

# Political Theory of Societal Association: Case of the Failed State of Syria—Part 3 ISIS

Frederick Betz

Institute for Policy Models, Enumclaw, WA, USA

Email: [fbetz@venture2reality.com](mailto:fbetz@venture2reality.com)

**How to cite this paper:** Betz, F. (2020). Political Theory of Societal Association: Case of the Failed State of Syria—Part 3 ISIS. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 183-208.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.812015>

**Received:** October 28, 2020

**Accepted:** December 13, 2020

**Published:** December 16, 2020

Copyright © 2020 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

This is the third paper (of five) analyzing the failure of the Syrian state. It is important because it analyzes how a terrorist militia can take over a failed state—when ISIS created a Caliphate instead of a modern state in Iraqi and Syrian territories. It also adds to the theory of political association, a meta-model technique for depicting the international context of a state. Five papers have been required to model the Syrian civil war, because of the complicated sequence of events in the history of Syria: 1) from being a territory in the Ottoman Empire to European colonial states, 2) to independent states, 3) to a near collapse under a terrorist caliphate, 4) with impacts upon Syria's neighboring state of Lebanon, and 5) with refugee impacts on its former colonial occupiers. In this history, we have been testing the validity of the modern political of association, as to how and why “state regression” occurs. After Syrian independence, the history of Syria empirically illustrates and contributes to the verification of a theory of political association—in that the theoretical distinctions between “state” and “nation” are fundamental concepts in the politics of a society. We continue to use the historical studies of Syria to provide the empirical basis for building and grounding (verifying) the social science theory of political association—through the analytical technique of modeling historical events.

## Keywords

Failed States, Nations, Political Theory, Middle East, Colonialism, Syria, ISIS

## 1. Introduction

In the two previous papers the case of Syrian history provided empirical evidence for the validity of a theory of political association (Betz, 2019; Betz, 2020). In the two papers, covering the history of the Middle East at the fall of the Ot-

toman Empire, the colonial occupation of Syria and the independence of Syria, we have used Syrian history to provide empirical societal evidence that verifies the validity of a theory of political association (expressed in a 3-dimensional taxonomy).

This theoretical taxonomy was constructed by three pairs of political dichotomies: 1) *Kinship-Altruism-Association & Reciprocal-Trust-Altruism-Association*, 2) *Decentralized-Power & Centralized-Power*, 3) *Idealism & Realism*. This formal theory has been useful in explaining the societal dynamics of the territory of Syria. In particular, it explains that the *Realism (Power Analytics)* existed in the Tribal/Religious domination of an Alawite group over other groups of Sunni Muslims, despite the *Idealism (Ideology)* of the Ba’athist governments for a united Syria.

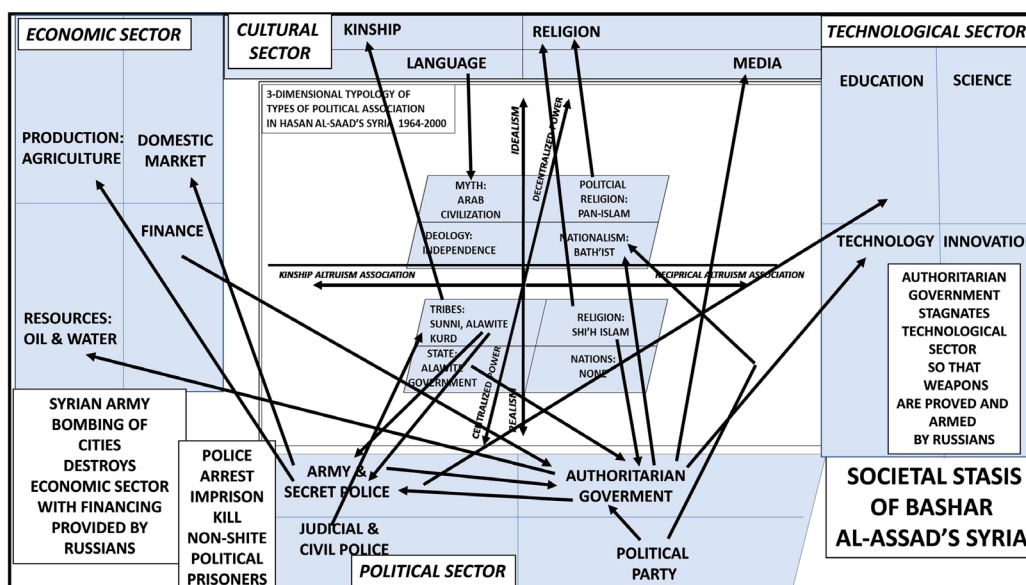
We have also shown how to connect models of ideas (themes) to models of societal organization (structure-function) in depicting how the Syrian government functions were organized around Alawite ideas of Shite versus Sunni. *Models of ideas (such as the theoretical ideas of political association) impact models of societal structure through the institutionalization of practices in the functional sectors of society.* And we have seen that the conceptual distinction between a “state” and “nation” is not only theoretically accurate in explaining the dynamics of independent Syria but also practically important in explaining how the Alawites of Syria constructed the independent Syrian “state”—but an unstable “state”.

## 2. Background

For example in the previous paper about independent Syria (Betz, 2020), we have shown how one important connection between theory in political science and theory in sociology is between 1) the theory of ideas-of-association and 2) the functional-organizational practices in a society.

**Figure 1** shows again this conceptual model of political association in the Assad’s Syria, as analyzed in the second paper (Betz, 2020). This theoretical model of the concepts in political association is a 3-dimensional taxonomy constructed by three pairs of political dichotomies: 1) *Kinship-Altruism-Association & Reciprocal-Trust-Altruism Association*, 2) *Decentralized-Power & Centralized-Power*, 3) *Idealism & Realism*. It is embedded in a structural-functional model of the governance of Syria by the two Assad regimes.

This formal theory explained that the *Realism (Power Analytics)* existed in the Tribal/Religious domination of an Alawite group over other groups of Sunni Muslims, despite the *Idealism (Ideology)* of the Ba’athist governments for a united Syria. Moreover, the Assad’s Idealism was institutionalized in a structural-functional model of the governance of Al-Assad’s Syrian society. The modeled connections depict where the “culture” is connected to the “political” and “economic” sectors of the four-sectoral societal model. The organization of the al-Assad governments was based upon a tribal and religious divisions among Syrian citizens—Shi’a Muslim Alawite clans against Sunni Muslim citizens. The



**Figure 1.** Political-association model of Assad's Syria, embedded in a 4-sector. Structural-functional model of Assad's Governance.

distinction between a “state” and “nation” was not only theoretically accurate in explaining the dynamics of independent Syria but also practically important in understanding how the Alawites of Syria constructed a “state”—but an “unstable state”.

These two models show the connections between Syrian “culture” and Syrian “government”, such as: how the cultural distinction between the *Idealism and Realism* in Syrian politics influenced the structural organization of the Syrian government and the function of Syrian Army in suppressing political opposition to the government. The Sunni Muslims experienced the repression of their rights, as opposed to the exercised civil rights of the Shi’a. This connection of “culture” to the “political” and “economic” sectors of Syrian society then stimulated the Sunni rebellions. Against these rebellions, the Alawite government conducted harsh suppression: arrests, imprisonments, murders, and bombings. The Alawite-led Syrian Army could not extinguish the Sunni Muslim rebellion, which began in 2011 in Aleppo. Syrian Army Sunni officers and soldiers defected and formed the Free Syrian Army. The civil war expanded to include Sunni Salafi jihadist groups, such as the Al-Nusra Front. Syrian Kurds formed the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and occupied regions in the North and East having Kurdish populations.

Kamel Daoud wrote: “Assad, by killing so many Syrians, had also killed the dream of democracy for many other Syrians, as well as for plenty of people elsewhere in the Arab world. They can see that a revolutionary often ends up a martyr, a tortured prisoner, a militiaman in the pay of foreign forces or an unwelcome refugee. And neither his children nor his people are the better for it.” (Daoud, 2017)

Rather than choosing a policy of reform to include Sunni participation in

government, the second al-Assad regime chose to imprison, kill, and bomb Sunni citizens —until Syria cities outside of Damascus were de-populated.

Then another tribal-religious group, the Isis, rolled into Syria in 2015 and threatened the collapse of the Alawite government, even in Damascus. There were no forces in the former Syrian cities to oppose Isis troops. Megan Specia wrote: “The Islamic State rampaged across eastern Syria and northeastern Iraq, seizing city after city ... The Islamic State officially declared its ‘caliphate’ in June of that year and urged foreign fighters to come to the region to take up arms. Days later, Mr. Al-Baghdadi, who had not been seen in public for years, delivered remarks in the Great Mosque of Mosul, reaffirming himself as the leader, or caliph, of the self-declared state. As the Islamic State grew, it lured recruits to the region for its jihad and attracted supporters who carried out attacks worldwide. At the height of its power, the Islamic State had an estimated 40,000 recruits from 100 countries.” (Specia, 2019)

The failure of nation-building in the present Middle East had created the conditions for the emergence of this caliphate, due to the Assad Governance of Syria by violence and terror over its Sunni citizens. Siobhan Fraile Ordonez wrote: “The fragility is almost a curse of the region. The process of nation-building has been overall rather unsuccessful due to exclusionary politics characterized by the behavior of regiments, particularly in Iraq. IS has a similar focus: it desires to build its own recognized state and to consolidate the powers in the areas it had previous control over. Whilst in the summer of 2014 the vast majority of fighting in which they engaged seemed territorial, much of this has shifted. IS expanded into surrounding areas not only in an attempt to spread their ideologies, but also to simply fulfill their chosen mission... Their claim to represent the original Islamic Caliphate is a key trigger in this expansion and will lead to more direct clashes with Eastern interests... Iraq lacked competent and confident leaders with a clear vision of democracy and authenticity, whilst Syria was under the control of a man who is a slave to his hunger for power.” (Ordonez, 2015)

ISIS succeeded in its rapid conquest of eastern Syria because the Ba’athist governments in Syria and Iraq had created *unstable states*. Reforms (Specia, 2019) were never instituted to create a nation in which all Shia and Sunni and Kurds were loyal citizens under a just government—neither in Iraq or Syria.

