# REGIONAL THREATS AND SECURITY STRATEGY: THE TROUBLING CASE OF TODAY'S MIDDLE EAST

**James A. Russell**

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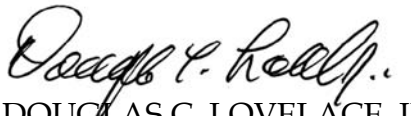
## FOREWORD

Nearly 5 years after the United States invaded Iraq, the tremors from this cataclysmic event are still reverberating in the region and around the world. A new generation of jihadist extremists is gaining experience on the battlefields of Iraq, and what passes for political authority seems increasingly wielded by nonstate groups via the point of a gun. All the surrounding states view developments in Iraq with varying levels of disquiet. Many commentators believe that the invasion has become the most important regional event framing political and military affairs since the 1967 Six-Day War. The war has dramatically altered internal political dynamics throughout the region, placing the regimes and their historically close relations with the United States under new pressures. All these forces are converging to frame a new strategic challenge to the United States and the international community, which has vital economic and political interests in ensuring regional stability and security. The World Economic Forum, for example, recently identified geopolitical instability in the Middle East as a separate and distinct threat to global stability.

This monograph attempts to peel back the layers of complexity surrounding the regional threat environment as a first step in the process of constructing a security strategy that can effectively mitigate the threats to U.S. and global interests. The United States has relied on a remarkably effective Cold War template to protect and preserve its regional interests that includes such elements as access to host nation facilities, prepositioned military equipment, foreign military sales, and joint training and exercises. The question facing strategists is whether this template remains relevant to the regional environment. The author argues that

changing internal political dynamics throughout the region will make it increasingly difficult for regional elites to continue to allow the United States to apply its tried and true Cold War template. He argues that the United States must come to terms with the altered regional environment in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion and conduct a strategic net assessment that will measure the ability of its national instruments of power to protect and preserve national and global interests.

This monograph furthers the Strategic Studies Institute's continued and abiding interest in promoting discourse on how to tailor means to ends as part of the process of building successful strategy in this critical region. The analysis presented will reinforce those arguing for a more holistic view of strategy and of the strategic environment in which internal and external factors are inextricably intertwined. Boundaries between external and internal threats are increasingly blurred around the world, including the Middle East. Strategists need to come to grips with these complexities as the nation deliberates upon applying its instruments of power around the world in pursuit of its objectives. This monograph will lead serious students of strategy down some unwelcome paths, but confronting these labyrinthine challenges is the vital and first step in building successful strategy and policy.



DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

JAMES A. RUSSELL is managing editor of *Strategic Insights*, the bi-monthly e-journal published by the Center for Contemporary Conflict at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, California. He also serves as senior lecturer in the Department of National Security Affairs at NPS, where he teaches courses on Middle East security affairs, terrorism, and national security strategy. From 1988 to 2001, Mr. Russell held a variety of positions in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Near East South Asia. During this period, he traveled extensively in the Persian Gulf and Middle East working on U.S. security policy. His articles and commentaries have appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Security and Terrorism Research Bulletin*, *World Defence Systems*, *Middle East Policy, Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *Comparative Strategy*, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, *Joint Force Quarterly*, *Naval War College Review*, *Nonproliferation Review,* and *Contemporary Security Policy*. His latest article, "Whither Regional Security In a World Turned Upside Down?" appeared in the Summer 2007 issue of *Middle East Policy*. He is the editor of *WMD Proliferation in the Middle East: Directions and Policy Options in the New Century* and *Critical Issues Facing the Middle East: Security, Politics, and Economics* (New York: Palgrave/MacMillan, 2006). Mr. Russell holds a B.A. from Franklin and Marshall College and an M.A. from the University of Pittsburgh and is currently completing his doctoral dissertation for the War Studies Department, King's College, University of London.

## SUMMARY

Like the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War of 1967, the U.S. invasion of Iraq is fundamentally reordering regional politics and security in ways that will be felt for a generation, if not longer.[1] The Pandora's Box opened by the United States in Iraq adds a new level of unwelcome complexity to an already strained regional fabric. Threats to regional security stem from global, interstate, and intrastate sources. The complicated, multidimensional, and interrelated natures of these threats suggest that the United States must reassess strategy and policy if it is to protect and further its regional interests. The objective of this monograph is threefold: (1) deconstruct the threats to regional security and stability in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion; (2) determine whether U.S. strategy is tailored to the threat environment; and (3) suggest steps that can be taken to bring strategy and the environment into closer alignment.

Such a process runs counter to the current defense planning methodology paradigm used by the Defense Department. Both the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* and its predecessor released just after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks called for the divorce of U.S. strategy and defense planning from specific regional threats and contingencies. Instead, the planning documents called for the development of "capabilities portfolios" to enable U.S. military forces to fight in a series of different operational environments: irregular warfare against nonstate actors, traditional interstate warfare, catastrophic attacks using weapons of mass destruction, and disruptive attacks from adversaries using cyber-warfare or other advanced technologies.

This monograph argues that the United States needs to reconnect its strategy, policy, and defense planning to regional environments if it is to have any hope of mitigating threats to its interests, not just in the Middle East, but around the world.

The altered distribution of power has changed the nature of the security dilemma for regional states—the critical structural dynamic in interstate interactions and the engine driving the region's geopolitical instability. The security dilemma refers to a term of art from the international relations theory of realism, which argues that states are primarily motivated by self-interest and exist in an anarchical, self-help system. The modern form of realism, the so-called "neo-realist" paradigm developed by Kenneth Waltz, holds that actions taken by states to protect and enhance their security create in turn insecurity for surrounding states that causes states to balance and counterbalance each other in a never-ending cycle.[2] Under this theory, the security dilemma of states and the relative distribution of power in the international system are a structural dynamic that governs interstate interactions. States pursue security through a combination of arms buildups and political-military relationships with other strong states in alliances. Pursuit of nuclear weapons—the putative ultimate guarantor of state security—and/or nuclear partners is explained under realist theory as a logical result of states' quest for security. That quest for security is operationalized by states' political leadership using a rational decisionmaking process that apportions available resources to meet the security needs of the state.

The altered security regional dilemma and the region's changing nuclear posture must be framed in

the context of changing internal political dynamics—another of the structural features causing regional geopolitical instability. The unfolding Hamas-Palestinian Authority conflict in the Occupied Territories provides an apt metaphor of the broader internal struggles for power unfolding across the region in which the discredited ruling elites are searching for a formula to accommodate the rising power of the Islamists while preserving their own hold on power. Upsetting the apple cart of Iraqi politics comes at a time of regional generational transition, with the corpses of discredited secular dictatorships and monarchies still littering the regional political landscape.

The United States confronts the altered regional security environment with a strategy that remains rooted in its Cold War experience which featured collective defense arrangements backed by security guarantees, forward military presence, and strong U.S.–host nation military relations. In order to mitigate threats to regional security, the United States must first come to grips with the linkages between the intrastate, interstate, and global environments in the region. With the linkages established, the threats to regional security and stability as suggested in the Davos Forum's formulation make perfect sense: geopolitical instability, energy supply disruptions, weapons proliferation, and international terrorism. To contain these threats, the United States must reconnect its security strategy to the regional environment, recognizing that it cannot simply apply "capabilities portfolios" to complex political and military problems bounded by history and regional circumstances. The analysis presented here suggests that state behavior in the region is the product of an altered security dilemma, in which

internal political pressures are discouraging regional states from entrusting responsibility for their strategic security to outside powers, and instead are moving them to redirect their security efforts inward.

