

SMA Reach-back

Question (LR1): *What opportunities are there for USCENTCOM to shape a post-ISIL Iraq and regional security environment promoting greater stability?*

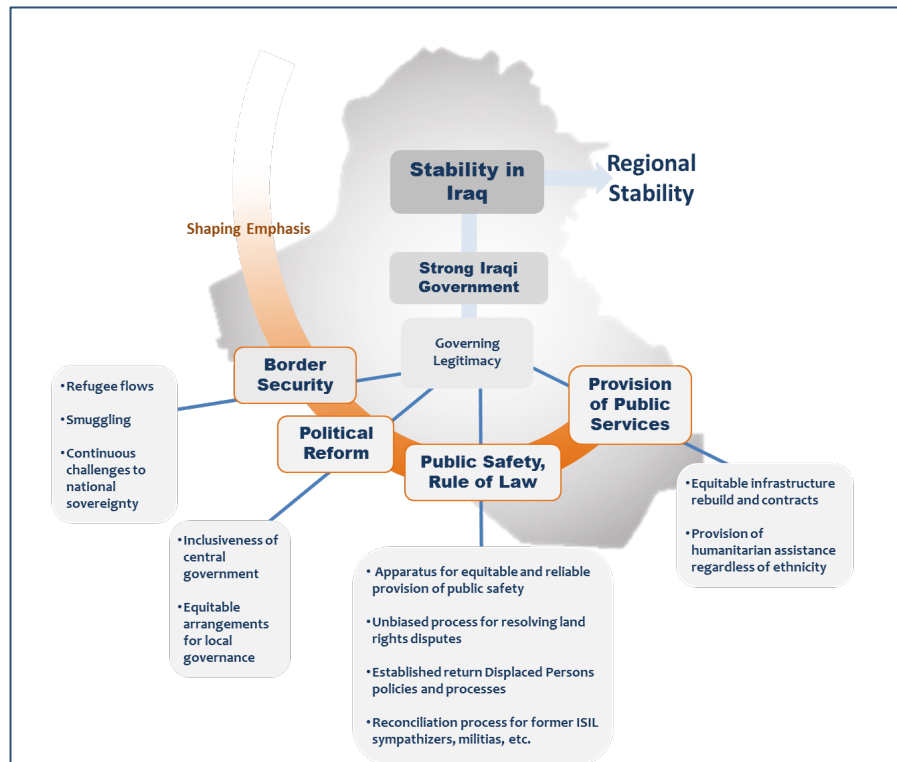
Executive Summary

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI

The expert contributors to this paper agree on the relationship between regional security and stability in Iraq: A strong and stable Iraqi government is a fundamental component of regional stability. The key to stability in Iraq is the popular legitimacy of central and local governance. Rather than operationally specific proposals, the experts suggest **shaping objectives** that USCENTCOM can use to prioritize and guide planning of shaping and engagement activities in four areas most critical for enhancing stability in Iraq: Political Reform, Border Security, Public Safety, and Provision of Public Services. While USCENTCOM may take the lead in assisting Iraqis with issues such as border security and public safety, it likely would play a supporting role on the political and rule of law issues discussed below.

The Meaning of “Post-ISIL”

First, a point of clarity. “Post-ISIL” may be a misleading term. John Collison of USSOCOM and David Gompert of RAND caution US and Coalition planners to avoid the trap of assuming that a “post-ISIL” Iraq or Syria means that no ISIL elements are present. Rather, what might more accurately be called the “post-Caliphate” phase in Iraq should be understood as one in which ISIL no longer holds significant territory but “remnants” of the group remain in control of some small towns and villages.



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Shaping Opportunities for a more Secure Environment

There is (uncharacteristic) agreement among international relations scholars on the factors that determine the stability of a state: 1) the extent to which it is seen as a legitimate governing authority by its population; 2) the degree to which the state has a monopoly on the use of force

within its borders (i.e., internal sovereignty); and 3) the state's ability to secure those borders (a component of external sovereignty).

Shaping Objective: Enhance GoI Governing Legitimacy among all Factions

Means: Support political reform, confederal system that decentralizes governance and political power while retaining the state

Dr.'s Belinda Bragg and Sabrina Pagano of NSI use causal loops to illustrate the stability dynamics in Iraq and why it is impossible to ameliorate security concerns without also addressing the political and social factors that determine how people view the government. They write that in Iraq, "security is intrinsically linked to perceptions of governing legitimacy and the dynamics of ethno-sectarian relations." As a consequence, political reform that forges reconciliation between Shi'a and Sunni, and accommodates Kurdish and Arab desires for greater autonomy is an unavoidable prerequisite for a stable and legitimate Iraqi state. Similarly, Dr. Dianne Maye (Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) argues that encouraging local autonomy, decentralizing power out of Baghdad and structuring the government to avoid "concentration of power in any one ethnic, political, or religious group" are prerequisites for stability in Iraq. She recommends that the USCENTCOM should support work to shape the political environment in ways that promote "strong, yet dispersed, self-governance in a confederal system" in Iraq that balances central government decision-making with the desire for increased autonomy in the provinces.

Shaping Objective: Enhance GoI Internal Sovereignty

Means: Increase the capacity of, and popular trust in the Iraqi security forces, e.g., by:

- **putting Iraqi forces in front only when able to provide effective, impartial service**
- **including Sunni Arabs at highest ranks of ISF**
- **encouraging consolidation of security authority while allowing for local preferences**

Security forces and police are often the most visible reflections of the domestic intentions and capability of the state. This is especially the case in a highly volatile security environment. In Iraq it is likely that a potent, locally-appropriate but nationally-coordinated security apparatus will be essential for implementing and assuring stability enhancing political reforms. USCENTCOM activities that encourage the capacity and help develop popular trust in the state's security forces regardless of ethnic or sectarian divisions will be very important. The goal should be to shape Iraqi security activities to demonstrate the professionalism, impartiality and capacity of the security apparatus. The *raison d'être* of a government is to provide service to its citizens. When it is unable or unwilling to do so, it loses the trust of its constituents. Whenever possible and whenever it can be done fairly and impartially, the Government of Iraq, rather than sectarian security forces, Coalition forces, even NGOs should provide citizens with services such as public safety and policing, justice and reconciliation, humanitarian assistance and border control. This not only improves internal security and public safety but enhances the legitimacy of the government as well. While allowing non-GoI entities to provide local services may be expedient it is erode trust in the government and thus its longer-term ability to govern. When security forces are not seen as impartial and dependable protectors of all segments of society, more credible alternative sources of security will be found. This is precisely the context that facilitated ISIL's rapid rise in Iraq.

