Proxy War in Iraq

Evidence from the Al Anbar Awakening

President Bush and Sheikh Sattar meet in September 2007

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Words:	21,342 words
Study:	MSc Crisis and Security Management
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Abstract

The subject of proxy warfare is nothing new; in fact, throughout the centuries, empires, states, and individuals have used non-state actors to perform acts of violence. War by proxy, however, remains somewhat of an obscurity in academia and policy literature, and its dynamics are generally poorly understood. The application of proxy war, by contrast, is widespread in contemporary global and regional affairs, and will likely continue to be. Therefore, it is quintessential to enhance the understanding of its dynamics in past instances, to allow for a more fruitful analysis of the phenomenon in the future. In order to enhance understanding, this thesis uses Principal-Agent theory and Milos Popovic' Theory of Defection to answer the following question: To what extent can Principal-Agent theories and Popovic' Theory of Defection explain defection in the case of the Al Anbar Awakening from 2006-2008? This study concludes that shared preferences were important in the Al Anbar case, but only if one considers other factors than ethnicity relevant. Also, this study finds evidence for the claim that a weak agent is unlikely to defect against a strong sponsor in the case of Al Anbar. On the other hand, this study finds little support for the claim that agents are likely to defect if they have access to alternative resources. Finally, this study concludes that Popovic' Theory of Defection is supported by the Al Anbar case. However, this support is dependent on the level of analysis that is employed.

Foreword

I choose the topic of proxy intervention because I saw its occurrence everywhere around me: Russian support for Ukrainian separatists, American support for Kurds in Syria, and Iranian support for militia's in Iraq and Syria. I started researching the relationship between local groups and foreign support, and found that it is still a very underdeveloped subfield, with very little theoretical development. I also found that the abovementioned armed conflicts were too recent and too politically sensitive to base an academic research on. Therefore, I choose one of the most recent, but also one of the most publicized cases: the Al Anbar Awakening.

I want to thank all those from the Leiden University faculty that facilitated the process of writing the thesis, and most of all my supervisor Wietse. Also, I am indebted to the work of Milos Popovic for his theoretical innovations. Finally, I want to thank my family and girlfriend for their support and critical remarks.

I hope it will be an enjoyable read.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction & Outline

The subject of proxy warfare is nothing new; in fact, throughout the centuries, empires, states, and individuals have used non-state actors to perform acts of violence (Williams, 2012, pp. 61-88; Ahrem, 2011, pp. 1-5). War by proxy, however, remains somewhat of an obscurity in academia and policy literature, and its dynamics are generally poorly understood (Mumford, 2013, pp. 2-4; Salehyan, 2010, pp. 495-496). The application of proxy war, by contrast, is widespread in contemporary global and regional affairs, and will likely continue to be so (Loveman, 2002, p. 30; Mumford, 2013, pp. 97-112). Therefore, it is quintessential to enhance the understanding of its dynamics in past instances, to allow for a more fruitful analysis of the phenomenon in the future.

This study will contribute to this debate by analyzing the relatively recent case of the Al Anbar Awakening in Iraq from 2006-2008. This case is especially interesting because the collaboration between the Anbari tribal sheikhs and the United States' military resulted in a dramatic and positive change in security (Benraad, 2011, pp. 121-125)

This study will start by providing a short overview with historical examples of proxy interventions to strengthen the argument that this policy is not novel, as well place the phenomenon of proxy intervention in the wider academic context. Subsequently, this research will delve into the academic theoretical debate that has developed over the past 10 years with regards to proxy interventions, touching upon differing definitions, perspectives and variables. This research will define, analyze, and compare the concepts of militias and rebels, states, and the different types of sponsorship.

In the ensuing section, this study develops four distinct theoretical expectations based on Principal-Agency theories, and Popovic' Theory of Defection. The first expectation argues that shared preferences reduces the likelihood of defection. The second expectation asserts that if agents have access to alternative sources of support, the agent is more likely to defect. Third, Principal-Agency theory argues that strong agents are more likely to defect against weak sponsors. The fourth expectation is Popovic' argument that the stronger the hierarchy of an agent, the lower the chance of defection will be.

Following the theoretical chapter, the study presents a historical and contextual overview of the events leading up to the Al Anbar Awakening. The consecutive chapter is devoted to the evaluation of the theoretical expectations in the light of the Al Anbar Awakening case.

This study concludes that shared preferences were important in the Al Anbar case, but only if one considers other factors than ethnicity relevant. Also, this study finds evidence for the claim that a weak agent is unlikely to defect against a strong sponsor in the case of Al Anbar. On the other hand, this study finds little support for the claim that agents are likely to defect if they have access to alternative resources. Finally, this study concludes that Popovic' Theory of Defection is supported by the Al Anbar case. However, this support is dependent on the level of analysis that is employed. More information on this will be presented below.

1.2 Research Question

To what extent can Principal-Agent theories and Popovic' Theory of Defection explain defection in the case of the Al Anbar Awakening from 2006-2008?

1.3 Societal and Academic Relevance

The subject of proxy warfare as a foreign policy tool is significant and relevant for both scientific and societal purposes.

1.3.1 Academic Relevance

First, proxy conflict research has until recently been lacking in the scholarly discourse of International Relations (IR) and Strategic Studies academia (Lebow, 2010; Vasquez, 2009). Or as Mumford puts it "[proxy wars] are historically ubiquitous yet chronically under-analyzed" (Mumford, 2013, p. 1). Furthermore, IR discourse has overlooked important political, strategic and military implications of the use of proxy actors (Hughes, 2014, p. 523). Traditionally, IR scholars have emphasized the role of direct military intervention and hard power, neglecting completely the role of indirect interventions (Holsti, 1996). Those indirect shows of force have, however, been prevalent in foreign policy (Salehyan, Gleditsch, & Cunningham, 2011, p. 722). Rigorous analysis of the dynamics of proxy conflicts, thus, is much needed.

Second, the state as the principal actor in the international politics is under siege. As Brown puts it, "the temptation to rely on military proxies is systemically driven, being generated by the structure and basic behavior of an emergent global system which is neither unipolar, nor

bipolar, nor even really 'multipolar', but polyarchic – a highly interactive and interdependent, yet decentralized, system of many kinds of actors, large and small, state and non-state" (2016, p. 244). In other words, the world is moving towards a system that is more fluid, which will increase the likelihood of war by proxy (Brown, 2016, p. 244; Bunker & Bunker, 2016, pp. 325-326), making understanding the dynamics of proxy conflicts all the more relevant.

Third, Mumford argues that nowadays the world is drifting away from total war scenarios, and this shift is intrinsically linked to the changing dynamics of international relations, and the role of the nation state, therein (2013, pp. 3-4). Or as John Mueller describes it, the world has witnessed the "obsolescence of major war" (Mueller, 1989, p. i; see also Loveman, 2002, pp. 35-36). Therefore, states will increasingly utilize other means to attain their foreign policy objectives, again making better understanding of the concept more relevant.

1.3.2 Societal Relevance

Proxy wars are relevant for society for three, at times intertwined, reasons. First, it potentially offers a tool with which policy makers can achieve their interests and at the same time diminish the risks of exposure (Hughes, 2014, pp. 522-523; Marshall, 2016, pp. 183-185). In other words, to understand the dynamics of proxy wars is to develop an analytical tool to understand an instrument which can have great effect on the international stage.

Second, in line with the previous argument, better understanding of proxy war and its pitfalls will enhance states' ability to counteract proxy initiatives from other rival states by hitting where it hurts (Cragin, 2015, p. 311; Byman & Kreps, 2010, p. 3). One should note that this facet is not fully incorporated in this thesis, and must hence be regarded as a mere hint for future research.

Third, in addition to the growing spectrum of international actors, the West is experiencing a modern Vietnam syndrome because of the high cost in blood and treasure of the wars of choice in Iraq and Afghanistan (Kalb, 2013). The mission creep developed by these conflicts has diminished the Western public's appetite for large-scale interventions overseas (Mumford, 2013, pp. 77-80; Blow, 2013). In a world where states are less inclined to intervene directly in conflicts, other tools are necessary for these states to influence the outcome favorably. Generally, states have three options when confronted with intrastate conflicts: do nothing, intervene with direct military force, or intervene indirectly (Salehyan, 2010, p. 503). Considering

the high cost in blood and treasure of direct intervention, and the undesirability of doing nothing, the option of intervening indirectly seems increasingly promising.

1.3.3 Conclusion

In sum, the lack of theoretical understanding of proxy warfare, and the overall negligence of the concept, combined with the likely increase in the occurrence of proxy conflicts, leads one to conclude that enhancing knowledge of the proxy war dynamics in imperative. This research aims to enhance the knowledge of the dynamics of proxy warfare by studying a very important and recent case: the Al Anbar Awakening.

1.4 Literature Review & Knowledge Gap

This section is devoted to researching the existing knowledge on proxy interventions, and distinguish between the different streams of thought. It will start with a broad determination of the position of proxy wars in current academic debate, and subsequently delve into the more issue specific literature on proxy conflict.

1.4.1 Proxy Warfare in International Relations Literature & Theory

Intrastate conflicts have received increased scholarly attention (Regan, 1998, pp. 754-759), not least because of the policy implications of conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and several African states during the 1990s (Collier, 2002, pp. 1-16). More recently, the war on terror prompted the United States (US) to intervene in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 (Belasco, 2009a, pp. 1-10). The aftermath of these conflicts elucidated that interventions in third countries, and especially the nation-building efforts by the US and other Western states, are far more costly and hazardous than the bearing capacity of the sending countries (Stiglitz & Bilmes, 2010, pp. 11-16). Furthermore, direct third-county interventions have increasingly been criticized for a lack of international legality and legitimacy (Bellamy, 2004, pp. 131-136).

Traditionally, IR theorists have emphasized interactions between states searching to maximize power (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 1-9; Waltz, 2010, pp. 1-5). On the other hand, towards the end of the Cold War, IR scholars set out to broaden and deepen the IR research agenda (Krause, 1996, pp. 229-235). For example, non-state actors, including but not limited to international institutions (Keohane & Nye, 1977, pp. 1-6), and individuals (Paris, 2001, pp. 94-96), became the object of research, in an effort to capture the complexity and multiplicity in

levels of analysis in International Relations realities (Krause, 1996, p. 229). This, coupled with the increasing restraint of the international community to engage militarily in other countries' internal conflicts, leads to the conclusion that actors on the international stage will need other tools to achieve foreign policy objectives (Mumford, 2013, pp. 3-4). Proxy warfare, thus, should be placed within the International Relations debate on widening and deepening the research agenda.

Furthermore, some authors have sought to explain why states opt to choose for militant or terrorist organizations to pursue their foreign objectives (Salehyan, Gleditsch, & Cunningham, 2011, pp. 709-714; Byman, Chalk, Hoffman, Rosenau, & Brannan, 2001, pp. 20-39; Mumford, 2013, pp. 32-36). Mumford, for example, argues that states motivate their actions based on both interests or ideology (Mumford, 2013, pp. 32-36). His underlying idea is in line with the realist school of International Relations, that states will seek to maximize self-interest (Waltz, 2010, pp. 1-9; Mumford, 2013, pp. 32-34). Mumford asserts, however, that self-interest alone cannot fully comprehend the complexities involved in choosing a proxy (Mumford, 2013, pp. 31, 34-38). Therefore, he adds ideological motivations to the equation "because of the integral part ideology has in identity formation and thus alliance construction" (Mumford, 2013, p. 31). Byman et al., for example, also point out that "religion can be a powerful motivation for states to support insurgencies" (Byman, Chalk, Hoffman, Rosenau, & Brannan, 2001, p. 36). Although the separation between ideology and self-interest seems reasonable for the purposes of providing a comprehensive notion of the spectrum of motivations, Mumford's dichotomy is rather simplistic. Tamm, for example, points out that constructivist efforts such as Wendt's "Anarchy is what states make of it" differ with realist and liberalist notions of power (Tamm, 2014, p. 383; Wendt, 1992, p. 391). For the purposes of this study, however, it is sufficient to determine the position of proxy warfare within the wider spectrum of IR theoretical strands. All in all, proxy interventions can be instigated by both self-interested, as well as ideological reasons.

1.4.2 Proxy Warfare in the Cold War

Proxy war is as old as war itself, which humankind has known since the dawn of time (Williams, 2012, p. 61). Importantly, however, during the Cold War, the US and the Soviet Union sought more indirect means to attain foreign policy objectives. As Byman et al. point out, "during the 1970s and 1980s, the [US], the Soviet Union, and their proxies regularly supported insurgencies throughout the world. Each shared a belief that toppling or weakening ideologically hostile

governments was a strategic necessity, even if the country in question was far from its shores" (2001, p. 39). Direct confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union became increasingly unimaginable because of the risk of total annihilation by weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) (Loveman, 2002, p. 37). Loveman asserts that "given the state of weapons technology and the general abhorrence of conflict in the aftermath of the Second World War, it is not surprising that the international conflicts of the Cold War period were never settled with a Third World War. But this aversion to war does not imply that the basic realist tenets of state interest have ceased to exist" (2002, p. 37). The support of the US for the contras in Nicaragua (Walsh, 1998), the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in Angola (Wright, 1997, pp. 99-141), and the mujahedeen during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Coll, 2005, pp. 53-70), are but a few examples of this practice (Maoz & San-Akca, 2012). Thus, in a Cold War context, proxy wars were alternatives to avoid total war because direct confrontation would annihilate all affected powers, i.e. the US and the Soviet Union.

