

*“Islam is not a religion of peace;  
or war.*

*Islam is a religion, just like any other.*

*Peace and war depend on one’s interpretation and ends.”*

Dr. Abbas Kadhim

Islamic Scholar

Director Iraq Initiative: The Atlantic Council

# Fix US

Jason Criss Howk

**Education and Tolerance**

*In every direction*

**Islam**

A Religion

Political  
Ideology

**Islamism**

**“ISIS”**

Violent Radical  
Islamism /  
Khawarij Ideology

# Pop Quiz

## Terrorist or American Patriot?

-Najibullah

-Osama

-Said

-Omar

-Junaid

-Abdul

-Abbas

-Gulbideen

-Daud

-Akhtar

# Religious population of the world

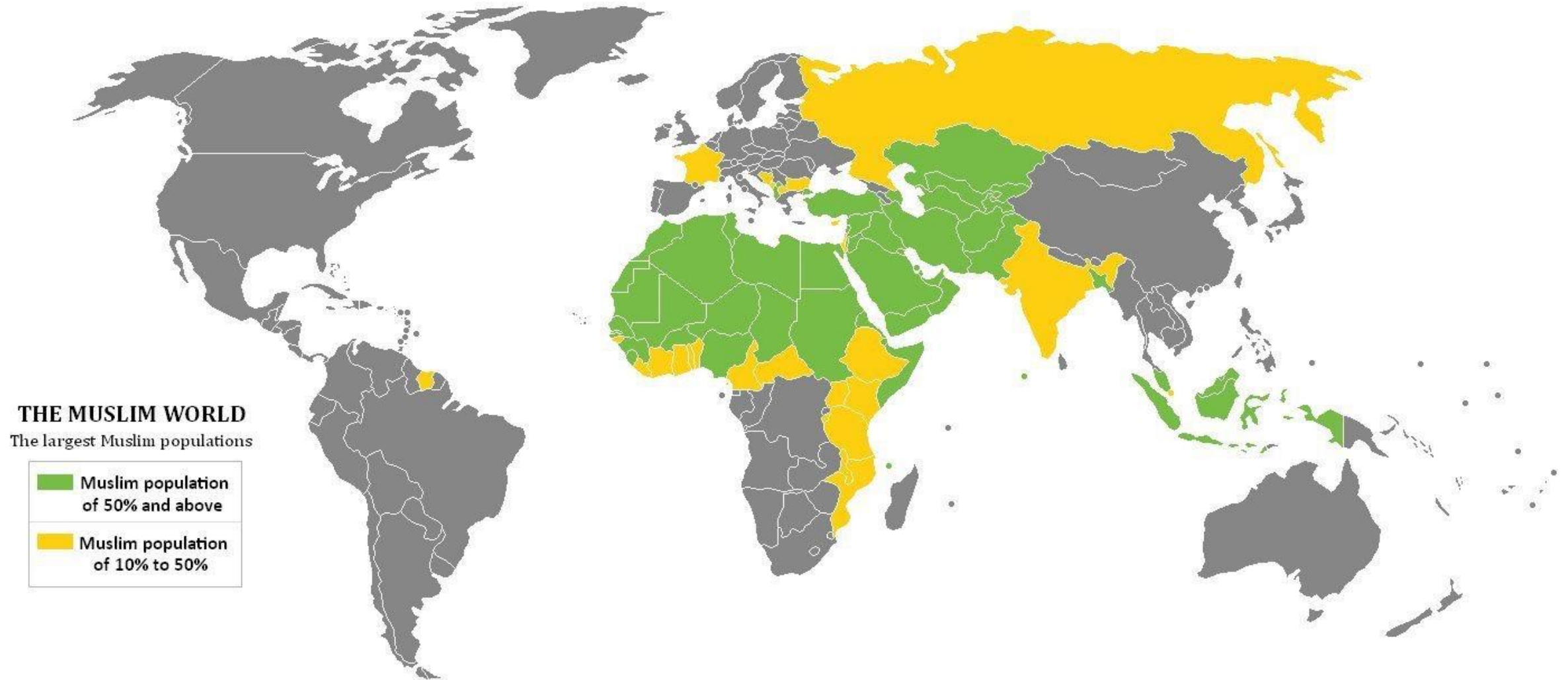
|                      |             |      |
|----------------------|-------------|------|
| <b>Christian</b>     | 2.2 Billion | 31%  |
| <b>Muslim</b>        | 1.6 Billion | 22%  |
| <b>Non-Religious</b> | 1.1 Billion | 15%  |
| <b>Hinduism</b>      | 1 Billion   | 14%  |
| <b>Buddhism</b>      | 376 Million | 5%   |
| <b>Judaism</b>       | 14 Million  | 0.2% |

