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There are several competing beliefs regarding how political factions at the sub-state level choose to align and realign during a state of armed conflict. This research draws upon current literature to provide a framework for comparing the Anbar and Baghdad Awakenings of 2006–2007. This research concludes that alignment and alliance building is a process based on structural constraints only at the point of institutional maturity, therefore the critical point in the realignment process for the U.S. military is at a point between an individual's realignment and the wider community's perception of their success.

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There are several competing beliefs regarding how political factions at the *sub-state* level choose to align and realign during a state of armed conflict. The literature on this topic can be divided into four broad categories: historical literature on the ethno-sectarian violence, international relations literature on alliances and coalitions, sociological literature on the theories of motivation, and complexity theories on self-organizing social systems. This article will assess two realignments that took place in Iraq post-2003 at the sub-state level. While there is an abundance of literature on the history of the Iraq war, alliances at the international level, coalition politics, and micro-behavior (at the individual level), there is a gap in the literature on the variables affecting alignments and alliances in a state of civil war, civil insurrection, or where internal militant factions challenge state sovereignty. This research draws upon current literature to provide a framework for comparing the Anbar and Baghdad Awakenings of 2006–2007. This research concludes that alignment and alliance building is a process based on structural constraints only at the point of institutional maturity; therefore the critical point in the realignment process for the U.S. military is at a point between an individual's realignment and the wider community's perception of their success.

ALIGNMENT AND ALLIANCE DEFINED

Alignments and alliances are strategies used by organizations to gain a mutual benefit, or to maximize utility. In the realm of political science and the study of international relations, the

standard definition for "alliance" comes from Bruce Russett, who described an alliance as, "a formal agreement among a limited number of countries concerning the conditions under which they will or will not employ military force" (Russett, 1971, pp. 262–263). The challenge with this definition is that it does not take into account alliances that take place within a country, or between factions in a state of civil war or civil insurrection. Nor does it take into account alliances that take place between countries assisting factions within a particular country.[1] For the purposes of this study, the term "alliance" will not be used in the traditional sense, but rather as a way to describe a formal security arrangement between previously competing political/military factions. Likewise, an alignment, for the purposes of this study, is used in the broadest sense to refer to a formal or informal relationship between two armed political or military factions, for the purposes of mutual security cooperation and mutual policy coordination on security issues (Barnett & Levy, 1991; Langer, 1950).

IRAQ'S HISTORY OF ETHNO-SECTARIAN VIOLENCE

There is an abundance of literature on the history of ethno-sectarian violence and sociopolitical divides in Iraq.[2] After the fall of the Ottoman Empire and from its inception as a nation-state in the 1920s, Iraq has remained an amalgamation of hostile ethnic, national, and religious entities forced together by the British after World War I. Socially, Iraq is divided into three major ethnic groups; each is based in different areas within the country. Sunnis dominate areas in the center and the west of the nation and make up approximately 20% of the population. The Shi'ia reside primarily in the south and account for nearly 60% of the Iraqi people. The historically oppressed Kurdish minority lives in the north and accounts for approximately 20% of the population.

Like many Middle Eastern countries, Iraq's public-sector accounts for a significant portion of the economy (Bellin, 2004, p. 139). During the rule of Saddam Hussein, Iraq had a highly centralized, command economy, controlled by the state. The nation still relies on oil revenue, a major dividing factor amongst the three major ethnic factions, to sustain its economy. When the Ba'ath party lost power, the Sunni minority was unable to maintain primary control over the oil producing regions in the northern and the eastern parts of the country. The division of oil revenue is a source of major contention between the once powerful Sunni minority, the Kurdish-controlled oil rich northern areas, and the Shi'ia dominated parliament. During the initial occupation phases of the Iraq war, the U.S. and coalition forces adhered to the "big bang"[3] approach for instituting neoliberal economic reforms, and by using this method the coalition overlooked many unique challenges facing Iraq at the time: a post-authoritarian government, a weak middle class, residually socialist institutions, and the forces of Islamic fundamentalism.

