to "LOOK UP! GET UP! AND DON'T EVER GIVE UP!"

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1. Introduction

This thesis aims to shed light on the internal political and military situation in Iraq after the removal of Saddam Hussein from power on April 9, 2003. In my work I will try to provide a comprehensive study of the triangular relationships that existed between the U.S.-led coalition (including the Iraqi government), Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and the Sunni Arab population in Iraq and in particular in the al-Anbar province. I will reveal the policies and actions that were used by the American and Iraqi officials to attract the Sunni tribes, through a case study of the *Awakening* movement in the province. Through the use of the case study, I will exemplify these various tactics, strategies, incentives etc. that primarily the U.S., as the main occupying force, and the Iraqi government, used in order to attract Sunni tribes in their fight against Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Furthermore, throughout my thesis and the case study, it will become evident that these Sunni tribes were an active part of this political maneuvering and not simply a subject of enforced policies by an outside force. By providing information about this period in Iraq's history, the environment that allowed this triangular dynamic to exist and to be relevant and successful, and through the theoretical framework that I am using, I will supply the reader, and add to the existing literature on the topic, by showing how the occupiers used economic and other material-based incentives in order to attract short-term popular support. Even if it was coming from criminal elements. By doing so the Americans disregarded the long-term effects that their actions might produce, and thus in the long-run supported the consolidation of the Sunni tribal members and helped the division of the Iraqi society within a sectarian line.

By revealing this intricate political, military and social dynamic, my thesis will identify and expose the actions undertaken by the U.S. forces. By providing and using these details I will then be able to answer the central question of the thesis - *how did the short-term incentive-driven policy of the Americans to attract Sunni tribesmen, assist the latter's tribal consolidation, and supported the further disintegration of Iraq within its ethnic religious and sectarian boundaries*? Throughout my research, I will point out the reasons why the Sunni sheikhs and tribal members decided to change sides and cooperate with an occupying force and a Shi'a led Iraqi government after their initial decision to cooperate with AQI. This re-alignment demonstrates the agency that tribal elements possessed and shows that they had an active role, and were not mere pawns in the conflict. It furthermore, reveals the uncertainty

and dangerous reality they were living in, which boosted the forces of tribal affiliation as the main source of security for the Sunni population.

By filling this gap within the existing literature, my thesis allows future researchers to incorporate this dynamic relationship and indiscriminate cooperation between the different sides while studying the current situation in Iraq. It will also serve the purpose of providing another nuance to the complete picture of the U.S.-led invasion in the country and its results.

The majority of the literature that is done on the post-invasion period in the country by authors such as Yitzhak Nakash, Ali Allawi, Terry Anderson, Caleb Cage, Gregory Tomlin etc., focuses on the larger Shi'a population as well as the semi-autonomous Kurdish region and its inhabitants. This fact allows my thesis to provide a different angle on the developments in the country, and to supplement the existing picture by adding a new and very important nuance, i.e. the Sunnite tribes. It is vital to put Sunni tribes under center of attention because of their importance to both U.S., Iraqi government circles and AQI before, during and after the invasion.

The existing works that explore the Sunnites in Iraq focus primarily on the policies that Saddam Hussein (1937-2006) implemented in order to gain popular support and stabilize his rule.[1] A further set of journalists and historians have devoted some academic and journalistic work on the Sunni involvement in the insurgency movements and terrorist organizations which operated in the country, such as AQI.[2] However, these works usually lack a comprehensive research, and focus on their shared sectarian beliefs, which are believed to be the unifying element, without giving too much thought on any other factor that might have played a role in this cooperation.

There are very few authors who have done an inclusive research of official U.S. policy documents, as well as Iraqi government documents, which reveal the importance of the Sunnites for Washington and Baghdad. Furthermore, there are almost no academic works done, that would air the voices of the local population and give agency to the tribes.[3] Little is known about the plans and tactics, often based on bribery, indiscriminate patronage-client relationships, misunderstanding of the tribal structure, traditions and laws, which led to short-term success in attracting their help, but in the long-run, depleted the trust and increased the resentment towards the Americans. A process that supported tribal consolidation. Due to the

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[1] As an example of such studies is Joseph Sassoon's "Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian regime."
[2] Studies conducted the Council of Foreign Relations; a number of journalists have also written short pieces on this cooperation.
[3] H. Al-Mohammad, "Relying on one's tribe: A Snippet of Life in Basra Since the 2003 Invasion", *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 26, No. 6, December 2010.

classified status of the mass of official documents issued by the U.S., future researchers will have an even better opportunity to conduct this type of study, due to the declassification of some of these policy papers, and I would hope my thesis will serve as a starting point in this endeavor.[4]

The research that I conducted, which uncovered the important position that tribes hold in Iraq, and especially the Sunni tribes for the goals of the U.S.-led Coalition, elevate the value that my thesis provides to the academic circles. As I will show, many official American documents of this period were solely dedicated to the tribal elements and leaders in the so-called Sunni Triangle.[5] They aimed at preparing U.S. officials and soldiers on how to deal with, communicate and befriend the Sunnites. The reasons that Sunnites were so important, even though they constitute a minority within the largely Shia populated country, is for one the sectarian background of AQI.[6] The leader of Jamaa at-Tawhid wal-Jihad, which later became AQI, Abu Musab az-Zarqawi (1966-2006) and the organization itself adhered to the Salafi branch of Sunni Islam, which, among many other things, denounces Shia beliefs. Their operations in Iraq were proving very attractive to the Sunni population in the post-Saddam era, particularly in al-Anbar province, and that triggered the need for a U.S. reaction to the danger of large swathes of Iraqis joining the terrorist organization. Sunnites were feeling attracted to join the insurgency movement, because they feared a reprisal from the majority Shiites, due to the former's involvement in Saddam Hussein's tenure in power and his repressive policies towards the latter.[7] Furthermore, the lack of security and fear of vengeance attacks as part of the *if you are not with me you are against me* policy that AQI preached, and in certain respects was shared by the Americans, as well as the criminal record of a majority of the local sheikhs, meant that it is more beneficial to join the insurgents instead of opposing them. By doing so, the local tribesmen believed they would be able to sustain their smuggling and other illegal activities, as well as receive the backing of the foreign insurgents against the Shiites.[8] This uncertain situation made sheikhs ever more prominent in the eyes of their tribesmen, AQI and Coalition forces as the leading figures in this largely ungoverned part of Iraq.

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[4] Under Executive Order: 13526.

[5] A geographic area in Iraq often referred to as the base of the majority of the Sunnites in the country. More on the Sunni Triangle in Chapter 2.

[6] According to the latest reports the Shia population represents around 60-65 % of the 32.5 million people In Iraq, while Sunnites are about 32%. For more please visit: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html.

[7] J Baker et.al, The Iraq Study Group Report, December 6, 2006, p. 20.

[8] J. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," *The Washington Quarterly*, January 2009, p. 49.

A strong argument can be made that, in large areas of Iraq tribal affiliation has remained a memory of the past, especially when discussing the cosmopolitan areas of the country, such as Baghdad. Tribes, however, remain a big part of the Iraqi way of life, particularly in rural and remote areas, such as the Sunni Triangle and al-Anbar province, and their strength have been increased by the country's current and past developments. The importance of tribal structure and traditions, as well as sheikhs and tribesmen, is proven by the attention they received by the U.S. government. I will engage with the theoretical framework of what constitutes a tribe, the process of the creation of tribal associations, the reasons behind it and what drove the consolidation of Anbaris in contemporary times, in the following chapter. This is important because in the concluding chapter of the thesis, I will express my arguments on how U.S. policies in the region, in addition to Iraqi government actions, and the existence of AQI, resulted in boosting the forces, that help build and consolidate tribal allegiances and bonds in the post-Saddam era. I will explain why I believe that these processes helped the sectarian division of the country and the rise of the so-called Islamic State.

Finally, I have chosen the period between 2003 and 2009, because it marks the dates when the Bush administration was in office during the US-led operations in Iraq. The coming of President Barack Obama in office on January 20, 2009, marked a significant change of U.S. foreign policy in Iraq. One of the backbones of Obama's political campaign for presidency was the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country, claiming that the Americans have done their job and it's time to "pull out."[9] The second reason for this restriction is the word cap of my dissertation, which does not allow for a more comprehensive and comparative research of the policies of the two administrations. However, the period in discussion is the time during which American policy of engagement with the local Sunni tribes was at its highest rate, primarily because of the threat that emanated from AQI.

1.1 Sources

As part of my research I have conducted a study on documents issued by U.S. officials employed by different branches and levels within the government, including statements, speeches, Congressional reports and testimonies, official diplomatic correspondence, military handbooks and researches, reports by aid agencies, orders, etc. These served as my primary sources because, firstly, they showed the importance that Sunni tribes and tribal leaders held

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[9] P. Baker, "With Pledges to Troops and Iraqis, Obama Details Pullout," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/28/washington/28troops.html.

for the Coalition; and secondly, through the various recommendations, orders and actions recorded I was able to pin-point the different incentives used in order to attract the tribes.

By using the process-tracing method while studying the sources I was able to establish the clear link between, short-term American policies before, during and after the invasion, aimed directly at the Sunni population in the Triangle,[10] and the resulting tribal consolidation, disintegration of the country within its ethnic and religious boundaries, and the long-term alienation of the Sunni tribes towards the U.S. forces and Iraqi government. The financial reports, which had to be submitted by the various aid organizations and mid-level U.S. officers in Iraq, over different periods of time, show empirically the change in the level of commitment by the Americans towards the Sunni tribes. In addition to that, later assessments and congressional reports that looked into how these funds were spent provided examples of misuse and hand-picking in awarding contracts and even direct cash payments to õimportantö tribal leaders. This selective process was possible because U.S. officials were allowed to operate with the money with minimum or in some cases no supervision. There are examples of persecution against former military personnel who failed to justify the requirements for awarding a certain contract, or even cases where no pay slips and reports were submitted after providing cash to individuals.[11] Major John Cockerham is perhaps one of the prime examples of this practice. He was sentenced to more than 17 years in prison for receiving bribes of over $9 million, to award reconstruction contracts to selected companies.[12]

It is very important to note that I used great caution and a critical eye when studying these documents because of the fact that they often provide a biased, westernized view and opinion when discussing local population, and served to justify American policy. In order to confirm the relevance of the information and arguments found in these texts, I used my secondary literature consisting of journalistic and academic work, done by local and western based authors. The validity of this approach is proven by the fact that, in many of my primary sources and correspondences, American officials were complaining of the õbiasedö coverage that the military campaign is receiving from both Arab and Western media. This comes to

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[10] A large area of Eastern Iraq where the majority of the Sunnites live. For more please see Chapter 2.
[11] õUS: Iraq reconstruction billions 'may have been stolen'ö, *BBC*, June 14, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-13768882.
[12] U.S. Department of Justice verdict December 2, 2009, http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/press_releases/2009/252618.htm

prove my point that a study focusing on the journalistic work during the period can provide a counterbalance to the official Government documents.[13]

Furthermore, in order to be able to provide an impartial opinion and extract the information from these documents as fairly as possible, I applied the content analysis method, through which I was able to minimize any prejudiced handpicking of parts of the texts taken out of the context, in order to support a point I was making. This approach into reading my primary, and in fact my secondary literature, allowed me to express my opinion and support it with arguments that were selected through a balanced approach of using as many unrelated sources, that contrasted each other, as possible.

Among the primary sources are the two part study on the Al-Anbar Awakening conducted by members of the U.S. Marine corps; a tribal study focusing on three of the tribes in the Al-Anbar governorate which was commissioned by the U.S. State Department; declassified documents issued by the State Department and others.

The secondary literature consists primarily of newspaper articles as well as interviews and research on the ground, conducted by various journalists and aid workers, which allowed the opinions of local people to be voiced, and not spoken for, as is commonly the case in Western media.

Another restriction, although on a personal level, is that I was unable to use work completed by authors writing in Arabic, due to the limitation of my knowledge of the language. Therefore, I had to rely on Arab and local authors, who chose to write in English, or had their works translated into English and Bulgarian.

1.2 Theoretical framework

The construction of a tribe is a complex issue, one that has been studied and examined by numerous authors throughout history. According to, Michel Maffesoli, Proust and Halbwachs claim, that it is inherent in our human nature to organize in small social groups that a have common background. Maffesoli says, that õmemory and collective remembrance, whether private, public or familial in nature, are what allow a neighborhood or a townö to become inhabitable.[14] Daniel Shapiro describes tribes as, õgroups whose members are connected

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[13] *Al-Anbar Awakening - Volume I - American Perspectives - From Insurgency to Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009, Abu Ghraib, View of Daily Life, Religious and Political Perspectives*, Marine Corps University Press, 2009, p. 52.
[14] M. Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, SAGE, December 5, 1995, p. 67.

through kind, kin, and emotional investment.[15] These traits can be traced back through history and examples can be found during Ottoman times, later during the British mandate and the Monarchy. Furthermore, Joseph Sassoon acknowledges they can be spotted even during the Baøath party years, 1963-2003.[16]

Peoples of the Middle East have a deep connection to their tribes, which dates centuries before the coming of the Prophet Mohammed and which is well exemplified and described in the Qurøan. The role of the tribes was strong even before the U.S.-led invasion and during the late part of the reign of Saddam Hussein.[17] Ahmed Hassin argues, that this kinship connection continued after Husseinøs removal, and I believe it was even strengthened due to the political situation in Iraq and the importance of tribal leaders for the U.S. soldiers and the AQI. The lack of security and the increased amount of threats that ensued after the removal of Hussein, and in some respects even before that, led the local Sunni population to seek the protection of its tribal members and sheikhs, as the only source of security and peace of mind. As Maffesoli points out, the tribe has always been a way of õcollectively combating the multiple forms of adversity.ö[18]

Tribal formation and organization proved extremely useful to the U.S. government officials. They relied on the control and obedience that tribal customs and communal traditions exert on tribesmen. The phenomenon of succumbing to communal expectations and laws, was studied in depth by Michel Foucault, who discussed it in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*. According to Foucault, discipline is a form of self-control by the individual, a certain pattern of behavior which is defined by outside pressure and which dictates the obedience of the individual.[19] When discussing the prerequisite for tribal formation, Maffesoli describes õthe social form of the networkí (as) an unrecognized yet solid whole, invisible, yet forming the backbone of any entity.ö[20] In other words the strong hierarchical, kin-based structure of the tribe which is defined by particular unwritten, yet universally accepted, rules and regulations, often religiously sanctioned, apply pressure on the individual for self-control, in fear of being ostracized by his family and tribe. This Foucauldian disciplinary power model, provided an opportunity for the U.S. officials to influence tribes by

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[15] D. Shapiro, õRelational identity theory: A systematic approach for transforming the emotional dimension of conflictö, *American Psychologist*, Vol. 65 (7), October 2010, p. 634-645.

[16] J. Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an authoritarian regime,* Cambridge University press, 2012, p. 11.

[17] Ibid, p. 6.

[18] Translated from the French original and published in M. Maffesoli and B. Perrier*, L'homme Postmoderne*, SOCIETE, November 9, 2012.

[19] M. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and other writings 1977-1984*, Routledge, 1990.

[20] Maffesoli, *The times,* 1995, p. 84.

attracting sheikhs, who are highly revered in the tribeøs traditions and hierarchy, especially if they can provide economically and can protect the tribe. By forming alliances with the sheikhs U.S. officials could steer the tribes away from joining the insurgency movement.

Maffesoli argues that, when values and convictions seem less sure, i.e. Iraq during the discussed period for the Sunnites, the natural social structure is broken up, which leads to the formation of secondary groups - tribes.[21] Durkheim attributed to secondary groups õthe dynamic which integrates individuals into the general torrent of social lifeö. Therefore through the uncertainty of life, the expected way for Sunnites was to collect into tribal formations, or subgroups, using pre-existing tribal connections. On the other hand tribes were the only way through which local could integrate into the social life, and it was the only way they could affect politics on a higher level.[22]

These developments provided the Iraqi government and U.S. officials with an opportunity to exert influence over entire tribes simply by using patronage strategies to attract tribal leaders.

