

Statement of

Francis G. Hoffman

Senior Research Fellow

Center for Strategic Research,
Institute for National Strategic Studies,
National Defense University

On

“Perspectives on the Future Security Environment”

Before the Subcommittee on Intelligence and Emerging Threats and Capabilities,
House Armed Services Committee,
U.S. House of Representatives

February 13, 2012

* The views expressed in this testimony are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Defense Department or the National Defense University.

Future Hybrid Threats: An Update

Thank you, and good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member.

It is an honor to have the opportunity to once again appear before this important and now expanded committee. The scope of today's hearing is broad, but it comes at a critical time for the Nation as it approaches another round of strategic decisions with fewer and fewer resources. We need to consider the future security environment holistically if we are to make the risk assessments and hard tradeoffs required if we are to act strategically and secure our Nation's interests.

The upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review, with Congressional oversight, will be a crucial test of our capacity to demonstrate true strategic thinking and determine priorities for resources.

My written statement is provided pursuant to your request and provides a concise background on the research on hybrid threats conducted now by many students of warfare, from Australia to here, and over to the United Kingdom and Europe. This statement contains my personal views and does not represent the official position of the Department of Defense, the Joint Staff, or the National Defense University.

A number of defense scholars and Service chiefs have described the emerging character of modern conflict as *hybrid*. This term attempts to capture the blurring and blending of previously separate categorizations of different modes of conflict. Hybrid threats incorporate a full range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal activity.

There are various definitions for hybrid wars. Instead of the modes of conflict, some analysts focus on the motivation or classification of a conflict, for example whether it is a civil war or ethnic war. In my view, these definitions add breadth and depth to the debate.

My personal definition of a hybrid opponent is “*Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the battlespace to obtain desired political objectives.*”¹

The U.S. Army has incorporated the construct in its latest principal doctrinal publication, defining hybrid opponents in terms of the force rather than the modes of conflict. For the Army, hybrid threats are “The diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, criminal elements, or a combination of these forces and elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects.”² This definition stresses the combination of different types of forces rather than a single force using different means and modes. Hezbollah’s example in the 2006 Lebanon war provides credible evidence to support the Army’s perspective

The Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army has recently employed the term in an essay in *Foreign Affairs*. General Raymond Odierno noted that the Army “will also make sure it firmly embeds one of the most costly lessons it has learned over the last decade: how to deal with the challenge of hybrid warfare. In the future, it will be increasingly common for the army to operate in environments with both regular military and irregular paramilitary or civilian adversaries, with the potential for terrorism, criminality and other complications.”³

I believe the General has captured the essence of the challenge which expands the traditional conception of war and the professional domain of the armed forces. His inclusion of this as one of his

¹ This definition varies slightly from Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, 14, 58. My updated version emphasizing the simultaneity and deliberate fusion of these modes. Additional commentary and assessment can be found in F. G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Threats Defined and Debated,” *Armed Forces Journal International*, October. 2009.

² U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-0 Operations C-1*, GPO, Washington, DC: February 2011, 1–5.

³ Raymond T. Odierno, “The U.S. Army in a Time of Transition,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2012, 10.

top three lessons from our ongoing operations implies how important it is. Other scholars, professionals and analysts have also identified this aspect of the contemporary character of conflict.⁴

The hybrid threat is not entirely new or original.⁵ However, the term has of late captured the interest of many policymakers and numerous military leaders. The projected hybrid threat was cited by then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and has been repeated by his successor, The Honorable Leon Panetta.⁶ Both the Army and Marines have studied this emerging (or reemerging) threat in the middle of the conflict spectrum for several years. Furthermore, Army and Navy leaders, as well as the Joint community, have incorporated the concept into their estimates of the future security environment.⁷

Our British allies and others in NATO are studying this phenomenon as well, and have incorporated this challenge into their threat assessments and descriptions of future requirements.⁸ The

⁴ Clyde Royston, "Terrorist to Techno-Guerilla: The Changing Face of Asymmetric Warfare," *Joint Center for Operational Analysis Journal*, December 2007; Mackubin T. Owens, "Reflections on future war," *Naval War College Review*, Summer 2008, 61–76; David E. Johnson, *Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, OP-285-A, 2010; Nathan Freier, "Hybrid Threats and Challenges: Describe...Don't Define," *Small Wars Journal*, January 2010, accessed at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2010/01/hybrid-threats-and-challenges/>.