Most historians agreed that for democracy to succeed in the country, Iraq had to maintain political institutions that represented all Iraqis fairly and equally. After the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, Iraq operated as an occupied government under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). During this period, U.S. and coalition officials worked with Iraqis in developing a new political system, which better represented minority factions, like the Kurds, Turkmen, and Christians. Iraq's constitution, approved in 2005, established a parliamentary democracy consisting of three branches: judicial, executive, and legislative. The judicial branch is a consolidated federal judiciary based on European civil and Islamic religious law. The executive branch

consists of a chief-of-state (President), a head-of-government (Prime Minister), and a Council of Ministers. The legislative branch consists of a unicameral council of representatives, of which the majority faction selects the Prime Minister.

The major structural obstacle impeding Iraq's political development was the historical ethnic and sectarian divisions amongst the Arab Shi'ia in the south, the Kurdish populations in the north, and the Sunni Arab populations in the center and west. Because the ethnic imbalance had the propensity to ignite sectarian civil war, coalition policy makers urged the Iraqis to develop a type of proportional representation. In theory, the ethnic divisions could have served as a check against one another's power. Instead, the fractious decision-making and majority-representation created more alienation and resentment amongst the disparate parties.

During this period, disgruntled insurgent groups and former Ba'athists gained more ground and became increasingly effective at targeting coalition forces. The radical Islamist, Abu Musa'b al-Zarqawi is credited with integrating *Salafist* ideology into a cohesive fighting force to counter the American and coalition presence. In 2004, his network pledged allegiance to the broader Al Qaeda terrorist organization, and was known as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). As such, by 2006, American policy makers feared that if U.S. forces pulled out of the region too soon, the nascent Iraqi government would be faced with overwhelming opposition from the insurgency and an ethnic civil war (Ottaway, 2005). To counter AQI and radicalized elements of the Iraqi society, U.S. and coalition forces stayed in the country much longer than they initially planned. The conundrum for Iraq was that in order for the nation to gain security, Iraqi-led forces had to generate enough control of their own territory, but without U.S. and coalition forces in the region the nation would have quickly spiraled into civil chaos.

For macro-level political reasons, in 2006 and 2007, Iraq's Sunnis realigned with U.S. forces to battle AQI (Kuehl, personal communication, May 2, 2014). Concurrent to the surge of U.S. forces in the region and the U.S. military's doctrinal change in late 2006, Sunni tribal leaders in the western Anbar province of Iraq experienced a "*Sahwa*" or "Awakening" movement, which led them to side with U.S. and coalition forces. Later, as more leaders joined the movement, these "Sons of Iraq" were organized into a formal program and paid by the U.S. forces to fight insurgent groups.

Explanations of the alliance that formed between U.S. forces and the tribal sheikhs of Anbar province as well as the broader Sons of Iraq (SOI) movement in 2006 and 2007 are often attributed to monetary factors, or relative personal gains. Several policy makers have argued that the reason the Sunnis aligned with the U.S. is because the U.S. military paid them to do so (Public Radio International, 2009).[4] The Sunni Awakening (or *Sahwa*) movement was actually connected to a much larger movement within Iraq at the time, fed by the Sunnis' widespread discontent of the central government as well as the rise in Al Qaeda's criminal activities in their sectors and villages. The central government could not keep pace with the spread of the criminal organizations and by late 2005, Al Qaeda had complete control over many Sunni areas, especially in west Baghdad and the western provinces of Salahuddin, Tamim, Ninewah, Diyala, and Anbar.

The surge proved to be successful in the short run, yet was difficult for war planners to distinguish which surge component—the military reinforcement or the doctrinal change—was most effective in Iraq, primarily because there was such little variation in force employment during this period (Biddle, et al., 2012). Military historian Stephen Biddle carefully noted, "the modest scale of reinforcements in 2007 suggests that doctrine may actually have been the decisive factor. Without observing independent variation in troop density and doctrine, however,

it is impossible to make a definitive statement as to their relative causal impact" (Biddle, et al., 2012, p. 39). Yet, a third factor, a massive Sunni political and military realignment, proved to be another important (and at times overlooked) component in the success of the surge.

