

# THE “NEO-ANBAR AWAKENING” POLICY RECOMMENDATION TO COMBAT ISIL

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# **Policy Recommendation to Combat ISIL: The “Neo-Anbar Awakening”**

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# **Policy Recommendation to Combat ISIL:**

## **The “Neo-Anbar Awakening”**

*“Our American friends had not understood us when they came. They were proud, stubborn people and so were we. They worked with the opportunists, now they have turned to the tribes, and this is as it should be.” - Sheikh Abd al Sittar Abu Reesha, leader of the Anbar Awakening*

Sheikh Abd al Sittar’s words resonate with wisdom to this day. His is referring to the first ‘Anbar Awakening’ that took place in 2005 and lasted roughly until 2011. During this time, Sunni tribal leaders in Iraq’s Anbar province “began quietly forming working alliances with US military forces against al-Qaeda.”<sup>1</sup> The US solidified its alliances with Sunni tribes by launching joint military offenses against al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) known as ‘the surge.’ The surge proved fruitful and “suppressed the violence, broke the links between militias/insurgents and the Iraqi people and allowed American officials to forge a new power-sharing arrangement among Iraq’s various ethno-sectarian groups.”<sup>2</sup> The Anbar Awakening produced security for the Anbar populace and military defeats for AQI. This project looks to be the framework for a ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening’ to undermine the rule of ISIL in its own Anbar strongholds. Slowly making attempts to undermine ISIL’s military capacity may be able to roll back its ability to govern and hence its ability to maintain popular support. To draft an effective plan for this ‘neo’ Anbar

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<sup>1</sup> John A. McCary, “The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives,” *The Washington Quarterly* 32 (2009): 43, accessed March 8, 2015, [http://www.jauiraq.org/documents/266/09jan\\_McCary.pdf](http://www.jauiraq.org/documents/266/09jan_McCary.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, “The Resurgence of al-Qaeda in Iraq,” *Committee on Foreign Affairs*, December 12, 2013, accessed March 6, 2015, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA18/20131212/101591/HHRG-113-FA18-Wstate-PollackK-20131212.pdf>.

Awakening, theoretical context, the current situation in Anbar province, a tentative strategic plan, potential problems of this plan, and entailing solutions will be addressed.

## Theoretical Precursors

David Ucko believes that COIN operations must be derived from contextually-specific circumstances. He does not advocate for a certain theory of COIN to employ but rather to re-strategize existing tangible and intellectual COIN resources as necessary. Strategists such as Gray also see the benefits of addressing the most immediate strategic concerns. To remain theoretically pragmatic while addressing pressing strategic concerns to undermine ISIL, this project will use Roger Petersen's community-based insurgency mobilization model. Petersen was not mentioned in the literature review because his theoretical model does not address COIN from a more macro standpoint. However, his model provides critical perspectives in drafting a 'neo' Anbar Awakening.

In order to mobilize a community against insurgent forces, Petersen first splits the population up into 7 distinct categories with entailing numbers; mobile combatants (-3), local insurgent support (-2), unorganized resistance (-1), neutral (0), unorganized support (+1), self-defense militias (+2), and government security forces (+3). COIN forces must target -3 and -2 forces, train +2 and +3 forces, and engage all aside from -3 and +3 forces. Six mechanisms that drive people across the spectrum are then considered for how to mobilize each community; rational calculation, focal points, social norms, emotions, status considerations, and psychological mechanisms. Community-based mobilization uses these population sectors and mechanisms to aid +2 forces and focus on the strategic decision-making of other similar forces as the main way to eventually undermine an insurgency. This strategy contrasts "US-centric

COIN tactics” that only focus on US-driven action to defeat an insurgency by ‘going all in’ on the loyalty of local forces.<sup>3</sup>

The main facets of a population forces that community mobilization focuses on are -3, -2, +2, and +3.<sup>4</sup> Other portions of the Anbar populace still factor in but will remain relatively unaddressed due to this project’s scope and goals. Community (in this case ‘tribal’) mobilization is not population-centric. In population-centric COIN approaches, all operations are done to sway the general populace to either the insurgency’s or the government’s corner. Tribal mobilization involves strategically drawing tribal forces into the +2 category and using them to defeat -2 and -3 forces. It does not involve conducting operations solely for the sake of the local populace’s perspectives (although such perspectives must still be considered). To mobilize a community, a COIN force must realize that its success depends upon the interest-based calculations of local actors. Tipping the cost-benefit analysis of local actors (tribes) involves employing both economic and organizational incentives. Using incentives to fight a war may seem inhumane but nonetheless worked in the first Anbar Awakening. Money given directly to tribes to be split more fairly as opposed to government rationing increased trust between local actors and the US in this first Awakening. Simultaneously, organizational incentives like attempting to ensure greater political representation are enticing offers to previously disenfranchised Sunni tribes in Iraq’s Anbar province. Finally, Petersen also addresses levels of analysis in his model. He claims that analyses should come at the most fundamental level of a community (or tribe) - the individual.<sup>5</sup> However, this view is limited as Petersen wasn’t able to

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<sup>3</sup> Jon Lindsay and Roger Petersen, “Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009,” *United States Naval War College* (2012): 45, accessed March 13, 2015, file:///C:/Users/cody/Downloads/Lindsay-and-Petersen---Varieties-of-Insurgency-and-Counterinsurgency-in-Iraq.pdf.

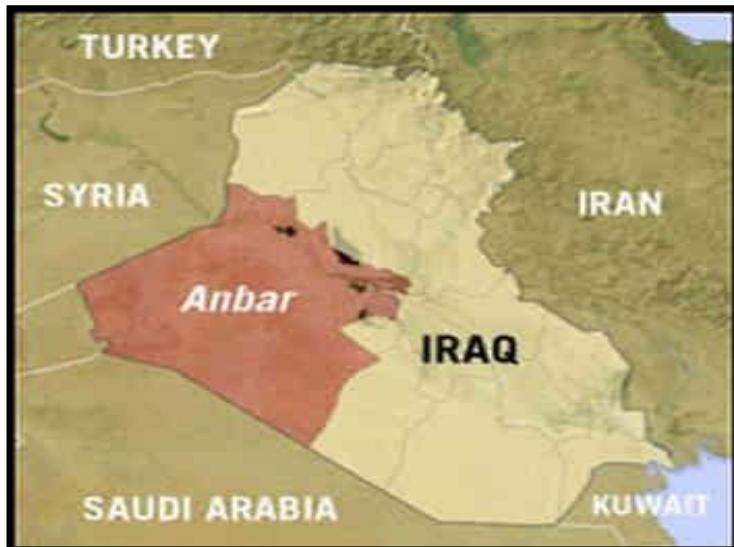
<sup>4</sup> Lindsay and Petersen, “Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009,” 46.

<sup>5</sup> Lindsay and Petersen, “Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009,” 20.

factor the current Anbari situation in regards to ISIL into his logic. Many individuals have chosen to fight for ISIL on their own accord. The around 20,000 foreign fighters in ISIL are prime examples. Even though the individual level of analysis is obviously critical to consider in some regards, it is not as crucial for the purposes of this policy recommendation. This recommendation is focused on Anbar province where tribal allegiances supersede all. Sheikh Dhaher Bedewi, a Sunni tribal leader in Anbar province, claims that the violence currently surrounding Anbar is solely “a tribal issue.”<sup>6</sup> The main schisms thus come not from individuals in ISIL and individuals outside ISIL fighting each other and switching sides but, rather, from historical tribal beef coming to fore under the banner of ISIL violence. At the same time, the US is currently aiding tribes, not individuals, to fight ISIL. Thus, Petersen’s model will be used to construct a ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening using the level of analysis of tribes.

### **Why Anbar Province?**

Figure 1 Map of Anbar Provine in Western Iraq<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Matt Bradley, “War Carves Divisions Among Iraq’s Sunnis,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 10, 2014, accessed February 14, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB20201082926585793778104580313203339110256>.

<sup>7</sup> “Iraq: Fears of New Massacre in Abu Aitha, Anbar Province,” *Abna*, September 27, 2014, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://www.abna24.com/english/service/middle-east-west-asia/archive/2014/09/27/640561/story.html>.

## **1. Historical Significance**

Ironically enough, ISIL's precursor, AQI, spawned the first Anbar Awakening. AQI had a large presence in Anbar province in the early 2000s. By 2006, the provincial capital of the province had "fallen...to AQI's dominance."<sup>8</sup> The organization's prominence in the area led to locals opposing it via two different perceived injustices. The first was AQI's attempt to establish a monopoly of the revenues within the province.<sup>9</sup> This revenue came primarily in the form of criminal activities, oil-smuggling in specific. AQI started to receive preferential treatment in the crude-smuggling business. Such treatment did not sit well with the local tribes of Ramadi who historically dominated this black-market service. The second was AQI's use of violence to try and subdue the local populace. Anbari tribesman started to act out against AQI as it tried to monopolize oil-smuggling trade. Uncooperative tribes meant that AQI would lose its hold over Anbar province. As a result, the organization embarked on a campaign of violence. The brutal killing of tribal Sheikhs, kidnappings, extortion, rape, public beheadings and dismemberments, and the systematic use of murdering entire families because of their tribal affiliations riddled Anbar Province. This violence reached a point to where Anbar tribes had enough. Tribes again started to oppose AQI and its brutality. This sentiment was manifested most clearly in the city of Ramadi where angered locals, vengeful policemen, and rival jihadist groups decided to band together in a 'motley' alliance to oust AQI. Secondly they formed a group known as Thuwar al-Anbar or Revolutionaries of Anbar.<sup>10</sup> Thuwar al-Anbar was the beginning of the Awakening. These new locally-derived coalitions needed backing and found a partner in the US. Many of the groups allying to oppose AQI in Anbar had previously fought US forces, yet found armed

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<sup>8</sup> Hassan Hassan and Michael Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015), 68.

<sup>9</sup> McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 47.

<sup>10</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 70.

