

The Challenge of Adversary Networks in Iraq

Jeffrey B. White
Berrie Defense Fellow
The Washington Institute for Near East
Policy
March 15, 2006

Iraq network challenge

“One thing that has really surprised us is the enemy’s ability to regenerate, we take a lot of people off the streets, but they can regenerate very rapidly. The insurgent networks are complex, diffuse. We can take out the leadership, but it doesn’t take long for them to grow new legs,”

Col. Ed Cardon , USA, quoted in *Defense News*, January 9, 2006

Discussion Topics

- Networks and biology
- Iraqi networks
- Characterization (traits) of Iraqi networks
- "Fitness" of Iraqi networks
- Vulnerability of Iraqi networks
- Conclusions

Networks and biology

- "Combat Darwinism", "adaptive insurgents", "learning opponents": terms indicating that people working Iraq are employing biological concepts.
- Insurgent organizations are social networks.
- Networks because they are social systems, should be approachable through sociobiological concepts

Definition

Sociobiology is defined as the systematic study of the biological basis of all behavior. (Wilson, *Sociobiology*)

Key biological concepts relevant to insurgent networks

- Traits
- Adaptation
- Selection pressure/environmental pressure
- "Fitness"
- Reproduction
- Competition
- Social behavior/cooperation
- Survival

Iraqi adversarial networks

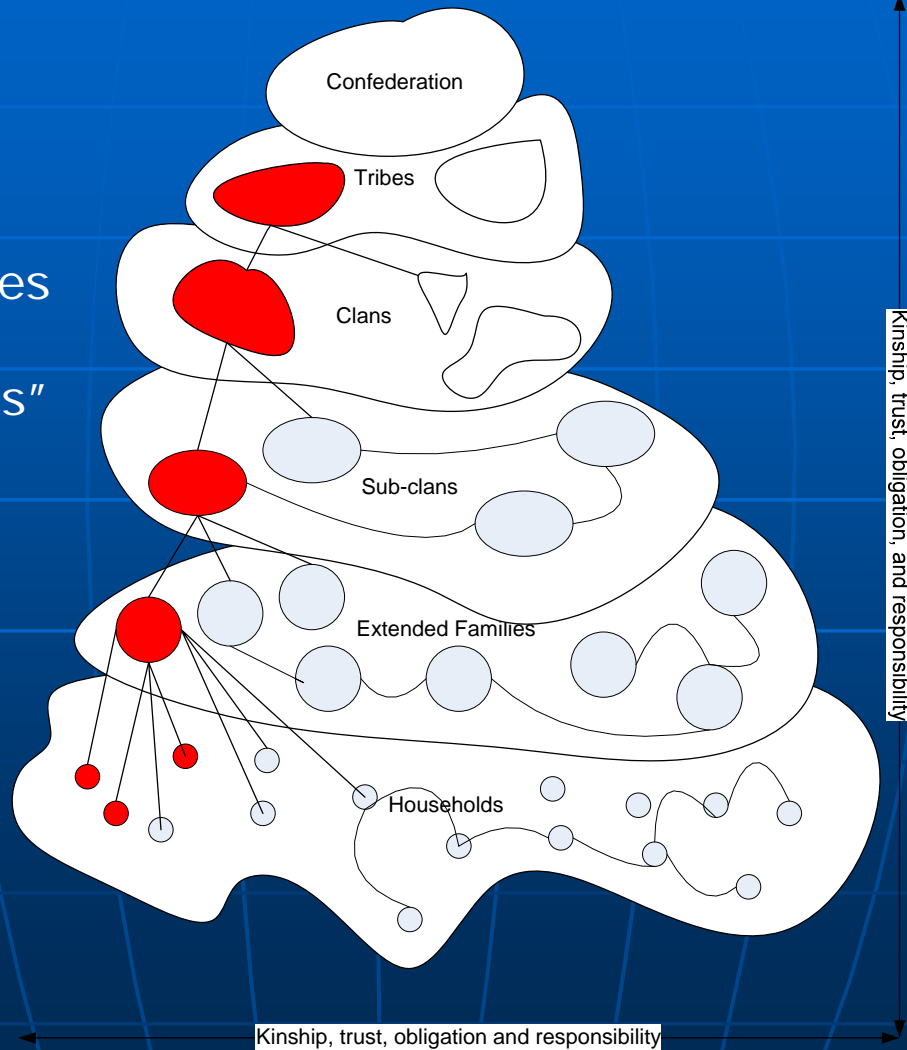
- Sunni networks
- T&FF networks
- Shia networks
- Meta Networks

“Subspecies” of Sunni insurgent networks

- Personal
- Kinship
- FRE/Baathist
- Criminal
- Nationalist
- Religious
- Functional

Kinship structures

"... serve as homeostatic devices for seeing groups through hard times"



T&FF networks

- Abu Musab al-Zarqawi
- Ansar al-Sunna
- Ansar al-Islam?