STRUCTURAL ARGUMENTS

State-Level of Analysis Arguments

Much of the literature on why groups align or realign comes from the realist and neorealist school of thought in International Relations. There are four major theoretical debates at the foundation of how and why alliances form in the international system of state actors. The first can be found in the balance of power theorists like Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson (1993), Kenneth Waltz (1979) and, most recently, John Mearsheimer (2001). Balance of power theory is one of the basic pillars of the realist theory of international relations. Realists argue states balance against the rising power since it creates a vital problem for their national security. Since states are living in an anarchical self-help world, they should act in a way as to balance against rising state actors.

The second major theoretical debate behind alliance formation takes us one step beyond the realist balance of power doctrine and considers security to be the foremost concern of policy makers. This camp is often referred to as "neorealist." The neorealist literature suggests that the distribution of power in the international system provides the most convincing theoretical explanation for the origin conflict (Waltz, 1979). The leader of this school of thought is Stephen Walt. In his seminal work, *The Origins of Alliances*, Walt challenges the realist balance of power theory and questions whether states will choose to balance or bandwagon against threats. He also examines how states choose alliance partners. After a close examination alliance structures in the Middle East, Walt argues that a "balance of threat" thesis provides a better grasp on alliance formation than variables of ideology, foreign aid, and political penetration. Furthermore, Walt shows that factors such as geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions can be just as important elements in alliance politics. Walt also claims that aggregate power (including population, individual and military capabilities, technical prowess, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggregate intentions) all affect the level of threat. Walt posits that balancing is more common than bandwagoning, but weak states are more likely to bandwagon against rising power (Walt, 1987, 1997).

Randall Schweller (1994) argues that balancing and bandwagoning are not dichotomous activities because the motivation for bandwagoning and the motivation for balancing is quite different. He shows that bandwagoning is associated with change and balancing with maintaining the status quo. He argues that status quo states have self-preservation in mind; therefore, their behavior will tend to be balancing. On the other hand, revisionist states have a desire to change the status quo, therefore may bandwagon, or accept forms of aggression. Mearsheimer (2001) asks whether states systematically engage in aggression as their relative power increases, and what determines whether great powers balance as opposed to bandwagoning, buck-passing, or appeasing. Mearsheimer argues on the side of offensive realism, in that he suggests that in a world of uncertainty and anarchy, leaders are likely to seek more power and enhance prospects for survival.

The third major theoretical approach has its roots in economics. Mancur Olson's (1965) work, *The Logic of Collective Action*, is an important underpinning in the academic field of social movement theory, revolutions, and cases of collective state actions. In the same camp, Robert

Keohane (1984) and Joseph Nye (2004) provide the foundation of neoliberal institutionalism. Like the realists, neoliberal institutionalism focuses on the state as the central unit of analysis. Neoliberals do not deny the anarchic nature of the international system, but instead, they focus on game theory in the explaining state behavior. Game theorists seek to show, through the employment of games, how rational actors behave under a set of circumstances.

The fourth major theoretical approach can be attributed to Glenn Snyder (1984, 2002) in his work on alliance formation. Snyder synthesizes the neorealist, neoliberal, and historical analysis into a general, multi-faceted theory of alliance formation. Snyder looks at several factors: costs, benefits, systemic forces, non-systemic incentives, conflicting interests, and the effects of bargaining. Snyder amalgamates these factors into a generalizable model alliance formation.

Sub-State (Sub-National) Level of Analysis Arguments

There are two areas of scholarly literature that address how groups form and coalesce at the level beneath the state (sub-state). The first area is an extension of the neorealist literature; it carries the same assumptions as the neorealist literature with the exception of the level of analysis. Instead of the level of analysis being at the state level, these authors look at inside the state (Christia, 2013; Posen, 1993; Wilcox, 2000). The second area that addresses how groups form at the sub-state level comes from the comparative politics literature on coalition formation (Riker, 1962).

