

# Strategic Competition, Proxy Forces & Counter-Terrorism



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# BLUF

- CT should be treated as an integrated part of strategic competition
- Revival of strategic competition increases the likelihood of irregular warfare, including use of proxy forces and state sponsorship of terrorism
- Proxy forces also increasingly important for counter-terrorism
- Currently available tools for countering state sponsorship of terrorism are ineffective and need to be reformed

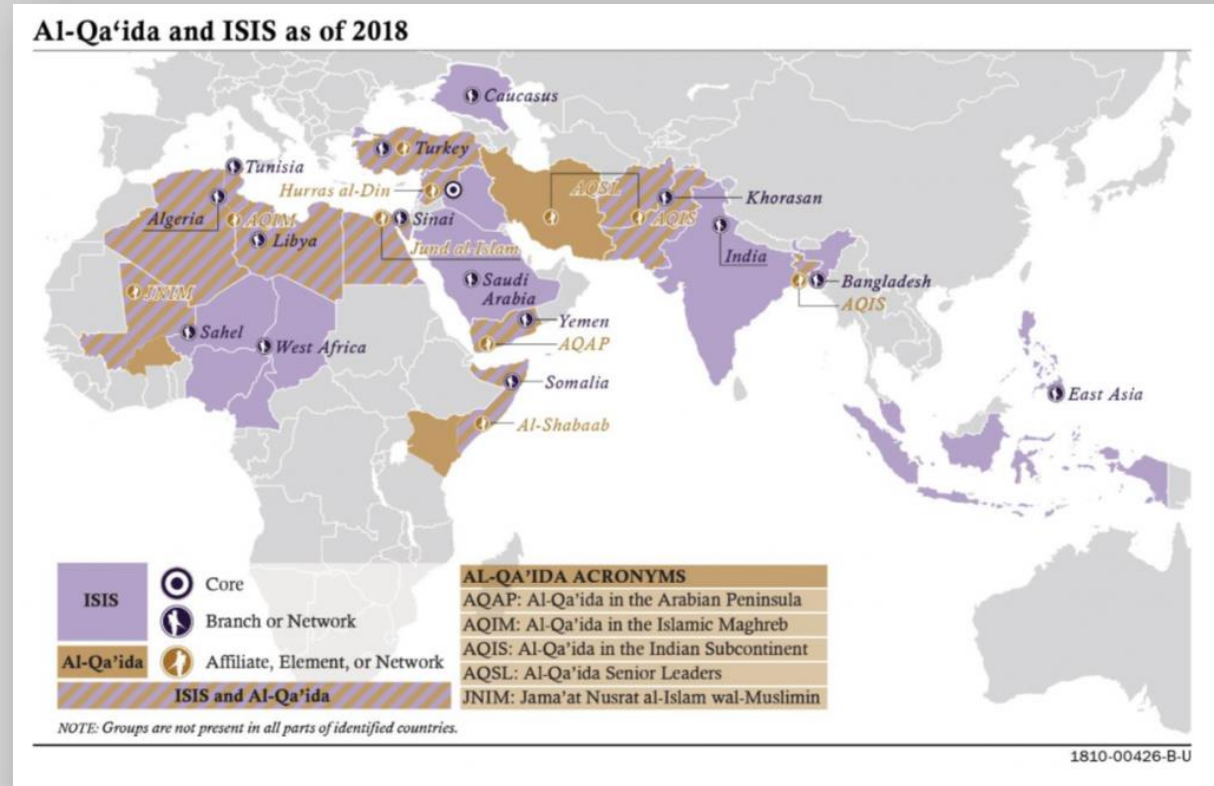
# Overview

- Counter-Terrorism Since 9/11
- The renewal of “Great Power Competition”
- Implications for Use of Proxy Forces & Terrorism
- Implications for Counter-Terrorism
- Closing Remarks



# Counter-Terrorism Since 9/11

- Tactical success, strategic failure
- Tunnel vision
- Bandwidth problem
- Adversaries have adapted
- So have we!



Source: ODNI, 2019

# The Renewal of Great Power Competition

- Reprioritized by U.S. 2017-2018
- China #1 military priority
- Indo-Pacific priority region
- Redistribution of forces & funds

"We will continue to prosecute the campaign against terrorists that we are engaged in today, but Great Power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of U.S. national security."

-Sec. Def. Jim Mattis (January 2018)

# Implications for Use of Proxy Forces & Terrorism

- Proxy warfare & terrorism
- State sponsorship of terrorism
- Non-state actor capabilities





# Implications for CT

- Over- vs. under-correction
- Integrate CT & strategic competition
- CT competition vs. cooperation
- Rethink CT deployments
- Devise criteria for when/how to intervene
- Expose opponents' use of terrorist proxies
- Revise state sponsors of terrorism list
- Risk of conflating CT & state competition

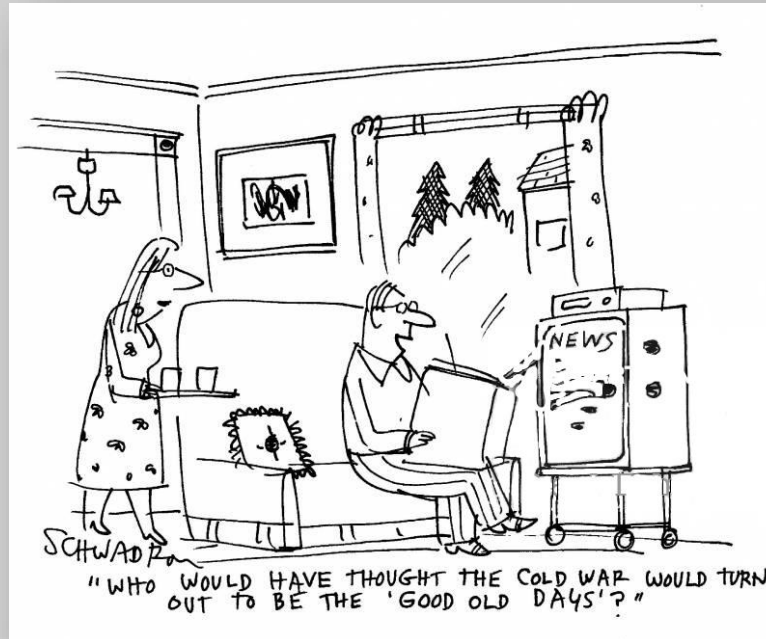
“While we understand your decision to review our force posture and to deploy our military as efficiently as possible, we are concerned that a narrow focus on confronting Russia and China in great power competition is a shortsighted action that both diminishes our overall national security posture and our ability to lead with American values and influence.”

-Congressman Anthony Brown et al  
(January 2020)

# Closing Remarks

- Strategic competition vs. CT is not an either/or choice
- Must identify points of convergence/divergence
- Balance will be key
- Opportunity to recalibrate CT





Questions/Comments?