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Evolving Threats in the Middle East: Their Implications for US Defense Planning

**Testimony to the Middle East and Africa Threat
Panel of the House Armed Services Committee**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Panel,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today, but I should stress that I intend to take full advantage of the fact that I am retired from the federal government, and have no commercial ties to anyone in the defense and intelligence community. I should also stress that I am here as a private individual and not, in any way, as a representative of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The views I am about to present call into question both the House Armed Services Committee's approach to the Quadrennial Defense Review, and the mission assigned to the panel dealing with the Middle East and North Africa. As such, they are my personal views and should be treated as such.

Why the Committee Has Asked the Wrong Questions

Any effort to respond to the Committee's questions must begin with an analysis as to whether they are the right questions. I believe, for three reasons that they are not:

- *First, threat-driven defense planning has acute limitations.* I have been involved in efforts to decide on our future strategy and shape our future year defense plans for more than four decades. Time and again, these have involved efforts to predict the future threats we should use to size our military forces and defense expenditures. At least 90% of the time, they failed to predict the actual conflicts to come, and most failed to predict even the new strains and requirements that would be placed on our forces.

Their primary value, at least during the Cold War, lay in analyzing the worst-case threats -- which were a strategic nuclear exchange with Russia, a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict, and a new war on the Korean Peninsula. In the light of what we have learned since the end of the Cold War, some of the key assumptions and data used in those analyses were gravely flawed in the case of a strategic exchange and NATO-Pact conflict. Moreover, in retrospect, the focus many such efforts placed on war fighting undercut their value because they did not address what was in fact, the need to focus on what would most deter a conflict while serving US strategic interests.

I do not believe that military forces and defense expenditures should be sized around specific threat analyses. As a superpower, we simply cannot answer the question of how much is enough by gazing into a crystal ball or consulting panels of analytic shamans. We need to consider the range of uncertainties and possibilities, and create forces large and flexible enough to cope.

- *Second, military threats are one factor to be considered in analyzing national security requirements inside and outside the Department of Defense.* Since the end of the Cold War, we have entered a world in which economics and economic competition may normally be more important to our security than changes in our military forces. Dependence on energy imports and the trade deficit are only two

examples of "threats" from this perspective. To illustrate the point differently, unless the US engages in a major conflict, the decisions the President and US Congress make about the budget deficit and the growth of mandatory entitlements may be a far more serious threat to the security of the United States than any foreign power.

More directly, the need for major changes in the way we form and shape alliances and coalitions, the way in which we influence world opinion and use public diplomacy, our ability to improve our approach to conflict termination and stability operations have clearly become issues that are at least as critical as threat analysis, and they are all areas where we have recently had major failures.

Even within the Department of Defense, the world is not a two-person, zero-sum game. Moreover, the war in Iraq has clearly shown the need to restructure the other Departments of Government to effectively support the Department of Defense in stability operations, nation-building, and peacemaking. Even if one ignores all of the complexities involved in homeland defense, a threat-driven approach by definition ignores one of the most critical needs for changing our national approach to structuring the federal government.

Third, in the specific case of the Middle East and North Africa, our worst threats are not threats that can be measured in terms of conventional forces and warfighting capability. The real threats in the Middle East may well consist of how well local powers can achieve enough stability and resources to consistently meet the world's growing need for oil and gas exports. Some US government analyses still project that the global economy we depend upon will require MENA oil exports to double by 2025. Virtually all estimates make the reliable flow of such exports a critical national and global security interest, and the military protection of such resources is only one lesser part of the risks involved.

We talk about a war on terrorism, but we actually face a much broader struggle. This includes a clash within Islam and the Middle East over the role of religion -- driven by neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremists and Shi'ite activist Islamist extremist. This ideological struggle interacts with massive forces of social change such as hyperurbanization, population growth, a youth explosion that is putting intense pressure on education and the job market, political rigidity and a lack of inclusiveness, and a host of state barriers to efficient economic development. No matter what we do about today's transnational threats -- such as al-Qa'ida and Zarqawi -- these problems are almost certainly generational and may well occur and reoccur over the next quarter century.