The United States needs to undertake a strategic regional net assessment as it seeks to construct a regional security strategy to protect its interests and mitigate wider threats to international security. That net assessment should include (1) reviewing the role of security guarantees in promoting regional stability, an acknowledgment of the contradictory nature of the interstate and intrastate threats and tensions; and (2) the negative impact that the U.S. obsession with force protection is having on its ability to effectively implement strategy on the ground.

## ENDNOTES

1. Richard Haas argues that the invasion has effectively ended the period of U.S. regional dominance dating to the end of the Cold War. See "The New Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 6, November/December 2006, at *www.foreignaffairs.org/20061101faessay85601/richard-n-haass/the-new-middle-east.html.*

2. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* New York: Random House, 1979.

# REGIONAL THREATS AND SECURITY STRATEGY: THE TROUBLING CASE OF TODAY'S MIDDLE EAST

In September 2002, Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa presciently warned that the "gates of hell" would open if the United States invaded Iraq. Not heeding his warning, the United States emphatically ripped those gates from their hinges in March 2003, and the entire region now sits precariously wedged just inside the entrance staring into the inferno. Indeed, the entire world is feeling the heat.

From Baghdad, Najaf, and Kirkuk to such far-flung places as Beirut and Tripoli in Lebanon to Mogadishu, the Gaza Strip, and Manama, the region is ablaze with the politics of contention. In this debate, the AK-47, explosively formed projectiles, improvised explosive devices, suicide bombers, sectarian death squads, and rocket-propelled grenades serve as the preferred means of communication. Around the world, the Iraq war shimmers on televisions and computer screens, serving as the Sunni-extremist equivalent of the Jerry Lewis telethon, pouring money into al Qai'da's coffers and providing a steady stream of recruits ready to throw themselves and their innocent victims into the flames of hell's inferno. The suicide bombers of Iraq have emboldened and reenergized al Qai'da's franchised global operations, urged on by their spiritual leaders, Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden, operating from established sanctuaries in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan.[1]

Like the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War in 1967, the U.S. invasion of Iraq is fundamentally reordering regional politics and security in ways that will be felt for a

generation, if not longer.[2] The Pandora's Box opened by the United States in Iraq adds new and unwelcome complexity to a geopolitical environment already roiled by traditional stresses. Threats to regional security stem from global, interstate, and intrastate sources. The complicated multidimensional and interrelated natures of these threats suggest that the United States must now reassess present strategy and policy if it is to protect and further its regional interests. The objective of this monograph is threefold: (1) deconstruct the threats to regional security and stability in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion; (2) determine whether present U.S. strategy is tailored to the newly emerged threat environment; and (3) suggest steps that can be taken to bring strategy and the threat environment into closer alignment.

Such a process runs counter to the current planning model used by the Defense Department. Both the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* and its predecessor released just after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks call for the divorce of U.S. strategy and defense planning from specific regional threats and contingencies.[3] Instead, the planning documents call for the development of "capabilities portfolios" to enable U.S. military forces to fight in a series of different operational environments: irregular warfare against nonstate actors, traditional interstate warfare, and responses to catastrophic attacks with weapons of mass destruction or disruptive attacks from adversaries using cyber-warfare or other advanced technologies.[4] This monograph argues that the United States needs to reconnect its strategy, policy, and defense planning to regional environments if it is to have any hope of countering threats to its interests, not just in the Middle East but around the world.

## The Road to Nowhere—Or Down to the Crossroads?

The United States today finds itself in a period of profound strategic confusion and weariness as it sifts through the rubble of the last 6 years of conflict, searching for clues as to what went wrong and how to restore its position of global leadership. Nowhere is the rubble as high, deep, and quickly accummulating as in the Middle East. Public opinion polling from 2006 has found that nearly 70 percent of the regional public regards the United States and Israel as the principal threats to regional security.[5] The same polling data indicated that Lebanese Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has become the most popular leader in the Middle East.[6] Where a decade ago the United States could reasonably be said to exert preponderant influence throughout regional capitals, today's regimes look upon their association with the United States as a regrettable but necessary evil and are anxious to demonstrate their independence from Washington, regarding such a stance as a matter of political survival.

A legitimate question for strategists is whether the United States should even be concerned about threats to the security of the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. Noted strategic analyst Edward Luttwak recently argued that the Middle East is irrelevant to global affairs and hence is undeserving of sustained attention by the U.S. Government and the international community.[7] Luttwak reasons that: (1) the Arab-Israeli dispute has lost its strategic significance and is now largely a local quarrel; (2) regional military threats are not substantial; (3) Middle Eastern societies are not amenable to political change and hence are best left alone by outside powers; and (4) the region is stagnant

economically and culturally, badly lagging behind the world in most development indicators.[8] Luttwak therefore concludes: "Unless compelled by immediate danger, we should therefore focus on the old and new lands of creation in Europe and America, in India and East Asia—places where hard-working populations are looking ahead instead of dreaming of the past."[9]

While deserving of serious thought, Luttwak's argument is rejected in most quarters. In early 2007, for example, the World Economic Forum reported 23 core global risks to the international community over the next decade, the thrust being that the Middle East remains central to global stability. Not only does the report include "Middle East Instability" as its own unique risk to global security, it also identifies numerous other salient threats that point to the region's central importance: potential disruptions in world energy supplies, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the spread of international terrorism, the U.S. current account deficit, access to fresh water, retrenchment from globalization, and state collapse through civil wars (see Figure 1).

The unsurprising implication of the World Economic Forum's report is that countering the risks to security in the Middle East is critical to preserving global stability. In a follow-on report specifically addressing regional issues, the World Economic Forum and the Gulf Research Center identified several critical regional trends with adverse global implications.[10] The report noted: "The Middle East is a focal point for global risk and its mitigation. This is particularly clear with geopolitical risk—with a high concentration of destabilizing geopolitical events having their origin in the wider Middle Eastern Region."[11] The report highlights a number of particularly critical threats to global security emanating from the region:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Economic**<br>• Oil price shock/energy supply interruptions<br>• U.S. current account deficit/fall in value of $<br>• Chinese economic hard landing<br>• Fiscal crises caused by demographic shifts<br>• Blowup in asset prices/ excessive indebtedness<br><br>**Environmental**<br>• Climate change<br>• Loss of fresh water services<br>• Tropical storms<br>• Earthquakes<br>• Inland flooding | **Geopolitical**<br>• International terrorism<br>• Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)<br>• Interstate and civil wars<br>• Transnational crime and corruption<br>• Retrenchment from globalization<br>• Middle East instability<br><br>**Societal**<br>• Pandemics<br>• Infectious disease in developing world<br>• Chronic disease in developed world<br>• Liability regimes<br><br>**Technological**<br>• Breakdown in critical information infrastructure<br>• Emergence of risks associated with nanotechnology |

Source: *Global Risks 2007: A Global Risk Network Report,* World Economic Forum: Geneva 2007.