The patronage theory suggests that in countries where elected officials or traditional leaders have the freedom and political power to allocate jobs, services and benefits controlled by the state, which occurs when õthe procedures for appointment or implementation of state policies are not well codifiedö, elected officials enjoy significant discretion in picking the right people for the job.[23] Oliver Schlumberger claims, that countries in the Middle East display strong õpaternalistic traitsö and are based on õpatronage and clientism,ö and õwelfare benefits.ö[24] During the period of the Baøath party rule these conditions were partially met. Even though Saddam Husseinøs and the socialist partyøs official stance was that tribal favoritism was going to be discarded, what was happening in reality was that Sunnites, and in particular members of Husseinøs tribe and family were handpicked for the most important and influential government positions. The patronage conditions could be easily identified in post-Saddam Iraq as well. The decisions to provide certain benefits, and the strength that economic incentives granted by U.S. officials, gave the Americans a valuable tool when dealing with the local population.

The theory of patronage also suggests that in order to secure that their will is going to be implemented by the central authorities, the people have a better chance of õsticking togetherö

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[21] Ibid, p. 70.
[22] Ibid, p. 70.
[23] K. Chandra, 2007, II, p.2-3.
[24] O. Schlumberger, õRents, Reform, and Authoritarianism in the Middle Eastö, *Dead Ends of Transition: Rentier Economies and Protectorates*, Campus Verlag, 2006, p. 50.

in order to increase their likelihood of influencing decision makers. The goal of feeling as if you have influence over the decision making process was another reason for people to consolidate within tribal organizations.[25] The elections of 2005 in al-Anbar proved both the power of tribal leaders and the communal feeling of exerting pressure on the central government.[26] Thus, by delivering the needed goods, which in patronage politics represents the supplying of economic and political benefits through an individualized and concealed transaction, to tribal leaders, who in turn can funnel these possessions among the tribe, the U.S. and Iraqi government could buy-off the support of certain tribes, or at least influence their decision making.[27] The tribe provided the only way for an Iraqi citizen, in particular Sunnites during the described period, for expressing and fulfilling one's desires and needs. It was the only way in which each individual member, through the collective powers of the community, can pursue political participation and feeling of significance. The tribe in other words provided a feeling of belonging, self-determination and protection.

Tribal consolidation, in my opinion, appeared not simply because it provided opportunities for the people to exert influence over the policy makers but it also provided security and the feeling of communal protection. Furthermore, these feelings were strengthened because of the sectarian divide and fear of reprisals emanating from the majority Shi'a population and in some areas the Kurdish forces.[28]

According to Maffesoli, religious feeling has the power to overcome the wear and tear that time deals to collective values.[29] Therefore, tribal feeling among the Sunni population was not only encouraged and strengthened by the common division between the different sects in Islam, but it was further emboldened by the common fear of sectarian reprisal that Sunnites shared, due to their earlier involvement with the government of Saddam Hussein.

This process was diligently used by the U.S. officials. By providing the desired goods to the tribes, and in particular their sheikhs, the Americans were attempting to gain a level of influence and patronage over the tribes in their quest of diverting them from joining the insurgency and attracting them in the fight against AQI.

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[25] Chandra, 2007, II, p.6-7.
[26] In the elections less than 4000 people voted.
[27] Chandra, 2007, II, p. 22.
[28] Hamilton, E., "Iraq Report – 8: The Fight for Mosul", *Institute for the Study of War*, June 4, 2008, p.6.
[29] Maffesoli, 1995, p. 43.

My thesis will follow a logical path which aims at providing background information for the reader in the first chapters, before diving into the specificities and the case study of the al-Anbar Awakening in the final chapter.

In what follows I will provide a brief and compact geographical information about the Sunni Triangle and al-Anbar in order to help the reader picture the province and its importance; as well as why the events happened in this particular area of the country.

The next chapter will describe the customs, traditions and life of Arab tribes in general. In addition to that, it will build the tribal puzzle of the Sunni Triangle in Iraq pinpointing the biggest tribal confederations and tribes belonging to them; where are they situated; who are their sheikhs and how prominent they are. This chapter is important in order for the reader to have a clearer view on why some of the later events occurred in a particular area. Furthermore, it will explain why certain actions by AQI and U.S. officials caused a particular reaction by the tribes.

The subsequent chapter will begin following the chronological order of events that eventually culminated in the Awakening. In it, I will inform the reader about the practices and actions of Saddam Hussein during his tenure in power in relation to the tribes, both Sunni and Shiøa. This information is valuable because it helps explain the internal situation in post-Saddam Iraq, and it shows that many of these policies drew resemblance to the later U.S. actions in Iraq.

In the next chapter I will also provide short background information on the insurgency activity and different organizations that operated in Iraq after Saddamøs deposing and in particular the history of AQI and its founder. This information will allow the reader to build a complete picture of the developments in the region.

Finally, I will go into the main chapter of my thesis. In it the reader will be exposed to the main hypothesis of my research, mentioned above, through various examples of the patronage-client relationship between U.S. officials and Sunni tribes in al-Anbar. This relationship will be exemplified by the chronological case study of the Awakening movement. By tracing its origins, its developments and results, I will be able to showcase practical examples of this õcarrot and stickö based relationship, and how it was used by both sides for personal short-term gains. That emanated in harming the long-term stability of the country by assisting the tribal consolidation and thus, the later sectarian disintegration of the country.

Lastly, at the end of my thesis I have included extra figures that serve to inform the reader better about some of the discussed topics.

## *2. Geographical significance of al-Anbar province*

Map 1 - Iraq

The Sunni Triangle occupies a large area of Iraqøs territory. Most researchers have put the edges of the triangle between Ramadi on the Southwestern side, Baghdad on the Southeastern, and Tikrit in the North. This area is where the majority of Iraqøs Sunnites reside.[30] The al-Anbar governorate is the largest geographical region in Iraq. It is located west of Baghdad and comprises the western-most parts of the country. Historically it bore the name Ramadi and Dulaym.[31] The capital of the governorate and the largest city is Ramadi, located around 100 km west of Baghdad on the banks of the Euphrates River, which is the main õhighway of lifeö in the region and about half of the total population of the governorate lives on its banks. This explains why all of the major cities are located on the Euphrates,

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[30] *Oxford Dictionaries*, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Sunni-Triangle.
[31] Dulaym or Dulaim, under different transliterations, is the name of one of the most prominent tribal confederations in the region until this very day. In fact the current Governor of the province comes from the tribe - Ahmad Khalaf al-Dulaymi.

which stretches diagonally across the province entering from Syria and running across the north-east part of Anbar.[32] The river is the major communication line and its banks provide the most important agricultural lands in the largely filled with dessert landscape, governorate.[33]

Al-Anbar shares borders with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. This is one of the main reasons why its territory proved to be central to the activities of AQI and other foreign insurgents as well as U.S. forces. Another reason is that, albeit being the largest, it is the least densely populated, being home to around 1.6 million of Iraq's 32 million people.[34] It is divided into seven districts - Al-Qa'im, Anah, Haditha, Heet, Ramadi, Fallujah and Ar-Rutba. Some of the largest cities in the governorate, which provided the main scene of the Awakening movement, include Fallujah, Al-Qaim, Hadithah, Heet, Al-Baghdadi and others.
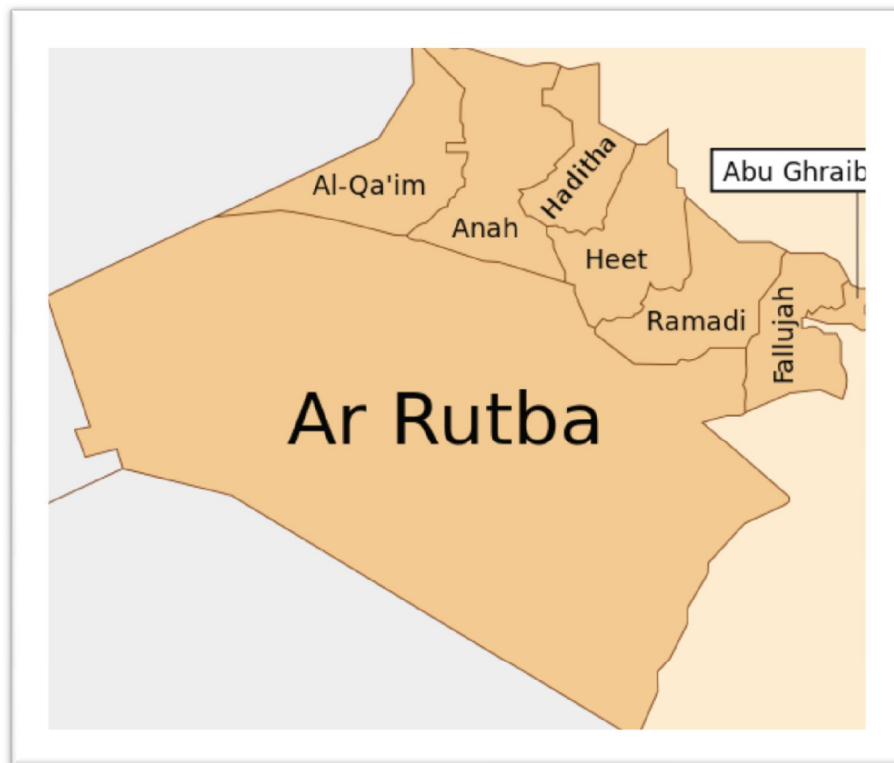
Wikipedia-author: Slashme, redrawn from work by Shihab20

Map 2 – Al-Anbar

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[32] Following the flow of the river from the Syrian border are Al-Qaim, Hadithah, Hit, Ramadi, Fallujah and others.

[33] S. Kilic, "Effects of the Al-Anbar crisis on Iraq's water management," Daily Sabah, April 27, 2014, http://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/2014/04/28/effects-of-the-alanbar-crisis-on-iraqs-water-management; [33] K. Kagan, "The Anbar Awakening: Displacing al Qaeda from Its Stronghold in Western Iraq", *Iraq Report*, Institute for the Study of War, April 5, 2007, p. 2.

[34] *The World Factbook*, CIA, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print/country/countrypdf_iz.pdf.

The important location and geographical disposition of al-Anbar province provided for the AQI-led insurgents an ideal place for entering and leaving Iraq, through the country's long and largely unmanned borders with Syria, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.[35] As I will discuss in more detail later, this was a route that was used as an entry point for the foreign insurgents, and it was equally important for the local tribes as they embarked on their smuggling activities. Smuggling provided for the tribes' largest economic gains, and in the end was one of the main reasons for the rift between AQI and the local sheikhs.[36] In addition, the Euphrates River and the large unpopulated areas were ideal for moving, weapons, in and out of the country.

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[35] R. Scarborough, "Al Qaeda 'rat line' from Syria to Iraq turns back against Assad", The Washington Times, August 13, 2013, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/aug/19/al-qaeda-rat-line-from-syria-to-iraq-turns-back-ag/?page=all.

[36] J. Lindsay and A. Long, *Counterinsurgency Theory and the Stability of Iraq's Anbar Province,* October 7, 2009, p. 33.

3. The tribes

Arab tribalism has been a topic discussed well before the advent of Islam or Christianity. Tribes, in the area of Mesopotamia in particular, have been of vital importance and a big part of the policies of the different empires that ruled over the region, from Persian, through the Arab Muslim, Ottoman and British empires, and continued to play their role in the subsequent years of the region's development.[37] All of these various forms of central government, although quite different in their structure and means of operation, shared a common understanding of the importance of tribes and appreciating their customs and tradition.

Tribes in this region are organized in a particular hierarchical, patriarchal structure. There are several levels of tribal organization, which systematize the groups of people from smaller to larger communities, each led by a male figure. The majority of sociologists and anthropologists that have dealt with tribal organization in Iraq have come to a consensus that there are four distinct stages of alignment. These are the *bayt*, or house – which represents the smallest and most closely knit structure of the extended family, which usually includes several hundred members. The *khamsa,* is an internal structure within the *bayt* – it includes all the male children that can trace their kin to the same great-great grandfather, or as the word in Arabic suggests five generations of male offspring. The *khamsa's* main function is to defend the honor of the tribe and to resolve legal disputes within it or with other tribes.[38] Next is the *fakhd,* or clan, which represents a grouping of several *bayts. Ashira*, or tribe, numbering between a few thousand to hundreds of thousand members, gathers several clans, and is led by a *sheikh*. Finally, *qabila*, which stands for confederation, is the largest and highest level of this pyramid, headed by a paramount sheikh who unites several tribes that share a common lineage.[39]

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[37] Fr. Smith, "The Abbasid: a Golden Age and Disintegration, 750 to 1055 CE," Macro History: World History, http://www.fsmitha.com/h3/islam13.htm.
[38] P. Asfura-Heim, "No Security Without US: Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province," *Iraq CNA*, June 2014, p. 5.
[39] G. Cetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890–1908*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 72. Please see Figure 1.
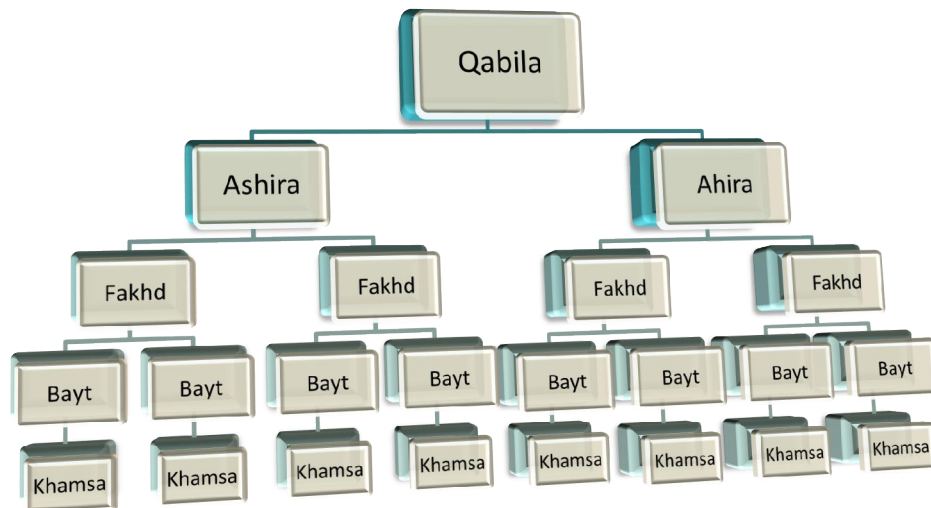
Figure 1 - Tribal organization

Within this structure, the lineage that a tribesman came from was of crucial importance to his status in the group. In essence, the tribal leader, especially the prominent leader of a *qabila*, is selected for this post based on his level of influence, wealth, prominence and ancestry. The importance of the sheikh and his wellbeing for the tribe was displayed during the invasion of 2003, when several of the most prominent Sunni sheikhs were urged, by their own tribesmen, to leave the country in order to seek safety in neighboring states, which many of them did.[40] The title sheikh is awarded to the most respected among the deceased sheikhsø sons and not necessarily the oldest.[41] It was awarded even in pre-Islamic times, even though it has changed its importance and meaning over time.[42] Today the people referred to as sheikhs are not only the tribal leaders, but also various religious or even scholarly leaders.[43]

Traditions and customs are some of the most important features of the daily life of people within the tribe, and they guide the interaction between different tribes and tribesmen.

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[40] *Al-Anbar Awakening - Volume II - American Perspectives - From Insurgency to Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009, Abu Ghraib, View of Daily Life, Religious and Political Perspectives*, Marine Corps University Press, 2009, p. 117.
[41] Ibid., p.98-99.
[42] Encyclopedia Britannica.
[43] Such is the case with the head of Egyptøs Al-Azhar University who bears the title Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar.

Adhering to these unwritten laws is obligatory and if a tribal member strays away from the accepted norms he or she is ostracized. Since being part of the tribe, gives not only identity to the individual but it also gives protection, if one is to be removed from its structures than he or she can no longer rely on the safety his tribesmen provided.[44] Therefore, the Foucauldian model of self-restraint is in full effect within a tribe as mentioned above.

