

# The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State: A Chilling Narrative



## Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State by Carter Malkasian

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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In the labyrinthine chronicles of the Iraq War, the Anbar Awakening stands as a pivotal chapter, a tantalizing glimpse of hope amidst the chaos. It was a time when Sunni tribes in the restive Anbar Province, once staunch supporters of al-Qaeda in Iraq, turned against their former allies and embraced the Iraqi government and its American backers.

### Historical Context: Sunnis in Anbar

Anbar Province, a vast and largely desert region in western Iraq, has long been a stronghold of the Sunni Muslim community. Historically, Sunnis held a dominant role in Iraqi society, but their power waned after the US-led invasion in 2003 and the subsequent rise of the Shia-dominated government.

In Anbar, Sunni resentment towards the Shia government and American forces festered. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, a ruthless extremist group, exploited this discontent, gaining a foothold in the province and waging a bloody insurgency.

### **The Awakening: A Precarious Alliance**

By 2006, al-Qaeda's reign of terror in Anbar had become unbearable. Sunni tribes, weary of the violence and chaos, decided to cooperate with the Iraqi government and American troops to drive out the extremists.

The Anbar Awakening, as it became known, was a risky gamble. The tribes faced the wrath of al-Qaeda and the mistrust of the Shia government. However, with the support of American military advisers, they launched a series of successful operations, culminating in the recapture of the provincial capital Ramadi.

### **Consequences and Lessons**

The Anbar Awakening was a significant victory in the counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq. It weakened al-Qaeda in Iraq and provided the Iraqi government with a buffer zone against the insurgency. However, its long-term consequences were far from positive.

The Shia government, jealous of the Sunnis' newfound power, refused to give them a meaningful role in the post-war political Free Download. The Sunni tribes felt betrayed and marginalized, setting the stage for future sectarian conflicts.

Moreover, the Awakening created a power vacuum in Anbar that was eventually filled by the Islamic State (ISIS). ISIS, a more brutal and ambitious organization than al-Qaeda in Iraq, skillfully exploited Sunni grievances and the mistrust between the Iraqi government and the tribes.

In 2014, ISIS launched a lightning offensive that swept through Anbar and eventually conquered Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. The Anbar Awakening, once hailed as a model for counterinsurgency, had ultimately paved the way for the rise of the Islamic State, a global terrorist threat.

The Anbar Awakening is a complex and cautionary tale. It demonstrates the potential of local cooperation in combating extremism but also highlights the fragility of such alliances in the face of sectarian tensions and political opportunism.

The rise of ISIS, born from the ashes of the Anbar Awakening, serves as a grim reminder of the enduring challenges in the Middle East and the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to combating terrorism and promoting stability.



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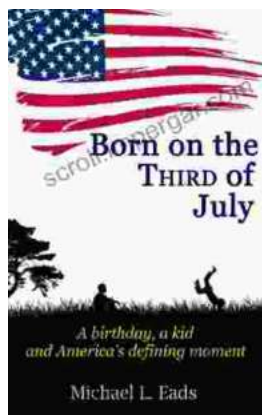
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