**Figure 1. World Economic Forum "Core" Global Risks**.[12]

- *Oil price shocks or energy supply disruptions.* Oil producers in the Middle East must steadily increase production over the next decade and beyond if world oil markets are to remain in a rough supply-demand balance and keep pricing in a predictable range. The International Energy Agency forecasts an inexorable growth in global demand for oil from 84 million barrels per day in 2005 to 116 million barrels per day by 2030.[13] As non-Organization of Petroleum Exporting

Countries (OPEC) suppliers reach a production plateau by 2020, oil and natural gas production will be overwhelmingly concentrated in a few states, most which are located in the Middle East. The Middle East's share of global oil production is projected to grow from 35 percent in 2004 to 44 percent by 2030.[14] The health of the world's economy will increasingly depend on predictable production increases by Gulf state oil and gas producers to ensure the orderly functioning of world energy markets. Political stability which creates a favorable investment climate throughout the region is an important underlying structural factor that will allow this process to move forward. Regional geopolitical instability that interferes with this process by disrupting the investment climate could have a catastrophic global impact.

- *International terrorism.* The jihad in Iraq is attracting followers from within the region and around the world, unsettling already unstable internal political dynamics throughout the region. Like the exodus of the jihadis from Afghanistan in the 1990s to conflict zones around the world, Iraq today constitutes the world's proving ground for a new wave of Islamic extremists to develop their skills in igniting conflicts around the world.[15] It is also clear that al-Qai'da is actively pursuing plans for a strategic attack on critical oil production facilities throughout the region—an event that could have an enormously damaging impact on global economic and political affairs.[16]
- *Proliferation of nuclear and other unconventional weapons.* Iran's apparently inexorable

march toward acquisition of nuclear weapons has been greeted with proclamations in regional capitals from Rabat to Muscat declaring an intent to develop their own nuclear power programs. Where once the region boasted only one nuclear power (Israel), a cascade of nuclear programs threatens a new and potentially destabilizing round of nuclear proliferation. Given the unstable intrastate and interstate dynamics, a nuclearized region is thus another of the disturbing alternative futures that might tempt the regional states.

**Regional Instability and the New Security Dilemma**.

The World Economic Forum reports all note the threat posed by geopolitical instability in the Middle East to global security. That geopolitical instability flows from a discombobulated regional environment that is still rearranging itself in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion—the most important regional event since the Six-Day War in 1967. The Iraq war has altered the distribution of power throughout the region, with a number of critical external and internal elements pressuring regional governing elites:[17]

- *The perceived decline in U.S. global military power and political influence and a consequent loss of credibility in the American extended deterrent.* The global decline in U.S. political influence is mirrored in the region—and has been particularly exacerbated by the Iraq invasion and its distraction from a more constructive involvement in the Arab-Israeli dispute.
- *The emergence of an alliance of powerful state and nonstate actors: Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas,*

*and various Shi'ite-based militias and political organizations in Iraq.* Various of these actors have successfully portrayed themselves as representatives of a "successful" resistance movement opposed to Israel and the United States in Iraq, Lebanon, and the occupied territories. The new-found public legitimacy and popularity of these actors represent a profound challenge to the established ruling elites.

- *The Sunni state elites of the Eastern Mediterranean and Gulf states now confront an ascendant Iran-dominated Shia bloc.* As a result, they are scrambling to build a series of balancing political relationships to fill the vacuum created by the loss of U.S. influence and the necessity for them to distance themselves from Washington.
- *Iran's so far successful defiance of the United States and the international community in its relentless movement toward acquiring a nuclear capability.* Its achievement of nuclear status is one aspect of its enhanced regional power and influence in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion. Iran now arguably exercises a preponderant influence in Iraq—particularly in the south.
- *Strengthened Islamist political movements throughout the region.* These must now be accommodated by regional regimes.
- *Anxious regional oil producers*. While still dependent on U.S. military protection, they are actively building political, economic, and military partnerships with outside powers such as India, China, Russia, and Pakistan.
- *Publics that are virulently anti-United States and anti-Israel.* They increasingly see little distinction between the two.

Shorn of the protective security umbrella provided by U.S. guarantees and facing a restive, anti-U.S./Israel public, regional regimes simultaneously confront a threatening external environment consisting of an unstable Iraq, a potentially nuclear-armed Iran, and an Iranian-headed regional alliance of state and nonstate actors ranging from Baghdad to Beirut. Regional elites also see the prospect of an Iranian-allied state in Iraq after the United States inevitably departs and a proliferation of nonstate Shi'ite and Sunni militias develops, looking for other regional climes in which to ply their mischievous trade. The military prowess in asymmetric military operations shown by Hezbollah against Israel in Lebanon in August 2006 and similar military capabilities of various nonstate insurgent groups in Iraq provide a stark and threatening contrast to the traditional conventional military incompetence in the surrounding states.

**An Altered Regional Security Dilemma**.

The nature of the security dilemma for regional states has been changed owing to the altered distribution of power—that critical underlying structural dynamic of interstate interactions and the engine driving the region's geopolitical instability which so concern analysts at the World Economic Forum. The security dilemma refers to a concept employed by the international relations theory of realism, which views states as existing in an anarchical, self-help system where they are primarily motivated by self-interest.[18] The modern form of realism, the so-called "neo-realist" paradigm developed by Kenneth Waltz, holds that actions taken by states to protect and enhance their security in turn

create insecurity for surrounding states that causes states to balance and counterbalance each other in a never-ending cycle.[19] Under this theory, the security dilemma of states and the relative distribution of power in the international system form a structural dynamic that governs interstate interactions. States pursue security through a combination of arms buildups and political-military ties to other strong states in alliances. Pursuit of nuclear weapons—the supposed ultimate guarantor of state security—and/or nuclear partners is explained under realist theory as a logical result of states' quest for security. That quest for security is pursued by states' political leadership using a rational decisionmaking process that apportions available resources to meet the security needs of the state. Waltz controversially argued in 1981 that these underlying dynamics of the international system would inevitably result in a world of many nuclear states. But Waltz also argued that nuclear proliferation would not necessarily lead to a more unstable international environment, since possession of nuclear weapons would make the costs of war catastrophically high for states and would thus naturally weight the decisionmaking cost-benefit analysis of leaders against war.[20]

Throughout the Middle East, the security dilemma of states has ebbed and flowed in ways that were predicted by the theory, albeit with some twists. The region has historically featured four regional hegemons: Israel, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran. Regional states have lived in an environment dominated by interstate conflict and rivalry, punctuated by violent outbreaks and warfare. As predicted by realism theory, the unstable regional environment created incentives for states to arm themselves through purchases of military equipment. Not surprisingly, the region has constituted the largest

market for conventional arms in the developing world over much of the last 25 years. Recent figures illustrate this trend. According to the Congressional Research Service, the Near East Region leads the developing world in arms purchases, with states signing arms contracts valued at $75.5 billion during the period from 1998 to 2005.[21] However, to view arms purchases simply as a logical extension of state responses to their respective security dilemmas fills in only part of the picture. Throughout the Middle East the security dilemma of regional states has always been more complicated than the realist paradigm would suggest, a complication attributable to the region's changing geopolitical dynamics.