Americans a better alternative to armed AQI operatives. As an emir from Ansar al-Sunna (a Salafist faction fighting in Iraq) told an American military official, “We have concluded that you do not threaten our way of life. al-Qaeda does.”<sup>11</sup>

The first Anbar Awakening represented a genuine bottom-up approach to oppose the AQI insurgency. The movement grew from a few localized alliances to a nationally institutionalized COIN apparatus. As anti-AQI alliances continued to grow throughout Anbar and Iraq as a whole, a movement known as ‘the surge’ started to take place. Initially characterized by the addition of a large amount of US troops to the fight, the surge became a COIN dream. Ali Khedery, a long-standing US diplomat in Iraq, clarifies that the surge consisted more than an increase of American troops. It brought in a ‘surge’ of American diplomacy that forced Iraqi politicians to work cohesively to accomplish national goals.<sup>12</sup> This political cohesion was met with a huge decrease in violence leading up to the 2009 Iraqi national elections. The elections produced more Sunni tribal representation, with tribes earning seats in the Anbar Provincial Council and other anti-AQI alliances acquiring similar positions.

The surge produced benefits for many who used to fight for AQI because of the power it (the surge) provided. Success on the political front brought a rejuvenation of nationalistic sentiment which swayed popular support away from the AQI. AQI was subsequently pushed to the brink of decimation. The organization decided to rebrand itself the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) to appeal to existing national fervor. This name change faced more backlash than anything else. Genuine nationalists wanted nothing to do with it. It became clear that most Sunni insurgents had

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<sup>11</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 72.

<sup>12</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 78.

“only ever accepted AQI on an ad-hoc military basis.”<sup>13</sup> The bond that existed between AQI and the tribes it depended on was thus easily broken when a more legitimate means of security and stability entered the picture. In the long-term, the Maliki administration abused the Awakening alliances. Sectarian violence has since erupted. In effect, many paint the Anbar Awakening a failure. This viewpoint neglects the fact that the Awakening itself was successful, while it was the political mechanisms in Iraq that took power later that could not sustain peace in the long-term.

Anbar, being the site of the previous Awakening, must be the site for its ‘neo’ incarnation as well. To start, experience allows US officials to navigate the complexities of Sunni tribes more easily. Officials are already familiar with specific tribes in the Anbar region, whether they be friends or enemies of the US. History has also taught the US officials that war in the Anbar province is tribal, not necessarily religious. In the first Awakening, the US was able to seduce the loyalty of Anbar tribes by offering them the economic and organizational resources they needed. The same structure undoubtedly carries through today, and it is known that Anbar tribes have values that carry far beyond their current alliance with militant Islamic extremists. Although the situation in Anbar differs drastically from that of the first Awakening, the US knows which incentives can help build powerful alliances. Finally, the history of the first Awakening provides the US with the foresight that long-term mechanisms must be in place after tribal mobilization to avoid further disenchantment and destruction in Anbar. Thus, Anbar is a perfect site to launch this ‘neo’ Awakening because of the past successes and failures the US has embarked upon within it.

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<sup>13</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 80.

## **2. Tribes Dominate Anbar Province**

Iraq's tribal system is a labyrinth of perpetually fluctuating complexities. It's difficult to understand. When fighting an irregular war, the US has a tendency to gravitate towards forces and power structures that are familiar to its own. Sunni tribes do not 'fit the bill' of familiarity. It may seem as though Sunni tribes are too unreliable to back with money, arms, and military advisors. However, the dominance of Sunni tribal structures in Anbar can be advantageous for US forces looking to undermine ISIL for three reasons: Tribal alliances are malleable, tribes in Anbar are primarily Sunni, and using tribes as a means to oppose ISIL allows the US to sustain a relatively limited troop footprint.

Tribal politics supersede everything in many parts of Iraq and Syria. Anbar province is no different. In Anbar, "every piece of terrain...is claimed by a tribe."<sup>14</sup> The preeminence of tribalism, especially in regards to Anbar, must be established here. Amir al-Dandal, a member of a prominent Syrian tribe, witnessed inter-tribal fighting in Deir Ezzor due to circumstances surrounding ISIL. The fighting, al-Dandal claims, "had everything to do with the tribes, not with jihadi politics, and it was resolved on a tribal basis."<sup>15</sup> The same dynamic undoubtedly holds true in Anbar.

Tribal politics and allegiances are dynamic and can change rapidly. Although tribes can be problematic, their ultimate loyalty normally lies in one place; the tribe. Preservation of the tribe is the largest priority of tribesman, no matter who they are allied with. Resources are the life-blood of sustained preservation. No resources means no protection, and no tribal protection

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<sup>14</sup> Patricio Asfura-Heim, "No Security Without US": Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq," *CNA Analysis and Solutions* (2014): 3, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/COP-2014-U-007918-Final.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 203.

means tribal destruction. Therefore, outlets of tribal resources are key to maintaining tribal loyalties. As Petersen posited, community-based groups, such as tribes, are subject to the power of incentives and are thus malleable. Tribal alliances in Anbar “will succeed or fail based on...whether groups’ interests continue to converge on common incentives.”<sup>16</sup> It may seem politically incorrect to base security alliances off of incentives. However, the reality of the situation is that the provision of incentives, and the ability to sustain them, provides an opportunity to establish trust. Each tribe will invariably act in its own self-interest based on a cost-benefit analysis. This dynamic shows why Anbar tribal dominance is beneficial to US COIN operations. If the US can provide benefits to Sunni tribes in Anbar that outweigh the costs acting against ISIL, crucial alliances can be built. Thus, the fact that tribalism and its malleability rules Anbar is yet another reason why it should be the focus of COIN operations.

Sunni tribes in Anbar province are well...Sunni. The tribes’ religious affiliations may be obvious but the implications of that “Sunni” label are not. Religion is undoubtedly an important factor, but it does not weigh in as much as one may think in this project’s COIN analysis. The fact that most tribes in Anbar province are Sunni means that they all have a general symmetry in regards to their composition, customs, and values.<sup>17</sup> Although all Sunni Anbari tribes are not all identical in every way, patterns do persist. Inter-group symmetry is important because it gives an educated understanding between the relationships between tribes within Anbar province. ISIL is made up a multitude of Sunni tribes, many of whom reside in Anbar. By knowing what values (like incentives) motivate them, COIN operators could more accurately exploit their loyalty to ISIL. At the same time, Sunni tribesmen allied with the US are going to have an in-depth knowledge of their ISIL counterparts. According to Sheikh Wissam Hardan, a co-founder of the

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<sup>16</sup> McCary, “The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives,” 53.

<sup>17</sup> Asfura-Heim, “No Security Without US”: Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq,” 7.

first Awakening movement, “Americans, along with the Iraqi government, know very well that no one can break the back of ISIL except the Sunnis.”<sup>18</sup> The strategic role of Anbari Sunni tribes is unparalleled. Sheikh Wissma solidifies this importance by positing “We know ISIL’s secrets, where ISIL moves and how they operate. We know the weaknesses of ISIL.”<sup>19</sup> This knowledge comes not from the Sheikh’s constant surveillance of ISIL but rather from his familiarity with Sunni tribal operations. At the same time, many Sunni tribes in Anbar have allied with ISIL because they feel that they have no legitimate governing outlet to turn to. If a few Sunni tribes witness other Sunni tribes allying with the government and coexisting in a relatively peaceful manner, they deem the situation safe enough to follow suit. In Petersen’s terms, this provides those who are able to affiliate with anti-ISIL tribes unparalleled strategic knowledge of -2 and -3 forces by leveraging +2 forces. All the while, showing other -2 forces that allying with the +3 sector could prove beneficial for them.

The US spent its fair share of time in Iraq. While there, it deployed thousands of conventional forces to fight Iraq’s insurgency. While it sustained a large footprint in Iraq, the US learned that its large presence produced consequences. Blowback, the CIA-coined term for the latent consequences of military and political action, became a household word. More harm was produced as negative sentiment for the war was directed at the US. Such sentiment was not conducive to undermining the legitimacy of AQI. Sunni Anbari tribes offer a way for the US to conduct COIN operations without having a large force footprint. The US does not need to leave a large footprint because Anbari tribes have their own incentive to fight ISIL and do not need US rational to initiate their fight. ISIL has been launching waves of brutality against tribes not

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<sup>18</sup> Borzou Daragahi, “ISIS Brutality in Iraq Reawakens Sunni Resistance,” *Financial Times*, February 25, 2015, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/43594cf2-bce5-11e4-9902-00144feab7de.html>.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

aligned with its ‘caliphate.’ In 2014, for example, Anbar security officials claim that ISIL killed around six-hundred from the Albu Nimr tribe in just the month of November.<sup>20</sup> The Albu Nimr tribe has been fighting ISIL ever since, showing that a light US footprint is possible because Anbari tribes already have a deeply entrenched incentive to fight the brutal organization. The US does not need to come back into Iraq to try and establish a new system of governance to fix the violence. Nor does it need to completely re-construct an entire security apparatus as it has previously attempted. The US just needs to try and sway Sunni tribes into an alliance of incentives in an attempt to mitigate the violence, not come in with tanks and helicopters to crush an entire insurgency. Existing tribal incentives and security apparatuses both make Anbar a prime location to initiate a ‘neo’ awakening because problems persisting in the province can be “resolved on a tribal basis.”<sup>21</sup> The US may thus not have to overextend its resources in fighting ISIL. As a result, the US can selectively bolster sectors of the strategy that are deemed most critical.

### **3. The US is Currently Arming anti-ISIL Tribesman in Anbar Province**

The Anbar Province would be an ideal place to launch a ‘neo’ Awakening movement because the US is currently aiding anti-ISIL tribes. The US has already approved \$24.1 million to be allocated for the purposes of arming and training “tribal security forces” in Iraq.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the US is doling out armaments to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Kurdish military to oppose ISIL (\$1.2 billion and \$353 million respectively). The aid money consists solely of arms and other war-fighting materials. The intention is to aid each ‘camp’ in the hopes

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<sup>20</sup> Bradley, “War Carves Divisions Among Iraq’s Sunnis.”

<sup>21</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 203.