1.4.3 The Appeal of Proxy Warfare in Contemporary Conflicts

This study slightly introduced the debate on the appeal of proxy warfare earlier in the discussion; this section will continue this argument. There are several costs commonly associated with direct intervention, including but not limited to: international condemnation and subsequent backlash in the international arena, direct costs both in blood and treasure, embarrassment of open strategic failure (Salehyan, 2010, p. 503; Mumford, 2013, pp. 41-45). Actors in the international arena attempt to circumvent these costs by employing other actors to fulfill their objectives for them (Byman & Kreps, 2010, pp. 2-6).

First and foremost, proxy intervention creates a veil of uncertainty about the sponsor's involvement. As opposed to direct interventions, proxy wars' plausible deniability reduces the risk both of international condemnation, and the possibility of open strategic failure – and hence international embarrassment (Mumford, 2013, pp. 41-42; Byman & Kreps, 2010, p. 6). Byman et al. underline this in reference to terrorist groups, by arguing that "whereas a state's conventional military attack on an adversary creates a clear connection to the perpetrator and thus a clear target for retaliation from the adversary, state delegation to a terrorist group may create a more tenuous linkage between the agent and the state sponsor. Retaliation is more difficult to justify because of the thin evidence linking state intent and agent actions" (2010, p. 6). For example, Russia has

gone to great lengths to mask their support for Ukrainian separatists during the civil war in the Ukraine that started in 2014 (MacFarquhar, 2016).

Second, direct intervention is costly (Belasco, 2009a, pp. 1-10). Far too often, IR scholars and policy communities neglect this indispensable variable (Baldwin, 2000, pp. 174-175). Baldwin asserts that "[c]ost is an intrinsic part of the concept of utility, and utility calculations are what estimates of success are all about" (Baldwin, 2000, p. 179). In other words, costs in both blood and treasure should be part of the foreign policy analysis equation (Stiglitz & Bilmes, 2008, pp. 1-8). Therefore, proxy strategies can aim to by-pass the costs in blood and treasure traditionally associated with direct interventions (Popovic, 2014, p. 28). Hence, proxy wars will give policy makers more proverbial bang for buck.

1.4.4 Proxy Wars: Modus Operandi

The way in which proxy wars are fought differs amongst cases. Sponsors have a wide array of options with which they can support their proxies. There are four general categories of *modus operandi*.

First, sponsors can choose to provide personnel and training. Importantly, the function of these troops differs from a direct intervention. The goal is not to engage the opponent directly, but to enhance the proxy troops' capabilities. For example, advisors can train the proxy forces, enhance organizational capabilities, organize logistics in order to bolster the capabilities of proxy forces (Mumford, 2013, pp. 61-65).

Second, a sponsor can provide military materiel to the sponsor force. Mumford asserts that "it is the means to ensure a specific end without having to engage in the messy business of warfighting themselves" (Mumford, 2013, p. 63). He continues that "the supplying of military materiel […] is the prime way for benefactors to get others to do the fighting for them" (Mumford, 2013, p. 63). This is not to say that every arms sale is made in the proxy context. However, arms, ammunition, and other military technological capabilities, may serve to enhance the capabilities of the agent to achieve a shared objective. In other words, not every arms sale or delivery is inherently indicative of a proxy relationship, but it can be if the transfer serves a common strategic or tactical goal.

Third, financial assistance is yet another means employed by sponsors to establish a principal-agent relationship. Again, financial aid can be provided for a wide variety of reasons – not least for humanitarian reasons. However, if sponsors choose to finance an actor for the

purpose of achieving some politico-military objective, this can and should be regarded as a proxy relationship. As this study will show in the ensuing case study of the Sons of Iraq, the US primarily supported them with financial means, i.e. by paying the salaries of troops.

Fourth, sponsors can utilize 'soft power' strategies to support their agents. Nye argues that soft power is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises out of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies" (Nye, 2004, p. x). In other words, soft power arises from the notion that non-military characteristics of both sponsors and agents can influence behavior at the same rate – be it in a different manner – as can military or financial support. Once again, observers should be reluctant to typify all such actions simply as proxy relationships. Crucially, the fact that one actor may come to support another actor, does not necessarily entail that a relationship of dependence exits, essential to the typology of proxy warfare. For example, sponsors can enhance the international or regional standing and legitimacy of their agents in order to further their aims – among others, this type of support was provided to the Al Anbar militia by the Bush administration (Perry, 2010, p. 105).

In conclusion, a wide variety of means are available to policy-makers in the proxy conflict context to achieve a strategic end. Among these is support through the supply of personnel, financial assistance, supply of military equipment, and soft power support.

1.4.5 Proxy Warfare in Principal-Agency Theories

Salehyan notes that proxy warfare should be understood in a principal-agent framework, where "delegation is employed as a cost-saving device and can be a useful tool when the principal lacks task-specific knowledge and expertise" (2010, p. 495). Principal-agency has two major dilemmas: adverse selection and agency slack. Adverse selection refers to the inherent information asymmetry between principal and agent, where the principal, or sponsor, will have inadequate information about the motives and capabilities of the agent (Salehyan, 2010, p. 492). Agency slack, often also referred to as moral hazard, underlines the potential non-alignment of interests, and the inability of the principal to control the agent perfectly. However, the principal is not completely surrendered to the wishes of the agent. First, the principal can use monitoring mechanisms to control the behavior of the agent (Salehyan, 2010, p. 502). Second, the principal can punish the agent if behavior diverts from the principal's wishes (Salehyan, 2010, p. 502). It goes without saying that this works the other way around as well: the principal can reward

(elements of) the agent structure if they behave in their interests. In other words, the ability to monitor and sanction the agent is paramount from the principals' perspective.

2. Methodological Framework

This thesis sets out to examine the applicability of Popovic' delegation theory to the Al Anbar Awakening case. A case is a "single instance of an event or phenomenon" (Odell, 2001, p. 162). In social sciences research, case studies are contrasted by quantitative large-n studies. Each methodology has advantages and drawbacks, and should primarily be chosen depending on the specific question a researcher aims to address (Odell, 2001, p. 163). Importantly, choices in methodology imply consequences in the use of methods for data collection and assessment. Several reasons motivate the decision to examine a single case.

First, Popovic already conducted a large-n study on the topic of delegation and defection in civil wars (Popovic, 2015a). Although repetition is a cornerstone of sound academic research, this study will not conduct a large quantitative study, largely due to reasons of feasibility. Also, the decision to choose for a quantitative and qualitative research strategy should be directed by the question that grounds the research (Yin, 2003, p. 5; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, pp. 1-15).

Second, Popovic suggests himself that when studying insurgent operations in Kashmir, that "generalizations to other groups may be difficult to make. It is possible that organizations operating in other conflicts might defect against their sponsors for other reasons" (Popovic, 2015b, p. 933). It is exactly this question that this study attempts to address; in other words, to examine the extent to which Popovic' thesis that rebel defection becomes more likely if organizational structure is weak, holds in a different context. If a new case in different circumstances does not support Popovic' theory, then the theory may have to be changed. If the case confirms the theory, then the theory is strengthened.

2.1 Case Study Design

The single case study design has been selected in order to comprehensively assess the relevance of the defection theory laid out by Popovic (2015b). If the theory holds in this alternate context, Popovic' theory will be strengthened. Using Odell's terminology, this study will conduct what is

widely regarded as a disciplined interpretive case study, because it "interprets and explains an event by applying a known theory to a new terrain" (Odell, 2001, pp. 163-164).

One of the strengths of a single case study is that it may uncover previously unknown variables (Odell, 2001, p. 164). In some cases, these variables may completely refute the proposed hypothesis. In other instances, new variables may potentially be incorporated into the theoretical framework to strengthen the applicability of the theory (Odell, 2001, p. 170).

The Al Anbar Awakening case also shows similarities with a least-likely case study design. The least-likely case study is important because it is "the closest a single case study can come to approximating a neutral test would be when a researcher selects an extreme case that is highly unlikely to confirm, and finds that even this case does so. Such a least-likely case study would provide strong, though not unqualified, support for the inference that the theory is even more likely to be valid in most other cases, where contrary winds do not blow so strongly" (Odell, 2001, p. 165). A preliminary study of the case shows that the tribes that constitute the so-called 'Awakening' are highly factionalized. The central organization of the proxy is thus weak. Still, a preliminary study of the case characteristic shows no signs of defection against American sponsorship (Perry, 2010, p. 105). This would suggest that Popovic' main hypothesis is refuted. If this study can conclude after a more thorough analysis that Popovic' hypothesis holds, the case study will prove to be strong support for the theory (Odell, 2001, pp. 165-166).

2.1.1 Single Case Study: Drawbacks

The decision to conduct a single case study inherits some inherent drawbacks. First, case studies in general are less representative than large-n statistical studies (Odell, 2001, p. 171). The results of a single case or multiple cases apply for those cases only. This study heavily relies on previous statistical analysis from the original author of the defection theorist, Milos Popovic, in this regard (Popovic, 2015a). The work that has been done in this area previously will perform the basis for analysis. Still, the results of this thesis should be regarded merely applicable to the Al Anbar Awakening case. In other words, the utilization of a single case study design impacts the external validity of the research negatively.

Second, the results of this research are not applicable to a wider variety of cases. The objective of this research is simply to test the theory in this one instance; to consider whether the theory holds or not in these specific circumstances, and if not, how the theory may be further developed to more precisely fit.

Third, Odell argues that "qualitative methods provide lesser precision in their descriptions, claims about magnitudes of causal effects, and claims about the relative importance of different causes, than statistical methods" (Odell, 2001, p. 75). In other words, the weight of explanatory factors can be more precisely measured when using large-n studies. For example. Popovic (2015b) intends to measure the effects of organizational structure of Pakistani militants on the chance of defection. He introduces counterfactual arguments – ethnic kinship between principal and agent, and alternative support – as opposing views. A previous large-n study determined the weight of these explanatory factors (Popovic, 2015a). The magnitude of the explanatory factors could then be applied in more detail to a single case (Popovic, 2015b). It is important to note here that it was not the case study that determined the magnitude of the explanatory factors, but the preceding statistical analysis.

2.2 Case Selection

This thesis sets out to research the applicability of defection theory on the Al Anbar Awakening case. The unit of analysis of this research, therefore, is the relationship between the United States and the Al Anbar Awakening. Importantly, this does not mean that one single organization in the Al Anbar Awakening is crucial to this research; contrarily, the Al Anbar Awakening as a socio-political movement is crucial to understand developments in the Al Anbar province. No single organization can claim to completely represent the participants in the Al Anbar Awakening. This study, however, makes frequent use of one of the most popularized organizations: the Al Anbar Awakening Council, led among others by Abdul Sattar and Faisal Gaoud (Al-Jabouri & Jensen, 2010, p. 11). The Al Anbar Awakening Council was the first of such Awakening councils, established in September 2006 (Al-Jabouri & Jensen, 2010, p. 4; see also Appendix III). Following the establishment of the first Awakening council, tribal leaders in Al Anbar and other provinces took up the initiative and called their organizations Awakening councils as well (Al-Jabouri & Jensen, 2010, pp. 14-15). Section 4.1.1 of this study will elaborate on other programs and actors, such as the Sons of Iraq paramilitary program. The reasons why the Al Anbar Awakening is an interesting case to study in this context will be discussed below.

First, the Al Anbar Awakening has some inherent qualities when put in a historical context. In fact, some of the militia's that were co-opted by the US military were former insurgents fighting the US. Also, the Al Anbar Awakening is widely regarded as the single

biggest success in Counter-Insurgency (COIN) in contemporary history (Montgomery & McWilliams, 2009a, pp. 1-16). Therefore, the Al Anbar Awakening is intrinsically interesting to study based on the merits of the case.

Second, the Al Anbar Awakening case solves some practical issues. For the purposes of this study, it was important that the case had concluded at this point in time. An ongoing case not only gives principals little time to reflect on the event, and thus limits availability of data, but is also inherently speculative as to its conclusion.

Third, the Al Anbar Awakening case is a relatively overt case of proxy warfare. For example, the fact that Bush met with Sheikh Sattar in 2007 indicates the level of openness about the US support for Al Anbar's tribal counter-insurgency (Perry, 2015, pp. 101-115). The fact that the support for the Anbari tribes was relatively open, enhances the availability of open source data. Despite this, some data may not be readily available because documents could still be classified.