Our ability to deal with these problems and threats is only partly related to military threats, terrorist capabilities, and the capability of our military forces. It may depend far more on our ability to influence evolutionary and stabilizing patterns of reform, and work with regional powers to meet the ideological challenge of Islamist extremism. It will probably depend more on our ability to reshape regional anger and hostility towards the United State over issues like the Arab-Israeli conflict, our perceived failures in nation-building in Iraq, or our

focus on the "blame game" in counterterrorism, rather than creating effective regional partnerships.

Equally important, the trends in regional military forces may be far less important than how well individual countries organize to deal with internal security threats in terms of their use of military and security forces, efforts at reform, and willingness to meet the ideological and political challenge of extremism and terrorism. The capability of hostile state actors to conduct asymmetric warfare, use extremists and other violent movements as proxies, and their interactions with terrorist and extremist movements may be the real key to how serious a threat they pose to our national interests. Discussing the wrong issues and the wrong capabilities can easily lead to the wrong kind of national security planning.

Military Capabilities and Trends in the Region and How Regional Force Capabilities Will Evolve Over the Next 20 Years

Let me now turn to the specific issues I have been asked to address. The first two are the military capabilities and trends in the region, and how regional force capabilities will evolve over the next 20 years.

In broad terms, most powers are increasingly concentrating on internal security, improving their internal security forces, and improving the capabilities of their conventional military forces to carry out asymmetric warfare and internal security missions.

There is no easy way to quantify such trends with unclassified data. It is clear, however, that most nations in the region do perceive a growing internal security threat, or are already dealing with one. Most are increasing the strength and capability of their Special Forces and intelligence branches, as well as specialized internal security and police functions.

A number of countries are also dealing with significant Islamist threats. Iraq is clearly fighting a low-level civil war driven by Islamists as much as nationalists. Algeria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia continue to fight significant threats. Nations as diverse as Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, and Yemen face growing problems with ethnic and sectarian divisions and extremist cells. Iran, the Sudan, and Syria actively support extremist movements, and Iran in particular continues to expand its capabilities for asymmetric warfare. Morocco is also involved in a long-standing ethnic conflict for control over the former Spanish Sahara.

Trends in Military Effort

There are no reliable data on the total military efforts in the region, but it clearly is still massive. Total publicly stated military expenditures have totaled around \$54 billion in

recent years, and will probably rise sharply over the next half decade because of the flood of oil revenues going to key powers. Such expenditures exclude most internal security forces and homeland defense activities, but still average over 6% of the region's annual growth rate in spite of a high level of poverty and the fact that public reporting of military spending often falls far short of actual spending.ⁱ

Trends in Military Manpower

About 2.8 million men are in active military forces; 2.6 million are in reserves, and roughly one million in paramilitary forces -- not counting regular police. It should be noted, however, that the overall level of training and readiness for active forces has slowly declined in most cases:ⁱⁱ

- In North Africa because of the lack of a serious regional conventional threat and the end of a Libyan-driven arms race.
- In the Levant by a mixture of economic problems, peace agreements between Israel and Egypt and Jordan, the end of the Lebanese civil war, and Syria's inability to pay for major new arms purchases and lack of any major outside source of aid since the end of the Cold War.
- In the Gulf by a mixture of past sanctions on Iraq and the Iraq War, Iran's choice to concentrate on proliferation and asymmetric forces rather than expensive conventional forces, serious economic problems in Yemen, and declines in oil revenues during much of the 1990s.

Trends in Military Readiness and Effectiveness

With the exception of Israeli forces -- and certain elements of Egyptian, Iranian, and Jordanian forces -- most reserves are in hollow units with little reserve training, modern equipment, or facilities. Most are hollow forces with semi-retired and/or incompetent officers.

Paramilitary forces are sharply mixed in quality. Some units have been extensively modernized and trained, but many are outdated and have limited capability, training, equipment and competent leadership. Some are little more than instruments the regime uses to maintain control over traditional political opponents, with little capability to deal with asymmetric or terrorist threats.

