

The 2008 Presidential Elections and the Strategic Interests of the U.S. in the Middle East

Many observers consider the upcoming US presidential election to be extremely critical. One important reason is that the next president will have his or her hands full defending US strategic interests through out the Middle East.

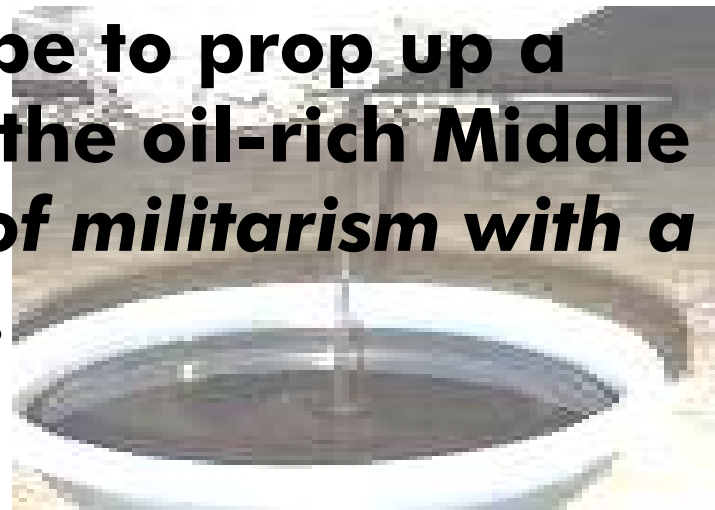
CLARIFYING OUR TERMS

- **U.S. strategic interests refers to the interests of companies and government agencies.**
- **They largely relate to the oil and gas resources of the Persian Gulf area because of its enormous profitability, as well as its necessity for industry and the military.**



THE MIDDLE EAST POLICIES OF THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION

- **We may not know if the next president will be the current favorite Obama, or Clinton, or McCain.**
- **Nevertheless, we already know their administration's recipe to prop up a crumbling empire in the oil-rich Middle East: *extra portions of militarism with a dribble of diplomacy.***



MIDDLE EAST



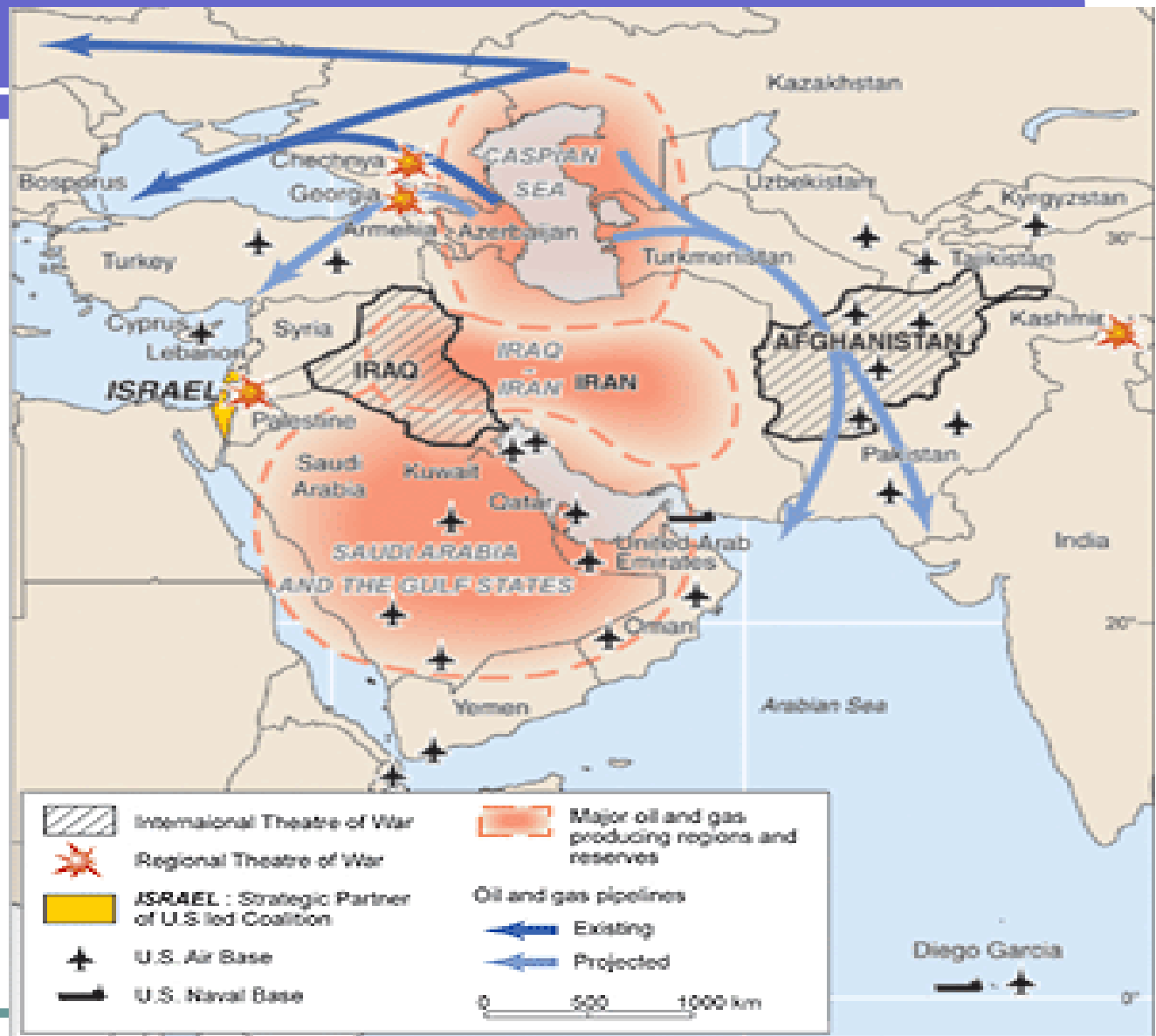
Map of the Greater Middle East, a term invented in the United States about one century ago when the region's economic importance became known. Nearly all boundaries were established by the Britain and France after their WW I victory over the Ottoman Empire.

THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Control of major oil fields through production agreements.**
- **Control of pipelines, ports, and shipping lanes.**
- **Locating old and many new US military bases, fleets, in proximity to oil infrastructure and war zones.**
- **Propping up governments aligned with the United States government.**

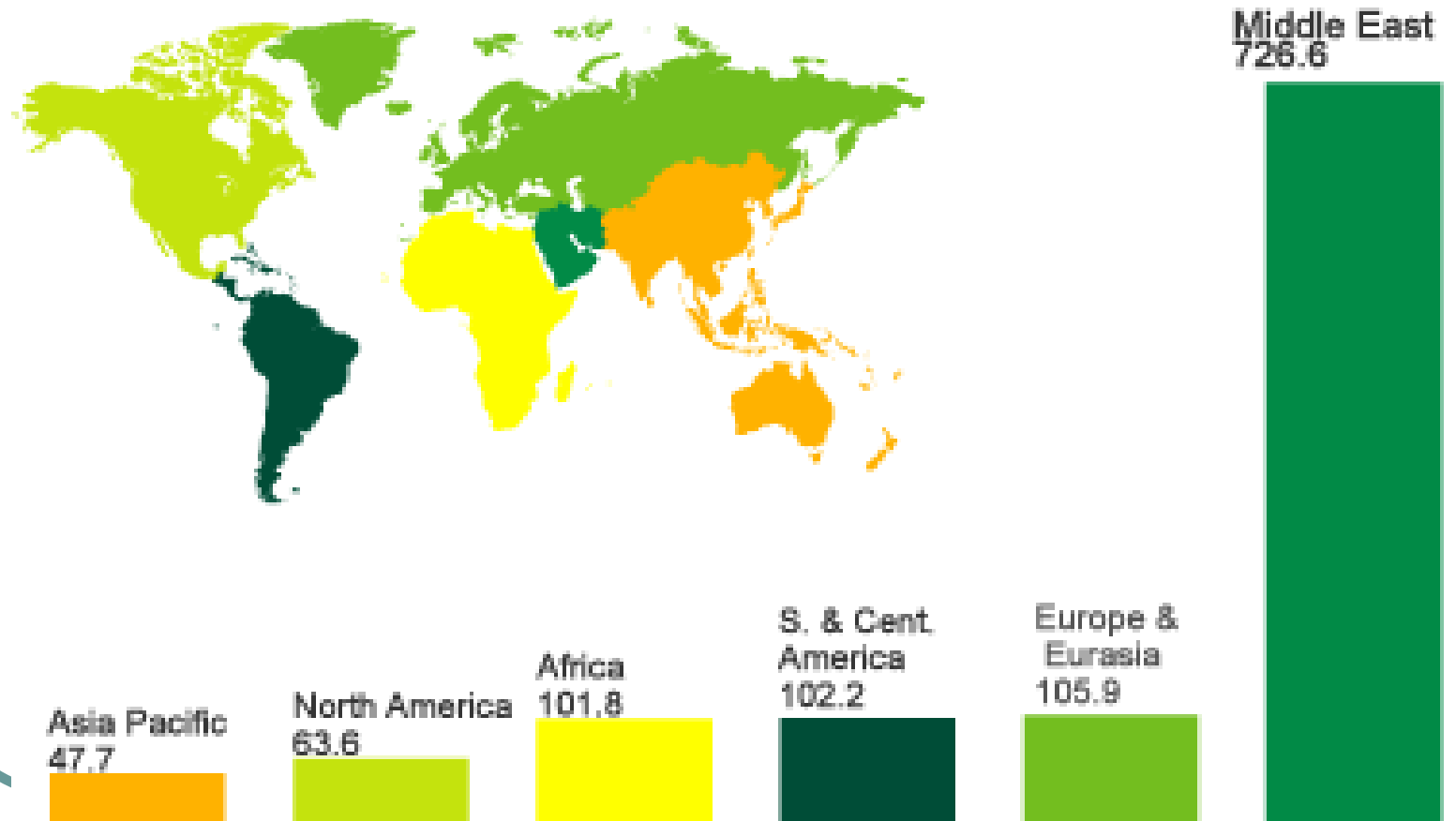


When the location of oil and gas fields, pipe lines, ports, US fleets and military installations, and recent or current wars are presented on the same map, the relationship of these factors becomes easier to grasp. This is the history which will shape the new US presidential administration.