Fourth, the Al Anbar Awakening case falls within the parameters of commonly used definitions. In a large-n study conducted by Popovic, proxy conflicts are only taken into account if the conflict results in more than 25 battle-related death a year. Popovic further points out that these deaths have to be the result fighting against a government (Popovic, 2015a, p. 9). This study differs in that respect. The Sunni militants of the Al Anbar Awakening were not directed against a government, but against the common enemy of both the Sunni tribal leaders and the Americans: Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) (Kagan, 2007, p. 1). Needless to say, in the context of the Iraqi civil war AQI is not a government in the traditional sense. Note that the American-Al Anbar dyad was thus not incorporated in the statistical analysis (Popovic, 2015a). However, other authors point out that proxy war should not necessarily be directed against a state government (Mumford, 2013, p. 45). Hence, Mumford argues that "the dual employment of a proxy war strategy alongside a direct interventionist strategy also need not seen as contradictory" (Mumford, 2013, p. 25). In other words, whether the Al Anbar Awakening case should count as a typical proxy intervention case is somewhat contentious. However, the necessary elements are present to conduct an in-depth research, as will be shown in section 5.2.

2.3 Data Collection & Analysis

This research focusses on the relationship between the United States as a sponsor and the Al Anbar Awakening Council as an agent. In researching this relationship, this study relied on several data collection methods. Of the six evidence collecting methods suggested by Yin, this research relied on archival research, documents, and interviews (Yin, 2003, p. 83). The archival records used in my research consist of Congressional reports, maps and charts, and organizational records (Yin, 2003, p. 89). With regards to documentation, this thesis relied on leaked and declassified intelligence reports and diplomatic cables as primary sources, and academic literature, news articles and magazine articles as secondary sources. Unfortunately, it was impossible to conduct field research in Iraq. Due to recent events, the security situation has worsened in this area. The Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIS or ISIL) remains in control of large swaths of land in western and northern Iraq. It has only been some months since a combination of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and militias have regained control over the provincial capital of Ramadi and Fallujah (Morris & Salim, 2016, p. 1).

Instead of using primary interviews, this thesis relies on the set of interviews that were published in the study named "Al-Anbar Awakening" by Montgomery and McWilliams. According to the authors, "it presents the perspectives of both Iraqis (volume two) and Americans (volume one) who ultimately came to work together, in an unlikely alliance of former adversaries, for the stabilization and redevelopment of the province. The collection begins in the 2003-2004 time frame with the rise of the insurgency and concludes with observations from the vantage point of early-to-mid 2009" (Montgomery & McWilliams, 2009b, p. xi). These volumes serve as the next best thing to direct personal interviews because this study is comprised of literal transcripts of key individuals. However, the conclusiveness of future research would benefit considerably from more personal interviews because semi-structured interviewees could provide clarification to the ambiguities in prior research. For example, experts can hardly even agree on the right name and leadership of the Al Anbar Awakening Council (McCary, 2009, p. 48; cf. Long, 2008, p. 80; cf. Smith and MacFarland, 2008, p. 48; see also Long, 2008, p. 88).

The combination of sources allowed this study to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the US and the tribal organizations in the Al Anbar province. The multiplicity of resources sources allows for triangulation of findings, which in turn improves the validity of the research (Yin, 2003, p. 98). Some problems still persisted, however. Primarily, the

bulk of the material stems from Western scholars, institutions, and media outlets. Therefore, in relying mostly on US situational accounts, a potential political bias arises which needs to be addressed (Denemark, 2001, p. 417). The prime technique to address this bias has been to incorporate as many as possible authors, with often very differing opinions and assessments. Also, leaked situation reports from the intelligence community – although unconfirmed – shed new light on the day-to-day operational context, as well as the validity of other relevant sources. Also, there is the risk of hindsight bias, which refers to the "after-the-fact exaggeration of an outcome's a priori likelihood" (Roese & Olson, 1996, p. 197). For example, commanders on the ground might equate the success of the Al Anbar Awakening with their prior efforts, but the likelihood of success could have been far less in advance, or affected by other factors (Smith and MacFarland, 2008, p. 41; cf. Al-Jabouri & Jensen, 2010, pp. 14-15).

3. Theoretical Framework

This section introduces and critically assesses Milos Popovic' Theory of Defection. His theoretical framework is especially applicable because Popovic' theory is designed to explain the state and non-state dyad. Also, according to Popovic, his is the "first comprehensive study of sponsor-rebel relations" (Popovic, 2014, p. 10). In order to fully comprehend all facets of the theory, this section will first clarify the essential concepts and definitions. The second section will link Principal-Agency Theory with Popovic' proposed hypothesis. The third section will analyze Popovic' theory more in-depth.

3.1 Defining Actors in Proxy Warfare

The mayor contribution of this section is to define three concepts that are essential to understand conflicts fought at arms-length. This section will delve into the concepts of militias, states, and sponsorship respectively.

3.1.1. Militia

This study defines militia as a named non-governmental political-military collective of individuals using armed force to achieve certain local or state-level political goals, including, but not limited to, control over territory and population (for a slight alteration of this definition, see Popovic, 2014, p. 22). This study's definition of militia differs in one important aspect of Popovic' own definition of "rebels". Popovic defines "rebels" as "named non-governmental

political-military collective of individuals using armed force against a target government to achieve certain political goals" (Popovic, 2014, p. 22). The difference is crucial in that Popovic focusses only on those agents that are directed against a state actor, whereas this study will entertain the possibility of non-state agents directed against other non-state entities (Jones, 2012, pp. 1-2). This widening of the definition of a key player allows for research of co-opted militias without endangering the main premise of Popovic' theoretical applicability.

One should note that the widening of the definition should not result in the inclusion of paramilitary organizations. Popovic defines paramilitaries as "supplements of the state's regular forces. [They] may control a rear base but they ultimately lack a distinct political organization and their objective is always driven by violence" (Popovic, 2014, p. 23). However, the definitional lines are not as static and clear-cut as Popovic would like one to think. For example, non-state proxy actors may change in status, resulting in complete or partial incorporation into the official state security apparatus. Furthermore, paramilitary organizations that initially lack a "distinct political organization", may prove an independent military force later on – especially if they are able to attract alternative support for their operations and formulate their own political goals.

Also, whereas Popovic' "rebels" are in the business of rebellion, which is defined as a "protracted political-military struggle against a government aimed at weakening and/or replacing its authority over a certain territory through the use of illegal political organizations and armed forces" (Popovic, 2014, p. 22), "militias" are engaged in violent activity, possibly at the behest or at the detriment of the government. The term "rebel" implies an actor's actions against established authority, but this should not necessarily be the case in proxy relationships. Therefore, "militia" is more neutral than "rebel", for a non-state actor with violent capabilities, indicating that its political objectives may or may not be in line with official state policy.

Furthermore, Popovic views rebels organizations as unitary actors in the sense that a named organization can comprise of several semi-independent actors, also known as factionalized organizations (Popovic, 2014, pp. 11-12). This is seemingly contradictory, but in the tumultuous context of intra-state wars, loyalties and organizations are often fluid (Woldemariam, 2011, pp. 1-4). The solution this study has decided on when it comes to what constitutes an rebel – or militia – organizations is to determine the level of power of the central leadership. For a more elaborate discussion on this issue, see section 5.3.4.

3.1.2 States

It goes beyond the scope of this research to comprehensive review all the literature covering the conceptual, definitional, and political issues of what exactly defines a state. Therefore, this research will follow Popovic' lead in using his working definition of a state as an entity with a "sovereign government over a certain territory recognized by at least two permanent members of the UN Security Council. Government is the regime that controls the capital city" (Popovic, 2014, p. 23). This is in line with the most common Weberian definition of the state as the "human community that, within a defined territory— and the key word here is "territory"— (successfully) claims the monopoly of legitimate force for itself. The specific characteristic of the present is that the right to use physical force is only granted to any other associations or individuals to the extent that the state itself permits this. The state is seen as the sole source of the "right" to use force" (Weber & Dreijmanis, 2008, p. 156). In other words, a state is the entity with the monopoly of force in a given territory.

Also, this definition suits the purposes of this research because the sponsorship dyad between states and non-state actors is essential in order to answer the research question. The relationship between state and the non-state actor is the fundamental phenomenon that this studies seeks to investigate. This relatively narrow definition allows this study to exclude contentious cases that would unnecessarily complicate the research, and that would expand the universe of cases considerably. It is important to note, however, that although this research excluded non-state sponsors, the definition may be altered to include non-state actors in other studies, depending on the unit of analysis.

Furthermore, the state in this research will operate as a unitary actor. Previous studies have noted the multiplicity intra-actor levels, ranging from individual cabinet member to specific state agencies (Allison & Zelikow, 1999, pp. 1-15; Nielson & Tierney, 2003, pp. 241-245; Hawkins, Lake, Nielson, & Tierney, 2006, pp. 1-9). However, in order to clearly examine the dyad between state and agent, this study will focus only on the state as a unitary actor, without downplaying the possible complications of collective agency (Salehyan, 2010, pp. 502-503).

In sum, this research will use a narrow working definition of a state as a unitary sponsor, as different conceptualizations and definitions of a state may lead to different research results – similar dynamics are present with regards to militia's. Future research on this topic will have to elucidate the significance of the state as a unitary actor – both state and non-state – and what the

consequences for the principal-agent relationship will be if the state and non-state actors consists of relatively autonomous and competing institutions.

3.1.3 Sponsorship

This research uses Popovic' definition of state sponsorship as "active provision of material and non-material resources by an external government to a designated rebel organization […] aimed at establishing and maintaining an agenda control over the group" (Popovic, 2014, p. 26). For a more elaborate discussion on the forms of support, one could return to section 1.3.5 of the introduction. Also, the conceptual differences with direct interventions have already been touched upon previously in this research, but is important to note that "[u]nlike intervention, sponsorship is a complex relationship between sponsors and rebels. In this relationship, a sponsor provides resources to a rebel movement in exchange for compliance and loyalty, often at the expense of rebels' organizational autonomy" (Popovic, 2014, p. 25). In other words, the sponsor supports the agent in a multitude of ways, and in return they will demand some say in organizational policies and goals.

3.2 Principal-Agency Theory

3.2.1 Introduction

This section will expand on the introduction of Principal-Agency Theory given in the literature overview, as well as Popovic' theoretical expectations consisting of: preference convergence, sources of alternative income, and power disparity between principal and agent (2014, pp. 37-42).

Principal-Agency Theories essentially describe any relationship that exits between an entity with decision-making authority, that grants another entity some of its authority to execute a task. Importantly, Principal-Agency Theories may also cover alliances, which are "an explicit agreement among states in the realm of national security in which the partners promise mutual assistance in the form of a substantial contribution of resources in the case of a certain contingency the arising of which is uncertain" (Bergsmann, 2001, p. 29). Thus, an alliance can denote a specific kind of principal-agent relationship. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive, nor does the existence of one imply the relevance of the other. Furthermore, Principal-Agency Theories have been used to describe delegation mechanisms in national bureaucracies (Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991) as well as in international organizations (Nielson & Tierney,

2003). The reasons why principals decide to delegate authority to agents include, but are not limited to, cost-efficiency and plausible deniability (Salehyan, 2010, p. 502; Popovic, 2015b, p. 932). As a quid pro quo, sponsors will want their agents to cooperate over goals and implementation (Popovic, 2014, p. 30). The ideal scenario for principals is that agents will fully comply with the sponsors' demands, and allocate resources accordingly. The perfect execution of the tasks on the principals' behalf will lower the cost of monitoring the agent, and may thus be a very attractive policy to pursue.

However, perfect alignment between interests and goals is hardly reality. This section will continue by laying out some the inherent problems of principal-agent relationships. The final section will start to link this body of knowledge with Popovic' propositions, which will form the basis of further elaborations in the next section.

3.2.2 Adverse Selection & Agency Slack

As noted previously, intervening at arms-length inherits certain risks to the sponsor. First, because principals have an inferior information position vis-à-vis the agent, principals run the risk of selecting an incapable agent. This asymmetric information position is referred to as adverse selection (Salehyan, 2010, p. 492). This risk presents itself prior to the establishment of the principal-agent relationship.

The second risk posed by delegation is agency slack (Salehyan, 2010, p. 502). Agency slack refers to the possibility that agents may act against the sponsor's wishes - both overtly or covertly. In the extreme case, agency slack may also mean that the agent uses the capabilities to attack the principal. This is also known as the "Madison's dilemma", where "[t]he essence of the problem is that resources or authority granted to an agent for the purpose of advancing the interests of the principal can be turned against the principal" (Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991, p. 26).

3.2.3 Monitoring & Sanctioning

As has been shown in the previous paragraph, delegation is not without its risks. If one were to compare the delegation of violence to a business arrangement, the business would formalize its demands and obligations in a contract. The principal business would potentially hire third parties to monitor the agent's progress. If demands are not met from either side, a legal procedure could be started in which a judiciary would point to the guilty party, and order sanctions if demands are

not met. The abilities of states and non-state actors in the international arena to take a case before court is limited, however, to say the least. Especially, if states are interfering in other countries' internal affairs, the principal and agent will have an incentive to keep publicity to a minimum. Therefore, states and militias will be unlikely to enforce contractual obligations. Instead, principals have a variety of tools available to control the agent if necessary – which all come at a cost (Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991, pp. 27-34). First, in principle, sometimes the sponsor can perform due diligence research on the agent, to reduce the problem of adverse selection (Salehyan, 2010, p. 502). In theory, this would reduce the change that the agent will conceal important information about motives and capabilities. Yet, the inherent information asymmetry leading to adverse selection will be unlikely to be resolved completely.

