

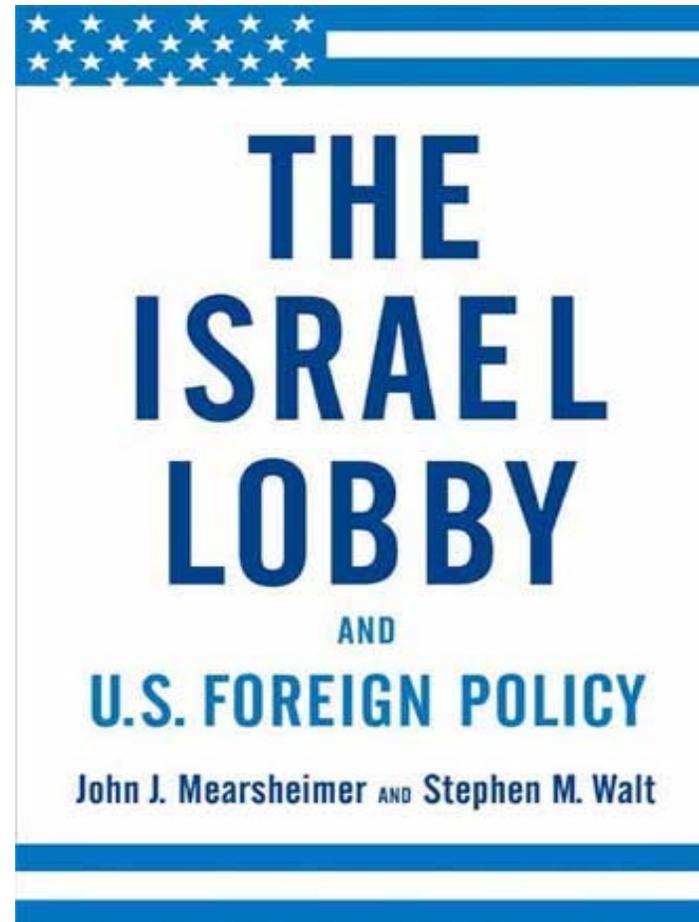
U C Irvine, May 12, 2008

**“Blood on our Hands:
American Involvement in the
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”**

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The catalyst for this discussion



How the Israel Lobby Relates to overall US Foreign and Military Policy in the greater Middle East



Since the 2006 publication of “The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy” by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, public debate over the power of the Israel lobby to influence US foreign policy in the Middle East has proliferated. This presentation brings a fresh progressive perspective to this controversy, analyzing US policy toward Israel in the context of broad US imperial policy in the greater Middle East, and trying to set Israel-Palestine in the context of the Presidential election.

MIDDLE EAST



Map of the Greater Middle East, a term invented in the United States about one century ago. Nearly all boundaries were established by the British and French after their WW I defeat of the Ottoman Empire.

Article and book on “The Israel Lobby”

- The article, “The Israel Lobby,” was published by the London Review of Books (LRB) in March 2006.
- LRB followed up with a long response by Walt and Mearsheimer to their many critics in late 2006.
- Their book, The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy, was published in 2007 and has been a foreign policy best seller.



Mearsheimer and Walt are part of the U.S. foreign policy establishment

- John Mearsheimer is a professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago and director of its Program on International Security.
- His previous academic work was on Conventional Deterrence and The Tragedy of Great Power Politics.



Walt and Mearsheimer are foreign policy “realists”, similar to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter’s and now Barack Obama’s national security advisor.

- Steve Walt is Professor of International Affairs and former academic dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. His academic research and writing includes Taming American Power: The Global Response to US Primacy.
- *Like Mearsheimer, he is an academic strategist for the empire, not a political or intellectual opponent of the US militarism.*



The book, The Israel Lobby, presents several carefully researched claims:

- The Israel Lobby is the most powerful foreign lobby in Washington.
- Its center is AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.
- The lobby has many members, including Christian Zionists, such as John Hagge, driven by their fundamentalist religious theology.

Rev. John Hagge



Lobby is extremely effective in DC

- Many of Walt and Mearsheimer's claim are credible, such as the Israel lobby's efforts to carefully follow all legislation and media reports concerning Israel.
- They take the Israeli government's lead on issues.
- They are generally aligned with Israel's right-wing Likud Party, not the liberal Labor Party or the left-liberal party, Meretz.