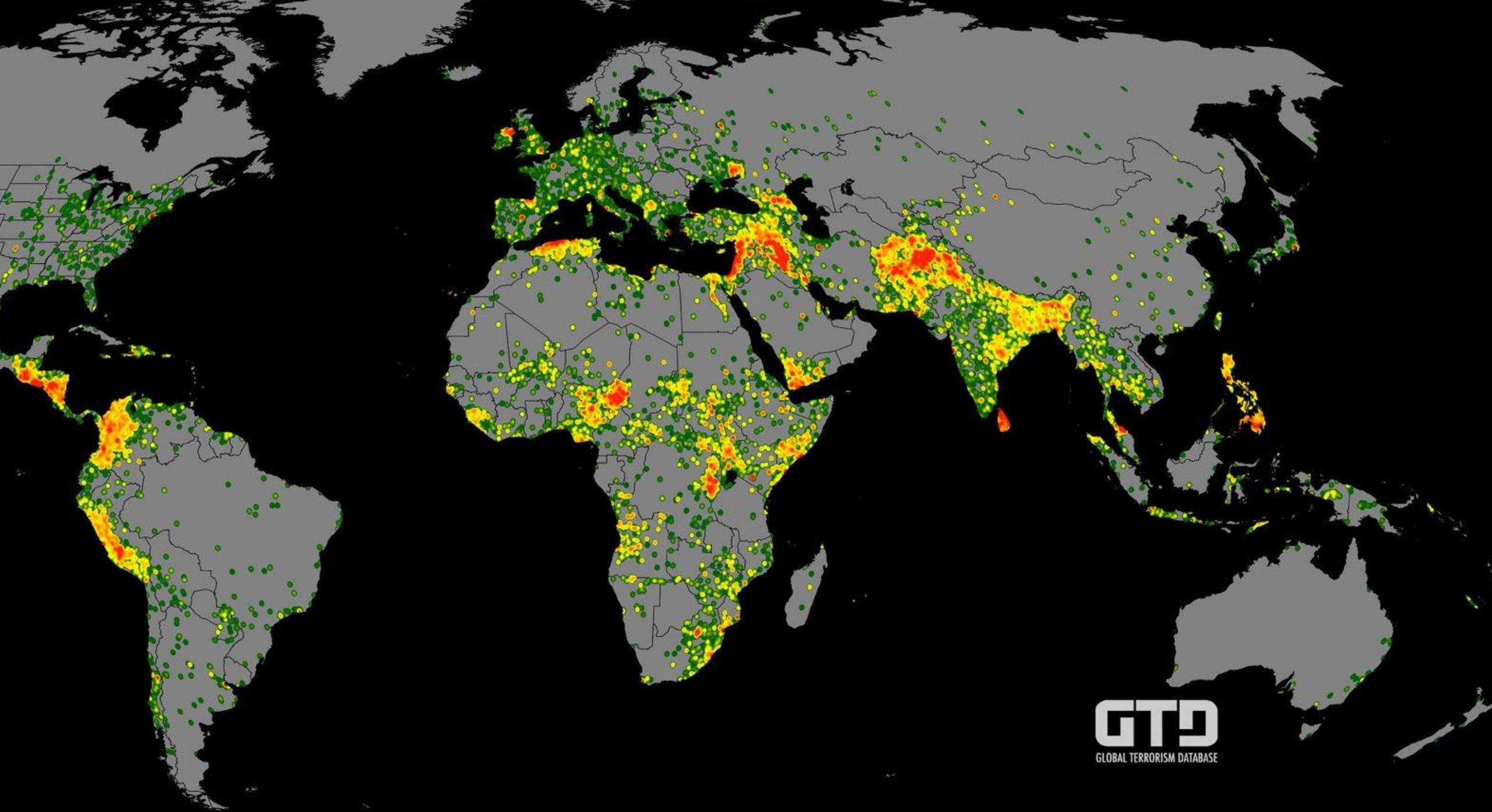
\*Pew Research 2012

# “The Muslim World”



# Likely Muslim Growth Areas





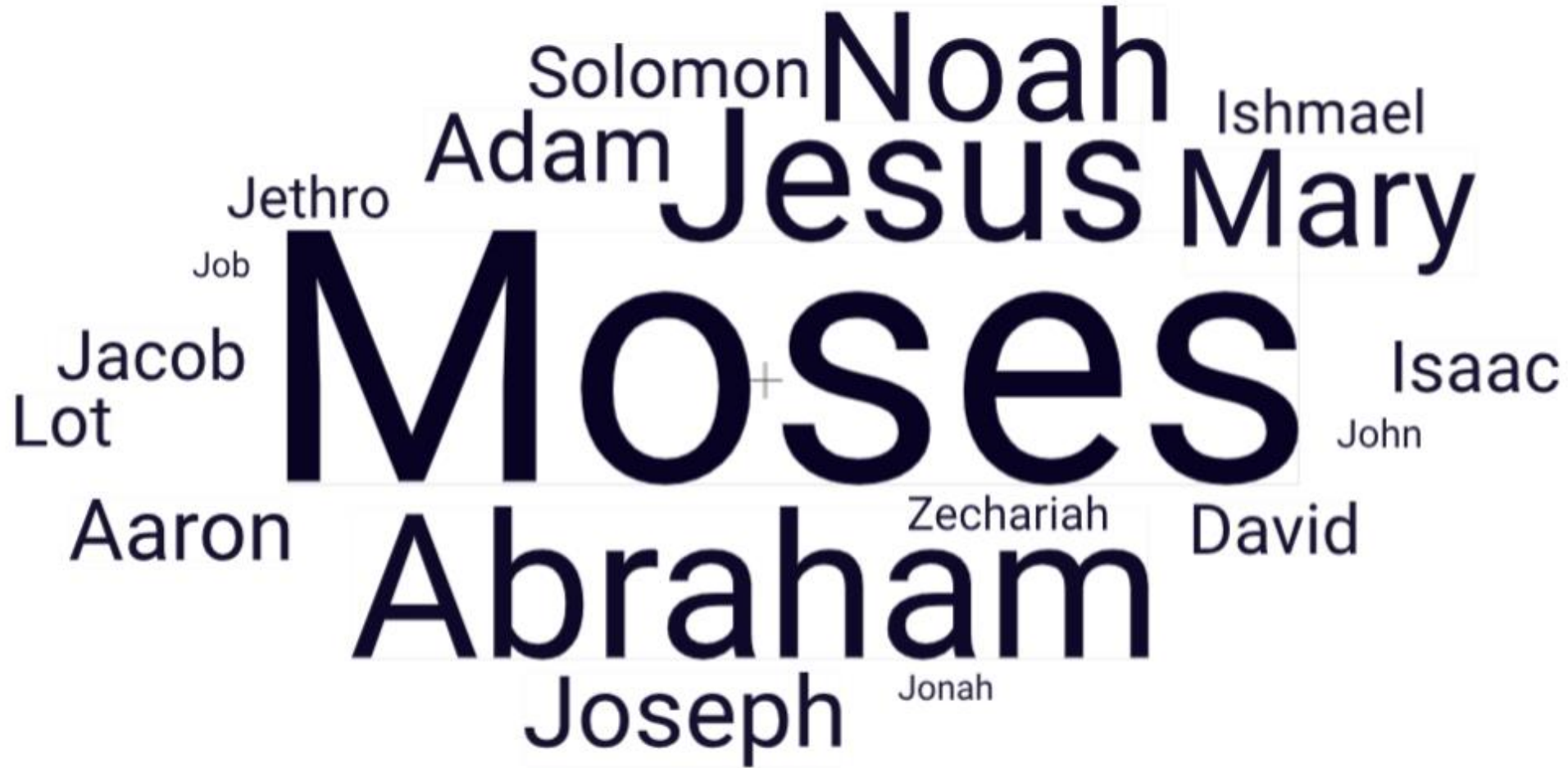
**GTD**  
GLOBAL TERRORISM DATABASE



# ISIS Strategy

**“Accept the fact that this caliphate will survive and prosper until it takes over the entire world and beheads every last person that rebels against Allah.”**

# Who's in the Quran



# Messages in the Quran

- Forgiveness
- Oneness of God and the power of God
- Faith in one God
- One faithful community
- Code of conduct
- Rewards of heaven
- Punishment of hell
- Prayer
- Judgement day / Resurrection
- Creation
- Conduct of warfare/diplomacy

# Controversial Verses

- When you meet **unbelievers** (on the battlefield) strike their necks. (47:4-6)
- God will remember and take care of those who died in God's way and admit them **to paradise**. (47:4-6)
- You can **question another's faith** if you don't think they have struggled in God's way with all their wealth and person. (49:14-16)  
– *You aren't Muslim enough!*