Even though many of the tribal tenets no longer hold the same importance and are not observed to the same degree, some features of tribal life have largely remained untouched. For the purpose of this research, I will mention one tradition which is important to the topic. Such are the rules of conflict resolution. According to them, if a member of one tribe kills a member of another, there must be an equal retribution. This is where the role of the mediator or *wasit* comes to play.[45] He is usually a highly respected man, who is impartial in the conflict and is expected to make an unbiased judgment. The *wasit* would then engage into what might be compared to a contemporary diplomatic shuttle between the two sides in an attempt to limit their contacts with each other to none, and to reach an agreement that satisfies by both sides. Depending on the skills of the mediator and the willingness of those involved, a settlement, *sulh*, is reached. A more brutal and direct way of achieving retribution is through blood vengeance or *tha'r*. This is perhaps the oldest and most sought after way of tribal conflict resolution. As one Arab proverb goes, *notable blood is the vengeance granting peace*.[46] This tradition calls for an õeye for an eyeö approach and it is one of the primary reasons for the severing of the relationship between AQI and local tribes. Only by seeking vengeance could the relatives of the deceased, retain family honor ó *sharaf*.[47]

3.1 Major Sunni tribes and tribal consolidations

Soon after the invasion the Americans realized that they did not understand well enough and had not prepared their troops with regards to the traditions and tribal customs which resulted in the alienation of tribesmen, and pushing them towards AQI. As soon as they saw their mistake, U.S. officials took actions to correct it by studying the customs, issuing handbooks as well as enrolling soldiers in culture classes, thought by Iraqi teachers who gave

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[44] H. Al-Mohammad, õRelying on oneøs tribe: A Snippet of Life in Basra Since the 2003 Invasionö, *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 26, No. 6, December 2010, p.2.
[45] L. Todd, A. King, A. Jackson, M. Mcfate, A. Hashim and J. Harrington, *Iraq Tribal Study – Al-Anbar Governorate: The Albu Fahd Tribe, The Albu Mahal Tribe and the Albu Issa Tribe*, Global Resources Group, 2006, p. 2-49.
[46] G. Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-state*, Amsterdam University Press, 2009, p. 133.
[47] A. Baram, õVictory in Iraq, One Tribe at a Time,ö The New York Times, October 28, 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/28/opinion/victory-in-iraq-one-tribe-at-a-time.html.

a brief preparation in the basic ways to deal with an Iraqi tribesman.[48] The reasons for this new policy of educating U.S. ground forces were of course much deeper than a simple misunderstanding of, and occasional clashes with locals. The Americans understood that only through acquiring the trust of the tribesmen, could they õpurchaseö their support and cooperation. The majority of the initial tribal studies aimed at placing the different tribes and grading their importance in the region, similar to what Saddam Hussein did.
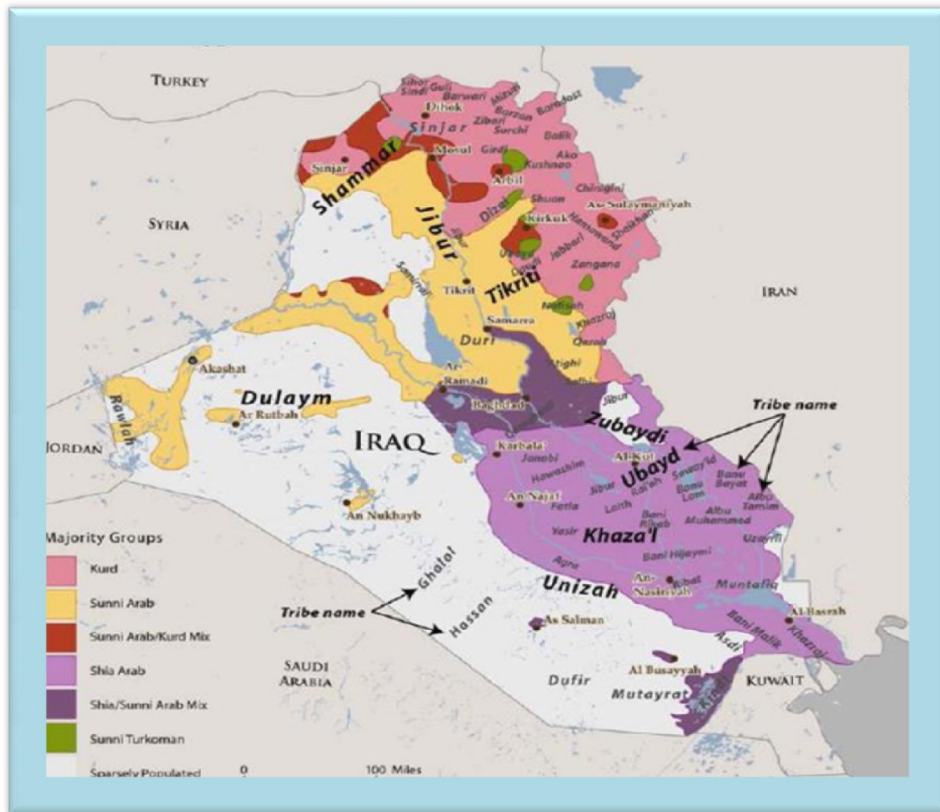
Source: CIA Iraq country profile

Map 3 – Iraq tribal map

The largest *qabila* in the Sunni Triangle is the Dulaymi confederation. According to some reports it consists of about 50 large tribes.[49] Its members are spread throughout al-Anbar as well as other regions of Iraq and even Syria. As it will become evident later, many of the most prominent figures in al-Anbarøs political scene bear the name ad-Dulaymi. The confederation continues to hold its prominent position even today which is proven by the current Governor of al-Anbar, Ahmad Khalaf ad-Dulaymi (1970). During and after the

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[48] *Al-Anbar Awakening - Volume I,* 2009, p. 209.
[49] Asfura- -Heim, *No Security Without US*, 2014, p. 5.

invasion, the de facto sheikh was Ali Hatim Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Sulayman al-Assafi, however, because he was too young at the time the confederation was led by two of his great uncles ó Sheikhs Amer and Majed. The common history of this *qabila* can be traced back to the name of Saad bin Ebadda bin Dulaym bin Haritha.[50]

Another prominent tribal confederation is the Shammar. Its members are located in the region of al-Jazira and spread through the border with Syria as well as Jordan.[51] It is considered to be one of the largest confederations with more than 4.5 million members throughout the region, not only in Iraq. The *qabila* traces its origin from the ancient Tayy tribe, which is portrayed in *One thousand and one Arabian nights*.[52]

Al-Jubur, is perhaps the largest tribal confederation located in Iraq which has tribal affiliations in various provinces, however, its base can be traced to the area of Kirkuk. According to some analysts this confederation gathers around 6 million members in it ranks. One of its most prominent representatives was Staff Major General Abdullah Mohammad Badir al-Juburi, Commanding General of the 7th Iraqi Army Division.[53]

The Tikriti tribal confederation is based in and around the area of Tikrit, a town on the banks of the Tigris, 140 km northwest of Baghdad. This confederation unites a number of prominent tribes, perhaps the most notable being the Albu Nasir, which is the tribe of the former dictator Saddam Hussein and many of his closest associates.[54]

There are hundreds of distinct tribes in the Sunni Triangle and al-Anbar alone, some of them more prominent than others. I will mention but a few of these tribes that had a role in the developments in al-Anbar after the invasion, some of which played a crucial role in the establishment and development of the Awakening movement. Among them are the Albu Fahd[55], Albu Issa,[56] Albu Mahal,[57] Albu Faraj, Albu Risha,[58] Aethawi,[59] Albu Alwan.[60]

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[50] U. Al-Juhany, *Najd before the Salafi Reform Movement*, Ithaca Press, 2002.

[51] L. Todd, et. al., 2006, p. 4-4.

[52] *The Arabian Nights: Tales from a Thousand and One Nights*, Random House Publishing Group, 2009, p. 280-282.

[53] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, Volume II, 2009, p. 211.

[54] J. Robertson, õArab Tribes in Iraq," The Associated Press, www.boston.com/news/galleries/iraqtribe/index.html.

[55] This tribe is part of the Dulaymi confederation. One of its most prominent members during the discussed years is Staff Major General Khadim Muhammad Faris al-Fahadawi al-Dulaymi: *Al-Anbar Awakening* - Volume II, 2009, p. 261.

[56] Sheikh after the invasion was Khamis Hasnawi al-Issawi. *Al-Anbar Awakening* - Volume II, 2009, p. 85.

[57] Sheikh after the invasion was ó Sabah al-Sattam Effan Fahran al-Shurji al-Aziz; *Al-Anbar Awakening* - Volume II, 2009, p. 139.

[58] Sheikh after the invasion and founder of the Awakening movement ó Abdul Sattar Abu Risha; *Al-Anbar Awakening* - Volume II, 2009, p. 45.

[59] A prominent clan of that family is the Hardan; *Al-Anbar Awakening* - Volume II, 2009, p. 53.

Along the border with Saudi Arabia, the ruling tribe is the Anaiza and around the area of Abu Ghraib, Mosul and Fallujah the largest tribe is the Zobaø[61]

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[60] It is a part of the Dulaym confederation. Members of this tribe served as high level government officials such as Mamoun Sami Rashid al-Alwani, who served as Governor of al-Anbar and Kamis Ahmad Abban al-Alwani, Vice Chairman of al-Anbarøs provincial Council; *Al-Anbar Awakening* - Volume II, 2009, p. 151, 163.

[61] Some authors have also used Zobai.

4. Historical look at Sunni tribal engagement with the central government

In the history and development of the Levant and Mesopotamia, tribes have played a crucial role.[62] Tribal allegiance can be dated back to decades before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad and the adoption of Islam.[63] The importance of local tribes can be found in Islamic texts during the first centuries of Islam as well as the later expansion of the religion and the different empires that fought under its banners.[64]

Tribes located in the territories of current day Iraq were an important part of the policy of the Ottoman Empire, especially during the *Tanzimat* era.[65] The need to cooperate with the *ashiras* and their crucial importance to the stability and development of the region can be well exemplified in the work of McGuire Gibson, *Violation of fallow and engineered disaster in Mesopotamian civilization* (1974), where he describes how the Ottoman administration was forced to rely on the sheikhs and their people in order to construct and maintain local irrigation projects. The fertility of Mesopotamian land was of vital importance which is why bribery and various incentives were constantly used by the authorities representing the central government in order to obtain tribal services.[66] In addition to that, the military capabilities of tribes, and the influence of local sheikhs were both valued by the Ottoman Empire, which attracted tribal leaders to the Sultan's divan and tribesmen into the army.[67] This trend was continued by the British mandate when Iraqi tribal members became central to the formation of the new state's army.[68]

The *ashiras* of Mesopotamia and Anbar for that matter were of great importance during the British mandate and the consequent monarchical and republican years. As Martin Thomas exemplifies in *Bedouin Tribes and the Imperial Intelligence Services in Syria, Iraq and Transjordan in the 1920s* (2003), the British army and officials were forced to put in

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[62] Mesopotamia mainly refers to the region of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, corresponding to modern-day Iraq, Kuwait and Parts of Syria; [62] The Levant is a vast region in Southwest Asia, which includes territories of current day Jordan, Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, Cyprus and Egypt.
[63] K. Bukhsh, *Studies: Indian and Islamic*, Routledge, 2013, p. 116.
[64] J. Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari*, *The Conquest of Arabia*, Volume X.
[65] The *Tanzimat* era lasted from the declaration of the Hatt-, erif of Gülhane in 1839 by Sultan Abdulmecid until 1876 and represented a push for reforms in the territories of the Empire.
[66] M. Gibson, "Violation of fallow and engineered disaster in Mesopotamian civilization," *Irrigation's impact on society*, University of Arizona Press, 1974, p. 11, 15, 16.
[67] E. Hamilton, Iraq Report – 8, 2008.
[68] P. Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq,* Westview Press, 2004, p.24.

place policies which were aimed at mustering the strength and importance of tribes in state formation and support for King Faysal (1885-1933). [69]

Tribal structures and members continued to play an important part of the state during both World Wars as is clearly shown in T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922), and by Stefanie Wichhart's PhD dissertation *Intervention: Britain, Egypt and Iraq During World War II* (2007). The next significant prove of tribal importance on the timeline is the Ba'ath coup of 1968, which was led by army officers, many of whom were part of this long lineage of tribal recruitment practices. [70]

The initial position of the Ba'ath party, proclaimed with its constitution of 1970, was to denounce tribal allegiances claiming it will treat all of the state's subjects equally. [71] A policy was introduced in 1968 that banned the use of tribal names. [72] Although the purpose of this policy was to put Iraqi politics in line with the conscripts of equality prescribed in the Socialist manifestos, some authors have expressed the opinion that the aim of this act was to enable Saddam Hussein and then-President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr (1914-1982), [73] to employ members of their preferred tribes without being scrutinized. [74] The state's official policy of equality, however, proved to be mere window-dressing and Hussein relied heavily of the Sunni tribes to a different extent, all throughout his reign.

The former dictator came from a tribe based in and around the town of Tikrit, located north of Baghdad on the banks of the Tigris River, hence his full name Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti. His tribe, the Albu Nasir, is part of the larger and prominent Tikriti tribal confederation. [75] The highest ranking positions in the Ba'ath party organization and the state's legal and military apparatus were filled with members of Saddam Hussein's Albu Nasir tribe, or the Tikriti confederation. Such was the case with his brother in law, Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, who he appointed in 1975 as the head of the Mukhabarat, the intelligence agency of

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[69] Faysal I bin Hussein bin Ali al-Hashimi. M. Thomas, "Bedouin Tribes and the Imperial Intelligence Services in Syria, Iraq and Transjordan in the 1920s*," Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 38, No. 4, October 2003, p. 541.
[70] C. Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, New Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 193.
[71] K. Kelly and J. Breslin, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance*, Freedom House; Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefi eld, 2010, p. 157-192.
[72] N. MacFarquhar "Unpredictable force awaits U.S. in Iraq Storied tribes of the Middle East Devout, armed and nationalistic," *International Herald Tribune*, Jan. 7, 2003, p. 2.
[73] Both of them were born in and around Tikrit and were members of the Tikriti tribal structure, and in fact were cousins.
[74] J. Wing, "Overview of Iraq's Tribes," *Musings on Iraq*, July 13, 2009, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.nl/2009/07/overview-of-iraqs-tribes.html.
[75] S. Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of Middle East Wars: The United States in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Conflicts*, ABC-CLIO, 2010, p. 1240.

Iraq.[76] It is quite clear how important tribal allegiance was to Saddam if we look at the United Nation's *Iraqi most wanted list*, issued with Resolution 1483 of the Security Council in 2003. Out of the 89 people listed, 35 share Hussein's tribal name.[77]

Another of the dictator's incentive-based tribal policies, proving the value of Sunni tribes, was the appointment of Rukan Razuki Abd al-Ghafar, a Tikriti himself, as the head of the newly established Tribal Affairs Office in Iraq. The sole purpose of this office was to set up a deep level of control by the central government over the tribal elements. Hussein created it because he feared the strength of local sheikhs and he wanted to exert full control over their actions and the power they held over their people. This fear would be shared much later by the U.S.-led coalition, and similar actions will be taken by them as well.

All of the sheikhs were registered and were graded based on the prominence, influence, strength and power that they held over their people. This allowed Hussein to change the dynamics of each region by simply empowering tribal leaders that were loyal to him, even if they lacked influence among their tribes, over the more prominent and "free-thinking" sheikhs, even if these sheikhs were known to be involved in illegal activities, such as smuggling or looting. He was able to allocate more economic resources to his, as I would refer to them, "puppet sheikhs" and thus use the power dynamics that a tribe is based on, economy and security, to elevate the status of his puppets. These actions again bear a sticking resemblance to the activities that the U.S. officials were involved in after they removed Hussein from power.[78] The term that many authors and that local people used for these newly created leaders was "fake sheikhs."[79] The fake sheikhs were easy to create, dispose of, and manipulate, and tribes became the easiest way for tribesmen to climb up the ladder social ladder and to ensure his and his family's safety and wellbeing.