AIPAC plays the DC game with great expertise

- **They successfully craft legislation, media treatments, and diplomacy on behalf of the Israeli government.**
- **They heavily contribute to political campaigns, especially to oppose any critics of Israel.**

Walt and Mearsheimer contend the Israel Lobby damages US and Israeli government interests

- The Israel lobby's influence over U.S. policy in the Middle East has hurt the “national interest” of the United States
- Strong U.S. support for Israel, especially for settlements in the occupied territories, has fueled anti-US terrorism and low opinions of the U.S. in the ME, including among U.S. allies.
- Israel's settlement policy and practices also hurts Israel itself.

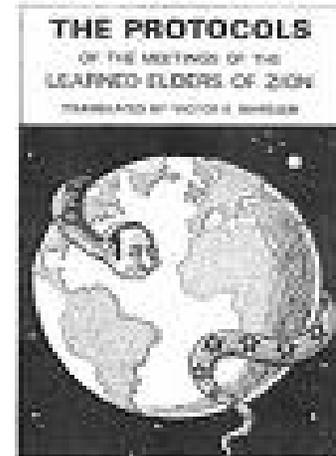


Walt and Mearsheimer agree with the Israel Lobby on many points regarding the Middle East.

- **Israel has a right to exist and any credible threat to Israel's existence should be responded to by direct US military intervention.**
- **The US has vital strategic interests in the Middle East. Based on the Carter Doctrine, these vital interests are the Persian Gulf's oil and gas.**
- **The US should maintain a large network of military bases in the Middle East to protect these vital US national interests and should "realistically" be prepared to use this military force when necessary to secure the oil and gas.**

Walt and Mearsheimer have been harshly criticized for their writing on the Israel Lobby.

- Some of their critics argue that Walt and Mearsheimer are anti-Semites, recycling old stereotypes from a Czarist forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, that the Jews secretly control the world.
- These critics have written many articles about them and some have blocked their public presentations.



“All that Glitters is not Gold”

- Walt and Mearsheimer have received little criticism from the political left, from those who argue that their actual agenda is to boost US imperialism in the Middle East, at a time when US policy is in total collapse because of the Iraq War and substantial US support for Israel.
- Most of these critical articles are available as hard copy or on the web at:

<http://www.LAJewsforPeace.org/Essays.html>

Five points support the left-wing critics' claims about "The Israel Lobby"

- 1. Walt and Mearsheimer have long academic careers as "realist" foreign policy experts at elite universities. They have made many presentations over the years to the Council on Foreign Relations and similar bodies.**
- 2. Walt and Mearsheimer's previous writings have examined the best strategies for US imperialism to maintain its "predominate" position.**

“National Interests” mean corporate interests

3. A careful reading of the Israel Lobby uncovers repeated references to U.S. “national interest”, a code word for U.S. corporate interests, in particular the region’s energy resources (pp. 7, 337).
4. Their research on Israel only emerged when US policy in the Middle East was in disarray because of 9-11 and the faltering military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq (pp. i - xii).

“Structured Absence” is the clincher.