# Favorite Verses

- God rewards best those who **choose to forgive** when they are angry. (42:36-37)
- Bad deeds will be rewarded by equally bad deed, but **God will reward those who forgive and reconcile** (when attacked)...unless its in defense. (42:39-41)
- The **most courageous** way to act is to show **patience and to forgive**. (42:43)

\*Traditional chapter numbers

# Summary: Trump Riyadh Speech, 21 May 2017

- US seeks peace in the region
- US takes this seriously and we have studied the issues
- US is not here to lecture you, but we offer to assist you if you want to improve yourselves
- We must all work together and Muslims must take the lead on radicalization and countering extreme interpretations of Islam
- The problem is ideological and wont be solved by the military alone
- Not one more kid should grow up in fear and be radicalized or terrorized—its your job as leaders to stop this
- We must act now and act together---a fresh start and shared vision
- You must drive the extremists and terrorists out of your nations and institutions, America cannot
- **No sanctuary, no financing, no more barbaric ideology!**

# Lessons From 5 Years of Discussions (A)

## **Stereotyping happens in every direction and leads to intolerance**

- **Americans do not hate Muslims or Islam;** although you probably can't tell from the daily barrage of news. **Don't make assumptions about your audience.**
- **It is easy to stereotype and everyone does it** consciously and unconsciously
- **Calling someone a bigot will not change their views.** If you want to help someone understand a complex topic like religion, it is **best to not start** your discussion by stereotyping the audience **as “a bunch of white Christian bigots.”**
- **So-called liberal groups were often more close-minded than conservative audiences** or at least very unreceptive to having conversations with a new voice. **(bias against new approaches—even when they get results)**

# Lessons From 5 Years of Discussions (B)

## NO Partisan POLITICS!

- **Leave politics out of the discussion.** I teach political science and worked in DC, I am no stranger to politics. However, I make clear in my discussions that **I will not be inserting politics in my remarks and will not take questions that get politically partisan.**
- **Keep the focus on the topic,** not who was running for office, who had been elected, or what either group said for political party reasons
- When someone in the audience or a speaker starts to get political, **they destroy the ability to build bridges.**
- **Politics instantly alienates part (up to 50%) of the audience and derails the conversation.**



# Lessons From 5 Years of Discussions (C)

- **Unbiased educators are the key.** The goal must be to educate people with facts and keep your bias out of the talk. Audiences will thank you for even-handed talks
- To **build bridges** just speak about facts and **don't get upset** about how we feel.
- **Tolerance is built through education.**
- If your audience is trying to figure out your personal views on the topic...**you are doing it right.**
- **The messenger matters.** You may think that the best person to explain Islam to American audiences is a Muslim. I have come to realize that is not often true. The curse of interfaith work is that most speakers are **talking in an echo chamber** that already has tolerance towards religions. We spend a lot of money to keep speakers on the road talking to **the wrong audiences. The problem then becomes that most speakers aren't changing anyone's mind or heart.**

# Lessons From 5 Years of Discussions (D)

- **We need tolerance in every direction.** The best way to get there is to talk more not less about religion and other challenging topics---**IN A CIVIL and CONSTRUCTIVE WAY**
- I get it; this is **not a comfortable conversation**. You are **going to encounter many intolerant people** on this path. I have been called an anti-Muslim racist, a closet Muslim, a terrorist, a Muslim-lover, a traitor to the Army and America, and a longer list of unprintable words.
- There are **extremists** in our nation on the **left and right**, both Muslim and non-Muslim that do not want fair-minded people to discuss religion. They **want division between humans**. They want hatred between religions. They **don't want you and I to have a discussion** that might teach us that we can tolerate each other, and even become friends.
- **Be realistic**, you will not change the mind of many extremists, and you should not focus your efforts on the 10 percent on either side of the topic you are discussing. **Focus your civility dialogue on the 80% of the audience that is curious and willing to change their mind** when presented with logic and facts.

# Q&A Guidance

- **USE 7-10 seconds to ask a question or 20-30 seconds to make a comment**
- Try to focus on:
  - What stereotype mistakes do we make that harm bipartisan solutions?
  - What type of negative stereotypes (words/phrases) should we stop saying?
  - What are some intolerant actions that don't unite people?
  - How can we get politics out of the discussion? Does partisanship help?
  - What messengers are missing from the conversation?
  - HOW DO YOU GET the right audience to listen to your ideas?
  - How will you change your approaches to equality and inclusion discussions?
  - How do we make equality and police reforms bipartisan issues?
  - How do we bring black communities and police departments closer?