Oil is the most important component. The Middle East has 2/3 of the planet's cheap, recoverable oil reserves, and much of Iraq is still unexplored.

Proved oil reserves at end 2003
Thousand million barrels



CONTROL OF THE PERSIAN GULF IS CRITICAL TO ALL GREAT ECONOMIC POWERS

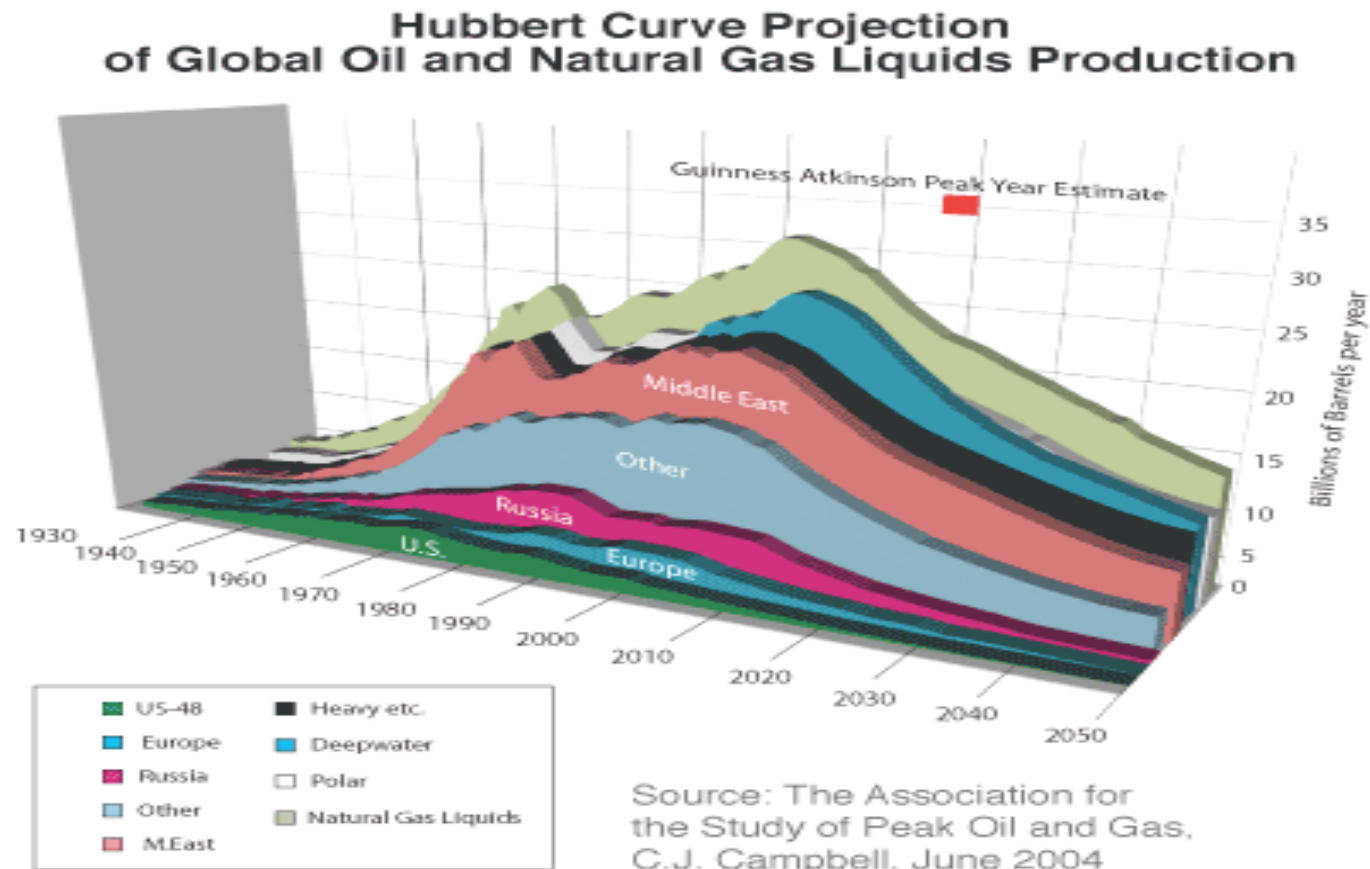
- The great imperial powers have fought over the Persian Gulf and Greater Middle East since the end of the 19th Century because of its OIL.
- The British and French defeated the Ottoman Turks and Germans in WWI.
- The US displaced the British and French in the 1950s and fought off the Soviet Union.
- The US empire is now a stumbling giant. The Europeans, Russians, and Chinese are on the move in this region and in nearby Africa.



