



Comparing/Contrasting VEOs



COGNITIVE DIMENSION – VIOLENT EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS: AL QAEDA, ISLAMIC STATE AND HEZBOLLAH

Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning

October 2019



Early Major Attacks by Each Group



Islamic Jihad (Hezbollah) attack on U.S. Marine Barracks Beirut, 23 Oct 1983, 241 dead



Al Qaeda attack on U.S. Embassy's in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam, 7 Aug 1998, 224 dead



ISI series of bombings, shootings and assassinations across Iraq, 15-21 May 2013, 732 dead



Agenda



- Introduction
- Looking at VEOs
- Cognitive Themes
 - Identity
 - Worldview
 - Narratives
 - Education/Socialization
 - Acquiring & Sharing Info
 - Ways of Thinking & Perceiving
- Comparisons
 - VEO Review
 - Why Join
- Summary/Questions





What Does VEO Mean?



- In this presentation, three groups are included as VEOs, meaning “Violent Extremist Organizations”, or VEOs for short
- Yet, why are they called VEOs and where did the term come from?
- In the U.S., where the term was originated sometime in the 1970s by law enforcement agencies, it has traditionally been used to describe white supremacist and/or Neo-Nazi/Skinhead groups, up to roughly 2005
- It was in the Netherlands that intelligence entities adopted this American term in 2004 to replace the term “radical Islamists” which was feared to be too discriminatory and thus inciting the very violence the Dutch were trying to avoid/suppress
- Other European intelligence, law enforcement agencies and then governments followed suit, with the U.S. adopting the term by 2009 (however, in the U.S. the term is used to cover the entire spectrum of violent actual or potential terror entities, thus retaining specific overtones of white/Aryan supremacism)
- Adoption of the term VEO largely ended the numerous somewhat tortured discussions at the national and operational level of what to call these terror groups





What Does VEO Mean? What is a Terrorist?



- There is no statutory definition in the U.S. defining what a VEO is, it is just 'assumed' that everyone knows what is meant
- However, by using the term VEO as an operationalized term, it has allowed the creation of what is called "Countering Violent Extremism" efforts, both by legal, law enforcement and military/intelligence entities
- Yet using the VEO term, does it actually accurately describe the three organizations to be examined here"
- In a cognitive exploration, it is much more important to "see" how the people in these organizations view themselves, what motivates them to join and stay with the group(s), than what we as outsiders to the groups call and "see" them

From the Quran, which to a believing Muslim is the direct word of Allah:

- *"Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority" Quran 3:151*
- *"I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them" Quran 8:12*

So, as the 'We' and 'I' is Allah, he is telling Muslims to engage in terror, which can be seen as an act of love to propagate the faith against those who do not believe

- Does this give a different view of some what we call terrorists, especially in the Information Environment?



Information Environment: Cognitive Dimension



Information Environment

Cognitive
Human-Centric,
Non-Tangible

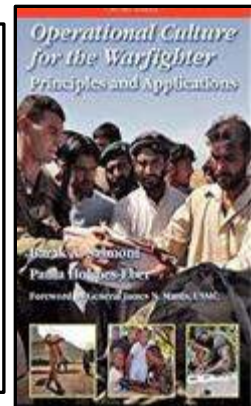
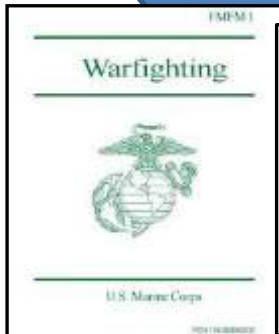
Informational
Data-Centric

Physical
Tangible,
Real World

*"...encompasses the minds of those who transmit, receive, and respond to or act on information. It refers to individuals' or groups' information processing, perception, judgment, and decision making. These elements are influenced by many factors, to include individual and **cultural beliefs, norms, vulnerabilities, motivations, emotions, experiences, morals, education, mental health, identities, and ideologies.**"*

As such, this dimension constitutes the most important component of the information environment.

"War is shaped by human nature and is subject to the complexities, inconsistencies, and peculiarities which characterize human behavior."

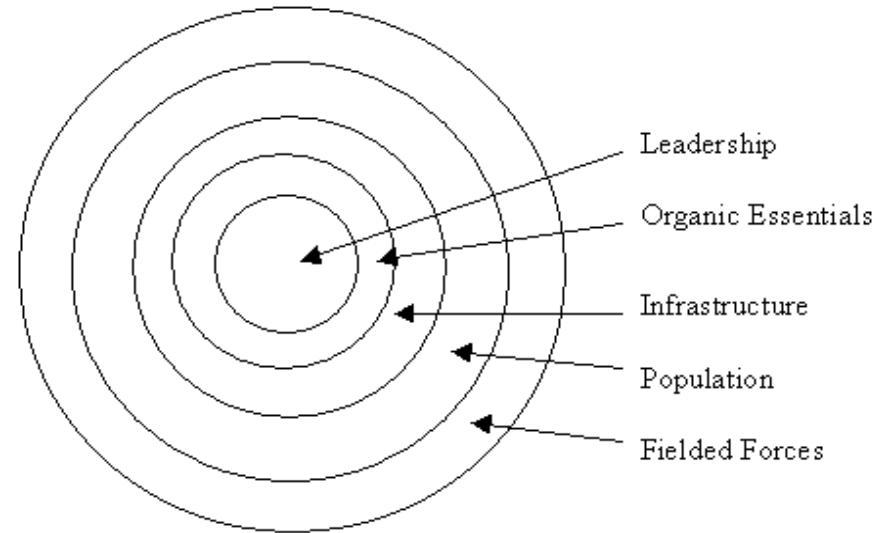




How to Look at these VEOs Needs to be Revised



- The traditional way of examination done by military analysts is to look at the “enemy” as a system (the “five rings model”), which is linear
- Is inadequate as it does not capture the fluid and dynamic structure of ‘VEOs’, does not address interchanges among the rings, has an inherent bias to hierarchical structures and does not adequately deal with the diffused and loosely coupled networked system of systems, nor does it address cognitive applications
- Currently, Al Qaeda and Islamic State are not tied to a single command and control structure/location (dynamic, not static) while Hezbollah is static and dynamic





A Different (Cognitive) Way to Look at VEOs (Non-state actors)



- See them as an “action system” which must be examined with four ‘cognitive’ functions:
 - Adaptation
 - Integration
 - Goal attainment
 - Pattern maintenance
- Yet it also needs to be combined with an “organizational learning system” as each has demonstrated an inherent capacity for learning:
 - Environmental interface
 - Action/reflection
 - Meaning and memory
 - Dissemination and diffusion
- All are dynamic, and “Darwinian” learning organization, which “compliments” their cognitive dimension

	Means (Allocation)	Ends (Integration)
External	ADAPTATION	GOAL ATTAINMENT
Internal	PATTERN MAINTENANCE	INTEGRATION