Neorealist Departures

Posen (1993) applies fundamentals of the realist tradition of international relations theory to conditions at the sub-state level in his work on the security dilemma and ethnic conflict. He addresses how the competition for power and security unfolds in states where the sovereign is no longer in control. Posen concludes that realist international relations theories can help explain and predict the "intensity of military conflict among groups emerging from the wreckage of empires" (Posen, 1993, p. 43). He also shows that the security dilemmas in these situations make the risk of conflict quite high. Wilcox (2000) argues that coalitions between warring factions in the Yugoslav civil wars, which had three distinct political factions, are best explained through balance of power theory. Like Wilcox, Christia (2013) finds that at the sub-state level of analysis, alliances manifest based on the distribution of relative power, not identity factors such as race, language, or religion.

The second area below the state level of analysis comes from the comparative politics literature on coalition formation. Much of the work in the field assesses political coalitions using bargaining theory. This field developed around a theory of political coalitions: the postulation that politicians are inclined to form coalitions that are just large enough to win, but not any larger (Riker, 1962). This gives them the maximum payoff (winning an election) for the minimum price (attracting votes), or a *minimum winning coalition*. Other literature in this field assesses coalitions in terms of the circumstances and environment under which they form or combinations of both (Axelrod, 1970; De Swaan, 1973; Cheibub, Przeworski, & Saiegh, 2004; Strom, Budge, & Laver, 1994; Austen-Smith and Banks, 1988).

The 19th century military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz famously described war as "a continuation of politics by other means." Despite the fact that politics and war are intertwined, the authors of the comparative political theory on coalitions generally do not apply their theories to political factions that were in a state of armed conflict; however, theories on minimum winning coalitions yield some interesting hypotheses, which pertain to alliance formation at the sub-state level when armed conflict is taking place.

Two-Level Games

Robert Putnam (1988) deviates from the state-centric literature in his theory of "two-level games" whereby he shows how domestic politics and international relations are intertwined (Putnam, 1988, pp. 427–460). He argues that when domestic decisions need to be made, policy makers will take the concerns of domestic players into account and work to build coalitions. On the international level, however, policy makers simply look for decisions that will benefit their state.

The notion of two-level games is important when discussing the U.S. intervention in Iraq. From the standpoint of the U.S. policy maker, there were several important international-level foreign policy decisions being made that impacted the outcome of the war, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts. Those decisions took into account broad issues dealing with the region as a whole, balance of power considerations, as well as economic and diplomatic ties with regional partners. Concurrently, military commanders on the ground had to make tactical military decisions on a daily basis. Ideally, those tactical decisions would have aligned with changing U.S. foreign policy objectives. Empirical evidence suggests that commanders on the ground were likely driven by the politics of more existential threats, like coalition building between local Iraqi counterparts, not state-level concerns (Kuehl, personal communication, May 2, 2014).

From the standpoint of the Iraqis, who have a multitude of political factions, there were certainly international-level considerations as well as domestic level win-sets that did not coincide. Furthermore, the literature also suggests that in order for there to be an international agreement between both the U.S. and Iraq, the "win-sets" of both countries must overlap. In 2009, these win-sets overlapped to the point where the U.S. and Iraq could negotiate a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), but it is possible that domestic-level considerations were ignored when those decisions were being made. Furthermore, as time progressed, these win-sets changed, as did domestic and international considerations on each side.

AGENT-BASED ARGUMENTS

Agent-based arguments for how groups coalesce look at individual actions, versus environmental or structural conditions. These arguments are based on the idea that people make choices based on what others do, and in making those choices people affect others. The micro motives of individuals in war are especially important when assessing the actions on non-state actors; however, this sort of analysis is cumbersome and rarely performed in the academic literature. Paul Staniland (2010) looks at the causes of insurgent cohesion and fragmentation in his dissertation on insurgent groups. His analysis is at the micro-level; looking at individual actors within armed groups, their rivals, and motivations. Likewise, in a 2011 study by RAND, 36 cases of reintegration in Afghanistan were studied and 71% of the cases cited "grievance" as a key factor for deciding to switch sides (Jones, 2011).