*The hypothesis suggested by this previous modeling of Syrian Ba’athist government is that modern states are not stable unless transformed into modern nations, which provide justice and equity to all citizens.*

### 3. Methodology

The methodological approach of this research is to use observations of a societal history to provide empirical evidence for grounding (verifying) social science theory. Cross-disciplinary social science research is necessary to depict and theoretically explain the historical dynamics of Societies and of progress or regress in Civilization.

This approach requires analyzing the history of a society in terms of 1) models of stasis in a societal structure/function and 2) then analyzing periodic change events, so that 3) one understands how succeeding events resulted in reorganization of societal structures—a new societal stasis in the history of the society. This is a cross-disciplinary social science methodology—crossing between the discipline of history and the disciplines of the social sciences (e.g. political science, sociology, economics, management science, anthropology, etc.).

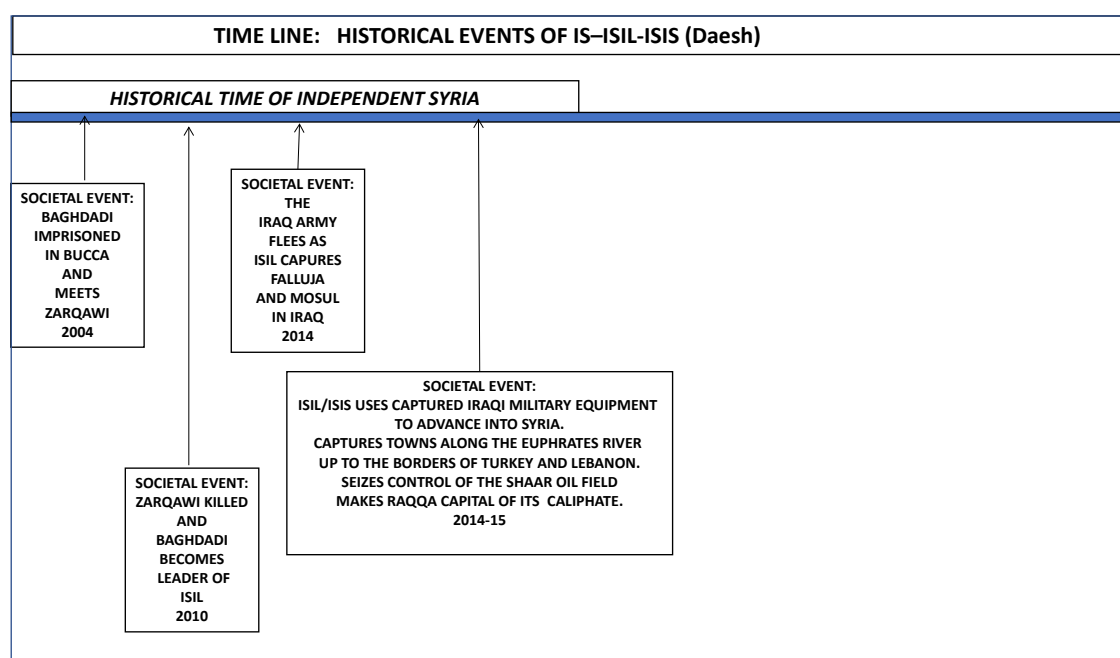
The importance of the formalization of social science theory into analytical forms (modeling) is that it facilitates the use of societal histories to “ground” (provide empirical evidence) for the validity of a cross-disciplinary social-science theory.

In this cross-disciplinary approach, we use the technique of historians, in directly quoting historical sources (observers of a historical scene)—in order to directly show the historical evidence about events. Then we analyze the historical event through the general perceptual framework of the social sciences—societal dynamics.

The organization of this paper reports the “observed” facts of history, followed by theoretical social science explanations of these events. The facts are presented in historical order to depict the actual sequence of the societal events being observed.

#### 4. Timeline 2004-2015 ISIL Captures Mosul in Iraq and Advances into Syria

To observe the facts of history in the case of ISIS, the timeline of significant events from 2004 to 2015 are shown in **Figure 2**.



**Figure 2.** Timeline of ISIL/ISIS advances in Iraq and Syria.

### 2004-2010 The Origin of ISIL/ISIS/IS

The origin of ISIS goes back to the Al Qaeda group started by Osama Bin Laden and to the U.S. & Iraq war in 2004 (which had followed upon an Al Qaeda terrorist attack on New York City and Washington, DC). Megan Specia wrote: “The Islamic State traces its roots to Al Qaeda in Iraq, an offshoot of the terrorist group that attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. The Iraqi affiliate started an insurgency that pushed Iraq to the brink of civil war in 2006 and 2007, before it suffered defeat at the hands of American troops and local militias. By 2013, remnants of the Qaeda affiliate had rebranded themselves the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, and had identified opportunities in Syria, which was in the third year of its civil war.” (Specia, 2019)

Organizers of ISIS had met first during the US occupation of Iraq in US prisons, such as Bucca. In Bucca, the ISIS leader, Baghdadi, began his leadership of a jihadist group which was to become ISIL (and then ISIS). Martin Chulov wrote: “Baghdadi was born Ibrahim ibn Awwad Al-Badri Al-Samarrai in 1971, in the Iraqi city of Samarra. He was detained by US forces in Falluja, west of Baghdad, in February 2004, months after he had helped found a militant group, Jeish Ahl Al-Sunnah Al-Jamaah (which had taken root in the restive Sunni communities around his home city). ‘He was caught at his friend’s house,’ said Dr Hisham Al-Hashimi... ‘Then he was moved to Bucca. The Americans never knew who they had.’” (Chulov, 2014)

The imprisoning of Sunni insurgents by the Americans, after the invasion of Iraq (about 24,000 men divided into 24 camps), provided a training camp for the future leaders of jihadist groups. Martin Chulov wrote: “When Baghdadi, aged 33, arrived at Bucca, the Sunni-led anti-US insurgency was gathering steam across central and eastern Iraq. *An invasion that had been sold as a war of liberation had become a grinding occupation.* Iraq’s Sunnis, disenfranchised by the overthrow of their patron, Saddam Hussein, were taking the fight to US forces—and starting to turn their guns towards the beneficiaries of Hussein’s overthrow, the country’s majority Shia population.” (Chulov, 2014)

One of the leaders of the earlier jihadist group, Zarqawi, had also been incarcerated in Bucca. Martin Chulov wrote: “Zarqawi wanted a 9/11 moment to escalate the conflict—something that would take the fight to the heart of the enemy ... In Iraq, that meant one of two targets—a seat of Shia power or, even better, a defining religious symbol. In February 2006, and again two months later, Zarqawi’s bombers destroyed the Imam Al-Askari shrine in Samarra, north of Baghdad. The sectarian war was fully ignited and Zarqawi’s ambitions realized.” (Chulov, 2014)

But Zarqawi was killed in a U.S. raid in April 2010; and Al-Baghdadi succeeded Zarqawi in leadership. The Islamic State of Iraq (ISIL) would replace Al-Qaida as the leading jihadist group. Later in April 2013, after advancing into Syria, ISIL changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (or ISIS). Under the leadership of Al-Baghdadi, the ISIL forces began attacking the government of Iraq’s security forces in eastern Iraq. ISIL militias captured the Iraqi ci-

ties of Fallujah and Hit in January 2014.

**2014, A Sunni Salafi jihadist militant group gained recognition as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)—officially called the Islamic State (IS) and by its Arabic language acronym (Daesh).** ISEL/IS/Daesh drove the Iraqi government forces out of key cities in Northeastern Iraq. Farah Najar wrote: “ISIL began as an offshoot of al-Qaeda in Iraq, which in 2006 became known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). The movement, led by key al-Qaeda figures, played a major role in driving the sectarian conflict that followed the US invasion in 2003. ISI carried out deadly attacks in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, during this period, targeting Eastern-allied tribal leaders and US army posts before eventually being pushed out. Undeterred, it soon pitched up in Mosul, Iraq’s second-largest city, which is then used as a hub to continue its attacks. In 2010, the group’s current leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was named ISI chief. Two years later, he mandated IS affiliates to set up an offshoot in Syria—a country that had been forced to contend with its own civil war.” (Najar, 2019)

**June 2014, ISIL forces enter Mosul, and the Iraqi Army soldiers leave Mosul.** Suadad Al-Salhy and Tim Arango wrote: “ISIL militants ... seized control of the northern city of Mosul, Iraq’s second largest, in the most stunning success yet ... Thousands of civilians fled south toward Baghdad and east toward the autonomous region of Kurdistan, where security is maintained by a fiercely loyal army, the Pesh Merga. The Iraqi Army apparently crumbled in the face of the militant assault, as soldiers dropped their weapons, shed their uniforms for civilian clothes and blended in with the fleeing masses. The militants freed thousands of prisoners and took over military bases, police stations, banks and provincial headquarters, before raising the black flag of the jihadi group ISIL over public buildings. The bodies of soldiers, police officers and civilians lay scattered in the streets.” (Al-Salhy & Arango, 2014)

**September 2014, ISIL uses the captured Iraqi military equipment, trucks and tanks and arms to advance into Syria.** ISIL captures the towns along the Euphrates River up to the borders of Turkey and Lebanon. ISIL seizes control of the Shaar oil field in eastern Syria. ISIL advances to Raqqa, which makes the capital of its “caliphate”.

