THE COLD WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST
And the making of our political present.
We have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3 of its population. This disparity is particularly great as between ourselves and the peoples of Asia. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devised a pattern of relationships, which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and daydreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world benefaction.”
• "For roughly the last two centuries the Middle East has been more consistently and more thoroughly ensnared in great power politics...No area has been so unremittingly caught up in multilateral great power politics“. Carl A Brown.
Today’s Themes

- Tension between imperialism and universalist ideologies.
- Oil.
- Class of Civilizations?
- Cold War roots of Islamism.
- Cold War roots of American Hegemony.
US GLOBAL POWER

Map 3: The US Military Footprint on the World

Global Expansion of U.S. Military Involvement

Due to the secretive and transient nature of the present conflicts, the map is not complete, and the size of troop deployment is based on the present availability of data.

Sources:
1. 2005 Base Structure Report
2. GlobalSecurity.org

Permanent Bases
US and Territories: 2,639
Foreign: 737
‘Temporary’ bases since 1993: 98
US BASES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA
TOPICS

- Iran Question?
- Arab Nationalism and the Arab Cold War (1952-1973).
- The Islamist Defiance and the Long War for the Persian Gulf (1979-Present).
THE PERSIAN GULF
STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF SAUDI RESERVES

• “A stupendous source of strategic power and one of the great material prizes in world history” US State Department Official, 1945
THE US/SAUDI SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Historical Origins
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
ORIGINS OF SAUDI STATE

- Abdul-Aziz Bin Saud/Hussein Bin Ali
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
ORIGINS OF SAUDI STATE

• Abdul-Aziz Bin Saud/Hussein Bin Ali
• British align with house of Saud.
• Wahhabism and the Ikhwan. Conquer Mecca, 1925.
• Civil War. Abdul-Aziz suppresses Ikhwan, institutes state-Wahhabism. “One Ruler, One Authority, One Mosque”.
ORIGINS OF US/SAUDI PARTNERSHIP

• 1933, Aramco.

• Aramco. “State within a state”

• 1945: Abdul Aziz and FDR’s meeting. US Protection/Saudi Oil.

• Cold War objectives. Flow of oil, cultural importance in Sunni world, pivot on OPEC.

• Seven Saudi Kings, Twelve US Presidents. Clash of civilizations?
MEETING AT BITTER LAKE
ORIGINS OF US/SAUDI PARTNERSHIP

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• Aramco. “State within a state”
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• Cold War objectives. Flow of oil, cultural importance in Sunni world, pivot on OPEC.
• Seven Saudi Kings, Twelve US Presidents. Clash of civilizations?
CONSEQUENCES OF US/SAUDI PARTNERSHIP

• Mutual political and economic penetration.
• Saudi modernization.
• Export of Islamism to counter Arab nationalism/communism.
• US influence in OPEC.
• Escalating co-dependency.
• Increased US intervention/resistance.
THE IRANIAN QUESTION

Iran in the Early Cold War, 1945-1953.
IRAN’S FATE IN EARLY COLD WAR INTRIGUES

• 1941, Soviet’s occupy north, British occupy south.
BRITISH AND USSR CONCESSIONS
IRAN’S FATE IN EARLY COLD WAR INTRIGUES

• 1941, Soviet’s occupy north, British occupy south.

• British depose Monarch, political and social authority in Iran is shattered.

• Largest group is “Tudeh”, communist party in Iran. Young Shah Reza Pahlavi dominates appointments, Majlis dominated by liberal/ left nationalists.

• Soviets work with ethnic minorities over Iranian communists. Contradiction.
IRAN’S FATE IN EARLY COLD WAR INTRIGUES

- PM Ahmad Qavam seeks US support.
- Iran/Soviets make deal to withdraw Soviet troops.
- Shah’s forces retake the North of Iran.
- Tudeh wiped out or forced into hiding, Qavam dismissed in 1947.
- Iran falls into Anglo-American sphere.
BRITISH AND USSR CONCESSIONS
IRAN’S FATE IN EARLY COLD WAR INTRIGUES

• 1920s Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (BP). Colonial regime.
• Americans fear Soviet control, rely on Shah.
MOHAMMAD REZA SHAH PAHLAVI
IRAN’S FATE IN EARLY COLD WAR INTRIGUES

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IRAN’S FATE IN EARLY COLD WAR INTRIGUES

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• Americans fear Soviet control, rely on Shah.
• 1951, Mohammad Mossadeq’s nationalization plan. British embargo.
• June 14, 1953. Operation AJ AX.
JOHN FOSTER DULLES, 1953

• “Not only would the free world be deprived of the enormous assets represented by Iranian oil production and reserves, but the Russians would secure these assets and thus henceforth be free of any anxiety about their petroleum situation”. Little doubt that some sixty percent of world’s oil reserves, would fall into Communist control”. 
PAN-ARAB NATIONALISM

And the Arab Cold War, 1952-1979.
BAATH IDEOLOGY

- 1943, Michel Aflaq
- Ideology? Pan-Arabist, fascist in organization, socialist in class structure.
- Enemies: communists and Islamists.
- Regional branches: 1954, come to power in Syria, Iraq 1968.
GAMAL ABDEL NASSER
GAMAL ABDEL NASSER