Bragg and Pagano (NSI) recommend two ways in which USCENTCOM might help shape the situation. First, they suggest that USCENTCOM encourage consolidation of Iraqi security forces. This does not necessarily mean forging a single, central government tightly controlled national security organization, but that there is a single authority that sets the standards for national and

regionally appropriate security forces. Second, encouraging recruitment of experienced Sunni officers – many of whom will be former Ba’athists – into the highest ranks of the Iraqi Security Forces and local police may help “alleviate fears that the process of removing ISIL forces will be used as cover for reprisals against Sunni populations ... and as a means of bolstering Shia political and military dominance.” Failure to incorporate Sunni in leadership roles “increases the probability that Sunni tribal elders will look to provide their own security in the future” which will expand the number of sectarian militia and the number of security forces laying claims to authority.

Shaping Objective: Enhance GoI External Sovereignty

Means: Build Iraqi capacity to secure and control its borders

Dr. Diane Maye (Embry-Riddle) discusses another prerequisite of stability in Iraq: the Government’s ability to secure its borders, a key component of external sovereignty. Here again, the capacity to secure its own borders is not solely a security issue but a political one as well: it is a visible means of demonstrating and enhancing the credibility of the Baghdad government as a capable and legitimate political authority to domestic constituents as well as foreign interventionists. As a result Maye recommends that US and Coalition forces work to ensure that Iraq’s security apparatus is able to secure its international borders. Without secure borders Maye predicts that Iranian smugglers will continue to “freely traffic narcotics, arms, organs, and other illegal merchandise across the region. Furthermore, the Jordanians, Lebanese, and Europeans will be host to ever-increasing numbers of refugees. Nefarious organizations will achieve their aims as they obtain more and more political, economic, and military power.”

Mosul as a Template for Shaping Operations in other areas

Shaping Objective: Demonstrate Success in post-battle environment

Means: Encourage post-liberation calm in Mosul, e.g., by:

- helping negotiate multi-group security arrangements
- prohibiting retribution
- helping to forge policies for displaced persons return; reconciliation

Finally, John Collison of USSOCOM offers suggestions for promoting security prior to, and following the liberation of Mosul from ISIL. These efforts not only would help stabilize the volatile environment around Mosul but could serve as a template or set of precedents for post-battle shaping in other areas of Iraq. In coordination with USG and Coalition partners USCENTCOM can engage with key military and militia leaders to help manage post-liberation expectations and quell jockeying for political position, resources and territory among the groups operating in and around Mosul. Collison (USSOCOM) highlights two issues that demand particular and immediate attention: 1) the need to establish common understanding of the policies and procedures that will be used to return displaced persons to their homes in a reasonable and equitable manner; and 2) articulation of reconciliation policies and procedures that will be used for those accused as ISIL sympathizers or having committed sectarian violence (e.g., screening process, arrest criteria, who would stand trial, etc.)

Immediately following liberation of Mosul USCENTCOM can use its access to the leaders of multiple security forces to shape an environment conducive to stability by insuring that: 1) Iraqi Security Forces allow humanitarian assistance to reach all displaced persons (DP) regardless of ethnicity; 2) post-conflict security arrangements are seen as equitable and at least minimally acceptable by all of the various security forces around the city; 3) Iraqi Forces establish security buffers to prohibit

violent retribution against vulnerable ethnic populations and those accused as ISIL sympathizers; and 4) public services (e.g., water, food, justice/police, fire, medical) are rebuilt and/or provided to Iraqis regardless of ethnicity. This may require oversight of which Iraqi groups stand to benefit from what are likely to be very lucrative reconstruction contracts post-conflict.

Contributors: *Dr. Belinda Bragg and Dr. Sabrina Pagano (NSI); David C. Gompert (RAND); John Collison (USSOCOM); Dr. Diane May (Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University)*

Editor: *Allison Astorino-Courtois (NSI)*

Post-ISIL Iraq and Regional Stability

Diane L. Maye, Ph.D.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Background – Iraq’s Crisis of Governance and its Regional Implications

The rapid rise of the Islamic State in Iraq is one of the best examples of how nefarious organizations succeed in ungoverned regions. After the US left Iraq, the newly-appointed Shiite government restricted political power-sharing with Sunni political rivals. Sunnis in the outlying provinces felt abandoned and were not fully integrated into the country’s political or security apparatus. In the absence of governance, to maintain civil order, the most organized groups began to declare their authority in matters of religion, justice, and the law. In the case of Iraq, the most organized and experienced groups were the ones in direct opposition to the standing government: former Ba’athists and rogue elements of the Al Qaeda network. In the wake of the US departure from the region, competing militias, religious tyrants, and subversive groups have posed a direct threat to Baghdad as well as standing governments across the region.

A weak central government in Iraq is likely to continue to aggravate the balance of political power across the entire Middle East. For instance, Turkey will have considerable influence in Iraq’s northern Kurdish areas, which is likely to instigate the ethno-separatist Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) and rival Kurdish political groups. The Shi’a in southern Iraq will bend to Iranian interests, which in turn puts enormous pressure on the governments of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Without being able to maintain strict control of Iraq’s borders, Iranian smugglers are able to freely traffic narcotics, arms, organs, and other illegal merchandise across the region. Furthermore, the Jordanians, Lebanese, and Europeans will be host to ever-increasing numbers of refugees. Nefarious organizations will achieve their aims as they obtain more and more political, economic, and military power.

“...While some US academics and politicians have posited the idea of partitioning Iraq along three ethno-sectarian lines ... Iraq does not have a neat set of dividing lines between its major factions; territorial disputes are likely to erupt if partitioning favors one faction over another...”

Recommendations to USCENTCOM

It is in the interest of the US and coalition forces to deny jihadist groups and malevolent regional stakeholders the ability to gain political, economic, and military power. The US and coalition forces will achieve these aims by promoting a stable and strong Iraqi state: a government that has a monopoly on the use of violence, territorial integrity, and legitimate political control over its population. In order to create political stability in Iraq after the defeat of ISIL: the U.S. and coalition forces should ensure Iraq’s security apparatus is effective, promote strong, yet dispersed, self-governance, and actively work to secure the nation’s borders.