Second, principals can monitor the agent themselves to make sure that agents will comply with its demands after the relationship has taken form (Salehyan, 2010, p. 502). Principals may hire third parties to fulfill the monitoring function – creating yet another principal-agent structure.

Third, if the agents' fulfilment of demands is below par, the principal must be able to credibly threaten to impose sanctions. Credibility is the keyword here – as even a possibility of a credible threat will reduce the chance of defection ex ante (Weingast, 1984, p. 155). Consider also that an agent in its right mind will not kill the goose that lays the golden egg. In other words, an agent that is increasingly dependent on the sponsorship of a principal will be more susceptible to threats of sanctions. A strong state can use "intelligence to locate rebel camps on their territory, deploy police and army to rural areas, and identify, round up and punish the ringleaders for misbehavior" (Popovic, 2014, p. 42).

Fourth, according to Salehyan, principals "construct checks and balances where multiple agents are created to increase competition among one another, reveal information about opportunistic behavior, and mitigate agency slack" (Salehyan, 2010, p. 502). In other words, agents will improve performance in order to receive resources.

3.2.4 Defection

The agency slack problems referred to earlier – overt or covert defiance of orders, using capabilities against sponsors – can also be grasped using the concept of defection. Popovic defines defection as "voluntary actions that rebel leadership, commanders or its factions pursue to maximize their benefits at the expense of the contract that they made with a sponsor" (2015a, pp. 3-4). Furthermore, defection can only occur as long as the sponsorship is still active (Popovic,

2014, p. 84). Moreover, militias may defect as a collective or as a faction. There are two types of defection: mild and severe defection. For the mild defection, militias can – both as a collective or faction – declare dissatisfaction verbally, refuse to carry out orders, or refuse to partake in negotiation or cease-fires backed by the sponsor (Popovic, 2014, pp. 32-33).

As for the severe defection, Popovic asserts that there are two variations: desertion or switching sides (2014, p. 32). Both are extremely bad news for the sponsor because the agents might use their newfound capabilities against the sponsor or their interests. Mild and severe defection might occur simultaneously or consecutively.

3.2.5 Principal-Agency: Theoretical Expectations

Popovic contends that Principal-Agency literature has three conditions under which it is more likely that agents will defect against their sponsor. First, if interests are aligned, agents are unlikely to defect. Popovic argues that the best intellectual proxy for alignment of interests in civil wars is ethnic affiliation (Popovic, 2014, p. 37). It is certainly true that in civil wars, ethnicity is often used to mobilize support. Moreover, some actors will actively seek to divide the conflict along ethnic lines in order to enhance their position (Lewis, Ali, & Kagan, 2013, pp. 1-9). However, and this is where this study differs considerably with Popovic' stance, ethnicity is not the sole indicator for shared interests. It is not hard to imagine a whole range of motivations that may compel actors to work together in conflict situations. For example, in the case of the US support for the Afghan insurgents opposing the Soviet occupier, little indicates that shared ethnicity has played any meaningful role (Coll, 2005, pp. 53-70). Instead, motivations for interethnic collaboration include, but are not limited to, efforts to attain intra-ethnic hegemony, personal financial, or simply countering a common enemy – as was the case in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, as well as in the Al Anbar province where the US and tribal leaders opposed AQI. It is beyond the objective of this research to fully investigate the weight of ethnic ties between sponsor and agent as a determinant for defection vis-à-vis the weight of other factors such as personal financial gain. These factors may very well override ethnic relationships. In other words, preference convergence can refer to shared ethnicity, but should not be limited to this one factor alone.

Second, if the agent has alternative sources of support, the principal will no longer enjoy a monopoly on resources (Popovic, 2014, p. 39). Hence, the grip on the agent may slip, and sanction mechanism will hurt less as the agent becomes less dependent on this sponsor.

Alternative resources include, but are not limited to, local tax levying, diasporas, and additional state sponsors.

Third, Popovic' overview of the academic literature suggests that a stronger agent is more likely to defect against a weak state (Popovic, 2014, p. 42). The crucial aspect here is that a weak state has relatively less capabilities to credibly threaten sanctions in case the agent does not fulfil the state's demands. Capabilities refer to an effective police or military force that have the means to punish rogue agents (Popovic, 2014, p. 42).

In sum, the Principal-Agency Theory literature suggests that agents are more likely to defect if they share ethnic ties, the agent has alternative resources, and finally, if the agent is strong and the principal is weak. However, Popovic argues that although all these factors may play a role, none of these explanations can capture defection comprehensively. Therefore, an alternative explanation is needed, which will be explained in Chapter 3.3.

3.3 Popovic' Theory of Defection

Popovic' main hypothesis is that the longer the delegation chain of authority, the likelier defection becomes (Popovic, 2014, p. 9). The organizational structure of the agent affects the length of the delegation chain, because "this authority is delegated to the rebel leadership who becomes an agent to its sponsor. […] Within the rebel organization, the command and control chain may extend to further principal-agent relationships" (Popovic, 2014, p. 9). If the agent organization is decentralized – or worse, factionalized – the chance of defection will increase (Popovic, 2014, pp. 9-10).

On the other hand, defection becomes more unlikely if the agent's organization is highly centralized because then the leadership has firm control over policies and implementation up to the lowest levels in the organization. In this case, sponsors can easily sanction the leadership and hold them accountable for the actions of lower echelons. In these centralized organizations, "key decisions are taken by a few individuals at the top, while the lower levels have almost no say in organizational policies and are in charge of implementation of these decisions. The lower levels report back to the central leadership and can be held responsible for any action" (Popovic, 2014, pp. 9-10). Furthermore, Popovic argues that centralized organizations are unlikely to defect because they lack ties to the local community, and thus are prevented from developing alternative sources of support, and the leadership receives private rewards for their loyalty (2014, p. 10).

Strong hierarchy, in other words, ensures that the agent implements directives from the sponsor. Also, in this situation, the leadership can relatively easily monitor and sanction lower commanders who refuse to carry out orders, and thus ensure command-and-control all the way down the organizational chain (Popovic, 2014, p. 10).

As noted before, this is not the case for decentralized and factionalized organizations. According to Popovic, "the leadership of non-centralized organizations cannot use the sponsor's resources to control the rank-and-file as commanders have stronger local ties, and, therefore, an access to alternative resources, which weakens their allegiance to the center" (2014, p. 11). In other words, the leadership of non-centralized organizations has less influence over the behavior of the lower echelons of the organization.

4. Case Study: Al Anbar Awakening

4.1 Introduction

This section will present the case study of the Al Anbar Awakening, or Sahwa. This process was truly a product of specific historical circumstances, and it is therefore important to grasp the situation in Iraq at the time. Therefore, after the introduction, this chapter will begin by sketching the contextual backdrop of the Awakening: the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the turmoil that followed, and the start of the insurgency. The second part will go into more detail on the history and culture of the Al Anbar province; in other words, the circumstances that first shaped the insurgency, and then made the power brokers in that region capitulate. The third part will deal solely with one important actor: Al Qaeda in Iraq. Their behavior and power position is essential to understand the Awakening. The fourth part will describe the reasons for the increasing friction between AQI and the Sunni tribesmen of Al Anbar that led to overtures towards the Americans on the part of the latter. This section will include earlier attempts to work together. Why these earlier attempts were unsuccessful will become clearer in the fifth section, which will describe the American attitudes towards collaboration. The sixth section will finally introduce the Al Anbar Awakening Council, its leadership, and organizational structure.

4.1.1 Disclaimer: Al Anbar and the Fog of War

As in any armed conflict, the Iraq War (2003) knows plenty of confusion. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between different groups, factions, and individuals, in order to start this

chapter with a clear foundation. First, the Al Anbar Awakening is often confused or used synonymously with the Sons of Iraq program (Al-Jabouri & Jensen, 2010, p. 3). However linked, the two differ considerably. The Al Anbar Awakening was a grass-roots, tribal uprising against AQI (Long, 2008, pp. 67-68). The Sons of Iraq program, on the other hand, is considered an ancillary of the Awakening, where the US took the initiative (Al-Jabouri & Jensen, 2010, p. 3). In other words, both consist of local Iraqi forces that oppose Al Qaeda in Iraq, and were supported by the United States military, but whereas the Awakening was a bottom-up movement that started among the Iraqi Sunni Arabs, the Sons of Iraq was a top-down program, organized by the US.

Second, there is some confusion in the literature about the organizations and committees that represented the early Awakening. On the one hand, McCary claims that there were two organizations: one led by former Anbari governor of Ramadi, Fasal al-Gaoud called the Al Anbar Salvation Council, and one led by Sheikh Sattar: the Awakening movement (2009, p. 48). Long, on the other hand, claims that "in Ramadi, Sheikh Sattar al-Rishawi of the Dulaimi confederation's Albu Risha tribe formally launched a concerted campaign against al-Qaeda in September 2006. Along with other leaders such as the Albu Nimr's Fasal al-Gaoud, Sattar founded a tribal alliance known as the Al Anbar Salvation Council (ASC)" (2008, p. 80). In other words, according to Long, Fasal and Sattar were leaders of the same organization. Note that the ASC is also known as the Al Anbar Awakening (Long, 2008, p. 88). Smith and MacFarland, however, make no mention of the Al Anbar Salvation Council or Fasal al-Gaoud, and merely refer to Sheikh Sattar's Awakening Council which originated in September 2006 (2008, p. 48).

The lesson here is that even prominent scholars and experts have different accounts of what exactly happened, who led the process, and what were the results. This is to remind the reader of what has been said earlier; that this study is dependent on mostly expert accounts, and that is very hard, if not impossible, to verify even a simple name. The following, therefore, consists of a mixture of accounts from different experts and academic scholars and other sources, in order to verify as many facts as possible through triangulation.

4.2 The US invasion, turmoil, and insurgency

The United States and its "Coalition of the willing" invaded Iraq in March 2003 (Taft & Buchwald, 2003, p. 557). The stated mission goal was to "disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people" (Bush,

2003, p. 1). The initial invasion progressed smoothly, and the first phase of the war ended around 3 weeks later. Soon after, however, the problems started arising. There were reports of widespread looting and instability, with incident-numbers soaring in throughout 2003 and 2004. The Sunni insurgency against the new Shia Iraqi government and the Americans dates back to the invasion in 2003, and two decisions made by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) (Pfiffner, 2010, p. 76). The first decision (CPA order 1) was the firing of all government personnel that were high-ranking members of Saddam Hussein's Baath party – a process often referred to as de-Baathification (Pfiffner, 2010, pp. 78-80; Ricks, 2006, pp. 35-45). Saddam's Baath party – although formally secular – had consisted mostly of Sunni Arabs, including from the tribal regions in western Al Anbar province (Isakhan, 2011, p. 262) . The second decision (CPA order 2) involved the disbandment of Iraq's extensive security and intelligence services (Pfiffner, 2010, pp. 80-84). Again, Iraq's security forces drew heavily on the Sunni Arab population for recruits, and most of the higher command were also Sunni Arab. Therefore, Pfiffner argues that the CPA strengthened the insurgency by: " (1) alienating hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who could not support themselves or their families; (2) by undermining the normal infrastructure necessary for social and economic activity; (3) by ensuring that there was not sufficient security to carry on normal life; and (4) by creating insurgents who were angry at the US, many of whom had weapons and were trained to use them" (2010, p. 76). However, Dobbins, for example, points out that even without these decisions, Sunni Arabs would likely have been aggravated about their new political position in a post-Saddam Iraq (2009, p. 141). In other words, Sunni Arabs felt disadvantaged by the division of power in the new Iraqi government. Finally, reports surfaced of ethnic cleansing campaigns against the Sunni population in retribution of earlier AQI attacks (Kagan, 2009, p. 6). In sum, the stage was set for a full-fledged sectarian conflict and insurgency between disenfranchised Sunni tribesmen, former military officers, and American and coalition forces, Iraqi police and military, and Shia militia, among other groups, and Al Anbar province was in the center of it.