Talcott Parsons “Four Functional Prerequisites” model

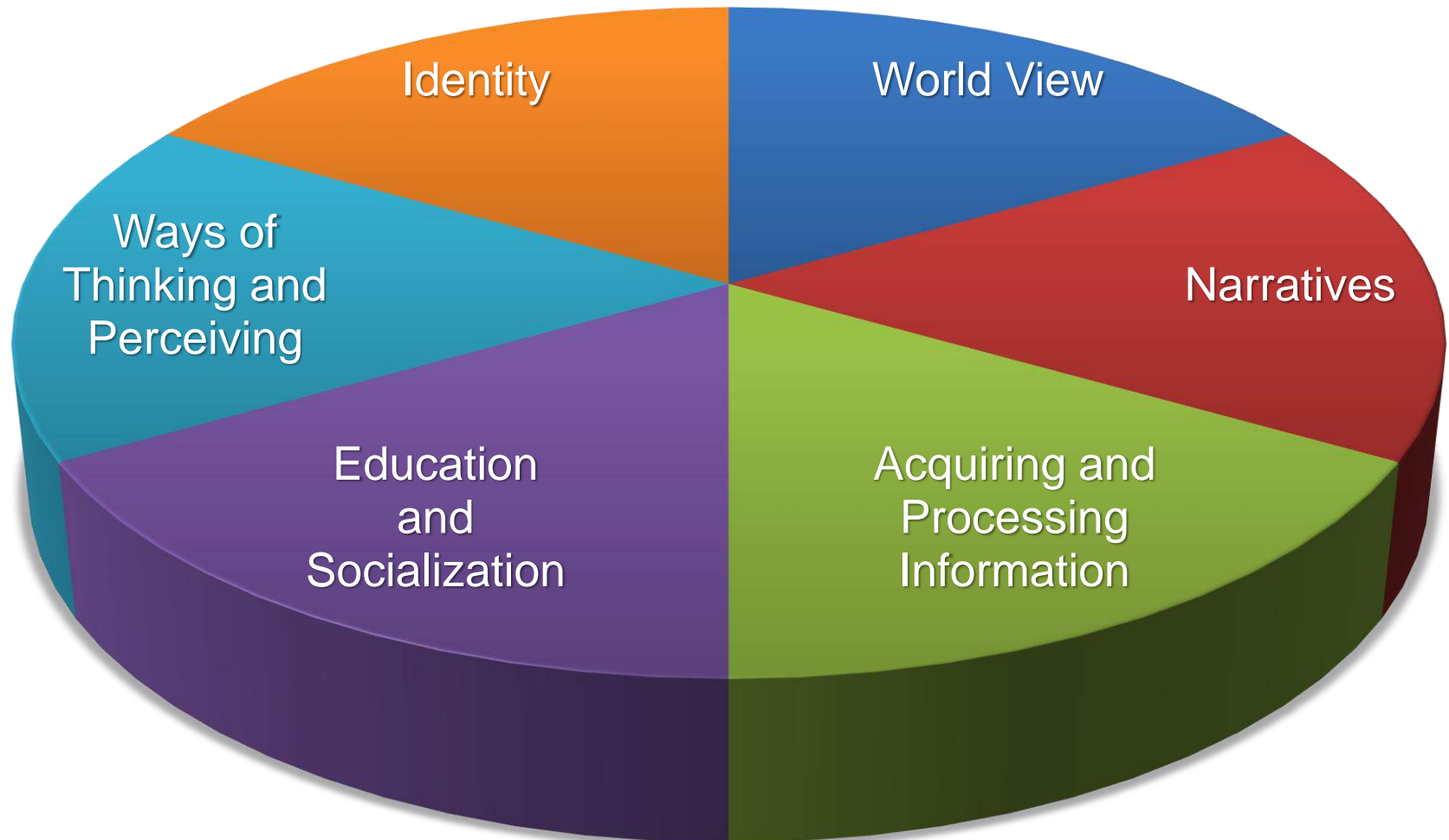
	Means	Ends
External	ENVIRONMENTAL INTERFACE	ACTION/REFLECTION
Internal	MEANING AND MEMORY	DISSEMINATION AND DIFFUSION

Talcott Parsons “Organizational Learning Subsystems” model

*Talcott Parsons was an American sociologist, best known for his social action theory and structural functionalism; considered one of the most influential figures in sociology



Cognitive Dimension - Inherent Themes -



Many are inter-linked



Cognitive Themes Within the VEOs



In the Cognitive Dimension are at least six themes, which are often inter-related:

- Identity – links to the past, values, aspirations, organizational narrative(what makes them unique), challenges, adversaries, future goals
- Worldview – resurrection of a supranational caliphate, will of Allah for fulfillment, revisionist (Qutbism/Bin Ladenism, Al Wala Wal Bara, Velayat-e-Fiqah)
- Narrative – identity (alternatives), mobilizing narratives (traditional), clashing narratives due to clashing national/ethnic/racial identities, clashing ideological narratives
- Acquiring/Processing Information – source(s) of information, use of types of media, specific societal groups, formal sources, informal sources, legitimacy, veracity, trust of sources, control of sources
- Education and Socialization – education systems, socialization, arts, literature, conflicting control of people, mobilization capacity
- Ways of Thinking/Perceiving – logic, rationality, eschatology, cosmology, theology, proof/evidence, conflicting reasoning, predestination, end goals, in-groups/out-groups (requirements for group membership), interconnectedness with past events, time/relationship



9/11 Attacks – Significant Terror “Watershed” for U.S.



New York **2,977 dead – 11 September 2001** **Washington DC**
Attacks conducted by Al Qaeda



Al Qaeda

Identity



- *Who are we now:* largely rebuilt
- Multiple Emirates (HTS, AQAP, Taliban)
- Global presence, anti-IS, pro-Muslim Bros
- If not with AQ, you are against Islam

- *Where do we want to be:* a Caliphate
- Pan-Islamic ecumenical movement
- Neo-Muwahhidunist global state
- Tawhid

- *Where do we come:* Fitna among Muslims
- Maktab al-Khidamat (Afghan jihad 1984)
- Fusion with EIJ 1989 (Ayman al-Zawahiri)
- AQ "Declaration of Jihad" Aug 1996



Islamic State

Identity



- Where are they now - *ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah*
- Remnant enclaves as refuges, Cyber Caliphate
- Takfir
- Al-wala' wa-l-bara' (loyalty and disavowal)

- Where they want to be - the Caliphate
- Neo-Muwahhidunist global state
- The Tawhid (the Shahadah)
- Religio-political foundation based on two basic tenets: Al-wala' wa-l-bara' (loyalty and disavowal)
- Takfir

- Feb 2003 - *Jamā'at al-Tawhīd wa-al-Jihād (JTJ)*
- Oct 2004 - *Tanzīm Qā'idat al-Jihād fī Bilād al-Rāfidayn (TQJBR)*
- Oct 2006 - *al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq* (ISI, aka Al Qaeda in Iraq [AQI])
- Apr 2013 - *ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fī 'l-'Irāq wa-sh-Shām* (ISIS/ISIL, perjoratively *Dā'ish*/Daesh)
- 29 June 2014 - *ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah* (IS)



Hezbollah

Identity



- *Who are we now:* a Shi'a proxy for both Lebanese Shia survival and Iranian security
- Political/social enclave based on Bekaa Valley and Beirut, both in Lebanon
- Global presence, anti-Israel, anti-U.S., anti-IS, willing to negotiate with AQ
- Are not anti-Sunni

- *Where do we want to be:* part of the Iranian Velayat-e Fiqah "abroad"
- Part of regional Iranian security system based on self-determination and sovereignty under Velayat-e Fiqah
- Shia