**2014, ISIL/ISIS begins propaganda over the Internet and showed the brutality of its government.** Megan Speica wrote: “In 2014, it began publishing a slick online magazine, Dabiq, to bolster support for its ideology and activities. The world watched in horror as the Islamic State released a stream of videos showing the killings of international journalists and aid workers seized in Syria. It began in August 2014 with footage of the beheading of James Foley, an American journalist who had been held by the group for two years. The clips appeared to be a response to the start of American airstrikes against the group. The executions were a small fraction of the atrocities the Islamic State carried out. Violence against local residents was widespread and systematic. Photos and videos of gruesome crucifixions, mass beheadings and stonings regularly surfaced online at the height of the group’s power. The Islamic State also targeted minority



religious groups, including the Yazidi, taking thousands captive and making sex slaves of women and girls.” (Specia, 2019)

ISIS also launched a campaign to destroy and sell cultural artifacts. Megan Speica wrote: “Rampaging across Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State destroyed churches, shrines and sites, including the ancient Roman city of Palmyra. It looted areas for profit and defaced others for fame, as part of a campaign targeting places of religious and historical value. In late 2014, the Islamic State destroyed St. Elijah’s Monastery in Mosul, considered Iraq’s oldest Christian site. The group posted videos and photographs of the destruction of Palmyra in 2015, and of the beheading of a scholar who had worked to preserve the UNESCO heritage site. The extremists shared clips of fighters shooting at and bulldozing Hatra and Nimrud, ancient sites in northern Iraq, that same year.” (Specia, 2019)

**2015, ISIL/ISIS members launched terrorist attacks in Europe.** Megan Speica wrote: “While most of the group’s attacks still occurred in Syria, Iraq and neighboring nations, the violence in Europe demonstrated the Islamic State’s ability to reach Eastern targets. Some were directed by the group, though most were simply inspired by its ideology... A hostage-taking at a kosher supermarket in a Paris suburb in 2015 was linked to the group. In November 2015, coordinated attacks on a nightclub and several cafes in Paris that killed 130 people were traced to the group. Months later, attacks on the airport and subway system in Brussels that killed dozens were attributed to the Islamic State. Dozens of later attacks—on a Christmas market in Berlin; a Bastille Day celebration in Nice, France; an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England; two locations in London within three months; the Istanbul airport; a nightclub in Orlando, Fla.; and a San Bernardino, Calif., office building, among others—were inspired by the group, even as it began losing territory at home.” (Specia, 2019)

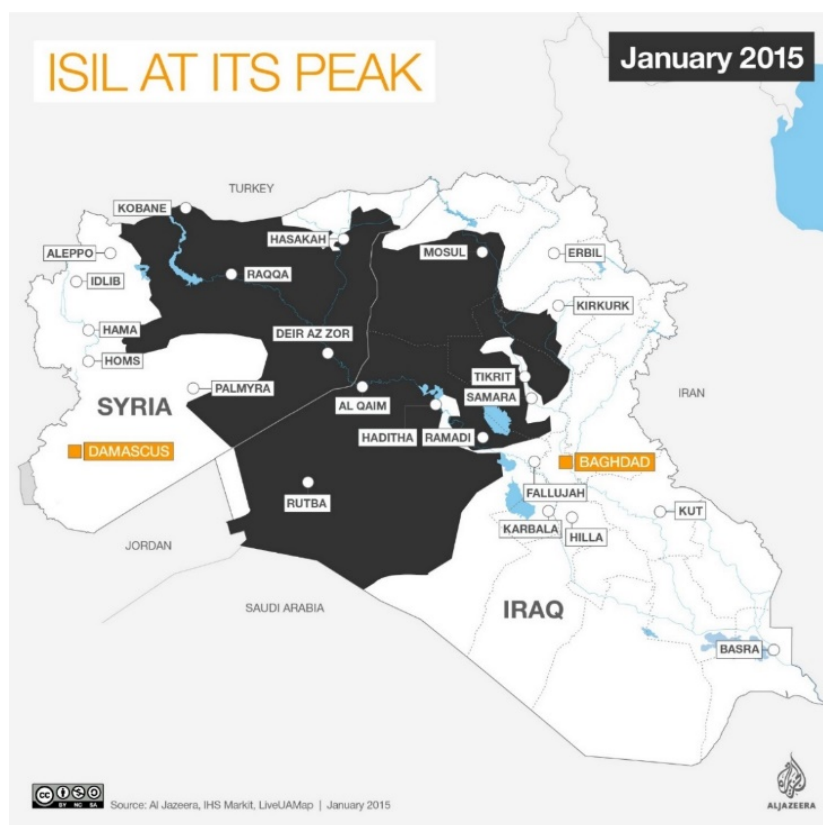
Terrorist attacks in Europe solidified the resolve of European and American nations to destroy the ISIS caliphate. Steve Negus wrote: “One who previously engaged in jihad knows that it is naught but violence, crudeness, terrorism, deterrence and massacring.” As Abu Bakr Naji wrote: “The Management of Savagery was the group’s key theoretical work. Other forces in the Middle East, like Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria, can be just as brutal. But they try to conceal their brutality, while the Islamic State revels in it... ISIS killed Americans in 2014 to draw the United States into a war, which the Islamic State was already waging on many fronts: against the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad, the Alawite-dominated regime in Damascus, Syrian and Iraqi Kurds, and other Sunni rebels.” (Negus, 2015)

#### **January 2015, territory under control of ISIL/ISIS at its peak**

**Figure 3** shows the large amount of territory in Iraq and Syria that ISIL/ISIS controlled in January 2015.

Because of corruption in the Iraqi Army and because of the destruction of western Syrian cities by the Al-Assad regime, al-Baghdadi succeeded in establishing his caliphate, but only temporarily. Megan Speica wrote: “The Islamic





**Figure 3.** ISIS Territory in January 2015.

State leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, an Iraqi, was the architect of the group's push to seize territory and declare its own state. In Syria, the group exploited the power vacuum created when rebels wrested large parts of the country's north and east from the government of President Bashar Al-Assad. The Islamic State pushed out moderate rebels, easily seizing strategic territory. The group pushed into the northeastern Syrian city of Raqqa that year and consolidated control by January 2014, making the city its capital." (Specia, 2019)

For two years at the height of the Caliphate (and before international military intervention began), the IS territory included two administrative capital cities, Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. IS also held Fallujah in Iraq. IS "caliphate" government ruled with terror, oppression, and horror. Tom Stevenson wrote: "The horrors of IS rule are well known: the killings of Shia; the choice offered to the Christians of Mosul (conversion, ruinous taxation or expulsion); the slaughter of polytheists; the revival of slavery, the massacre of Yazidis on Mount Sinjar." (Stevenson, 2019)

Tom Stevenson summarized the conditions leading to the creation of IS: "IS was born of the wars in Iraq and Syria, countries which are fundamentally broken. Its message, played to a sinned-against and vengeful Iraqi and Syrian peasantry, fed on and fueled all the Sunni grievances: the corruption of Middle Eastern leaders and complaints of constant Eastern incursions." (Stevenson, 2019)

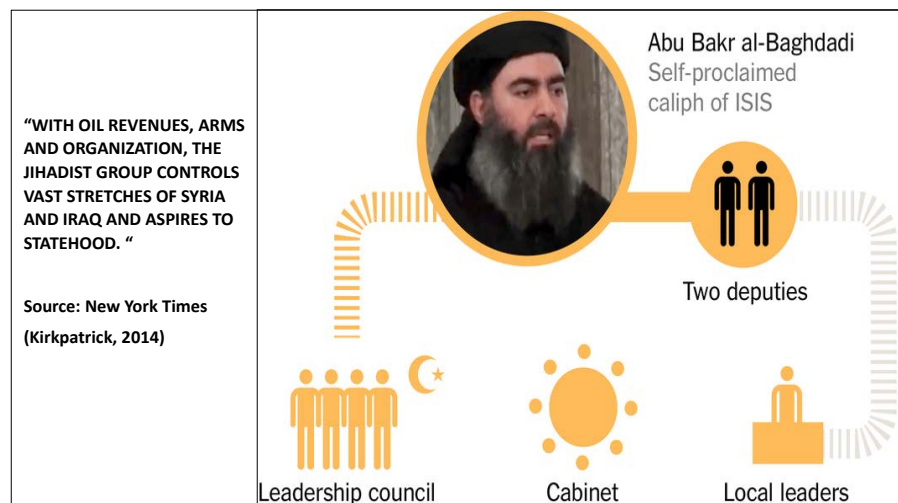
## 5. ISIL/ISIS Caliphate

IS/ISIL/ISIS was a new Islamic terrorist group spawned from Al-Qaeda—with a vision to turn history back, back to the Islamic and Arab civilization conquests of the 800s-900s. But this was to be a return, not to the civilized version of Islam but instead to a harsh, terrorist vision. IS was not classical Muslim theology but a version of modern Wahhabism, adapted to terrorist rule. **Figure 4** depicts the organization of the ISIS caliphate.

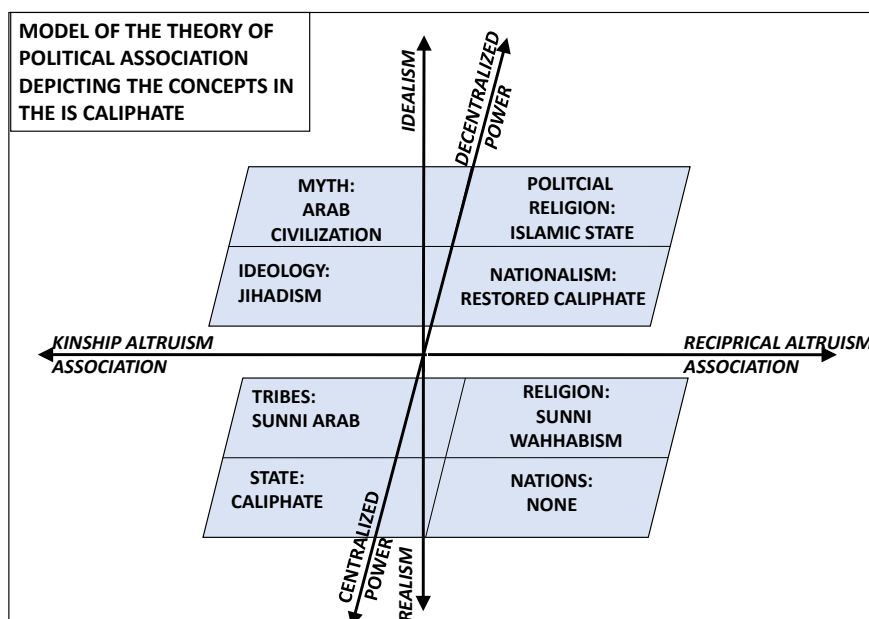
Erin Marie Saltman and Charlie Winter wrote: “Al-Qaeda and IS are tied by a similar jihadist ideology and violent interpretation of Islam. However, while al-Qaeda developed an outward-looking strategy under Osama bin Laden that focused on destabilizing the West before trying to establish a ‘caliphate’, IS has looked inwards first in establishing a state, as part of a strategy championed by the group’s deceased spiritual ideologue, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi... IS has developed self-sustainability mainly through resource production and sales of oil and water reserves. The complexity of IS’s media strategy—using online tools to circulate multidimensional propaganda in coordination with sympathizers around the world—is something unprecedented for a terrorist organization. The group has developed its own smart phone apps and distinctive online messaging system. It has also been benefiting greatly from a strong unofficial network of support from around the world.” (Saltman & Winter, 2014)