Modernization and force transformation vary sharply by country and unit. Israel is the only country to show a consistent effort to match Western standards, although some Egyptian, Jordanian, and Saudi units are quite good, and there are pockets of excellence in virtually every country. Advances in jointness, netcentric warfare, IS&R, and C4I far too often reflected poorly coordinated equipment purchases and ineffective advisory efforts.

True military professionalism and readiness are rare. Force and equipment numbers greatly exceed the capability to use them effectively, and sustainability and readiness are

poor. As a result, total force numbers and force ratio analysis are not only not useful, they are actively misleading.

Trends in Military Capitalization and Arms Transfers

Showpiece and "glitter factor" purchases of the latest weapons and equipment also disguise a region-wide under-capitalization of force strength and force modernization. A few countries are still living off the major arms purchases they made after the Gulf War and which were generally delivered after the mid-1990s. Israel, Egypt, and Jordan live off of US military assistance -- although none are currently able to sustain the overall rates of investment necessary to both maintain their present total force structures and properly modernize them.

Declassified US intelligence estimates show a striking decline in total new arms purchases for the Near East, even measured in current dollars. If one looks at the trend in four-year intervals, new arms agreements dropped from approximately \$92.7 billion during 1987-1990 to \$55.8 billion during 1990-1994, to \$35.3 billion during 1995-1997, to \$37.0 billion in 1997-2000, and to \$28.5 billion in 2001-2004. These figures should be interpreted in light of the fact that the average unit cost in current dollars of imports of major weapons like tanks, fighter, SAMs, and combat ships rose by at least 40% during the last 15 years.ⁱⁱⁱ

The lag between orders and actual deliveries disguises this trend. Actual deliveries dropped from approximately \$78.1 billion during 1987-1990 to \$52.1 billion during 1990-1993, to \$51.3 billion during 1995-1997, to \$60.6 billion in 1997-2000, and to \$41.0 billion in 2001-2004. As a result, the undercapitalization of MENA forces in terms of new arms purchases will play out over the next 5-10 years.^{iv}

With the exception of Iran, Israel is the only country in the region to even try to maintain a robust defense industry as a substitute for conventional arms imports. Unlike Israel, Iran also has yet to demonstrate its efforts will pay off.

At the same time, most countries can afford to gradually acquire modern weapons that will give them some degree of parity with the systems in today's US forces. These include:

- Advanced armor, with an emphasis on main battle tanks. More armored fighting vehicles. Long range artillery including multiple rocket launchers with advanced anti-armor and anti-personnel warfare. Supporting systems for fire control, UAVs, night vision devices, and artillery radars are on shopping lists or in delivery.
- Better helicopter mobility and attack helicopter capability.
- Some submarines, better mine laying capabilities and much more advanced mines. Advanced air, ship, and shore-launched anti-ship missiles. Some advanced torpedoes.

- Combat aircraft, advanced air munitions, and advanced surface-to-air missiles. The transfer of much more advanced air-to-air missiles, precision air-to-ground strike systems, and some transfers of advanced SHORADS and SAMs like Patriot and the S-300/S-400 are already taking place.
- Better IS&R assets, particularly UAVs for ground warfare and air targeting and maritime patrol capabilities. Combined with precision conventional weapons and longer-range delivery systems, these will erode the present US superiority in precision warfighting.
- Internal security and anti-terrorist weapons, including sensors, barrier defenses, special force vehicles and equipment, special purpose helicopters, UAVs, etc.

The problem in predicting these trends is that the history of Middle East arms purchases is one of sudden peak war or crisis-driven purchases that have unpredictable (and sometimes not terribly rational) content. These then are often delivered once the crisis or war involved is over. This, in turn, can result in poor levels of force organization to use the equipment, poor maintenance and sustainability, and peacetime efforts to buy systems with the most status and prestige, rather than effectiveness.