Security Apparatus

The combination of eliminating a terrorist network and replacing the network with new security apparatus proved to be a winning formula during the Sunni Awakening of 2006 – 2008. Before leaving the region, it is imperative that US and coalition forces ensure the post-ISIL security

apparatus is effective. In order to be effective, the state must have a monopoly on the use of violence, there must be a method for due process, and the general population must see the new security apparatus as a legitimate extension of state power.

Promote Dispersed Self-Governance

While some US academics and politicians have posited the idea of partitioning Iraq along three ethno-sectarian lines: Sunni Arab, Kurdish, and Shi'a, there are very important consequences to this action. First, the ethnically mixed areas in Diyala, Ninewa, Tamim, Saladin as well as Baghdad and Kirkuk will be difficult, if not impossible to partition, without massive internal displacement. The oil rich Kirkuk, a city whose inhabitants identify as Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, and Assyrians will become increasingly sectarian and violent. Finally, Iraq does not have a neat set of dividing lines between its major factions; territorial disputes are likely to erupt if partitioning favors one faction over another. Therefore, instead of partition, a better solution would be a move towards confederal government, which would allow central decision-making in Baghdad, but increased autonomy in the provinces. The government should be structured in such a way that it does not permit the concentration of power in any one ethnic, political, or religious group.

Prioritize Border Security

Given the instability in neighboring Syria and the influx of refugees and foreign fighters, border security should have been a top priority for the Maliki administration after the US departure from the region. Instead, contracts were delayed and cancelled, and the borders remained so porous they were an easy way for criminals and terrorists to enter back into the country. There was some speculation that border security was kept in this ambiguous state in order to appease Tehran's support for the Assad regime in Syria. Porous borders meant that Tehran could control the supply lines all the way to Damascus, a vital Iranian security interest given the strict economic sanctions on the country. The borders remained a gateway for illegal activities, including smugglers, drug-runners, and arms dealers trafficking goods between Iran, Iraq, and Syria. In order for Iraqis to fully control their territory, they need to have control over their borders.

Comments on Opportunities to Shape post-ISIL Iraq

John Collison¹
USSOCOM

Potential Target Countries for opportunities to shape regional security: Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran (those surrounding Iraq)

Potential Non-State & Pseudo-State Actors impacting opportunities for shaping regional security: Kurds (PKK, YPG/PYD, KRG (KDP & PUK)), ISIL, AQ, Lebanese Hezbollah (LH)

“Post-ISIL” assumptions and why the assumption is necessary:

- **ISIL no longer holds ‘major’ territories in Iraq** – definition of the meaning of ‘post-ISIL Iraq’; the context for action within Iraq and other adjacent countries. This does not imply that

¹ Views expressed herein do not reflect positions of HQ USSOCOM, USSOCOM-FMD, or FMD-J9. They are the opinions of the author.

ISIL holds no territories. Expectation is ISIL will continue to hold current strongholds, such as Haweja (near Kirkuk) and other small towns/villages. This implies follow-on US support operations to 'police up the battlespace'.

- [ISIL continues to hold major swaths of territory in Syria](#) – this is a critical assumption as it speaks to the context for actions within Iraq and adjacent countries, and the potential for ISIL forays cross-border into Iraq causing instability and exacerbating older grievances.
- [Syrian 'civil war' is still on-going](#) – this is a critical assumption as a context for action with respect to the region, and the potential for Iraqi-Kurdish support to Syrian-Kurdish elements as well as Shi'a Militia/Popular Mobilization Unit (PMU) support to pro-Assad forces and the corresponding potential for instability within Iraqi populations/constituencies.
- [Turkish forces remain in Northern Iraq and Western Syria](#) – a critical assumption from a standpoint that it influences the context for US action with respect to Iraq, and freedom of action for Iraqi and Iraqi-Kurd security forces in Northern Iraq.
- [Iran will not relinquish its support \(and influence\) over the Government in Baghdad and specific Al Hashd/Shi'a Militias](#) –this will be a key condition that CENTCOM faces with regard to any military/military-diplomacy task undertaken, and potentially create force protection issues with regard to Shi'a militia "threats."

Opportunities for shaping

The immediate challenge for opportunities will occur in the short-term (i.e. 0-2 years) to set up success in stability, influence, and regional operations in the longer-term (i.e. 3-8 years.) I have addressed here what I see the three primary 'opportunities' in the short-term that will affect stability and freedom of action in the longer-term to act and adapt to what will be ever-evolving conditions.

Immediate Challenges & Opportunities

- [Support Stabilization and Governance Development in/around Mosul](#). US support to Iraqi Government efforts post-liberation. CENTCOM forces, formations, and leaders on-ground need to be prepared to engage with Iraqi Security forces (principally advised/assisted elements) to facilitate the following;
 - Humanitarian assistance – for displaced populations and populations within city limits irrespective of ethnicity.
 - Initial security arrangements/agreements between competing forces, factions and militias must be seen as responsive and equitable; they may not like the agreement, but security must be seen as fair and applicable to all groups.
 - Safeguards to prevent retribution attacks on people and infrastructure – includes former/suspected ISIL sympathizers; Sunni; Shi'a; Yezidi; Christian/Chaldean; etc.
 - Initial governance organization and structures - in outlying villages and towns and within Mosul districts.
 - Establishment of control and operation of city/village utilities and emergency services.
 - Provision of services for populations throughout region – water, food, justice/police, fire, medical.
 - Establishment of displaced persons (DPs) returns policies and procedures.
 - Policies and procedures for arrest, screening and reconciliation of former ISIS.