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



World oil production is expected to peak around 2010 according to many experts



Peak Oil will intensify energy wars in the 21st Century

- **Less new oil means global oil supply is becoming tighter.**
- **More industrialization means global demand for oil is increasing.**
- **The cost of oil and the resulting profits are already soaring - \$104/barrel.**
- **Energy wars to control the supply, the profits, and access routes are underway and escalating.**

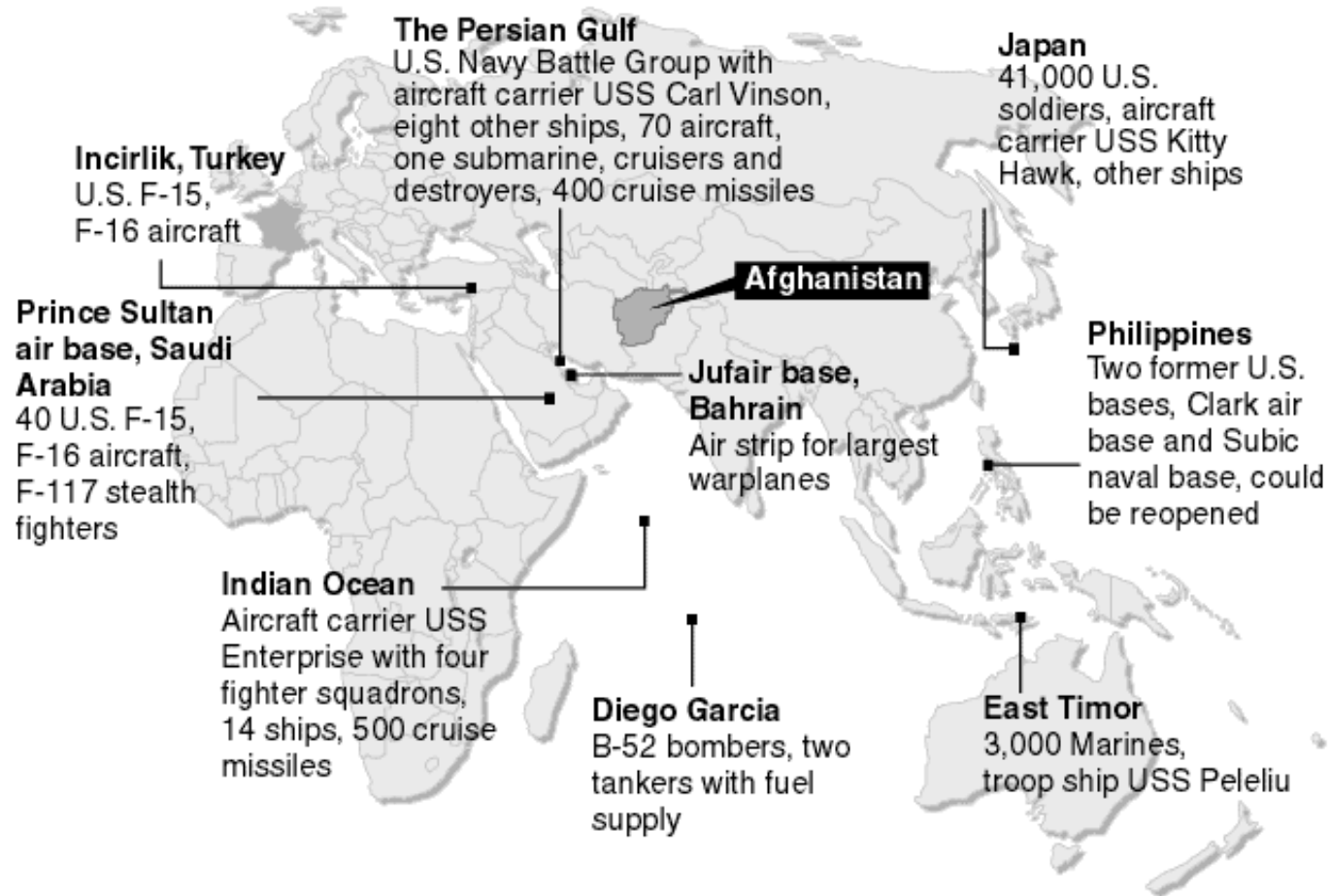
THE THREE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES SUPPORT THE BI-PARTISAN WASHINGTON MIDDLE EAST CONSENSUS