<sup>22</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Justification for FY 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF)*, Department of Defense, p.3, November 2014, accessed February 27, 2015, [http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2015/amendment/FY15 ITEF Book Final November\\_20-2014.pdf](http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2015/amendment/FY15 ITEF Book Final November_20-2014.pdf).

of incentivizing them to work together in a cohesive manner. Anbar is thus a prime candidate to launch a US-sustained ‘neo’ awakening because a current tribal funding infrastructure is in place in the province.

#### **4. ISIL Has Been Launching Brutal and Effective Offenses in Anbar**

Not only do Anbari Sunni tribes want more US aid to undermine ISIL, they *need* it. During the weekend of February 13, 2015, Anbari tribal Sheikh Naim al-Gaoud proclaimed that Anbar province would “collapse in hours” if tribal forces did not receive funding and would subsequently withdraw from the fight against ISIL if these conditions persisted. This claim is well-founded. ISIL has been launching full-scale assaults against ISF, Shia militia, and Sunni tribal forces throughout the province. ISIL’s main strategy in this region is to operationally secure Anbar province, secure its own lines of communication in the region, and prepare for an assault on Iraq’s al-Asad airbase, the only existing major ISF stronghold in the province.<sup>23</sup> The organization has been fairly successful in this quest. It (ISIL) established a stronghold in the Anbari city of Hit and has been able to repel repeated ISF attempts to retake it.<sup>24</sup> The ISF subsequently embarked on an operation to acquire the regions surrounding Hit, but were again defeated by ISIL. ISIL was then able to initiate a counter-offensive and take the al-Dolab district, further expanding its area of operation. In the process, ISIL confiscated a “large quantity” of military vehicles.<sup>25</sup> Ramadi also became a target of ISIL’s December 2014 offensive, witnessing suicide vehicle born improvised explosive device (SVBIED) attacks. ISIL combat initiatives

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<sup>23</sup> “Iraqi Army Facing Heavy Resistance in Anbar: Counter-Offensive Stalls,” The ISIS Study Group, December 12, 2014, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://isisstudygroup.com/?p=3758>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

have continued against al-Asad. The ISF, in response, attempted to take the areas around al-Asad but were again pushed by ISIL forces.

It is becoming clear that ISF forces are ‘locked’ in al-Asad airbase without many options to expand beyond it and are unable to render security services to the rest of the province. These problems are only in part due to lacking military capacity. Sunni tribes have tried to restore their dominance of the region but have not been able to due to ineffective coordination with ISF forces. Anbari tribes have made the claim that supports promised to them from the Iraqi government (GoI) have been diverted to Shia militias.<sup>26</sup> Tribesmen have attempted to reach out to the Shias for help but have found them non-responsive. To make matters worse, these Shia militias have been reported to launch assaults on Sunni populations in Anbar, leaving them more susceptible to IS recruit operations.<sup>27</sup> A combination of ISF and Shia militia unwillingness and inability to help their Sunni ‘counterparts’ greatly limits the capacity of anti-ISIL forces in general. As a result, ISIL has been able to enjoy military success in Anbar province. Anbar is thus the necessary location to initiate a ‘neo’ Awakening because US support could not only help Sunni tribes halt the ISIL militarily, but also change the way in which America’s support is distributed. This can bridge the endemic sectarian nature of security provision throughout Iraq. At the same time, Anbar also presents an opportunity for the US to capitalize on existing anti-ISIL sentiment derived from their brutal military offenses.

### **3. ISIL is an Extremely Effective Tribal Power Broker**

As previously mentioned, ISIL is able to sustain control over the Syrian and Iraqi populations due in part to its use of its organizational focus on tribalism. Syria and Iraq are states

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “The Main Act: ISIS Tightens its Grip in Anbar Province, Preps to take al-Assad airbase,” The ISIS Study Group, February 16, 2015, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://isisstudygroup.com/?p=4916>.

that have a large amount of tribes. These tribes have their own social and political systems. Most importantly, their loyalty lies within their own respective tribes. State influence is important but Syrian and Iraqi tribes have been historically known to protect their kin above all else. Resources give tribes the ability to advance the interest of their own respective kin relative to other tribes. Thus, the drive for resources to retain relative power and influence to protect kin is at the forefront of each tribal agenda. This system of tribal power-politics is the base of almost every tribal decision. ISIL knows this dynamic and is willingly to exploit it. The organization has positioned itself as a formidable tribal power broker. It acquires tribal loyalty via incentives and sustains it by providing mediation services.

ISIL is the first jihadist entity to ever turn members of the same tribe against each other.<sup>28</sup> The Shaitat in Syria and Albu Nimr in Iraq are both examples of tribes that ISIL convinced to commit fratricide. The most astounding fact is that religious ideology played virtually no part in either of these instances.<sup>29</sup> If kinship trumps all in tribal loyalty, how has ISIL able to turn families against one another? The answer is seemingly simple; incentives. ISIL, with many of its members hailing from Syrian and Iraqi tribes, knows that the power-politics surrounding tribalism is extremely influential. They know how far material resources can go to gain allies. ISIL has a vast array of resources to distribute from oil smuggling and other proceeds deriving from similar illicit activities. It uses these resources wisely. An effective strategy ISIL has been able to employ is known what Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan refer to as dividing and ruling.<sup>30</sup> ISIL knows that tribes are normally ruled by village elders. These elders, however, keep a status quo that retains their influence. ISIL also knows that this power happens to be

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<sup>28</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 205.

<sup>29</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 207.

<sup>30</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 205.

“artificially constructed...and therefore hard to fully harness.”<sup>31</sup> It exploits this power vulnerability by appealing to the younger generations within tribes who naturally want to retain some form of individual influence. Those tribesmen with a perceived ability to mobilize larger amounts of manpower are targeted by ISIL. Giving these younger tribesmen prospects for money, power, and prestige incentivizes them to turn on their tribe and affiliate with ISIL. Factional fissions subsequently result and the faction with the most power (usually those aligned with ISIL) wins out and kills the other so that future power struggles don’t persist. Since tribal power is volatile, those with an obviously greater amount of resources can persuade the loyalty of others.

It should be noted that ISIL not only incentivizes with resources, but also through fear.<sup>32</sup> ISIL offers younger and influential tribesmen resources but sometimes declining the offer isn’t an option. If tribesmen refuse, ISIL assassinates them and their families. Here, the value of kinship undoubtedly plays a part. Since tribal loyalty normally lies in kinship, allying with ISIL gives tribesmen the ability to increase kinship resources but also keeps them safe from otherwise certain death. Dividing and conquering tribes not only helps ISIL acquire man-power, it also helps reduce the chances of a force being created that can oppose it.<sup>33</sup> Systematically dividing tribes produces violence among and between them. Their military capacities become diverted to fighting each other instead of ISIL. As a result, any unified tribal front to oppose ISIL would be difficult to acquire and maintain.

ISIL also offers tribal mediation services. ISIL may fuel tribal violence to ensure the brunt of tribal military force stays away from it but it also selectively arbitrates conflicts between

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<sup>31</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 209.

<sup>32</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 208.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

them simultaneously. ISIL knows that total tribal chaos would negatively affect it. Controlled chaos, on the other hand, defines the organization's brilliant manipulation of tribalism. The solution of control amongst potential tribal chaos comes in the form of a man named Dhaigham Abu Abdullah.<sup>34</sup> As head of ISIL's tribal affairs administration, Abdullah serves as a mediating force to mitigate conflicts that arise between tribes. He and his men are employed by ISIL as arbitrators. Here too do power-politics come into play. Once affiliated with IS, tribes still want to increase their relative power. They come to arbitrators to attempt and accumulate more resources. In this way, tribes become dependent on the source of power that can give them relative influence; ISIL. The manipulation of tribalism allows ISIL to retain control over vast populations. Power-politics in these regions will continue to play a critical role in determining who controls what. Tribes in both Syria and Iraq thus present both obstacles to and opportunities for successful counter-insurgency forces in the future. If the US proves unable to capitalize on the tribal power structure in Anbar province, ISIL may continue to increase its influence in the region via the exploitation of Sunni tribes.

### **Petersen Factors - Anbar 2015**

It has been established that Iraq's Anbar province is the most ideal location for a 'neo' Awakening movement. What has not yet been detailed is exactly what factors will go into the movement. The Petersen community-based insurgency mobilization model produces easily-identifiable variables that can be applied to the current situation in Anbar Province.

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<sup>34</sup> Hassan and Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 207.

## **Population Sectors**

It is true that all sectors of the Anbari population are crucial to the success of this new Awakening. However, Petersen specifies that initiating community-based resistance to an insurgency should give preference to considering -3, -2, +2 and +3 forces.<sup>35</sup> Again, the scope of this recommendation is strategic and thus focuses efforts on the most pivotal strategic assets to community-based insurgency opposition. This is not to say that neutral actors do have strategic benefit, they do. However, this recommendation is not population-centric in nature and employs a more specific means of undermining ISIL; using Anbari Sunni tribal forces strategically in regards to their relationships with ISF forces. The population sectors in Anbar to be focused on are as follows:

### **A. *-3 Forces***

‘-3’ forces consist of mobile armed insurgents. They consist of individuals who travel beyond their individual communities in the name of an insurgent organization. Petersen puts -3 forces in the category of “a guerilla unit or rebel army.”<sup>36</sup> In today’s Anbar province, -3 groups are directly comparable to ISIL forces. -3 ISIL forces do not include the organization’s affiliated tribes as such tribes are local in nature and fall under the jurisdiction of their tribal leaders. -3 ISIL forces are those that spawned from Syria and organized the support of local tribes. Most of these forces involve ISIL personnel located in Abu Kamal, Haditha, Al Qaim, Hit, the outskirts of al-Asad airbase, and Ramadi. -3 forces also flow from the ‘rat lines’ (border towns) between Syria and Anbar province. Petersen sees these actors as inherently combatant. However, ISIL has expanded the operational capacities of its mobile members to include media experts, recruiters,

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<sup>35</sup> Lindsay and Petersen, “Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009,” 46.

<sup>36</sup> Lindsay and Petersen, “Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009,” 21.

and governing administrators. Efforts to undermine ISIL -3 forces must take the dynamism of the organization's forces into consideration.