4.3 Al Anbar Province

Al Anbar is geographically Iraq's largest province (see Appendix II). It is located in the west of the country; bordering Syria in the north, Jordan in the west, and Saudi Arabia in the southwest, making it ideal for smuggling and other illegal activities (Todd, 2006, pp. 5-47). A large majority

of Al Anbar's inhabitants are Sunni Arabs (Todd, 2006, p. 1). Many of these Sunni Arabs are member of a tribe, which "consists of various smaller clans, in turn composed of extended families. Members of a tribe claim kinship, […] which helps regulate conflict and provides benefits such as jobs and social welfare in environments where the modern state does not exist or is too weak to function" (Long, 2008, p. 68). Furthermore, the social and political position of tribes has changed drastically throughout the centuries; for example, under Saddam Hussein, tribes were initially suppressed, and later employed to bolster recruitment for the Iraqi army in its war against Iran (Todd, 2006, p. 5). As a general rule, tribal influence surges whenever governmental organization is weak (Todd, 2006, p. 6; Long, 2008, p. 70). Furthermore, Al Anbar was home to many in the officer corps of Saddam's security and intelligence organizations (Marten, 2012, p. 163). Also, Al Anbar hosted some very large weapons caches, which were plundered before the Coalition could move in to prevent it (Marten, 2012, p. 163). In other words, the province hosted a wide variety of actors and groups that had everything to lose after Saddam was ousted from power, and the means to take up arms. It should not be a surprise, then, that the hotbed of the insurgency was located in Al Anbar (McCary, 2009, p. 43). Al Qaeda in Iraq was one of the groups that successfully forced itself into the center of the insurgency in Iraq in general, en Al Anbar in particular (Marten, 2012, p. 163).

4.4 Al Qaeda in Iraq

The tribal sheikhs in Al Anbar had made a deal with AQI to oppose the American occupation and the Shia-led government (McCary, 2009, p. 44). Al Qaeda in Iraq, the local branch of the international terrorist network Al Qaeda, was in 2004 led by a Jordanian by the name of Abu Musab al- Zarqawi, who was killed by US forces in June 2006 (Marten, 2012, pp. 148-149). According to an Iraqi national, interviewed by David Kilcullen, the idea was straightforward: "We are Sunni, you are Sunni. The Americans and Iranians are helping the Shi'a - let's fight them together" (2007, p. 1). Furthermore, according to McCary, the tribal locals in Al Anbar, and Iraq in general, contributed local expertise, logistical support, and recruits. Al Qaeda provided support in training and finance (2009, p. 44). The situation had become so dire in the Al Anbar province that members of the American armed forces declared that the province had been lost (Ricks, 2006, p. 1; McCary, 2009, p. 49). However, Al Qaeda in Iraq now had a foothold in the territory, and started searching for sources of income, including but not limited to, smuggling and extortion

(McCary, 2009, pp. 47-48). McCary argues that in order to "force sheikhs and tribal leaders in Iraq to cede financial or tactical control, al Qaeda mounted a violent campaign of gruesome, demonstrative intimidation: kidnappings, assassinations, torture, and grotesque murders of tribal leaders and their family members, including beheadings and public dismemberment" (2009, p. 47; see also CNN, 2007). This violence, however, is deemed insufficient to account for the switch from AQI to the Americans because the Anbari's have long been used to intense violence (McCary, 2009, p. 47). Also, Long argues that the violence directed against tribal leaders in Al Anbar was meant to force the tribes back in line (Long, 2008, pp. 77-78). Indeed, it was not the violent campaign of intimidation that resulted in the dramatic shift in tribal allegiance, but the simple fact that Al Qaeda had made become overzealous in their effort to overtake every bit of business that was traditionally part of the tribes' income (Marten, 2012, p. 164). In other words, the calculus in the minds of the tribal leaders was that AQI had emerged as the dominant power which was expanding at their expense (Long, 2008, p. 77).

Another factor played an increasingly important role as well. Smith and MacFarland recall from their experience that "instead of telling them that we would leave soon and they must assume responsibility for their own security, we told them that we would stay as long as necessary to defeat the terrorists. That was the message they [the tribal leaders] had been waiting to hear" (2008, p. 44).

McCary, however, tells a different story. He argues that first the US was seen as the major threat against the tribal sheikhs, and now that it was about to leave, suddenly became an interesting partner because it did not threaten the tribes' political future. Instead, now that AQI had become so powerful in the region, the tribal leaders were more concerned about their position vis-à-vis AQI than the US (McCary, 2009, p. 50).

Initially, however, the local tribes were hesitant to go walk over to the Americans because they thought they were incapable of defeating AQI militarily (Marten, 2012, p. 164). According to Marten, this changed after the second battle of Fallujah in 2004 (Marten, 2012, p. 164; Long, 2008, p. 77). The Coalition had shown that it was capable of working together with locals in preparing the attack, evacuating civilians, and building support for their operation (Marten, 2012, p. 165).

In short, the tribal leaders had made an alliance with AQI to counter the US and the ISF. When AQI became too strong, and started infringing upon the political and economic status of

the tribal leaders, the strategic calculus changed in favor of US and Iraqi state cooperation. The cooperation that ensued could, however, never have been possible without a simultaneous shift in US thinking.

4.5 Shifts in American Thinking

In mid-2006, Al Anbar province and its capital Ramadi were considered some of the most dangerous places in Iraq (Kukis, 2006). For years, nationalist and islamist insurgents had been waging an intense and bloody asymmetric war against American and ISF. For a long time, the presence of US Marines and the ISF was confined to a small portion of the city, located near the most important government buildings, and a large Forward Operating Base (FOB) just outside Ramadi. The Americans would launch operations and patrols from inside the FOB, and most commonly run into enemy fire, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), or both. Also, the FOB was frequently under attack from mortar fire and light machine gun attacks. In other words, the American military had little control over the city, and at the time, the province in general was considered lost (Ricks, 2006, p. 1; McCary, 2009, p. 49). According to McCary, "the most dominant political force in the region was neither the U.S. military nor the Iraqi government, but al Qaeda" (2009, p. 49). The Americans, who had been in a largely similar position since 2003, needed a change.

The first change came in the form a change in tactics. Instead of operating from an FOB, the American military decided to clear, and crucially, hold areas in the city of Ramadi, where combat outposts would be created (Smith & McFarland, 2008, pp. 43-45). Ideally, these outposts would be manned by the Iraqi Police, to unburden the Americans soldiers, and free their capacities to stage new attacks on other areas and neighborhoods in Ramadi (Smith & McFarland, 2008, pp. 43-44). One of the major problems was that there were not nearly enough recruits to man the outposts and perform local police duties (Smith & McFarland, 2008, pp. 44-45). Therefore, Army Colonel MacFarland and others sought to engage tribal leaders (Smith & McFarland, 2008, p. 43). The American military promised that the recruits would be allowed to stay in their recently cleared neighborhoods – a policy that was previously strictly forbidden (McCary, 2009, p. 49).

Furthermore, whereas previously reconstruction efforts had focused around open bids or through the Iraqi government, the Americans now directly provided the sheikhs in Al Anbar with

lucrative reconstruction projects (McCary, 2009, p. 45). Furthermore, collaborative sheikhs were paid directly for the services of their tribesmen in the securing neighborhoods and manning checkpoints – around $300 per person (Marten, 2012, p. 160).

Also, the US military provided weaponry to the Sunni militia, although on a temporary basis (Benraad, 2011, p. 122; Michaels, 2010, pp. 143, 174). The extent to which the US delivered arms to the Sunni militia, however, remains unknown.

4.6 The Awakening

The Al Anbar Awakening started officially in September in 2006 when Sheikh Abdul Sattar (henceforth Sheikh Sattar, but also known as Sattar al-Rishawi, or Sittar albu-Risha, or Sattar abu Risha, or Abd al Sittar) announced that he and other sheikhs were, from then onwards, at war with Al Qaeda in Iraq. Together, they established the Al Anbar Awakening Council (Smith & McFarland, 2008, p. 48). However, it should be noted that the "celebrated Awakening, which cleared the entire province, probably began in early 2006 and perhaps even in late 2005. It is difficult to determine a precise start date because the Al-Anbar Awakening began as the insurgency began: secretly and separately, with differing organizational structures, various capabilities, tactics adapted to local circumstances" (Montgomery & McWilliams, 2009b, p. 13). Furthermore, Sheikh Sattar was not a paramount sheikh, but as the higher-ranking sheikhs of his tribes had left the country for Jordan and Syria – because of the danger to their lives, and many had been killed by AQI or other insurgent groups – he was still in a relatively strong position, regardless of his standing (Marten, 2012, p. 169). Nevertheless, he managed to bring together at least 20 tribes, who together with him renounced AQI, and vowed to support the American military and the government of Iraq (Marten, 2012, p. 168). Their tribesmen were to sign up for the Ramadi police force and protect the newly secured areas in Ramadi (Marten, 2012, p. 159). The operational success was tremendous: in every area where a sheikh had vowed to support the Awakening, the incident numbers plummeted (US Department of Defense, 2008, pp. 18-22; PRT Cable, 2007a). For example, in his cable in September 2007, Iraq Ambassador Crocker asserted that "there were 421 incidents, about 14 a day, in the province last month, the eighth consecutive month of decline. The tally compares to the 1,700 to 1,900 security incidents typically seen on a monthly basis last summer and fall. The high point was last September [2006] when MNF-West recorded 1,981 security incidents province-wide," and that there were four reasons for this

decline: “public opinion turned against Al-Qaeda, tribal leaders aligned with us, police recruitment increased, and joint Coalition-Iraqi security operations proved effective” (PRT Cable, 2007a). Also, statistics show a sharp decline of security incidents from 2006 to 2008 (see Appendix I).

Sheikh Sattar was killed by a IED near his home on 13 September 2007, ten days after meeting with US President Bush (PRT Cable, 2007d). His brother, Sheikh Ahmed, took over the leadership of the Al Anbar Awakening Council (PRT Cable, 2007b). Before his death, Sheikh Sattar had set up a political party that sought to overcome sectarian dividing lines: the Iraqi Awakening Movement (PRT Cable, 2007c). Note that Ambassador Khalilzad – Ambassador Crocker’s predecessor – argued in his cable that “although [Sheikh Sattar] talked about the need to avoid sectarian divisions in his nascent political party, it is likely that he envisions the new grouping as a vehicle for airing Sunni grievances and realizing Sunni political aspirations” (PRT Cable, 2007c). In any case, Sheikh Sattar did not live to realize his ambitions. His successor, Sheikh Ahmed, continued his brother’s aspirations to build a political party, but his national efforts were met with fierce opposition by the Iraqi central government (Fairweather, 2008). According to a September 2008 diplomatic cable, the political party established by Sheikh Sattar and continued by Sheikh Ahmed was “perhaps the most singular development on Anbar's political landscape in the past two years,” and that “its presence on the local scene promises to give the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), which controls the Provincial Council (PC), a run for its money at the ballot box [in the provincial elections in 2009]” (PRT Cable, 2008a). Following those regional elections, however, Sheikh Ahmed accused the IPP of tampering with votes, threatening that the Iraqi Awakening Conference would become a militant group instead of a political party (PRT Cable, 2009a). There is no evidence to suggest that he has put his words into action, however. Not unrelated is the electoral gain of the Iraqi Awakening Conference in these provincial elections, winning about 20 percent of the seats in the PC (PRT Cable, 2009c). In 2009, it appears that Sheikh Ahmed, now leader of the Conference of Iraqi Awakening Movements, would join prime-minister Maliki’s political bloc for the 2010 parliamentary elections (PRT Cable, 2009b). Eventually, however, his stature and power would demise significantly; and apparently, he now resides in Dubai (Lake, 2015).

It had always been the ultimate goal of the United States to incorporate the Awakening into the ISF, and efforts were taken on the military, political and diplomatic levels to assure this

would happen. As Ambassador Crocker put it, "We always felt that they [Awakening members] have to link up to the government of Iraq […] That has got to happen or nothing good is coming down the line" (Jasim & Salem, 2007, p. 1). In other words, the American play was to facilitate the Awakening, and ensure that the Shia-led Iraqi government of prime-minister Maliki would accept the Awakening members into the regular ISF. General Petraeus, head of the American forces in Iraq in 2007, concurred with this assessment: "I was determined that we would support the nascent Awakening and then, over time, gain our Iraqi partners' support, as well" (Petraeus, 2013). Ultimately, the Americans handed over responsibility of Al Anbar – and the Awakening – over to the Iraqi government in 2008 (Knarr, 2016, p. iv). Note that many in the Awakening movement considered this move by the Americans as betrayal (Benraad, 2011, p. 123). It goes beyond the purpose of this study to assess the impact of the allegedly premature departure of US troops from Al Anbar, but one could perceive this move as defection on the part of the US as a sponsor. As mentioned earlier, however, the most important dependent variable in this study is defection of an agent, not the sponsor.

However, in her 2011 article, Myriam Benraad argues that the Awakening members had defected back into the ranks of Al Qaeda in the 2009-2011 period (2011, p. 121). She provides four arguments for this defection: first, after the Americans had left Al Anbar, the economic incentive to cooperate had evaporated. Second, prime-minister Maliki had employed a strategy of divide-and-control by co-opting some of the Awakening members, and excluding others. Third, Awakening members had not been incorporated into the ISF. Those that were accepted did not receive timely payments. Fourth, with a diminishing American presence, AQI returned to the province with a devastating assassination campaign to force Awakening members to chance their allegiance once again (Benraad, 2011, pp. 122-129). In short, according to Benraad, the Awakening members acted against the interests of the United States.