⁵ The earliest scholar in this area is LtCol William. J. Nemeth, USMC, *Future War and Chechnya: A Case for Hybrid Warfare*, Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, June 2002.

⁶ Robert M. Gates "The National Defense Strategy: Striking the Right Balance," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 1st Quarter 2009, 2–7; Leon Panetta, Remarks at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, October 11, 2011. Accessed at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4903>.

⁷ General, James T. Conway, USMC, Admiral Gary Roughead, USN and Admiral Thad W. Allen, USCG, *A Cooperative Strategy For Maritime Security*, Washington, DC, October 2007, Admiral Gary Roughead, USN, Remarks at the Current Strategy Forum, Naval War College, Newport, RI on June 16, 2009; James Conway, *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025*, Washington DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, June 2008; ADM J. C. Harvey, Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces, Remarks as written, Surface Navy Symposium, Washington, DC, January 12, 2010, available at www.public.navy.mil/usff/.../hybrid_warfare-sna_speech.doc. On the U.S. Army, see General George C. Casey, "America's Army in an Era of Persistent Conflict," *Army Magazine*, October 2008, 28; General Martin Dempsey, U.S. Army "Versatility as an Institutional Imperative," *Small Wars Journal*, March 10, 2009. For the U.S. Marine Corps, see General James Amos, *Commandant's Planning Guidance*, November 2010.

⁸ In the UK, see General Richard Dannatt, "A Perspective on the Nature of Future Conflict," Chief of the General Staff's Speech to Chatham House, May 15, 2009, prepared remarks; as well as General Sir David Richard's opening chapter, "A Soldier's Perspective on Countering Insurgency," in David Richards and Greg

range of interest and the breadth of studies in this area is quite deep, with different twists and useful insights offered by each participant.⁹

Several students of war, however, find more comfort in the term “asymmetric.” In the 1990s, we explored this term, but it was found wanting and was ultimately dismissed. While it has returned to use by some, it still does not describe what an adversary is actually doing, but merely reflects that he’s doing something different in relation to us. Others find the term asymmetric to be sloppy and without rigor, including Oxford Professor Hew Strachan who concluded that “Much of the debate about asymmetry in war is historically naïve: all enemies try to get under the other side’s guard by using responses that are unpredictable. At one level therefore ‘asymmetry’ is inherent in strategy.”¹⁰ Harvard Professor Joe Nye has made the exact same point in his latest book, and goes on to suggest that the hybrid threat is a more meaningful term to capture what is actually occurring and what is projected to continue to develop.¹¹

Today's emerging operational demands include both very old and very new domains of warfare, like cyber. They also include both traditional enemies and more advanced forms such as the “High End Asymmetric Threats” cited in the Pentagon’s 2010 Quadrennial Defense Report.¹² But we must consider also an array of adversaries that is prepared to exploit all modes of human conflict including lethal means at the state-level, catastrophic acts of mass terrorism, irregular or guerrilla tactics, and

Mills, eds., *Victory Among People: Lessons from Countering Insurgency and Stabilising Fragile States*, London: Royal United Services Institute, 2011.

⁹ John J. McCuen, “Hybrid Wars,” *Military Review*, April–May 2008, 107–113; and David Kilcullen, *Accidental Guerilla*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; and Nathan Freier, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century: Irregular, Catastrophic, Traditional, and Hybrid Challenges in Context*, Carlisle, PA.: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2007.

¹⁰ Hew Strachan, *The Changing Character of War*, Lecture Delivered at the Graduate Institute of International Relations, Geneva, November 9, 2006, 18. Accessed at <http://www.europaeum.org/files/publications/pamphlets/HewStrachan.pdf>.

¹¹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power*, New York: Public Affairs, 2011, 34-35, 48.

¹² Robert M. Gates, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2010, 8.

large-scale, systematic criminal behavior including extortion, kidnapping, and human or drug trafficking. The diffusion of modern weaponry around the world, combined with the lessons learned by our foes in Iraq and Afghanistan, will produce a steadily higher degree of lethality in contemporary conflict. In particular, American military units will have to be prepared for very adaptive or protean opponents with modern technologies.