### ***B. -2 Forces***

'-2' personnel fall under the category of the localized insurgency. They consist of "local militia" that fights with and on behalf of an insurgency.<sup>37</sup> -2 forces are arguably the most pivotal enemy force in regards to conducting a new Awakening in Anbar province. In Anbar, -2 forces consist of local Sunni tribes that are affiliated with ISIL. These tribes represent the backbone of ISIL's military and governing capacities in the area because of their local knowledge and ready supply of manpower. 'These tribes' is a general term meant to describe the Anbari Sunni tribes affiliated with ISIL and is an imperfect label at best. However, information as to the specific tribes in Anbar that are affiliated with ISIL is hard to come by let alone credible if it were to exist. What is known is that Adnan Letif Hamid al-Sweidawi is the current shadow governor for ISIL in the Anbar province. ISIL shadow governors are tribal leaders operating under the broad jurisdiction of ISIL central authority. -2 forces are therefore Anbari tribes currently under the leadership of al-Sweidawi. -2 tribal forces presumably operate in close proximity to -3 ISIL mobile forces as well as throughout the rest of Anbar province.

### ***C. +2 Forces***

'+2' population sectors are what Petersen refers to as the "armed local government supporter."<sup>38</sup> These are locally-based armed groups that oppose the -2 and -3 forces and are theoretically in support of the government. +2 forces are the population sectors that COIN forces focus the most on when conducting a community-based mobilization to oppose insurgents. Just

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

as -2 forces serve as ISIL's backbone in Anbar, so do +2 forces for the US and GoI. In Anbar, US and GoI-affiliated Sunni tribes make up the +2 population sector. As with -2 forces, +2 personnel fight within the areas they live to sustain protection. The success of COIN operations depends upon the extent to which these +2 forces can be sustained from a survival and loyalty standpoint. The goal of Petersen's community-based mobilization is to strategically incentivize the loyalty of +2 forces to oppose -2 and -3 forces in the hopes of diminishing support of the insurgents to the point where only -3 forces fight on the behalf of it (the insurgency). +2 forces in Anbar currently consist of US-affiliated Sunni actors such as the Albu Nimr tribe and the Sons of Iraq tribal coalition.

#### ***D. +3 Forces***

Petersen's +3 societal sector is comprised of "mobile armed government forces."<sup>39</sup> They theoretically operate on a disciplined, unified basis and serve as the standard means of military capacity within the state. To Petersen, these forces are the state's armed military forces. In Anbar, this is only partially true. The ISF undoubtedly represents a facet of +3 actors currently fighting in Anbar. However, Shia actors also fall under the +3 category. Shia militias and elements of the IRGC-Qods (or Quds) force also operate against ISIL in Anbar.<sup>40</sup> The IRGC-Qods are the international military wing of the Iranian Republican Guard. They are, well, Iranian-backed. Many Shia militias fighting in Anbar are led by the IRGC-Qods and thus also under Iranian influence.<sup>41</sup> Both actors are considered +3 because they are not local and fight on a mobile basis with the ISF. They are not a part of GoI forces but nonetheless operate as an Iranian

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<sup>39</sup> Lindsay and Petersen, "Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009," 22.

<sup>40</sup> "Iraqi Army Facing Heavy Resistance in Anbar: Counter-Offensive Stalls," The ISIS Study Group, December 12, 2014, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://isisstudygroup.com/?p=3758>.

<sup>41</sup> "Pro-Government Tribal Forces in Anbar Province Running out of Steam," The ISIS Study Group, December 8, 2014, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://isisstudygroup.com/?p=3626>.

appendage of them. The fact that these Shia militias and IRCG-Qods force fight with ISF does not mean they consistently coordinate efforts to undermine ISIL with +2 forces. They usually do so only on an ad-hoc and desperate basis and have even been known to attack the Anbari Sunni populace not (yet) affiliated with ISIL.<sup>42</sup> +3 forces in Anbar are anything but the monolithic entity Petersen idealizes in his theoretical model. As a result, they will be dealt with on a skeptical basis as to their role in this project's 'neo' Anbar Awakening.

## **Neo-Anbar Strategy**

The delineation of Anbari population sectors relative to Petersen's model is a helpful way to grasp the complex array of actors necessary to consider if a 'neo' Anbar Awakening is to be successful. However, this delineation does not provide a strategy as to how this new Awakening is to be employed. Ucko and similar authors stress the importance of strategy when undertaking COIN operations. This project agrees with this focus and subsequently recommends four actions that together represent a potential strategy that the US could undertake to increase its anti-ISIL success in Anbar province; aid Sunni tribes and the GoI separately, directly aid Anbari Sunni tribal confederations, diversify the purposes of tribal aid, and actively mitigate sectarianism.

### **1. Aid Sunni Tribes and the GoI Separately**

The US is currently spending around \$1.6 billion to arm Sunni tribes and GoI forces.<sup>43</sup> Arms are being sent from the US to the GoI directly. The hopes are that the GoI-received armaments will subsequently be distributed the way in which the US government intends with selected Sunni tribes receiving roughly \$24 million. Wishing away sectarian splits, such a policy

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<sup>42</sup> "The Main Act: ISIS Tightens its Grip in Anbar Province, Preps to take al-Assad Airbase," The ISIS Study Group.

<sup>43</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Justification for FY 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF)*.

is wishful thinking at best. Sunni tribal leaders currently fighting in Ramadi, Anbar's provincial capital, claimed that they had "received only one shipment of the weapons the U.S had promised" as late as February 23, 2015.<sup>44</sup> US COIN forces must continue aid to the Sunni tribes, but give it to them directly just as it did in the first Awakening. The US should also continue to aid the GoI but separately as well. The funding for both are currently specified, cleared by the US government, and have even been shipped out. This makes aiding both on a separate basis difficult yet definitely feasible.

Not only is a split-funding strategy feasible, it is completely necessary. The inability of US arms to get to Anbari Sunni tribes may seemingly indicate US unwillingness to fund counter-insurgency efforts. However, the real problem lies in current US arms distribution policies in Iraq. The aid program depends on aid being sent to Iraqi forces (including Sunni tribes) "by and through the GoI to build the necessary military capability to counter ISIL."<sup>45</sup> The GoI currently receives the US-promised armaments and advisors. Sunni tribes are suffering from a huge shortage in supplies. For instance, in December 2014, the Albu Nimr tribe and the Sons of Iraq both reported a 'deathly' low supply of ammunition while attempting to re-take the ISIL stronghold Hit.<sup>46</sup> As promised supplies were not able to serve as a force-multiplier for Sunni tribes in Hit, the ISF and its affiliated Shia militias were launching a completely separate offensive without heeding to the calls for backup that Sunni tribes were beckoning. The December 2014 Hit offensive exemplifies the fact that the GoI is not distributing US aid to Sunni

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<sup>44</sup> Erin Banco, "Iraqi Sunni Tribes in Anbar Fighting ISIS Say they Need More Weapons," *International Business Times*, February 23, 2015, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/iraqi-sunni-tribes-anbar-fighting-isis-say-they-need-more-us-weapons-1825642>.

<sup>45</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Justification for FY 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF)*.

<sup>46</sup> "Pro-Government Tribal Forces in Anbar Province Running out of Steam," The ISIS Study Group.

tribes, but rather initiating its own anti-ISIL campaign. Arms and advisors are being sent to Iraq, the GoI just has not held up its end of the bargain from a distribution standpoint.

The US suffers from a fundamental misunderstanding of the strategic impact the Anbari sectarian security divide produces. Continuing to aid Sunni tribes via the GoI neglects a few of Petersen's mobilization mechanisms; rational calculation, social norms, and focal points. Mobilization mechanisms are the forces that induce actors to switch from one of Petersen's societal categories to another. Sunni tribes base their loyalties on rational calculation. The Albu Nimr, Sons of Iraq, and other affiliated anti-ISIL tribes are currently +2 forces. +2 forces are undoubtedly loyal to the government. However, loyalty has its limitations. In the Petersen model, +2 forces are loyal to the government only as far as their own strategic considerations are concerned. Sunni tribes in Anbar are no different. The benefits of fighting for the GoI must outweigh the costs of fighting ISIL (which are unarguably high). A lack of supplies and support from government forces could really tip the cost-benefit analysis scales in the direction of abandoning the 'good graces' of the GoI.

Trusting the GoI to honestly distribute arms to Sunni tribes on a consistent basis also neglects tribal social norms. Anbari tribes are not bound to the GoI by an unshakable loyalty to its state affiliation. Rather, their ultimate source of adherence lies in "intense preoccupations with family, clan, and tribe."<sup>47</sup> Sunni tribes are thus intensely loyal to the well-being of their kin above all else. Expecting them to remain loyal to the GoI outside of a favorable cost-benefit analysis plainly neglects the cultural sensitivity necessary to conduct effective COIN operations. The US's current arms distribution policy also glosses over the Sunni/Shia divide that exists between Sunni tribes and the ISF and its Iran-affiliated Shia appendages. The ISF and Anbari

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<sup>47</sup> Asfura-Heim, "No Security Without US": Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq," 8.

tribes only work together on an ad-hoc basis because incentive to work together outside of imminent mutual annihilation is lacking. The ISF is already supported by the GoI. It only uses Sunni tribes when it absolutely needs them. Why? Because the two forces mistrust each other. There is a “Sunni-Shia balance” in the ISF that favors the Shias.<sup>48</sup> Upon the 2011 departure of coalition forces, the Maliki administration ‘restructured’ Iraq’s military with a heavy Shia bias. At the same time, the ISF is fighting in close coordination with Iranian-backed Shia militias, further widening the sectarian gap between them and the Sunni tribes. Because sectarianism runs deep, both forces (Sunni tribes and the ISF) are inherently skeptical of one another. Thus, trusting one with the well-being of the other also neglects Iraqi social norms. +2 and +3 forces have to be incentivized to fully cooperate as a result of a divergence in ultimate loyalties and social identities. This neglect of social norms could have a greater effect on the cost-benefit analysis of Sunni tribes to fight ISIL because they are not being adequately incentivized to cooperate with ISF and Shia militia forces. As a result, Sunni tribal mobilization could turn in a negative direction.

