

From Clarence L. Moore's NSF grant proposal.

In the first three sentences, the writer introduces a concept of balancing, talks about how it applies to the locations under study in this research, and then clarifies the limitations of this idea within the context of this topic.

This pattern is continued through the rest of the paragraph: introducing an important scholarly concept, acknowledging its contribution to the topic at hand, and then addressing its limitations.

Stephen Walt's discussion of balancing posits that weak states join forces against powerful threats.¹ Applied to Anbar and central Afghanistan, balancing logic holds that domestic actors simply allied with whomever they believed could best provide security. However, this account does not explain why so many Anbar Sunnis switched allegiance to tribal leaders in 2006 before the 2007 surge granted those leaders extra support. David Laitin's *Identity in Formation* provides an important starting point for considering the role of collective identity in domestic alliance shifts. His tipping model suggests that conflict may provide an exogenous shock that creates identity instability, leading some cultural entrepreneurs to create new identities to which population members can shift.² Despite the link it creates between conflict and identity, the tipping model does not provide insight in the situations described because it does not consider conflict's ability to change the meanings associated with preexistent identities. Moreover, Laitin does not specify why some exogenous events cause instability or what these events destabilize. Stathis Kalyvas proposes that alliances reflect preexistent local rivalries, meaning that war in Iraq and Afghanistan simply gave local actors the opportunity to settle old disputes.³ Though Kalyvas's focus on micropolitics is significant, his conclusion does not explain why alliance preferences change. His analysis posits that conflict aggravates present cleavages, overlooking the possibility that it creates new ones. None of these authors considers the availability of multiple identities as a variable that may help explain shifting alliances.

¹ Walt, Stephen. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

² Laitin, David. *Identity in Formation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

³ Kalyvas, Stathis. "The Ontology of 'Political Violence'." *Perspectives in Politics*. 1 (2003): 475-494