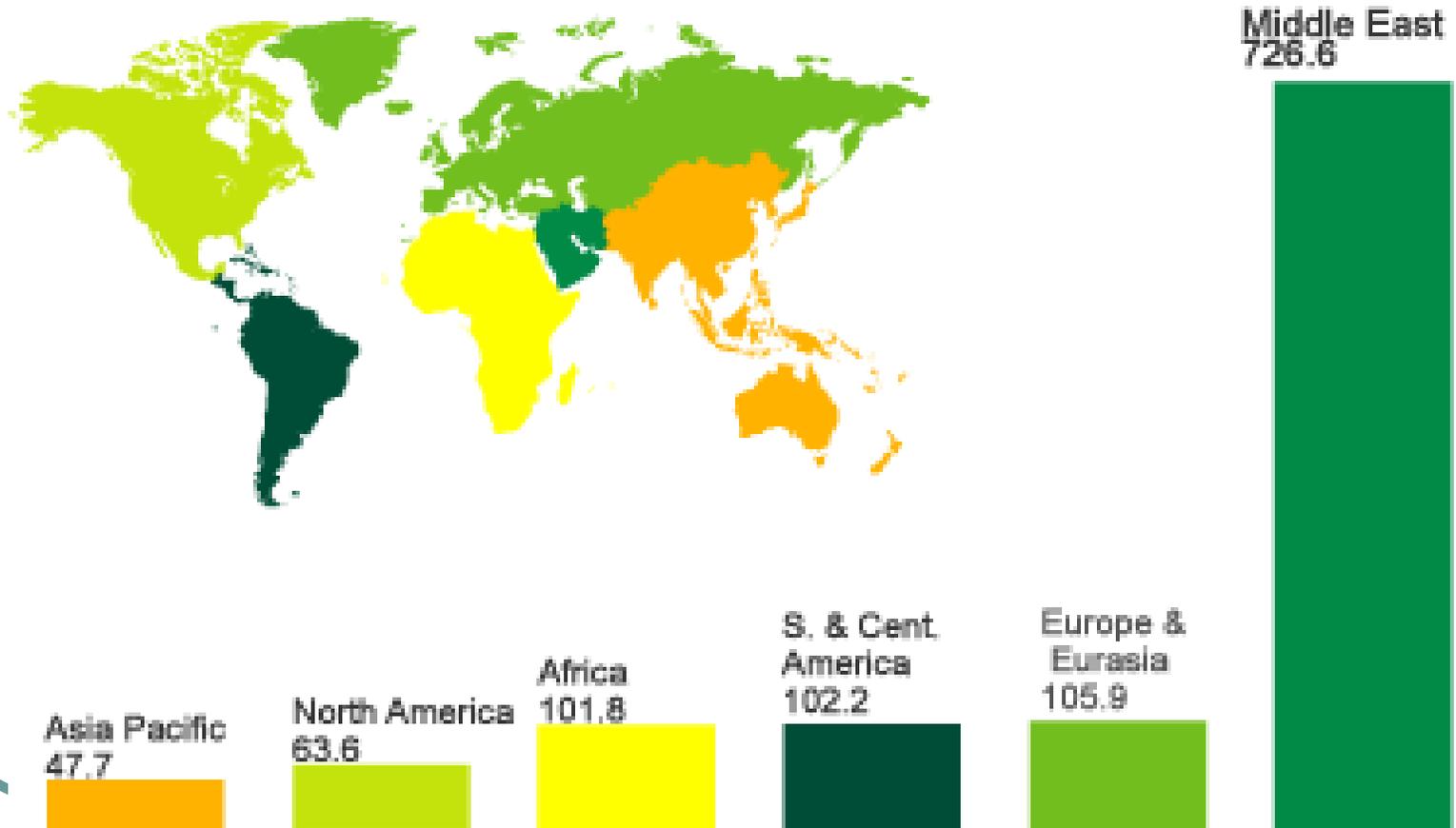
5. In addition to the four previous points, Walt and Mearsheimer downplay the other components of US policy in the Middle East.
 - They forcefully argue that oil was not a factor in the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and suggest that the Israel’s Lobby’s support for the war was a critical factor leading to the US invasion of Iraq. (pp. 233-5).
 - They downplay the massive US military footprint in the greater Middle East and the long history of US support for repressive regimes in this region, such as Saudi Arabia, since WW II.

Which way does the path go?

- The primary difference between the realists and the neo-cons is U.S. foreign policy tactics, not the strategic goal of controlling the Middle East's oil resources.
- The neo-cons believed the path to Jerusalem, code for a string of pro-U.S. states in the Middle East, was through Baghdad.
- The realists believe that the path to Baghdad, the same goal, now runs through Jerusalem.

The Middle East, including the adjacent Caspian Sea, has over 2/3 of the world's recoverable oil reserves, with much of Iraq still *unexplored*. Furthermore these oil reserves are “cheap” and easily extracted.

Proved oil reserves at end 2003
Thousand million barrels



UCSD historian, Chalmers Johnson, estimates that the US has approximately 1000 foreign military installations, many of which are situated in or near to the Middle East, particularly in Central Asia and the Mediterranean rim.