Petersen refers to the mobilization mechanism of focal points as “events, places, or dates that help to coordinate expectations and thus actions.”<sup>49</sup> US relying on the GoI to distribute much-needed arms creates a set of expectations for Sunni tribes. Sunni tribes, if they continue to Anbari Sunni tribes could thus conceivably mobilize to a more negative societal sector (ie -2) if their expectations continue. More effective US aid to Sunni tribes in the form of direct provision is therefore necessary if America wants to keep its current +2 allies.

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<sup>48</sup> “Iraqi Security Forces,” *Institute for the Study of War*, accessed March 11, 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org/iraqi-security-forces>.

<sup>49</sup> Lindsay and Petersen, “Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009,” 25.

*Figure 2 (caption right)*<sup>50</sup>



An Iraqi Special Operations Force (ISOF) soldier brandishes an IRCG-Qods patch, signifying the strong ties between the two groups. Iranian-backed Shia infiltration of the IA could undermine the ability of the GoI and Anbari tribal authorities to work together to undermine ISIL in the Anbar province.

Petersen also proposes sustainment mechanisms. Sustaining +2 forces at the +2 ‘level’ requires pay, discipline, and the demonstration of an inevitable government victory.<sup>51</sup> The hastily-composed December 2014 Hit offensive gravely violates all of these +2 ‘sustainment’ mechanisms. Sustainment mechanisms cannot be, well, sustained if mobilization mechanisms are not met. In order to sustain an ally, one must first ensure that it will not acquire an antithetical loyalty. The US government sending arms to the GoI directly to be distributed omits mobilization mechanisms and thus provides no foundation for sustainment mechanisms to preserve the trust and COIN capacity of +2 actors like Sunni Anbari Tribes.

### **Directly Aid Tribal Confederations**

Supporting the GoI and Sunni tribes on a separate basis poses a huge obstacle; knowing exactly who to aid. The previous section laid out the reasons why both entities should receive divided avenues of funding. However, one entity was tossed under the over-generalized blanket

<sup>50</sup> “Qods Force-Led Offensive Hits Wall in Tikrit as IA Gets Overrun in Thar Thar,” The ISIS Study Group, March 18, 2015, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://isisstudygroup.com/?p=5659>.

<sup>51</sup> Lindsay and Petersen, “Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009,” 35.

term of “Anbar Sunni tribes.” Around thirty-eight different Sunni tribes call the Anbar province home.<sup>52</sup> It is necessary to more clearly distinguish which tribal actors the US should aid in order to increase the effectiveness of its support. Distributing US funds to all on an equal basis is neither strategic nor possible. ‘Sunni tribes’ in Anbar province are by no means monolithic. Some are affiliated with ISIL, some with the US; others have split allegiances, while the rest lie within gray areas between all of these. Deciding which tribal entities to arms is a terrifying yet possible undertaking that requires some in-depth strategic thought.

In short, tribal confederations, or *qabilas*, should be the targets of US support. In order to understand why tribal confederations should receive direct US aid, it is necessary to understand how Anbari Sunni tribes are organized. The structure of Anbari Sunni tribes is essentially hierarchical. The most basic political and legal unit is known as the *khamsah* composed “of all male children who share the same great-grandfather.”<sup>53</sup> The *biet*, or house, contains *khamsahs* and represents a large extended family which is focused on performing economic functions. Multiple houses make up a clan, or *fakhdh*. Several clans, in turn, produce a tribe (‘ashira). Both clans and tribes perform the primary political and military functions for those affiliated with them.

It is a possibility to directly aid tribes, being they are a relatively large organizational unit for many local Anbaris and that such an action was the previous strategy of the first Anbar Awakening that successfully undermined AQI. It turns out, unfortunately, that most Anbari tribes are in “constant competition” with one another.<sup>54</sup> Each constantly vies to maximize resources for its own kin at any expense. As a result, giving aid on a tribe by tribe basis could

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<sup>52</sup> Asfura-Heim, “No Security Without US”: Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq,” 17-18.

<sup>53</sup> Asfura-Heim, “No Security Without US”: Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq,” 5.

<sup>54</sup> Asfura-Heim, “No Security Without US”: Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq,” 6.

produce competition among potential US allies and undermine their ability to effectively counter the ISIL. This fact punches a gaping hole in Petersen's model. Petersen assumes that +2 forces operate as a monolithic entity and can be strategically treated as such. Inter-tribal competition and potential conflict shows that +2 forces could eventually be at odds with one another. This potential conflict further compounds the complexity of deciding which +2 forces to aid. However, tribes have been known to maintain loyalty to one tribal entity larger than themselves; the tribal confederation (*qabila*). Tribes within these larger confederations hail from a common descent and sustain loyalty to it as a result.

The problem with aiding confederations is that tribal unity within them is generally "very loose and informal in military, political, and economic terms."<sup>55</sup> Some tribes may contribute many resources to a confederation while others may only pertain to the well-being of their own specific lineage. Inter-tribal conflict is thus still something necessary to consider. However, confederations consist of the only umbrella-style organization that Anbari Sunni tribes would even consider sustaining any variation of loyalty to. As a result, they (confederations) are one of the only realistic options that could potentially produce a monolithic-*ish* response to ISIL. One word can help solve the potential viability of genuine confederation loyalty: *asabiyya*. *Asabiyya* is an Arabic word that represents group loyalty and the sense of belonging. Although tribal confederations may be informal, *asabiyya* within them has been known to be particularly discernible in the face of an "external hazard."<sup>56</sup> Petersen's model again brandishes its beneficial head here. Petersen, as stated before, focuses on the process of strategically binding +2 forces to a COIN operation. Giving money and arms to a tribal confederation increases both its appeal to tribes from a resource maximization standpoint and a credible, well-resourced outlet for tribes to

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<sup>55</sup> Asfura-Heim, "No Security Without US": Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq," 5.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

fight *through* by way of genuine cooperation in lieu of a serious external hazard; the ISIL. It is a potentially favorable cost-benefit analysis that could strategically bind tribes to one another in the form of a confederation. Petersen's model posits that two of the ways to sustain +2 support in COIN operations are derived from pay and the perceived inevitability of a state victory. Fighting ISIL via the direct armament of tribal confederations gives both resources and tribal trust in *asabiyya* that could produce the perception of unified action and eventual victory.

Tribal confederations may be an effective entity for the US to aid directly but which Anbari tribal confederations should be aid specifically? The Dulaymi tribal confederation may be the most realistic answer. Arguably the largest tribal confederation in Anbar province, the Dulaymi has been known to consist of around “50 main tribes” who span in and out of the province.<sup>57</sup> However, this wide expanse of tribal allegiances lends it to be particularly vulnerable to ISIL influence. The Dulyami tribal confederation, as it stands, is currently “split” in allegiance between ISIL and anti-ISIL forces. Gathering Dulaymi-affiliated tribes such as Albu Itha (E’tha), Abdu Faraj, Ubayd, and Albu Nimr would be difficult. Using a Dulaymi tribal council could prove effective against ISIL. The Dulaymi tribal confederation may be split on the issue of ISIL, but supporting the factions currently opposing ISIL could help turn the tables against it in strategically key areas such as Haditha, Hit, and Ramadi. This band of tribal fighters would indeed be motley and loosely allied. Yet the combination of material resources for tribal preservation in areas of strong ISIL presence and a common enemy could serve as binding factors that help the tribes coordinate. Effectively aiding the Dulaymi tribes may produce successful anti-ISIL opposition. Dulaymi tribes either allying with ISIL or currently neutral in allegiance could view these a potentially successful anti-ISIL military campaign as incentive to

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

mobilize on the Petersen societal sector scale and become US allies. If anti-ISIL Dulaymi tribes can be sustained and push back ISIL influence, those tribes allying with ISIL currently may see it in their strategic interest to join in on the US funding and abandon ISIL who could no longer provide an enticing cost-benefit analysis for allegiance. Aiding anti-ISIL Dulaymi tribes could thus utilize Petersen's 'focal points' mobilization mechanism to sustain and even acquire more anti-ISIL support in Anbar province. There is one anti-ISIL entity that this project is unable to completely understand due to a lack of credible information; The Sons of Iraq. They are flagrantly anti-ISIL but their specific tribal make-up and relation to Dulaymi tribes is convoluted at best. The Sons of Iraq could be another beneficial actor for the US to aid directly but its structural make-up and influence was not able to be confirmed by this project.

### **3. Diversify the Purposes of Tribal Aid**

Aiding tribal confederations could still prove problematic if 'allied' tribes succumb to violence amongst themselves. Aiding *qabilas* is a general way to try and forge a 'marriage of convenience' between tribes by giving them resources and the opportunity to fight a common enemy. The ends to which aid is used for could determine whether a functioning, relatively united anti-ISIL entity is formed or tribal skirmishes trump all and ISIL continues to dominate in the Anbar province. Aid in the form of arms is a beneficial resource to send to tribes. At the same time, money is also a conducive tool. The US is currently sending money (\$24.1 million) in the form of arms. In the first Awakening, money was given directly to Anbari tribes to distribute by way of their natural customs.<sup>58</sup> The US was able to maintain a unified front of Anbari tribes because of its large presence and ability to closely coordinate with them on the ground. However, America no longer has that same 'luxury'. Its troops were rescinded from the area in

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<sup>58</sup> McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 50.

2011. Anbari tribal aid must take different forms to account of the lack of US forces directly ensuring solidarity on the ground in the province.

It may seem crude, but money and guns are simply the best types of support that the US can give to Anbari tribes. Success lies not in the *type* of aid but rather *how* aid is used. It would be impractical for this project to draw up a plan to recommend an idealized set of resources for Anbari tribes grounded in some sound philanthropic theory. The US can only work with what it has and it has guns and money. Once again, this ‘neo’ Awakening operates under the guise of Petersen’s model which focuses on strategic implications for actions not necessarily humanitarian implications (although the two are by no means mutually exclusive). Guns and money provide incentive for tribes to work together. However, those guns and that money can and must be used for a variety of purposes. US aid is currently geared towards supporting tribal military offenses. Military offenses are a necessary, but not sufficient target of aid to effectively counter ISIL.

