

The Anbar Awakening

LINK: The environment is primed for another awakening.

Derek Harvey, director of the University of Southern Florida's Global Initiative for Civil Society and Conflict, and Michael Pregent, security and reconciliation analyst and advisor in Iraq, for the New America Foundation – June 2014

In the course of the Awakening, U.S. troops learned that the tribal leaders and fighters who formed the Sons of Iraq were primarily pragmatists rather than ideologues. Unlike ISIS and other Sunni Islamist insurgents, the tribal fighters were driven not by a desire for vast sectarian conflict, but by tribal interests and political grievances. Today, as in 2006 - 2007, some fissures have developed between ISIS and its Sunni allies, especially Sunni tribes and potentially other insurgent groups who do not support ISIS's maximalist Islamist form of governance.

This divergence of aims will create opportunities for external actors to develop ties with the Sunni tribes—and thus could help restart the Awakening as well.

LINK: Sheikhs prefer complimentary American force to competitive extremism.

John McCary, human intelligence collector, for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in the Washington Quarterly – 2009

While the U.S. military was implementing its new strategic approach in the region, the high-level U.S. congressional debate over troop withdrawal began making headlines before the 2006 elections. This led to the perception among the Iraqi population that the United States and its military were most likely going to leave Iraq in the near future. **A fundamental consideration for Iraqi leaders when choosing an ally was whether or not that same ally was a political competitor. Al Qaeda had initially presented itself as a complimentary power but eventually became a competing and then dominant power.** Although initially perceived as an occupying force bent on stealing Iraq's oil and natural resources, the U.S. military became and is now seen as a complimentary and supportive power. The perception that U.S. troops will leave Iraq in the "near" future is a key factor in the Sunni tribal leaders' willingness to cooperate.³⁵ As one sheikh put it, "We consider the Americans to be our friends at the moment so that we can get rid of the extremists."³⁶

IMPACT: The local forces are absolutely critical for identification, AQI proves.

John McCary, human intelligence collector, for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in the Washington Quarterly – 2009

Having lost the ability to rid themselves of al Qaeda, the overwhelming might of the U.S. military became a tool at the sheikhs' disposal. **The most difficult aspect of counterinsurgency is identifying insurgents.**³⁷ **Whereas the U.S. military had previously been unable to target al Qaeda effectively without sufficient local knowledge, the addition of unhampered local intelligence made the military a far more effective force.** Muhammad Fanar Kharbeet, son of the late Sheikh Fanar

Kharbeet of the Albu Khalifa tribe outside Ramadi, helps clarify why: The Coalition Forces has the very strong military ability. **The civilians and the tribes, they have a difference that the Coalition Forces doesn't have. It's that they're local / they found and knows who comes from outside. They know who are the insurgents and who are al Qaeda in general, such that there is no more al Qaeda or anything else.** You wouldn't believe me. I'm not exaggerating that in two months, in two months everything was finished.³⁸

IMPACT: The US needs to provide the tinder, like last time.

Ben Hubbard, New York Times – November 15, 2014

It remains unclear how successful even a reliable long-term effort by the Iraqi government to enlist the tribal fighters can be. **Though American cash and battlefield presence helped the Awakening succeed before, both are lacking this time around. American officials say the United States is encouraging the process, but that all arms and salaries must come from the Iraqi government.**

The Kurdish Way

INHERENCY: The US relies on these very Kurds.

Denise Natali, senior research fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, in Foreign Affairs – April 22, 2015

Within Iraq and Syria, the U.S.-led campaign against the Islamic State (ISIS) relies heavily on Kurdish Peshmerga as coalition boots on the ground. Since international air strikes commenced in September 2014, the Peshmerga have regained about 25–30 percent of territories lost to ISIS. Territorial gains have also limited ISIS’ access to oil and gas resources, drying up some of its revenue streams. But the Peshmerga haven’t been a total success story; Peshmerga forces are using coalition air strikes to engineer territorial and demographic changes that are antagonizing Sunni Arabs—the very communities the United States needs on its side to degrade ISIS. Coalition military support to the Kurdish Peshmerga in Syria is also irritating Turkey, a major regional ally, and further hindering a shared regional framework of action.

INHERENCY: ISIL is an opportunity for the Kurds.