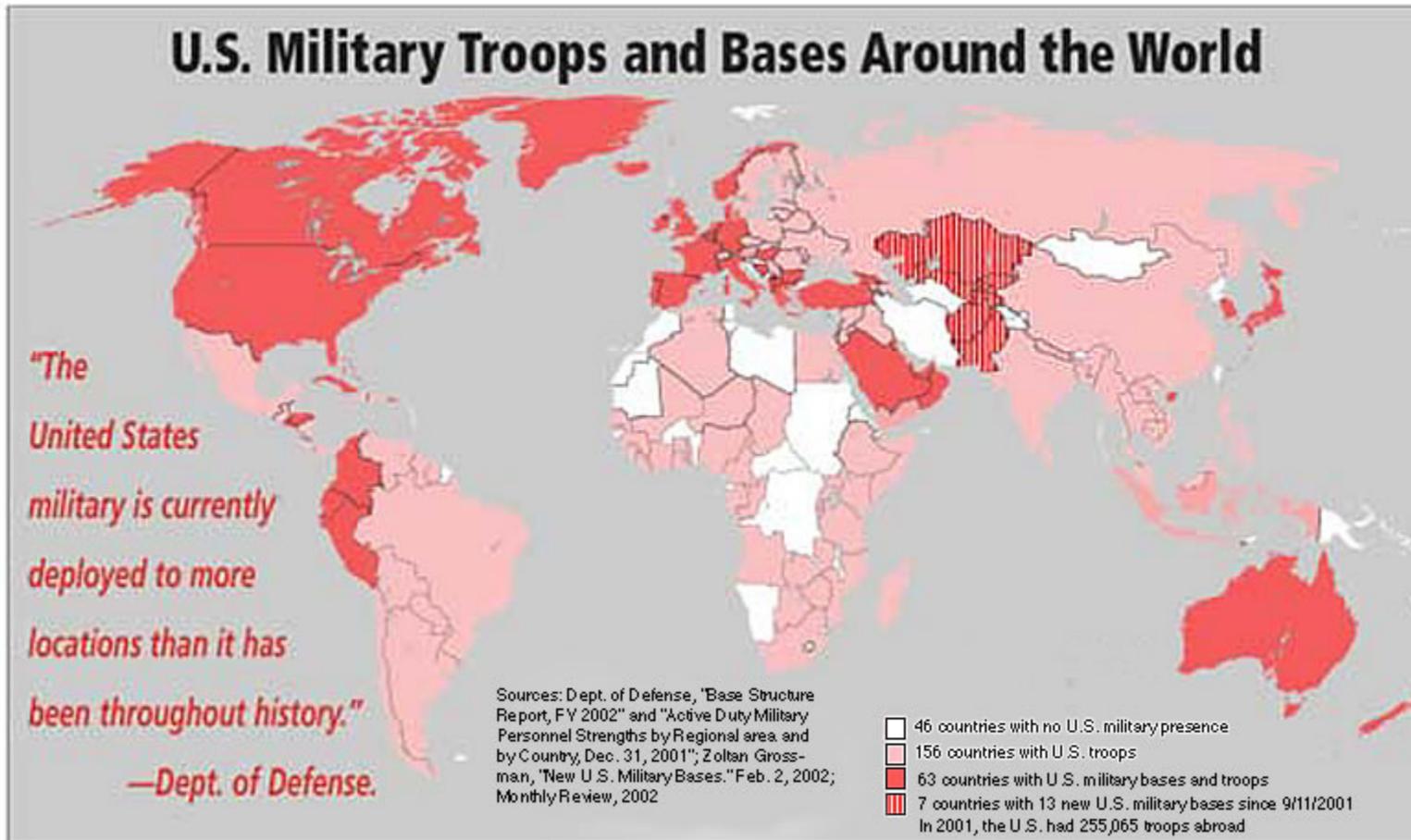
U.S. Military Troops and Bases Around the World

"The United States military is currently deployed to more locations than it has been throughout history."

—Dept. of Defense.

Sources: Dept. of Defense, "Base Structure Report, FY 2002" and "Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional area and by Country, Dec. 31, 2001"; Zoltan Grossman, "New U.S. Military Bases," Feb. 2, 2002; Monthly Review, 2002

- 46 countries with no U.S. military presence
 - 156 countries with U.S. troops
 - 63 countries with U.S. military bases and troops
 - 7 countries with 13 new U.S. military bases since 9/11/2001
- In 2001, the U.S. had 255,065 troops abroad



US Support for Israel and the Arab World

Walt and Mearsheimer contend that extensive US military and diplomatic support for Israel jeopardizes the position of the U.S. government in the Arab world (p. 8), especially when the U.S. government is desperate for help in Iraq.

On this point there is little to debate, and press reports, such as the following, confirm this claim.

Israeli intransigence undermines US military efforts in Iraq

- “Arabs skeptical of U.S. peace effort. The summit to push Israeli-Palestinian talks forward is seen as hasty, ill-conceived and not likely to achieve much.” By Jeffrey Fleishman, Los Angeles Times, October 14, 2007
- *“...The summit comes as Washington's allies Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan have become less circumspect in criticizing U.S. policy, often doing so publicly. The Iraq war, growing Islamic extremism and the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian issue are regarded as U.S. failures whose effects will agitate the region long after Bush leaves office in 2009...”*

The Lobby supports the empire

- The true debate between the Israel Lobby and Walt and Mearsheimer, plus others now critical of Israel, like Jimmy Carter, is over how much Israel still benefits the U.S. empire in the Middle East.
- The implicit Walt-Mearsheimer argument is that Israel's support of the U.S. was important during the cold war, but has now become a drawback in maintaining U.S. control over Persian Gulf oil.