Aside from military offenses, US aid to Anbari Sunni tribes must be used for other purposes. Aiding tribal confederations is challenging because a multitude of competing entities (tribes) reside within them (tribal confederations). Resolution mechanisms to sustain inter-tribal unity within them are therefore crucial considerations. Such means of resolution are a key cultural component within Anbar and must be funded if the US wants to keep its tribal allies. Two means of intra and inter-tribal resolution must be funded if anti-ISIL unity is to be sustained. One dispute resolution component that should be given US support are tribal intermediaries or *al-mashayas*. If a crime is committed within or between tribes or tribal sub-units, the *khamsah* group initiates the means for vengeance by communicating the fact that the two groups are enemies. The group vulnerable to a violent response will normally approach

tribal officials for help. *Al-mashayas* are one of the first means of dispute resolution employed by tribal officials because they approach those seeking revenge and physically separate the two groups in conflict.<sup>59</sup> By lodging themselves in the conflict between groups, *al-mashayas* represent one of the only forms arbitration to stop conflicts from erupting so that intra-tribal and inter-tribal solidarity can be sustained. These tribal intermediaries are composed of respected authority figures such as sheikhs and tribal judges. Their ability to influence dispute resolution rests in their legitimacy. Such legitimacy can only be enhanced with US money. At the same time, giving money to a greater amount of tribal notables to serve as intermediaries on a full-time basis would give more dispute resolution potential within tribal confederations to forge a more unified anti-ISIL front.

A second dispute resolution, the *diyya*, should also be given funding consideration by the US. Tribal disputes can be mitigated by payment. The payment given from tribal group to another to end a dispute is known as the *diyya*. *Diyyas* solidify the *fasl*, also known as “the solution” that prevents conflicts from escalating between two tribes or tribal sub-units in conflict with one another.<sup>60</sup> Without the *diyya*, there can be no solution between tribal groups and conflict will continue to escalate. The US should capitalize on the resolution potential of *diyyas* by setting up a fund for them to be distributed by the tribal confederation council. The council could then have the ability to quickly distribute culturally reasonable sums of money to mitigate tribal conflicts so that the confederation does not completely disintegrate. Obviously, it would be extremely difficult to monitor how that money is actually used. However, the stakes of inter and intra-tribal solidarity are just as important for Anbari tribes because they have to live in a world filled with consistent ISIL attacks. Incentive for distribution of *diyya* funds may thus be not too

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<sup>59</sup> Asfura-Heim, “No Security Without US”: Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq,” 13.

<sup>60</sup> Asfura-Heim, “No Security Without US”: Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq,” 15.

far-fetched. Producing a ‘*diyya* fund’ may seem naive and impractical but, in reality, the only way to ensure tribal solidarity is through local customs and the *diyya* happens to be a crucial one. Also, *diyyas* are not exclusively monetary in nature; they can also include exiling individuals at odds with one another to mitigate conflict. The US, however, may not ever realistically consider aiding the travel expense of tribesmen in danger of being internally reprimanded. Producing a fund of *diyya* resources to encourage fast, culturally systematic responses to tribal conflicts as they arise could prove an effective way to maintain tribal confederation solidarity to ensure a relatively unified tribal front against ISIL.

US funding that goes to Anbari Sunni tribes must be culturally broadened. Putting aid in the hands of tribal confederation councils may be lofty and susceptible to misuse but is nonetheless crucial to undermining ISIL. In the first Anbar Awakening, the US altered its policies and started to aid tribal sheikhs directly.<sup>61</sup> This strategy provided a more effective means of tribal resource distribution on the grounds that it was more culturally sensitive. It also allowed US-affiliated sheikhs to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of their fellow tribesmen. Tribal authority is “fickle...and therefore hard to fully harness.”<sup>62</sup> If the US wants to maintain loyal allies, it must make sure those allies can sustain the necessary amount of command and control. Strategically, it is beneficial to know one’s allies and keep ties with them to develop a relationship based on necessary incentives and inevitable trust that comes along with the consistent fulfillment of promises. In order to keep +2 forces on the side of the US, sustained aid towards a more diverse means will keep those in the power the US wants. It may also forge a

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<sup>61</sup> McCary, “The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives,” 50.

<sup>62</sup> Frederic Wehrey, “An Elusive Courtship: The Struggle for Iraq’s Sunni Arab Tribes,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 7, 2015, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=57168>.

trust between both sides that could sway the tide of victory in America's favor and away from ISIL.

#### **4. Actively Mitigate Sectarianism**

An oft-overlooked factor contributing to the influence of ISIL in Anbar province is sectarianism. It is easy to pin ISIL's ability to control over 35% of Iraq on a military or religious basis. Although these factors play a part, sectarianism trumps all. Sunni tribes allied with ISIL are not all monsters. They are vying for their own strategic benefit. ISIL success in Anbar province is completely derived from the fact that it presents a better outlet for some tribes to live their lives. Zaydan al-Jubouri, a Sunni tribal leader affiliated with ISIL, claims "We chose ISIS for only one reason. ISIS only kills you. The Iraqi government kills you and rapes your women."<sup>63</sup> He is not alone in this sentiment. The Maliki administration systematically marginalized large swaths of Sunnis, especially in Anbar province. ISF fighting alongside Iranian-backed Shia militias isn't too conducive to building trust with Sunni tribes either. ISF forces and Sunni tribes may be able to hold off ISIL advances temporarily. However, even if the US establishes separate funding avenues to the two groups, security cannot be sustained. Security cannot be acquired without mutual trust. Even if ISIL is eradicated the sectarian divide will allow another similar organization to take its place among the bad blood that exists between the GoI and Anbari Sunni tribes. The US needs to aid Anbari Sunni tribes and GoI in a way that can help mend the sectarian divide in the country. Such a task may not even be possible and this project is not asserting that it can simply recommend a policy that can undo decades of constant strife between the two groups. However, an attempt to do so is necessary, not just to undermine ISIL but to make sure another similar organization doesn't take its place in the future. One way

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

the US can try and incentivize at least some semblance of even the most basic form of trust between the ISF and Anbari Sunni tribes is through the enforcement of no-bid contracts.

No-bid contracts refer to a situation where only one entity provides a needed service and thus has control as to who or what gets bids for said service. The provider of the services thus controls who gets what. The provider is able to incentivize the actions of the recipients. This dynamic generally mimics the situation in Iraq. Although other actors such as Iran financially back the GoI, the United States is the major source of anti-ISIL funding. Both GoI forces (like the ISF) and Anbari Sunni tribes are dependent on US aid. The US needs to utilize this advantage to incentivize both groups to work together. The first step is to establish separate aid channels for GoI forces (such as the ISF) and Anbari Sunni tribes that have already been elaborated on in this project. The second step is to make aid completely dependent up on the extent to which the two sides cooperate and support one another. If one side neglects the well-being of the other, it will lose a portion of its funding. These conditions may not sound always seem politically correct but they realistically use strategy to incentivize cooperation for the time being. An ‘alliance of incentives’ could be produced.<sup>64</sup> Incentivizing cooperation could lead to what Petersen refers to as “a stable truce among an oligopoly of warlords.”<sup>65</sup> In this case, the GoI and Anbari Sunni tribes are included in the warlord category. Such a no-bid contract system should be centered upon two main conditions; the GoI keeps the IRCG forces out of Anbar and that ISF forces stay in Anbari areas to sustain security after they are taken from ISIL.

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<sup>64</sup> McCary, “The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives,” 43.

<sup>65</sup> Lindsay and Petersen, “Varieties of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2003-2009,” 45.

GoI forces such as the ISF are currently suffering from substantial weakness “after nearly a third of its divisions collapsed in the face of the Islamic State offensive in June 2014.”<sup>66</sup> The ISF has turned to the support of Shia militias as a result. Shia militias have helped the GoI defend against ISIL attacks in Baghdad and other crucial areas but their services come at a price. Shia militias have “reportedly committed human rights abuses against many Sunnis and reinforced Sunni resentment of the Iraqi government.”<sup>67</sup> ISIL operates under the mantra that it represents fellow Sunnis previously abused under ‘infidel’ leadership. Such a ploy has been effective in Anbar. The GoI is at a conflict of interest between survival and a long-term strategy to gradually mend sectarian resentment. The US should withhold aid to the GoI if it continues to use Shia militias in Anbar. Exactly how much requires an economic analysis that is beyond the scope of this project, however, the GoI must be incentivized to mend sectarian strife in Anbar if ISIL is to be legitimately undermined. That is not to say that Shia militias should be forced out of Iraq altogether. Doing so would increase sectarian strife and is ultimately an unrealistic strategy as Shia militias do provide legitimate military support for ISF forces outside of Anbar. Shia militias should be left out of Anbar because the province is unarguably Sunni-dominated. Many Shia militias operate as puppets of Iran and thus have a different agenda of how to overthrow ISIL and sustain security relative to Sunni tribes. Anbari tribal trust can only be won gradually. The GoI banishing Shia militias out of the province at least shows that it is willing to leave the future of Anbar up to the tribes and not Iran. It could also show Anbari Sunni tribes who are currently not affiliated with ISIL that it genuinely wants to work with them. Putting both GoI forces and Anbari Sunni tribes in the fight together without Shia militia influence could help build operational trust after a while. Such a dynamic could only help mend distrust between the

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<sup>66</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Iraq: Politics, Security, and U.S. Policy,” *Congressional Research Service*, p.2, February 27, 2015, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

two forces. Current ISIL-affiliated Anbari Sunni tribes may also be persuaded to undermining ISIL if the GoI continues its break with Shia militias in the province. Sustaining +2 forces and acquiring -2 forces would definitely allow the GoI to gradually roll back ISIL influence out of Anbar and hopefully the rest of Iraq as well. The no-bid contract system would ideally enforce and sustain this condition.