There are two distinct problems with this statement. First, Benraad uses the Awakening and the Sons of Iraq phenomenons interchangeably. As this study has argued above, these were two distinct programs; the former a bottom-up tribal movement originating in Al Anbar province, and the latter a top-down US program throughout Iraq. In short, it is empirically wrong to equate the Al Anbar Awakening to the SOI program. Therefore, from Benraad's statements and evidence, it is impossible to determine that defection in fact to place on the part of the Al Anbar Awakening Council.

Second, the United States had left Al Anbar to the ISF in 2008, cutting the sponsorship ties in the process (Knarr, 2016, p. iv; Popovic, 2014, pp. 84, 86). Therefore, those members that returned to AQI after 2008 should not be considered defecting against the United States – even though they act against the interests of their former sponsor. In other words, the Theory of Defection is limited to defection against sponsor in an active sponsorship. Therefore, even if SOI or Awakening members switched sides back to AQI after 2008, this would fall beyond the limits of this study's criteria for defection (Popovic, 2014, p. 86).

4.7 Conclusion

This section set out to provide an overview of the origins of the Al Anbar Awakening. It has attempted to link the US-led invasion in Iraq, their ensuing heavy-handed measures, the rampant insurgency throughout the country, and the rise of Al Qaeda in Iraq, together in an effort to contextualize the situation that led up to the Sunni Arab and US alliance. Importantly, the strategic calculus of both the tribal leaders and the US military needed to change, in order to sow the seeds for collaboration. Indeed, only when a common enemy had emerged in AQI, were the two parties ready to deepen their ties. Furthermore, the Al Anbar Awakening Council developed into a political party led by Sheikh Ahmed. Importantly, this study has observed no instances of defection by the Al Anbar Awakening Council from 2006 to 2008.

5. Al Anbar Awakening: Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This section aims to analyze the Al Anbar Awakening in terms of four theoretical expectations derived from the previous sections: ethnicity, alternative support, power disparity, and level of centralization. However, it is important to first determine the degree to which the Al Anbar case is consistent with the criteria set out in sections 3.1.1 to 3.1.3; in other words, to what extent the Al Anbar case fits neatly in the definitions of militia, state, and sponsorship.

The next section will evaluate the case-specific results for every theoretical expectation. In other words, it will assess the theories in light of the available evidence. From this evidence, it will draw sub conclusions, and recommendations.

5.2 Conceptual Criteria

In the above chapters, section 3.1.1 to 3.1.3 elaborated on the conceptual characteristics of those involved in proxy conflict, and the mean at their disposal. This section, therefore, will determine to what extent the Al Anbar case is compatible with those criteria.

5.2.1 Militia and the Al Anbar Awakening Council

This study has defined militia as a named non-governmental political-military collective of individuals using armed force to achieve certain local or state-level political goals, including, but not limited to, control over territory and population. In order to determine whether the Al Anbar case meets the necessary criteria, this section will assess every aspect of the conceptual definition. First, the Council was exclaimed in September 2006 in order to fight Al Qaeda in Iraq, making it a named entity with political-military characteristics. Second, the Council has used armed force to achieve local goals. For example, Smith and MacFarland recall developments in Ramadi where "soon after the council ended, tribes began an independent campaign of eradication and retaliation against AQIZ [AQI] members living among them. Al-Qaeda's influence in the city began to wane quickly. U.S. and Iraqi units operating from COPs [Combat Outposts] killed or captured AQIZ's most effective elements while resurgent IP [Iraqi Police] and tribal forces raided their caches and safe houses" (2008, p. 49). Ultimately, the goal of the tribal militia was to eradicate Al Anbar of AQI and insurgents by holding onto areas that were previously cleared by the ISF and US forces (Smith & McFarland, 2008, pp. 48-50). One should note, however, that although the Al Anbar Awakening Council fulfills the criteria of a militia, it is in fact, constituted by several more or less independent tribes. On the other hand, the members of the Al Anbar Awakening Council did share the same goals, namely defeating Al Qaeda in Iraq. As mentioned before, the purpose of this study is not to research one single organization; on the contrary, the goal is to research the relationship between the United States and the Al Anbar Awakening movement. Therefore, the Al Anbar Awakening Council should be regarded as an alliance of tribes that represented the Awakening Movement, and to a certain extent institutionalized its goals and ambitions. Nonetheless, one can in no circumstances regard the Al Anbar Awakening Council as a hierarchical, command-and-control type of organization.

5.2.2 State Sponsors

This study followed the most common definition of a state as an entity that has sovereign government over a certain territory recognized by at least two permanent members of the UN Security Council, where the government is the regime that controls the capital city (Popovic, 2014, p. 23). The United States, as the most important sponsor of the Al Anbar Awakening movement, clearly constitutes a state following this most common definition.

The second important state actor is the state of Iraq. At the time in 2006, Iraq certainly fulfilled the abovementioned criteria to qualify as a state – although it did not control some areas of its territory (Baker & Hamilton, 2006, pp. 6-8). Also, the Iraqi state did not have a full monopoly on violence (Weber & Dreijmanis, 2008, p. 156). As the Al Anbar case will show, the US – as well as the Iraqi state – granted Awakening groups significant autonomy to patrol their own neighborhoods. It goes beyond the purpose of this thesis to fully investigate the extent to which Iraq still comprised a state in the formal sense. However, it is sufficient to note that in any case the Iraqi state had limited power over parts of its territory, and had to share or abet the monopoly on violence in others.

The position of the government of Iraq in the Al Anbar Awakening is twofold. On the one hand, the government benefited from the expulsion of AQI from the province, and subsequent improved security and stability (McCary, 2009, p. 53). On the other hand, the government of Iraqi prime-minster Nouri al-Maliki – a Shia politician – has been hesitant to support the Awakening movement because it might be tomorrow's renewed insurgency against the Shia controlled Iraqi authorities (McCary, 2009, p. 53). Furthermore, the Iraqi government – under pressure from the United States – grudgingly accepted Sunni tribal members into Iraqi police and military in Ramadi at the beginning of the Awakening (Marten, 2012, p. 168; Morin, 2007). Therefore, the Iraqi now had two distinct roles. First, Sunni Awakening members were integrated into the official Iraqi police and military, receiving payment and training from Bagdad (Marten, 2012, p. 168). In many ways, however, this was an undertaking of Awakening and US military; the role of the Iraqi government was very limited. The second role consisted of countering the new position of the Sunni community which it feared would attempt to challenge the Shia-led government (McCary, 2009, pp. 53-55). In sum, the role of the Iraqi government is not easy to untangle. More often than not, the government has proven distrustful of the Awakening

movement (Simon, 2008, p. 1). However, at times the government has supported the Awakening movement, mostly after pressure from the United States (Marten, 2012, p. 142).

5.2.3 Sponsorship

This study has defined sponsorship as "active provision of material and non-material resources by an external government to a designated rebel organization […] aimed at establishing and maintaining an agenda control over the group" (Popovic, 2014, p. 26).

The United States supported the Awakening movement by several material and non-material means. Needless to say, the overall goal was to inhibit the tribes from collaborating with Al Qaeda by offering them money, status, and power (McCary, 2009, pp. 50, 55-56). In return, the tribes pledged to disconnect ties with Al Qaeda and insurgent groups, and refrain from attacking US forces, and the ISF (Smith & McFarland, 2008, pp. 48-49). Among the material means, financial resources have been the most important contributor to the proxy relationship. Through the Iraqi government, the Awakening tribal members were paid for their services as part of the Iraqi police (Smith & McFarland, 2008, p. 44). According to McCary, financial incentives were paramount because "U.S. military commanders eventually realized that a system in which competing contracts went to the lowest bidder was counterproductive" (2009, p. 50). The policy was built on Western concepts of free market capitalism, but the US finally came to the conclusion that were they to effectively control the tribal sheikhs, they needed to support the system of patronage, which had traditionally been present. In other words, "by paying the sheikhs directly and allowing them to distribute the money as they saw fit, tribal leaders were able to regain their legitimacy and demand the fealty of their tribesmen as they had done in the past" (McCary, 2009, p. 50). Marten adds that "later in the year [2007] [Iraq Operational Commander] Odierno was also responsible for the authorization to use CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] funds to pay Sahwa [Awakening] commanders in Al Anbar. Before that US officers could "pay" the Sahwa only in rice, cooking oil, and other forms of humanitarian assistance" (2012, p. 162). As General Allen recalls it in an interview, "we did all we could to empower the sheikhs in the short term, to give them back the power that had been taken from them by al-Qaeda, and we did that both in terms of a kinetic alliance against al-Qaeda, but also supported the sheikhs in affecting projects in their tribal areas to the good of the people, turning on water treatment facilities again, reconnecting the electricity, paving the roads that had been blasted by years, now, of IEDs [improvised explosive devices], repairing bridges, helping

merchants to get their shops open again. All of it we funneled through the sheikhs, and all of it in the end empowered the sheikhs again, when al-Qaeda had done everything it could to marginalize the traditional tribal leadership" (Montgomery & McWilliams, 2009a, p. 230). In short, the goal of the US was to provide the tribal leaders with the means to continue their system of patronage.

Second, several authors claim that the US military has provided arms to the Al Anbar Awakening members (McCary, 2009, p. 45; Marten, 2012, p. 142). McCary, for example, claims that the "U.S. military almost completely changed its reconstruction and security policy in the province, sending money through Sunni tribal sheikhs instead of contract bids or the central government. Most significantly, the United States authorized, funded, and armed Sunni militias, which co-opted al Qaeda and insurgent recruiting and provided local security" (2009, p. 45). He fails, however, to substantiate his claim with convincing sources. Furthermore, Marten states that "official US policy stated that the Iraqi Interior Ministry was responsible for providing additional weapons and ammunition to the SOI [and Awakening] units. When the US gave them weapons it was always presented as a temporary stopgap" (2012, p. 142). Also, Burns and Rubin claim that US forces have provided arms to Sunni groups (2007). Ambassador Crocker begs to differ on this assertion. He states in a diplomatic cable that the "MNF-I [Multi-National Force in Iraq, consisting of US and international coalition forces] does not provide weapons to CLCs [Concerned Local Citizens, an alternate name for the SOI and Awakening programs]" (PRT Cable, 2008b). In other words, whether the Awakening members received arms from the US military remain largely unclear. As noted, some claim that sporadic deliveries were made. However, there is no public information available to clarify if, and if so, what kind of weapons, were provided to the Awakening members.

Third, the US provided the Awakening with political support. In order to increase the standing of the Al Anbar Awakening Council and Sheikh Sattar, US President Bush visited the Sheikh in 2007 (Rubin, 2007, p. 1). Also, on more than one occasion, the US pressured the Shia-led government to support and pay the Awakening members (Smith & McFarland, 2008, p. 45).

Clearly, the US had a lot invested in the Awakening, both politically and financially. According to a 2011 study, the ancillary Sons of Iraq program had cost the US taxpayer "approximately $370 million [between] fiscal year 2007 through 2009 [in] CERP funds" (SIGIR, 2011, p. 1). Al Anbar, previously seen as one of the most dangerous places in Iraq, had now been

pacified with the help of the tribes (PRT Cable, 2007a). The US, therefore, used all means at its disposal to support the Awakening where it could (Smith & McFarland, 2008, p. 51).

In sum, the United States support for the Awakening movement can be regarded as sponsorship, by means of finances and political support. The question remains whether the US has actively provided weapons to Awakening members.

5.3 Theoretical expectations and Results

This section will introduce the four theoretical expectations that were formulated in the theoretical section, and evaluate them against the available evidence. For every theoretical expectation, this study will draw a conclusion. The four expectations consist of: shared preferences, sources of alternative support, power disparity, and level of centralization.

5.3.1 Shared Preferences

The first theoretical expectation is that defection is unlikely if sponsor and agent share preferences. According to Popovic, shared preferences are most commonly associated with common ethnicity (Popovic, 2014, p. 37). Earlier, this study has argued that ethnicity may be an important determinant for shared preferences, but is certainly not the only one.

In the case of the Al Anbar Awakening, the sponsor – the United States – and the agent – the Al Anbar Awakening movement – did not share any ethnic ties. On the contrary, previous enmity between the two had arisen because the US had been considered a Christian occupier of Muslim lands (McCary, 2009, p. 43). Furthermore, the entity that the tribes defected against – Al Qaeda in Iraq –were, in fact, Sunni Arabs – just as AQI. AQI, however, was led by foreigners – remember that Zarqawi was a Jordanian. Even though Zarqawi was killed in June 2006, before the official commencement of the Awakening, AQI was still perceived by the Anbari's as exogenous entity (Montgomery & McWilliams, 2009b, pp. 89, 91, 140). Also, Zarqawi was succeeded by an Egyptian by the name of Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (Kaplan, 2006). During the time that the US actively sponsored the Awakening in Al Anbar, the tribes have not defected (McCary, 2009, pp. 43-59).