There is almost universal agreement that arms purchases throughout the region have not created credible conventional military capabilities. This is no accident. While Middle Eastern leaders historically spent lavishly on conventional arms, those arms were never primarily intended to provide credible conventional military capability to reduce external threats to state security. With the exception of Israel, the region's conventional militaries historically have been noted more for their incompetence than their military prowess.[22] The reason for this is that regional regimes were motivated by a more important consideration: the overriding domestic political imperative to keep their conventional militaries weak as a way to mitigate coup threats from their militaries.[23] Instead of protecting regimes from external threats, arms purchases served as vehicles to co-opt potential internal regime opponents while simultaneously addressing a more important purpose of cementing political relations with outside powers. Saudi Arabia's $65 billion worth of military equipment purchased from the United

States under the foreign military sales program is the quintessential example of this regional phenomenon. Throughout the Middle East and Persian Gulf, state responses to external threats were systemically shaped by the contradictory objective of protecting themselves from internal threats as well as external adversaries. Regional regimes almost always chose to treat internal threats more seriously than external ones. One result of this calculation was that regional states lived in a perpetual military imbalance in relation to the regional hegemons.

Regional states similarly failed to see the value in cooperation as a tool to manage their security dilemmas—cooperative behavior that should have logically followed from the neo-liberal paradigm.[24] The explanation for this failure also partially lies with the overriding salience of internal threats to regional regimes. Had the regimes acted in accordance with neo-liberal theory to address their insecurity, they would have established a collective security framework as a vehicle to co-opt and balance the hegemons. During the 1980s, fractious interstate disputes and rivalries prevented Middle Eastern and Gulf states from creating effective political-military partnerships to address the systemic military imbalance created by the three regional hegemons. In the Eastern Mediterranean, the Arab League never became an institution capable of unifying the states against common threats. In the Gulf, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) created in 1981 similarly failed to mobilize member states into an effective balancing mechanism to counter either Iran or Iraq.

Political scientist Gregory Gause argues that during the period 1971-91, the cost-benefit calculations driving decisionmaking on alliances in the Persian

Gulf were perceived ideological and political threats and not strictly military power.[25] This calculus drove states into a complicated, dynamic series of interstate relationships that lacked foundation and which fluctuated according to regional circumstance. Despite the Gulf States' service as loyal noncombatant allies to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, less than 2 years after the war ended, they found themselves on the receiving end of an ungrateful Saddam's wrath. Interestingly, the most enduring regional partnership of the period has proved to be Iran's alliance of convenience with the secular Baath regime in Syria. That partnership served as a means to further Iran's objectives in Lebanon and helped consolidate Hezbollah's capabilities as a tool to be used against Israel and the United States.

As part of this complicated regional dynamic, most regional states simultaneously sought and received security guarantees from the United States (or the Soviet Union prior to 1989)—particularly after Gulf War I in 1991, developments that are consistent with the neo-realist paradigm. (While Jordan bucked the trend by aligning itself with Iraq during Gulf War I, it rectified the situation soon after the conclusion of that war.) These U.S. guarantees were embodied in a series of bilateral defense cooperation agreements throughout the region, embracing Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. A series of similarly structured agreements built up over the years between the United States and Saudi Arabia formalized the security partnership between these two states. These agreements committed the United States to the defense of these countries, permitted U.S. use of host-nation military facilities, defined the legal status of U.S. military personnel deployed in their countries, made provisions for prepositioned military

equipment, and established a framework for arms sales and military exercises. During the 1990s, the United States built up a military infrastructure in the Gulf to underwrite these guarantees and implement the policy of dual containment. Under the agreements, the U.S. Navy enlarged and placed on a more permanent footing its headquarters elements in Manama, Bahrain, as did the Air Force in Qatar and the Army in Kuwait.

With the exception of having to buy U.S. arms and bear some of the monetary costs associated with basing infrastructure, the security guarantees extended by the United States constituted politically cost-free arrangements for the regional states, allowing them to concentrate on their internal threats, regarded as more serious. The first overt signs that the terms and conditions surrounding the security guarantees were not as politically cost-free as the regimes had hoped first appeared in Saudi Arabia. Following attacks by Saudi dissidents on U.S. military facilities in 1995 and 1996, domestic pressure began building on the regime to end the presence of American military personnel at Prince Sultan Air Base—pressure that finally resulted in the departure of U.S. operational forces from the Kingdom in 2003. In many respects, the House of Saud acted in ways that were consistent with the argument of this monograph—that internal threats and internal political dynamics played overriding shaping roles in the response of state leadership to their security dilemmas. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the removal of these U.S. forces and the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks have formed part of a more complicated political framework between Saudi Arabia and the United States that has undermined the nature of the security guarantees extended by the United States to Saudi Arabia dating back to the 1950s.[26]

The historical root of the security dilemma of regional states is also reflected in their respective nuclear postures. A surprising feature of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is the comparative restraint exercised by states for the last 50 years despite being at the center of the globe's most persistent and enduring conflict and three major regional wars.[27] Regional states have lived under the threat of nuclear weapons at least since 1968, when it is believed that Israel achieved a nuclear capability.[28] Other nearby states also boast nuclear weapons, with India having exploded a device in 1974 and Pakistan in 1987, yet these developments did not spur regional proliferation. While the realist paradigm might have predicted a virtual cascade of additional regional nuclear states in response to Israel's nuclear program, none of Israel's neighbors aggressively pursued nuclear weapons. In the region, Iraq, Iran and Libya pursued nuclear programs for their own purposes. Iraq's program was disrupted by the Israeli strikes in September 1980 and then again in the inspection process following Gulf War I. Iran's program, started under the Shah, now apparently boasts a well-developed infrastructure for uranium enrichment. Libya also pursued a nuclear program—albeit an ineffective one that never had a likelihood of success.[29]

The basis for regional nuclear restraint stemmed from the outsourcing of "strategic" security by states to outside powers as embodied in a series of cross-cutting security guarantees extended by the United States and the Soviet Union that date to the 1950s-1970s. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union carved up regional alliance blocs glued together by security guarantees that effectively placed much of the region under an extended deterrent

nuclear umbrella.[30] As states exercised restraint in developing nuclear weapons, however, that restraint did not extend to the development of unconventional weapons. The period from 1970 to 2000 saw Syria, Iraq, and Iran all develop/acquire chemical and biological weapons and long-range missiles that were directed at a wide variety of regional adversaries. The presence of long-range missiles and chemical weapons is another disturbing feature of the regional military balance.

All aspects of the new regional distribution of power have combined to create circumstances eliminating the incentives for states to show nuclear restraint while increasing the attractiveness of a more ambiguous nuclear posture. The altered distribution of power features external and internal dynamics that have combined to force leaders to address external threats in ways that are now inexorably being shaped by internal politics. Where before these two competing priorities could be pursued independently by regional elites, it is now no longer possible for states to keep the external and internal threats separated. This new dynamic is being shaped by a variety of forces. At the global level, there is a general perception that U.S. power and influence are on the wane. Polling data over the last 5 years reveal the steady erosion of popular support for the United States around the world—a critical factor limiting U.S. ability to exert global leadership.[31] Reflecting this decline, states around the world, and most particularly those in the Middle East, confront significant domestic political costs to maintain a supportive relationship with the United States. This phenomenon is vividly on display in Iraq, in which no regional state has accepted a direct role in trying to stabilize the country. Far from demonstrating U.S. strength and power, the situation in Iraq is actually

undermining American might as well as the credibility of U.S. security guarantees that have been relied upon by Middle Eastern states as their primary instrument for protection against external adversaries. As noted earlier, the perceived decline in U.S. power has combined with a domestic political environment that is virulently anti-United States throughout the region.