Dexter Filkins, The New Yorker – September 29, 2014

The incursion of ISIS presents the Kurds with both opportunity and risk. In June, the ISIS army swept out of the Syrian desert and into Mosul, Iraq’s second-largest city. As the Islamist forces took control, Iraqi Army soldiers fled, setting off a military collapse through the region. The Kurds, taking advantage of the chaos, seized huge tracts of territory that had been claimed by both Kurdistan and the government in Baghdad. With the newly acquired land, the political climate for independence seemed promising. The region was also finding new economic strength; vast reserves of oil have been discovered there in the past decade. In July, President Barzani asked the Kurdish parliament to begin preparations for a vote on self-rule. “The time has come to decide our fate, and we should not wait for other people to decide it for us,” Barzani said.

IMPACT: Kurds are alienating Sunnis.

Denise Natali, senior research fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, in Foreign Affairs – April 22, 2015

Still, coalition strategy and Kurdish successes against ISIS are creating their own political problems—allowing Kurds to take measures against their Sunni Arab neighbors that extend beyond ISIS-related combat. KRG efforts to redraw Iraq’s internal boundaries have gained momentum as coalition air strikes unintentionally enable Peshmerga to claim former ISIS-controlled lands as part of the Kurdistan Region—at the expense of Sunni Arabs. According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga are preventing Sunni Arab communities from returning to territories from which ISIS has been expelled, taking over Sunni Arab homes and confining thousands of Arabs within “security zones” inside disputed areas. Iraqi Arab parliamentarians have harshly criticized Kurdish land grabs and the consequent displacement of Arab villagers as being conducted under the “pretext of fighting ISIS.” Although some Kurdish officials state that the disputed territories—lands equally claimed by the Iraqi government and the KRG—are no longer disputed, Arab Iraqis argue otherwise.

IMPACT: Vying for Kurdish independence cuts US-Iranian cooperation.

Mohsen Milani, professor of Politics and executive director of the Center for Strategic and Diplomatic Studies at the University of South Florida, in Foreign Affairs – August 27, 2014

The second factor that could stall U.S.–Iranian cooperation is the prospect of an independent Kurdistan. Under Maliki, the relationship between Baghdad and the Kurdish regional capital of Erbil, became increasingly hostile. After the northern Iraqi city of Mosul fell to ISIS in June, the Kurds decided to seize the opportunity to make a

bid for greater sovereignty. They quickly captured Kirkuk, a contested and energy-rich city in northern Iraq, and continued with their controversial policy to sell oil without Baghdad's approval. They also stated their intention to hold a referendum on Kurdish independence. All of these developments alarmed Tehran, which has generally maintained good relations with the Kurds, but has drawn a red line regarding Kurdish independence. The recent decision by Western countries to provide weapons directly to Kurdish militias has increased Tehran's anxieties. Although Iran has developed close political and economic ties with Iraq's Kurds and has even pledged to support them in their war against ISIS, Tehran also understands that independence for Iraqi Kurds could easily incite Iran's own ethnic minorities to demand independence and undermine the country's territorial integrity. Tehran is very

aware of a recent precedent: After World War II, an independent government was fleetingly established in Mahabad, in Iranian Kurdistan, although the Soviet-backed movement was soon crushed by Iran's central government. Iranian policymakers also know that, although the United States officially opposes Kurdish independence, the Kurds have powerful friends in Washington who seek to change that policy.

Urban Warfare

LINK: The US military is better equipped for urban warfare.

Missy Ryan, Washington Post – February 8, 2015

While U.S. forces honed those skills during the last Iraq war, [but] the Iraqi military, which was rebuilt from scratch after 2003, has much less experience in urban fighting, said retired Army Lt. Gen. Frank Helmick, who commanded the U.S. effort to train Iraqi forces in 2008 and 2009. He said the goal of that training was largely to build up security institutions and train Iraq's conventional army in external defense. "Urban fighting is going city to city, street to street, building to building, room to room," Helmick said. "Our goal was to get the army out of the cities in order to allow them to help secure the borders." In general, said Ahmed Ali, a senior fellow at the Education for Peace in Iraq Center, "this was not part of their mandate, and they were heavily reliant on U.S forces to engage in urban battles from 2004 to 2008."

LINK: Iraqi forces would lose local support.