Trends in Asymmetric Warfare Capability

In contrast to the region's conventional forces, its asymmetric capabilities continue to grow:

Iran

Iran has been the only regional power to consistently pursue a strategy of improving its capability for offensive asymmetric warfare, and has done so ever since the end of Iran-Iraq War in 1988. Iraq lost its capability with the fall of Saddam Hussein. Iran's forces are all structured to carry out asymmetric warfare, particularly its Revolutionary Guards.

The regular army has a commando brigade and an airborne brigade, a number of Special Forces units, and helicopter mobility.

The Revolutionary Guards have some 120,000 actives plus extensive reserves and the support of up to 300,000 Basij with some paramilitary capability. The Guards have roughly 100,000 ground forces with a nominal strength of 20 division (actually brigade) equivalents with growing mechanized and armored elements, growing air elements, control over most missile forces, and a substantial role in Iran's defense industries. The naval branch of the Guards has some 20,000 men, with a 5,000-man marine brigade, at least 40 light craft for special missions, 10 Hudong patrol boats with C-803 missiles, and shore-based anti-ship missiles. They routinely practice asymmetric attacks on Islands and ships and amphibious operations.

The navy has three submarines, seven mine warfare ships, and often participates in asymmetric warfare exercises. It also has significant amphibious capability to move forces to undefended ports, islands, or offshore facilities, but does not practice

meaningful offensive amphibious landings against defended targets. The air force can provide additional support.

Iranian intelligence cooperates with the Guards and has a significant operational capability for low-level covert operations.

Syria

Syria still has significant capability for asymmetric operations. It has a Republican Guard Division and Special Forces Division with "elite" forces with some training in such missions. It also has some 10 Special Forces regiments, some of which have special training for such missions. The air force does have helicopter training and experience in such missions. Syrian naval forces have low readiness, but some mine warfare and marginal amphibious warfare capabilities.

Syrian capabilities are, however, deteriorating. Syrian elite and special purpose forces have not had any meaningful experience in such operations in over 20 years. Exercises and training are rigid, outdated, and largely routine. Units have declined sharply in readiness, standards, and funding. The loss of Russian support following the end of the Cold War, money problems, and the corruption of units deployed in Lebanon have all been factors in this decline.

Syrian paramilitary forces are useful largely for internal repression. Syrian intelligence has a long history of involvement in politics, assassinations, working with extremist and terrorist groups, and wild card covert operations. Army and intelligence units have considerable experience in working with Islamist, extremist, and terrorist groups -- even when these have ideologies opposed to those of Syria.

The Palestinians and Israel

The Palestinians are a key wild card, as is their potential impact on the future of Jordan's political systems and alignments. So far, both radical Palestinian movements and supporting forces like the Hezbollah have concentrated almost exclusively on Israeli targets. The Palestinian Authority is secular and has avoided confrontation with the US. There are no guarantees for the future -- particularly without a far more favorable peace settlement than now seems likely. The Palestinians may well come under largely Islamic rule, with Hamas and the PIJ playing a major role. If so, they may well seek broader alliances with Islamist extremist groups, seek to takeover Jordan, and/or create new alliances with elements in Syria, Iran, and the Hezbollah.

It should be noted in this regard, that while there is no chance that Israel could become an active threat, the lack of an effective Arab-Israeli peace or peace process does make it a passive threat. Throughout the region, the US is seen as Israel's ally and supporter, and Israel's hard-line opponents and Islamist extremists capitalize upon this to encourage hostility and terrorism against the US. It is also at least possible that Israel could come under a government that supports the more extreme settler views, expand its security zones in highly provocative ways, or turn away from its long history of peace efforts. This is unlikely, but possible.

Other Nations

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia have significant capability for asymmetric warfare, but it is largely defensive. Each is dealing with a serious Islamist extremist threat. While it currently seems unlikely, it is possible that one or more could come under Islamist control or influence in the future, as has happened in the Sudan and is possible in Yemen. Today's friend may not be so in the future, and could pose an asymmetric threat or develop ties to non-state terrorist or extremist groups.