AIPAC presents Israel as a major supporter of the U.S. in the Middle East

- **If Israel's old pro-Soviet socialists could crawl out of their graves or wheel chairs, come to power, and call for Israel to oppose the U.S. role in the greater Middle East, the Israel Lobby would quickly lose its influence.**

Maps of the region tell it all

- **The following series of maps of the greater Middle East display the part of the picture minimized or ignored by Walt and Mearsheimer, and many of their critics.**
- **US involvement in the Middle East, especially the Persian Gulf, preceded the Israel lobby's major influence by several decades.**
- **The US is the successor empire to the Ottomans, British, French, and Soviet Union in this region, independent of and prior to the Israel lobby.**

The Carter Doctrine reveals the “realist” US agenda for the region

- *In his January 23, 1980, State of the Union Address Jimmy Carter declared that access to Persian Gulf oil was a vital U.S. national interest.*
- *To protect that interest the United States was prepared to use “any means necessary, including military force.”*
- As quoted in Blood and Oil, p. 46



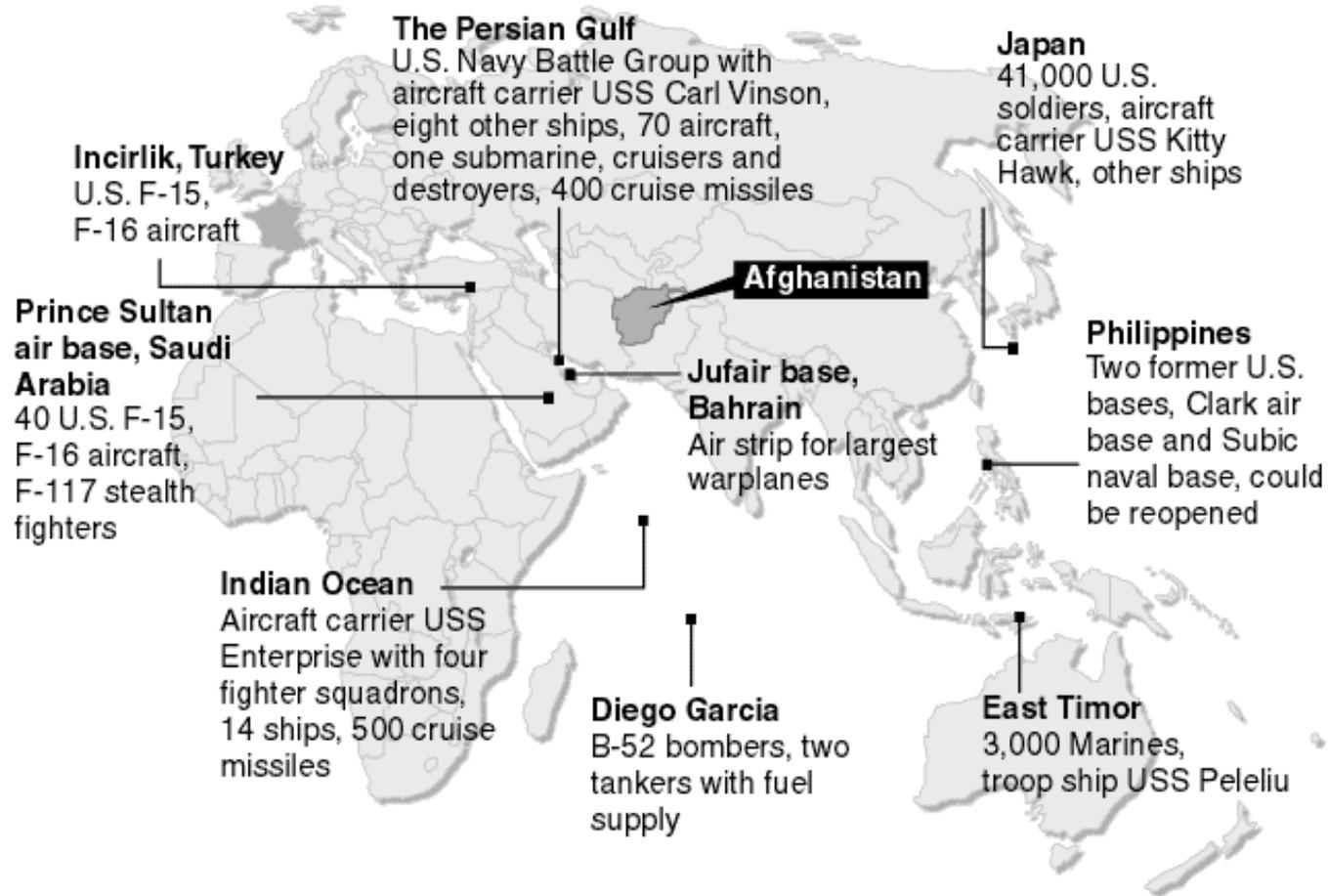
Mother Jones Magazine's 2003 map of Middle East oil reserves reveals the greatest concentrations surround the Persian Gulf, where the fate of nations, empires, corporations, and trillions of dollars in future profits are at stake.