Identity

Another way of looking at how groups align is to look at identity considerations, such as religion, race, or ethnicity, similar to the way many historians describe the demography of Iraq. Posner (2004) assesses this theory when explaining the institutions and ethnic politics in Africa. He looked at groups of ethnically homogenous people on either side of two artificially construed colonial boundaries and shows that ethnicity helped explain differences in political alignment, not national identity. This is a common argument when looking at politics in Iraq; it is naturally assumed that factions will align based on religious or ethnic considerations, like Sunnis aligning with other Sunnis, or Kurds aligning with other Kurds. To the contrary, Posner's work does not predict what will happen when there is a fracture *within* religious and ethnic groups or when there are multiple competing groups vying to align for power.

Weberian Sociology

The German social scientist, Max Weber stressed the importance of charismatic leadership in his analysis of power and legitimate authority (Weber, 1978). While charisma itself is difficult to define, Weber notes that charismatic leadership is often found with Prophets, demagogues, war heroes, and popular political leaders. Charismatic leaders often lead social movements by performing heroic deeds through unconventional means. In the Middle East, charismatic leadership is often found in religious and political leaders. During the 20th century, the Middle East saw a succession of political leaders who were typically deemed to be a source of legitimate authority after a *coup d'état* or social revolution. Samuel Huntington (1968) also emphasized the importance of charismatic leadership in the absence of traditional sources of legitimacy or where political institutions are very weak. Specifically, he notes, "[i]nstead of the party reflecting the needs of the state, the state becomes the creation of the party and the instrument of the party" (Huntington, 1968, p. 91). Huntington defines institutionalization as "the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability" (p. 12). Furthermore, Huntington suggests political institutions have "recurring patterns of behavior" and are strongest when they are adaptable, complex, autonomous, and coherent (p.12).

COMBINING STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

Micromotives and Macrobehavior

Schelling's (1978) work *Micromotives and Macrobehaviors* assesses the aggregation of individual micro-motives as an expression of societal macro-behavior. One of the key models that Schelling uses is in the notion of "critical mass," which is the point where a sufficient number of individuals adopt a change in a social system so that change becomes self-sustaining. Schelling also introduces the concept of feedback loops applied to social behavior.

Complexity Theory and Self-Organizing Systems

Rooted in the study of non-linear dynamics, complexity theory in the social sciences looks at how micro-systems and events can cause complex behaviors at the macro-level. Complexity theories take into account both agency and structure as well as a multitude of variables contributing to initial conditions, many of which do not act in a linear fashion. The theorists postulate that these layers of interactions produce self-reinforcing feedback loops, many of which depend on strong prior conditions. Complexity theory is characterized by nine basic concepts: survivability, co-evolution, emergence, agent-based systems, self-organization, self-organized criticality, punctuated equilibrium, and fitness landscapes (Axelrod, 1997; Axelrod & Cohen, 1999; Kauffman, 1993; Lewin, 1992; Richards, 2000).

The complexity literature in the social sciences is a departure from neorealism on three major fronts. First, non-state actors are important when looking at the evolution of the international system (Jervis, 1997). Complexity models are important in the analysis of sub-state alignments and alliances because there is a propensity for multiple layers of belligerents and actors (Jervis, 1997). Second, equilibrium is not as meaningful a concept. Whereas in the realist literature, the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning to restore the balance of power are key strategies for state survival; the literature on complexity theories looks at evolutions, dynamic systems, and patterns of change. Third, the complexity literature takes into account both agency (in terms of micro-motives) and structure (in terms of initial conditions). In terms of the perpetuation of complex behavior and the reinforcement of specific actions taken by militant groups, various scholars have introduced the concept of "violence markets" whereby actors are economically incentivized to continue fighting regardless of what the conflict is doing to the "state" at large (Elwert, 2015). The concept of a "violence market" combines both agent-based economic incentives with structurally-based broad ideological and political goals.