7 Tier I

TIER I

38 Tier II

Leaders in local and regional areas

71 Tier III

Iraqi & Foreign Fighters, many serving as cell leaders

Have direct ties to AMZ



Abu Abdallah
Ramadi Military
Leader



Abu Azzam
Emir of
Iraq



Abu Talha
Emir of
Mosul



Abu Abd al-Aziz
AMZ Senior
Leader Baghdad



Abu Aisha
Emir of
Haditha



Abu Umar al-Kurdi
Master YBIED
Builder, Baghdad



Abu Ali
Emir of West
Al Anbar



Abd al Satar
Emir of
Mosul



Abu Sayf
Chief, Mosul
Security



Abu Zaynab
Emir of Hit



Abu Abd al-Rahman
Gatekeeper/Safehouse
Facilitator/Ramadi Emir



Hisham
AQIZ Courier
Baghdad/Ravvah



Abu Omar a.k.a.
Abu Bakr,
Emir of Hit



Abu Majid
Emir of
Kurdish Region



Abu Ibrahim
Replaced Abu Islam
In Hussaybah



Abu Fatima
Emir of
Mosul



Abu Aqil
AQ Deputy of Iraq/
Emir of Baghdad



Abu Ahmed
Emir of
Baghdad



Dr. Muhsin
Assistant to
Abu Aqil Baghdad



Abu al-Abbas
Baghdad SVIED
/FF Cell Leader



Abu Hassan
AMZ Forger
/ Gatekeeper



Khallad
Foreign Fighter
Facilitator, Mosul



Abu Ri m a.k.a.
Adel
Media Chief/
Computer Expert



Dr. Hassan
Media Chief



Abu Qutaybah
AMZ Courier
Gatekeeper



Abu Zayd
Emir of
West Mosul



Ghassan Amin
Emir of
Rawah



Abu Uthman
AMZ Driver/
Safehouse Provider



Abu Ali
Emir of
Mosul



Abu Umar
FF Leader
from Mosul



Abu al-Fath
Facilitator
in Mosul



Mullah Birwa
Emir of
Germany



Abu Ahmad
Operational
Commander, Hit



Mahmud Saynt
Emir of
Hit



Abu Barra
Senior Assistant
to Abu Talha



Abu Islam
Leader of Abu Islam
Group, Al Qaim



Abu Zubayr
Emir of Mosul



Abu Sayf al-Urdani
AMZ Chief of
Security / Bodyguard



Abu Mahmud
Baghdad Military
Commander



Abu Hassan
AQIZ
Cell Leader



Abu Anas
Cell Leader
Ar Ramadi



Muhammad Daham
Ramadi Insurgent
Leader



Khamis a.k.a. Abu
Seba, Former
Intel Officer



Abu Sirhan
Assistant to
Abu Talha

TIER III

Wald Muhammed
Farhan al Zubaydi
AQIZ Barber

Abu Dijana
Al Qaim
Propagandist

Nashwan Mijhim
Mustet Beheading
Leader

Abu Dua
Foreign Fighter
Facilitator

Abu Mahmud
Terror Cell
Leader

Abu Saud
Foreign Fighter
Facilitator

Abu Asil
Foreign Fighter
Facilitator

Abu Raghad
Foreign Fighter
Cell Leader

Abu Talha
Ubaydi
Cell Leader

Abu Usama
Husaybah
Cell Leader

Abu Salman
Husaybah
Cell Leader

Abu Umar
Husaybah
Cell Leader

Abu Hamza
Husaybah
Cell Leader

Abu Maria
Propaganda
Chief, Mosul

Fahad
FRE/Cell
Leader, TWJ

Wald
Abu Zayd
Associate

Dr. Muhammad
Media Operative
Ramadi YBIED Cell

Abu al-Izz
Associate of
Abu Ri m

Abu Shahed
Cell Leader
Mosul

Abu Abd al-Qadir
Leader in
Saqlawiyah

Abu Junaid
Abu Umar al-Kurdi
Associate

Jamal Abu Muhannad
Baghdad
Cell Leader

Abu Ra'd
Cell Leader,
Mosul

Ahmed Mashandani
FRE Cell Leader
for JTJWJ

Abu Yunis
Baghdad YBIED
Cell Leader

Abu Asim
Husaybah Foreign
Fighter Facilitator

Fadhil Mashadani
Baghdad Ba'ath
Military Leader

Abu Hamza
Abduction of
Jeffrey Ake

Abu Saddam
Baghdad SVIED/
FF Cell Leader

Abu Mahmud
Mosul SVBIED
Cell Leader

Abu Khattab
AMZ
Facilitator

Abu Fatima
Baghdad
Cell Leader

Abu Zubar
Cell Leader,
Mosul

Abu Hassan
Associate of Abu
Umar al-Kurdi

Abu Ali
AMZ Safe
House

Abu Uthman
Cell Leader,
Mosul

Abu Qutayba
Cell Leader
Dawrah/Baghdad

Abu Faris
Mosul
Cell Leader

Abu Yahya
AQIZ Media
Cell Member

Abu 'Rayyan
Chief of Opns
SVIED, Baghdad

Abu Da'ud
Ramadi SVBIED
Cell Leader

Abu Usama
AMZ Driver

Khattab
AQIZ/FF
Facilitator

Fuad Khalid
Affar Hamza
Cell Leader,
Mosul

Abu Walid
FRE Leader/
Financier

Abu Khayrullah
Cell Leader,
Mosul

Hudayfah Satter
Associate of Abu Ri m
/Dr Hassan

Hajji Ibrahim
Associate of
Abu Talha

Qutaybah
AQIZ Baghdad
Attack Planner

Layth al-Alwani
Ramadi Cell
Leader

Abu Hamza
Key Planner Chemical
Attack Mosul Airfield

Abu Muhajir
Foreign Fighter
Facilitator, Mosul

Abu Uthamn
Mosel Net, Assoc.
of AbuBara

Abu al-Bara,
Facilitators, Assoc
of Abu Abd al-Aziz

Abu Khalid
IED/Hostage
Cell Ramadi

Rakan
Cell Leader,
Baghdad

