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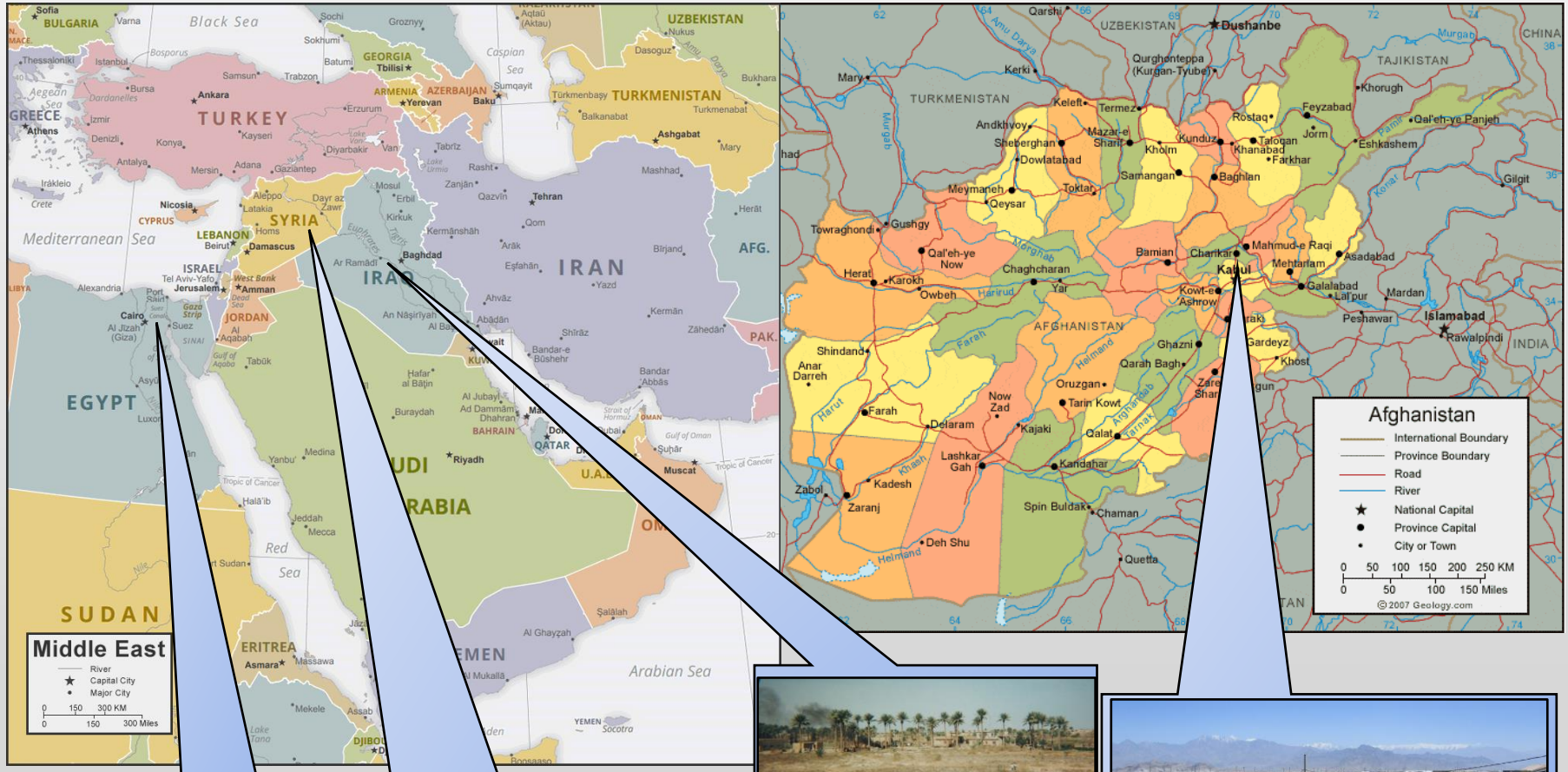
Middle East Lessons for America

Will Gunzelman

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Middle East Lessons for America