- **Support Negotiation and Development of Northern Iraq Security and Administration.** US support to the Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional governments in negotiations and agreements on the security arrangements and civil administration of NW Iraq. This might be more specifically called 'military diplomacy'. CENTCOM forces, formations, and leaders on-ground need to coordinate with the Department of State (DoS) to ensure 'military diplomacy' is synchronized with USG policy, and to inform and develop that policy where it is absent, with regard to security and administration of Northern Iraq with key (formal and informal) leaders and groups in the sub-region. This includes, but is not limited to, the following critical stakeholders (not all with GCC/military as primary engagement element);
 - Government of Iraq and aligned Hashd / Shi'a Militias
 - Governorates of Nineveh, Salah al-Din, and Kirkuk/At Tameem
 - Government of Turkey and surrogates (i.e. Turkman militias)
 - Government of Iran and aligned Hashd / Shi'a Militias
 - IRGC/Qods 'advisors' within area of operations
 - Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)
 - Governorates of Dohuk & Erbil
 - KDP Peshmerga and surrogates
 - PUK Peshmerga and surrogates
 - PKK Peshmerga and surrogates
 - Others – i.e. Yezidi and Christian militias aligned with one or more of the above.
- **Building Partner Capacity through Security Force Assistance (SFA)**
CENTCOM in coordination with USG policy objectives need to be prepared to support/conduct SFA post-Mosul liberation post-ISIL with elements that can and will contribute to maintaining security of populations within Iraq, and in coordination with US interests and objectives. While this is generally a part of the broader stabilization, post-liberation of Mosul/post-ISIL, I've captured here as a potential mid-term task to build greater foundation for stability in Iraq.

Longer-term

- **Support to the negotiation of equitable land / property disputes policies and procedures.** Not a military task, but does provide 'leverage' for micro-level 'military diplomacy', and does represent the context for other, military/security-specific coordination and tasks.
- **'Military-diplomacy' to support the movement of Turkish forces out of N. Iraq.** As per assumption, Turkish forces may remain in the short-term. It will become increasingly CRITICAL to demonstrating 'trust' to the GoI that the USG and CENTCOM are 'partners', as well as a principle means to limited increased Iranian influence of GoI.

After the Caliphate: Understanding and Countering Salafist Threats

David C. Gompert
RAND

The loss of Mosul -- and for all intents and purposes Iraq -- could be the beginning of the end of the territorial Islamic State. Yet we know, and ISIL's leadership has warned, that serious threats in the region and to the West will remain. Understanding what forms these threats will take is the first step toward shaping strategies to counter them.

“...foreign occupation and large-scale counterinsurgency, in the classical sense, will be unnecessary if not also unhelpful to counter post-Caliphate ISIL.”

We now know (if we did not already know) that ISIL depends fundamentally on radicalization and recruitment of *individuals* to kill and die in the cause of Salafist extremism. Larger Sunni communities and populations tend not to sympathize with but instead are brutalized and antagonized by ISIL. This suggests that foreign occupation and large-scale counterinsurgency, in the classical sense, will be unnecessary if not also unhelpful to counter post-Caliphate ISIL.

Still, individuals, groups and networks of fighters and terrorists will be motivated to continue violent jihad, whether against local regimes, the West, Shiites, or apostate Sunnis. Since ISIL's seizure of expansive populated real estate, recruits have had a dual motivation to commit violence: the siren call of Salafist extremism and the historic creation of the Caliphate. The Caliphate's demise may lessen the intensity and the breadth of Salafist-extremist motivation.

Post-Caliphate ISIL threats will take two main forms:

1. Remnants of fanatical forces in the region, including in Iraq, Syria, and Libya
2. Radicalized individuals in or returning to the West

The persistence of violent fanaticism in the region could continue to stoke individual radicalization and terrorism in the West. Thus, the destruction of ISIL remnants in the region could in time lessen, though not end, threats in the West. (This point is important in placing responsibility within the US Government for countering these two threats -- see below.)

The first of these threats is likely to take the form of comparatively small units with light combat equipment, modest economic resources, minimal popular backing, and only fleeting territorial sanctuary. With suicide terrorist methods and wanton executions, they will be extremely dangerous to civilians. But they could be overmatched by well-equipped, trained and led indigenous forces, e.g., Iraqi Army or Peshmerga. They may also be targets for liberated Sunni populations (e.g., tribes). Remnants might fight to the death or melt into rural or urban terrain. Some might seek a more normal life, but we should not count on this. While ISIL remnants will be hard to eliminate entirely, loss of territory will increase their vulnerability.

As for the second form of threat, individuals in or returning to the West could be American or European citizens -- inconspicuous but potentially suspicious to those who know them through work, family or mosque. They will continue to identify with the Umma and embrace Salafism mainly via websites and social media. The motivation of these individuals could ebb with the end of the

Caliphate, though it takes very few of them to create havoc, as we well know. They could engage in various types of suicide terrorism. While they may be networked, they are unlikely to have significant support, direction or sophistication.

By objective standards, neither of these post-Caliphate threats on their own presents as severe a danger to U.S. interests as Caliphatic ISIL has presented. However, the potential for further Salafist extremist violence in the volatile Middle East and for lone-wolf terrorism in the United States and Europe cannot be ignored. With the notable exception of Syria, threats from ISIL remnants in the region can be destroyed by indigenous forces – possibly police but certainly combat units -- supported by US ISR and US or allied air power and advisors. Remaining or new high-value post-Caliphate targets could be eliminated by air strikes or SOF. Responsibility for spelling out and executing this strategy is mainly CENTCOM's.

Countering the second threat -- radicalized post-Caliphate lone-wolf (or lone-group) terrorism in the United States -- requires a different strategy, of course. Lead responsibility is the FBI's, and the "battlefield" is mainly the Internet and other information domains. Enhancements are needed in intelligence collection, data management and analytics, and cyber operations. More robust capabilities and operation are achievable with current and coming technology. However, protections of privacy and freedom of expression need to be debated, agreed, and assured.

A final note about policy. In Iraq, insistent encouragement of a non-sectarian federated democratic state is paramount for the post-Caliphate anti-ISIL strategy to work. In Syria, the strategy leaves open the difficult question of what to do about the Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian backers, though it is possible that the destruction of the Caliphate would remove an excuse for regime brutality against Sunni opponents.

Promoting greater stability in post-ISIL Iraq: Analysis of the drivers of legitimacy, security, and social accord for key Iraqi stakeholders

Dr. Belinda Bragg and Dr. Sabrina Pagano (NSI)

This report summarizes insight from analysis² of a set of qualitative loop diagrams³ of the security dynamics of Kurds, Shi'a, and Sunni Arabs, constructed around social accord and governing legitimacy in Iraq. We focus on broad ethno-sectarian divisions in Iraq: Sunni Arab, Shi'a, and Kurd. While we recognize that there is variation both within and outside of these groups, the discussion and insights here capture the interests and grievances of a wide segment of the Iraqi population.

² A full analysis of the loop diagrams as well as the theoretical underpinnings of the social accord and legitimacy section of the StaM stability model is available from the authors upon request.