Mother Jones Magazine has identified pre and post Gulf War US military installations in the greater Middle East. Most of those in blue were built in the 1990s, during the Clinton Administration.



WEAPONS OF WAR: U.S. military forces occupy positions throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The SOCCENT (Special Operations Command, Central) forces are responsible for this area.



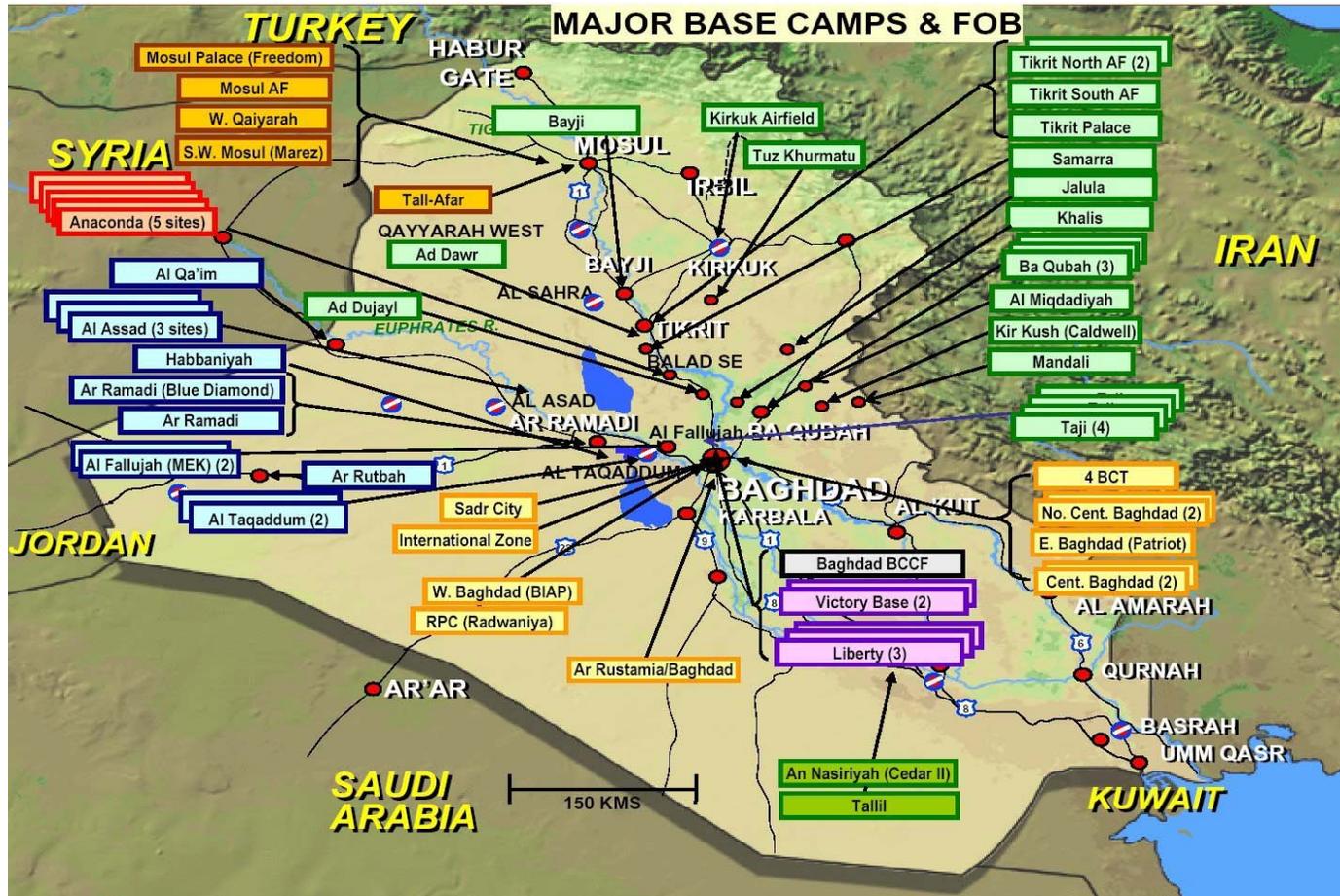
THE PERSIAN GULF AND IRAN ARE SURROUNDED BY U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, ALONG WITH FLEETS FROM BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND ITALY. AFRICOM WAS JUST ESTABLISHED.