Therefore, Hussein helped to preserve, and even empowered, the processes of Iraqi tribes' reliance on a hierarchical structure of patronage based relationships, which saw the members of a tribe relying economically on the sheikh, who had the same relationship with the central government. This patronage structure was used, as I will point out later, quite well and it was even enlarged when the U.S. invaded Iraq and became the dominant incentive provider for the Iraqi government, tribes and their leaders on a more local level. This

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[76] "Saddam Hussein's top aides hanged," *BBC*, January 15, 2007,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6261965.stm.
[77] *List of Individuals Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1483*, 2003,
http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1518/list_27jul2005.htm.
[78] Schlumberger, Rents, Reform, 2006, p. 50.
[79] *Al-Anbar Awakening, II,* 2009, p. 4.

economic relationship allowed tribes to become the most dominant social structure on a more local level in Iraq.[80]

The 1990s saw Saddam Hussein's tribal politics backfire as economic sanctions and devastating regional wars dragged the economy into the swamps.[81] Favoring of Sunni Arabs over the majority Shi'a population and the Kurds, destabilized the country and slowly created vast division lines between the peoples of Iraq. Furthermore, Hussein's mingling with the traditional fabric of tribal organization and naturally established hierarchical structure, based on core values and traditions that existed for centuries, by elevating loyal to him, but not traditionally strong and influential tribesmen to the status of large sheikhs, based on his exploitation of patronage-based economic incentives, led to a complete distrust in his abilities.[82] In fact there are at least two reported attempts to overthrow the longstanding dictator during the 1990s.[83]

This situation of tribal and political chaos, allowed both AQI and the U.S.-led Coalition forces in the post-Saddam Hussein era, to continue to exploit the tribes by using the same methods that the dictator used, i.e. providing incentives to less prominent tribal leaders who were prepared to swear loyalty to them, even if these sheikhs were involved in criminal activities and military operations against them. If such actions might be what was to be expected from an organization such as Zarqawi's at-Tawhid wal-Jihad, it is interesting to explore how the U.S. acquired the support and backing of some former criminals, and even former supporters of the terrorists, who saw fit to switch to the more economically attractive side.

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[80] Figure 2.
[81] The Iran-Iraq war 1980-1988; the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent Gulf War of 1991 which saw Coalition soldiers push the Iraqi army out of Kuwait and entering into Iraqi territory. For more: A. Finlan, *The Gulf War 1991*, Osprey Publishing, 2003.
[82] Baram, "Victory in Iraq," 2003.
[83] Wing, "Overview of Iraq's Tribes."

5. *The spread of insurgency in Iraq*

Iraqøs insurgent groups can be placed under distinct categories by their origins, aims, religious believes etc. The primary groups included: foreign born insurgents, who entered the country to fight the Coalition such as Jaish Abu Baker's group, Black Banner Organization, Ansar al-Islam, at-Tawhid wal-Jihad, and many others; the former Baøathist forces, also called nationalists - Council for Iraqi Revolutionaries, Order Fedayeen Saddam, , General Military, The Return and others; the Shiøa militias - Badr Organization, Sheibani Network, Mahdi Army; and the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and other minority based militias such as the Yazidi militia groups and others.[84]

The origins of the contemporary foreign-based insurgency in Iraq can be traced back to the last days of the Saddam, when border-crossings became hard to control and therefore terrorists could move more freely between countries. This process was even stronger in the scarcely populated al-Anbar, which made it easy for illegal entry into the country. After the invasion and the deposing of Hussein, this process of insurgency creation was catalyzed by a decision made by the U.S. officials, which even President Bush in an interview for a book in 2007, [85] claimed was counterproductive to the U.S. aims in the country ó the de-Baøathification law which released around 400,000 soldiers, mainly Sunnis, on the street without pay or any realistic chances for employment.[86]

Most of these various forces, at least in the initial period of the invasion were fighting against the Coalition, in many cases joining hand and working together. However, none of them was able to reach the level of prominence and effectiveness that Jama'at at-Tawhid wal-Jihad achieved. It was established in 1999 by Jordanian-born Abu Musab az-Zarqawi (1966-2006), and later became known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq. This organization managed to amass large number of foreign fighters under its banners, as well as to attract many of the aforementioned local insurgent movements, and attracted many local tribes to fight against the invaders.

Zarqawi was born and raised in Zarqa, Jordan. He became involved in drug smuggling and distributing activities for which he was jailed in the mid-1980s where he was introduced

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[84] K. Ridolfo, "Iraq: Christian Population Dwindling Due To Threats, Attacks", Free *Europe Radio Liberty*, May 31, 2007, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1076841.html.

[85] R. Draper, *Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush*, Simon and Schuster, March 25, 2008, p. 211.

[86] With order *Number 2*, signed by the head of the occupational authority Paul Bremer on May 23, 2003 the Iraqi army was dismantled A copy of the order can be viewed here: http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/CPAORD5.pdf.

to the radical forms of Islam. He was released from prison in 1988 under a general amnesty.[87] After his release he went in Afghanistan to join the anti-Soviet fight in 1989, where he saw very little if any fighting, since the Soviets had began withdrawing by that time. Nonetheless, this was the place and time where he met his mentor Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (1959). Together the two returned to Jordan in 1992 and formed the Bayat al-Imam group which aimed at toppling the monarchy. After a failed terror plot in Jordan, Zarqawi was arrested in 1993 and sent to al-Sawaqa prison where he was reunited with his mentor.

During the time spent in prison, Zarqawi began writing and defining his own radical beliefs. He wrote tracts which, because of close tribal affiliations with prison guards, were distributed outside of the prison.[88] After a second amnesty in 1999 he was again freed and left for Afghanistan. On his second visit to the country he met with Osama bin Laden (1957-2011). After receiving $5000 from bin Laden, Zarqawi set up a training camp in Herat, Afghanistan.[89] He managed to turn this camp into a successful venture attracting around 3,000 fighters by 2001. This drew the attention of the Americans, who began bombing the region, which led Zarqawi to move to Iran from where he and his group launched operations in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.[90]

While operating from Iran, Zarqawi established connections with Iraqi terror organizations, such as Ansar al-Islam, during his regular visits to al-Anbar and the Triangle.[91] When the invasion began, Zarqawi had already prepared his response for the Coalition forces. His plans included a multi-level attack, which was to be aimed at all the players in the region and their vulnerable spots. In addition to the expected attacks against U.S. soldiers, he had a plan to deter the Sunnis in the region from joining the invaders, and cooperate with his fighters instead, by attracting tribal members and leaders. Furthermore, he had planned to create an atmosphere of fear, one which would include, dread of reprisal for anyone who dared to assist the Americans, as well as fear for international civilian contractors. And finally, perhaps his most gruesome plan included an instigation of a Sunni-Shi¢a conflict by

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[87] P. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda's Leader*, Simon and Schuster, Jan 20, 2006, p. 350-353.
[88] M. Kirdar, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2011, p. 3.
[89] A. Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi", *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2006, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/
[90] Bergen, P., *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between America and Al-Qaeda*, Free Press, 2011, p. 162.
[91] G. Gambill, õAbu Musab al-Zarqawi: A Biographical Sketch,ö *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor*, 2, Issue 24, December 15, 2004.

attacking Shi'a targets, such as the attack of Al-Askari mosque in 2006,[92] in order to spark a Shi'a reaction and divide the two sects.[93]

In addition to his detailed plan of action, Zarqawi declared his allegiance to al-Qaeda and renamed his organization to Al-Qaeda in Iraq on October 17, 2004.[94] Abu Musab remained the leader of the organization until he was killed in a U.S. air strike on June 7, 2006 and was replaced by a senior member of the organization, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (1968–2011).[95]

Zarqawi's brutal but effective tactics managed to gain popular support and to spike the tension between the Shi'a and Sunni population. However, as I will point out in the next chapter, what worked in the initial part of the campaign was in fact one of the reasons for the alienation of the local population and led to eventfully turning them over to the American side.

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[92] R. Worth, "Blast Destroys Shrine in Iraq, Setting Off Sectarian Fury," *New York Times*, February 22, 2006.
[93] M. Kirdar, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*, 2011, p. 4
[94] J. Pool, "Zarqawi's pledge of allegiance to Al-Qaeda: From Mu'asker al-Battar," *Terrorism monitor*, Vol. 2, Issue 24, December 16, 2004.
[95] M. Kirdar, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*, 2011, p.5.

6. The al-Anbar Awakening

6.1 The tribes choose a side

The official beginning of the al-Anbar Awakening - *Sahwat al-Anbar* - can be traced to September 14, 2006 when Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha (1972-2007) gathered prominent sheikhs from the province and declared they will fight AQI, by holding an official press conference from his home.[96] As Sheikh Wissam al-Hardan al-Aethawi,[97] one of the founders of the movement who was present at the conference said, they brought õa very simple camera to the conferenceö and filmed the statement.[98] Sheikhs Sattar, comes from the Albu Risha tribe, which according to the majority of local sheikhs as well as official reports, was a small and insignificant smuggling tribe located in and around the city of Ramadi.[99] However, the movement itself originated long before this announcement and it was a prominent feature of al-Anbarøs political landscape.

Various reports suggest that there were numerous attempts by the U.S.-led Coalition forces to attract local citizens after the fight for al-Anbar began in 2003.[100] However, due to the indiscriminant violence that came along with military strikes, and the arrest of virtually everyone who looked suspicious, the soldiers on the ground managed only to alienate local people. At this point sheikhs decided it is more beneficial to side with AQI, whose ideologies and goals at that time were appealing to the majority of Sunnites in Iraq, because of their common enemies, i.e. the Shiites, Kurds and Americans.[101] Furthermore, those Sunnites who did not join the AQI-led insurgency, and were on neither side of the fence after Saddam Hussein was removed from power, slowly began to shift their support, even if by necessity and not so much by believe in their cause, towards the nationalist insurgents who at the time were opposing strongly the U.S. led Coalition.

There are two primary reasons why, in the initial stages of the war against the insurgents, the Sunni tribes chose to side with the local and foreign insurgents. The first reason can be related to who the nationalist insurgents were. Those groups which existed throughout the country, but as with the Awakening were based in al-Anbar due to their predominantly Sunni background, and the opportunity that the province provided them to run insurgent operations,

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[96] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* II, 2009, p. 58.
[97] From the Hardan clan of the Aethawi tribe.
[98] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* II, 2009, p. 58.
[99] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* I, 2009, p. 236.
[100] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* II, 2009, p.66.
[101] Howard LaFranchi, õøAnbar Modeløunder fireö, *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 26, 2007, http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0626/p01s02-usfp.html?page=1; Baker and Hamilton, et.al, *The Iraq Study Group.* 2006, p.20; T. Pitman, õSunni Sheikhs Join Fight Vs. Insurgency,ö The Associated Press, March 25, 2007 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/25/AR2007032500600_2.html.

were comprised of former high echelon Ba'ath military and political leaders. After the disbanding of the Iraqi army many soldiers joined ranks in these groups to oppose the U.S. forces.[102] Even the founder of the Awakening Sheikh Abdul Sattar is reported as being part of such groups.[103] These so-called nationalist insurgents did not always see eye to eye with the AQI-led terrorist groups, but they were very attractive to the local Sunnites because of their moderate religious standing, unlike AQI's, and because the former Iraqi army was well respected by Iraqis.[104] The second reason is the conduct of U.S. soldiers, who were involved in various activities which undermined their image in the eyes of the local population. They were disarming every civilian, therefore depriving them of any means of defending themselves against AQI, while at the same time members of al-Qaeda were, according to local people, carrying weapons freely across the province in various towns.[105] Furthermore, because of the constant and indiscriminate arrests, disregarding tribal honor, respect and traditions, local people were alienated and this hampered any chance for aligning with the "Westerners."

As expressed above, according to Maffesoli, tribal association is a way of "collectively combating the multiple forms of adversity."[106] This theory is clearly visible in Iraq as the volatile situation in al-Anbar drove Sunnites to seek the support of their tribes, whose sheikhs were those same, former Ba'ath military and political officials that had their pride offended by the American actions. The pragmatism of the sheikhs quickly directed them to the most attractive alliance at the time with the insurgents, which would allow them to provide support and safety for themselves and their people. Providing safety and security as I already mentioned was one of the key roles of the sheikh.

Slowly, the situation began to change in late 2004, and the beginning of 2005, and the idea of an Awakening was taking roots in some of the Sunnites allied with AQI and the nationalist insurgents. An example of such an initiative, reported by Staff BrigGen Haqi Ali Hameed,[107] is the Anbar Revolutionaries group which although very small, around 22 people are reported to have participated, was cooperating with the Marines. Their main activities

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[102] http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/CPAORD5.pdf.
[103] M. Kukis, "Turning Iraq's Tribes Against Al-Qaeda," *Time*, December 26, 2006, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1572796,00.html.
[104] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, I, 2009, p. 53.
[105] Benraad, "Iraq's Tribal 'Sahwa'," 2011, p. 14.
[106] Maffesoli, Perrier, *L'homme Postmoderne*, 2012.
[107] Commander of Second Region Directorate of Border Enforcement.

included providing intelligence information as well as assistance in some military operations in exchange for security and the opportunity to keep their weapons.[108]

There were two primary reasons that made Iraqis shift their position and begin to cooperate with the Americans ó first, the brutality of AQI and second, the economic potential of a U.S. friendship. The ideology of AQI envisioned enforcement of strong Shari¢a law and intimidation, sometimes through brutality. Zarqawi¢s organization was very keen in implementing its interpretation of Islam, and anyone who did not adhere was punished according to the terrorist group¢s understanding of justice and law. In addition to that, anyone who was suspected of cooperating with the Coalition forces was subject to threats, torture and even murder. There are numerous graphic examples of beheadings, tortures and intimidations of such suspects conducted by AQI.[109] This picture provides a striking resemblance to the actions that the self proclaimed Islamic State (IS) is currently perpetrating, as decapitated bodies were left lying on the streets, a common practice used by IS nowadays.[110] A further correlation between the actions of the two, is that AQI used women dressed as seamstresses in order to spy and provide intelligence for the organization about other women and the activities of their husbands, by gaining access to their houses, a place forbidden to male insurgents.[111] The same tactics are now used by IS who have established a female jihadist group called al-Khamsa.[112]

These brutal tactics again triggered the magnetic forces of the tribe and they propelled Sunnites to, on the one hand seek the support of their tribe, which was the only way they can feel protected and have moral, economic and military support. As one Iraqi put it, õwith the tribe you are someone, without the tribe you are nothing.ö[113] On the other hand, the dire situation of the tribesmen forced the sheikhs to seek the support of the most convenient partner who would see their interests come to fruition, which in late 2003, 2004 were the Americans.[114]

Sheikhs, who were themselves victims of intimidations and attacks by AQI, had a second reason to switch their position, and that was that the Zarqawi¢s group was suffocating the

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[108] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 230.
[109] M. Wilbanks interview with U.S. Marine Col. Jeff Satterfield, Multinational Force West, Camp Ramadi, Fallujah, Nov. 12, 2009.
[110] There are even cases reported where the bodies were strapped with explosives and as soon as the family of the victim went to collect the corps from the street the terrorists detonated it.
[111] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* II, 2009, p. 20.
[112] L. Sinjab, õSyrian female who fled 'road of crimes' to escape IS,ö *BBC*, March 1, 2015, http://m.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31681165.
[113] Al-Mohammad, *Relying on one's tribe, p.4.*
[114] M. Kukis, õTurning Iraq's Tribes Against Al-Qaeda,ö *Time*, December 26, 2006, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1572796,00.html

smuggling activities of tribesmen, their main source of income and therefore a source of prestige and influence for the sheikh within his peers group. Without this lucrative income, tribal leaders did not have the means to provide for their tribe, and therefore lost their prominence and risked to be replaced.[115] Many of the most dominant tribes in Anbar were engaging in smuggling activities during the reign of Saddam Hussein, who turned a blind eye to these activities in order to obtain their loyalty.[116] As mentioned above the sheikh of the tribe was not always the oldest son of the deceased sheikh but rather the most influential within the tribe. Therefore, tribal members had the collective power to influence decision making at the highest levels of the organization and sheikhs were forced to act in order to maintain their dominant position.

For their part, the Americans were realizing their initial mistakes which resulted in alienating the local Sunni population and pushed them towards AQI.[117] These mistakes can be traced back to the dismantling of the Iraqi army, which left around 400,000 thousand former military personnel on the street without pay.[118] In 2005, the number of former army men in Ninawa province alone was about 110,000.[119] This worked to the benefit of AQI, which saw a large number of soldiers flow into their ranks and others forming their own insurgent networks to fight the occupation. The mistakes however, did not stop there. The U.S. soldiers were unprepared to deal with the tribal population of al-Anbar province because they lacked even the basic knowledge of tribal culture, customs and traditions. This is quite easily spotted in the *Soldier's Handbook to Iraq,* which included outdated and completely irrelevant information about how to interact with the locals.[120] An example of the mistreatment of Iraqis was the incident with Sheikh Aifan al-Issawi (1970-2013), who was the nephew and acting leader of the powerful Albu Issa tribe and later on became part of the Awakening movement. Sheikh Aifan was mistakenly shot by the Americans, who after finding out about the incident visited him in the hospital. After seeing the seriousness of the situation and realizing the importance of the sheikh, they offered to transfer him to Germany for operation. The sheikh refused saying, that the Americans did not understand the õhabits

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[115] J. Lindsay and A. Long, *Counterinsurgency Theory and the Stability of Iraq's Anbar Province,* October 7, 2009, p.7.