³ A qualitative loop diagram is a visual heuristic for grasping complex recursive relationships among factors, and is a useful means of uncovering unanticipated or non-intuitive interaction effects embedded in complex environments such as those we see in Iraq. It is intended to serve as a "thinking tool" for analysts, practitioners, and decision makers. Loop diagrams are a useful means of uncovering unanticipated or non-intuitive interaction effects embedded in this incredibly complex environment. While these types of diagrams are often referred to as "causal loop" diagrams, no presumptions of direct causation are made in these analyses. In addition, although they resemble system dynamics models as used here, they are neither computational models nor intended to be strictly predictive.

The relationships and feedback loops for each of the key stakeholders (Shi'a, Kurd, and Sunni Arab) have been developed through the application of NSI's StaM model.⁴ Our analysis focuses specifically on the dynamics that drive the security and stability challenges facing post-ISIL Iraq. A clear understanding of the system that links Iraqi politics and social relations to security is a critical prerequisite for identifying areas in which CENTCOM activities might have the greatest positive impact, and those where the risk of unintended consequences is highest. Our analysis indicates that, for each group, there is a key interest—both driving and driven by their relations with other groups—that is central to understanding how the security-legitimacy-social relationship manifests for that group. For the Sunni, it is their perception of equality (or lack thereof) and fear of retribution (Figure 1), for the Shia, their drive to maintain political dominance (Figure 2), and for the Kurds, their desire for greater autonomy (Figure 3).

Implications for CENTCOM

Examining the individual loop diagrams helps inform our understanding of the dynamics shaping the goals and driving the actions of Iraq's key stakeholders. However, in order to gain insight into the extent to which these goals combine to drive either stability or instability, and derive implications for CENTCOM engagement activities, we need to compare across the three.

Political representation and inclusion of key stakeholders is critical to governing stability in Iraq. There is a fundamental tension at play in Iraq between the desire of the Kurds and Sunni Arabs for greater autonomy and substantive representation in the national government, and the Shia's desire to maintain political dominance. To achieve reconciliation, the Abadi Government needs to break from its recent history of Shia dominance and create an inclusive, non-sectarian democracy. If Iraq is to become a unified and stable state, with a legitimate and sovereign government, it will require political reconciliation between Shi'a and Sunni, and accommodation of Kurdish and Sunni Arab desire for greater power sharing and autonomy.

Political representation must be matched by substantive representation within the state security apparatus. The presence and strength of Shi'a and Kurdish forces, particularly in Sunni majority regions of Iraq also undermines Sunni Arab perception of their security situation. Increased Sunni representation in police and ISF forces can alleviate fears that the process of removing ISIL forces will be used as cover for reprisals against Sunni populations, based in the sectarian conflict between Shi'a and Sunni Arabs, and as a means of bolstering Shia political and military dominance. Failure to incorporate Sunni in leadership roles within the police and security forces increases the probability that Sunni tribal elders will look to provide their own security in the future. Establishing these kinds of security forces will increase both the number and capacity of sectarian militia in the country, further moving the government away from monopoly over the use of force (a key feature of sovereignty) and, by decreasing groups' reliance on the state security apparatus, further undermining the legitimacy of the national government.

Consolidation of military power by the government is critical for legitimacy and security. All of the key stakeholders (Sunni Arabs, Shi'a, Kurds) have militia or paramilitary groups. Yet, as Table 1

⁴ The StaM framework consolidates political, economic, and social peer-reviewed quantitative and qualitative scholarship into a single stability model based on three dimensions – governing stability, social stability, and economic stability- and, critically, specifies the relationships among them. As such, the StaM represents a cross-dimension summary, which draws on rich traditions of theory and research on stability and instability from diverse fields, including anthropology, political science and international relations, social psychology, sociology, and economics. The StaM aids users not only in identifying the factors that explain the stability or instability of a nation-state, region, or other area of interest, but also in making the connections between and among the various stability factors apparent—allowing users to derive all implications of a potential engagement strategy.

below shows, levels of trust among these groups are low⁵. That is, in most cases, the presence of sectarian forces is seen by other groups to undermine the credibility of the national security apparatus, and through this, their perception of their security situation. Much of this distrust is rooted in the contentious and sometimes violent nature of political and social relations among these groups. Furthermore, there is also significant political factionalization *within* each of these key stakeholder groups, and specific militia may have stronger ties to one Shia (or Sunni Arab or Kurdish) political faction than another.

Table 1: Key Stakeholder perceptions of major military and militia groups

Key stakeholder perceptions of major military and militia groups		Sunni Arab	Shi'a	Kurd
Credibility of national security apparatus	Trust in Shi'a-led Iraqi Security Forces	Weak negative	Strong positive	Weak positive
	Trust in Sunni-led Iraqi Security Forces	Strong positive	Weak positive	Weak positive
	Trust in PMF	Strong negative	Strong positive	Weak negative
	Trust in Iranian-backed Shi'a militia	Strong negative	Strong positive	Strong negative
	Trust in Peshmerga	Weak positive	Strong negative	Strong positive
Perception of legitimacy of Abadi government	Trust in Shi'a-led Iraqi Security Forces	Weak negative	Strong positive	Weak positive
	Trust in Sunni-led Iraqi Security Forces	Strong positive	Weak positive	Weak positive
	Trust in PMF	Strong negative	Strong positive	Weak negative
	Trust in Iranian-backed Shia militia	Strong negative	Strong positive	Strong negative
	Trust in Peshmerga	Weak positive	Strong negative	Strong positive

■ Strong positive
■ Weak negative
■ Weak positive
■ Strong negative

Directly funding and training non-government forces (militia and Peshmerga) may have short-term benefits for security; however, doing so has significant negative implications for longer-term stability, and may contribute to increased sectarian violence in post-ISIL Iraq. Legitimacy and sovereignty require that some solution be found to the fractured nature of the security and militia forces currently active in Iraq. Sovereignty requires that the government have the sole legitimate right to the use of force, a condition that cannot be met when autonomous militia are active within a state. Furthermore, the continued presence of such forces increases sectarian tensions and the likelihood of a resurgence of violence, particularly between Sunni and Shi'a, which will contribute to negative social conditions (e.g., reduced