This is not a hypothetical challenge. Israel faced this problem in 2006 in southern Lebanon when it confronted Hezbollah's admixture of advanced rockets, determined village defense forces, and its Iranian-trained foreign fighters equipped with advanced anti-armor guided-missile systems.¹³ Many excuses have been offered for the Israeli Defense Forces' failure to perform effectively in this conflict, but the most unforgivable is underestimating and misunderstanding one's opponent.¹⁴

Potential Hybrid Threat Scenarios

There are numerous scenarios that could be employed to explore the parameters of the hybrid threat. While American policy makers may be focused on non-state actors, the emergence of hybrid threats at the state level should not be discounted. One could examine the dissolution of Pakistan into chaos, split between armed fundamentalists and existing political elites who may retain the loyalty of a part of the Army.¹⁵ Additionally, one could postulate another Russian expeditionary thrust into a border state like the 2008 invasion of Georgia, where elements of hybrid warfare were manifested by

¹³ Andrew Exum, "Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment," Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Policy Focus* #63, December, 2006; Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman, "The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare" Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008; David E. Johnson, *Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, OP-285-A, 2010.

¹⁴ Avi Kober, "The Israel defense forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the poor performance?" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 31:1, 2008, 3–40.

¹⁵ For such an example see Andrew J. Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios, A Military Futurist Explores War in the 21st Century*, New York: Bantam, 2009, 30–62.

mixes of regular and irregular forces, although Russia's combined arms attack was certainly the decisive element.

Mexico's expanding narco-insurgency is another potential scenario, where we have seen extensive civilian casualties and terrorism, as well as a steadily growing degree of sophistication in the use of military hardware. The challenge of gangs as a form of disruptive force inside America and in Mexico portends greater problems down the road.¹⁶ The plot for such a scenario might envision the formation of a supra-cartel displacing the state or at least creating a regional entity, but that may be regarded as a Black Swan scenario.¹⁷ One could postulate a transplanted version of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* or FARC). An Iranian-trained, Venezuelan-funded force in South America or Panama is not far-fetched.¹⁸ While it is now isolated, and losing critical leaders, the potential for the FARC to transform itself in the region should not be ignored. A requiem for the FARC is extremely premature.¹⁹

A far more likely scenario is a major stabilization operation in North Korea that is contested by the former regime with a prepared resistance that is well resourced. The potential for a North Korean implosion followed by a long-term resistance movement by ideological fanatics is not beyond

¹⁶ See Phil Williams, "Criminals, Militias and Insurgents: Organized Crime in Iraq," Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, June 2009; Robert Killebrew and Jennifer Bernal, *Crime Wars, Gangs, Cartels and U.S. National Security*, Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, September 2010; David Danelo, "The Border War," *Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 2008, accessed at <http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2008-10/border-war> .

¹⁷ See also Mike Fowler, "Mexico: A Case of Hybrid Warfare," in Paul Brister, William Natter, and Robert Tomes, eds., *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats, Perspectives for an Era of Persistent Conflict*, Washington, DC: Council for Emerging National Security Affairs, 2011.

¹⁸ Bill Gertz, "Iran boost Qods shock troops in Venezuela," *Washington Times*, April 21, 2010. Accessed at www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/apr/21/iran-boosts-qods-shock-troops-in-venezuela.html.

¹⁹ Russell Crandall, "Requiem for the FARC?" *Survival*, August–September, 2011, 233–240.

consideration. American policymakers and scholars are aware of the potential chaos that a North Korean meltdown could produce, and are exploring potential “futures.”²⁰

North Korea has apparently taken many lessons from the insurgents in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Hezbollah and adapted its military posture to include more hybrid methods.²¹ Though speculative, a collapse of the North Korean regime could set in motion a series of events that will prove far more challenging than the take down of Saddam Hussein’s regime.²² In such a scenario, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) security or elimination operations will be a high priority U.S. military mission, followed by working with our South Korean allies on stability operations. However, the prospects of a virulent resistance by North Korean special operations forces would increase the costs of these stability operations and increase the risk to any allied forces operating in the north, as well as to any efforts to secure facilities and personnel. North Korea, sometimes referred to as a Soprano State, has proven itself capable of acting as a state-level hybrid threat, including official acts of criminal sovereignty.²³