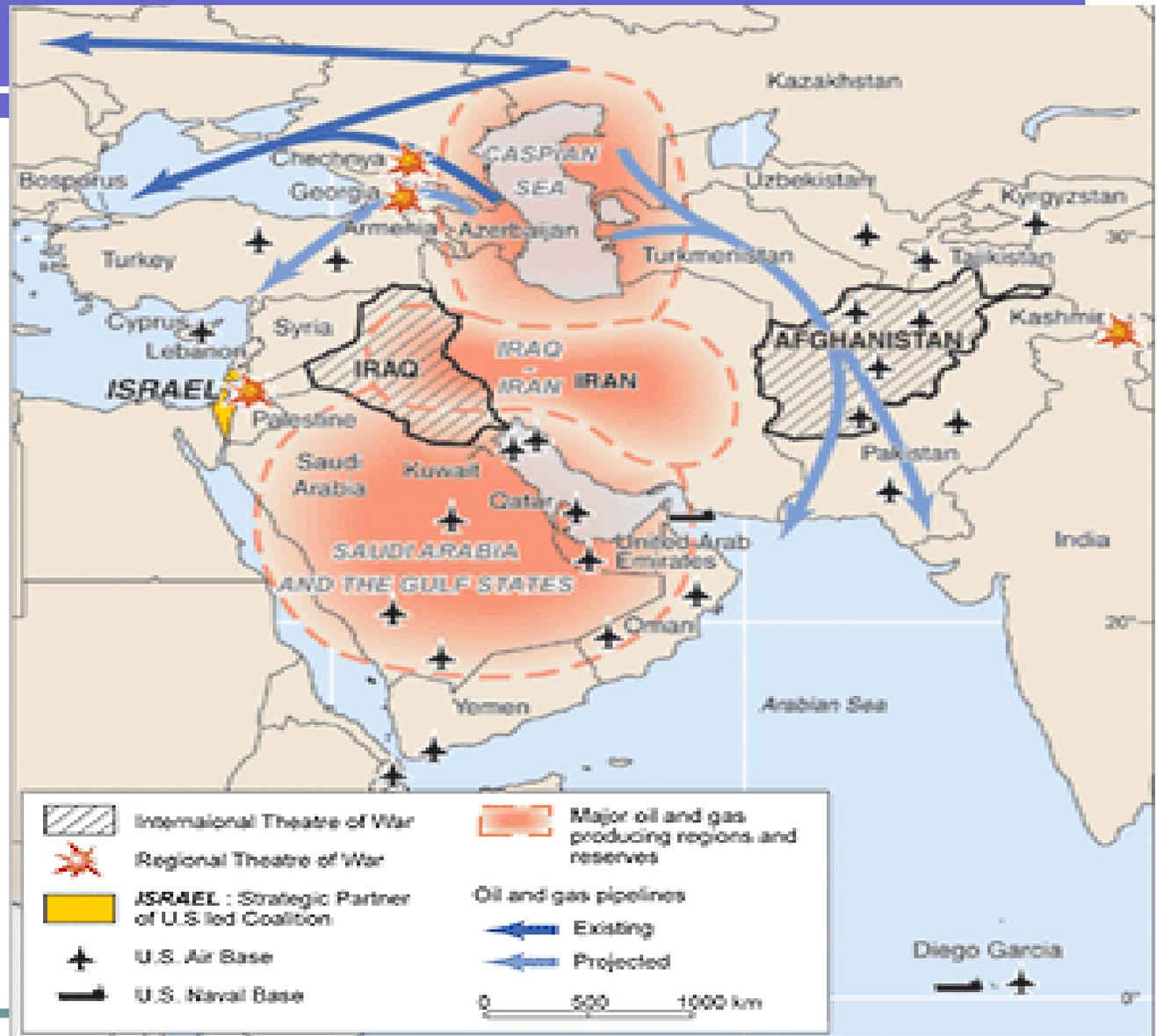
U.S. NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE STOCKPILED AT U.S. AIR BASES ADJACENT TO THE MIDDLE EAST



Bases in Iraq have added to the U.S. military footprint in the Middle East



When maps of oil and gas resources, pipe lines, US military installations, and recent or current wars are presented on the same map, the relationship of these factors becomes easier to grasp. Walter and Mearsheimer's claim that they are not connected is simply not credible.