⁵ Coding for this table was determined through examination of recent literature and SME evaluations, and analysis of the full loop diagrams. More detailed discussion of the factors contributing to these codings, and a full analysis of the loop diagrams is available from the authors by request. Below is a summary of the key source materials used: Al-Marashi, I. (n.d.). Sadr's challenge to Iraq's sectarian politics. Retrieved November 3, 2016; Amnesty International. (2016). Punished for Daesh's crimes: Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces. London: Amnesty International Ltd.; Arango, T. (2015, April 30). Proposal to arm Sunnis adds to Iraqi suspicions of the U.S. New York Times; Connable, B. (2014). Defeating the Islamic State in Iraq. Congressional Testimony Presented before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on September 17; Dawod, H. (2015). Sunni Tribes in Iraq; Dodge, T. (2014). Can Iraq be saved? Survival: Global Politics and Strategy, 56, 7-20; Eisenstadt, M. (2014, July 15). Managing the Crisis in Iraq: Testimony submitted to the United States House of Representatives Subcommittees on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade and the Middle East and North Africa. U.S. House of Representatives; Fahim, K. (2016, October 24). Iraqi Sunnis fleeing Islamic State rule in Mosul brace for revenge; Fumerton, M., & Van Wilgenburg, W. (n.d.). Kurdistan's Political Armies: The Challenge of Unifying the Peshmerga Forces; Hauslohner, A., & Cunningham, E. (2014, September 1). As battle lines shift in Iraq, Sunnis who welcomed the Islamic State now fear retribution; Hendawi, H., & Abdul-Zahra, Q. (2016, March 21). Fears in Iraqi government, army over Shiite militias' power; Iraq's Sunnis: The choice between ISIS and Shiite militia. (n.d); Mansour, R. (2016). The Sunni Predicament in Iraq - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved October 7, 2016.

intergroup integration, reduced social accord, decreased sense of national identity) that undermine the legitimacy of the national government.

Lack of social accord is a significant barrier to increased governing legitimacy and a driver of Sunni Arab and Kurdish desire for greater autonomy.⁶ Across all three loop diagrams, a similar pattern emerges around social accord. A lack of trust between and among groups prohibits the attainment of social accord, which influences perceptions of political power (representation and voice) and multiple forms of justice (distributive and procedural). Absent this social harmony and cooperation group dynamics emerge that undermine the perceived legitimacy of the government: Shi'a work toward maintenance of their dominance, undermining Sunni representation and voice, unequally distributing resources for Sunnis and Kurds, and engaging in human rights abuses against Sunni Arabs. These dynamics represent violations of both distributive justice (fairness in outcomes) and procedural justice (fairness in decision making procedures and/or general treatment). These social factors, individually and collectively, and directly (first-order effects) and indirectly (second- and third-order effects), contribute to the perception that the Abadi government is not legitimate. This in turn feeds into Sunni Arab and Kurdish desire for greater autonomy and movement away from a unified and stable Iraqi state.

Conclusion

That defeat of ISIL is essential for the stability of Iraq and the well-being of its people is perhaps one of the few issues on which there is almost complete accord among Iraq's many ethno-sectarian groups. However, it would be dangerous to interpret this specific shared goal as indicative of a more general social accord among Iraq's key stakeholders. There are ongoing and profound social cleavages among Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups, which are reproduced in, and magnified by, the political organization of the state. Furthermore, each of these groups is (to various extents) dominant in specific geographic areas of the country, and has its own sectarian militia or fighting forces.

It is possible that fighting against ISIL served to erode some of the barriers of mistrust and competition among these groups, and demonstrated the utility of working cooperatively. In this case, Iraq and CENTCOM have a possibly unique opportunity to build on this development, and work toward greater political and social reconciliation. Increasing political representation and voice, satisfaction with the process and outcome of revenue and resource distribution, and perceptions of equality among these groups should mutually and individually improve perceptions of the legitimacy of the Abadi government, creating the condition for short-term stability. In the longer term, these same factors should move through the social system to increase social accord, which can in turn provide a more resilient bulwark for governing legitimacy.

⁶ Social accord—the degree to which harmony among individuals and groups is achieved—is an overarching construct that comprises multiple factors. Social accord is more likely to be attained within a population when relevant sub-groups are well integrated with one another and on equal footing, there is a lack of intra-group strife, and there is a high degree of social certainty among the population as a whole.

Unfortunately, it is also possible that this shared goal will not be sufficient to trigger the development of a superordinate national identity and common national goals. Rather, it may be the case that the advent of ISIL has created conditions, especially perceived Sunni support for the group and greater Kurdish autonomy, which could form the basis for intensified sectarian conflict once ISIL is eliminated. If this is the case, that conflict will take place among groups that are now considerably better armed, trained, and experienced than they were before ISIL, and will unfold amidst a population that has already endured years of conflict and dislocation, with a government that lacks both resources and legitimacy.

It is clear that at present Iraq stands at a critical juncture between the opportunity for change and stability, and the risk of disintegration. The challenge for U.S. planning is to provide contingency plans for both of these distinct possible futures. Our analysis suggests that attempting to isolate security engagement efforts from the broader political and social forces at play in Iraq is futile. Security is intrinsically linked to perceptions of governing legitimacy and the dynamics of ethno-sectarian relations. Thus, whatever diplomatic, informational, military and economic levers the U.S. employs in Iraq, attention must be paid to the influence they might have on both of these factors. That is, will these actions contribute to the development of a superordinate Iraqi national identity and to mitigating sectarian conflict should it erupt after the fall of ISIL, or will they reinforce existing perceptions of inequality and mistrust?