CASE 1: ANBAR AWAKENING

In its beginning, the Sunni political and military realignment was largely tribal. From the onset, Sunni tribal leaders viewed the Shiite-led Iraqi government with distrust, and by 2005, Anbar's tribal leaders were enduring years of social, religious, and economic conflict with AQI. AQI leaders posed a direct threat to the traditional power of the sheikhs and openly challenged their rulings in religious and social matters (Cigar, 2011). Sheikh Ali Hatim al-Suleiman, of the 3 million strong al-Dulaymi confederation, wanted to strike back on AQI in 2005, but realized that such an effort would provoke an even stronger retaliatory response (Cigar, 2011). He also realized that the tribal leaders needed American support to be effective, but openly cooperating with the Americans would not garner popular support with the general Sunni population (Cigar, 2011). By mid-late 2005 the tribes were already in open warfare against Al Qaeda, but they did not have support from the U.S. forces in the area (Montgomery, 2009).

In Anbar province, Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha is often credited as the founder of the Anbar *Sahwa* movement. Like al-Suleiman, Abu Risha was another prominent sheikh from the al-Dulaymi tribe. For most of his life he had lived as an opportunist; during the strict economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. after the Gulf War he was well known for smuggling oil and conducting highway robberies along the vast stretch of desert highway that separates Iraq from

Syria (D. Abdul Karim, personal communication, October 27, 2017). In 2006, he approached U.S. Marine forces operating in Anbar province to build an alliance to fight AQI. His move couldn't have been more appropriately timed; the commander there, Lieutenant Colonel Sean McFarland, was facing a rapidly deteriorating security situation. Earlier that year, the U.S. Marine's headquarters-level intelligence staff had concluded that, "there was little the U.S. could do to stifle the insurgency in Anbar" (Gordon & Trainor 2012, p. 248). Extraordinary measures would be needed in order to secure the area.

Abu Risha was the first tribal leader to encourage his followers to join the local police forces in Anbar Province to fight against the insurgency. Other tribal leaders followed suit, and the *Sahwa* spread throughout the province. Later, U.S. forces discovered the killing of his three brothers and his father by AQI may have motivated Abu Risha to switch sides (Gordon & Trainor, 2012, p. 251). As his movement grew, he founded a formal council for *Sahwa* matters, including dozens of Sunni tribal leaders from his region. The collaborative pattern "spread rapidly through the province" and thousands of young Sunni men joined the local police forces (Wilbanks & Karsh, 2010, p. 59).

The Anbar Awakening was particularly successful because the Sunnis knew exactly where the AQI fighters lived and how to target them (Wilbanks & Karsh, 2010, p. 59). The legitimacy of Anbar's tribal leaders was instrumental in the recruitment and retention of young Sunni men. Because it was so successful, the Anbar Awakening became the model for exploiting the fissure between Sunni insurgent groups and the general Sunni population (Office of the Special Investigator for Iraq Reconstruction, 2011). The integration and focus on tribal leaders was also important, because they ended up providing the critical link between Sunni politicians in Baghdad and former military officers working at the local level.

CASE 2: BAGHDAD AWAKENING

When then the commander of the U.S. Army's 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, then-Lieutenant Colonel Dale Kuehl, arrived in western Baghdad in late 2006, he recalled there was no rule of law, no municipal services, and violence was very high (Kuehl, personal communication, May 2, 2014).Over the next several months, the violence did not abate. By May 2007, a succession of improvised explosive device (IED) attacks over the course of two weeks killed over a dozen of Colonel Kuehl's soldiers. Like Colonel McFarland had done in Anbar province, Colonel Kuehl took extraordinary measures to redirect the momentum of the campaign.

One of the first leaders of the Awakening movement in Baghdad, Sa'ad Ghaffoori (aka Abu Abed), had worked as an Iraqi Army intelligence officer under Saddam Hussein. By late 2006, AQI was controlling the population in his upper-class neighborhood of Ameriyah in western Baghdad through kidnapping, torture, and murder (Keuhl, 2009, p. 77). Tactically speaking, Ameriyah was in an ideal position to hit Radwaniyah Palace Complex, the biggest coalition base in Iraq, with Katyushas and other Soviet-era artillery pieces stolen by AQI fighters. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, AQI fighters had vowed to protect Ameriyah's residents from Shi'ia militias and American soldiers. Without the rule of law, however, AQI grossly abused their power and the residents of the neighborhood, which was deemed by many AQI operatives as the capital of the Islamic State in Iraq. Abu Abed's own brothers were tortured and beheaded by Shi'ia militias because of the lack of security in the area.