- **The US has vital strategic interests in the Middle East. Based on the Carter Doctrine, these vital interests are the Persian Gulf's region'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 it should use this military force when it is necessary to defend its interests.**

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



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



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.



The Carter Doctrine states the long-term 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*

THE NEXT FOUR YEARS WILL FEATURE MANY MIDDLE EAST CRISES

- Based on US bases and a long-term military build-up in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere the primary US reaction to peak will be military force.
- This is also revealed by looking at the histories of the each candidates foreign policy advisers.



The foreign policy advisers to the candidates have long imperial resumes

- Hillary Clinton: Madeline Albright, William Perry, Richard Holbrook, Wesley Clark
- Barack Obama: Zbigniew Brzezinski, Dennis Ross, Anthony Lake, Sarah Sewall
- John McCain: Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, Alexander Haig, and Colin Powell

Corporate Financing, too.

- **The campaigns are financed by corporate contributions. More billionaires, such as Warren Buffet & George Soros, are on the Democratic side.**
- **The Wall Street firm, Goldman Sachs, is typical: They give to all candidates to assure that populism and peace are campaign gimmicks, not policies.**

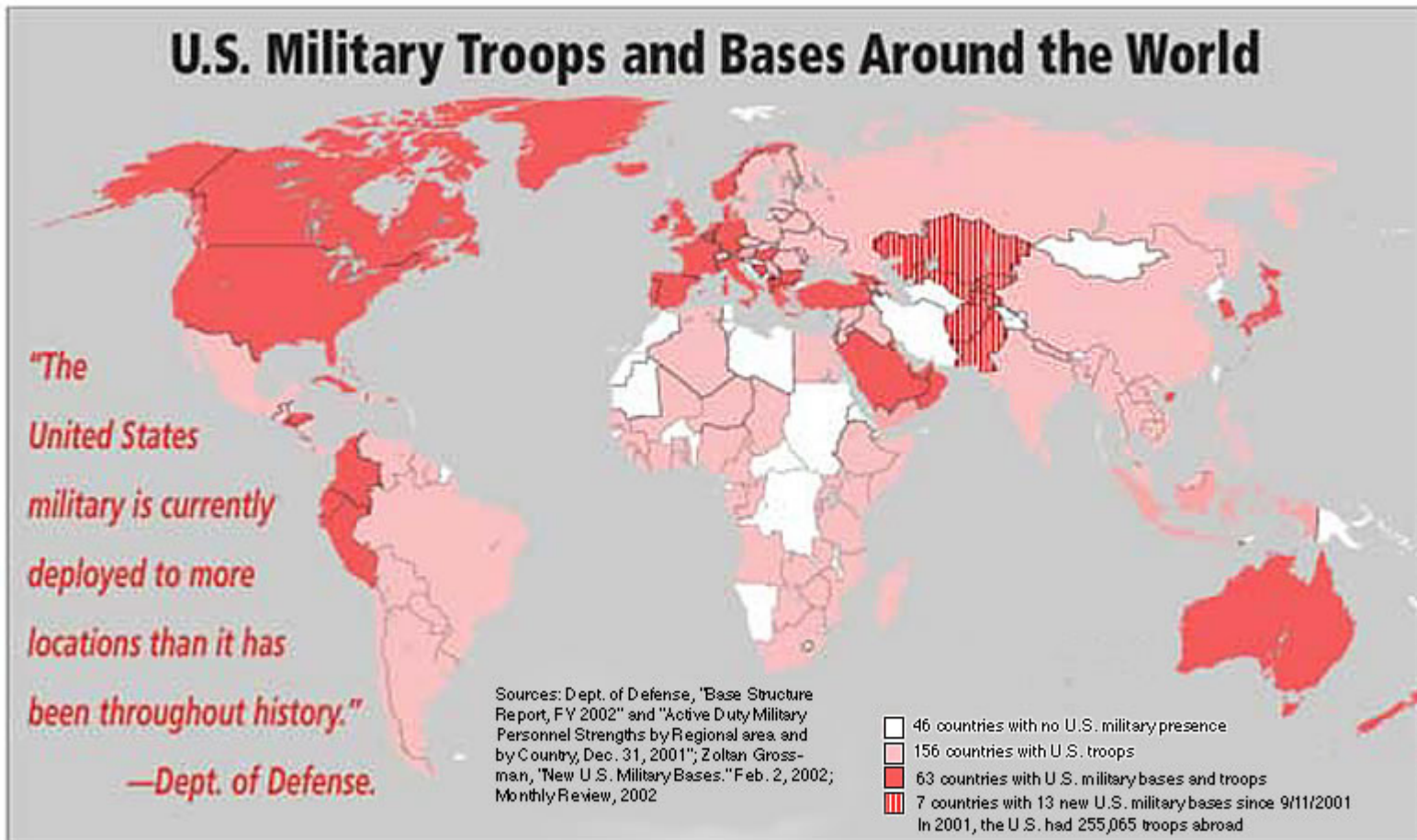
UCSD historian, Chalmers Johnson, estimates that the US has approximately 1000 foreign military installations, many of which are situated in or near to the Middle East, particularly in Central Asia and the Mediterranean rim.

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



The next US Presidential Administration faces multiple challenges with little public support

- Win or hold on in two losing wars: Iraq and Afghanistan
- Send US combat troops to Pakistan to control the nuclear weapons and fight Al Qaeda.
- Ship \$65 billion in US arms to pro-US Middle East Countries.