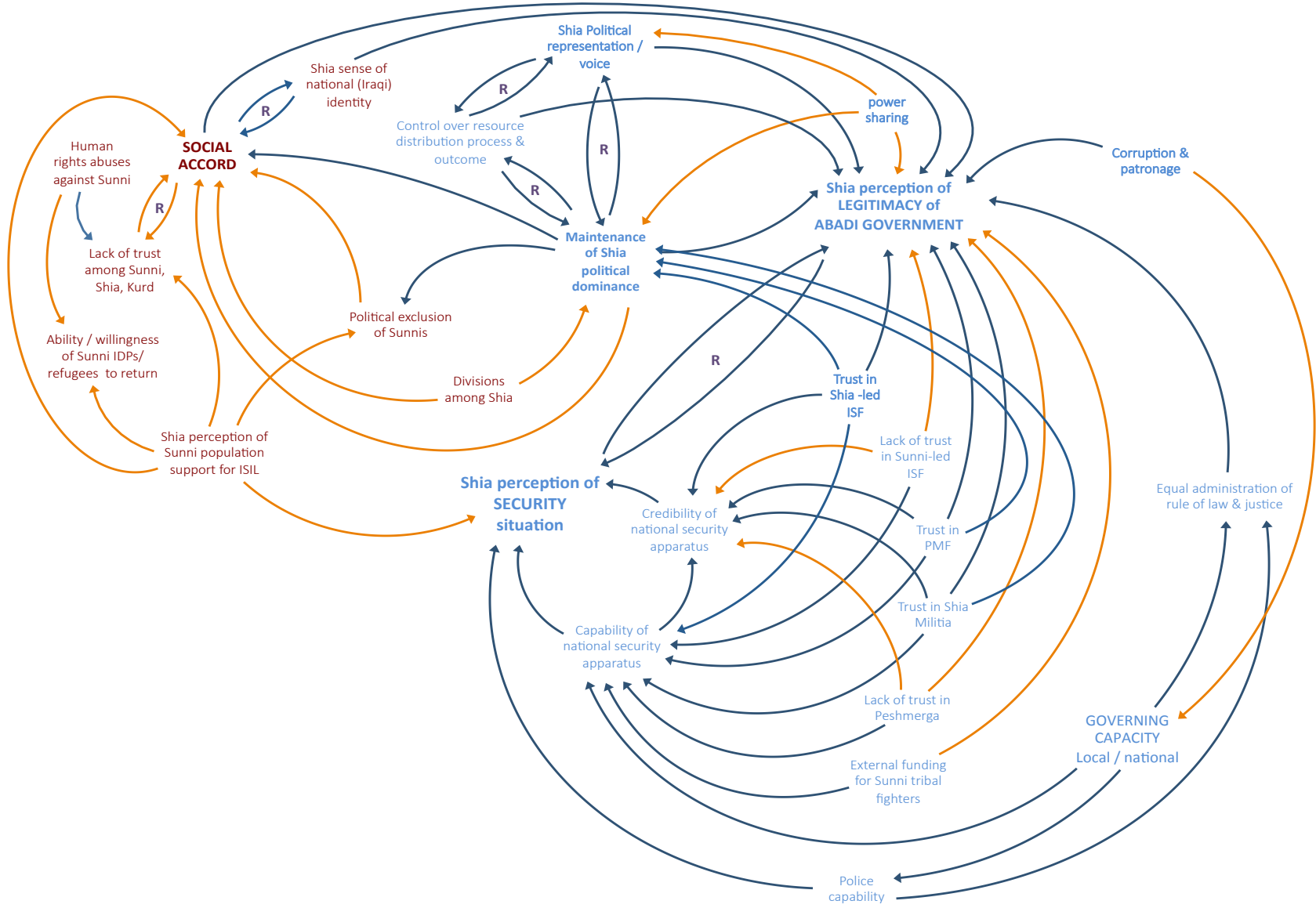


Figure 2: Shi'a perception of legitimacy - security - social accord relationship

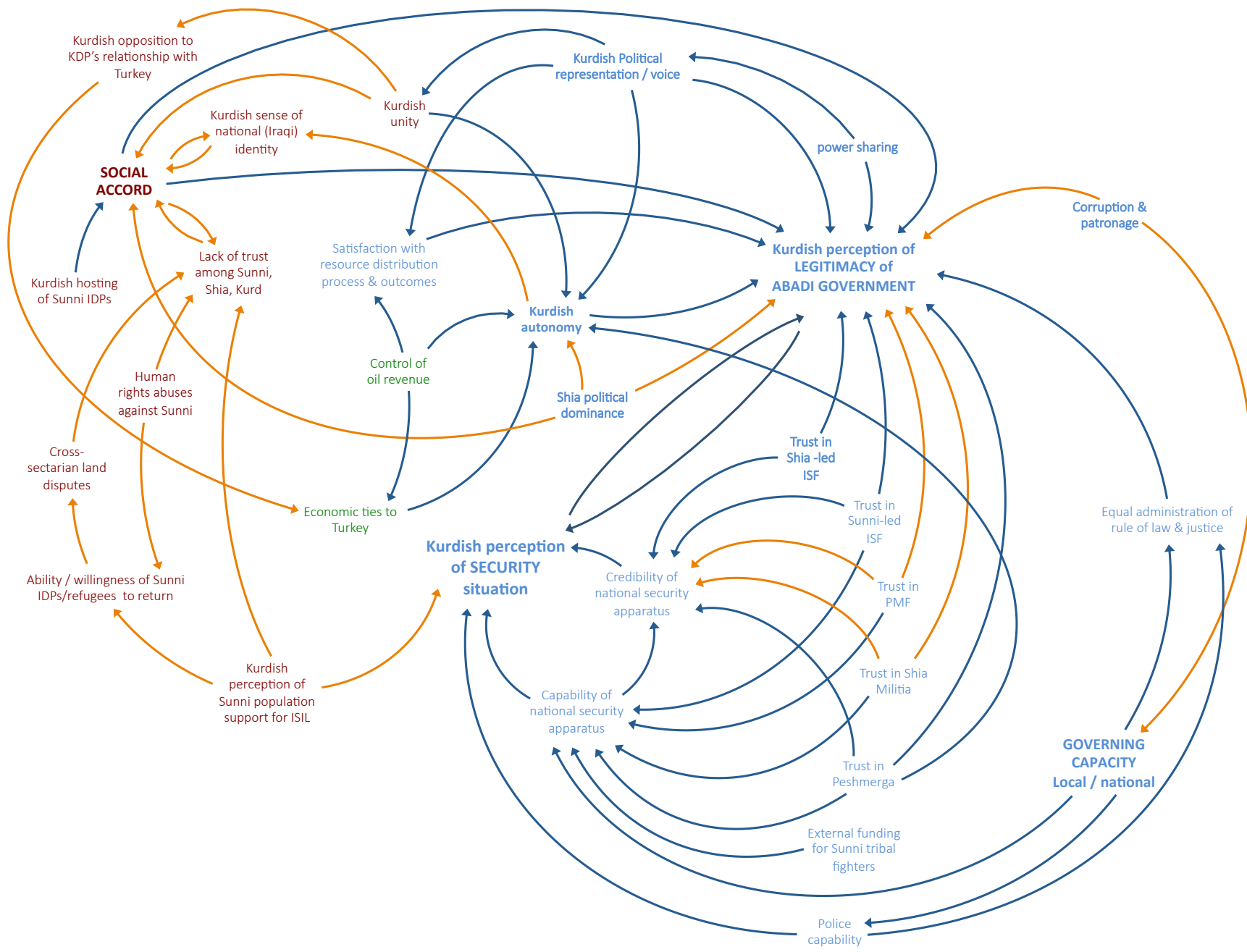


Figure 3: Kurdish perception of legitimacy - security - social accord relationship