Missy Ryan, Washington Post – February 8, 2015

The sensitivity of the latter question underscores the delicate position of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. Much of the heavy fighting against the Islamic State has been done by Kurdish peshmerga forces and Iranian-backed Shiite militias and volunteers. But deploying Kurdish or Shiite fighters into largely Sunni Arab Mosul would be a risky move, potentially undermining any local support for the operation. In recent weeks, Iraq has been gripped by reports that militiamen have carried out sectarian killings.

IMPACT: Troops are essential for even an air campaign.

Michael O'Hanlon, senior fellow at the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence and director of research for the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution, in Foreign Affairs – August 12, 2014

Nothing about the big breakthroughs in drone technology over the last decade changes those basic facts. It remains very hard to find and destroy an enemy from the air without good intelligence, gained largely on the ground, especially when one's allies are vulnerable to retribution by the enemy. U.S. troops need not attempt to solve these issues on their own, as they did in the last round of the war. But the United States does need to help restore the Iraqi military's ability to do so.

IMPACT: American airstrikes may be less useful, absent on-the-ground intel.

Missy Ryan, Washington Post – February 8, 2015

Urban offensives may require a shift in U.S. air tactics as well. Because dropping bombs on a major city would increase the odds of striking civilians, U.S. military officials may request White House permission to send air controllers closer to the front lines.

IMPACT: Greater civilian casualties are problematic.

Michael Soussan, former UN program coordinator for Iraq, in the Wall Street Journal – October 8, 2014

A house-to-house fight for control of the city will be much more costly in blood and treasure if ISIS is given too much time to build a network of tunnels and hunker down Gaza-style. Hiding behind civilians is not difficult, and the less training the invading forces have the more likely they are to kill more civilians. With Arab civilian casualties likely to be featured prominently in news reports, the coalition of Arab nations could flounder.

IMPACT: Refugees are ideal recruits.

Daniel Byman, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution Saban Center for Middle East Policy and professor of security studies at Georgetown University, and Kenneth Pollack, director the Brookings Institution Saban Center for Middle East Policy, in Foreign Policy – August 10, 2012

Beyond this, refugees can often become carriers of conflict. Angry and demoralized refugee populations represent ideal recruitment pools for the warring armies; the Taliban have drawn from angry young Afghan refugees raised in Pakistan, offering them a chance for vengeance and power.

Indeed, refugee camps frequently become bases to rest, plan, and stage combat operations back into the country from which the refugees fled. For instance, the camps set up in the Democratic Republic of Congo after Rwanda's genocide quickly became a base of operations for fleeing Hutu rebels to regroup.

IMPACT: Urban warfare is taking over as the main source of conflict.

Louis DiMarco, associate professor of military history at USA Command and General Staff College, *Concrete Hell* – 2012, p. 213-214

The trends of military history support the idea that warfare in the 21st century will be dominated by operations in the urban environment. But it is not just military history that supports the idea of the increasing decisiveness of urban combat. The importance of urban combat is also supported by population demographics.

Since World War II, increased access to modern medicine has led to a global population explosion. Between 1990 and 2009 the global population increased 28 percent. It has increased even more dramatically in developing parts of the world, areas that are the most likely setting for warfare in the 21st century: Africa's population has increased by 58 percent while the population of the Middle East has grown by 54 percent. That dramatic increase in global population has been

accompanied by a vast global rural to urban migration. In 1800, only 3 percent of the world's population lived in cities, but by 2000 almost one half of the global population lived in cities. By the year 2030 the UN projects that 60 percent of the world population will live in cities. This shift from rural to urban population will be most dramatic in those developing nations where simultaneously the population growth is most dramatic: in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

An important subset of this move by people to the urban environment is the accompanying growth of urban ghettos and shantytowns. One-third of the global urban population lives in poverty and disease-ridden urban ghettos. This environment is characterized by crime, disease, and political unrest. Warfare is conducted in response to politics; politics is the interaction of citizens in society; and increasingly in the 21st century those citizens will interact in, and be citizens of, cities. Urban combat will be the most likely type of combat, regardless of the specific political circumstances prompting war in the 21st century, simply because the urban environment will be the dominant residential environment across the globe.

Iranian Aggression

INHERENCY: Iran has been dominating the region.