Rather than hide them, ISIS published its acts of terror and murder. Steve Negus wrote: “The Islamic State has renamed and reinvented itself many times, but it still makes terrorist scenes a staple of its propaganda. Abu Bakr Naji wrote. ‘One who previously engaged in jihad knows that it is naught but violence, crudeness, terrorism, deterrence and massacring,’ Other forces in the Middle East, like Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria, can be just as brutal. But they try to conceal their brutality, while the Islamic State revels in it.” (Negus, 2015)

**Figure 5** depicts the model the political association of ISIS.



**Figure 4.** Organization of ISIS.



**Figure 5.** 3-D political association theory analysis of ISIS; wherein the Shia are enemies of the Wahhabism Sunni.

The ideal of ISIS was to return to an *Arab Civilization*, under a religion principally political as an *Islamic State*. Its ideology was *Jihadism*, war against any group or religion which was not within its Islamic State of a new *Caliphate*. But its political reality was that ISIS formed a tribe of Arabs defined by a narrow brand of Sunni Islam (Wahhabism), making enemies of Shia Muslims and Kurdish tribes and Arab governments. Next their enemies of the Kurds and Iranian Shias would fight back, fighting ISIS militias to their death, and bringing down the Caliphate as a failed State within a failed Syria—no state and no nation.

This ideology of a past Arab civilization which was implemented by the ISIS Caliphate was not one of a civilization but one of jihadist savagery. Siobhan Fraile Ordonez wrote: “A millennium ago, the Middle East and its great cities such as Baghdad and Damascus led in the creation of many innovations that came to define the modern world. With their foundations rooted in learning, tolerance and trade, the Arab caliphates gave future generations numerous inventions ranging from algebra to surgery. Yet now, little seems to remain of this romanticism, and instead the Arab states have descended into a modern tragedy...” (Ordonez, 2015)

The radical religious version of Sunni Muslim, Wahhabism, provided the extreme ideas which ISIS then degenerated into a vicious savagery. David Kirkpatrick wrote: “Caliph Ibrahim, the leader of the Islamic State, appeared to come out of nowhere when he, matter-of-factly proclaimed himself the ruler of all Muslims (in the middle of an otherwise typical Ramadan sermon). Muslim scholars from the most moderate to the most militant all denounced him as a grandiose pretender, and the world gaped at his growing following and its vicious killings. His ruthless creed, though, has clear roots in the 18th-century

Arabian Peninsula. It was there that the Saud clan formed an alliance with the puritanical scholar Muhammed ibn Abd Al-Wahhabi. And as they conquered the warring tribes of the desert, his austere interpretation of Islam became the foundation of the Saudi state. Much to Saudi Arabia's embarrassment, the same thought has now been revived by the caliph, better known as Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, as the foundation of the Islamic State. 'It is a kind of untamed Wahhabism,' said Bernard Haykel, a scholar at Princeton." (Kirkpatrick, 2014)

Yet despite similarity in religious ideology, the IS caliphate had made enemies of the rulers of all the other middle eastern states. David Kirkpatrick wrote: "The Saudis and the rulers of other Persian Gulf states—all monarchies—are now united against the Islamic State, fearful that it might attack them from the outside or win followers within. Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have all participated with Washington in its attacks on the Islamic State's strongholds in Syria. For their guiding principles, the leaders of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, are open and clear about their almost exclusive commitment to the Wahhabi movement of Sunni Islam. The group circulates images of Wahhabi religious textbooks from Saudi Arabia in the schools it controls. Videos from the group's territory have shown Wahhabi texts plastered on the sides of an official missionary van." (Kirkpatrick, 2014)

While some Arab states adopted Wahhabi doctrine (such as Saudi Arabia), still ISIL/ISIS made enemies of these states because it had modified Wahhabi doctrine to include establishing a Caliphate. David Kirkpatrick wrote: "The Islamic State's founder, Mr. Baghdadi, grafted two elements onto his Wahhabi foundations borrowed from the broader, 20th-century Islamist movements that began with the Muslim Brotherhood and ultimately produced Al Qaeda. Where Wahhabi scholars preach obedience to earthly rulers, Mr. Baghdadi adopted the call to political action against foreign domination of the Arab world that has animated the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Qaeda and other 20th-century Islamist movements. Mr. Baghdadi also borrowed the idea of a restored caliphate. Where Wahhabism first flourished alongside the Ottoman Caliphate, the Muslim Brotherhood was founded shortly after that Ottoman Caliphate's dissolution, in 1924 ... The movement's founders took up the call for a revived caliphate as a goal of its broader anti-West project." (Kirkpatrick, 2014)

**Figure 6** models the connections (black arrows) between the concepts of political association in the ISIS Caliphate to the functional operations of its government. Religious doctrine from ISIS' Wahhabi Muslim religion provided the basis of its schools and a religious police and courts enforced a harsh version of Shia law. The Caliphate government also operated government offices to provide civic services of marriage and birth registries. ISIS had a department of health and sanitation regulations. It provided electricity. Government finances were assisted with the sale of oil from the oil wells in eastern Syria.

Later discovered after ISIS's collapse, ISIS government papers described the governance in the ISIS "state". Tom Stevenson wrote: "Like any state, the caliphate produced mountains of paperwork. Since its collapse under the weight of

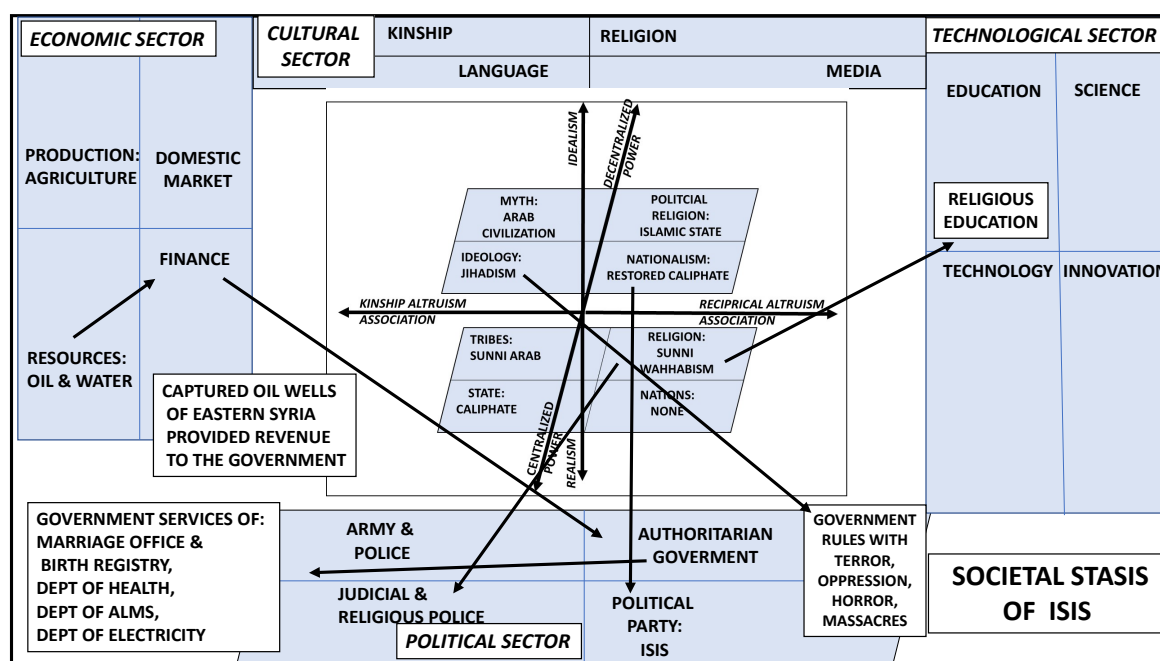


Figure 6. Societal stasis of ISIS caliphate.

US military power, some of the records of its rule have come to light, thanks in part to Rukmini Callimachi, a journalist at the New York Times, who collected 15,000 pages of IS files while embedded with the Iraqi Army... The IS files show that the caliphate was concerned with more than just scripturally correct governance. Its main temporal concern was orderliness.” (Stevenson, 2019)

How the IS Caliphate was ruled could be found in the papers. Stevenson wrote: “(There were) thousands of mundane regulations instituted by the caliphate bureaucracy. The claim to be a state, not just another bank of zealous militiamen, was central to what IS stood for. In support of its statehood, it operated marriage offices, a telecommunications agency, a department of minerals and a central birth registry. Its motor vehicle authority issued license plates carrying the IS logo. Its department of alms and social solidarity redistributed wealth to the poor. Its department of health brought in sanitation regulations ... It wasn’t that everything worked smoothly: the caliphate struggled to provide electricity ...” (Stevenson, 2019)

IS also ruled with harsh punishments. Tom Stevenson wrote: “There was, of course, another way of ensuring orderliness. A document left behind in Aleppo presents a spreadsheet of punishments for various offences. Blasphemy was punishable by a death sentence, as was homosexual sex. Drinking wine would incur eighty lashes. Engaging in espionage was a capital crime ... Highway criminality was more complex, with punishments ranging from crucifixion (for bandits who have committed murder) to the severing of the right hand and left foot (for highway robbery alone). Also to enforce its laws, IS established a religious police force (which was similar to that in Saudi Arabia). Police and soldiers were paid a basic salary of \$50 a month, with supplements of 50 more dollars for each wife

and \$35 for each child.” (Stevenson, 2019)