In general, nations hostile to the US -- or that become hostile to the US -- are likely to turn to asymmetric warfare and proliferation, rather than seek to compete in terms of conventional warfighting capability.

Non-State Actors

The most serious asymmetric threat, however, is likely to continue to be the one that already exists: neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremists and Shi'ite activist Islamist extremists. They see the US as the primary ally not only of Israel but every moderate and secular regime in the region. They see terrorist and asymmetric attacks on the US, its regional allies, and any secular or moderate regime as a way of driving the US out of the region, capitalizing on anger over issues like the Iraq War and Arab-Israeli conflict, and creating the possibility of Islamist takeovers of existing regimes.

Such non-state actors are, and will almost certainly continue to be, a major threat to the US and virtually all the states in the region. Even so, some states like Iran and Syria are virtually certain to continue to play with fire in trying to manipulate them and use them as proxies.

Trends in Proliferation

The defeat of Iraq, and Libya's renunciation of proliferation, have changed the balance in the region. Israel, Iran, and Syria are now the only major proliferators. Algeria and Egypt have made some efforts, but there is little evidence of serious warfighting capability. Saudi Arabia has shown some interest, but its Chinese-supplied missiles lack the warhead lethality and accuracy to be much more than a military joke, and there are no indications as yet of any action to modernize or expand Saudi capabilities.

- *Israel has significant numbers of high- and low-yield nuclear weapons, probably including boosted and thermonuclear weapons.* Uncertain estimates put Israel's nuclear weapons at over 200. Israel is capable of air and missile delivery by both short and long-range strike systems (Jericho I (500 km), Jericho 2 (1,000-2,000 km, roughly 140 F-16C/D/I and 53 F-15C/D/I), and sea-based systems may be under development. Israel does not have chemical weapons, but could produce them. Its biological weapons capabilities are unknown. It does not seem to have such weapons, but could probably acquire them relatively quickly and without detection. Israel is the only country in the region with advanced target and battle

management capability to use such weapons, and the only country with its own missile defenses.

- *Iran's efforts are covert and any unclassified estimate is uncertain.* It seems to be actively seeking nuclear weapons and long-range liquid and solid fueled missiles. It has declared it has chemical weapons, but no details about its stockpiles and weaponization of such weapons. It has imported equipment that could be used to support a biological weapons program. It has at least 18 Scud B and Scud C missile launchers and possibly 300 missiles. It has a pool of up to 55 operational F-4D/E and 25 Su-24, and seems to be seeking new long-range Russian strike-capable aircraft.
- *Syria has chemical weapons, including warheads with cluster and aerosol delivery capability, and seems to be developing biological weapons.* Syria's chemical weapons include both mustard and nerve agents. Its missiles include 18 obsolescent SS-21 launchers, at least 26 Scud and B launchers, and possibly converted Sepal and Styx cruise missiles and missiles. It also has FROG rockets and 20 Su-24s, 60 MiG23BN, and 50 Su-22 strike fighters although their operational readiness is unknown.

The key wild card threat in proliferation is that non-state actors like Islamist extremists can acquire CBRN weapons. Barring truly unforeseen political changes, the state actors just described are likely to be cautious and deterrable. Non-state actors, particularly neo-Salafi extremist groups, may not be. They also are dangerous potential proxies for state actors.

At the same time, the technology of proliferation is also changing. Fortunately, nuclear enrichment is still very difficult, and boosted and thermonuclear weapons are still extremely difficult to design and build. It is virtually certain, however, that far more efficient centrifuge designs will proliferate into the MENA region, and it is possible that LIS may become practical. This and the spread of nuclear power will, over time, ease both acquisition in general and the ability to carry out covert programs.

So-called “fourth generation” chemical weapons are becoming steadily less secret, as are advanced weaponization techniques. The technology, equipment, and skills necessary for biological weapons are disseminating throughout the world, and the techniques for advanced genetically modified weapons and advanced aerosol and other delivery means will almost certainly become available in the MENA region, as they will in other developing areas. Wide area radiological weapons designs remain very complex and sophisticated, but may also become available.