The single most important trend that led to the Awakening was that the strategic calculus of the tribal leaders had changed. Whereas earlier the US had been seen as an occupying force and the main competitor for regional and national influence, Al Qaeda in Iraq had now become so powerful that it challenged both the government of Iraq, and most importantly, the position of the

tribal sheikhs (McCary, 2009, pp. 47-48). The US military recognized this position. General Allen, who served in Al Anbar province between 2006 and 2008, explained in an interview that the US was counting on that the Sunni tribes would "fight Al Qaeda first and then put us off till later. We would help them to go after Al Qaeda, [and] use that intervening time to create relationships with them, to cause them ultimately to say 'we don't need to fight the Americans, we can use the Americans to solidify our position [and] achieve political advantage.'" (Marten, 2012, p. 160). In short, the decision to align with the US had little to do with ethnicity; indeed, it was a calculated decision arrived at with interest-based arguments (McCary, 2009, p. 50). As David Kilcullen so eloquently describes it, "you can trust a tribal leader 100% – to follow his tribe's and his own interests. And that's OK. Call me cynical, but I tend to trust self-interest, group identity and revenge as reliable motivations – more so than protestations of aspirational democracy, anyway" (2007, p. 1).

The question then remains whether the theoretical expectation that defection is unlikely if preferences collide, has merit. If one were to limit preference convergence to ethnic relationships, then on the basis of the available evidence, one would argue that this theoretical expectation is not met. However, this study argues that if shared preferences include other factors, as well as ethnicity, then this theoretical expectation is met, indeed. Two unlikely partners – the United States and the Sunni Arab tribes – came together to fight a common enemy; not because they shared ethnicity, but because they both viewed Al Qaeda in Iraq as a threat.

5.3.2 Sources of Alternative Support

The second theoretical expectation is that if an agent can gain alternative sources of support, defection becomes more likely (Popovic, 2014, p. 39). The underlying assumption is that if an agent has multiple sources of income, sanctioning by one principal will become less effective. With less potential to be sanctioned, the agent will less likely act according to the principal's priorities, and is thus, likelier to defect. In the case of the Al Anbar Awakening, the agent had alternative sources of support from the onset. The Anbari tribes have long engaged in smuggling and hijacking activities, and the leaders of the Al Anbar Awakening are no exception. For example, one author refers to Sheikh Sattar as an "an absolutely massive crook" (Marten, 2012, p. 168). Furthermore, McCary quotes MacFarland as saying that "I've read the reports … You don't get to be a sheik by being a nice guy. These guys are ruthless characters … That doesn't mean they can't be reliable partners" (McCary, 2009, pp. 49-50; see also Michaels, 2007, p. 1). In

other words, the US military was well-aware that many of the Awakening leaders had dubious backgrounds; and more importantly, were simultaneously acquiring resources through often illegal practices (Marten, 2012, p. 168; Long, 2008, p. 80). Furthermore, the tribal leaders used the funds they received from the US for patronage (Ardolino, 2008, p. 1; Long, 2008, p. 85). Instead of paying members directly, the US would allow the tribal leaders to redirect the money as they wanted to (McCary, 2009, p. 50). No other forms of alternative support have been observed. The question remains then, to what extent the availability of alternative resources would hamper the United States' sanctioning capabilities. In the case of the Al Anbar Awakening, the evidence does not lead one to conclude that alternative resources in any way hampered the US from sanctioning disobedient tribes. Importantly, however, there are no registered cases where, during the sponsor period, tribes needed to be sanctioned for their behavior.

In short, the theoretical expectation that if an agent has access to alternative sources of support, it is more likely to defect, is not supported by the available evidence in the Al Anbar Awakening case.

5.3.3 Power Disparity

The third theoretical expectation is that when sponsors are weak, and agents are strong, agents are more likely to defect (Popovic, 2014, p. 42). Again, this is related to the capability of the state to sanction the agent. If the state lacks capable measures to punish the agent, the agent will likely exploit this weakness when it is tempted to act against the interest of the sponsor.

In the case of the Al Anbar Awakening, the state sponsor – the United States – is obviously quite powerful militarily. At the beginning of the Awakening in 2006, the US had around 143,800 troops in Iraq (Belasco, 2009b, p. ii). However, as this study noted before, things were not going all that well (Michaels, 2010, pp. 1-25). After the Iraq Study Group Report was released, which contained suggestions for change in Iraq, the American President Bush decided on a "new way forward" (Bush, 2007, p. 1). This resulted in a "surge" in troops in 2007 and 2008, raising the number of troops with 7,000 and 9,500 respectively, reaching a height of 157,800 troops in 2008 (Belasco, 2009b, p. ii). In other words, the US had a formidable number of troops in Iraq during the Awakening. The effects of the surge in troops are, however, contentious. As McCary, for example, argues "the number of troops associated with the surge, often credited for increasing stability in the region, is much less important than this strategic

change to empower local leaders and, ironically, the perception that U.S. forces were eventually leaving the region, not increasing" (2009, p. 51). The fact remains, however, that the United States potentially had enough troops in the country to successfully punish rogue agents. This is also shown with the arrest of later Sons of Iraq leaders. Marten, for example, points to the arrest of Adil al-Mashhadani in Baghdad, "a man known for extorting and torturing his own people" (2012, p. 152). Earlier, this study concluded that the Awakening and the Sons of Iraq are two distinct developments; this example merely shows that the United States was capable of sanctioning those it had previously supported. On the other hand, publicly available information does not contain evidence that the US at any point sanctioned Al Anbar Awakening leaders, or their rank-and-file, during the 2006 to 2008 period. One should keep in mind, however, that the US forces were gaining strength in territory throughout Al Anbar, but in order to do so, were heavily reliant on the tribes. This casts some doubt on the capability of the US in case a large portion of the Awakening tribes would defect or switch sides. Indeed, the US was only granted a position of superiority at the discretion of the tribal leaders.

The strength of the agent is the other side of the same coin. In this case, the agents are the militia's in Al Anbar province. These different tribes and militia are historically divided, and should therefore not be seen as a single entity (McCary, 2009, p. 53; Goode, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, the tribes that formed the Al Anbar Awakening Council were only authorized to patrol their own tribal territories (Smith & McFarland, 2008, p. 43). There is little indication that the tribal militia's in Al Anbar province ever surpassed a level in size and armament that would allow them to conduct offensive operations outside their tribal territories. In other words, those militia that were allowed to patrol their territories, should be regarded as a type of neighborhood watches (Kilcullen, 2007, p. 1).

In short, the United States' military was as a sponsor capable of imposing sanctions if necessary. However, the strength of the US was contingent on the cooperation of their agents, which weakened their relative capabilities. Furthermore, the agents remained relatively weak, and lacked offensive capabilities that would allow them to carry out operations further afield. In other words, the United States as a sponsor was strong, and the agent remained relatively weak. Therefore, as the theory would lead one to expect, the Awakening tribes did not defect against the United States during the time of the sponsorship.

5.3.4 Organizational Hierarchy

Popovic' main theoretical expectation is that agents that have a non-centralized organization are more likely of defection than agents that are highly centralized (Popovic, 2014, p. 9). The main idea here is that organizations that have low organizational hierarchy, have an extended delegation chain, which decreases the control of the agents' leadership over the lower echelons, and hence, increases the difficulty with which principals can control their agents as a whole (Popovic, 2014, p. 9).

The case of the Al Anbar Awakening can be approached from two different perspectives, or levels of analysis. First, one can view the Al Anbar Awakening Council as one organization, and thus, one agent. This would lead one to believe that the Awakening is highly decentralized, or even factionalized (McCary, 2009, p. 53). The sheikhs that are considered part of the Council only have control over their own tribes and militia. Therefore, viewing the Council as a uniform organization with command-and-control mechanisms down the organizational chain is a mistake. As Benraad puts it, "while the movement may have begun as a common mobilization against al-Qaeda, thus demonstrating apparent solidarity among its [tribal] leaders, it has never been a unified reality" (2011, p. 126). Rather, the Awakening Council itself is a more or less loosely bound together alliance of tribal sheikhs. Importantly, there is no publicly available evidence to support the claim that Sheikh Sattar was in a position to command other tribal leaders who were members of the Council. This leads to the second possible perspective.

The second perspective views the Al Anbar Awakening as a movement where the most important actors are tribes. Tribes have no counterpart in Western culture, but they do have some command-and-control functions. Furthermore, the core characteristic of a centralized organization is that the leadership has complete authority over goals and policies, and the lower officers and rank-and-file have no authority but to execute the preset policies. In a centralized organization, the leadership is able to reward those that are loyal, and effect punitive sanctions on those that are disloyal (Popovic, 2014, p. 9). This type of centralized organization has some similarities with tribal organizations; but tribes are less formal, and lacks the institutional clarity with regards to command-and-control mechanisms. On the one hand, tribes have a somewhat similar method of asserting power: patronage. The United States sought to strengthen this mechanism, by enhancing the position of the tribes' leaders (McCary, 2009, p. 50; Marten, 2012, pp. 140, 152). As McCary puts it, "by paying the sheikhs directly and allowing them to distribute

the money as they saw fit, tribal leaders were able to regain their legitimacy and demand the fealty of their tribesmen as they had done in the past" (2009, p. 50). In short, specifically in Al Anbar, the United States paid tribal leaders, who in turn used that money to assert their power over their tribal organization (Marten, 2012, p. 152). On the other hand, Green argues that "even though a tribe may have been willing to work with the CF [Coalition Forces, US forces in this study], their organizational structure complicated swift action. A key reason for this is that in many Iraqi tribes the paramount sheik, who is the recognized leader of his tribe, does not have absolute authority over his tribe" (2010, p. 595). Put differently, according to Green, the tribal structure is highly complex and non-linear – most consistent with the factionalized organizational model. However, the US exploited the one mechanism they knew would strengthen the tribes' organizational structure: patronage. By deliberately by-passing lower ranking tribesmen, the US ensured their loyalty to the sheikh – and hence to the US – for one simple reason: self-interest. The lower tribesmen were now dependent on the goodwill of the sheikh for their income, and would thus follow their instructions (McCary, 2009, p. 50; Marten, 2012, p. 152).

Another important aspect of Popovic' theory is that "with strong parochial interests, commanders [lower level leaders] are bound to the protection of their respective communities, which usually runs against more general interests of their parent organization and sponsor. This makes decentralized organization less amenable to the control of central leadership, and, consequently, more prone to defection against their sponsors" (Popovic, 2014, p. 11). In the case of Al Anbar, however, the goal of the parent organization – the Al Anbar Awakening Council – was similar to those of lower commanders: protecting neighborhoods (Smith & McFarland, 2008, p. 43). This is one of the theoretical innovations to Popovic' theory; whereas Popovic assumes that goals between leadership – albeit highly non-centralized leadership – and commanders differ, the Al Anbar case shows that this is not necessarily the case.

In sum, if one regards the Awakening Council as one uniform organization, the organizational structure should be considered non-centralized or factionalized. Therefore, following Popovic' theoretical expectation, this low centralization would have led to defection. This has not been the case in the investigated period (Marten, 2012). On the other hand, if one views the Awakening Council as an overarching coordinating mechanism, and the constituent tribes as the real agents, one should come to the conclusion that Popovic' theoretical expectation

is supported by the available evidence. Indeed, the relatively hierarchical structure of the tribes convinced the United States to provide funds to their leadership (McCary, 2009, p. 50).

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to evaluate the publicly available evidence of the Al Anbar Awakening case in light of the theoretical expectations that were developed in earlier stages of this study: shared preferences, sources of alternative support, power disparity, and organizational hierarchy. Precipitating this analysis, this study concluded that the Al Anbar Awakening Council is an alliance of tribal militia. Moreover, it concluded that in this case the United States in the sponsor, and that the Shia-led state of Iraq has an ambiguous role. Also, this study concluded that the United States sponsored the Sunni tribes with funds and non-material means, such as political support.

Furthermore, this chapter concluded that shared preferences are a relevant indicator of defection and a lack thereof. However, Popovic' narrow view on preference convergence – ethnicity – has proven unhelpful in explaining Sunni Arab loyalty towards the supposedly Christian sponsor – the United States (Popovic, 2014, p. 37). Instead, preference convergence should be seen as overlapping interests. It is beyond the scope of this research to define what these interests exactly could entail, but a preliminary study indicates that money and power positions could play an important role. Future research should undertake an effort to uncover what these interests exactly should entail, and what the relative importance among them is.

Moreover, this chapter has concluded that the availability of alternative resources has had little effect on the ability of the United States to sanction their agent.

Also, the United States military was relatively strong vis-à-vis their agent. Therefore, the available evidence in the Al Anbar Awakening case supports the assertion that a weak actor is unlikely to defect against a strong sponsor.

Finally, Popovic' main theoretical contribution would lead one to expect that the higher organizational hierarchy, the lower the chance of defection. This study has presented two perspectives on this hypothesis. On the one hand, if one views the Anbar Awakening Council as a single entity with very weak organizational hierarchy, then the Al Anbar case shows little support for Popovic' assertion. However, on the other hand, if one regards the tribes as agents, the Al

Anbar case supports his hypothesis. The tribes use a system of patronage that shows similarities to the most important characteristics of a hierarchical organization.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

The goal of this study was to enhance understanding of the dynamics of proxy war. Therefore, this study analyzed a very recent case by using a relatively novel theory. The combination of theory and empirical research goals resulted in the following research question: To what extent can Principal-Agent Theories and Popovic' Theory of Defection explain defection in the case of the Al Anbar Awakening from 2006-2008?