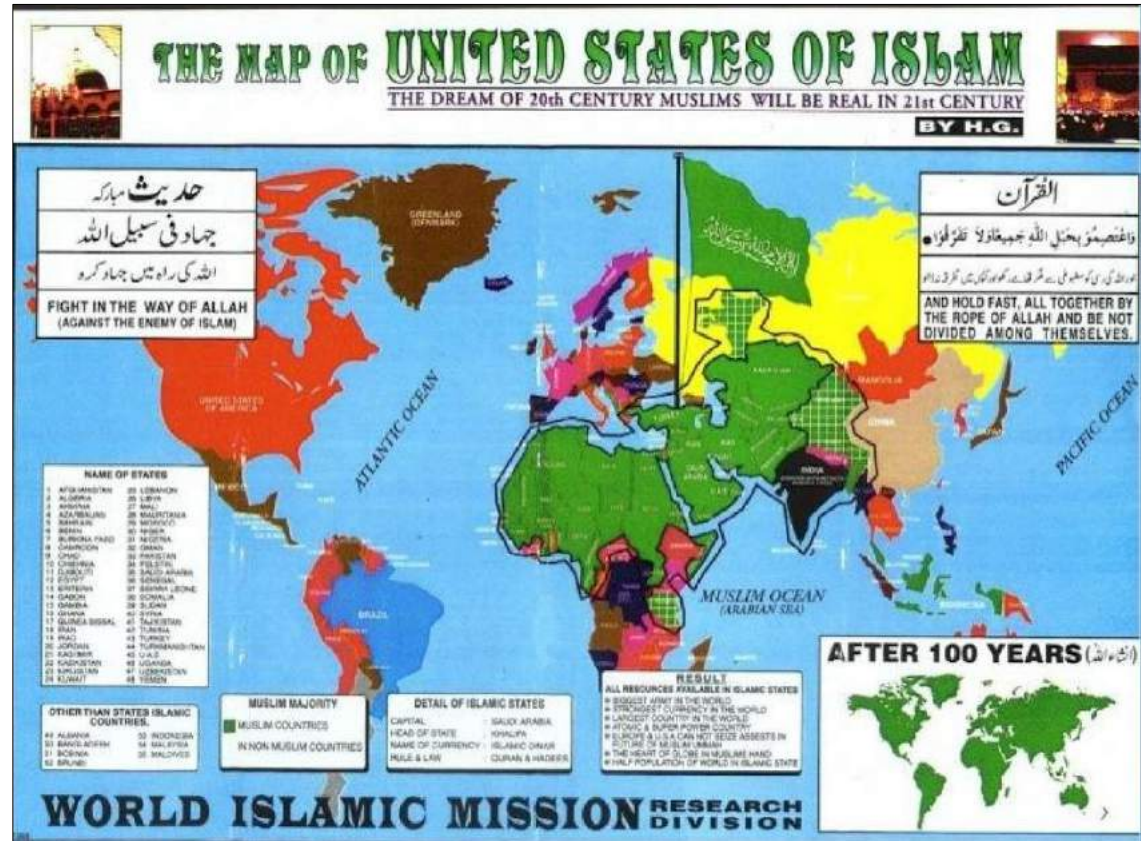
- *Where do we come:* Persecution by Sunni Arabs and Maronite Arabs
- Coalesced into Shia self-defence militias (Amal) from Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)
- Split from Amal to fight Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1980s
- Anti-Israeli, anti-SLA, anti-U.S.



Al Qaeda Worldview



- Resurrection of a supranational caliphate
- Will of Allah for fulfillment
- Revisionist (Qutbism/Bin Ladenism/Zawahirism)
- Pan-Islamic ecumenical (return of all Muslims to a single Sunni faith – so current tolerance of Shia and “deviant” Sunni sects)





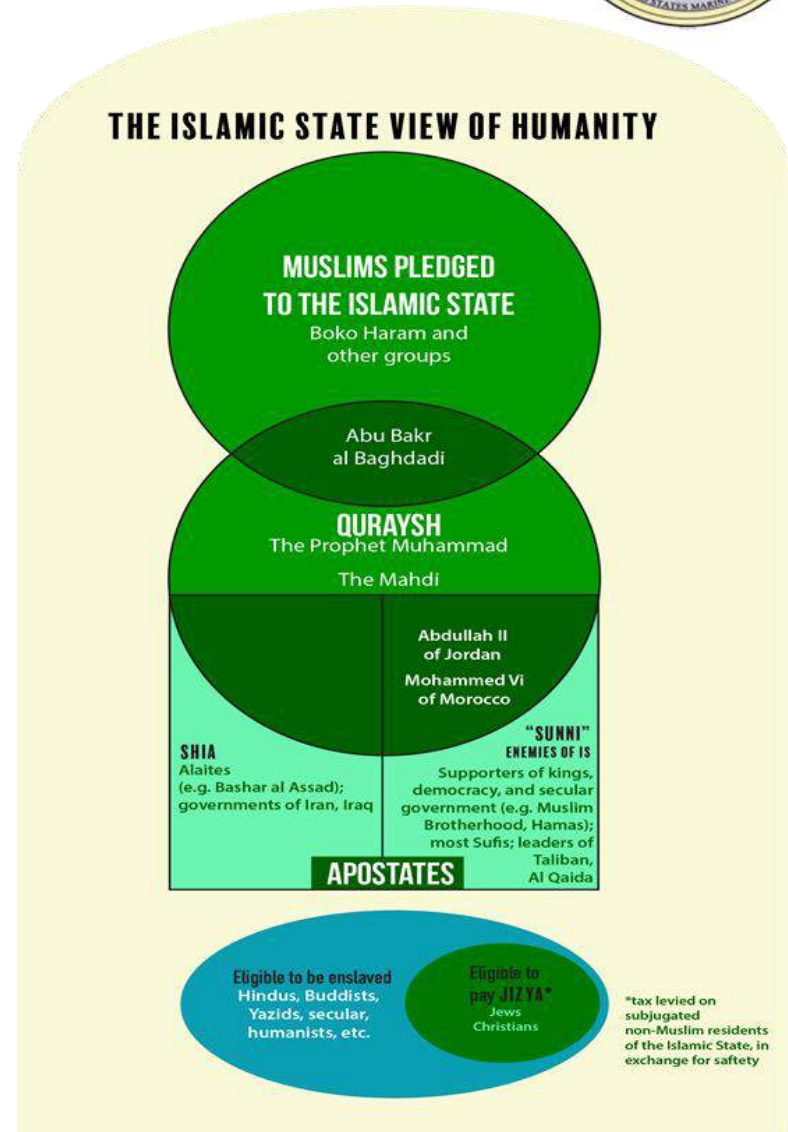
Islamic State

Worldview



The current Islamic State world view is not unique to it, has been seen before by austere Islamic revivalist movements:

- Khwariji (secessionist takfiris)
- Ahl-e Hadith (Sunni movement 800s)
- Almoravids (Sunni Berbers)
- Almohads (Sunni Berbers)
- Muwahhidun (Wahhabis/Wahhabees)
- Deobandi (South Asia Sunni movement)
- Sanussi (austere Sufi)
- Ahl-e Hadith (South Asia Sunni movement)





Hezbollah

Worldview



- Are Lebanese Shia who are struggling to drive Israel both out of Lebanon and to destroy the “Zionist” state
- Are also an important overseas element of Iranian Islamic Revolutionary expansion and struggle, as such have “special status” with Iran
- To establish an Islamic State in Lebanon which falls under the Velayat-e Faqih
- To a degree are Pan-Islamic in which all Muslims should unite under Iranian leadership in a greater Muslim regional political entity while retaining their Sunni beliefs
- Consider themselves as revolutionaries for Shia Islam but not as Iranian puppets