- Support Israel's settlements and oppression of the Palestinians while calling for a two state solution.
- Maintain several hundred military installations in the region.
- Persuade Turkey to continue to station US nuclear weapons on its soil.
- Prop up despotic governments throughout the entire region.
- Whip up Islamo-phobia in the United States while maintaining a 65 year alliance with the "Islamofascist" state of Saudi Arabia.
- Prepare the logistics and rationale for countering Iran, possibly through a military act since "all options are on the table."

U.S. NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE STOCKPILED AT U.S. AIR M.E. BASES IN TURKEY AND IN GREECE



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 to reduce its regional influence. Iran is already encircled by bases and fleets. Israel continues to lobby the US government to withdraw its updated intelligence estimate that Iran's bomb program stopped in 2003.



Europe, Russia and China are challenging the U.S. for control of the Persian Gulf

- Saudi Arabia and Iran are cutting economic and military deals with Chinese, European, and Russians business interests.
- The Saudi regime faces internal opposition from both Islamic Jihadists on the right and secular progressives on the left.



US policy in the Middle East is in deep crisis. Any challenge or conflict could trigger military escalation.

- **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 recently bombed a Syrian military installation and has again invaded Gaza.**

A Turkish-Kurdish war would further cripple the US in Iraq



Turkish tanks in northern Iraq.

Turkey withdrew its ambassador from the US and has periodically invaded Kurdish areas in northern Iraq to attack the Kurdish soldiers in the PPK.

SOME CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE ELECTION

- **There is no way to vote against US policy in the Middle East.**
- **At this point all paths lead toward military escalation in the Middle East.**
- **The real political options are “extra-parliamentary,” such as support for the civilian and military anti-war movements.**

But....?

But what about selecting a lesser evil in the election?