US policy in the Middle East is in deep crisis. This is the catalyst for The Israel Lobby's proposals to selectively “fix” US foreign policy in the Middle East.

- **The enormous coalition which aligned with the US in the first Gulf War in 1992 is long gone. No other Middle East country has stationed troops in Iraq to fight with the United States.**
- **The invasions and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan are debacles accelerating the decline of the US empire.**
- **Israel bombed a Syrian military installation in late 2007.**
- **Turkey withdrew its ambassador from the US and has periodically invaded Kurdish areas in northern Iraq to attack the PPK.**

CURRENT TRENDS IN THE M.E. CONFIRM WALT AND MEARSHEIMER'S ASSESSMENT THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS IN A PRECARIOUS POSITION

- **Abbas has become a figurehead in the Palestinian Authority, unable to stop a low intensity civil war between his Fatah supporters and Hamas.**
- **Pakistan, the front-line against Jihadism, is in disarray because of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.**

The Greatest Challenges to the US Empire are in the Persian Gulf

- **The US and Israel are threatening to attack Iran to stop its nuclear program, and Israel continues to lobby the US government to withdraw its updated intelligence estimate that Iran's bomb program stopped in 2003.**
- **Saudi Arabia and Iran are cutting economic and military deals with the Chinese and the Russians, while the Saudi regime faces internal opposition from both Islamic Jihadists on the right and secular progressives on the left.**

Behind the study of the Israel Lobby

- The Jimmy Carter and Walt-Mearsheimer books indicate that the many failures of US policy in the Middle East are fueling an elite debate over the role of Israel in the overall US presence in the Middle East.
- Despite Israel's enormous military power, it has become a political liability to the U.S. government in the region.
- Israel's treatment of the Palestinians prevents the U.S. from using the Israeli military in the Persian Gulf.



The next administration will be in the hot seat

- The Council on Foreign Relations is now conducting a thorough review of U.S. policy in the Middle East. The neo-con approach failed, and they are going back to the drawing board, with the same goals, but considering new tactics.
- This study, to be presented to the new administration, will likely present a Walt-Mearsheimer “light” program of more pressure on Israel to accept a two-state solution, but not according to 242 and 338.

Pulling the rabbit out of the hat

- If the Walt-Mearsheimer-Carter proposals were fully implemented, U.S. military, diplomatic, and financial support for Israel would become contingent on an Israeli-Palestinian agreement removing the settlements and establishing a viable Palestinian state.
- It would implement the two UN Land for Peace resolutions, 242 and 338.

Or would the goose finally lay a golden egg?

- **If the U.S. forced Israel to accept a Palestinian state according to 242 and 338, the 2002 Saudi Peace Initiative could finally be implemented.**
- **Saudi Arabia would then lead all 21 Arab countries, and possibly Iran, into full diplomatic, cultural, and economic relations with Israel.**

A green light for pro-US regimes

- **With an Israeli-Palestinian peace, and possibly the Saudi initiative, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan would be freer to openly support US policy in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan.**
- **Some components of the US-lead coalition in the first Gulf War could be re-established.**

The “realist” dream scenario for the US in the Middle East.

- A comprehensive Middle East peace would allow Israel to finally be integrated into the military component of a revived Pax Americana
- According to Walt and Mearsheimer, the US could then finally use Israel as a military ally in the Persian Gulf.
- In theory Israel could then openly fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, attack Iran, and reinstate the Saud family if/when it is toppled.

Similarities of Neo-cons and Realists

- *The realist vision for the Middle East hardly differs from that of the neo-cons, aligned with the Likud Party. It is on U.S. tactics where they differ, not ultimate goals.*
- *The neo-cons thought the path to Jerusalem was through Baghdad. The realists believe the path to Baghdad is through Jerusalem.*

So what about Walt and Mearsheimer?

- Much of what Walt and Mearsheimer write is correct and useful.
- Any efforts to quote or promote them should always be clear that a reform of U.S. policy regarding Israel should not be in lieu of a total overhaul of US policy for the rest of the Middle East.
- The full agenda of Walt and Mearsheimer is to promote US “national interests” in the Middle East. This must always be referenced.