**The Security Dilemma and New Nuclear Dynamics**.

The region's altered nuclear posture presents another disturbing feature of the regional security environment. In September 2006, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's son (and presumed successor), Gamal, announced Egypt's intentions to revive the dormant nuclear energy program abandoned in 1986. The ambitious plan is to build three nuclear power plants by 2020 that would generate 1,800 megawatts of electricity. The first of these plants is to be located in the city of Al-Dabah. The younger Mubarak's announcement followed several forceful statements by the regime's opponents calling for Egypt to develop its own deterrent nuclear weapon. For example, in July 2006, Dr. Hamdi Hassan, spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary caucus, stated: "We are ready to starve in order to own a nuclear weapon that will represent a real deterrent and will be decisive in the Arab-Israeli conflict." Other prominent Muslim Brotherhood leaders have openly called for the development of nuclear weapons, ridiculing the Mubarak regime's policy of trying to have the Middle East declared a WMD-free zone.[32] Egypt currently operates two nuclear research reactors. Its newest reactor became operational in 1997, with construction and design assistance provided by the Argentinian

company, Investigacion Aplicada, or INVAP. Egypt is a Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatory.

In November 2006, Algeria announced intentions to expand its own nuclear energy program—an announcement immediately followed by an offer extended by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to assist in Algeria's program. Tehran faces stiff competition for the business. In January 2007, Russian Minister of Industry and Energy Viktor Khristenko visited Algiers, where he concluded an agreement to cooperate on developing nuclear energy. According to Khristenko: "We have agreed within the framework of the memorandum to begin contacts between experts in the two countries to study the possibilities of bilateral cooperation and to determine the areas of possible cooperation in this [nuclear] context, and I hope that we can begin this work soon."[33] Algeria also reportedly approached South Korea for nuclear cooperation in mid-2006.[34] Algeria has been operating two research reactors under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision since the mid-1990s. INVAP provided a one-megawatt reactor that became operational in 1989; another reactor, provided by China and producing 15 megawatts, is located at Ain Oussera in a remote area of the Atlas Mountains some 90 miles south of Algiers. Discovery of sophisticated surface-to-air missiles at the site in the early 1990s led to suspicions that Algeria was developing nuclear weapons at the site. Under pressure from the United States, Algeria acceded to the NPT and placed its facilities under IAEA safeguards in 1992.[35]

Morocco first indicated its intention to expand its nuclear power program in April 2006—plans that received a boost during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Rabat in September 2006. During the

visit, a Russian spokesman indicated that Russia's nuclear export agency, Atomstroiexport, would join in the bidding for Morocco's first nuclear power station which Rabat hopes to become operational by 2016.[36] Morocco currently operates a small two-megawatt reactor provided by the United States under IAEA safeguards.

Joining the cacophony of announcements, in December 2006 member states of the GCC announced plans to develop their own nuclear power programs under IAEA supervision.[37] In early 2007, GCC Secretary General Abdul Rahman Al-Attyah indicated that preliminary plans call for the beginning of nuclear power plant construction by 2009, an ambitious timetable given the lack of a nuclear infrastructure in the Gulf. Saudi Foreign Minister Saudi al-Faisal told reporters: "It is not a threat. . . . It is an announcement so that there will be no misinterpretation of what we are doing. We are not doing this secretly. We are doing it openly."[38] Putin's February 2007 visit to Saudi Arabia—the first-ever official visit by a Russian head of state to the Kingdom—signaled that the GCC and the Saudis would find a ready supplier for all their nuclear needs from Russia. Of the GCC member countries, only Saudi Arabia is known to have an active nuclear research program, and none are believed to have nuclear reactors. All are NPT signatories.

Finally, Jordan's King Abdullah announced in January 2007 that Jordan would join its Arab neighbors in pursuing a nuclear power program. Following the announcement, a spokesman for Jordan's Energy Ministry announced the formation of a committee to begin studies on the construction of a 600 megawatt reactor. Pakistan has publicly offered to assist in the development of Jordan's program. The government's

announcement received widespread praise from such diverse sources as the Jordanian Communist Party and the Islamic Action Party—the political arm of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood.[39] Like other regional states, Jordan promises to observe IAEA-administered safeguards. Moving to a more ambiguous nuclear stance reflects the altered security dilemma and addresses the new regional distribution of power by signaling different actors with a variety of different messages. Consider:

- It reinforces the message to Tehran that regional states are not prepared to stand by idly and see a nuclear-armed and regionally-dominant Iran establish a coercive political-military framework to intimidate the region. The region's new nuclear posture must be seen as a hedged response to Iran.
- It signals to outside powers such as Russia, China, and India that the era of U.S. regional hegemony is drawing to a close and that outside powers now have an opportunity to build political, military, and economic partnerships in which cooperation on nuclear programs can be one supportive element in a broader integrated relationship.
- It sends a variety of messages to the United States: (1) the overriding importance of forestalling Iran's march towards nuclear weapons and the potential consequences of not stopping Iran; (2) the region's exasperation and displeasure with U.S. regional policy under the George W. Bush administration; (3) that it may not be possible to revert to the "business as usual" approach between Washington and regional capitals; (4) but Washington has time

to try to resolve these issues since it will be 5-7 years or longer before these nuclear programs can be realistically established.

- It demonstrates to domestic political constituencies that the regimes are publicly distancing themselves from Washington and are no longer necessarily prepared either to accept a U.S. security guarantee or to exist under a threatening nuclear shadow emanating either from Tel Aviv or Tehran. The pursuit of nuclear programs has the potential to become an important symbol of national identity and prestige throughout the region.
- Moving to a latent nuclear status signals to Israel that the region will be able to achieve nuclear capability on short notice, representing an end to Israel's regional nuclear monopoly.
- Administering their nuclear programs under IAEA supervision allows the regional states to cloak their programs in an aura of legitimacy, which means they can continue to use Israel's and Iran's continued noncompliance with the NPT to their political advantage in the international arena.

**Unstable Internal Political Dynamics**.

The altered regional security dilemma and the region's changing nuclear posture must be framed in the context of changing internal political dynamics—another of the structural features leading to regional geopolitical instability. The unfolding Hamas-Palestinian Authority conflict in the Occupied Territories provides an apt metaphor for the broader internal power struggles unfolding across the region in which

the discredited ruling elites are searching for a formula to accommodate the rising power of the Islamists while preserving their own hold on power. Upsetting the apple cart of long-established Iraqi politics comes during a time of regional generational transition, with the carcasses of anachronistic and discredited secular dictatorships and monarchies still littering the regional political landscape. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is positioning his son, Gamal, to succeed him. Syrian President Haffez Assad's son, Bashar, already sits perched atop a creaky Alawite power structure. In Jordan, King Abdullah faces the daunting prospect of governing without the popularity and legitimacy of his father. In Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad proclaimed himself king in an attempt to ensure that the Khalifa dynasty continues in perpetuity its rule over the island's restive Shi'ite majority. In Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah recently decreed that succession would be dealt with by an internal committee and that power would not necessarily pass directly to the next-in-line figure in the succession hierarchy. In Kuwait, succession in the Sabah family was handled with the constructive input of an increasingly assertive Kuwaiti parliament.