Abstract

- This presentation provides the talking points from a discussion on the Middle East, Russian “Siege and Starve” tactics, and the need to recognize agriculture as a U.S. national security issue. Presented to the Cattleman’s Association on February 21, 2022; two days prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Key words: Middle East, Russia, Ukraine, Agriculture, National Security, National Defense, Foreign Policy, Political Science, Farming, Ranching, Great Power Competition (GPC), Warfare, Economics, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, NATO, Food Shortage
- Author, Will Gunzelman, retired from U.S. Army Special Forces (“Green Berets”) after 27 years of service and numerous combat deployments
 - Adjunct professor of Business Strategy and Policy
 - Strategy, leadership, and operations consultant for senior government leaders and private sector executives
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Agenda

- Background
- Afghanistan
- Iraq
- Egypt
- Syria – Siege and Starve (Agriculture as a national defense issue)
- The “So What” (lessons to be learned from the Middle East)

Background

- 27 ½ years U.S. Army
 - 2 ½ years in Military intelligence
 - 25 years U.S. Army Special Forces “Green Berets”
 - Special Forces Communicator, Intelligence NCO, Team Sergeant, and Sergeant Major positions



Military



Military



Military

Background

- 4 ½ years Improvised Threat and Counter-Weapons of Mass Destruction Advisor (armed contractor/complex problem-solvers)
 - Afghanistan
 - Syria
- Adjunct Professor: Business Strategy (6 years)



Contractor



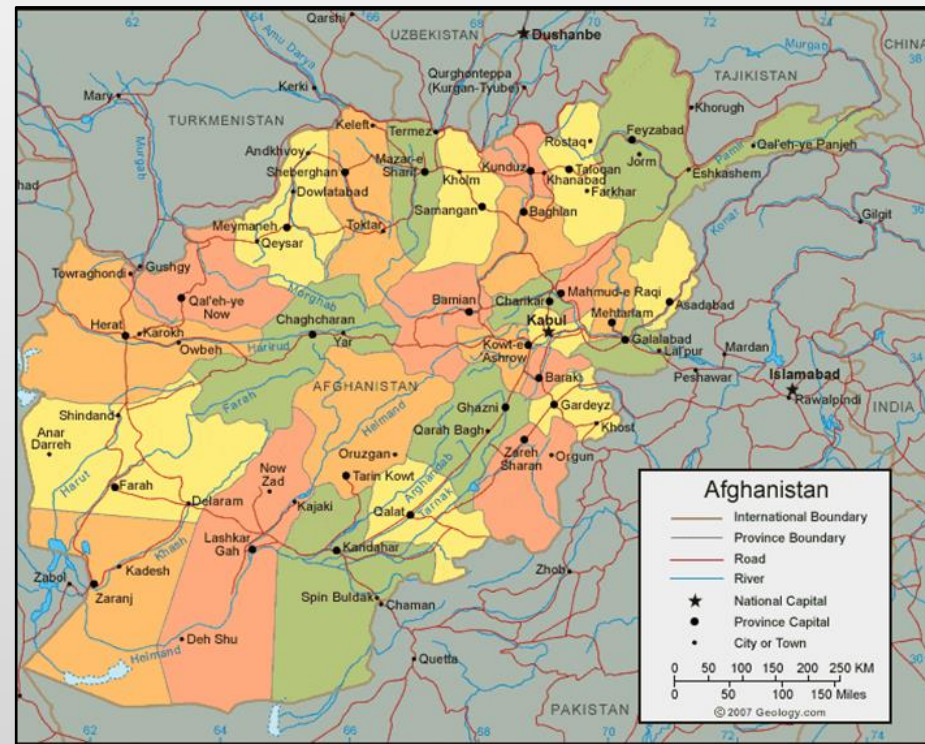
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Contractor

Afghanistan (Size of Texas)