[116] A. Baram, õThe Iraqi Tribes and the Post-Saddam System,ö *Brookings*, July 8, 2003, http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2003/07/08iraq-baram.

[117] N. Al-Jabouri, and S. Jensen, õThe Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening,ö Paper commissioned for a conference in Tampa, Florida, entitled *The Anbar Awakening: An After Action Review*, January 2010, p. 8-10.

[118] J. Araf, õU.S. dissolves Iraqi army, Defense and Information ministries,ö *CNN*, May 23, 2003, http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/05/23/sprj.nitop.army.dissolve/.

[119] Hamilton, õIraq Report ó 8,ö 2008, p. 4.

[120] *Soldier's Handbook to Iraq*, 1st Infantry Division, 2004

and traditionsö of tribesmen. After receiving treatment in Jordan and returning to Iraq six months later, he and eight other prominent Albu Issa members were arrested. They were all put in Abu Ghraib prison for nine months without being formally charged. Their release came only after the situation in Fallujah was becoming increasingly dire in 2004. A meeting was arranged with then President Jalal Talabani (1933) and American officials. According to the Sheikh the Americans said that they are õgoing to release you to cool things down in Fallujah.ö[121]

Such benefit-based practices were the norm in the Iraqi-American relationship during the period after the invasion. Nonetheless, tribes and sheikhs realized that, the Americans provided them with a greater opportunity to continue to hold their leadership position, by offering their temporary allegiance in exchange for acquiring protection and economic gains, such as reconstruction contracts. Through such actions, the loyalties of Sheikh Abdul Sattar, and his brother Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha (1965) were obtained at a later stage. The two brothers owned a contracting business and as Major Daniel Zappa[122] explains, the Americans used the opportunity by saying, ö hey we might be able to get you a piece of this (removal of rubble laying in the town of Ramadi), and eventually, long story short, they got the whole contract (which was reportedly worth millions of dollars).ö[123]

The apprehension from both sides that a õshort-termö cooperation is beneficial to both, on top of the alienation process that was driving a wedge between the initial ties with AQI, led to the formation of small models of the Awakening movement in various places in al-Anbar, beginning with the town of al-Qaim.[124]

6.2 Al-Qaim and the often neglected beginning of the Awakening

Al-Qaim is a town located on the Syrian border in the northwestern part of al-Anbar. It lies on the banks of the River Euphrates and has been a strategic point for smugglers in Iraq and Syria. The town is dominated by the Albu Mahal tribe, which is a part of the Dulaym tribal confederation and its paramount sheikh at the time was Sabah Al-Sattam Effan Fahran al-Shurji al-Aziz.[125] Al-Qaim was of vital strategic importance both to the insurgents and to the Coalition forces for two main reasons: first, it served as an entry point for foreign insurgents; and second, due to its remote location, lack of security across the border with

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[121] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* II, 2009, p. 87-88.
[122] Executive Officer 1st Battalion , 6th Marines, Assigned to 1st Brigade Combat team, 1st Armored Division, U.S. Army, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), September 2006 ó May 2007.
[123] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* I, 2009, p. 209.
[124] Ibid., p. 230.
[125] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* II, 2009, p. 139.

Syria and its position on the Euphrates it provided a great opportunity for smuggling various goods and military equipment and moving it throughout the country.[126] The strategic importance of the town is proven by the fact that the U.S. built a base, Camp Gannon, on the border, from where they attempted to control the flow of smuggled goods as well as insurgents, and to some extent they managed to achieve that, which increased the hostilities and the level of threats towards the base. The Albu Mahal tribe was the perfect ally in the area because its *fakhds* spread across the border into Syria which allowed it to control the border crossing. Al-Qaim therefore became the center of attention for all sides in the conflict.[127]

Initially just as the majority of Sunnite in Iraq, the bulk of the clans of the Albu Mahal tribe aligned themselves with AQI and started to actively oppose the Coalition forces. The reasons follow the same pattern described above, where the indiscriminate actions and misunderstanding by soldiers on the ground of the locals, led to the alienation and resentment among tribal members. The insurgents on the other hand, were a paramount threat to the survival of the tribesmen if they chose to oppose them. Furthermore, they were seen as the least of two troubles that would allow smuggling to continue uninterrupted. By the end of 2004 Albu Mahal members were actively supporting AQI in the skirmishes with the Coalition forces.[128] However, their opinion began to shift in early 2005, when AQI began to suffocate the economic activities of the tribes by trying to collect over 50% of the profits from smuggling. In addition, the terrorists enforced their strong religious tenants and punished anyone they felt was diverting from the õrightfulö form of Islam and/or was suspected of assisting the U.S.[129]

The escalation of tension between AQI and the U.S. soared drastically on April 11, 2005 when Camp Gannon was subjected to a severe attack which included three suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIED). The attack meant to send a strong message to the Americans, Iraqi government and local tribes, that AQI was controlling the province and that it can organize large scale attacks against strong military targets. A video of the attack was posted immediately afterwards, filmed by a specially designated film crew, with the

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[126] W. Knarr, õAl-Sahawa: An Awakening in Al Qaim,ö *CTX*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2013, p. 6.
[127] King, *Iraq Tribal Study*, 2006, p. 4 ó 27.
[128] Ibid. 4 ó 32.
[129] S. Tavernise, and D. Filkins, õThe Struggle For Iraq: Skirmishes; Local Insurgents Tell Of Clashes With Al Qaeda's Forces In Iraqö, *New York Times*, January 12, 2006,
http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F07EFD7163FF931A25752C0A9609C8B63.

expected accompanying al-Qaeda-type rhetoric.[130] Another resemblance to the tactics that IS is currently engaged in.

Side by side, conflicts between the Albu Mahal tribe and AQI were slowly building up, and some small-scale conflicts were a reoccurring part of their relationship by the middle of 2005. The escalation of tensions, however, reached its boiling point on May 2, 2005 when the Chief of Police Major Ahmed Adiya Asaf, a member of Albu Mahal, was murdered and decapitated. Further attacks by AQI members continued to mount the tension, including the kidnapping of the Governor of al-Anbar province, Nawaf Farhan (d. 2005), a cousin of Sheikh Sabah (the paramount sheikhs of the Dulaym confederation), on May 8.[131] The tribes had requested assistance from the Iraqi government in April, through the help of former Governor of al-Anbar Faisal al-Gaoud, from the Albu Nimr tribe, but were turned down.[132] This official plea for help is counted by some historians as the initiation of the Awakening in Anbar province. In retaliation to these brutal attacks, the Albu Mahal's Hamza Battalion,[133] which was initially created with the assistance of AQI, all of a sudden became a fighting force against them. In response to all this chaos, the U.S. forces launched on May 7, operation *Matador*. The operation was planned before the change of allegiance of the Mahalawis, and it was intended to target both the AQI and the Hamza Battalion. The attack resulted in the death of more than 130 people most of whom locals. The U.S. lost nine marines.[134]

Despite the destruction and killings on the part of the U.S., the Mahalawis had had enough of AQI, and they continued to seek the support of the Americans. The Hamza Battalion helped push the insurgents into the town of Karabilah, which was inhabited predominantly by the Karbuli tribe, who were still supporting AQI.[135] The Coalition forces, were still skeptical towards the Mahalawis, however, they realized that a win lays in cooperation, even if the tribe were considered enemies just a month ago, and so an alliance began to form. The alliance was one borne out of necessity and both sides were planning to cooperate as long as there was a common threat present.

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[130] Knarr, "Al-Sahawa," 2013, p. 6.
[131] Ibid., p. 5.
[132] Faisal al-Gaoud was the governor of al-Anbar between 2003 and 2005 when he was replaced by a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party after the Sunnites boycotted the elections. King, *Iraq Tribal Study*, *2006*, p. 4 – 33.
[133] A para-military formation within the Albu Mahal tribe.
[134] K., Flower, Et Al., "Hunt for Insurgents near Syria Ends," *CNN,* 14 May 2005, http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/05/14/iraq.main/index.html.
[135] King, *Iraq Tribal Study,"* 2006, p. 4 – 34.

The main responsibilities of tribal members were to spot, identify and provide intelligence about insurgents that were still hiding and operating in al-Qaim.[136] The superficial and short-term, interest based relationship that characterized the cooperation between the two sides during the Awakening, was born.

On July 25, 2005, after several weeks of hard preparation and summoning supporters from across Iraq and Syria, AQI launched a large scale attack on the city of al-Qaim which led to the destruction of 41 homes, as well as the killing and injuring of hundreds of Iraqis.[137] According to some records, the insurgentøs force was in the thousands while the Albu Mahalawis had only around 300-400 people to protect the city and did not receive any external support.[138] This attack, as well as the continued violence instigated by AQI, prompted Sheikh Sabah, who presided in Jordan at the time for his own safety urged by his tribesmen to leave Iraq, to contact the then and current Defense Minister of Iraq, Saadoun ad-Dulaimi (1954), to seek help. After logistical assistance from the Americans, ad-Dulaimi met with Sabah and several leading Dulaymi sheikhs, in order to create a plan to protect the city. This meeting and the dire situation of the Albu Mahal tribe provoked a reaction from the Americans, who launched an airstrike over the insurgentsø bases. The strike however, even though it cost the lives of several insurgents, served to anger AQI. The latter, launched a new large scale attack in the region taking over the largest hotel in the city of Husaybah located in the center of the town, as well as the northern parts of al-Qaim. Mahalawis, who again found themselves between a rock and a hard place, were forced to seek American support. Americans provided air-support and indiscriminately detained Mahalawis along with insurgents on the base that there were, õbad guysö hiding among them.[139] Despite the Coalitionøs efforts and the struggles of Mahalawis AQI managed to reclaim al-Qaim.

The importance of the town and the area surrounding it prompted a steep increase in American troops on the ground. The initial deployment in February 2005 saw 3,200 soldiers which by September of 2005 had increased to 14,000 (figure 2).[140] By that time the U.S. officials recognized the need for cooperation with the local people in order to protect American soldiers and divert the heavy load onto Iraqis. In August of 2005, around 280

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[136] Knarr, õAl-Sahawa,ö 2013, p. 9.
[137] Ibid., p.10.
[138] Ibid., p. 9.
[139] Ibid., p. 12.
[140] Ibid., p. 13.

Mahalawis were selected as fit for combat, and 89 of them were taken for training with the Special Forces.[141]

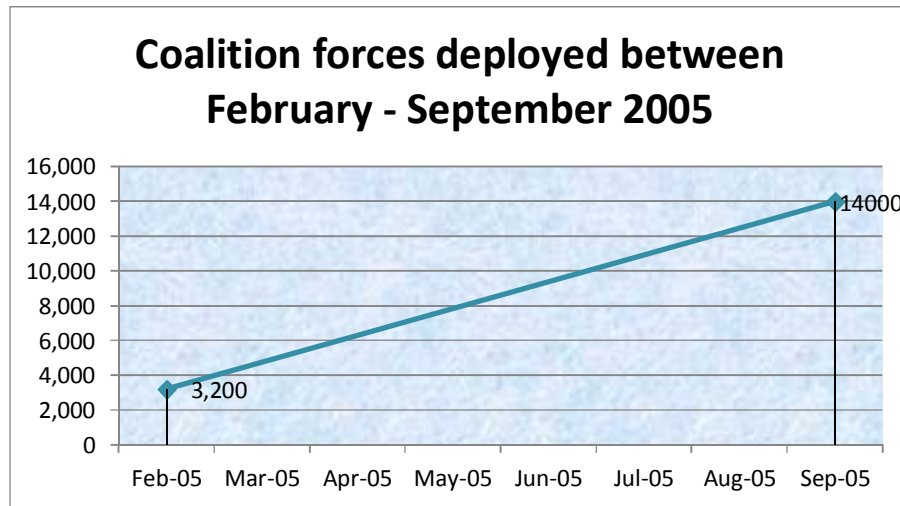**Coalition forces deployed between February - September 2005**

Figure 2

Nonetheless, despite the tribesmen's efforts, Americans continued to treat them as potential insurgents, and as the new rotational commander Lieutenant Colonel Dale Alford said, "the problem is we wanted to shoot at all of them. Hell, we were making insurgents."[142]

Eventually, the Americans realized that, local support was required to secure the town, otherwise they would have to entrench Marines in every block that they retake from AQI, which was costly and ineffective. Once again, the necessity dictated the need for a temporary alliance, and Americans were cooperating with locals simply in order to reduce their participation in this battle. On the other hand, Mahalawis and other Iraqis in the region were "pissed-off," as Alford remarked, at the Americans for their lack of support and indiscriminate attacks.[143] The attacks were continuing even though Iraqis have asked for American help numerous times and were already providing the marines with military and intelligence assistance.[144] It was quite clear once again that sheikhs were prepared to disregard their primary feelings towards the Americans, and consciously and deliberately enter into an alliance with them, which would provide the tribesmen with the best chance to have safety and survive the conflict. Even though the U.S. had already begun employing policies to attract the local population, this was an active and pragmatic choice on the part of the Iraqis who saw the benefits of the alliance.

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[141] Ibid., p. 14.
[142] Lieutenant Colonel Dale Alford, briefing, 16 February 2010.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Knarr, W., et al., "Al-Sahawa," 2013, p. 14.

The desperate and dire situation that both the Americans and Iraqis found themselves in, forced them to forge a coalition which led to the establishment of the Desert Protectors, in September 2005, from the ranks of the Mahalawis.[145] This formation represented the first para-military unit that led to various other military and police cooperation initiatives between the U.S. and Sunnites after the official establishment of the Awakening movement.[146] This new force, which was led by Major General Mukhlis Shadhan Ibrahim al-Mahalawi, was not under the umbrella of the Defense Ministry, nor the Ministry of Interior but was rather commanded by the U.S. army.[147]

On November 5th, the Coalition forces launched operation *Steel Curtain*, which aimed at clearing the al-Qaim area – the town of Husaybah, Karabilah, Ramana and Ubaydi from insurgents. The operation included U.S. and Iraqi military personnel as well as the Desert Protectors. The operation ended with success on November 22. One of the key factors was the support from the newly established militia, which was primarily responsible for providing military intelligence along with military assistance for the Coalition forces.[148] For their cooperation, the Mahalawis suffered a great number of casualties. The success prompted fear in the Americans that the tribesmen would seek *tha'r* against the tribes who aligned themselves with AQI, which as mentioned earlier was the natural way of inter-tribal dealings in this part of Iraq.[149] In an attempt to stem the tide of tribal relations, and in order to be able to control the Desert Protectors, in January 2006, Colonel Ismael Shah Hamid Dulaymi was deployed in al-Qaim along with the 3rd Brigade of the 7th Iraqi Army Division. Colonel Dulaymi was a cousin of Sheikh Sabah and had grown up in the town. He held a certain level of importance in the Albu Mahal tribe. Later on, the Protectors were integrated into his brigade. Slowly but steadily, the Coalition and Iraqi forces, as well as the local tribesmen regained the territory around the area of al-Qaim that AQI had previously occupied, by September of 2006.

U.S. soldiers continued to use patronage policies in their dealings with allied tribes in the region. They realized that in order to gain the support of a particular tribe that was important to them, they had to treat it better than other tribes and by the same token, if they didn't show enough respect for a particular tribe or sheikh, they risked losing their support. Such was the case reported from LtCol Alford, who felt he had to "favor" the Albu Mahal tribe and their

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[145] Ibid., p. 13.
[146] King, *Iraq Tribal Study*, 2006, p. 4 – 34.
[147] Knarr, W., et al., "Al-Sahawa: An Awakening in Al Qaim," p. 13.
[148] Roggio, B., "Steel Curtain Unmasked," The Long War Journal, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, November 27th, 2005.
[149] Soldier's Handbook to Iraq, 1st Infantry Division, 2004, p. 1-2.

acting Sheikh Kurdi Al Rafah Albu Mahal, over the other tribes and sheikhs in the region, because of his vital support in the fight against AQI, and the strong position that his tribe held in the area.[150] Furthermore, the Americans realized that there is a need to change their attitude and relationships not only with the sheikhs, but with the common tribesmen. The reason was the ability of locals, who could spot the insurgents within their neighborhoods and provide intelligence information to the Marines. Therefore Captain Brendan Heatherman[151] ordered his platoon commanders to attempt to get closer to the locals in order for õthem to tell you (who the insurgents are), because they are comfortable with you.ö[152]

This superficial and incentive-based relationship which often included giving more power to high profile Iraqis did not always produce the desired results and, in fact, there were comic situation in some cases. One such example was Captain Heathermanøs attempt to establish a relationship with a local *mukhtar,* who he wrongly misinterpreted as being the chosen mayor of Karabilah.[153] In reality, he was the head of a small neighborhood. Coalition officials set out to establish a close relationship with the man for several weeks by õempowering him (through, economic support) with that area of the Karbulis in Karabilah (that they already believed he was the mukhtar of).ö[154] When they finally found out the reality of the situation they had already caused some trouble with other more prominent local leaders by trying to artificially shift the tribal õTeutonic platesö of the town.[155] This comic episode in the relationship of the two sides serves to prove the point I made earlier that the U.S. soldiers and officials were engaged in actions which drew a striking resemblance to Saddam Husseinøs fake sheikhs policies. The policies further proved to the tribesmen and sheikhs that they can benefit from cooperation with the Americans.