Al Qaeda *Narratives*



- War on Islam (Defenders)
- Far Enemy vs Near Enemy
- The Nakba
- Blood of Martyrs
- Violent Jihad
- Restoration of Caliphate



Within these narratives are mobilizing core threads:

- Humiliation
- Enemy Encirclement
- Righteous Cause
- Obligation
- Self-sacrifice
- Revival
- Conspiracy
- Justice
- Victory





Islamic State

Narratives



- Employment of evocative religious themes to create a religio-political bond, in which the resulting historical myths will resonate powerfully amongst Muslims (Sunni, specifically) and provide immediate legitimacy
 - Surprising success with small numbers of “believers” (**The Battle of Badr, Muhammad’s first victory**)
 - Triumphant return of the Exile (**Muhammad’s return from Medina and conquest of Mecca**)
 - Establishing the House of Islam (**Establishment of Dar ul-Islam in Medina by Mohammad**)
 - IS is refighting Caliph Abu Bakr’s Ridda Wars of 632-634
 - IS “reversion” to insurgency tactics (**12th century Muslim victory over “Crusaders” with “small bands” and “disparate organizations”**)
- Desired end-state is establishment of a Caliphate headquartered in Mecca, via Baghdad



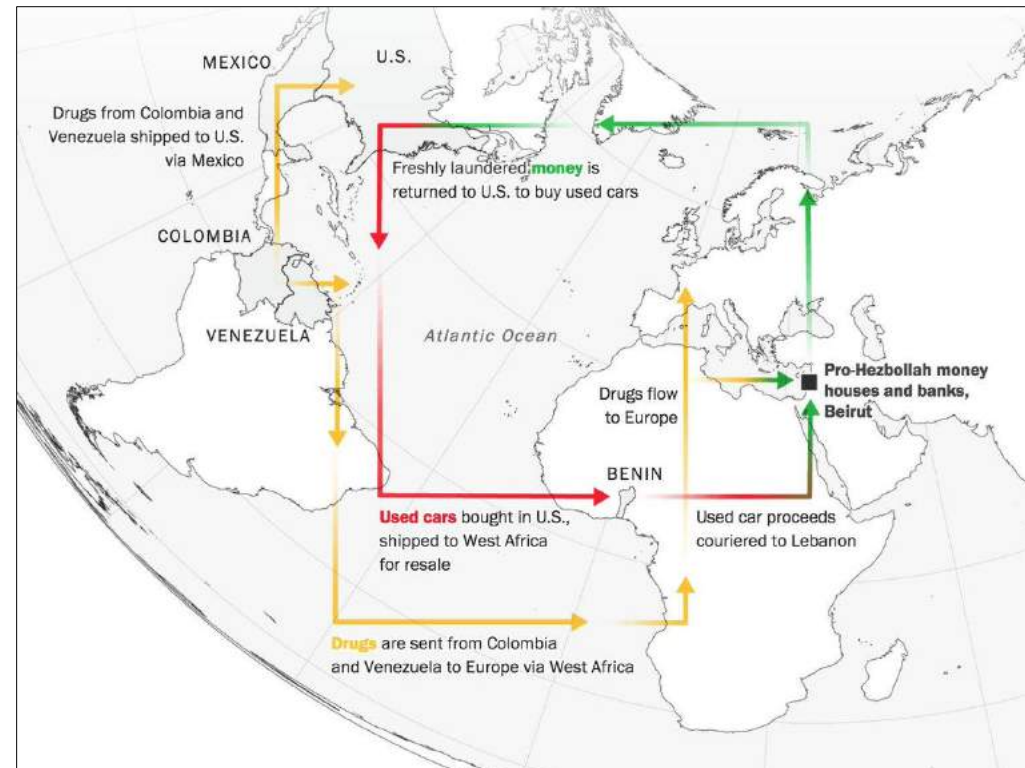
“Idol” destruction



Hezbollah *Narratives*



- Defending Lebanon from Israel/Zionism as an Islamic patrimony (waqf), to liberate all of Lebanon from Zionism
- To protect the Shia population of Lebanon under the guidance of Velayat-e Fiqah
- To assist in the defeat of Sunni demographic expansion which is being executed under the auspices of Wahhabism/Islamic State/Saudi Arabia (this garners Christian support in Lebanon)
- To assist in the destruction of the U.S. and supporters of Israel by any means (example – drug trafficking)





Al Qaeda

Education & Socialization



- The first and fundamental educational and socialization means is the Quran, supplemented by Ahadith
- Secondary means are via electronic or hard-copy documents, and increasingly purpose-produced cyber products available on Youtube, Google, and other venues (prominently via numerous and varied “apps”), through the “Sahab (Clouds) Media Foundation” and the “Global Islamic Media Front”
- On-line magazines such as “Inspire”, “Voice of the Caliphate”, “Zurwat al-Sanam” (The Tip of the Camel’s Hump) and “Muaskar al-Batter” (Camp of the Sword)
- Younger Muslims are increasingly identifying with who they are online, thus use of social media is how they gain acceptance, popularity, status and self-esteem through their profiles and postings



Maktabah Khayr Ummah al-Islamiyyah — “Series-How To Call To God #11



Video message from Hay'at Tahri'at al-Sham: “A Way of Life”, October 17, 2018
https://amjad.media/tariq_alhayat

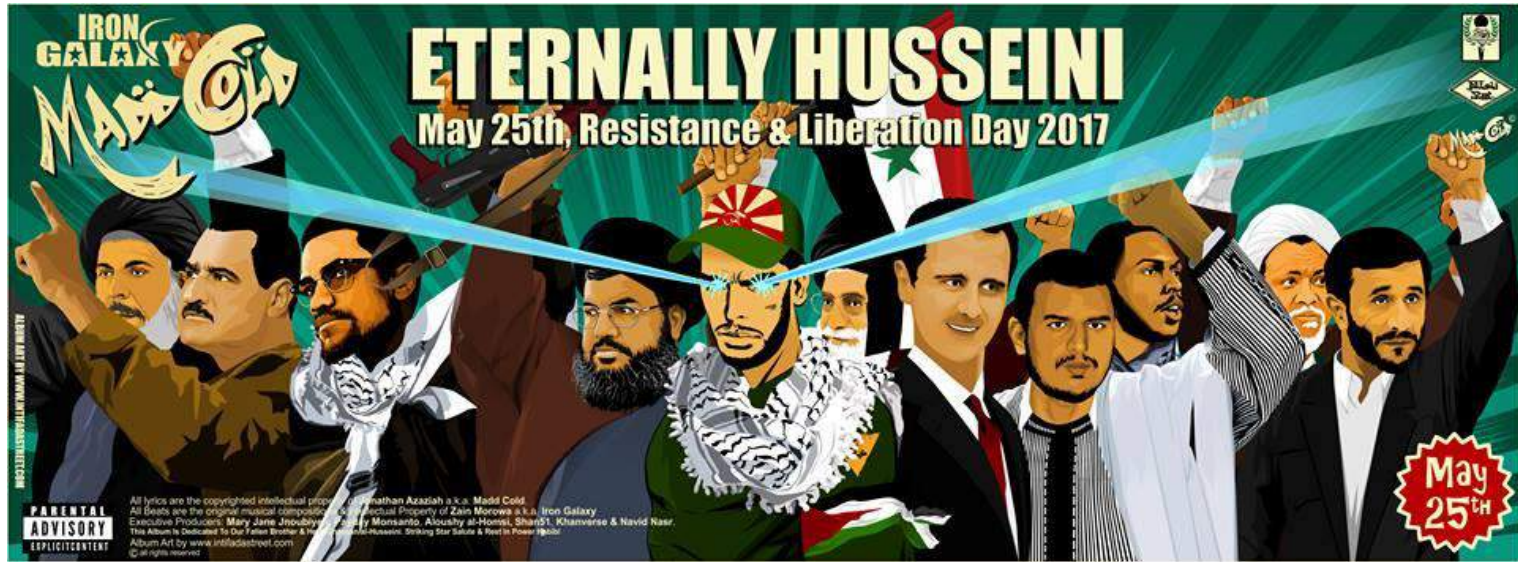
- Education systems – classroom, religious curriculum, military training
- Socialization via religious indoctrination, mandatory mosque attendance
- Population control via religious police
- Mobilization on religious foundation
- The *Quran* is primary educational/socialization source, substantively aided by citing from the *Kitab al-Tawhid* and the *Idārat at-Tawaḥḥuṣ*