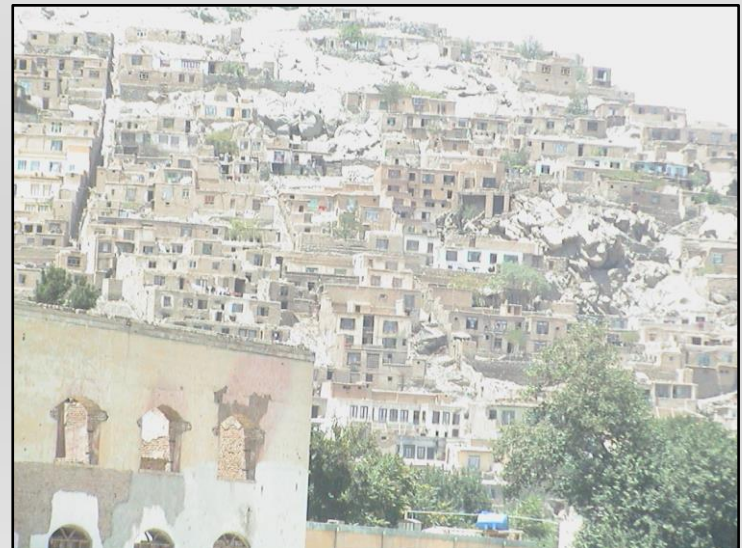
- Sunni Islam = 84- 89%
- Shia Islam = 10-15%
- Taliban = “students”
- Afghanistan is mostly Pashtun (42%) ethnicity/Sunni Islam
- Taliban largely Nationalists/strict Islamists (Pashtun)
- Steady flow of Sunni fighters from Pakistan
- Kabul is mixed ethnicity
- Hazaras (Shia) supporting Iran in Syria
- Irrigation Specialists = Opium
- Tajiks and Uzbeks more Eurasian focused



Afghanistan (Early 2000's)



Infamous Soccer Field



Afghanistan (2017 to 2021)



Food Distribution



Iraq (3 x New York State)

- Shia Islam = 64-69%
- Sunni Islam = 29-34%
- ISIS is Sunni aligned
- Awakening eventually ended the war in 2009
- ISIS gained stronghold based on Shia government in 2014
- ISIS currently diminished in Iraq
- Iraq dominated by Iran (Shia)
- Shia resettlement in Sunni areas
- Tribal and religious ties dominate relationships
- Iran seeks logistics bridge to Israel
- ISIS trying to regenerate



Iraq

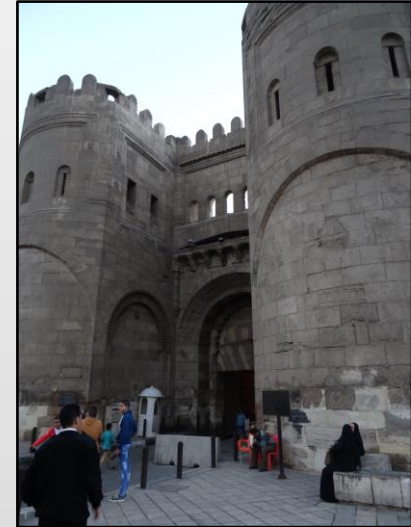


Egypt (8 x Ohio)

- Sunni Islam = 90%
- Coptic Christian = 10%
- Morsi (Muslim Brotherhood) elected in 2012
- Muslim Brotherhood is the tree all terrorists branch from” (Minister of Youth)
- Muslim Brotherhood ideology could not govern
- Military coup in 2013 led by General El Sissi (elected in 2014)
- “As goes Egypt so goes the Middle East” economically
- Tourism main driver for GDP
- ISIS prevalent in the Sinai
- Youth unemployment at 19%
- Al Qaeda – Ayman Al Zawahiri is from Egypt



Egypt



Syria “Siege and Starve”

- Sunni Islam = 74%
- Alawi, Shia, and Ismaili = 13%
- President Bashar Al Asad is Alawi
- Civil War led to ISIS caliphate
- Russian backed Siege and Starve campaign against U.S. backed forces in the south
- Tariffs and bribes raise prices 50%
- The U.S. zone lacks good grazing land
- Difficult agriculture situation has caused an exodus
- Russia enticing families to leave with grazing land, food, and medical
- No food = no U.S. backed forces



Syria



The “So What”

- No food = No forces (Agriculture is vital to national defense)
 - Nations must be self-sustaining
 - Current warfare is largely non-kinetic (Economics, Agriculture, Information Operations, Supply Chain, Cyber, etc.)
 - Foreign adversaries are much more experienced in this realm
 - The Middle East and other regions are **NOT** a “melting-pot”
 - Cannot apply “western solutions” to Middle East problems
 - Identity politics stifle nations (A house divided cannot stand)
 - Ideology over principled governance leads to disaster (Egypt)
 - Forced demographic shifts lead to animosity and conflict (Iraq)
 - Most insurgencies/revolutions start with the youth
 - Wars without defined goals provide China and Russia freedom to maneuver
- ❖ **When people no longer feel they have a voice –Conflict starts**

References

- All statistics, maps, and state size comparisons are derived from the World Factbook: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), [The World Factbook - The World Factbook \(cia.gov\)](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)
- Photos: Author's personal archive
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