- **The old lesser evil argument has little relevance to the Middle East.**
- **All three major candidates support the massive US military presence in the region demonstrated above.**
- **The debate over Iraq ignores all other aspects of US policy in the Middle East because the candidates agree with each other.**

The Iraq Debate is over how many troops should stay, not leaving.

- **Clinton and Obama would keep US troops in Iraq to protect embassies and bases, fight Al Qaeda, and be prepared for other regional crises.**
- **Journalist Jeremy Scahill says they both would allow mercenaries to fight and work for the US in Iraq.**

CONSIDER THEIR AREAS OF AGREEMENT ON MILITARY POLICY:

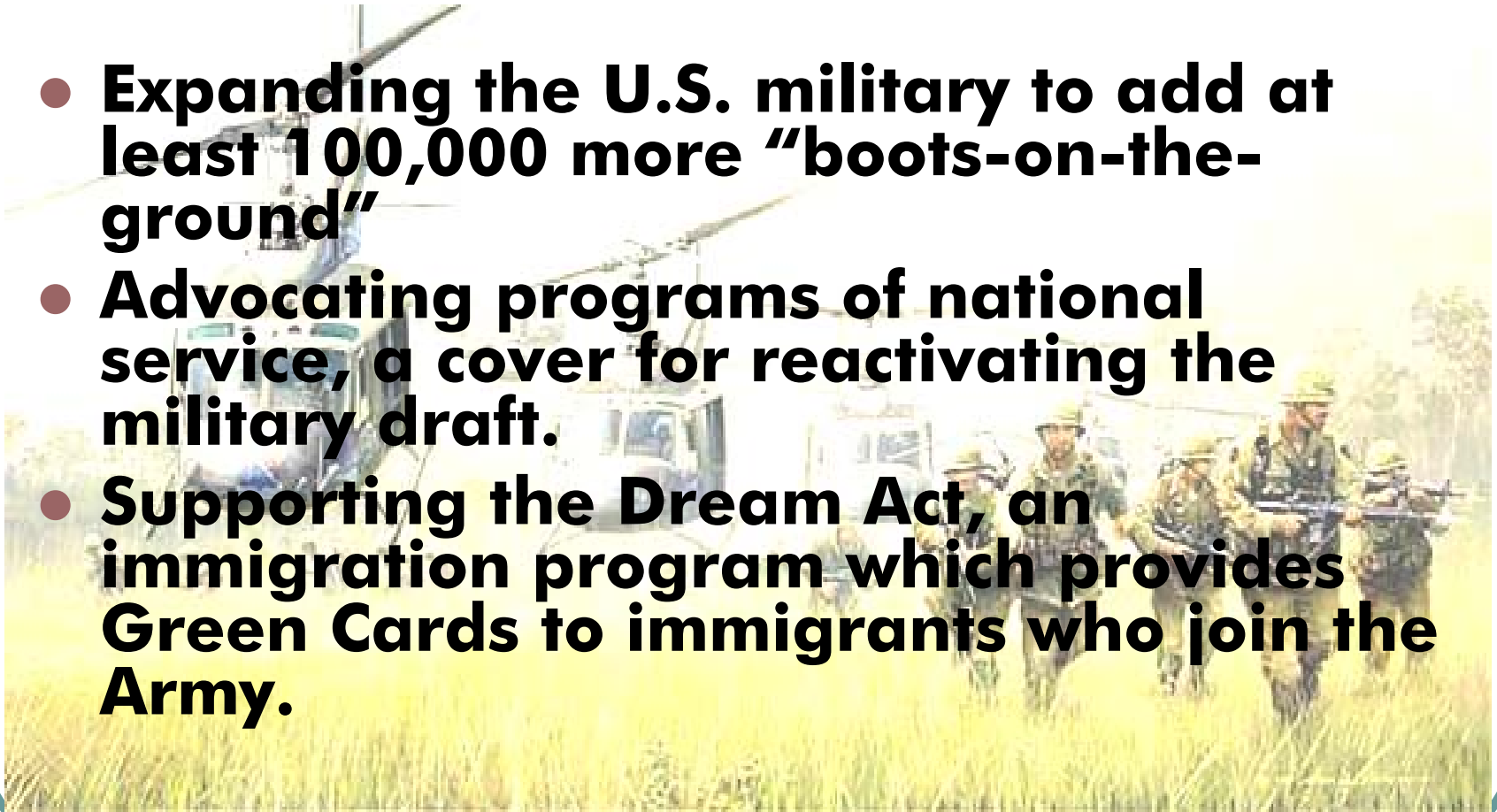
- **Full funding for the \$ 1 trillion military budget, including the Iraq War.**
- **Full support for the Afghan War.**
- **Full support for the oppressive governments of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, and Egypt.**
- **Full support for the Israeli government, including settlements and siege of Gaza.**
- **Full support for the “war on terrorism” and “homeland security.”**