Long-range missiles with significant payload are already deployed. More advanced solid-state designs seem like to be built or deployed, and cruise missile technology and weapons may also become available. Relatively high levels of accuracy and improved targeting should also become available. At the same time, population increases will also increase the “mass destruction” impact of much more conventional strikes on facilities like desalination plants and electricity generation facilities, and the potential impact of

precision attacks on energy facilities can become the equivalent of “weapons of mass economic impact.”

How Potential "Bad Guys" Will Behave in the Future and Their Intentions Towards the US and its National Interests

Up to a point, the answers to this question are simple. To the extent that an "axis of bad guys" exists -- and adult-Westernizing the threat seems only marginally better than demonizing it -- Iran and Syria are unlikely to change their present intentions and behavior unless major regime change occurs for internal reasons.

Both would almost certainly like to pursue a combination of proliferation, modernizing their conventional forces, and improving their capabilities for asymmetric warfare. In practice, both are likely to have to give priority to proliferation and asymmetric forces -- although some conventional force modernization is certain and Iran may have significantly more disposable resources because of high oil revenues.

Iran: Proliferation and Asymmetric Warfare

Iran is likely to be both defensive and hostile, seeking ways to strengthen its position relative to the US and its allies. Proliferation will almost certainly go on at some level, regardless of outside pressure and what Iran *appears* to agree to. Iran will continue to build up its capabilities for asymmetric warfare, but be careful to limit their use unless it feels threatened or it sees a major opportunity.

The good news is that many aspects of the belief structure of Iran's new president and Majlis are so socially and economically impractical that they may eventually lead to a change in the character of the regime. The bad news is that in the short run, more pressure on the US, Israel, and Iran's neighbors are likely, as are more resulting adventures.

There is some chance of a serious escalation of Sunni and Shi'ite tensions that could lead to an more aggressive Iran. One way or another, Iraq is certain to have Iranian involvement. Any form of federalism that created an Iraqi Shi'ite enclave that felt dependent on Iran could make this much worse, as could the expansion of Shi'ite Islamist influence in Iraq. The Sunni-Shi'ite splits in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen are other potential friction points.

As for military developments over the next two decades, it is hard to look more than 5-10 years in the future. Iran will conduct force modernization, although it seems likely to emphasize proliferation and asymmetric warfare.

Its air force continues to age -- although there are new reports of aircraft purchases from Russia and it has bought more modern air munitions. Its surface-based air defense system is a patchwork quilt of obsolescence. It has reconditioned some of its major surface ships, but with mixed results.

The conventional capabilities of its land forces have never been fully rebuilt since its devastating defeats in the spring and summer of 1988. Only 480 of its some 1,600 tanks are T-72s, and these are both vulnerable and have significant operating problems. At this point in time, it seems to be relying on its nascent defense industries to produce modern tanks, AFVs, and artillery, but its future success is very unpredictable.^v

If one looks at Iranian arms buys in recent years, Iran did order \$1,900 million worth of new arms agreements in 1997-2000, but only \$500 million worth in 2001-2004. The end total of \$2.3 billion is probably less than half of what was needed to recapitalize and modernize its present force structure. It compares with a total of \$54.7 billion for Saudi and \$11.6 billion for a small Gulf country like the UAE.^{vi}

Syria: First Rate People, Third Rate Military, Fifth Rate Government

Syria's main goal will be to defend and preserve its present Alawite-dominated regime. It will compromise and retreat whenever it seems desirable to do so to achieve this goal. Syria, however, cannot help playing games over the Golan, Lebanon, and Iraq. It will not perceive its interests as those of the US or its allies. It may be bribable; its behavior cannot be change through persuasion or threats.

As for military developments over the next two decades, Syria badly needs to modernize almost every aspect of its force structure. Its air force, surface-to-air forces, and much of its navy now have limited operational capability. Its electronic warfare capability and command and control systems are aged in military terms and highly vulnerable to Israel or US attack/suppression.