Abu Ma'adh
AAA Driver

Abu Ali
Cell Leader
Mosul

Abu Umar
Cell Leader,
Baqubah

Abu Khayrullah
Mosul
Cell Leader

Abu Hassan
Media Cell
Member

Abu A'zam
Associate of Abu
Umar al-Kurdi

New Addition

Shia networks

- Visible
 - SCIRI
 - Dawa
 - al-Sadr
- Occluded
 - Mahdi Army
 - Badr Brigades
 - Imam al-Hussein Brigades (Basra, - Nasiriyah, Baghdad, Latifiyah)
 - Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades (Basra)

Meta networks

- Mujahadeen Shura Council
- Mujahadeen Central Command
- “Coordination Department of the Jihad Brigades”

Traits of Iraqi networks

- Structure
- Nature/identity: Basic "identity" of the network
 - kinship, ideological/religious, personal
- Purpose/function: What does the network do?
- Scope: How broad or narrow is it?
- Knowledge, skills, abilities
- Membership: Kinship based, foreign, local
- Resources: Arms money, social influence
- Adaptability

Adaptability

- Ability to learn:
- Ability to adjust behavior based on learning
- “Preadaptation”

“Preadaptive” insurgent structures in Iraq

- Ba'th Party
- Intelligence and security services
- Tribal system
- Religious beliefs and structures

A highly “fit” Iraqi network

- Decentralized
- Strong kinship connection within tribal/clan/family system
- “Moderate” religious views/ moderate goals
- Membership drawn from important Iraqi Sunni kinship groups
- Integrated functions
- Broad geographic range
- Broad skill base, good TTP
- Well resourced from internal sources
- Plasticity in behavior

A less “fit” Iraqi network

- Hierarchical
- Not native
- Extreme views (religious/political)
- Foreign membership
- Limited/specialized functions
- Local only
- Limited skill base/poor TPP
- Resource vulnerability
- Rigidity in behavior

Vulnerability of Iraqi networks: Strengths

- Protective measures: coloration, redundancy, cell structure, cohesion
- Behaviors: connectivity, cooperation
- Adaptations: strategic, operational, tactical

Adaptive insurgents

- Strategic level
 - Accommodation of various insurgency tendencies
 - Response to the political process
 - Alliances of convenience within the insurgency
- Operational level
 - Shifts in emphasis along operational lines
 - Operational division of labor?
 - Direct support to Sunni voting in October referendum and December elections
- Tactical level
 - IED design and tactics
 - Learning who to attack with what

Vulnerability of Iraqi networks: Weaknesses

- Competition for resources
- Connectivity
- Need to "surface" to act
- Inadaptability
- Contradictions/differences
- Self-interest

Conclusions

- Iraqi networks learn and adapt.
- Iraqi networks are inherently resilient
- Iraqi networks are closely linked to the environment
- Iraqi networks should ultimately act in their own self-interest
- Strategies for "defeating" Iraqi networks must be equally adaptable, persistent, and seek "natural" vulnerabilities.
- Strategies that seek to change the environment or "landscape" are more likely to be successful (no guarantees)
- Problems with "oil spot" and "clear, hold, build"

Backup

Utility/applicability

- "...behavior and social structure, like all other biological phenomena, can be studied as "organs," extensions of the genes that exist because of their superior adaptive value." (Wilson, *Sociobiology*)
- "...the analogical approach is warranted by the argument of structural similarities between biological and sociocultural processes. (Maasen, et al, *Human by Nature*)
- "...analogies allow for the exploration of descriptive, dynamic, and explanatory similarities across disciplinary boundaries. (Maasen, et al, *Human by Nature*)

Goals and strategies

- Goals
 - Comprehensive defeat
 - Suppression
 - Temporary disruption
 - Containment
- Strategies
 - Offensive operations
 - Leadership attrition
 - Resource reduction
 - Change in "fitness landscape"
 - Problems with "oil spot" and "clear, hold, build"