Hezbollah

Education & Socialization



- Socialization of Shia in Lebanon is done in light of a culture of historical Levantine Sunni persecution, which has created conditions of insularity and paranoia
- This “enclave” existence has focused Shia families into a community based on the hussainiya (hosayniya in Farsi, also referred to as an ashurakhana or imambar), a congregational hall for Imamiyya religious rites similar to a mosque
- Iran has provided religious training for most Lebanese Shia clerics
- The Lebanese Shia, via Hezbollah, have a parallel educational system separate from the regular Lebanese school system, allowing Hezbollah indoctrination

Acquiring & Sharing Information

Methods and Sources



Legitimacy and Trust



Primary source of information is the Quran, supplemented with Ahadith, is the foundation of legitimacy and unquestioned veracity; secondary sources are Al Qaeda-sourced or approved writings such as *“39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad”*, *“The Global Islamic Resistance”*, *“The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Islamic Nation Will Pass”* or more basically, *“The Al Qaeda Handbook”*

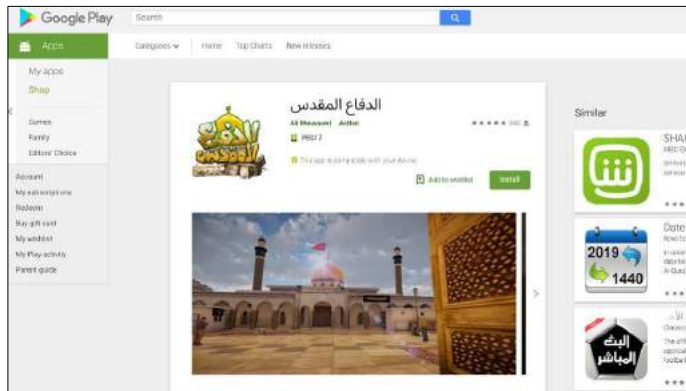


Hezbollah



Acquiring & Sharing Information

Methods and Sources



Legitimacy and Trust



- Hezbollah operations have long been governed by the mantra, “If you haven't captured it on film you haven't fought”
- The group grasped the importance of documenting its successes as early as 1994 when Hezbollah fighters and a cameraman infiltrated an Israeli military compound in Lebanon and raised a flag inside the base, captured the event on film — and scored a major propaganda coup
- Hezbollah maintains a unit solely dedicated to psychological warfare that specializes in burnishing Hezbollah's public image.
- Newspapers, social media outlets and television programming comprise Hezbollah's information warfare portfolio; the group uses its information-related capabilities to advertise its many successes, including summer camps for children and a robust public works program

Significant VEO Attacks



Hezbollah, assassination of Lebanese PM Rafiq Hariri – 14 February 2005, 22 dead



Al Qaeda, attack in Bali, Indonesia - 12 October 2002, 204 dead



ISIS/ISIL, attack and massacre at Camp Speicher (Tikrit), Iraq – 12 June 2014, at least 1,566 dead, possibly in excess of 1,700 dead (there were nearly 11,000 unarmed cadets and soldiers in the camp, ISIS attackers specifically targeted Shia and non-Muslims)



Al Qaeda

Ways of Thinking & Perceiving



- Freedom of religion (Islam)
- Far Enemies (West/U.S.)
- Need of Vanguard/Emirates
- Supremacy of Shariah
- Criticality of Theology
- Pan-Islamic Ecumenicalism

Major influences:

- Ahmad ibn Hanbal
- Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah
- Muhammad al-Wahhab
- Sayyid Qutb
- Ayman al-Zawahiri



Al Qa'ida's Grand Strategy

- **Operations:** Far-Enemy Centric
 - Attack the Far Enemy to *Awaken the Masses*
- **Strategy:** Protracted Attrition Warfare
 - Enable and reorient the violence of others groups
 - Severing ties b/t the West and the Muslim world is a necessary precondition to establishing the Caliphate
- **Strategic Communications:** Social Movement Theory
 - "The Caliphate" as a conceptual master frame to foster alignment among diverse & dispersed violent Islamists
 - Sharia → Da'wa to help reorient hearts and minds



Islamic State

Ways of Thinking & Perceiving



- Freedom of religion (Islam)
- Absoluteness of the Tawhid
- Need of a Caliphate
- Supremacy of Shariah
- Literalism to avoid Shirk
- Criticality of Eschatology
- Fard al-Ayn vs Fard al-Kifaya

Major influences:

- Muhammad al-Wahhab
- Ibn Tamiyyah
- Abu Musab al-Zarqawi
- Turki al-Binali

ALLAH
GIVES THE
HARDEST
BATTLES
TO HIS
STRONGEST
SOLDIERS

muslimahbyheart

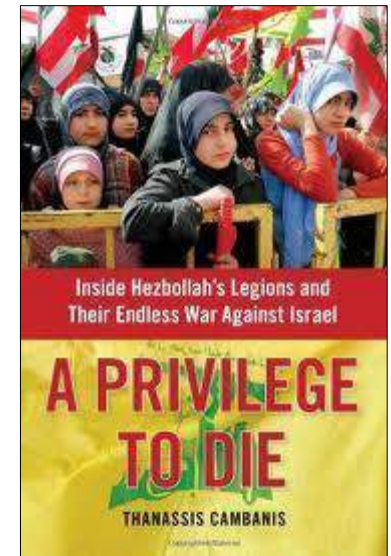


Hezbollah

Ways of Thinking & Perceiving



- What does it mean to be Lebanese?
- What are the legitimizing identities?
- Secular, religious, progressive, reactionary, communal?
- Early 1970s 'Higher Shia Council' created, first real representation of what was called "the community of the deprived"
- Beginning of Shia mobilization as a political community, 1974 formation of Amal (anti-Israeli)
- 1979 alternative group Hezbollah rose in allegiance to Ayatollah Khomeini, based on 3 precepts:
 - Belief in Islam as a comprehensive religion covering all aspects of life
 - Jihad to assert the first precept
 - Jurisdiction of the Jurist (Velayat-e Faqih)