The Iraq venture has reopened simmering internal sectarian fissures that had for the most part lain dormant during the 1990s and the era of U.S. containment in the Gulf. Political empowerment of Shi'ites and Kurds in Iraq will have lasting implications in the region by reigniting political aspirations within both groups across national borders. Kurds in Iran and Turkey are already feeling the pull of the de facto Kurdish state currently emerging in northern Iraq. The armed Peshmerga today police the borders of the new Kurdistan, and the Kurds now have access to a portion of oil revenues coming out of the fields near

Kirkuk and Mosul. It is estimated that oil reserves in northern Iraq total 48 billion barrels, with another 100 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) has already signed production sharing agreements with Norwegian and Turkish companies that are actively exploring for new wells in the Kurdish areas.[40] The KRG is treading delicately in its relationship with the Iraqi government in Baghdad, but there is little doubt around the region that in political terms the removal of Saddam has led to the Kurds finally achieving their centuries-old dreams of achieving political autonomy. A Kurdish state in northern Iraq would represent a potential threat to Iran as well as Turkey, with both having sizable Kurdish populations. In July 2004, Iran and Turkey signed an agreement to cooperate on security matters relating to Kurdish separatist groups operating out of northern Iran. The agreement to cooperate against Kurdish groups comes amidst a growing Turkish-Iranian relationship that features the possible export of Iranian natural gas through Turkey to Europe.[41]

Political empowerment of the Shi'ite majority in Iraq following Saddam's removal is also stirring Shi'ite political aspirations throughout the Gulf, where they form the majority in Iran and Bahrain, with significant minorities in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon.[42] In December 2004, Jordan's King Abdullah voiced the concerns of the region's Sunni leaders when he warned of the possibility of a dominant Shi'ite crescent stretching from Iran through Iraq and Syria and into Lebanon.[43] The removal of Saddam is reviving the region's age-old religious rivalry between Shias and Sunnis stretching back over the centuries. The triumph of the Baathists in Iraq during the 1960s and their rule the next 40 years formed a critical component in the

Sunni states' plans to keep Shi'ite influence bottled up in Iran, giving them a free hand to manage their own Shi'ite minorities. The model of Iraq's inchoate democracy, which has given the majority Shias political power, resonates powerfully within significant Shi'ite communities in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon.[44] Pilgrimages to the recently opened Shi'ite shrines in Najaf and Karbala have also invigorated the transnational sense of Shi'ite religious identity and community that Saddam and the Sunni monarchies had long suppressed.[45]

**New Political and Military Actors.**

Empowerment of the Shi'ite communities and the increased pressure on the Sunni-led states also comes at a time when a new caste of populist political leaders and Islamist-dominated associations is emerging region-wide to challenge the religious, age-based, and familial hierarchies that dominate regional politics. This region-wide challenge provides another of the underlying structural features of the geopolitical instability so feared by the World Economic Forum. Leaders like Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon, Ismail Haniyeh in Gaza, and Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq are the vanguard of new political and anti-democratic movements that are exerting authority through skillful grass roots politics backed by the point of a gun. These leaders are positioning themselves as alternatives to the familial and sectarian hierarchies that seized power with the departure of the colonial occupiers some 50 years ago.

Importantly, below these visible figures are a variety of vibrant political associations in Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Yemen that are all mobilizing to exert power in the nascent democratic processes

unfolding in these states. In Saudi Arabia, a group of once-dissident clerics has been readmitted to mainstream society and actively participated in that country's municipal elections in early 2003.[46] Fiery anti-U.S. clerics like Saffar al-Hawali have been permitted to join the process of political mobilization in the elections, which only confirmed the popularity of the religious conservatives at the local political level.

Reflecting the Kingdom's changing domestic political landscape, the regime in November 2004 allowed a group of clerics (including Hawali) to issue a fatwa urging support for jihadist forces inside Iraq. Region-wide political mobilization is being reinforced by the aftermath of the Iraq invasion, in which a variety of new actors are combining impressive organizational skills with Islamist and populist political rhetoric that melds Islamist political themes and historical narratives featuring resistance to traditional powers and sources of authority and a call to re-Islamize society.

An important complementary factor accompanying the emergence of new political forces is the arrival of a new generation of conventional weapons that allows nonstate groups to establish so-called states-within-states and to challenge established conventional military forces in the region. Shi'ite organizations like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Mahdi army in Sadr City are recent examples of this phenomenon. Both organizations have established states-within-states in their respective areas, combining political and military tools to exercise control. As Israeli and U.S. military forces have discovered much to their discomfort, increasingly lethal weapons like the RPG-29, antiship cruise missiles, advanced sniper rifles, remote piloted vehicles loaded with explosives, and new surface-to-surface rockets have provided

insurgent and militia groups with dangerous new killing power. The U.S. Central Command's General John Abizaid told reporters in September 2006 that the new weapons provide an unwelcome "hint of things to come" in the already-deadly military landscape.[47] Abizaid notes the intraregional cooperation between a variety of different groups that are spreading weapons throughout the region: "There are clearly links between Lebanese Hezbollah training people in Iran to operate in Lebanon, and also training people in Iran that are Shia splinter groups that could operate against us in Iraq."[48] There have long been suspicions that Iran's Revolutionary Guards have been assisting insurgents and Shi'ite militias in fielding ever-more deadly shaped-charge improvised explosive devices that are exacting a growing toll on the road-bound U.S. military in Iraq.[49] U.S. M1A2 main battle tanks, Marine Corps Amphibious Assault Vehicles, British armored personnel carriers, and Israeli Merkava battle tanks have been destroyed by explosively formed projectiles and RPG-29s in the last 36 months.

The new generation of conventional weapons proved critical to Hezbollah's successful resistance against Israel's overwhelming conventional military power in Lebanon in August 2006. Hezbollah's organizational structure, featuring a decentralized command and control network with competent and innovative unit commanders, successfully executed a defense in depth that countered Israeli mounted infantry and armor and even successfully struck an Israeli naval vessel. [50] Iraqi insurgents are also using similar asymmetric tactics against U.S. forces in Iraq, and many believe it is only a matter of time before the Shi'ite militias start to see their military capabilities grow with the new advanced weaponry.

This upsurge in regional military capabilities coincides with revelations that Russia has apparently abandoned its policy of restraining conventional arms transfers to Iran and developing nations around the world. According to the authoritative Congressional Research Service: "In recent years, Russian leaders have made major strides in providing more creative financing and payment options for prospective arms clients. They have also agreed to engage in counter-trade, offsets, debt-swapping, and, in key cases, . . . licensed production agreements in order to sell its weapons."[51] Many of the new weapons in Hezbollah's arsenal, e.g., the RPG-29, are believed to have been originally sold by Russia or are being produced under license in Iran, which provided these weapons to its terrorist clients in Iraq and Lebanon.

This weaponry, combined with appropriate training and organizational skills, provides nonstate actors like the Mahdi army and Hezbollah with the ability to threaten all the conventional militaries of the region. Hezbollah has established effective local control throughout much of southern Lebanon, and Shi'ite militias have similarly established control over much of Baghdad and southern Iraq. In both these cases, it is not clear whether the central government authority has the military capability to reassert control over these areas. For the Sunni-led states in the Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean, this is particularly troubling, given the history of conventional military incompetence throughout these states. The new military power accruing to actors like Hezbollah provides them with new bargaining leverage over internal political rivals as well as the surrounding regional states.