Central to the IS movement was the concept of a new “caliphate” as a modern state. Tom Stevenson wrote: “IS’s deep origins were in the transnational jihadist movement that emerged in the 1970s from the confluence of the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Camp David Accords, and the 1979 siege of Makkah. Like Al-Qaida before it, IS sought the eventual destruction of the Saudi monarchy. But IS and the Saudis have things in common. Both were determined to act against apostasy and heresy; both insisted on the dangers of innovation... But IS deviated from the Wahhabis, in the declaration of a caliphate, an act that was antithetical to Wahhabism.” (Stevenson, 2019)

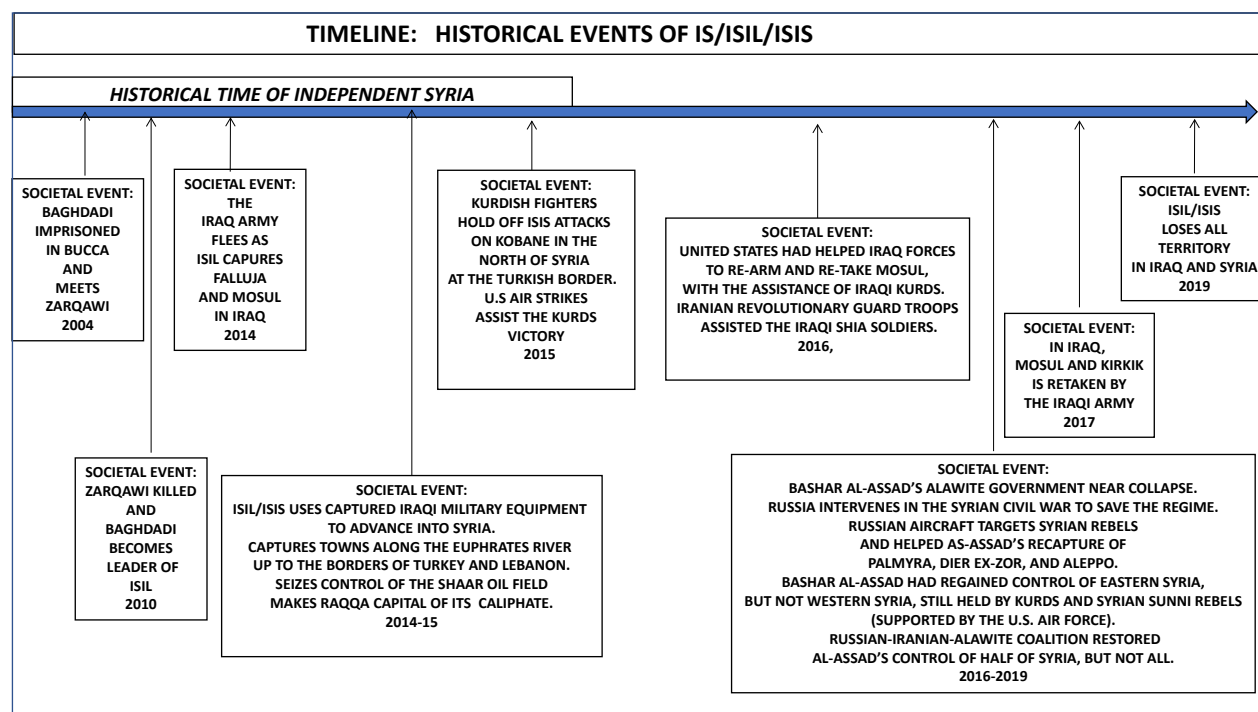
This means that although IS was “Sunni” (as are the Saudis), yet IS made an enemy of Saudi Arabia—by challenging Saudi authority and by establishing a caliphate. Also IS had made enemies of Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Kurds—by killing Shia and other groups. IS made enemies of Europeans and America by encouraging acts of terrorism. ISIS acted as a “state”—but a state without a context of other friendly and supportive states. The ISIS caliphate was an incompletely conceived “state”. Other states, as enemies of ISIS, used military force to defeat IS and eliminate IS control of all territory. This international context of enemies of IS mobilized to defeat the caliphate state.

## 6. Timeline: Foreign Intervention in Syria

ISIS massacres in Syria and terrorist attacks in Europe had mobilized ISIS enemies to fight back, determined to destroy the caliphate. Jamie Detter wrote: “Since mid-2013, ISIS (and an Al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Al-Nusra and Kurdish YPG forces and some other armed opponents of Assad) have conducted sectarian or ethnic-based massacres. SNHR has documented four massacres (involving miscellaneous rebel fighters, ISIS and Al-Nusra) in which 178 civilians were killed including 26 children and 72 women. Another three sectarian massacres that left 58 dead victims can be blamed on ISIS alone, and the researchers accuse the YPG of conducting three ethnic-cleansing massacres that left nearly 100 dead. YPG officials have denied the accusation that any of their fighters have been involved in ethnic-based massacres. The survey doesn’t include the mass execution by ISIS of up to 250 Syrian soldiers last August in Raqqa—a slaughter that bolstered the Islamic extremists’ reputation as the most brutal terrorist outfit in the World...” (Detter, 2015)

**Figure 7** depicts the timeline of ISIs up to the time of foreign intervention in Syria to destroy ISIS.

**2015. The enemies of the “ISIL/ISIS Caliphate” fought back, beginning a four-year campaign to defeat the Caliphate.** The first turning point against ISIS occurred in 2015, when Kurdish fighters held off ISIS attacks on Kobane in the north of Syria at the Turkish border. Paul Wood wrote: “The Kurds in Kobane are jubilant. After 131 days of fighting, they say they have triumphed over the so-called Islamic State. If this is indeed the victory the Kurds claim, it would not have happened without American bombing.” (Wood, 2015)



**Figure 7.** Timeline of IS/ISIL/ISIS events.

In the tribal associations, the Sunni Wahhabism ISIS group considered the Kurds as enemies—for jihad, for killing. They attacked the city of Kobane on the Syrian/Turkey border. In Kobane, Syrian Kurds organized into themselves into a militia called the Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG). To assist their defense of Kobane from ISIS attack, the government of Turkey allowed Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's Peshmerga (Iraqi Kurdish Militia) to enter Kobane from Turkey to help fight off ISIS. In October 2014, Peshmerga troops numbering 152 and Free Syrian Army fighters numbering 50 crossed into Kobane. In the same month, U.S. air force planes dropped supplies into Kobane and bombed ISIS positions outside Kobane. Kobane was saved from ISIS conquest and the roll-back of the ISIS Caliphate had begun—first in Syrian Kobane and then in Iraqi Mosul and Tikrit. ISIS's savage tribal focus had created enough enemies to work together, to destroy ISIS.

**2014-2015. ISIS approached the suburbs of Damascus; and Russia intervened in the Syrian civil war to save the Al-Assad regime.** Bashar Al-Assad's Alawite government was nearing collapse. Russian aircraft were flown into a Syrian airbase in Khmeimim (in north-west Syria) and began targeting Syrian rebel troops of the Syrian National Coalition and ISIS fighters near Damascus. With Russian air support, the Alawite army began the recapture of Palmyra, Dier ex-Zor, and Aleppo. Lebanese Hezbollah militia and Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops assisted the Syrian Army troops.

**2016-2017. A re-structured Iraqi Army began the retaking of Mosul.** Reuters reported: "Iraq's military has launched an offensive that it claims is the first stage of an operation to push Islamic State out of Mosul, the largest city under its



control. The assault was launched from the Makhmour area of Nineveh province, where thousands of Iraqi troops have been deployed in recent weeks, setting up bases alongside Kurdish and US forces. Backed by air power from the US-led coalition and by Kurdish peshmerga forces, Iraqi troops advanced westwards, recapturing several villages from ISIS ...” (Reuters, 2016)

The rearmed Iraqi Army, now largely Shia, was assisted by Iraqi Kurds and by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops and by American air strikes. Megan Specia wrote: “Beginning in 2016, the Islamic State lost ground nearly as quickly as it had captured it. In Iraq, security forces backed by the United States, and elsewhere Iranian-backed Shiite militias, ousted the group, retaking Mosul in mid-2017 and officially declaring the group defeated in the country by the end of the year.” (Specia, 2019)

The ISIS caliphate was dissolving. In 2016, Jim Michaels wrote: “The Islamic State has lost 45% of the territory it once held in Iraq and 20% of areas it controlled in Syria... The Islamic State had distinguished itself from Al-Qaeda by fielding troops, capturing cities and creating a government as part of a plan to establish a caliphate throughout the region. When it swept into Iraq from Syria in 2014, it resembled a conventional military force that operated in large formations and employed heavy weapons. But nearly two years of relentless airstrikes and pressure from Iraqi ground forces have forced the militants to move in smaller groups and retreat from some of the territory they controlled.” (Michaels, 2016)

**July 2017. Mosul was retaken.** BBC News reported: “Thousands of Iraqi soldiers, Kurdish fighters, Sunni Arab tribesmen and Shia militiamen, assisted by US-led coalition warplanes and military advisers, took part in an offensive to retake Mosul, which had begun in October 2016. On 10 July 2017, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi formally declared victory over IS in the city... Hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled the city, much of which has sustained heavy damage during the eight-month offensive.” (BBC News, 2017) Also Kirkuk had been retaken earlier in October 2016.

**October 2017. Kurdish forces, backed with American air power, regained much of the territory in Syria, including Raqqa.** In eastern Syria, Assad’s army, backed by Russian air strikes took back Syrian territory from Damascus up to Aleppo.

The sequence (of Syrian air force bombing of Syrian cities, ISIS occupation, and next the Allied retaking of Syrian cities) left the cities devastated. Megan Specia wrote: “But many of the cities once held by the Islamic State are shells of their former selves. In Raqqa, two-thirds of the city was destroyed in the coalition fight against the group. In Mosul, centuries-old mosques and markets were reduced to rubble.” (Specia, 2019)

## **7. International Political Association as a Meta-Frame Model for a State Political Association**

In this timeline of the defeat of ISIS’s Caliphate, we see that international inter-

vention. (by the United States, Russia, and Iran) were key elements in the defeat. ISIS was a “quasi-State” with an incomplete military, having no air force. With their warplanes, either the United States or Russia controlled the skies over Syria. The United States planes assisted the Iraqi Shia and Iranian militia fighting ISIS in Iraq and also assisted the Kurds fighting ISIS in eastern Syria. The Russian planes assisted Hezbollah and the Syrian army fighting Syrian Sunni rebels in western Syria.