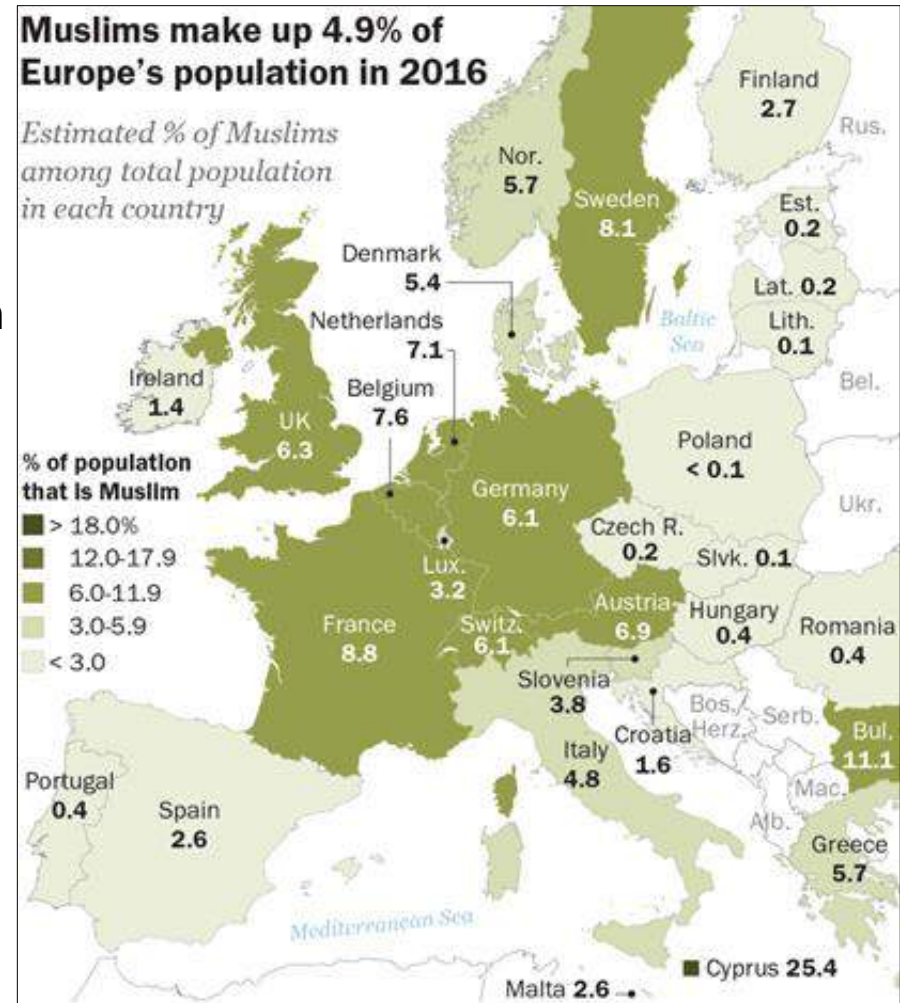


Ability to laugh at themselves

As of Feb 2019, Hezbollah was given the portfolio of Ministry of Health; as soon as this was learned, many Shia Lebanese went on to social media to joke that Hezbollah will not treat the sick because their doctrine celebrates martyrdom

Al Qaeda Assimilation vs. Mobilization

- Millions of Muslims have immigrated, legally or illegally, to Europe since 1950
- Europeans have largely treated Muslims as menial labor and excluded them into enclaves suffering from high unemployment (~50%) and discrimination
- Al Qaeda can recruit extensively via mosques or cyber radicalization
- Drone attacks, killing of Muslim terrorists abroad mobilizing factors for “war on Islam” narrative
- Europeans going abroad targets of kidnapping funding



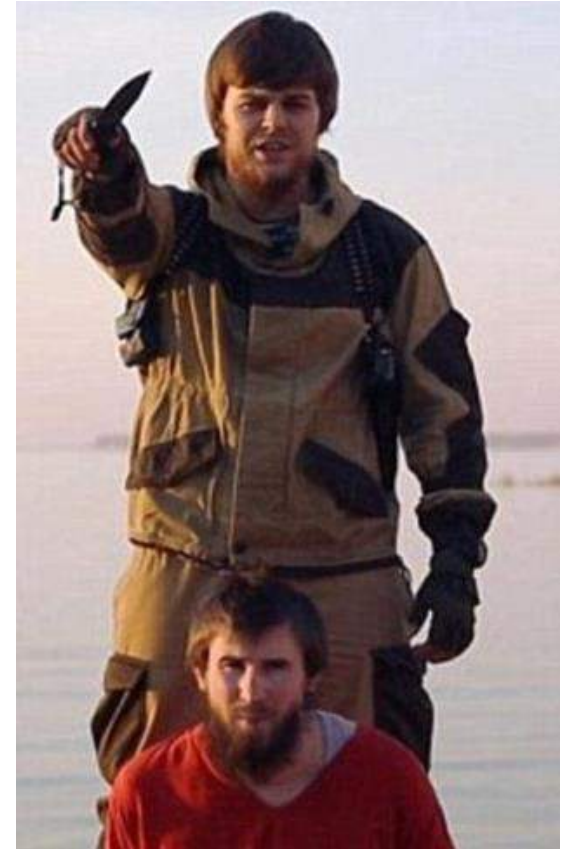
It is unknown how many Europeans have joined Al Qaeda since 1988 but it has been thousands



Islamic State Assimilation vs. Mobilization



- Europeans have largely treated Muslims as menial labor and excluded them into enclaves suffering from high unemployment (~50%) and discrimination
- The Islamic State recruits extensively via radicalized individuals or cyber radicalization
- Drone attacks, killing of Muslim terrorists abroad and the creation of a “Muslim space” are mobilizing factors for recreating the Caliphate narrative
- A significant factor is Islamic State enabling of sexual assaults and concubines via Quranic citation
- Of the known 31,000+ foreign fighters identified as being with IS (2014-2018):
 - 5000 from Western Europe
 - 5000 from Caucasus
 - 3500 from Russia
 - 875 from Balkans
 - 760 from UK



Russian born executioner Anatoly Zemlyanka who was branded 'Jihad Vlad', cut off a suspected Russian spy's head in a gruesome IS execution video



Hezbollah

Assimilation vs. Mobilization



- Lebanon is a multi-secular country in which governance is divided by religious groups, with the Shia traditionally having the minority power
- The Shia, as a traditionally persecuted minority (under 400 years of Sunni Ottoman rule) assimilate poorly, remain largely apart and look abroad to Iran for guidance and substance
- There are roughly 1.67 million Shia Imamiyya in Lebanon, with possibly as many as 1.35 million Shia Imamiyya abroad in the greater Lebanese Diaspora of almost 14 million (~11 million Christian)
- Hezbollah is unusual in the Middle East as they do not reveal the mobilizable strength of their military forces, and they have managed to discipline their personnel to not boast in a Middle East full of braggadocio
- **It is believed Hezbollah has ~45,000 “soldiers”**