At the same time, the ISF must sustain its presence in the areas it helps Sunni tribes take over from ISIL in Anbar province. Years of war have ravaged Anbar's population. ISIL is able to rule over so many Sunnis in Iraq due in part to its ability to provide general security. The ISF must supplant ISIL as the main security provider in the province if it ever hopes to successfully undermine the insurgency. As of yet, ISF forces "have not been providing any assistance to the Sunni tribes who have been fighting the ISIL units in the province."<sup>68</sup> Namely, they have not been providing security. The ISF must provide sustained security for its tribal allies in Anbar not just in helping out with military offenses but with setting up security perimeters in vulnerable regions as well. The US no-bid contract system should enforce this by detracting aid from the GoI if ISF units provide unwilling to provide these security services. Some ISF units cannot do this as they have their own survival to worry about. However, when the ISF launches offenses and takes territory in Anbar, it should detach security forces to allow for the captured region to be maintained. The ISF has been known to capture areas and pull out immediately after, leaving Anbari tribes to fend for themselves when ISIL counter-attacks. This strategy cannot be tolerated. If the ISF sets up security perimeters in areas it captures in Anbar Province, the two anti-ISIL forces could be incentivized to work together to continually deter a common enemy.

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<sup>68</sup> "Pro-Government Tribal Forces in Anbar Province Running out of Steam," The ISIS Study Group.

If the ISF can sustain security, it could gradually show Anbari Sunni tribes its willingness to work with them to defeat a common enemy which could lead to more cooperation in the future. This plan is primarily militaristic in nature and may overlook other crucial elements conducive to building trust between the ISF and Anbari forces. It relies on the assumption that the two sides will end up wanting to fully cooperate under the right conditions. However, ending sectarian strife must start somewhere. Incentivizing the ISF to support Anbari tribes could give Anbaris a security provider that isn't ISIL. Petersen's emphasis on focal points is especially important here. If Anbari Sunni tribes either currently allied with ISIL or not opposing the organization see a genuine attempt on the part of the ISF to protect citizens in the province, they could be convinced to switch sides if they deem that security can be sustained through cooperation with the ISF. No-bid contracts could thus have positive ripple effects if properly used.

The proposed no-bid contract conditions are directed solely at the GoI. This does not dismiss the fact that some tribal confederations may be unwilling to work with ISF forces given their distrust of the GoI and its Shia militia influence. However, Anbari tribes have simply abused the ISF less than the other way around. It could be more effective to aid Anbari Sunni tribal confederations directly on the condition that they not succumb to internal fissions. Constant aid will ultimately give tribes the incentive to work together as their livelihood depends upon unity. Providing the GoI with incentive to more fully cooperate with Anbari Sunni tribes and the tribes themselves from not rupturing into competing factions could produce a lethal, relatively unified front against ISIL and undermine its ability to portray itself as the lesser of two evils in Anbar province.

How could the US government be sure that both parties uphold their parts of the deal if given aid? The answer lies in the US Army Special Forces (SF) also known as the Green Berets. SF units are currently attached to ISF forces throughout Iraq, including Anbar province. They are culturally-adept warriors who constantly provide the US government with up to date situations on the ground. Tasking SF with giving an honest assessment of how each side is fulfilling its respective no-bid contract conditions would serve as an extremely effective and credible means of monitoring. However, SF units have been primarily deployed in support of ISF for the purposes of training and advising. The US should spread SF influence to anti-ISIL tribal areas as well. This could provide not only a force that can monitor Anbari Sunni tribes but also one that can strengthen their protection. Dispersing SF power to tribal confederations could give Anbaris more trust in the US as it would be putting its best and brightest on the line to help eradicate tribal lands of ISIL influence. Finally, having SF units positioned among both ISF and tribal forces could produce more effective cooperation between the two Iraqi forces. SF forces could coordinate with one another in times of conflict to systematically utilize tribal and ISF forces in tandem. This way, another mechanism of coordination would expose the two forces to one another in an attempt to build trust while vying to eradicate a common enemy. A strategic combination of no-bid contracts and currently deployed resources would no doubt take time, money, weapons, and luck but nonetheless serves as a potentially effective way for the US to start bridging sectarianism in Iraq. Future security cooperation could be sustained between ISF forces and Anbari Sunni tribes as a result. The ISIL insurgency and future conflicts could be mitigated by a more inclusive Iraqi security system. An illustration of coordinated success came on March 7, 2015 when a joint ISF/Shia militia/Sunni tribal attack led to the acquisition of the

town, Khan al-Baghdadi.<sup>69</sup> If this area can be sustained by the joint force and all sides continue to cooperate, the ISIL stronghold of Mosul could be a realistic future target. The US needs to ensure future cooperation between all anti-ISIL forces involved for this to happen. If necessary, the conditions of an enforced no-bid contract laid out above could prove critical.

## **Current US Operations in Anbar Province and Their Implications**

The US government and the GoI have recently undergone an attempt to create an Iraqi National Guard. This security force is meant to consist of “a new Sunni force made up of between 120,000 and 200,000...Sunni tribesmen under the central leadership of officers from the former Iraqi army.”<sup>70</sup> This force is meant to carry out combat operations in Anbar under the support of coalition air support. It is hoped that a ‘mixed bag’ of anti-ISIL forces could bridge the sectarian security divide that exists in Anbar province to eventually eradicate ISIL presence from the area. Actual coordination between anti-ISIL forces has been success. The March 7, 2015 Khan al-Baghdadi confrontation is a prime example. However, sustained loyalty and commitment of each respective anti-ISIL force is unlikely for one reason; the composition of the Iraqi National Guard plan isn’t strategically sound.

Security cooperation in Anbar rests in strategy. Incentives represent the basis of strategy in Anbar and must be provided to retain the loyalty of ISF and Anbari Sunni tribes. This concept is nothing new as the first Anbar Awakening was deeply rooted in monetary and military force support to Anbari Sunni tribes to retain their help in eradicating AQI influence. The Iraqi National Guard plan, however, is devoid of these strategically-issued incentives.

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<sup>69</sup> “Iraq Security Forces Reclaim Town of Khan al-Baghdadi,” The ISIS Study Group, March 7, 2015, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://isisstudygroup.com/?p=5382>.

<sup>70</sup> Raed El-Hamed, “A New Sectarian Force for Iraq,” *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, The American University in Cario, November 20, 2014, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.aucgypt.edu/gapp/cairoreview/Pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=709>.

To start, the plan rests in the ability of the GoI to recruit Anbari tribal forces. Tribal forces are supposed to be enlisted via popular mobilization efforts put on by the GoI. The GoI having such an appeal over Anbari Sunni tribes is wishful thinking. Anbari tribes, under the plan, would have to operate under the guidance of provincial military authorities who adhere to the wishes of the GoI. It is assumed devolving power to the province level will allow the ISF and Anbari tribes to work together on a more localized basis. Tribal incentive to do so is lacking at best. Such a plan glosses over the fact that Anbari Sunni tribes will still have to fight *under* ISF military officers. Considering the ISF has many times proved unwilling to provide support for Anbari tribes and withhold US-provisioned aid during ISIL assaults, tribal trust of these leaders can only run so deep.

At the same time, details pertaining to the organization of the National Guard, how it would be funded, and the ranges of its powers are not yet solidified. These issues are compounded by the fact that current National Guard units have not been sufficiently paid or armed.<sup>71</sup> If the GoI can't even sustain material incentives to Anbari Sunni tribes, the cost-benefit analysis of the tribes fighting under the auspices of the ISF could prove unfavorable. Ratification of the bill to formulate wide-spread National Guard units has even been obstructed by centralist Iraqi leaders worried about the implications of giving more autonomy to provincial governing forces.<sup>72</sup> History doesn't help the situation either. The GoI dismantled Awakening units after AQI was undermined and the US left.<sup>73</sup> Any GoI promises of political or military inclusion after the fall of ISIL in an attempt to sustain tribal loyalty will most likely be approached with a heavy amount of skepticism. True cooperation among the GoI and Anbari

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<sup>71</sup> Joel Wing, "Iraq's National Guard Plan Moving Forward While Legislation in Jeopardy in Baghdad," *Musings on Iraq Blog*, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2015/01/iraqs-national-guard-plan-moving.html>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> El-Hamed, "A New Sectarian Force for Iraq."

tribal forces, it seems, will be hard to come by. Tribes have a variety of reasons not to trust their state leaders while the GoI has problems resting power in Sunni entities. Thus, the ability of the GoI to create and *sustain* an Anbari tribal force under its rule is problematic in nature.

Second, the National Guard plan suffers from a flawed level of analysis in constructing these heterogeneous anti-ISIL forces. It assumes Anbari tribal forces to be a monolithic entity. Anbari loyalties, as has already been established, reside in tribes first and foremost. Constant competition between tribes amidst the limited provisioning of anti-ISIL aid makes any alliance vulnerable to schisms. Anbari tribes distrust GoI forces and other tribes alike. Forcing them under one anti-ISIL banner under GoI leadership with the hope that ISF officers can lead them to victory is unrealistic. Tribal loyalties must be assessed on a case-by-case basis because they ultimately act in their own best interest regardless of what the GoI or provincial authorities want. Throwing a variety of tribes together without properly sustaining monetary and security incentives and hoping sustained military cooperation to undermine ISIL will take place is culturally naïve. Viewing Anbari Sunni tribes as a large single entity will thus undermine efforts to fund them and undermine ISIL. It will take a more gradual approach rooted in sustained incentives to forge cooperation between these groups and have a chance at lessening ISIL influence in the Anbar province.

Finally, the Iraqi National Guard plan “focuses on the Islamic State while ignoring Shia militias.”<sup>74</sup> ISIL simply cannot be undermined in Anbar province until the GoI relieves its reliance on Shia militias in the area. The US government and GoI assume that a common enemy between state security forces and Anbari Sunni tribes is enough to incentivize sustained collective action. What both states fail to address is that Anbari Sunni tribes have another enemy

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

whose failure is antithetical to ISF success; Shia militias. Anbari tribes distrust these forces for good reason. For instance, Shia militias abducted over one-hundred and fifty Sunnis in Samarra and allegedly massacred forty-one in Jurf al-Sakhr.<sup>75</sup> The GoI still relies on these Shia militias for support and this reliance expands into Anbar province. US and GoI expectations to create a joint tribal/state security apparatus is significantly hindered by the presence of Shia militias who operate under an Iranian agenda. As a result, National Guard units cannot be sustained if Shia militias continue to have a dominant influence within ISF ranks. The incentive of Anbari Sunni tribes to undermine ISIL could be greatly outweighed by the potential implications of Shia militia influence once ISIL is gone. US and GoI forces shouldn't make Anbari tribes choose between the lesser of two evils because ISIL has been winning that scorecard. That is not to say a National Guard cannot be formed. It already has and is made up over seven thousand volunteers, including many from the Dulaym tribal confederation.<sup>76</sup> While an abundance of volunteers may paint the plan as a success, details of GoI infrastructure to retain tribal loyalty and even consistent battle-field coordination have yet to surface. It is imperative the US and GoI alter its strategy to arm Anbari Sunni tribes if sectarianism is to be slowly bridged and ISIL gradually phased out of power.