Author Biographies



Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois is Executive Vice President at NSI, Inc. She has also served as co-chair of a National Academy of Sciences study on Strategic Deterrence Military Capabilities in the 21st Century, and as a primary author on a study of the Defense and Protection of US Space Assets. Dr. Astorino-Courtois has served as technical lead on a variety of rapid turn-around, Joint Staff-directed Strategic Multi-layer Assessment (SMA) projects in support of US forces and Combatant Commands. These include assessments of key drivers of political, economic and social instability and areas of resilience in South Asia; development of a methodology for conducting provincial assessments for the ISAF Joint Command; production of a "rich contextual understanding" (RCU) to supplement intelligence reporting for the ISAF J2 and Commander; and projects for USSTRATCOM on deterrence assessment methods.

Previously, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a Senior Analyst at SAIC (2004-2007) where she served as a STRATCOM liaison to U.S. and international academic and business communities. Prior to SAIC, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a tenured Associate Professor of International Relations at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX (1994-2003) where her research focused on the cognitive aspects of foreign policy decision making. She has received a number of academic grants and awards and has published articles in multiple peer-reviewed journals. She has also taught at Creighton University and as a visiting instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Dr. Astorino-Courtois earned her Ph.D. in International Relations and MA in and Research Methods from New York University. Her BA is in political science from Boston College. Finally, Dr. Astorino-Courtois also has the distinction of having been awarded both a US Navy Meritorious Service Award and a US Army Commander's Award.

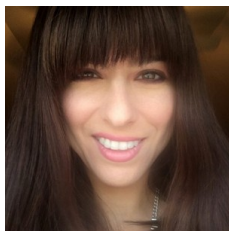


Dr. Diane L. Maye

Dr. Diane Maye is an Assistant Professor of Homeland Security and Global Conflict Studies at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, an affiliated faculty member at George Mason University's Center for Narrative and Conflict Analysis, and an External Research Associate with the U.S. Army War College. She also served as a Visiting Professor of Political Science at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy. Diane earned a Ph.D. in Political Science from George Mason University in 2015. Her dissertation focuses on Iraqi political alignments and alliances after the fall of the Ba'ath party. Diane has taught undergraduate level courses in International Relations, Comparative Politics, American Foreign Policy, Counterterrorism Analysis, Beginner Arabic, and Political Islam. Her major research interests include: security issues in the Middle East and U.S. defense policy. Diane

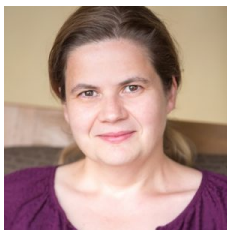
has published several scholarly works and has appeared in online and scholarly mediums including: *The Digest of Middle East Studies*, *The Journal of Terrorism Research*, *The National Interest*, *Radio Algeria*, *The Bridge*, *Business Insider*, *Small Wars Journal*, *Military One*, *In Homeland Security*, and the *New York Daily News*.

Prior to her work in academia, Diane served as an officer in the United States Air Force and worked in the defense industry. Upon leaving the Air Force, Diane worked for an Italian-U.S. defense company managing projects in foreign military sales, proposal development, and the execution of large international communications and physical security projects for military customers. During the Iraq war, she worked for Multi-National Force-Iraq in Baghdad, managing over 400 bilingual, bicultural advisors to the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Department of Defense. She has also done freelance business consulting for European, South American, and Middle Eastern clients interested in security and defense procurement. Diane is a member of the Military Writers Guild, an associate editor for *The Bridge*, and a member of the Terrorism Research Analysis Consortium.



Dr. Sabrina Pagano

Dr. Sabrina Pagano is an experienced project leader and principal investigator, with almost 15 years of experience leading teams and projects both in academia and industry. She earned her Ph.D. in Social Psychology (minor in Statistics) from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a dual BA with highest honors in Psychology and Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has led and been an active contributor to work in both the government and commercial domains. Though supporting a wide variety of projects and proposals, her work at NSI has focused in three main areas, including serving as the Principal Investigator and Project Manager for a multi-year contract investigating progress in conflict environments, providing project oversight as the project manager for two AAA titles at a top gaming company, and as one of two developers of a corporate offering focused on enhancing dignity in interactions with customers and employees. Prior to NSI, she served as the Director (Acting) of a growing behavioral sciences program, as well as a Faculty Fellow Researcher and Lecturer at UCLA. Dr. Pagano's work has spanned a wide variety of topics, with particular depth in intergroup relations, injustice, basic and moral emotions (e.g., empathy, moral outrage), and prosocial/antisocial behavior. She maintains an active knowledge base in the broad field of social psychology, and knowledge that spans multiple fields given over a decade of experience and leadership specifically on multidisciplinary projects.



Dr. Belinda Bragg

Dr. Belinda Bragg is a Principal Research Scientist for NSI. She has provided core support for DoD Joint Staff and STRATCOM Strategic Multi-layer Analysis (SMA) projects for the past six years. She has worked on projects dealing with nuclear deterrence, state stability, U.S.-China and U.S.-Russia relations, and VEOs. Dr. Bragg has extensive experience reviewing and building social science models and frameworks. She is one of the two designers of a stability model, (the StaM) that has been used analyze stability efforts in Afghanistan, state stability in Pakistan and Nigeria, and at the city-level to explore the drivers and buffers of instability in megacities, with a case study of Dhaka. Prior to joining

NSI, Dr. Bragg was a visiting lecturer in International Relations at Texas A&M University in College Station. Her research focuses on decision-making, causes of conflict and political instability, and political uses of social media. Dr. Bragg earned her Ph.D. in political science from Texas A&M University, and her BA from the University of Melbourne, Australia.