Earlier, the Assad regime had an air force, but it had not effectively limited the spread of Syrian rebels or ISIS militias. Assad’s air force was finally limited to helicopters which had dropped “barrel bombs” on civilian populations in the Syrian cities other than Damascus. The Assad barrel-bomb assaults had emptied Syrian cities and, effectively, paved the way for ISIS to roll up the bombed-out Syrian cities.

The air forces of the United States and of Russia turned the military situation on the ground from ISIS power toward Kurdish or Damascus’ power. The U.S. warplanes and Russian warplanes did not cooperate in a united offensive, but merely avoided clashes between the forces in the Syrian sky.

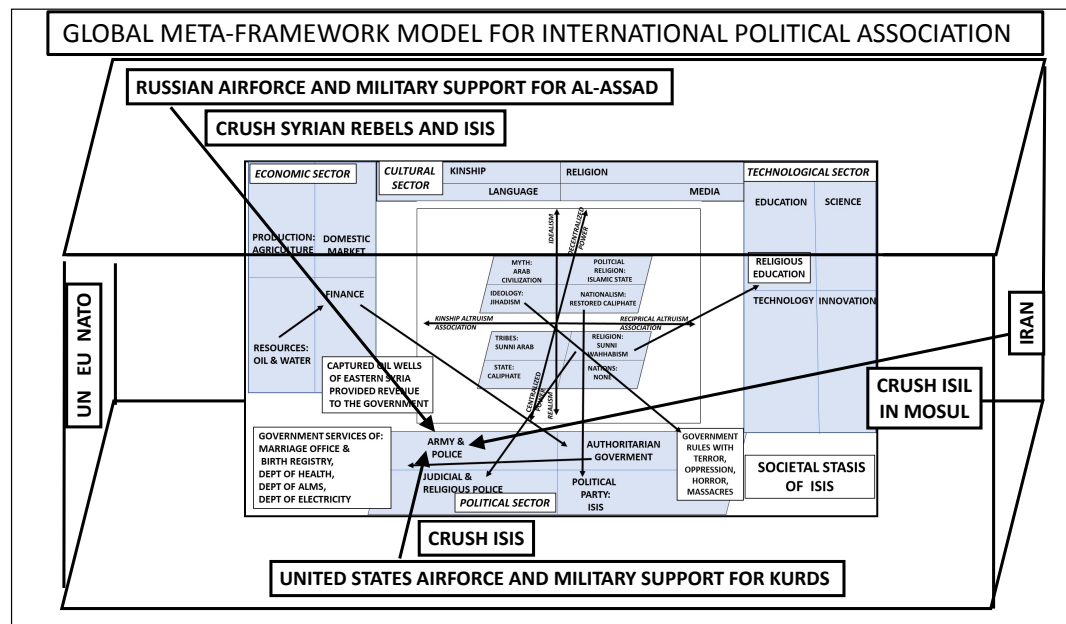
*In the technology of modern war, if you have two contending forces on the ground with roughly equivalent weapons, the ground force with also an air force support (of bombing and strafing) will win. Bombing takes out trucks, artillery, tanks, buildings, and people.*

But bombing alone cannot take and hold a territory. Troops on the ground are needed. The U.S. Air Force had the ground assistance of Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Sunni Syrian rebel ground forces. The Russian Air Force had the ground assistance of Syrian Shite Army troops, Lebanese Hezbollah militia, and Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces. What this empirically means (for the theory of political association) is that in this modern global world, state/nation territories do not and cannot operate wholly in isolation from other nations.

As shown in **Figure 8**, we next construct a meta-model of international political-association around the model of state political-association theory—to reflect the importance international context upon the situation of political association in a country.

A meta-model can depict the “context” of a model—contain the model in a larger context. The model of political association in the ISIS society had a larger context of international interactions between the nations of Iran, Russia, the United States and the UN. The international context used external military force (air force) to facilitate the defeat of ISIS on the ground by its enemies (Kurds, Syrians, Iraqis, and Iranians).

The military assistance of the United States, Iran, and Russia helped the ground-forces of the Iraqi Army, the Syrian Army, Kurdish Peshmerga, and Iranian Revolutionary Guard to destroy the ISIS Caliphate in Iraqi and Syrian territory. Although ISIS members attacked cities in Europe, the international organizations of the EU, NATO, and the UN did nothing to subdue/eliminate the



**Figure 8.** International situation of ISIS political association depicted in a contextual meta model of state political association theory.

terrorist Caliphate of ISIS. This lack of action by international organizations was an important issue, because, as a result, Syrian refugees flooded European nations.

In ISIS's international context, the nations of the United States, Russia, and Iran were important and also the international organizations of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) were important. None recognized ISIS as a legitimate state, but only a "terrorist organization". Iran assisted the Iraqi army to reform (as a Shiite army) and retake Mosul from ISIL. The United States assisted Kurdish forces in retaking Tikrit in Iraq and cities in Eastern Syria. Russia assisted the Assad government in retaking Syrian cities in Eastern Syria.

The need for international assistance in defeating the ISIS came about because of the failure of the Assad regime to gain the loyalty of all Syrian citizens. Aram Nerguizian wrote: "While the Assad forces had been whittled down by four years of fighting, they were increasingly focused on frontier defense missions in what some increasingly described as Assad's 'vital Syria' (e.g. Damascus). This focus was reinforced by the fact that loyal Alawites largely had nowhere to go, and were more inclined to fight for their towns and villages than to engage in fruitless military adventures in eastern and northeastern Syria—far both from reliable supply lines and a strong enough reason to fight on. The Assad regime may have lost some—if not much—of its ability to raise central government funds or amass foreign currency reserves. However, it could still depend on strategic assistance from Russia and Iran in mid-2015." (Nerguizian, 2015)

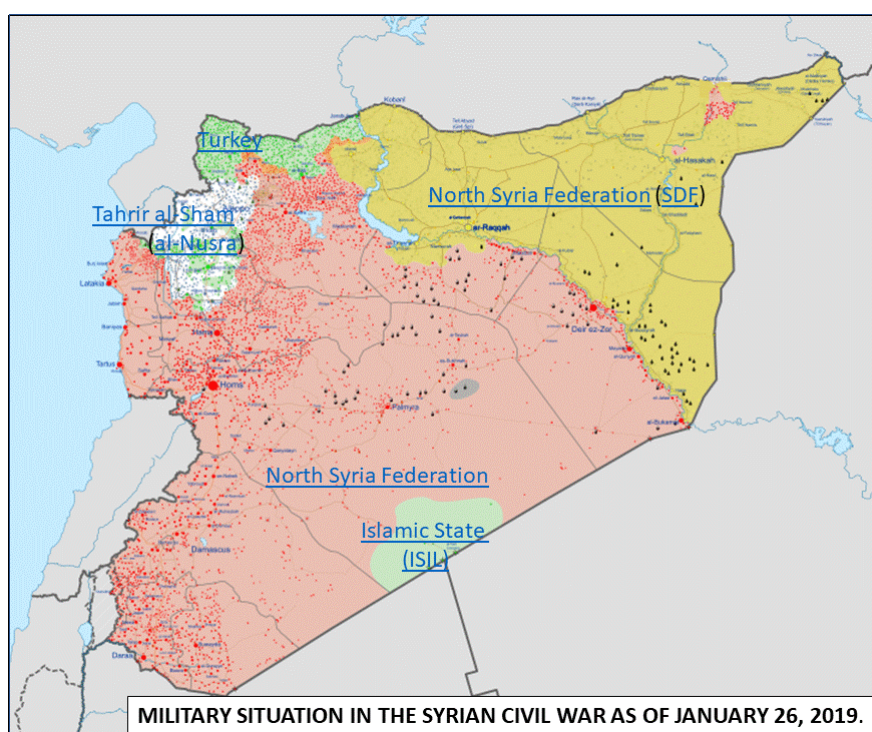
Of course, both Russia and Iran had their own national interests in assisting the Assad regime to survive. Aram Nerguizian wrote: "There is little doubt that both Russian and Iranian aid levels to Syria were driven by each country's dis-

creet set of national interests. Russia continued to see Syria as bulwark both against perceived interventionist policies in the West, and the loss of what remains of Russian influence in the Levant. Meanwhile, Iran's priorities tied to Syria were largely dictated by the need to secure its long-term investment in Hezbollah—something it may not be able to do without a pliant Syria.” (Nerguizian, 2015)

The religious divide in Syria between Shite and Sunni was mirrored in context by the Middle Eastern nations each tilting toward either Shite or Sunni. Ben Hubbard wrote: “In Aleppo was Syria’s sectarian split. Sunni rebels had been adopted by Sunni powers such as Saudi Arabia. Mr. Assad deepened his reliance on Shiite militias, who received support from Iran. Bolstering Mr. Assad’s troops in Aleppo were fighters from Lebanon’s Hezbollah and Shiite militiamen from Iraq and elsewhere who viewed the battle in religious terms.” (Hubbard, 2016)

**Figure 9** shows the partition of Syria as territories held by different forces.

In 2019, the U.S. forces killed Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi with a drone strike. Thomas Friedman wrote: “President Trump announced on Sunday that a commando raid in Syria this weekend had targeted and resulted in the death of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State. The killing of the founder and leader of the Islamic State by United States commandos operating in Syria should certainly further weaken the most vile and deadly Islamist movement to emerge in the Middle East in the modern era. The world is certainly a better place with Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi dead and a measure of justice meted out on behalf of all the women ISIS raped, all the journalists ISIS beheaded and the tens



**Figure 9.** Military situation in Syrian Civil War, January 2019.

of thousands of Syrians and Iraqis it abused. Good for President Trump for ordering it, for the intelligence agents who set it up, for the allies who aided in it and for the Special Forces who executed it. But this story is far from over.” (Friedman, 2019)