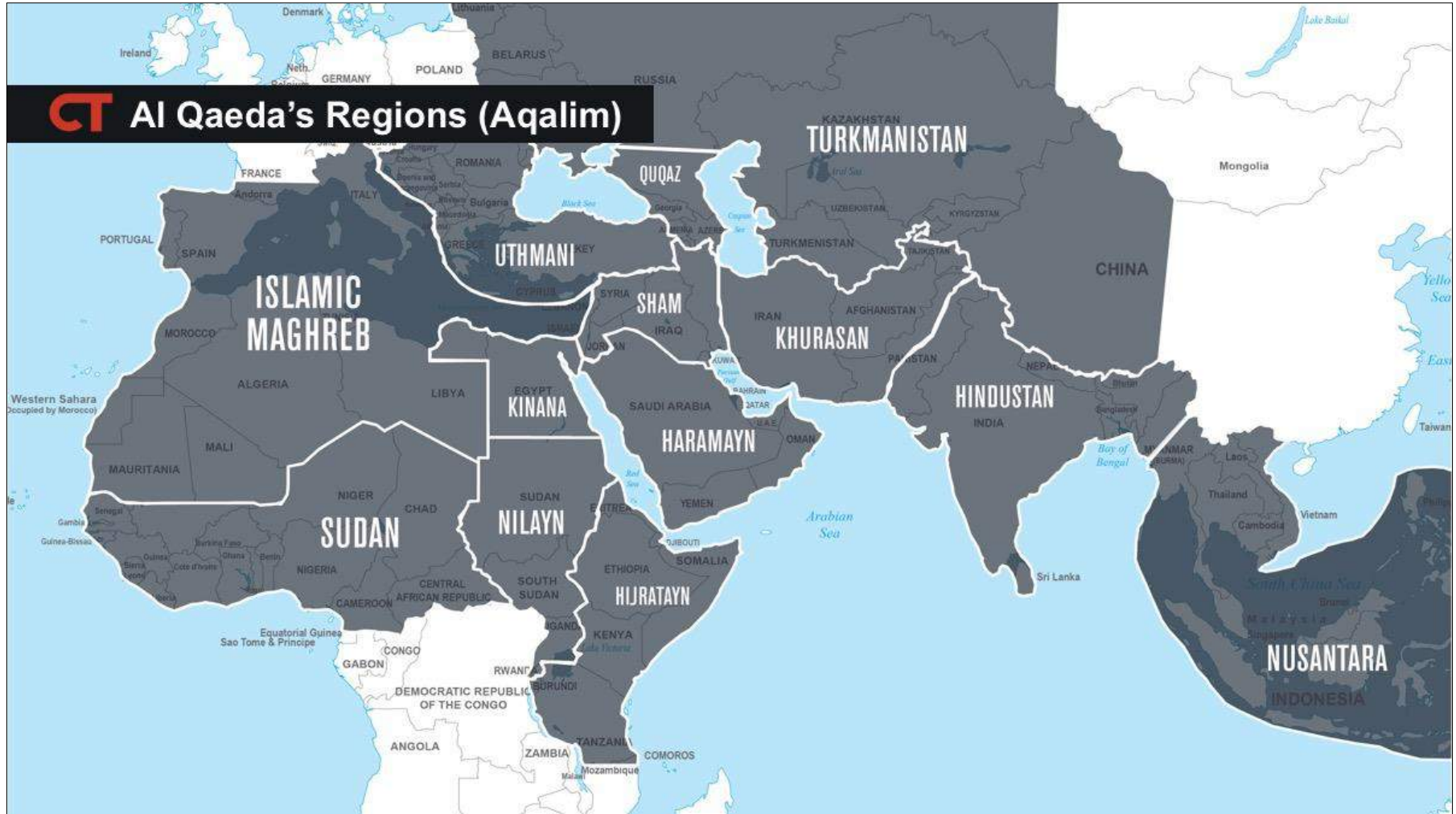
BLUF: Comparing Cognitive Dimensions



	Hezbollah	Al-Qaida	ISIS
Identity	Shia Velayat-e Fiqah	Sunni Ecumenical Pan-Islam	Sunni Loyalty & Disavowal
Worldview	Shia leadership of Muslim Imamate	Inshallah Revisionism	Takfiri Revivalists
Narrative	Defending Islam Defending Shia	Defending Islam	Caliphal Resurrection
Acquire & share info	Pervasive Social control/media	Primarily Cyber	Pervasive Collection
Socialize & educate	Shia Imamiyya indoctrination	Quranic Supremacy	Quranic Literalism
Ways of thinking	Self-determination under Shia leader	Thematic Mobilization	Eschatological Vanguard



The Aspirational Caliphate - Al Qaeda -





The Re-established Caliphate - Islamic State -

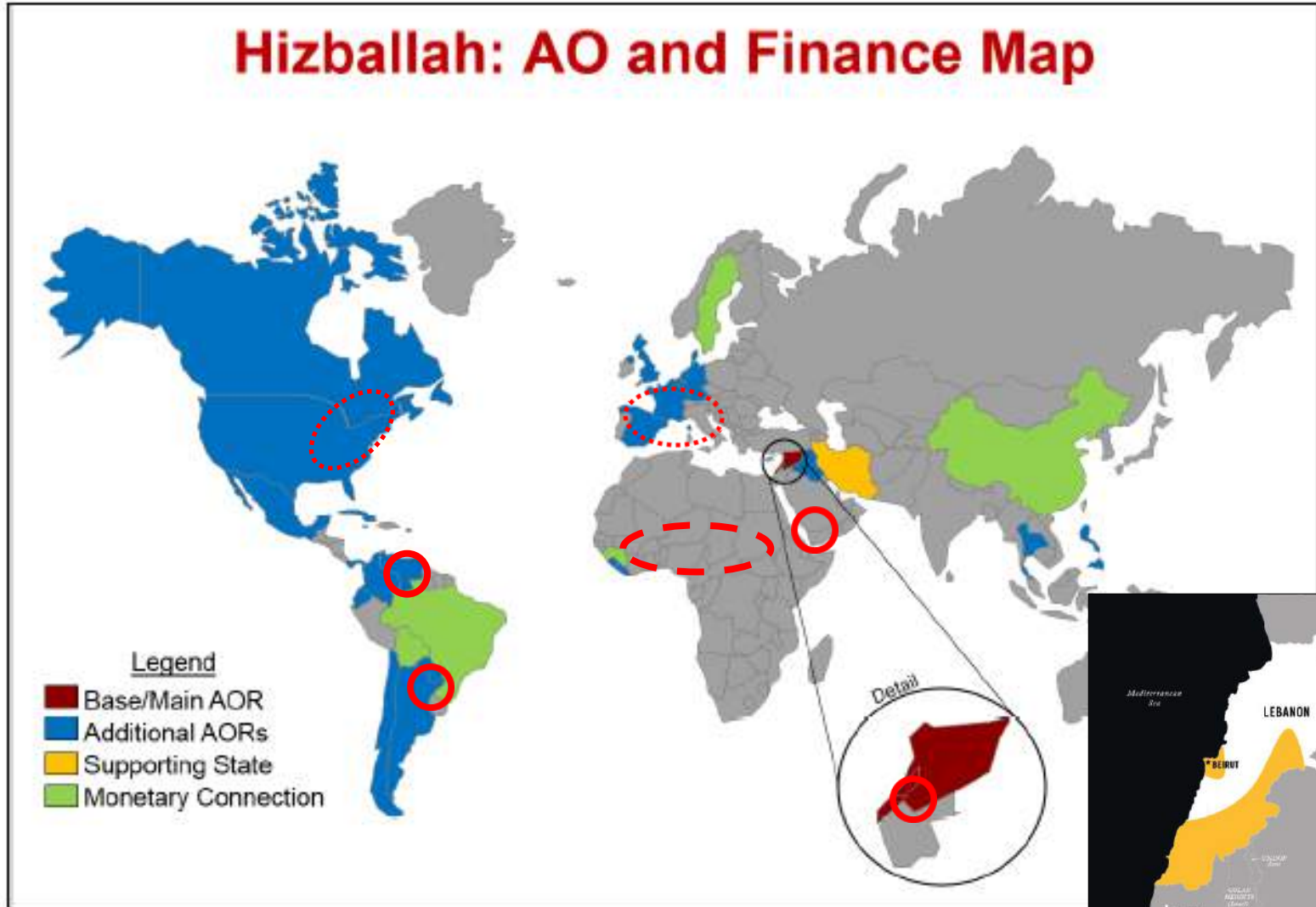




Iran's Loyal Proxy's Reach - Hezbollah -



Hizballah: AO and Finance Map



Significant VEO Attacks



Hezbollah (denied), attack on Israeli tour bus in Burgas, Bulgaria – 18 July 2012, 6 dead