### **Potential Implications of a Neo-Anbar Awakening**

The U.S. embarking upon a ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening as per the above recommendations could potentially produce profound implications beneficial to US efforts in countering the ISIL insurgency. These implications produce a dichotomous effect, one that could benefit the Iraqi security apparatus and another could sabotage ISIL. Structuring the ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Wehrey, “An Elusive Courtship: The Struggle for Iraq’s Sunni Arab Tribes.”

along more culturally-strategic lines could produce a more functional Iraqi security apparatus. The ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening attacks three mechanisms critical to establishing anti-ISIL control in the Anbar province; organizational coherence, recruitment capacity, and legitimacy.

The ability to sustain organizational capacity in Anbar province will determine who the victorious actor will be in Anbar province. The ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening has the potential to provide conducive resources for anti-ISIL actors to establish a relatively effective organizational capacity while diminishing that of ISIL. One does not necessarily have to occur before the other. Gradual cooperation amongst the ISF and Anbari tribal forces could undo ISIL’s organizational prowess and then (hopefully) increase cohesion between them (anti-ISIL forces) to the extent that they can protect Anbar jointly and legitimately. If the US is able to sustain aid to Anbari Sunni tribes and the GoI simultaneously, military successes could present themselves relative to the current situation in Anbar province. This is not to say that the two forces can completely eradicate ISIL from the province as that is highly unlikely at this point. What is likely is that sustained aid in the manner prescribed above in this project could likely increase their *relative* military success against ISIL.

Sustaining relative military success could undermine ISIL’s ability to govern for two reasons. First, it could sabotage ISIL’s ability to distribute administrative services, resources, and security. If anti-ISIL forces could gradually roll back ISIL’s military strongholds, the organization would no longer have established control of those regions. Without established ISIL control, these territories could not be properly sustained as a *wilayat* and the administrative functions and services it offers could subsequently suffer a reduction in provision. ISIL is able to sustain its control over territories because its organizational capacity allows it to provide basic amenities not previously given to large swaths of Sunnis (specifically in the Anbar province). If

its military strongholds were to be diminished, ISIL could not as easily provide these functions. The security ISIL offers its inhabitants from outside threats would also diminish. Without these mechanisms of appeal, the ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening could weaken ISIL’s ability to govern and subsequently retain control over the local population under its current jurisdiction.

Second, ISIL’s organizational capacity could also be damaged in more direct way; lessening the amount of governing personnel it has at its disposal. Iraqi shadow governors compose an integral part of ISIL’s command and control structure. Some of these shadow governors are tribesmen. Anti-ISIL forces could either eradicate ISIL-affiliated forces from an area or incentivize them to become, in Petersen’s terms, +2 forces (anti-ISIL). Doing so could quite possibly lead to ISIL-affiliated shadow governors fleeing, being killed, or switching allegiances. These three possibilities could then sabotage ISIL’s formal organization and possibly impair its overall function in Anbar province.

Organizational implications from a ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening could also affect recruitment capacities of both non-ISIL forces in the province as well. An actor that is able to assert its organizational capacity to the extent of providing basic services and security will be a more appealing option to the population of Anbar. As previously mentioned, ISIL has been able to ‘divide and conquer’ various Sunni tribes because it can offer younger tribesmen the spoils of power and resources. Through cost-benefit analysis, tribes will continue to ally with the power that gives them the most beneficial offer. ISIL’s inability to provide substantial benefits to tribes due to a relative loss of hard power in Anbar could decrease its soft power capacity to recruit strategically-minded locals. Anti-IS forces, if able to increase their military momentum, could also have a large impact on ISIL’s global recruitment operations. Selling itself as a legitimate

‘caliphate’ capable of enacting and sustaining Islamic rule will be an increasingly difficult task if it gets gradually pushed out of Iraq. On the flip side, military defeats could make ISIL more brutal in its attempt to sustain foreign recruits bent on waging jihad. However, such a strategy could nonetheless illustrate its desperation and lead to further defamation. There is a reason so many foreign recruits (currently estimated to be around 20,000 strong) join ISIL; it is successful. Success explains why ISIL’s numbers have swelled to a huge extent relative to groups like al-Qaeda or al-Shabab. People naturally want to join the best. If potential recruits started to see ISIL as a sub-par terrorist organization, their egos could determine that their abilities could be better used towards a movement that is more likely to be successful. Diminishing either ISIL’s actual or perceived success could thus possibly hurt its seemingly impenetrable image, furthermore stunting its local and global recruitment capacities.

It is difficult to assess how anti-ISIL recruitment capacity in Anbar province could evolve if a ‘neo’ Anbar Awakening is properly implemented because this project does not specifically cover anti-ISIL recruitment. However, given the fact that Anbar is dominated by tribes (tribes that operate in their own strategically-formulated best interest), it is likely that anti-ISIL forces could be more appealing to either neutral or currently ISIL-affiliated actors. Success and perceived competence breed appeal. The extent to which anti-ISIL force establish a functioning organizational capacity that can provide basic life amenities and security that is derived from both Anbari Sunni tribal and GoI action according to the above prescriptions could determine the popular perception of anti-ISIL forces throughout the province.

A diminished organizational capacity, reduced ability to draw on local Anbaris for support, and lessened international appeal could all undermine ISIL’s legitimacy. ISIL is a formidable force because it is seen by all as either a legitimate solution to the world’s problems

or an enemy to humanity. Any doubt surrounding either of these perceptions could sabotage the functional competency, appeal, and mysticism of ISIL. If it doesn't grow it dies. If the growth of the ISIL 'virus' is stunted and its geographic control gradually rolled back, it will die because it no longer will be able to establish itself as a legitimate entity over such a large amount of people. Anti-ISIL forces (Sunni tribes and the GoI) could witness a completely opposite future if they can fight and govern with one another. Slowly bridging the sectarian divide between Sunnis and Shias in anti-ISIL Iraq could thus increase state legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Iraqis need to constantly witness joint efforts to dispel a common enemy from their state. Cooperation between the variety of anti-ISIL actors and their seemingly diverging agendas will undoubtedly prove difficult to coordinate at times. Nonetheless, gradual actions made by all anti-ISIL parties to at least attempt and work together is a necessary step that has the possibility to result in a relatively more representative Iraq to capitalize on the inevitable power vacuum in the country that could span beyond Anbar province. Doing so could produce a sustained, albeit volatile, legitimacy within an Iraqi state that will once again inherit the responsibility of ensuring a group similar to ISIL does not pose a threat in the future.

## Conclusion and Contribution

This paper examined the ISIL insurgency and its implications. Based on extensive theoretical context, a clear delineation between terrorism and insurgency was crafted to highlight the depth of intellectual grappling needed to address the threat of ISIL. In order to counter ISIL, the US must first see it as an insurgent, not merely terrorist, entity and subsequently utilize a variety of tools at its disposal in order to have a realistic chance at undermining it. A variety of counterinsurgency authors and their arguments were covered. Ultimately, the ‘strategist’ school of thought seemed to be most fitting because of its emphasis on employing a flexible framework of responses to insurgent entities that differ according to time, place, and population.

ISIL and five of its microcosms were addressed to illuminate its complexity. Historical analyses asserted that a mixture of ethnic-religious tensions, political and social disenfranchisement, and existing jihadi infrastructures in place in both Iraq and Syria created a fertile ground ripe with opportunity for a power-house militant organization to take root. ISIL’s appeal presents itself not in the sole garb of religion but that of rational calculation amongst a variety of foreign and local actors as well. ISIL’s use of ideological dissemination, recruitment tactics, organizational capacity, and financial resources all propelled its ability to flourish relative to all other competing powers in the region in the wake of the Syrian Civil War and establish itself as a credible, capable governing power

This project put forth three policy recommendations to address the complexity of the ISIL threat. The US’s current weaponized drone programs have proved to tip the cost-benefit analysis of many relatively neutral actors towards ISIL. Overall, it has produced much more blowback, in turn crippling America’s ability to win the ‘hearts and minds’ campaign abroad.

Defeating ISIL also concentrating US resources on the Anbar province to help Sunni tribes in the region. These tribes provide a calculable base of relatively rational actors to utilize in order to delegitimize ISIL in the Anbar province and beyond. Finally, US efforts to subdue the ISIL threat must not end at prioritizing the use of hard power. A long term approach, political nature, was lastly addressed. A genuine attempt by international actors to bring ISIL to the negotiating table with the intent to incrementally de-militarize the group and eventually bring it into the political process is paramount and represents a new approach to defeating ISIL. Politicization would serve as the physical manifestation of these talks to include ISIL members into a new, more representative political system in Iraq.

A benefit of this project's analysis is that it opens enlightening passageways for further research. The ISIL situation in Iraq and Syria is perpetually dynamic. Circumstances change every day as should solutions to eradicate the organization. Due to the scope of this project, research was limited primarily to the situation in Iraq. Subsequently, analyses of ISIL's recruitment, organizational capacity, and finances in Syria could be expanded on in much greater detail. The situation of Anbar province and ISIL's response to opposing forces in the province will also need to be continually assessed for accuracy. Finally, the prospects of political and social reconciliation between war-torn communities in both Iraq and Syria will hold unparalleled implications for the future of the region. This project truly adds to existing literature because of its emphasis on ISIL as an insurgent and not purely terrorist entity. Simultaneously, it put forth three innovative policy recommendations that span both short and long-term approaches. While the undertaking was grand, these recommendations, even if unused, can contribute to ongoing research in national and international security.

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