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[150] The paramount Sheikh Sabah was in Jordan at that time; American Forces Press Service, õIraqi Prime Minister Visits Anbar Provinceö, May 27, 2007, http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=46196; Knarr, W., et al., õAl-Sahawa: An Awakening in Al Qaim,ö p. 18.
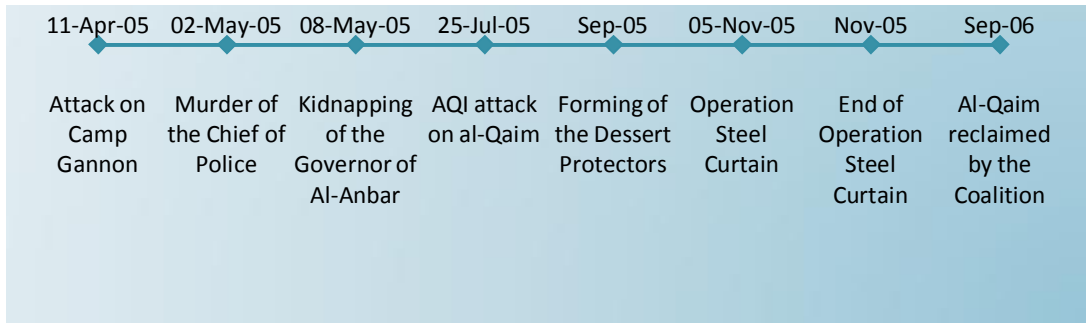[151] Commander of Kilo Company, 3/6 Marines.
[152] Knarr, õAl-Sahawa,ö 2013, p. 19.
[153] *Mukhtar* means chosen in Arabic and in common days refers to mayors; however, it can also refer to leader of a small community.
[154] Knarr, õAl-Sahawa,ö 2013, p. 20.
[155] Ibid., p. 20.

11-Apr-05	02-May-05	08-May-05	25-Jul-05	Sep-05	05-Nov-05	Nov-05	Sep-06
Attack on Camp Gannon	Murder of the Chief of Police	Kidnapping of the Governor of Al-Anbar	AQI attack on al-Qaim	Forming of the Dessert Protectors	Operation Steel Curtain	End of Operation Steel Curtain	Al-Qaim reclaimed by the Coalition

Figure 3 – Timeline of the battle for al-Qaim

The stabilization of the region both in military terms and in terms of internal tribal disbalance, artificially created by the Americans, was achieved, as LtCol Nicholas Marano, Commander 1/7 Marines expressed, with the integral help of the so-called *Circle of Trust*.[156] It included the Mayor of al-Qaim, the paramount Sheikh of Albu Mahal on the ground, Kurdi who was also in a way the connecting link between all the other members, the leader of the Desert Protectors, Iraqi division and brigade commanders and the intelligence officer of the brigade.[157]
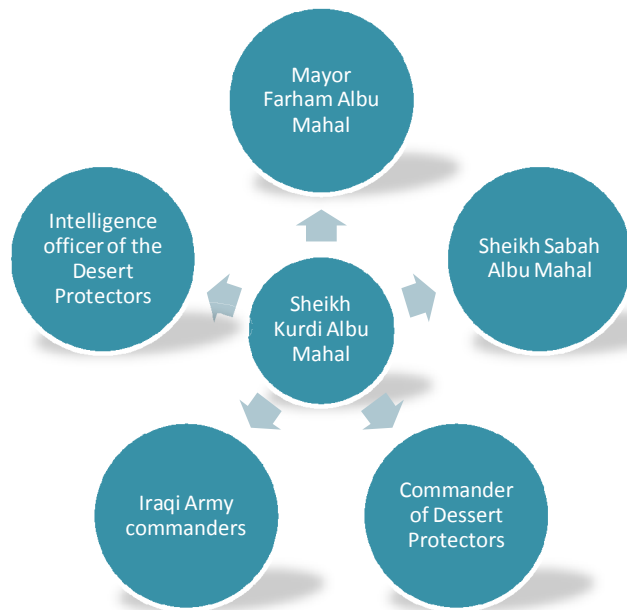
Figure 4 – *Al-Qaim's Circle of Trust*

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[156] Stationed between March and September 2006.
[157] Knarr, "Al-Sahawa," 2013, p. 21.

This was the first time cooperation between the U.S. forces and Sunni tribesmen in al-Anbar province, managed to establish a military unit which was designed to fight the AQI-led insurgent groups. What is most intriguing is that we find the same pattern that pre-dated the establishment of the Desert Protectors as the one I have shown existed throughout the province. Tribes initially joining the ranks, or at the very least choosing the sides of AQI figuring that they are probably the more beneficial of the two sides, even if they did not buy into their ideology. Sheikh Kurdi himself was one of the leading figures in the Hamza battalion which was intended to õfight the Coalition,ö before eventually deciding to switch his position by aligning himself with the Americans, who were the õbetter optionö at that time.[158] The situation took a whole new look once tribesmen and sheikhs realized that the foreign insurgents were actually demanding more than they were providing. Through constant threats, intimidation, murder and torture, AQI began to squeeze the profits from the smuggling activities that tribes were engaged in for decades, thus depriving them of a larger amount of their economic gains. This occurrence was happening parallel to the American realization that, first they have grossly underestimated the power of tribes and their importance, and second, that they have committed numerous mistakes in their treatment and interaction with tribal members which pushed them towards AQI. The combination of these two factors led to a marriage of necessity, between Sunnites and Americans, because of the mutual, short-term benefits that it provided. Nonetheless, the current state of cooperation did not, in any way mean that the tribes, or the Americans, had completely changed their opinion of the õother.ö[159] We must not forget that these same locals were involved in fighting and killing hundreds of American soldiers throughout Anbar province, and the American soldiers were responsible for the deaths, arrest and torture of thousands of Iraqis, many of whom did not have any real connection with the insurgents, other than in some cases kinship or tribal affiliation.

This same pattern that followed the struggles for al-Qaim in 2005, was repeated a year later with the official establishment of the Awakening Movement in Anbar by Sheikh Sattar, and as Brigadier General David Reist, former deputy commander of the Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) expressed, the Awakening õlogically moved from west to east (referring to the geographical positions of al-Qaim and Ramadi).ö An even deeper connection between the two Awakenings exists. Dr. Sadun Dulaymi, the defense minister, who assisted Sheikh Sabah with the creation of the Desert Protectors, was the uncle of Sheikh Sattar,

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[158]Ibid., p. 21.
[159] King, *Iraq Tribal Study*, 2006, p. 4 ó 35.

which allowed the example of al-Qaim to spread to Ramadi. The links between the two movements can also be traced at other levels, such as the actions of a member of the Albu Nimr tribe, which is closely related to the Albu Mahal tribe, Numan Abdul Mahsen al-Gaoud who was related to Faisal al-Gaoud, the former Governor of al-Anbar province. The latter provided the contact between the Americans and the Mahalawis during the fight for al-Qaim. The former was present at the declaration of the establishment of the Awakening Movement.[160]

6.3 Leading up to Sheikh Sattar's "Awakening"

The initial siding up with the insurgents in the immediate post-Saddam period had occurred in the rest of al-Anbar as well. Local tribesmen throughout the province were supporting the terrorist organizations. However, AQIøs brutal tactics were resulting in the same alienation as it did in al-Qaim, and during the first half of 2006, movements in Ramadi that were challenging AQIøs dominance have already started to occur. These were not movements that were ignited because of support for the U.S., but rather movements that were aimed at preserving the economic activities, safety and security of local tribes, that were constantly being threatened by AQIøs brutal tactics and radical religious beliefs. Once again Michael Maffesoliøs theory, that in uncertain and dangerous times the social structure is broken up, which leads to the strengthening of secondary groups ó tribes, was in full effect.[161] Furthermore, this dire situation and the peer pressure from tribesmen forced sheikhs to reset their position and pick the least of the two evils, or risk losing the grip on their tribe.

A change in U.S. tactics towards the Iraqis in this region of al-Anbar began to take shape as well. Soldiers were being put through training, a õfour-hour session of cultural trainingí cultural nuances of how Arab people live, how they act, and understanding that cultural difference.ö[162] In addition to that, the patronage theory was being implemented in full force by the U.S. Financial and economic incentives became a common strategy for the Americans, while trying to attract the support of tribal leaders. This new strategy was exemplified, by awarding security, reconstruction and building contracts, as well as aid funds to particular sheikhs who were deemed important to the military operations. All the conditions expressed in Kantan Chandraøs theory of patronage were at hand, and the Americans took full advantage of the situation. What is striking is that the U.S. officials were practically funding

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[160] Knarr, õAl-Sahawa,ö 2013, p. 24.
[161] Maffesoli, *The times,* 1995, p. 84.
[162] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 147-148.

individuals and tribes which were, up to a short while ago, involved in military campaigns alongside AQI. Not only that, but the Americans had knowledge of their criminal records and nevertheless decided to cooperate and boost backing for such sheikhs for the sake of the short-term success of the fight against Zarqawi, disregarding the long-term destabilizing potential that such a strategy promised. It is quite obvious that American interests in the region were not at all aligned with the interests of the local population but were simply designed toward defeating al-Qaeda by any means necessary.

For the Arabs, this meant that the Americans were becoming a õbetter short-term ally,ö even though that did not mean establishing warm feelings towards the occupying force.[163] The Awakening represented a õmarriageö born out of necessity, consciously chosen by both sides, bound to be limited to the time-frame needed to expel the mutual enemy - AQI.

The success in al-Qaim, proved to be an isolated set of events in the region, and in fact, U.S. officials in Washington, as well as those that were on the ground were considering the province to be lost to the foreign insurgents led by az-Zarqawi.[164] Before the õofficialö establishment of the al-Anbar Awakening by Sheikh Sattar, Americans began implementing a policy of attracting tribal members in order to establish a police force that can patrol and secure the area. This attempt, however, proved to be very unsuccessful in its initial stages and those forces were disbanded by early 2005, because they were corrupt and in fact there were cases where policemen worked against the Coalition forces.[165] Their tribal police strategy would be renewed once the relationship with the sheikhs strengthened, and it peaked during and after the creation of the Awakening. Between September and November of 2006, there were around 1,500 new policemen which was a striking increase to the total number of 150 policemen gathered before that. Even more strikingly this number increased to around 28,000 *Sons of Anbar* (another name for members of the Awakening), by the end of 2006 (figure 5).[166]

[163] McCary, õThe Anbar Awakening, 2009, p. 44-45.
[164] T. Ricks, "Situation Called Dire in West Iraq," *The Washington Post*, September 11, 2006, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/10/AR2006091001204.html.
[165] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 102.
[166] M. Wilbanks and E. Karsh, õHow the 'Sons of Iraq' Stabilized Iraq," *Middle East Quarterly*, 2010, p. 61.

Sons of Anbar

	2003-Sep 2006	Sep-Nov 2006	Dec-06
Sons of Anbar	150	1650	28,000
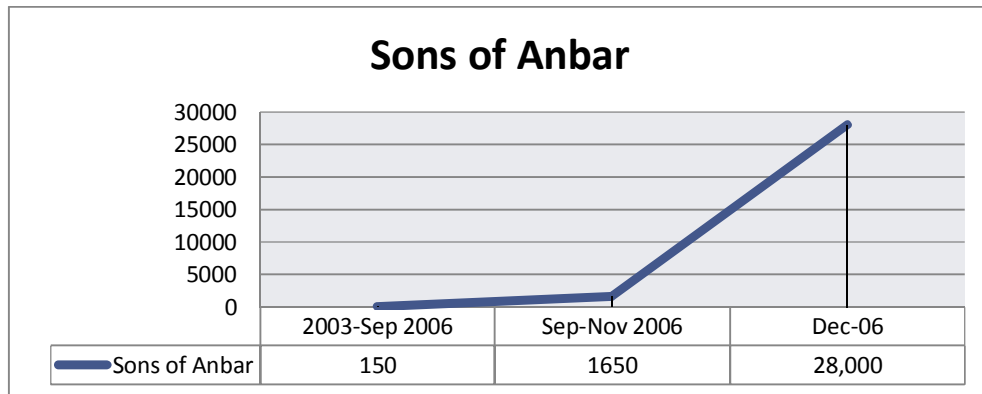
Figure 5 – *Sons of Anbar*

These numbers show, on the one hand, the power that sheikhs held over tribesmen and thus once again proving that uncertain times strengthen the ties within the social subgroups. On the other hand, it shows the abilities of the patronage theory, and the strength it provided to the Americans, who through economic incentives exerted great influence upon the tribal leaders themselves. By using funds handed down by the U.S., sheikhs, who were allowed to õdistribute (cash) freelyö among their tribesmen, were able to increase their appeal within their people.[167] This system of empowering tribal leaders, who out of practicality had to be present in Iraq, led to a practice which had the same result as Saddam Husseinøs õfake shakeö politics. Some of the most prominent sheikhs were outside of the country, and by providing the power to distribute economic incentives to leaders on the ground, the Americans increased the status of lower-level sheikhs residing in Iraq.[168]

Such was the case with the leader of the Awakening Sheikh Sattar.[169] The Americans decided to empower those people who would serve them best in their short-term strategy to remove the AQI threat.[170] However, purchasing the tribesø loyalty in the short-term would sabotage any long term goals of building stability in the country, because as soon as AQI was to be removed, the need for this patronage-client relationship with local sheikhs would cease to exist. The same is true for the tribes, who were looking for help to remove the foreign insurgents, while at the same time benefiting economically. If AQI was removed and the financial support dried out, than the Sunnites would simply view the Americans as invaders. However, by then Washington would have created a Sunni military force that would be left out on the streets, and the responsibility for controlling and keeping it in check would be

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[167] McCary, õThe Anbar Awakening,ö 2009, p. 50.
[168] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 4.
[169] McCary, õThe Anbar Awakening,ö 2009, p. 48.
[170] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, I, 2009, p. 230.

outsourced to the Shi'a led Iraqi government. This is partially what happened with the former Ba'ath soldiers.[171] Not only that, but the Americans would create a force that had no emotional connection to the state and therefore no nationalistic drive, but was rather led by Sunni tribal and sectarian affiliation, one which already at that time held suspicions of Shi'a plots against them.[172]

In 2008, the integration of this newly established semi-official, force was left to the government of Nuri al-Maliki who had around 100,000 Sons of Iraq on his hands, of which, according to different reports, by 2009 only around 9,000 were appointed into the Iraqi Security Forces and 30,000 were employed in other ministries. That left the bulk of this force on the street without pay.[173] Those who were employed had to put up with a pay cut from their previously received $360 per month, provided by the Americans and funneled through the sheikhs.[174] Another important issue was that once the economic incentives provided by Washington to loyal sheikhs, which in one year since the inception of the practice had reached roughly 35 - 40 million U.S. dollars, dried up, sheikhs would have to return to their main occupation before the invasion, namely, criminal activities such as smuggling and looting. However, there was one important difference, this time around, the sheikhs had a U.S. trained military force on their disposal.[175]

U.S. officials began to hold regular meetings with local sheikhs both in Iraq and outside of it, mainly in Jordan where the majority of sheikhs had fled to, by the end of 2003. However, at that time the Americans were still reluctant to provide the local people with too much power, because the situation had not yet deteriorated to the point that it would in 2004 and 2005.[176] The Coalition forces began realizing by 2005 the strength and level of organization that the insurgents had. U.S. officials have been reported saying that the insurgents have the ability to "take over the country," on all fronts, militarily, economically and politically.[177] Therefore, their engagement with the local leaders increased and they began setting up various projects which would try to win sheikhs over. They organized conferences with foreign investors, including investors from places such as Japan, who were there to say that if the sheikhs cooperate with the Americans in securing and stabilizing the

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[171] Benraad, "Iraq's Tribal 'Sahwa,'" 2011.
[172] S. Simon, "The Price of the Surge", *Council on Foreign Relations*, May/June 2008 Issue, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63398/steven-simon/the-price-of-the-surge.
[173] Special Inspector General for Iraq reconstruction, Quarterly report to the US Congress, April 30, 2010, p. 11.
[174] Benraad, "Iraq's Tribal 'Sahwa,'" 2011.
[175] Ibid.
[176] S. Otterman, "Iraq: The Role of Tribes," *Council of Foreign Relations*, November 14, 2003, http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-role-tribes/p7681.
[177] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, I, 2009, p. 66.

situation on the ground, then they would be interested in investing in al-Anbar, and of course such an investment would enrich the sheikhs personally.[178] Such conferences were held in Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and other places. They were attended not only by anti-AQI tribal leaders, but also by former Ba'ath party members, who led insurgent movements against the U.S. in the initial invasion period.[179] The Americans once again managed to prove that they would indiscriminately cooperate with every element in the country as long as they were ready to õchase their carrot stick,ö which was the case with the former Ba'athists.[180]

It is quite clear that the U.S. officials held the power to create leaders and to exploit the benefits from this patronage-client based affiliation, simply by applying the stick and carrot approach, such as the multi-million dollar contract for removal of a destroyed building in Ramadi awarded to Sheikh Sattar and his brother. Sattarøs track record, which the Americans were aware of, showed clearly that the sheikh was driven not by conviction but by potential profit. Using people like him, the U.S. managed to change the dynamics and the social structure in al-Anbar by establishing superficial and material-based relationships with other local leaders with questionable reputation, who were ready to side with them as long as they received a paycheck. Which points to the fact that, tribes were deliberate and willing participants in the conflict, adhering to a sort of *realpolitik*, which would serve their interests first, by supporting the strong of the day.