## 8. ISIS Participants

In the political association of ISIS participants, there were different kinds. Thomas Friedman wrote: “ISIS emerged in 2014 as the product of loose factions or movements ... ISIS’s first faction—its brains and military backbone—was composed of former Sunni Baathist army officers and local Iraqi Sunnis and tribes, who gave ISIS passive support. Iraqi Sunnis constitute about a third of Iraq’s population. They had ruled Iraq for generations, and many Sunnis in the Iraqi military were enraged, humiliated and frustrated by how the U.S. invasion of Iraq had overturned that order and put the Iraqi Shiite majority in charge. ISIS also derived a lot of passive support from just average Iraqi Sunnis after Iran and pro-Iranian Shiites in power in Baghdad, led by Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki (whom the Bush administration tragically installed) used their power to abuse Iraqi Sunnis and keep them from jobs and out of the military.” (Friedman, 2019)

Secondly, there were the true believers in al-Baghdadi’s version of Wahhabism Islam. Thomas Friedman wrote: “One ISIS faction was composed of the true religious ideologues, led by Al-Baghdadi. They have their own apocalyptic version of Islam...” (Friedman, 2019)

Thirdly, another kind was foreign volunteers. Thomas Friedman wrote: “A third faction was comprised of foreign volunteers. Some were hardened jihadists, but many were losers, misfits, adventure seekers, and young men *who had never held power, a job or a girl’s hand* and they joined ISIS to get all three. ISIS offered a paycheck, power and sexual release to men and women coming from closed societies or cultures where none of that was available.” (Friedman, 2019)

Fourthly, there were the Iraqi Sunni villagers, which ISIS controlled. Thomas Friedman wrote: “For many Iraqi Sunni villagers under ISIS control, ISIS was just less bad than the brutality and discrimination they were experiencing under Iraq’s pro-Iranian Shiite-led government.” (Friedman, 2019)

*The basis of society still remains as political association and structure-functional operations. The power of political association consists of the ideas which bind people together. The effectiveness of the structural-functional operations depicts the capability of the governance of society.*

Thomas Friedman summarized a hard lesson from ISIS: “The U.S. keeps repeating the same mistake in the Middle East: underestimating the power of religious ideology and underappreciating the impact of bad governance.” (Friedman, 2019)

## 9. After ISIS

The ISIS Caliphate was militarily destroyed, and ISIS members were captured or

went into hiding. Still the Syrian territory remained divided between several governmental forces: Assad, Turkey, Kurds, and Iranian militias.

In November 2019, the U.S. forces were withdrawn from protecting the Kurds in western Syria. Karen De Young wrote: “Trump’s withdrawal announcement came after Turkey last month prepared to launch a cross-border invasion, aided by Syrian rebel forces, into northeastern Syria. The administration later reached an agreement with Ankara to remove Kurdish forces (which Turkey considers terrorists) and U.S. forces from an area 75 miles wide and about 20 miles deep along the border to avoid a clash with the Turkish force. That area has since been occupied by Turkey and its Syrian allies, amid sharp criticism of Trump’s withdrawal decision from within and outside the administration and amid reports of human rights abuses as more than 100,000 civilians have fled... Another several hundred miles along the northeastern border also has been claimed by Russia and Turkey, under an agreement Erdogan struck last month with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Russia is the leading ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.” (De Young, 2019)

Turkey moved into Syria to control its border with Syria, expelling the Kurdish population. The Assad army supported by Russian Air Force bombings attacked Sunni Syrian rebels still in the north-eastern area of Syria.

In March 2020, Josh Rogin wrote: “The situation in Syria is catastrophic. The Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian allies are bombarding the rebel-held enclave of Idlib, continuing their wholesale slaughter of civilians. Turkey, drawn into the conflict by the chaos along its border, is essentially at war with Damascus and, by extension, Moscow. Thousands of Syrian refugees are once again heading toward Europe, potentially destabilizing the situation there... In Idlib, the assault on civilians by President Bashar Al-Assad’s army, Russian warplanes and Iranian militias is pushing an already crowded population into an ever-shrinking space—and that space is hell. ‘Now, three million Syrians are huddling there, suffering from cold and lacking water, sanitation and medical care,’ said Jon Alterman, director of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).” (Rogin, 2020)

A Syrian ex-pat in the U.S. echoed the alarm over the remaining Sunni Syrians in northern Syria. In March 2020, Keenan Kassir wrote: “I am a Syrian American, and I have an urgent message. You do not have the full story on Syria. The truth will shake you to the bone. The president of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, is committing genocide. Assad has deliberately erased at least 200,000 Syrian civilians from existence. Most of them died for the ‘crime’ of sharing the same ethnicity, religion and neighborhood as pro-democracy protesters. It is true that the overwhelming majority of these victims come from a single ethno-religious group (Sunni Arabs), but this is not about religion. This is about a dictator who is willing to gas children to stay in power. They are disposable to Assad because, to him, they are subhuman. Assad’s troops (in March 2020) are closing in on Idlib, and another massacre is in the offing. Idlib is the final city left for Assad to recapture since the Syrian revolution began in 2011. Another 3 million people,



half of whom are internally displaced refugees, might be forced to leave for Turkey and Europe.” (Kassar, 2020)

In November 2020, Patrick Cockburn wrote: “Syria is today divided into three parts: the government-controlled area, covering most of the heavily populated regions; the small opposition enclave in Idlib; and, in the north-east, a large triangle of land where Kurdish, Turkish, Syrian government, Syrian opposition, Russian and American forces compete for control of roads and population centers. The arena where they confront one another is a plain east of the Euphrates River, with Turkey to the north and Iraq to the east. About two million Kurds and a million Arabs live here under conditions of chronic insecurity. Until last year, the area was dominated militarily by Kurds, who defeated Islamic state with US support. But IS gone, at least for the moment, Trump declared last October that he would withdraw American forces giving the green light for a Turkish invasion ...” (Cockburn, 2020)

In the twenty-first century and in the international context, governments were still allowed to massacre their own citizens—based upon tribal and religious divisions—without international cooperation to stop a genocide. It was back in March 2020 that Kennan Kassar had written: “Make no mistake: What’s happening in Syria is a modern-day Holocaust... Assad has shown that he will do anything to stay in power. More than half a million Syrians have died in the conflict, and 13 million have been displaced... An international NATO air force should designate part of Syria as a no-fly zone. A no-fly zone, which would not allow Assad’s air force to fly within its boundaries, would protect Syrians from further slaughter. Genocide deniers strongly oppose such a zone. Assad’s defenders falsely claim that any intervention equates to ‘Western imperialism.’ What they won’t tell you is that Russian imperialism is keeping Assad in power. Syrian civilians, and the opposition forces fighting on their behalf, are utterly helpless against the combined airpower of Assad and Russia.” (Kassar, 2020)

Yet no NATO or EU forces would intervene to stop a “final solution” of clearing out the Sunni rebels in Syria. *In the early twenty-first century, the political association of the global world had no “stomach” to stop genocide.*

## 10. Discussion

We have seen that the 3D typological theory of political association was valid to explain political positions in the case of Syria over several periods: as Ottoman provinces, under colonial occupation by France, independence under Alawite government, and destruction by Bashar and ISIS regimes.

We see that the events in the history of modern Syria verify the generality of the theoretical model of political association—as comprising the three dimensions of 1) kinship-reciprocal altruism, 2) centralization-decentralization of power, and 3) idealism-reality in politics. It is a general theory which can apply to different times in a society and to different societies to assist in explaining how and why the different forms of political association can occur in societies.



In Syria, the politicization of Islam was an important ideological concept through all three periods: the last days of Ottoman occupation, independence, and the Al-Assad regimes. Islam was the basis of the majority of the population in the Syrian region, and Sunni Imams played an important role in politicizing the religion as a basis for political identity. Also the ideological concept of “Arab nationalism” was important in the Ottoman and colonial periods but faded as the Alawite clans of the Al-Assad’s took power.

Tribal identity and division remained real through all periods providing the primary political association of all Syrians. Syria never really became a “nation” under the Al-Assad’s but only a one-party, authoritarian state. And the army of the Alawite government treated the Sunni Syrians as rebels, destroying Syrian towns by bombing.

This provided an open field for conquest of territory by a new ideological group, ISIS. ISIL-ISIS-IS formed militias of dissident Sunni’s to attack major cities in Iraq and Syria. The “real” politics of Syria then became a Sunni-Shite divide in Syria and Iraq, with a radical, Wahhabis caliphate conquering a large territory in eastern Syria and northern Iraq.

This history provides evidence that the political science theory of the difference between “states” and “nations” is empirically real and important. In the modern world with modern weapons, a state without the equity and loyalty of its population is an unstable entity. *The stability of a modern “state” requires it to evolve into a “nation”, wherein the population perceives and believes that the government is fair, and effective, just to all sectors of its population.*

To repeat again, the methodological approach of this research is to use observations of a societal history to provide empirical evidence for grounding (verifying) social science theory. Cross-disciplinary social science research is necessary to depict and theoretically explain the historical dynamics of Societies and of progress or regress in Civilization. This approach requires analyzing the history of a society in terms of 1) models of stasis in a societal structure/function and 2) then analyzing periodic change events, so that 3) one understands how succeeding events resulted in reorganization of societal structures—a new societal stasis in the history of the society. The importance of the formalization of social science theory into analytical forms (modeling) is that it facilitates the use of societal histories to “ground” (provide empirical evidence) for the validity of a cross-disciplinary social-science theory. The theory used in this research is cross-disciplinary—using important theoretical insights from the social science disciplines: socio-biology, anthropology, political science, and political economy. And we have used a modeling technique to express the concepts of political association theory in order to apply them to specific historical cases; we have modeled the International Context of Syria and Iraq as a kind of model “meta-space”.