Encouraged by the success of the Anbar Awakening, and with the help of a local imam, in May 2007 Abu Abed took charge of the *Sahwa* movement in Ameriyah. Over the course of the next several months, Abu Abed worked with the U.S. military to gain control over the neighborhood. The collaboration aided both sides: Abu Abed's men gained military support from the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army gained critical intelligence. The new intelligence aided operators in targeting AQI members and helped U.S. forces find their weapons caches (S. Ghaffoori, personal communication, April 17, 2016). Then the Awakening movement spreads to other provinces. In 2007, former Ba'ath party members Baqubah aligned with U.S. forces and provided intelligence on AQI strongholds in the city (Kagan, 2009, p. 118).

Sons of Iraq

The SOI's intimate knowledge of the local population, insurgent strongholds, and access to reliable intelligence facilitated the efficiency and success of the *Sahwa* movement. With the help of U.S. forces and momentum gained from tactical successes, the *Sahwa* quickly spread to Baghdad's other sectors, including: Hayy Al-Jamia, Adhimiya, Dora, and Khadra. By early 2008, the SOI had grown to a force of over 100,000 (Ahmed, 2008). Many of the SOI leaders were former Iraqi officers and soldiers under Saddam Hussein (S. Ghaffoori, personal communication, April 17, 2016). The men were familiar with formal military doctrine as well as unconventional warfare, small arms, and guerilla tactics. Once the U.S. formalized the program, SOI members were paid the equivalent of $300 USD per month for providing security services (Bruno, 2009; S. Ghaffoori, personal communication, April 17, 2016).

ALIGNMENT AND ALLIANCE FORMATION

The Awakening movement allowed the U.S. to take advantage of the internal cleavages amongst the Sunni population, seize the momentum, and provide stability. The combination of the surge in U.S. forces, Army doctrinal changes and the Sunni Awakening led to a decrease in violence and a strategic pause which enabled the U.S. forces to negotiate a SOFA with the Iraqi government and develop a plan to withdraw from the region. In addition, the decrease in violence led to a gradual improvement in the ability of the Iraqi Army to control and hold ground during operations.

In both the case of Abu Risha and Abu Abed, the individuals had a grievance. In the case of Abu Risha, it was AQI's lack of respect for tribal authority and the fact they murdered his family members. In the case of Abu Abed, it was AQI's indiscriminate use of violence and the lack of security in his neighborhood. Both men sensed an opportunity for advancement, both in terms of security for their area and in political opportunity (S. Ghaffoori, personal communication, April 17, 2016). Over time, this led to their individual realignment with U.S. forces. The next steps in the realignment process were significant battlefield successes against AQI, leading to their rise as popular figure. Only then did the realignment happen at a macro-level, across a sector of society. It is important to note that within that sector of society, many have the same grievances as the popular figure. Once a macro-level alignment took place, U.S. forces were able to institutionalize the SOI program. It is important to note that the bulk of the realignment process in both cases was ideological. Most of the steps involved in the early phases were not economic

in nature. Only when an ideological shift occurred, buffered by an opportunity for economic and political security, did realignment take place.

The issue for host nation and coalition forces is that in order for the realigned factions to aid in counterinsurgency, they must be able to self-organize and protect themselves, as well as their communities. The realigned factions also had a leading figure, which convinced others to join the cause. The problem is that self-organization by militant groups, especially those with a leading figure, are perceived as a threat to the state and entrenched politicians. There was also a problem with the legitimacy of the organization. While the U.S. and many Iraqi citizens appreciated the efforts of the SOI, they were never truly seen as a legitimate organization.

Yet, in essence, it was the SOI that reflected the U.S.'s counterinsurgency doctrine of population-centric, rapidly adapting, tactical-level resistance. The Sunni realignment in both Anbar and Baghdad also demonstrates that the impetus to "change sides" often happens on a personal level before it grows into an ideological movement. Likewise, the Sunni Awakening shows that realignment is often initialized because of betrayal and opportunities for advancement, and not necessarily by monetary gain. As the Awakening movements grew, it became a way for former military members and jobless men to find meaningful employment (Chakmakchi, personal communication, August 11, 2014). So, while initial recruitment was ideologically driven, over time it became a security business (Chakmakchi, personal communication, August 11, 2014).