The close relationship between U.S. officials and local sheikhs, in particular Sheikh Sattar, which was developing since mid and late 2004, culminated in the public declaration of the establishment of the al-Anbar Awakening on September 14, 2006 from Sattarøs house in Ramadi. Although this act represented the official establishment of the movement, many analysts agree, that the al-Qaim õawakeningö was the groundbreaking movement, which eventually gave birth to the idea that cooperation is possible and could be beneficial to both sidesø short-term goals. However, even if some valid arguments could be made that what happened on the Iraqi-Syrian border was a limited and localized teamwork without any significant importance for the rest of al-Anbar, or the Sunni Triangle, there have been plenty of examples between al-Qaim and Sheikhs Sattarøs declaration of such short cooperations between the U.S. forces and local tribal elements.[181]

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[178] Ibid., p.7.
[179] Ibid., p. 67.
[180] Ibid., p. 58.
[181] Ibid., p. 274-275.

Such an example is the help that U.S. forces received in the two main battles for Fallujah and particularly in the second, dubbed initially *Phantom Fury* but changed by Prime Minister Ayad to operation *al-Fajr* – The Dawn for better appeal to the local population. The first operation lasted from April 4 until May 1 2004 named *Vigilant Resolve* and the second from November 7 until December 23, 2004. The U.S. helped with the establishment of the *Fallujah Brigade*, which consisted of local tribesmen. The Americans once again decided to overlook the allegiance of the people involved in the *Brigade* because they were in need of local assistance, when they appointed Major General Muhammad Latif, a former Ba'ath army officer, as leader of the *Brigade*. After the fiasco of operation *Vigilant Response*, U.S. officials were reluctant to undertake a new attack and therefore they initially used the tribesmen as an attacking force while providing the weapons and economic incentives. They even offered to release some prisoners in exchange for their help.[182] Once the city was taken after the second operation, the *Brigade* was disbanded as the Americans had no use for it anymore, which could be seen as a pattern of things to come.[183]

6.4 Sheikh Sattar and the declaration of the Awakening on September 14, 2006

The cooperation between the Americans and the Iraqis in al-Anbar, however, culminated with the establishment of the Awakening movement. The reason is that it not only represented the most successful, at least in the short term, cooperation between the two sides but it also resulted in a political organization after the military campaign was over. Although clashes between its members surfaced after the death of Sheikh Sattar and the political party that it had transformed into, split into various sections and smaller parties.

There was another interesting fact to the establishment of the new formation, one that would give pretext to many historians and people who took a part of the Awakening, to claim that this was the actual beginning of any such movement in al-Anbar. A few days before the meeting in Sheikh Sattar's house, parts of a U.S. classified document, *State of the Emergency in Al Anbar*, were leaked to the media. The report claimed that Coalition forces have most likely lost the war in al-Anbar.[184] The later success of the Awakening led the general public looking at the developments of the situation, to conclude that Sheikh Sattar's initiative began the tribal rising against al-Qaeda in al-Anbar.

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[182] Ibid., p. 62.
[183] Ibid., p. 54, 81.
[184] Knarr, "Al-Sahawa," 2013.

Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha was for a long time on the radar of the U.S. officials in Iraq, but at the beginning, the Americans did not engage with the local population in a way which would allow them to establish a close relationship. With the change of attitude in both the tribesmen and the Westerners, Sheikh Sattar became õthe right guy at the right time, and he was ready to capitalize on the fact that a lot of other tribal leaders were ready to go.ö[185] Sattar was not a high-ranking sheikh, nor was he a popular one among the other tribal leaders.[186] He was the leader of one of the smaller tribes in the region of Ramadi, the Albu Risha, which was a part of the Dulaym confederation.[187] He was illiterate and had never finished high school.

Sattarøs life shows that he did not hold any personal allegiance to a particular side in the conflict and rather went with the strong side of the day, which embodied the general Sunni tribesø actions during the occupation. His involvement with AQI, as well as his smuggling and looting activities, were well known to the Americans as well as to tribal leaders in al-Anbar, and in fact he was commonly referred to by both sides as a õtroublemakerö and a õgangsterö who was õrobbing in the streets.ö[188] Furthermore, as Sheikh Majed Abd al-Razzaq al-Sulayman a prominent tribal leaders in the Dulaym confederation said, they chose Sattar as a leader precisely because he was a õgangster,ö and the new role would suit him, because of the types of activities he would have to engage in.[189] His rise to prominence, the organization he established later included some 41 different tribes under its umbrella, can be explained by the financial backing as well as military support that he received by the Americans, who even stationed a tank in front of his house in order to protect him.[190] In the eyes of the other sheikhs, and particularly in the eyes of his tribe, this was raising Sattarøs importance and influence, because he not only possessed the financial opportunity to spread his patronage, but also the military means to impose his will upon other tribes and AQI.

Sheikh Sattar and his tribe had for years controlled the movement on the road between Baghdad and Amman, Jordan, collecting taxes and running smuggling and looting operations over unprotected travelers and traders. However, by mid 2004, AQI had begun to take over this vital route, leaving the Rishawis, and their sheikhs economically deprived. Sheikhs Sattar recognized that the time for cooperation with the foreign insurgents had finished and the time

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[185] *Al-Anbar Awakening,* I, 2009, p. 135.
[186] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 35-36.
[187] Benraad, õIraqøs Tribal ÷Sahwa,ö 2011.
[188] Ibid., p. 131.
[189] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 135.
[190] Pitman, õSunni Sheikhs,ö 2007.

to switch sides had arrived.[191] He began to establish contacts with the American forces, and met in the face of Colonel Sean MacFarland (1959) a U.S. officer who was keen to establish the same connection with the tribesmen.[192]

MacFarland is the person who is widely credited both by Iraqis and by U.S. officials as the central figure that facilitated the establishment and support for the Awakening. He was stationed in Iraq between January 2006 and February 2007. During that time he began to establish close contacts with the local leaders, on a tribal as well as on the government level. MacFarland soon realized that the most opportunistic and productive partners against AQI, would be the sheikhs and not the government officials. He met with the Governor of al-Anbar about once every week, and as he describes it, õitøs just me and the governor,ö which contrasted his meetings with the sheikh.[193] The Governor himself was elected in 2005 in elections that saw only about 4,000 people going to the ballot stations, because Sunnites were urged not to cast their vote by sheikhs. The winner was the Iraqi Islamic Party. His meetings with Sheikh Sattar however, were quite the opposite as they included plenty of other local tribal leaders.[194] Therefore, it was clear to MacFarland, who had more potential to influence local people.

The stature of Sheikh Sattar was rising artificially, as mentioned before he could be described as one of the new õfake sheikhs,ö because of the support that he was receiving from the American Colonel, who favored Sattar over the other leaders in the region and had established a close relationship with him.

Sattar had already aligned himself with the Coalition forces by late 2004 and participated in various activities either backed or directly sponsored by the U.S. forces. The final straw that led him to this new drastic action was that his father and three of his brothers were killed by the AQI militants. This pattern of events draws a comparison with what triggered the cooperation between the Americans and tribesmen during the al-Qaim campaign. Sattar called his allied sheikhs, and at a press conference held at his house, declared the establishment of the Awakening movement and its aim to fight the AQI insurgents.

The involvement of the U.S. forces in the organization and establishment of the movement is clear by the fact that on September 13, Sheikh Wissam al-Hardan al-Aethawi, who was present at the meeting and was a first deputy in the movement, reports that a car, likely belonging to a CIA operative, visited Sattarøs house. At a meeting between Sattar and

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[191] Simon, õThe Price of the Surge,ö 2008.
[192] Currently Lieutenant General.
[193] Wilbanks, õHow the "Sons of Iraq," 2010
[194] Ibid.

Wissam, the former handed the latter a speech written on behalf of U.S. President George W. Bush that Sattar was suppose to read during the conference. Because he was illiterate, Wissam helped him with the content of the speech which the leader of the Awakening eventually delivered on the 14th.[195] Not only that, but there was at least one reported U.S. official present at the meeting, Col. Sean MacFarland, who said that the house was õpackedö with allied sheikhs.[196]

The tribal leaders established a committee called the *Anbar Salvation Council* consisting of 41 people, not all of who were present at the meeting. Sattar was chosen as the leader and Wissam was to be the administrative deputy of the movement. Sheikh Hamid al-Hayess was selected as õhead of the Salvation Council.ö[197] The success of the movement spread quickly throughout the Sunni Triangle and soon there were other centers where tribal leaders had stood up and declared that they will fight the foreign insurgents. It moved even past the Sunni center and into Baghdad. MacFarland was reported saying that, by December of 2006, tribes were õbeginning to flipö if not to direct support to the Coalition then at least to a neutral stance.[198]

Sattarøs newly elevated high-ranking position in the local hierarchy, as well as his deep connection with the U.S., is exemplified by his attempts to replace the Governor of al-Anbar, Mamoun al-Alwani (1957), from his position by pressuring the governor through the Americans. Just a month after the establishment of the Awakening, at a õvery unpleasant dinnerö described by the leader of the Provincial Reconstruction team to the U.S. State Department, James Soriano, Governor Rashid conceived to allow the Deputy Governor of the province to be named by Sattar. The prominent position of the Sheikh as well as his desire to squeeze every opportunity from his newly established alliance with the Americans, was even more clear in November of 2006, when after an intervention by the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki (1950), the Anbar Provincial Council was expanded by 8 seats, to 48, and they were all given to members of the Awakening. But nothing shows the level that he had reached, more than the meeting with President George W. Bush, at al-Asad air base in September of 2007. The meeting occurred just a week before Sheikh Sattar was assassinated with a car bomb on September 13, 2007, a day before the first anniversary of the Awakening.[199]

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[195] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 57.
[196] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, I, 2009, p. 61.
[197] Ibid. p. 58.
[198] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, I, 2009, p. 12.
[199] *Ibid.,* p. 276.

6.4 The economics behind the Awakening

Once tribal leaders declared their support to the Americans they were awarded with various economic incentives. I pointed out a number of examples above that clearly show the support that some selected sheikhs were receiving from the Americans. However, plenty more can be described as reported by tribal leaders or even in some cases U.S. officials involved in this patronage-client relationship. Sheikh Jassim Muhammad Saleh al-Suwadawi, who was part of the al-Jazeera area Awakening council, for instance in an interview explained how, through the Coalition, sheikhs were able to win many reconstruction and building projects.[200] By coincidence or not in December of 2006 the Governor of al-Anbar received his first reconstruction funds amounting to around $40m, even though the funds were available for years before that.[201] Jobs in towns were scarce and in many instances the sheikhs were provided with the opportunity to selected people for a particular job, accomplishing the necessary preconditions for a patronage based relationship as explained by Kanchan Chandra.[202] This way the Americans established a structure of double-patronage where the sheikhs were both part of the allocation of capital and work, and clients at the same time (Figure 3).[203] In order to raise the stature of the sheikh in his area, the õchosen onesö were acting as õfunnelsö through which the Americans provided projects and economic benefits to tribal members.[204] There were many instances where Americans were turning a blind eye to sheikhs who decided to collect the money from a particular project without actually accomplishing what they were hired for.[205] This however, does not provide a surprise, as the former had already decided to use tribal leaders and tribesmen who were not only ex-Baøath members, but at some point were part of the armed insurgency, and even joined al-Qaeda.[206] In order to appease and attract the support of the sheikhs the Americans resolved not only to economic but to other incentives such as prisoner release, as was mentioned earlier with Sheikhs Aifan.[207] What is even more striking is that Saddam Hussein is reported to have conducted prisoner releases in exchange for promise that the freed men will help fight the American invasion.[208]

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[200] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 70.
[201] U *Al-Anbar Awakening*, I, 2009, p. 158.
[202] Chandra, *Why Ethnic parties succeed*, 2007, p. 2-3.
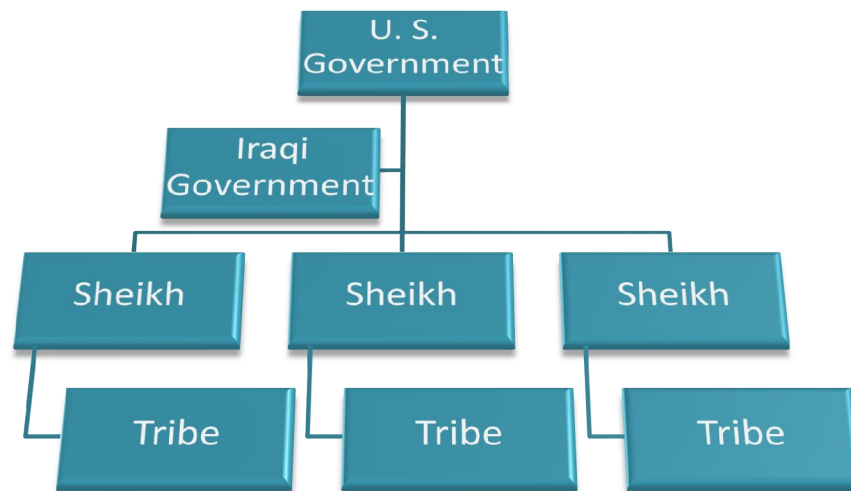[203] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, I, 2009, p. 209.
[204] Ibid., p. 230.
[205] Ibid., p. 236.
[206] Ibid., p. 250.
[207] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 39.
[208] D. Blair, "Saddam Empties Iraq's Jails," *The Telegraph*, October 21, 2002,
www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/1410858/Saddam-empties-Iraqs-jails.html.