- Military officer from 1948 war.
- Ideology: Pan-Arabism, socialism, anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, Islam?
- Repression of communists and Muslim Brotherhood.
- Power through non-aligned movement, growing Soviet military connections by 1955.
- Mid-50s, Suez Canal and Palestinian Refugee Problem.
1956 SUEZ CRISIS
THE 1956 SUEZ CRISIS

• Nasser nationalizes Suez Canal.
• Triple invasion from France, England, and Israel.
• US/USSR intervene to prevent three countries.
• Canal remains nationalized, Nasser’s popularity surges.
• Israel gains access to the Straights of Tiran.
THE ARAB COLD WAR

- Egypt, Syria, Iraq.
- Pan-Arabism/socialist.
- Tilt Soviet.
- Iran, Gulf Monarchies, Jordan, Lebanon.
- Islam, modernization.
- US aligned.
THE 1967-1973 ARAB ISRAELI WARS

- Increased border skirmishes between Israel and Arab states.
- 1966, Syrian/Egyptian mutual defence pact signed.
- Egypt Soviet arms, Israel French hardware.
SIX DAY WAR

• Soviet intelligence.
• Nasser expels UN troops, closes Straits of Tiran.
• Egypt’s motives? Israeli motives?
• Israeli air strikes, Nasser’s deception.
June War (1967)

- Conquered by Israel

1. Golan Heights (Syria)
2. West Bank, East Jerusalem incl. (annexed by Jordan in 1950)
3. Gaza Strip (administered by Egypt since 1948)
4. Sinai Peninsula (Egypt)
1973 ARAB ISRAELI WAR

- Sadat pursues diplomatic path, rebuffed. Prepare for war.
- US/USSR détente.
- Sadat expels 20,000 Soviet “advisors”.
- October 6, 1973, Egypt “invades” the Sinai.
- US/Soviet war?
FALL OUT FROM 1973 WAR

• Israeli military victory, Egyptian political victory.
• Sets stage for normalization of Israeli/Egyptian relations.
• Egypt moves into US orbit.
• Further fracturing of Arab alliance and abandonment of 1967 peace framework.
THE 1979 WATERSHED

- Iranian revolution.
- Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
- Seizure of the grand mosque in Mecca.
- The Carter Doctrine and The Long War for the Gulf (1979-present).
THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION
ISLAMIST DEFIANCE AND THE ORIGINS OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

• Shah pursues program of “modernization”.
• Ruhollah Khomeini.
ISLAMIST DEFIANCE AND THE ORIGINS OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

- Shah pursues program of “modernization”.
- Economic crisis from 1975 onward. Overdevelopment, then recession.
- “SAVAK”.
- Left, moderates, Islamists form alliance against the Shah.
THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION CONTINUED


• Khomeini in France, communicates through radio and smuggled tapes.


• 16 Jan, 1979, Shah flees, Khomeini returns.

THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION CONTINUED


• Khomeini in France, communicates through radio and smuggled tapes.


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• 1979-1982 consolidation period.

THE LONG WAR FOR AFGHANISTAN
(1979-PRESENT)
THE ISLAMIST DEFIANCE CONTINUED

• Afghanistan: 1973-1978 modernization under Daoud. Growing communist (Soviet aligned) and Islamist (Pakistani supported) resistance.

• 1978, Khalq coup. Amin, Taraki (“ultra leftist), and Karmal (moderate).

• Amin consolidates power, alienates tribal elites.

• Islamist alliance with tribal elites.

• Dec 1979, Soviet invasion.
HAFIZULLAH AMIN
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THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN

- 500,000-two million killed, 5.5 million refugees. Mass rape, use of chemical weapons, “genocide”.
- Soviet modernization in cities.
- Islamist, Pakistan (ISI), Saudi, American alliance. “Afghan Arabs”
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THE LONG GULF WAR (1979-PRESENT)

- US will use military force in Persian Gulf if necessary.
- 1980, Saddam Hussein invades Iran.
- Features: Iranian isolation, stalemate, trench warfare, "human wave attacks", heavy use of poisonous gas by Iraq, million deaths on each side.
- Arab states align with Iraq. UN security council states major supplier of arms for both sides.
- Both regimes consolidated by war.
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- Saddam Hussein in debt to Arab neighbours. Desires increase in oil prices.
IRAQI INVASION OF KUWAIT

- Saddam Hussein in debt to Arab neighbours. Desires increase in oil prices.
- Iraq annexes Kuwait, begins to threaten Saudi Arabia.
- Aug 8, US moves into Saudi Arabia “Desert Shield”.
- Uprisings in southern Iraq brutally repressed.
- Bin Laden declares Jihad against Saudi family and US.
DISABUSING OURSELVES OF MYTHS

- Oil? Access vs control.
- Axis between US, conglomerates, and indigenous elites.
- One way imperialism.
- Conflict between “Islam” and “west”?
- Historical time? Islamism is modern.
- “Interests”, “National Security”.
CONTEMPORARY DILEMMAS

- Indefinite US military presence in Gulf.
- Sunni/Shia civil war?
- Iran/Saudi conflict.
- Israeli/Arab alliance?
- Contradictions in Wahhabism.
- Iran and Trump Administration?