This analysis suggests that political factions will realign based on individual considerations that then develop into macro-level movements. Thus, nor agent-based nor structure-based arguments alone can explain the process by which the leaders switched sides. Thus, it is important to combine both agency (in terms of micro-behaviors by political actors) and structure (in terms of initial conditions) when assessing both the Anbar and Baghdad Awakenings. An important concept within the self-organization literature is the idea of "critical mass." Theories of self-organization suggest that individual considerations aggregate to a point of critical mass in order to become macro-level movements. In the case of Iraq, there were individuals like Abu Abed and Sheikh Abu Risha who decided *as individuals* to align with the Americans, but the macro-level Awakening movement did not gain momentum until enough individuals had joined the SOI. Both Abu Abed and Abu Risha were charismatic leaders, who propelled a wider social movement.

Yet, there is no consensus on whether or not a single personality can shape an entire movement. Colonel Simon Gardiner, a now retired Army Civil Affairs Officer that served in Iraq during the surge, points to the importance of personal leadership in countering insurgency (Gardiner, personal communication, May 17, 2014). Equally important during the *Sahwa* was the role of a leading figure, like Abu Risha or Abu Abed, who had charisma and leadership capabilities, as well as the ability to convince others to "switch sides."

On the other hand, then-Major General John Kelly, who was the Multi-National Force-West commander during the height of the surge, states that "[n]o single personality was the key in Anbar…[i]t was a combination of factors, not the least of which…was the consistent command philosophy" (Kelly, 2009). It is important to understand that under the previous regime in Iraq there was a cult of personality that promoted the adulation of Saddam Hussein. Likewise, a leading figure in Arab politics often dominates, which is common in authoritarian governance (Sassoon, 2011, p. 175). So, it is not surprising, from a cultural standpoint, that the actions of one person would be celebrated by elements of the Iraqi populace.

The importance of charismatic leadership as a source of legitimate authority was seen during the Sunni Awakening, but perhaps underappreciated by coalition forces, which were more accustomed to legal-rational and traditional sources of authority. In the aforementioned cases, the U.S. didn't approach Abu Risha or Abu Abed with the notion of realignment or switching sides. To the contrary, the U.S. military's role came later; the military was needed to gain them battlefield success, which in turn gave them more legitimacy and more popular support. The rapid rise of Abu Abed as a charismatic leader is especially important, as his power rested on his image of being able to perform heroic deeds, often by what were seen as irrational or untraditional means. So, the critical point in realignment for the U.S. military is not in the institutionalization of security programs, but the point between an individual's realignment and the perception of their battlefield successes.

Therefore, it is logical to conclude that in their formative stages, political factions typically behave in accordance with agent-based considerations. As the political groups mature, they typically follow a charismatic leader to the point of institutionalization. Once political groups mature to the point of institutionalization they are more likely to behave in accordance with structural theories from the neorealist literature. This suggests that alignment and alliance building is a process based on structural constraints only at the point of institutional maturity. When the political party or militant group is not institutionally mature, it will rely more upon charismatic leadership or agent-level motivations. Once the group has matured, it will behave more in accordance with the neorealist literature and less on the authority of the charismatic leader.

NOTES

1. See also: (Booth, 1987; Liska, 1962; Snyder, 1997; Walt, 1995; Wilkins, 2012).
2. See also: (Bengio, 1998; Lewis, 1995; Tripp, 2007; Yitzhak, 1995).
3. The 'big bang' approach to economic reform suggests market-oriented reforms should be implemented before entrenched politicians can block them. See: (Islam, 2006).
4. For additional background on how the Army uses money as a weapon system see: Center for Army Lessons Learned, "Commander's Guide to Money as a Weapon System" April 2009 http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/docs/09-27/09-27.pdf; (Petraeus, 2008).

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