6.1 Conclusion

This question is important to ask because research on proxy war has been lacking in academic literature and proxy wars are increasing in number because of the changing status of the state in the international system. Furthermore, proxy wars can represent a tool with which policy makers can reduce the cost in blood and treasure of war; but, simultaneously proxy wars can produce backlash, and it is therefore critical to understand the dynamics before employing such a policy.

In later chapters, this study developed four theoretical expectations. The first theoretical expectation was that shared preferences decrease the likelihood of defection. Popovic' argued that ethnicity is the single most important indicator for preference convergence (Popovic, 2014, p. 37). This study, however, found evidence in the Al Anbar Awakening case to conclude that shared ethnicity may not be the most important indicator of preference convergence. On the contrary, in the case of Al Anbar, other factors such as financial rewards and power were dominant in the decision of the sheikhs to side with the United States; and importantly, to stay loyal. In short, this study has found evidence to support the assertion that in the Al Anbar case, shared preferences decreased the chance of defection.

The second theoretical expectation was that if agents have alternative sources of support, they are more likely to defect. This study has found no evidence to support this claim in the Al Anbar case.

Third, the theory expected that a weak agent is unlikely to defect against a strong sponsor. In the Al Anbar case, the United States was a strong sponsor, capable of sanctioning their agents. However, this strength was dependent on the cooperation of the tribal leaders, which weakened

their relative position. The tribes as agents remained relatively weak, mostly protecting their own tribal territories. Therefore, the available evidence in the Al Anbar Awakening case supports the assertion that a weak actor is unlikely to defect against a strong sponsor.

Fourth, Popovic' argued that the stronger the hierarchy of an agent organization, the lower the chance of defection would be. This study differed between two levels of analysis. The first perspective views the Al Anbar Awakening Council as a uniform organization. This perspective would lead one to believe that the Al Anbar Awakening Council is a non-centralized organization. In other words, the assertion that low hierarchy leads to defection would be untrue in the case of the Al Anbar Awakening. The second perspective views the tribes as the most important actor. This view argues that these tribes have a hierarchical organization, indeed. The United States has expressly and successfully attempted to exploit this hierarchy with patronage. Thus, if one views the Awakening Council as an overarching coordinating mechanism, and the constituent tribes as the real agents, one should come to the conclusion that Popovic' theoretical expectation is supported by the available evidence in the Al Anbar case.

Therefore, in answer to the main research question, this study concludes that the available evidence shows support for Popovic' Theory of Defection. Furthermore, two of the three expectations of Principal-Agency theories have been met: shared preferences and power disparity. However, more research is necessary to more comprehensively investigate the relative weight of differing preferences and the appropriate level of analysis for Popovic' Theory of Defection.

6.2 Theoretical Recommendations

The single largest limitation of this research has been the lack of empirical data. More often than not, theoretical expectations could not be verified with complete certainty because the evidence was conflicting and incomplete. This study finds that this to a large extent is related to the fact that the Al Anbar Awakening took place in a war zone. The availability of reliable data is further hampered by the political contentiousness of American support for Sunni tribes; e.g. very little is known about possible deliveries of arms to the Sunni militia. Lastly, there is very little data available on the organizational structure of tribes in Iraq largely due to the informality of these social constructions.

This study has illuminated four potential areas of future research. First, future research on this topic will have to elucidate the significance of the state as a unitary actor, and what the consequences for the principal-agent relationships will be if the state consists of relatively autonomous or competing institutions.

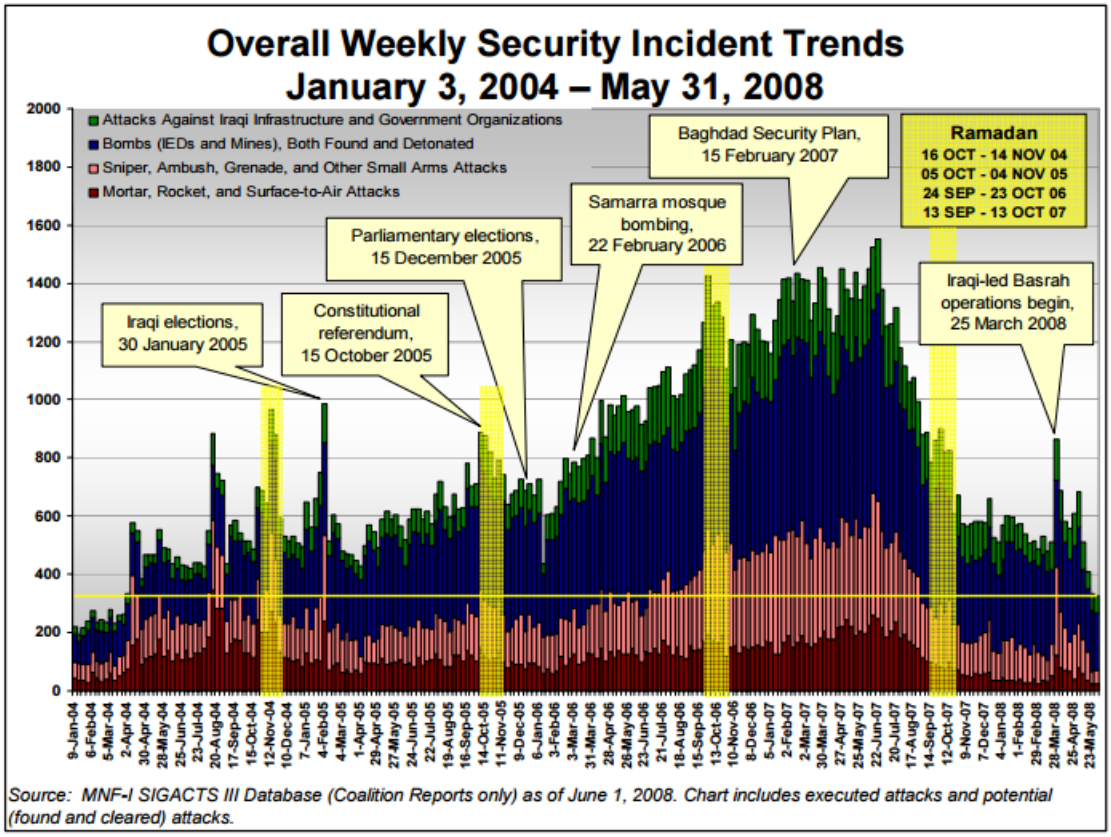
Second, it is imperative that future research finds a more satisfactory conceptualization and definition of shared interests, as this is lacking in current literature (Fearon & Laitin, 2003, pp. 69-82). In other words, preference convergence can refer to shared ethnicity, but future research should determine the value of ethnicity vis-à-vis other preference factors. Third, future research should uncover the most consequence of utilizing differing levels of analysis of agent behavior and organization. As the Al Anbar case has shown, different perspectives can lead to different outcomes. Fourth and finally, there is a need for more empirical data on the organizational structure of the tribal agents. This could be achieved through observations in the field, as well as in-depth interviews with key actors of the Awakening. Also, interviews with key academic authors could untangle the use of differing terms, names and the presentation of seemingly contradictory facts.

6.3 Policy Recommendations

This study concludes with two practical recommendations for policy makers. These recommendations are especially important because one can expect proxy conflicts to proliferate in the future (Brown, 2016, p. 244; Bunker & Bunker, 2016, pp. 325-326). First, this study has indicated that preferences matter. Policy-makers should, therefore, refrain from seeking agents solely on an ideological basis. Instead, agents are less likely to defect in a situation where they are acting out of pure self-interest.

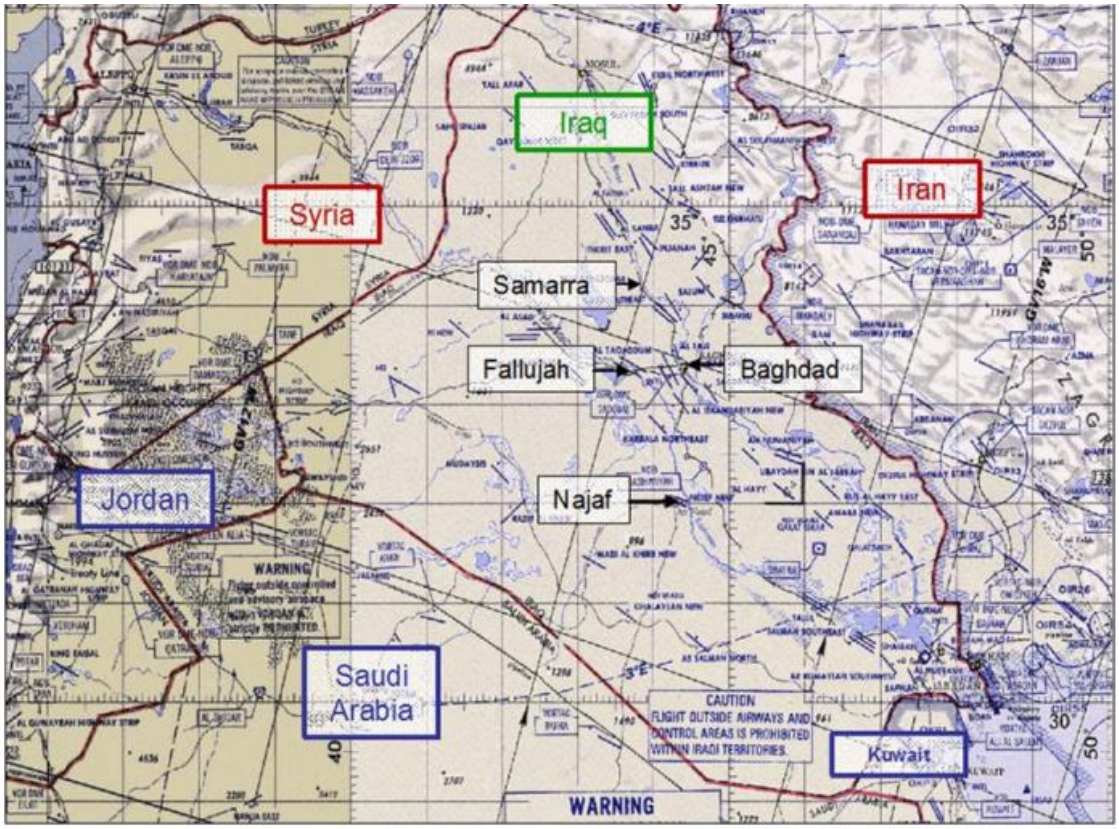
Second, this study has tentatively concurred with Popovic' proposition that organizational structure is important. The stronger the hierarchy of an agent, the less likely the agent will be to defect. Therefore, policy-makers should refrain from selecting proxies that have low organizational hierarchy.

Appendix I: Security Incidents Chart

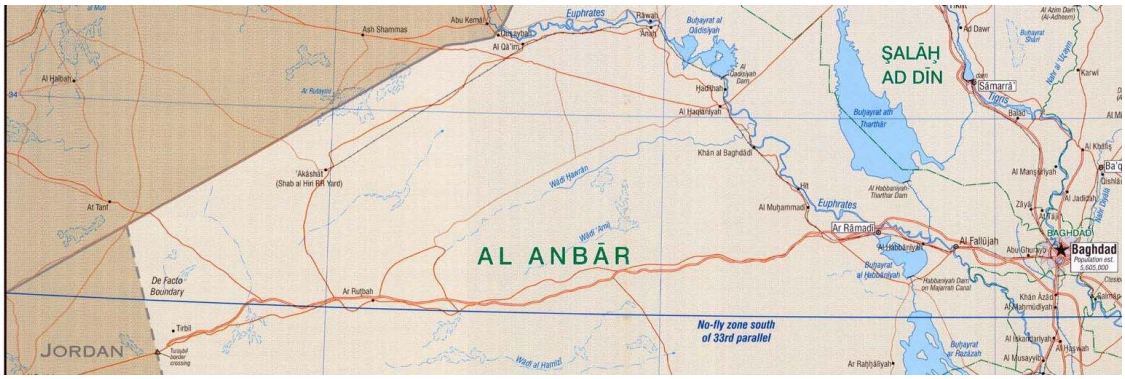


Source: Report to Congress (2008) *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 20

Appendix II: Maps



Source: Knarr, William (2016). *Al Sahawa—The Awakening Volume IV: Al Anbar Province, Area of Operations Topeka, Ramadi*, p. D-2



Map of Al Anbar

Source: Central Intelligence Agency 2003 - Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9426794

Appendix III: Photographic imagery

Courtesy COL Tony Deane

September 2006 meeting of LTC Deane (2nd from L), Sheikh Sattar (4th from L), COL MacFarland (5th from L), and the Ramadi Sheiks representing the Awakening Council

Source: Knarr, William (2016). *Al Sahawa—The Awakening Volume IV: Al Anbar Province, Area of Operations Topeka, Ramadi*, p. 2-12

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