Al Qaeda, attack at Westgate Mall, Nairobi – 21-24 September 2013, 71 dead



IS (Sinai affiliate Ansar Bait al-Maqdis), shoot-down of Russian Metrojet flight 9268 – 31 Oct 2015, 224 dead



Review: Are the Three VEOs?



- What is Al Qaeda?
- Is it a....
 - nationalistic movement
 - violent extremist organization
 - religious millenarian movement
 - insurgency
 - terrorist organization
 - or something else

“Al Qaeda is not a nation-state and it has not signed the Geneva Conventions. It shows no desire to obey the laws of war; if anything it directly violates them by disguising themselves as civilians and attacking purely civilian targets to cause massive casualties.”

— John Yoo, Law Professor – UC-Berkeley

- First, what it says about itself: “the Al Qaeda Organization (AQO, or in Arabic - *Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad*) claims to represent the true and abiding interests of the world's Muslims, estimated to number 1.3-1.5 billion persons”
- However, as an organization/entity, Al Qaeda does have definitive goals, which can be used to examine the cognitive motivations of its adherents:
 - To overthrow the corrupt “apostate” regimes in the Middle East and replace them with “true” Islamic governments, called emirates
- This makes Al Qaeda very different from the Islamic State, who believe Al Qaeda is not theologically strict enough and too “flexible”, and are attacking the wrong foe, which is apostate Muslims



Al Qaeda as a VEO



- Complicating the situation, Al Qaeda has changed organizationally over the 30 years of its existence yet has held to its self-professed purpose that it is not aiming to establish a homeland or to replace an existing government
- Its objective is a re-established caliphate, one that covers the entire globe and in which all Muslims live, as Allah wills once local Emirates are established
- However, while at times very violent in this pursuit it also has exhibited “governance” methods as generally understood, which argues it might be a violent revolutionary group
- Al Qaeda also exhibits and pursues a Pan-Islamic ecumenical vision (they do not reject Shia such as the Islamic State does) but have chosen, by direct citations out of the Quran and Ahadith, to pursue their goals via terrorism
 - “Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority“ Quran 3:151
 - "I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them“ Quran 8:12
 - Allah's Apostle said... 'I have been made victorious with terror' Bukhari 52:220 (Hadith)
- Yet for some Muslims, because of that ecumenicalism, it is outside the bounds of “normal” Islam, despite being “rational”; therefore, Al Qaeda is a VEO despite being acceptable to many Muslims for that very “tolerance”



The Islamic State

A VEO or Not?



- So the Islamic State may be considered, from a violence perspective, as far more extreme than Al Qaeda, which has refrained when possible from shedding Muslim blood and are far more careful in targeting
- Still, is the Islamic State “extremist” from the perspective of devout Muslims?
- No, they are not as they are following exactly what Mohammad has instructed in the propagation of Islam, in both the Quran and Hadith
- A simple examination of the Muslim conquest of the Arabian Peninsula during the lifetime of Mohammad will show the savagery that was used, the execution of prisoners, the killing of individuals at the “whim of Allah” (actually Mohammad)
- While unacceptable to many in the West who appear to fear Islam but disguise it as “cultural tolerance”, Islam is a violent religion and ideology based on conquest (which cannot be truly compared as equivalent to Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism or any other “faith” one wants to examine)
- Yet when examined in the actual history of Islamic conquest and propagation of the religion based on Mohammad’s example, the Islamic State, while truly violent, is not actually extremist
- Which underlines the fact that its barbarity, so appalling to most modern Muslims, shows the secular drift of Islam away from its origins, similar to all the above mentioned religions



Hezbollah as a VEO?



- Hezbollah, while initially formed basically as an anti-Israeli Shia defensive militia, conducted suicide attacks resulting in mass casualties
- Clearly violent, Hezbollah has basically ceased using suicide attacks since the early 2000s, with a few exceptions (such as the attack in Bulgaria)
- In its numerous encounters with the Israeli military and then its participation in the Syrian Civil War, Hezbollah forces have increasingly professionalized, to the point that it is incorrect to call Hezbollah personnel insurgents or militia but more appropriately as soldiers
- However, while moderating and institutionalizing the violence within what Westerns would accept as “military” force, that Hezbollah is Shia and is a wholly owned proxy of Iran makes them, within the greater Muslim community of Sunnis, apostates at the worst, heretics at the best
- In this sense, while less violent, Hezbollah would be considered by most Muslims to be an extremist organization, thus a VEO





Why Join ?



- For Al Qaeda and Islamic State, it is largely self motivation while for Hezbollah, it is community expectations
- Those that seek to join either Al Qaeda or Islamic State normally have to actually seek out groups, often being first “groomed” (recognized as seeking a “cause”)
- Religious recruits are often not learned in the Umma and its tenets and have to be instructed (much is grievance-based)
 - Understand the Tawhid, Jihad and the “benefits of a Shaheed
 - Jihad is a defensive obligation (fard al-kifaya)
 - Islam is under attack by the U.S./West
 - Islam is in danger
- For Hezbollah, to reiterate, service is now seen as a community expectation



**Al Qaeda recruiting video on Youtube
(on the AQ al-Muhajirun channel
hosted on a Google-owned site)**



Hezbollah youth indoctrination



Marriott Hotel - Islamabad



54 dead – 20 September 2008



Summary



- It can be very difficult for Americans (and most non-Muslims) to understand what drives a Muslim to self-recruit, to justify his (or her) actions which may appear illogical, and to willingly accept martyrdom to the point of suicidal actions
- So, as a cross-cultural contextual example, to explain the so-called radicalization of Muslims (our perception), place yourself as an American on December 8, 1941
 - Could the mass volunteering of Americans for military service after a surprise Japanese attack be described as the “radicalization” of Americans?
 - Could the brutal combat conducted by U.S. Marine forces in the Pacific against Japanese forces (as brutal or more so) lead to the USMC being described as a VEO?
 - Of course, one could say that Americans did not conduct suicidal actions, which would be untrue as the examples of Captain Richard Fleming (USMC) at the Battle of Midway, Private Thomas Baker (USA) on Saipan, Sgt Alfred Nietzel (USA) in the Hurtgen Forest, Germany, and others have shown
- As some Americans will mobilize for the nation of America some Muslims will “mobilize” for the “defense” of Islam
- Which means, whatever messages and actions we direct toward Al Qaeda, the Islamic State or Hezbollah members cannot be based on Islamic messaging, for as non-Muslims, we have no standing, thus it must be Muslims who combat the Muslims of Al Qaeda



Questions?