**Iranian Ascendance**.

The regional environment in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion suits Iranian interests and objectives—another feature driving the region's geopolitical instability. Iran's historical objective of becoming the dominant regional political and military power has been realized. A comfortable political and military partnership appears to be emerging between the Shi'ite power structure in Najaf and Karabla with the mullahs in Tehran. The U.S. military occupation of Iraq and the ongoing insurgency serve Iran's purposes in two ways. First, it ties down the United States militarily and reduces the coercive and deterrent leverage from its forward deployed forces. Instead of demonstrating U.S. resolve and strength as the neoconservatives had hoped, Iraq is demonstrating the limits of U.S. power and emboldening its adversaries. Second, the slow bleed of U.S. influence and military power in Iraq makes it more difficult for the United States to muster the political and military resources necessary to credibly threaten what looks like Iran's acquisition of a nuclear capability. Instead, the United States is forced to recognize Iran's dominant position. Iran now holds the keys to Iraq's future, not the United States. Iran is the new champion of regional political causes like the Arab-Israeli dispute. Where once Nasser and Saddam were the main attraction, today pictures of Iranian President Ahmadinejad and Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah dominate the souks of the Middle East.

Iran's regional ascendance is aided by U.S. regional missteps outside Iraq. The Iraq occupation in conjunction with the diminished U.S. effort to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute has dramatically reduced U.S. political influence throughout the region. All public

opinion polls in the region taken over the last several years reveal that popular support for the United States has all but disappeared. Reflecting the widespread frustration with the United States, an exasperated Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal told reporters in September 2005: "We fought a war together to keep Iran out of Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait. . . . Now we are handing the whole country over to Iran without reason."[52]

**Security Strategy and Regional Threats.**

The United States thus confronts the altered regional security environment with a strategy that remains rooted in its Cold War experience that featured collective defense arrangements backed by security guarantees, forward military presence, and strong U.S.–host nation military relations. These Cold War relations saw the United States establish a military infrastructure around the world to support global operations. In the Persian Gulf and Middle East, the development of the infrastructure received particular momentum after the ejection of Saddam from Kuwait in 1991, which saw the development of basing facilities in Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

The American forward-deployed military presence in the Gulf has in the past served as an important instrument for preserving regional security and stability. Midway through the 1990s, the United States had successfully prepositioned three heavy brigade sets of military equipment in the region that formed the leading edge of the ground component that could be joined with air assets already in theater to counter conventional military threats to the peninsula. During the 1990s, the network of military facilities in Kuwait,

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Oman allowed the United States to enforce the sanctions against Saddam. The infrastructure also represented the literal representation of the security umbrella spread by the United States over the Sunni monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula. By the end of the late 1990s, the infrastructure comprised the following main components:

- Central Command Naval Component, or NAV-CENT, in Manama, Bahrain;
- Air Force Central Command Component, first at Eskan Village in Saudi Arabia before moving to Prince Sultan Air Base and then to Al Udeid in Qatar in August 2003;
- Army Central Command Component, Kuwait;
- Heavy Brigade sets of ground equipment in Qatar and Kuwait, and afloat;
- Harvest *Falcon* Air Force equipment at Seeb in Oman;
- Aerial refueling detachment at Al Dhafra in the United Arab Emirates.

During the late 1990s, the digital revolution's benefits began seeping into U.S. military operations throughout the world. Under the rubric of the so-called revolution in military affairs, digitized pictures of the land, sea, and air environments were piped into American military bases and those of their coalition partners. The creation of common operating pictures helped create transparency and enhanced situational awareness to coalition militaries throughout the Gulf. By the time of Gulf War II, the network had enlarged with the addition of a veritable alphabet soup of new command elements, organizations, and operational nodes:

- Combined Forces Command Afghanistan (CFC-A) in Kabul that works with NATO's

International Security Assistance Force.

- Also in Afghanistan, the Combined Joint Task Force 76 that directs combat operations throughout Afghanistan.
- Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa in Djibouti (CJTF-HOA), which is assisting countries in the region to build indigenous counterterrorist capabilities.
- Combined Joint Task Force 150, a coalition maritime naval assemblage commanded by a revolving series of multinational officers out of Manama that includes nine ships from seven countries performing maritime security in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.
- Combined Forces Air Component Command's Combined Air Operations Center at Al Udeid, Qatar. This constitutes the Air Force's Central Command forward-deployed theater component.
- Central Command Forward Headquarters (CENTCOM-CFC), Camp As Saylihyah, Qatar, serving as the leading edge of headquarters elements based at Central Command's headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.
- Central Command Special Operations Headquarters (SOCCENT), Qatar, which coordinates special operations in theater.
- Multi-National Forces Iraq (MNF-I), overseeing all combat operations in Iraq.
- Multi-National Security Training Command (MNSTC-I) that coordinates the program to train and equip Iraqi forces.
- NATO Training Mission that focuses on developing the Iraqi officer corps.
- Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), Kuwait, constituting the Army's

Central Command component that coordinates Army activity throughout the Central Command area of responsibility. CFLCC also maintains an area support group, or ASG, at Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar.

- Central Command Deployment and Distribution Center (CDDOC), Kuwait, that supports theater-wide logistics and information distribution.
- Information, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance launch and recovery facility at Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates. This facility provides the Air Force Central Command Component with an operational and logistics hub to support theater-wide intelligence surveillance and collection with a variety of collection platforms.[53]
- In October 2004, as part of supplemental appropriations to fund ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress earmarked $63 million in military construction funds for improvements at the Al Dhafra airfield in the United Arab Emirates, which accommodated a U.S. Air Force aerial refueling detachment during the 1990s and now hosts an information, surveillance, and reconnaissance launch and recovery facility. The same bill contained $60 million to fund additional enhancements to the Al Udeid airfield in Qatar.
- In Afghanistan, the United States is spending $83 million to upgrade its two main bases at Bagram Air Base (north of Kabul) and Kandahar Air Field to the south.[54] The funding will be used to expand runways and other improvements to provide new billeting facilities for U.S. military personnel.

- The expansion of the facilities infrastructure in Afghanistan has been mirrored by the development of facilities and solidified politico-military partnerships in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.[55]
- In early 2006, Congress approved $413.4 million for Army military construction projects in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2010. The same bill funded $36 million for Air Force construction projects in these countries.
- In Iraq, the United States so far has spent an estimated $240 million on construction at the Balad base (north of Baghdad), the main air transportation and supply hub; $46.3 million at Al Asad, the largest military air center and major supply base for troops in Al Anbar; and $121 million at Tallil air base (southern Iraq). Other projects include $49.6 million for Camp Taji located just 20 miles northwest of Baghdad; $165 million to build an Iraqi Army base near the southern town of Numaiy; and $150 million for the Iraqi Army Al Kasik base north of Mosul.[56]