Figure 6 - Hierarchy of incentives

By the same token tribes were expecting these benefits as a precondition for their support for the Coalition forces.[209] That is one of the reasons why the Coalition chose to side with Sheikh Sattar who promised them that if they are able to award projects that would benefit his area and tribe, he can õprovide three battalion-sized formations of tribal militia, right now.ö[210]

After the Awakening finished its job and exhausted the reasons that it was created for, so did the fragile õunityö that connected the various entities taking part in it. As soon as the common threat posed by AQI was destroyed or minimized, the leaders of the movements began fighting for power and exploiting the projects that were awarded to them, for personal gains. There are reports and testimonies by tribal leaders, such as the case with Sheikh Majed Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Sulayman,[211] who warned the Coalition forces that their activities are becoming a source of alienation towards different tribal elements in the province, because of their ignorance towards some of the corrupt activities of Awakening leaders.[212] The total amount spent on the Awakening movement by the U.S. government by 2009 was nearly $400m, monthly they were allocating around $40m to the tribal leaders for various projects as well as salaries and weapons.[213] Sheikhs were reportedly receiving 20 percent of every

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[209] H. LaFranchi, õøAnbar Modelø under fireö, *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 26, 2007, http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0626/p01s02-usfp.html?page=1.
[210] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, I, 2009, p. 230.
[211] A high ranking man in the Dulaymi confederation.
[212] *Al-Anbar Awakening*, II, 2009, p. 133
[213] Wilbanks, õHow the ÷Sons of Iraq," 2010, p. 67.

payment made to a tribesman.[214] A large bulk of this sum was misused both by Iraqis and by the Americans. The latter would use ghost employees, there was poor or no control over the distribution and the use of the funds. The U.S. provided cash directly to the sheikhs and allowed them to distribute the money as they pleased to their tribesmen without any control whatsoever.[215] Many documents were displaced and missing, such as receipts and internal control documents that would otherwise hold people accountable to how the money was being spent, by the time a report was issued in 2014 that looked into how the various reconstruction funds were spent.[216] There have been several emblematic cases of former U.S. officials who were incarcerated for their involvement in various corruption schemes as mentioned above.[217]

These examples provide just a small caption of the available, and publicly unavailable, information on how did this odd cooperation between former enemies quickly turned into a fruitful cooperation that ended in reducing significantly the strength of AQI and in fact in some places, completely removing the foreign insurgents. However, it is quite intriguing to note that one of the central figures in establishing the Awakening, MacFarland, expressed the opinion that tribes are only interested in the benefits and they do not have friends. He, interestingly enough, predicted what would happen in the future with this fragile incentive based, superficial alliance of interest that he helped create - õdown the road, would they fight us if we overstayed our welcome? They might very well.ö[218]

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[214] Simon, õThe Price of the Surge,ö 2008.
[215] Wilbanks, õHow the ‑Sons of Iraq,ø' 2010, p. 68.
[216] õLessons Learned on the Department of Defenseøs Commanderøs Emergency Response Program in Iraq,ö Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, January 24, 2013, p. 12.
[217] A. Madhani, "U.S. Troops, Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan Suspected of Corruption," *ABC News*, June 20, 2010, www.abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-troops-charged-corruption-iraq-afghanistan/story?id=10952163.
[218] Kukis, õTurning Iraq's Tribes,ö 2006.

7. Conclusion

Tribes and tribal existence have been a significant part of the history of Mesopotamia and the Levant since ancient times, long before the establishment of the dominant religion in the region in present days ó Islam. The territories of nowadays Iraq have been dominated by the different families, clans and tribal federations and their importance can easily be traced throughout history regardless of the various empires and forms of government that have existed.

Nevertheless, with the progress and development of the country and in particular the larger cities, tribes became less prominent and tribal affiliations began to disintegrate. Many might argue that this is the case in current days Iraq, especially in the larger towns. However, various processes and events in the contemporary history of the country, as I pointed out in my thesis, have unlocked and propelled a process of renaissance of tribal association. This runs contrary to the forces of societal disintegration and individualism that are present in most, if not every, developing country.

This development was kick-started during the reign of Saddam Hussein and carried throughout the development of the country up to the present days. During this period of time spanning around 35 years, Iraqis experienced several wars, economic sanctions and embargos, regime changes, invasions and an influx of a large number of foreign insurgents, whose aim was destroying the central government through terror activities. All of these events made the everyday life of the average Iraqi, regardless of his sect, religion or political orientation extremely difficult economically and safety-wise. In addition, the lack of security and protection increased the fear and distrust in central government structures. The daily threat to the life of the individual was a common experience for all Iraqis in every part of the country, especially after the invasion. All of these developments gave surge to a process of resurrection of tribal affiliation, in search of protection and economic support.

As I showed in my thesis, this process began with Saddamøs tribal policies which aimed at securing his place in power, through an elaborate and complex set of actions that offset the traditional balance of tribal affiliation throughout the country. Hussein began playing off different sheikhs one against the other, eliminating tribal leaders and elevating new ones in their place, ones that were going to be loyal to the regime and could be easily deposed of, just as they were created. This selective process of handpicking individuals for top government positions led to a sense of pride for the members of the õchosenö tribes, as would be expected and tribal members started to see the need to re-affiliate themselves with their *ashira*, because

this would provide them with an opportunity for upward mobility in the government apparatus.

This tribal selection had a side-effect, an effect which resembles the tribal resurrection witnessed in the Tikriti tribe, for instance, although it was for completely different reasons. In the uncertainty, created by Saddam and the economic strains that were the rule of the day, we can also witness the resurfacing of tribal connections within the other õun-chosenö Sunni, Shia, Kurdish, etc. tribes which were the only providers of a certain level of security and a feeling of belonging in a country that was dominated by Saddamøs õchosen Sunnites.ö

The process which began with the dictatorøs actions was only strengthened during the U.S-led invasion and its aftermath. The features which allowed tribalism to flourish were not only present, but in fact increased after the removal of Hussein and the aftermath of this event. The rise of sectarianism, added to the worsening of the economic situation, on top of actions by the American forces which led to widespread distrust in them, and the central government, were all contributing factors to the tribal consolidation of the local population, and, in particular, of the Sunni tribesmen. The Sunnites experienced, not only the above-mentioned factors, but they had also a separate incentive to consolidate, and that was the fear of reprisals by the Shiøa led government as well as the strong Kurdish forces, due to Sunni support and participation in Saddam Husseinøs reign. Sunnites felt the need to consolidate with their tribesmen and to draw their connections closer because collectivism provided for a better chance of withstanding the various social, economic and security difficulties they were facing. Furthermore, the tribe provided for a sense of belonging and a place within a country that was deeply divided among not only religious and ethnic, but also sectarian lines. Surrounded by this reality of fear, uncertainty and danger, Sunni sheikhs were forced to take actions in order to guarantee the existence of their tribesmen and to secure their position on top of the tribal formation, a position that could be threatened by other prominent leaders if the wellbeing of the *ashira* is not looked after.

The reality of the situation required from sheikhs to make a decision on what is the more profitable and more beneficial stance in the war that ensued after Saddam Hussein was removed from power, between the Coalition forces and the foreign insurgents led primarily by AQI. As I expressed in my thesis, this was a conscious choice on behalf of the tribesmen, caught in between the war that would allow them to gain their agency and not be viewed as voiceless pawns in the conflict. This argument was clearly proven by the shift in the allegiance of Sunni tribes from support and alliance with AQI in the initial post-Saddam period when they helped the fight against the Coalition, to a later 180 degrees turnaround in

support for the latter in their fight against the former. This alliance was at no point anything more than a temporary collaboration between the players for gains that would serve a short-term strategy of removing the enemy of the day, whether that was AQI or the Americans.

This process of incentive-based alliances was explored not only by the tribes, but also by the Americans who after their initial failure in the fight against AQI in al-Anbar, realized their mistakes, which assisted the sheikhs' decision to align their tribes with the terrorist organization, and took actions to alter this balance of power by attracting the support of the tribes. In order to achieve that, Americans had to rely on material-based, economic incentives that would "buy-off" the support of a particular tribe in exchange for direct cash transfer or other forms of economic assistance, that were veiled under reconstruction and rebuilding projects taking place throughout the country.

There was an obvious immediate success that these policies secured for both sides of this newly formed alliance, however, as many authors and even American policy-makers expressed at the time, the nature of this alliance compromised the future cooperation of the central government and the Sunni tribes. Furthermore, it also created the threat of a U.S. trained semi-professional fully armed army, being left out on the street after the goal of defeating the insurgents was accomplished, and the Coalition would not have the need for such an armed force anymore. This army could not be supported and financed by the Shi'a central government without American support.

The situation in Iraq after the pull-out of the U.S. troops in 2009 clearly shows this point, as tens of thousands of former *Sons of Iraq* were left unemployed and angered by false promises of integration into the Iraqi army and administrative branches, a situation that much resembled what have happened in 2003 after the dissolution of the Iraqi army by the U.S. The similarities, however, do not stop there in my opinion, as plenty of common threads could be found between the situation in Iraq in 2003, and the situation in Iraq after the Coalition troops left the country. For one, a resurgence of AQI was beginning to take shape which could be seen by the number of terror attacks per day which in the period after 2009 were in higher numbers than between 2003 and 2004.[219] Furthermore, plenty reports suggest that tribes and sheikhs decided to realign their position in the conflict once again and supported AQI's actions much like the initial post-Saddam period, especially during the leadership of Prime

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[219] *The statistics portal*: http://www.statista.com/statistics/269731/civilian-deaths-per-day-by-suicide-bombings-in-iraq-war/.

Minister Nouri al-Maliki, which ended in 2014.[220] This tribal support helped create the fertile ground on which the IS, which derived from AQI, was able to flourish. In fact tribesmen have expressed opinion that they will support IS until al-Maliki steps down because they see him as the bigger threat.[221] This distorted vicious cycle of repeating events, seems to indiscriminately repeat itself, as we can now see another familiar occurrence begins to take shape – tribal alienation from IS and realignment with the central government, which is seen as the lesser of two evils, and the increasing presence of foreign troops on the ground, including Americans. To make the picture even more familiar, we can just explore one of the reason behind this division between IS and the tribes, which is the brutality of the former and its drive to establish its understanding of Islam.[222] After all IS is the brainchild and a descendant of AQI. As I have shown in the thesis, we can find this to be one of the driving factors for the division between sheikhs and the foreign insurgents during the Awakening movement.

Therefore in conclusion, I believe it is quite clear that Sunni tribes have played a major role, both passive and active, in the conflict that occurred in Iraq after the invasion of the U.S.-led Coalition forces, and even before that. Their importance was well acknowledged by all sides in the conflict and the need to use the tribes was part of their respectful strategies. The situation of uncertainty and constant threat emanating from both sides of the conflict, boosted tribal consolidation and the strengthening of tribal relations, as a viable form of providing security and economic stability for tribesmen. In addition to that, sheikhs and their tribes managed to obtain an agency by positioning themselves on different sides of this conflict during different times, depending on which was more beneficial and provided for a better support and security for tribal members, as well as a stronger position for the sheikhs.

Tribal consolidation was a by-product of the war in Iraq and has now resulted in a deeply sectarian, religious and ethnically divided Iraq, which has struggled to form a comprehensive

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[220]O. Ali, "Anbar Tribal Leader: Maliki Is 'More Dangerous' Than ISIS," *Rudaw*, July 6, 2014, www.rudaw.net/english/interview/06072014; E. Banco, "Some Iraqi Sunni Tribal Leaders Allied With The US Are Working With ISIS," *International Business Times*, February 27, 2015, www.ibtimes.com/some-iraqi-sunni-tribal-leaders-allied-us-are-working-isis-1831068. A. Fordham, "The Other Battle In Iraq: Winning Over Sunni Muslims," *NPR*, February 3, 2015, www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2015/02/03/383454926/the-other-u-s-battle-in-iraq-winning-over-sunni-muslims.

[221] R. Spencer, and C. Malouf, "We will stand by Isis until Maliki steps down, says leader of Iraq's biggest tribe," *The Telegraph*, June 29, 2014, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10934438/We-will-stand-by-Isis-until-Maliki-steps-down-says-leader-of-Iraqs-biggest-tribe.html.

[222]E. Banco, "Iraqi Sunni Tribes In Anbar Fighting ISIS Say They Need More US Weapons," *International Business Times*, February 23, 2015, www.ibtimes.com/iraqi-sunni-tribes-anbar-fighting-isis-say-they-need-more-us-weapons-1825642; S. Al-Salhy, "Iraq's Sunnis ready to fight IS group," *Al-Jazeera*, August 31, 2014, www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/iraq-sunnis-ready-fight-group-201482771434297157; O. Guerin, "Iraq: Sunni tribe 'left for slaughter' by Islamic State," *BBC*, November 10, 2014, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29984668.

all-representative government that could unite the country. The rise of IS certainly furthers this division, due to its sectarian drive and brutal tactics against not only Shi'a, Kurds and other minorities, but against Sunnites that dare to oppose it. However, the threat of the Islamic State could also serve as a uniting force between the various actors in Iraq, as they now posses a common enemy which Sunnites, Shiites, Kurds, Christians, etc. want to remove.

Additional Figures:

U.S. boots on the ground
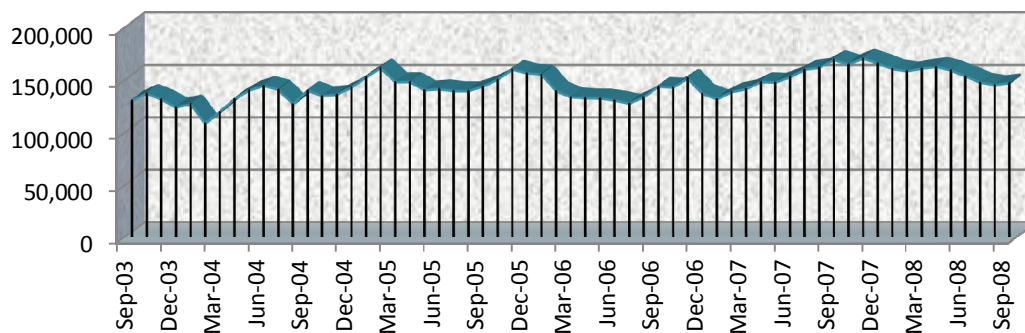
Figure 7

Commander's Emergency Respond Program
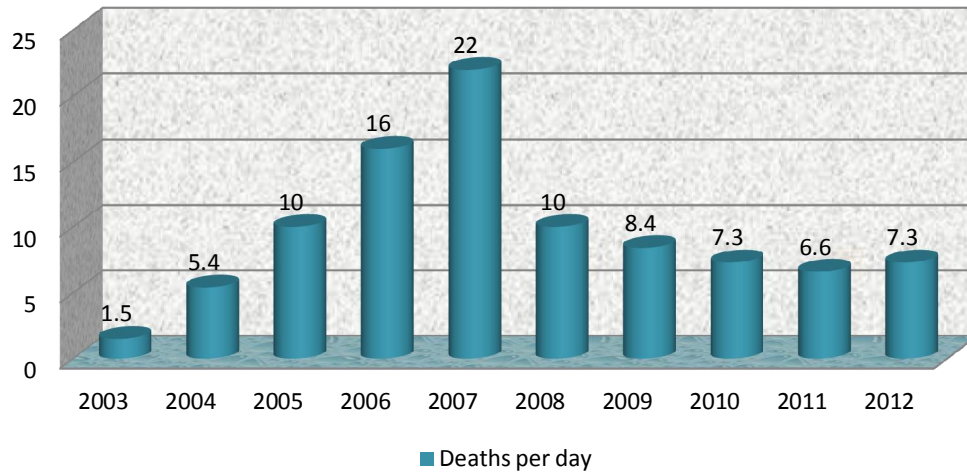
▪ Ammount in millions of dollars
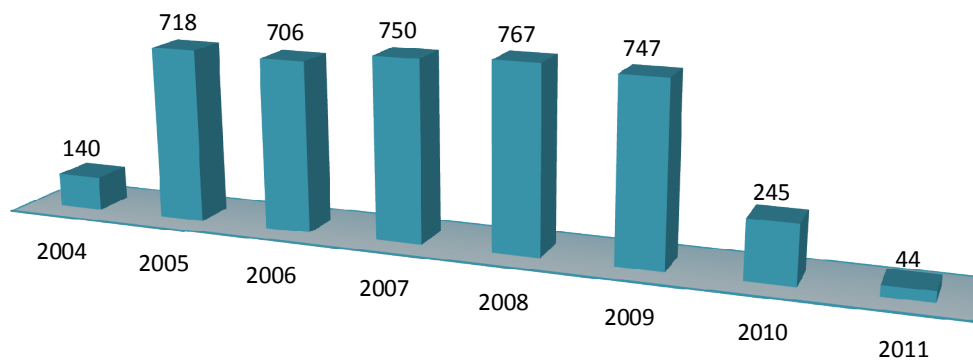
Figure 8

Average number of civilian deaths per day by car bombs and suicide attacks in Iraq the war, from 2003 to 2012

Figure 9

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