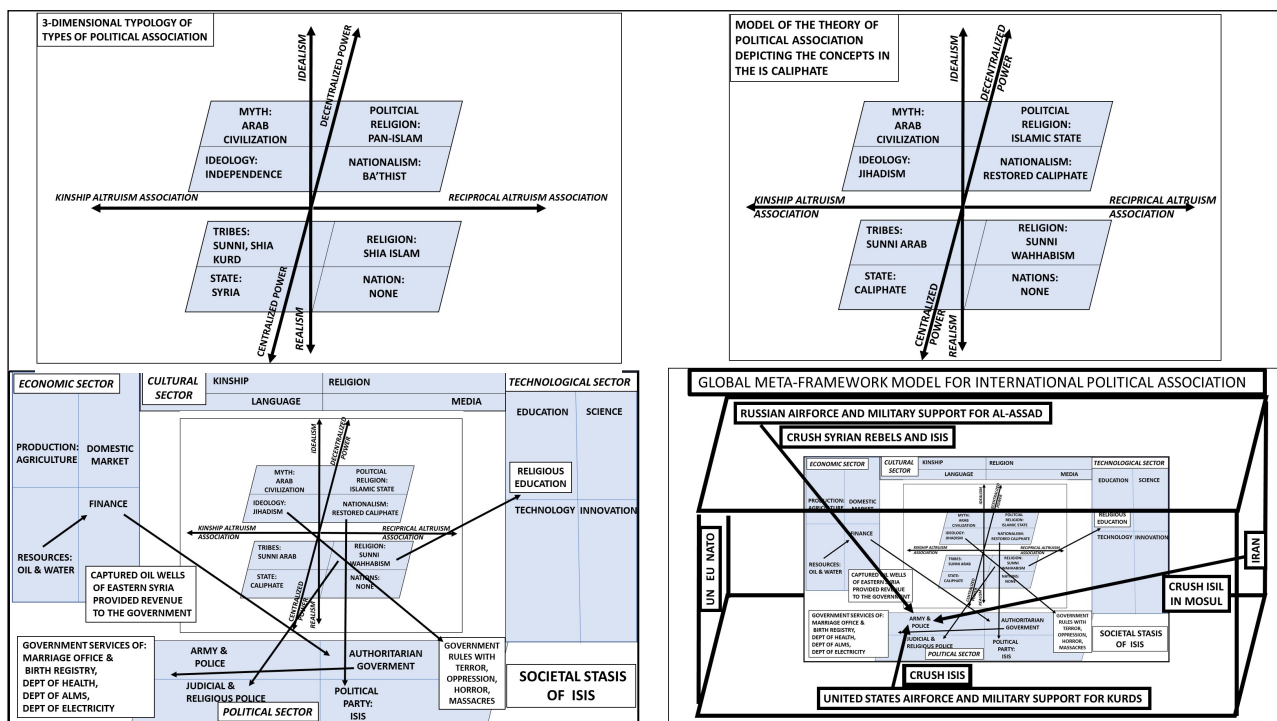
The difference between theory and a model is that a model is the application of theory to a specific empirical object. In the three papers on the instability of the Syrian state (Betz, 2019, 2020), we have developed four kinds of models to

analyze the events and stasis of Syrian society in the dynamics of its history. These four kinds of models are shown again in **Figure 10**.

All these models have used a “graphic form” because this form of depicting a society enables the coupling of “Ideas” to “Operations” in a societal system. And this coupling of ideas-to-operations can be altered historically by a change event.

A model is important because it analytically connects a specific empirical object to a general theory. The meta-space of a model can depict the context which can impact conditions in the model. As a methodological note, models in physical sciences are contextless and universally valid. For example, the model of Bohr’s atom connects the chemical table of atoms to the physical theory of quantum mechanics. Or as an example, the Watson and Crick’s model of DNA analytically connects the theory of evolutionary heredity to genes of a living organism. However, models in the social sciences are always within a context; and the meta-model of the context can connect historical objects/events in society to theories in political science, economics, sociology, etc.

A meta-framework of a model enables the embedment of a specific model into another model of its context. The term “meta” derives linguistically from philosophical distinguishes between languages and languages-about-languages (meta-languages) such as a language and its grammar.



**Figure 10.** Applications of political association modeling to historical cases. The upper two are the 3-D theory of association applied to Assad’s Syria and to the ISIS Caliphate. This is important to abstract the kinds of political association used respectively by the Assads and by ISIS. The lower left model shows how the 3-D model of Ideas-of-Association can be embedded into a Structural-functional-Model of the society. This is important to abstract (model) how exactly how political ideas can impact societal operations. The lower right models show how to embed the models of ideas and operations of a state into a larger international context. This is important to depict the larger historical contexts of societal models used in connecting societal ideas to operations.

*Theoretical models in the social sciences are methodologically essential—in order to use historical cases of a society to explain society and to ground social science theory. History provides the empirical experience of the nature of human society. Models enable the generalizations of theory from and about the historical nature of society.*

*The nature of human society is not static but dynamic. And historically-grounded social theory can be applied in modern civilization in order to learn “grounded” lessons (experientially verifiable) for normative judgments on societal order. Normative judgements in human civilization can be about “what-ought-to-be” in society instead of just “what-is” or “what-was” in the histories of societies.*

*It is toward this aspiration of “civilization”—that we have been developing this methodology of “grounding” social-science theory on the “empirical evidence” of societal histories. Experientially in the history of Syria, ISIS was not a desirable form of society for human civilization. It was desirable only to its Wahhabi Sunni leaders but not to all Syrians or Iraqis (Shiites, Alawites, Kurds, Christians) nor to most Europeans, Americans, Iranians.*

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## References

- Al-Salhy, S., & Arango, T. (2014). Sunni Militants Drive Iraqi Army Out of Mosul. *New York Times*, June 10.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/world/middleeast/militants-in-mosul.html>
- BBC News (2017). *How the Battle for Mosul Unfolded*. BBC News, July 10.  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-37702442>
- Betz, F. (2019). Political Theory of Societal Association: Case of the Failed State of Syria, Part 1. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 7, 271-296.  
<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2019.711020>
- Betz, F. (2020). Political Theory of Societal Association: Case of the Failed State of Syria, Part 2. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 504-529. <https://www.scirp.org/journal/jss>  
<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.86038>
- Chulov, M. (2014). *Isis the Inside Story*. The Guardian, Thu 11 Dec. 2014.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/-sp-isis-the-inside-story>
- Cockburn, P. (2020). *Syria Alone*. London Review of Books, 42, No. 21, November 5.
- Daoud, K. (2017). *What Assad Has Won*. New York Times, July 7, 2017.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/07/opinion/sunday/assad-syria-arab-spring-kamel-daoud.html?searchResultPosition=39>
- De Young, K. (2019). *U.S. Will Leave Up to 600 Troops in Northeastern Syria to Prevent ISIS Resurgence, Top General Says*. Washington Post, November 10.  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/us-will-leave-about-600-troops-in-northeast-syria-to-prevent-isis-resurgence-top-general-says/2019/11/10/5cbe9350-03d5-11ea-b17d-8b867891d39d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/us-will-leave-about-600-troops-in-northeast-syria-to-prevent-isis-resurgence-top-general-says/2019/11/10/5cbe9350-03d5-11ea-b17d-8b867891d39d_story.html)
- Detter, J. (2015). *A Damning Indictment of Syrian President Assad’s Systematic Massa-*

- cres. The Daily Beast, June 19, 2015.  
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/a-damning-indictment-of-syrian-president-assads-systematic-massacres>
- Friedman, T. L. (2019). *Al-Baghdadi Is Dead But the Troubles of the Middle East Are Far from Over*. New York Times, Oct. 27.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/27/opinion/trump-al-baghdadi-dead.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>
- Hubbard, B. (2016). *Assad's Lesson from Aleppo: Force Works, with Few Consequences*. New York Times, Dec. 16, 2016.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/16/world/middleeast/syria-aleppo-assad-autocrats-obama.html?searchResultPosition=29>
- Kassar, K. (2020). *What's Happening in Syria Is Genocide*. Washington Post, March 11.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/03/11/whats-happening-syria-is-genocide>
- Kirkpatrick, D. D. (2014). *ISIS Harsh Brand of Islam Is Rooted in Austere Saudi Creed*. New York Times, Sept. 24.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/25/world/middleeast/isis-abu-bakr-baghdadi-caliph-wahhabi.html>
- Michaels, J. (2016). *ISIL Loses 45% of Territory in Iraq, 20% in Syria*. USA Today, May 2016.  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/05/17/exclusive-isil-loses-45-territory-iraq-20-syria/84499682>
- Najjar, F. (2019). *Anatomy of a Caliphate: The Rise and Fall of ISIL*. Aljazeera, 23 March.  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/03/anatomy-caliphate-rise-fall-isil-190320140536453.html>
- Negus, S. (2015). *ISIS' inside the Army of Terror: And More*. New York Times, April 1.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/books/review/isis-inside-the-army-of-terror-and-more.html?searchResultPosition=5>
- Nerguizian, A. (2015). *The Military Balance in Shattered Levant*. June 15, 2015, CSIS, IISS, Carter Center, IHS-Janes, ISW, NYT.
- Ordonez, S. F. (2015). *The Non-Islamic Non-State*. St Andrews Foreign Affairs Review, 28 September 2015.
- Reuters (2016). *Iraqi Army Launches Offensive to Push Isis out of Mosul*. Reuters, March 24.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/24/iraqi-army-begins-mosul-offensive-against-islamic-state>
- Rogin, J. (2020). *The Catastrophe in Syria Is Getting Worse. It's Time to Act*. Washington Post, March 5  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/why-americans-should-care-about-syria/2020/03/05/550e88bc-5f2a-11ea-b29b-9db42f7803a7\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/why-americans-should-care-about-syria/2020/03/05/550e88bc-5f2a-11ea-b29b-9db42f7803a7_story.html)
- Saltman, E. M., & Winter, C. (2014). *Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism*. Quilliam Foundation, November.
- Specia, M. (2019). *The Evolution of ISIS: From Rogue State to Stateless Ideology*. New York Times, March 20.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/world/middleeast/isis-history-facts-islamic-state.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article&region=Footer>
- Stevenson, T. (2019). *How to Run a Califate*. London Review of Books, June 20.
- Wood, P. (2015). *Syrian Kurds Drive Islamic State Out of Kobane*. BBC News, January 26. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30991612>