The issue facing DoD defense planners today is the relevance of the network of Gulf and Central Asian facilities to the regional security environment. The extensive facilities infrastructure was built on the premise that the United States needs to perform a variety of political and military missions on behalf of its own interests: (1) insert large numbers of conventional forces into the region as defense against external threats; (2) address regional contingencies on short notice with forward-deployed forces using special operations forces and weapons platforms capable of standoff precision strikes; and (3) deter outside powers from threatening the region with military forces or using those forces

to create a coercive political environment exercising a destabilizing influence. For the regional elites, the facilities are intended to: (1) protect them from coercive external threats; and (2) remind internal opponents of the regime's powerful friends. While the dynamics of these expectations have always been somewhat contradictory, the aftermath of the Iraq invasion has created a political environment in which it is dangerous for the regional elites to be seen as publicly tied and beholden to the United States. This environment raises doubts over whether the United States can realistically expect to use the facilities infrastructure to perform its two primary missions on behalf of the regional elites for the foreseeable future.[57]

A test case for the United States emerged in early 2007 as a result of the unfolding crisis over Iran's nuclear program and rumors of U.S. military plans for an extended bombardment of Iran's nuclear sites.[58] The military infrastructure in the Gulf would be critical for mounting any sustained operations to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities that are reportedly widely dispersed, and deep underground in some cases, throughout the country. In early 2007, it remained unclear whether the Gulf States would allow the use of facilities on their soil to support U.S. military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities. Qatari First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani told reporters in March 2007 that "we will not participate by any means to harm Iran from Qatar," though he refused to indicate whether Qatar was effectively vetoing the use of Al Udied Air Base or the Central Command's headquarters in any Iranian operations.

It remains to be seen whether and how the Gulf States will deal with their ambivalence over the U.S.

military footprint. The regimes fear the prospect of a politically ascendant and potentially nuclear-armed Iran, but see the U.S. military presence as a powerful tool for resisting Iranian attempts to install a coercive political framework throughout the region. But the regimes equally fear the creation of domestic political dynamics that are increasingly hostile to the United States and which force them to publicly distance themselves from their erstwhile protector. Some of the region's elites are better positioned to resist internal political pressures than others. The al Nahyans in the United Arab Emirates, for example, face no serious opposition or internal political pressure to reduce their ties with the United States. Hence, the U.S. operations at Al Dhafra Air Base apparently remain safe for the time being. But in other Gulf States, such as Bahrain and Kuwait, changing internal political dynamics may force the regimes to start pressuring the United States to reduce the military footprint. The linchpin for the regional base structure is in Iraq, where the United States has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in new military facilities. Given what is an untenable long-term military situation, it appears inevitable that a phased U.S. withdrawal will come in the next several years, possibly even sooner, as coerced by the Iraqis and domestic public opinion in the United States. It is unclear whether any Iraqi government will acquiesce to a long-term, foreign military presence on the new bases being built at Balad and elsewhere.

The political-military disconnect, it must be said, also exists in the United States. The quiescent domestic political environment of the 1990s that permitted the United States to build its regional military infrastructure has been transformed by the Iraq War and the so-called war on terrorism. U.S. political relationships

with the Gulf State elites that had been maintained on a low key and with little fanfare during the 1990s are being subjected to new scrutiny in the press and in Congress.

**A Way Forward**.

To mitigate threats to regional security, the United States must first come to grips with the linkages between the intrastate, interstate, and global environments in the region. With the linkages established, the threats to regional security and stability as identified in the Davos Forum's formulation make perfect sense: geopolitical instability, energy supply disruptions, weapons proliferation, and international terrorism. In countering these threats, the United States must reconnect its security strategy to the regional environment, recognizing that it cannot simply apply "capabilities portfolios" to complex political and military problems bounded by the history and regional circumstances. The analysis presented here suggests that state behavior in the region is the product of an altered security dilemma, in which internal political pressures are forcing regional states away from outsourcing their strategic security to external powers and instead toward credibly addressing threats to external security themselves.

The United States needs to undertake a strategic regional net assessment that examines the following issues as it seeks to construct a regional security strategy both to protect its interests and to mitigate wider threats to international security. That net assessment should include analysis of the following issues:

- The role that security guarantees extended by the United States can still play as part of a

framework of regional security. Today, these security guarantees are manifested through forward military presence, joint training and military exercises, annual bilateral meetings devoted to security issues, sales of defense equipment, and continued development of the host-country facilities infrastructure. This Cold War template has had a remarkably successful track record around the world in protecting American interests and working with host nations in ways that preserve regional security and stability. It is clear that security guarantees can play an important role as part of the framework of regional security to reduce the prospects of interstate warfare, nuclear proliferation, and the threat of coercive political pressures from a regional hegemon. These steps in and of themselves help create a stable environment that will minimize the chances of disruptions in energy supplies. The United States and its host-nation partners need to determine whether this template can continue to be applied in the same way.

- In addressing this template, the United States and its regional partners must reckon with the contradictions between the threats to stability posed by intranational and interstate tensions. A coherent regional security strategy must balance both aspects of the threat environment. It remains unclear whether the United States and its regional partners can square this circle, since the current template of regional security is primarily designed to counter interstate coercive threats while secondarily intimidating internal

regime opponents. A region-wide consultative process must be established that addresses these issues to determine how best to structure security relationship in ways that manage the tension between external and internal threats.

- Finally, it is time for the United States to confront the impact that its bureaucratic and political obsession with force protection has had on its ability to embrace and integrate with host nation populations. The United States today has constructed a series of fortified enclaves throughout the Persian Gulf and Middle East that make it increasingly difficult to conduct business with host nations on an ongoing basis while keeping its finger on the pulse of the local populace. These American fortresses isolate our diplomats and military professionals from the environments in which they must operate and make it more difficult to integrate effectively into the local communities. While tearing down the walls of these stockades opens up these facilities and their personnel to terrorist attacks, remaining behind these walls in subterranean air con-ditioned vaults imposes other and equally dam-aging long-term costs on the United States and its ability to implement a more dynamic security strategy.

**Conclusion.**

The U.S. invasion of Iraq is reordering the regional balance of power in ways that make the threat environment more dynamic and unpredictable. Iran is taking advantage of the environment to position itself as the dominant regional power, i.e., moving

into the vacuum created by instability in Iraq and the weakening U.S. regional position. The aftermath of the Iraq War is creating a new security dilemma for the regional ruling elites, who can no longer outsource their strategic security to the United States. This dilemma has forced the regimes into embracing a changed nuclear posture as seen in their response to Iran's rise and their own domestic opposition to the United States. In dealing with this security dilemma, the regional elites must at the same time confront the rising power of Islamist political movements with reduced maneuvering room.

For its part, the United States is faced with maintaining its Cold War era regional military infrastructure that addresses external threats to security but which complicates the ability of the regimes to address internal political issues. During the 1990s, containing Iraq in the air and at sea provided a convenient and supportable rationale for both the ruling elites and the United States to maintain this infrastructure. The Iraq war has changed this rationale for all parties concerned. While the United States now increasingly casts its presence in the context of the war on terror—this approach lacks strategic resonance and is not widely supported by regional publics.

Similarly, the overwhelmingly negative U.S. domestic public reaction to the Iraq War promises to diminish the willingness of future administrations to support an open-ended military commitment in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East—commitments manifested mainly through a forward military presence. These political uncertainties aside, however, the risks to global security emanating from the region demand that strategists adopt an integrated, long-term approach to address the region's geopolitical

instability. This may mean that the United States will have to return to a posture based more on an over-the-horizon naval and air presence to give regional elites the political breathing space they need to manage their dynamic intrastate environments and allow the roiling political currents sweeping through the region to run their course.

## ENDNOTES

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