Hillary Leverett, senior fellow at the Jackson Institute and CEO of STRATEGA, for the Yale MacMillan Center – March 28, 2011

"We were essentially unconstrained going into the 1990s in both our ability and our determination to consolidate hegemony in the Middle East, and by this I mean a highly militarized, U.S.-led political and security order for the region. Today, that is disappearing right before our eyes." **Leverett said there has recently been a "dramatic shift in the regional balance of power away from the U.S. and increasingly going in favor of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its allies."** She said this has been going on for more than a decade, but has accelerated and intensified with the "Arab awakening" of 2011, and that Iran has advantages in the realm of "soft power," as opposed to hard military power.

LINK: America relies on Iranian troops absent its own commitment.

Helene Cooper, New York Times – March 5, 2015

At a time when President Obama is under political pressure from congressional Republicans over negotiations to rein in Tehran's nuclear ambitions, a startling paradox has emerged: Mr. Obama is becoming increasingly dependent on Iranian fighters as he tries to contain the Islamic State militant group in Iraq and Syria without committing American ground troops.

IMPACT: Iran is ill-equipped to fight the battle.

Eric Schmitt, New York Times – March 16, 2015

Iran has not yet launched any of the weapons, but American officials fear the rockets and missiles could further inflame sectarian tensions and cause civilian casualties because they are not precision guided. Their deployment is another dilemma for the Obama administration as it trains and equips the Iraqi military and security services to help defeat the

Islamic State, but unlike Iran is unwilling to commit fighters and advisers who join Iraqi forces in the field.

IMPACT: Iranian influence is being matched.

Paul Shinkman, US News & World Report – April 2, 2015

Now, a volatile conflict in Yemen threatens to expand Iranian influence at the expense of regional rivals including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Those countries, backed by a band of Sunni Muslim leaders, have grown tired of waiting for U.S. assistance and are instead taking responsibility themselves. Their

week-old air war against the Iran-backed Shiite Muslim Houthi rebels and consideration of a subsequent ground invasion have only minimal support from the U.S. It looks as if Obama got exactly what he wanted. But Yemen's internal complexities, combined with foreign meddling, has prompted concerns of all-out regional war. The renewed violence will now prove whether the American government is prepared to accept its new role in the Middle East as a supplier and organizer, but not a leader.

IMPACT: Iranian-backed soldiers may undermine local support.

Michael Maloof, former senior security policy analyst for the Secretary of Defense – March 9, 2015

Sources say, however, that while the U.S. is quietly welcoming Iranian involvement on the ground, there also is concern that the Shiite Iranian participation in the effort to retake Mosul could cause Sunni tribes to renege on backing the Iraqi government and side with ISIS. In addition, there is the growing prospect that Iran's involvement could further ignite sectarian conflict in Iraq.

IMPACT: The United States makes enemies.

Bret Stephens, editor of the Wall Street Journal, *America in Retreat* – 2014, p. 228

But perhaps the thinking is beginning to change. The evidence of where the Obama administration's foreign policy has led is becoming difficult to ignore: Russia's invasion of Ukraine; China's aggressive maritime claims against Japan and the Philippines; Iran's confident march to nuclear capability; North Korea's nuclear tests; the unfolding chaos in Iraq; the calamity in Syria. **Averting one's eyes, keeping our hands clean, staying out, remaining in a supine position, is not a foreign policy option for the United States. There is a growing sense that if America provides no leadership, authoritarian regimes will quickly fill the breach; that if our red lines are exposed as mere bluffs, more of them will be crossed; that if our commitments to our allies—both the ones we generally like and the ones we have no option but to accept—aren't serious, those friends might abandon us; that if our threats against our enemies are empty, our enemies will be emboldened, and we will have more of them. If history does not end—and it hasn't—then the United States does not get a holiday from it.**

IMPACT: The US loses allies.

Bret Stephens, editor of the Wall Street Journal, *America in Retreat* – 2014, p. 12

These aren't mere words. **Perceptions shape actions. Allies who doubt the credibility of American security guarantees, of its strength of will, will pursue their interests irrespective of Washington's wishes or commands. Enemies who think they have nothing to fear from the United States will do as they please.**

Should Americans care that Israel might strike Iran's nuclear facilities because Jerusalem has lost confidence in Obama's promises to prevent Iran from getting a bomb? Perhaps we should, because such a strike could draw the United States into a conflict in a time and manner not of our choosing. And should we mind that leaders in Beijing, Moscow, or Tehran think the president of the United States is a self-infatuated weakling? The answer is yes, assuming we don't want to see Taiwan, Estonia, or Bahrain become the next Crimea.