Wait. There is much they agree on:

- **Support for the nuclear programs of Pakistan and Israel.**
- **Support for military escalation against Iran, to stop their nuclear program and reduce their influence in the region.**
- **Support for Turkey's attacks on Iraqi Kurdistan.**
- **Support for several hundred US bases in the Middle East.**
- **Support for stationing US nuclear weapons in the Middle East.**

BUT THERE ARE STILL MORE AREAS OF AGREEMENT AMONG THE CANDIDATE

- **Expanding the U.S. military to add at least 100,000 more “boots-on-the-ground”**
- **Advocating programs of national service, a cover for reactivating the military draft.**
- **Supporting the Dream Act, an immigration program which provides Green Cards to immigrants who join the Army.**



STARK CHOICES AND MANY OPPORTUNITIES LIE AHEAD

- **The bi-partisan military-prison-police complex has led to several decades of cutbacks in public services and infrastructure. The decline of the dollar and return of inflation indicates the cutbacks will only get worse.**
- **But, this means there are hundreds of non-electoral opportunities to think globally but act locally.**
- **Organizations focused on the cutbacks, environment, war, racism, and taking control of the work place abound. IT IS TIME TO GET ACTIVE! ELECTIONS ARE NO SUBSTITUTE.**

ADDENDUM

- **THE RELATIONSHIP OF ISRAEL TO THE STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES DURING THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION.**

HOW ISRAEL FITS INTO U.S. POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

- **US military support for Israel began in 1967.**
- **Before that Israel's patrons had been the Soviet Union, Britain, and especially France.**
- **Israel has been unable to openly help the United States in its two Persian Gulf Wars.**

ISRAEL IS ONLY ONE PILLAR OF U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Formal Policy: Israel has a right to exist and any credible threat to Israel's existence should be responded to by direct US military intervention.**

Informal Policy: Full U.S. diplomatic and military support for West Bank settlements and the apartheid / separation wall.

Typical Israeli settlement on the West Bank.



Behind the book the Israel Lobby

- **The Jimmy Carter (Palestine: Peace not Apartheid) and Walt-Mearsheimer (The Israel Lobby) 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.**



US Support for Israel and the Arab World

In The Israel Lobby Steve Walt and John Mearsheimer contend that extensive US military and diplomatic support for Israel since 1967 jeopardizes the position of the US government in the Arab world (p. 8). 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 DEBATE IS FUELED BY TWO STUBBORN FACTS

- Despite Israel's enormous military power, it has become a political liability to the US in the much of the Middle East
- Israel's treatment of the Palestinians prevents the US from using the Israeli military in the Persian Gulf.

“All they understand is force.”



The Israel Lobby supports the US empire, but times are changing

- **The true debate between the Israel Lobby and Walt and Mearsheimer, plus others now critical of Israel, like Jimmy Carter, is over whether Israel still benefits the US empire in the Middle East. Does it help or hurt to control the oil?**
- **The implicit Walt-Mearsheimer argument is that Israel's support of the US was important during the Cold war, but has now become a drawback in maintaining US control over the Persian Gulf.**

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.**
- **The Palestinian jail break from Gaza to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula was an embarrassment to Israel, the US, and to Egypt.**

The Israel Lobby's success has been based on positioning Israel as a supporter of US militarism

- **The Cold War gave Israel an enormous opportunity to curry favor with the US.**
- **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 outside great power involvement in the Middle East, the Lobby would quickly lose its influence.**

Pulling the rabbit out of the hat

- **If the Walt-Mearsheimer-Carter proposals were implemented, US military, diplomatic, and financial support for Israel would be 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 US forced Israel to accept a Palestinian state, 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 military 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 be militarily integrated into a revived Pax Americana. It would be a boost for the US, not for the people of the region.**
- **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, attack Iran, or reinstate the Saud family if/when it is toppled.**

So what about Walt and Mearsheimer?

- **A severe crisis, such as an outright defeat in Iraq, could jump start a change in U.S. policy toward Israel.**
- **But, Israel might then realign with Europe, Russia, or China in a period of much wider ME war.**