Syria lacks the leadership and experience it had in 1973 and 1982, and much of its military has become a corrupt garrison force in the years of peace that have followed. In spite of more than a decade of effort, it has not been able to get anything like the arms deliveries it has sought from Russia -- although report after report has been issued indicating it has found ways to arrange such financing.^{vii}

If one looks at Syrian arms buys in recent years, Syria only ordered \$500 million worth of new arms agreements in 1997-2000, and \$300 million worth in 2001-2004. The end total of \$800 million is probably less than 25% of what was needed to recapitalize and modernize its present force structure and compares with \$9.7 billion for Egypt and \$8.4 billion for Israel.^{viii}

Non-State Actors

The emerging threats from non-state actors the US has seen in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, and in cells and organization in much of the region are likely to become steadily more sophisticated. It is impossible to predict the extent to which today's neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremist and Shi'ite activist Islamist extremist movements will grow or decline, but it seems very unlikely that they will go away. This is true regardless of whether Bin Laden and/or Zarqawi are killed or captured, or a major movement like Al Qa'ida is broken up.

As long as the present tensions in the Middle East exist, new non-state actors will emerge. Much will, however, depend on the outcome of the fighting in Iraq and progress towards an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. The radicalization of Sunni and/or Shi'ite Arabs in Iraq could present major new problems, as could the radicalization of the Palestinian leadership. Similarly, there are serious uncertainties regarding the future of movements like Hezbollah.

Today's movements already point towards several aspects of the future. They clearly learn from experience, share techniques and lessons, and have at least some interest in CBRN weapons. Most work in some form with one or more state actors and other groups, although such relationships are unstable and uncertain.

Who is A "Bad Guy?"

Twenty years is a long time, even in a place where regimes and leaders are as lasting as in the Middle East. Friendships do not always last, and regime change is often anything but desirable from the viewpoint of US strategic interests and military commitments. So far, the law of unintended consequences has triumphed over the end of history.

The US may also face problems with basing, deployability, coalitions, and alliances from states that are not "bad guys," but are far less willing to be directly tied to US interests, security guarantees, and military presence. Yet, a number of regimes have so far tended to see the US as more necessary in the regional peace process, as a counterbalance to non-state threats, and as a counterbalance to Iran. This is a hard one to call.

Threat Analysis and Force Sizing

Superpowers need large, flexible forces. Professional, all-volunteer forces need to constantly assess possible changes in mission. This does require broad analysis of the kind of future threats around which we should shape our forces. It also requires a clear understanding that we are far from the level of understanding in the Middle East or any other region that allows us to size and shape our forces around the specific details of any estimate of future threats.

In fact, a general caveat about Americans and their desire for prophecy may be in order. H. L. Mencken described it as, "The virulence of the national appetite for bogus revelation." I would hope that the Panel, the Committee, and defense planners in general would remember that we are the country that did not predict Pearl Harbor, did not predict Korea, failed to predict the timing of Russian acquisition of nuclear weapons and then failed to predict its development of ICBMs and rate of MIRVing.

We mischaracterized the threat in Vietnam, and initially disregarded the Sino-Soviet split. We did not predict the risks in Lebanon, Haiti, and Somalia. We are the country that did not predict the threat Iraq would be to Kuwait or its level of proliferation, and then exaggerated the probable effectiveness of the Iraqi Army before the Gulf War. We failed to accurately predict 9/11 and the threat posed by Islamic extremism. We blundered into

the Iraq War with the wrong threat analysis of the reasons for going to war, and totally failed to understand the importance of stability operations.

I hope that the preceding analysis does have some value in highlighting the kind of risks and problems the Quadrennial Defense Review and other strategy and force planning exercises should consider. Given our national track record, however, a little modesty seems necessary. More importantly, our national history has been equally consistent in warning that it is far safer to plan for too much in peacetime than have too little in war.

ⁱ Author's estimates, based on work by the International Institute of Strategic Studies.

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ⁱⁱⁱ The author bases these figures on work done by Richard F. Grimmet of the Congressional Research Service.

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