The most obvious scenario for a real rather than speculative hybrid threat is Iran, which is a state committed to opposing U.S. interests. As such, it has both the will and the capability already of serving as a full hybrid opponent. It is likely that policymakers would try indirect and standoff approaches early in such a conflict. But it is possible that a major intervention of U.S. ground forces

²⁰ Ferial Ara Saeed and James J. Przystup, “Korean Futures: Challenges to U.S. Diplomacy of North Korean Regime Collapse,” Washington, DC: Center for Strategic Research, *Strategic Perspectives* 7, September 2011.

²¹ “N. Korea Swiftly Expanding Its Special Forces,” *Washington Post*, October 9, 2009; “New Threat from N. Korea’s ‘Asymmetrical’ Warfare,” *The Chosun Ilbo*, April 29, 2010.

²² See Bruce W. Bennett and Jennifer Lind, “The Collapse of North Korea Military Missions and Requirements,” *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Fall 2011, 84–119; Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr. *Defiant Failed State: The North Korean Threat to International Security*, Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2011.

²³ Paul Rexton Kan, Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., and Robert M. Collins, *Criminal Sovereignty: Understanding North Korea’s Illicit International Activities*, Carlisle, PA: Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 2010.

could be required to achieve the significant, even critical, U.S. interests in the region. Dr. Krepinevich suggested such a scenario with what he called the “Streetfighter State.”²⁴

The hope that moderates or pragmatists would gain the upper hand atop Iran’s power pyramid has not been realized.²⁵ The revolutionary clerics have strengthened their hand against the reformers, but did so by allocating more power to their enforcers of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).²⁶ The result has been the rise of the Pasdaran as the ultimate Guardians of the Revolution, creating the potential for a Praetorian Guard or a Praetorian state.²⁷ Future crises could arise in the next decade as the result of succession challenges or in response to crackdowns against democratic and moderate elements.²⁸

While Iran has been developing its strategic nuclear deterrent and a second tier deterrent of ballistic missiles targeted against its regional neighbors, it has also begun to adapt the IRGC and its internal security force cum militia, the *Basij*. This tier seeks to both suppress domestic resistance and strengthen the Guard and *Basij* to better resist internal power struggles or any U.S. intervention. The ideology of these forces has been focused into a culture that emphasizes Islamic virtue, jihad and resistance, and heroic martyrdom.

²⁴ Krepinevich, 20–29.

²⁵ Marc Lynch, *Upheaval: U.S. Policy Toward Iran in a Changing Middle East*, Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010, 10.

²⁶ Babak Rahimi, “The Role of the Revolutionary Guards and Basij Militia in Iran’s Electoral Coup,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 7, Issue 21, July 17, 2009; Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in The Age of the Ayatollahs*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

²⁷ Frederic Wehrey, et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran, Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009; Elliot Hen-Tov and Nathan Gonzalez, “The Militarization of Post-Khomeini Iran: Praetorianism, 2.0,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 34:1, 45–59; Robin Wright, “Elite Revolutionary Guard Broadens its Influence in Iran,” *The Washington Post*, April 1, 2007, A21; Ali Alfoneh, “Changing of the Guards: Iran’s Supreme Leader Struggles to Control Military,” *Middle Eastern Outlook*, No. 1, April 2010; Abbas Milani, “Ahmadinejad vs. The Ayatollah,” *The National Interest*, June 21, 2011.

²⁸ Scenarios over the succession are examined in Alireza Nader, David E. Thaler, and S.R. Bohandy, *The Next Supreme Leader: Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, MG-1052-OSD, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2011.

Iranian ground tactics have evolved and reflect insights garnered from Hezbollah's tactical successes against Israel, and the lessons learned in Iraq.²⁹ These lessons were used to update the published and operative Mosaic Doctrine for Iran's defense.³⁰ U.S. analysts who have studied the doctrine describe it as a *hybrid model* of protracted and layered defense in the event of an invasion.³¹ This doctrine should be seen as the third leg of Iran's deterrent and defense strategy, after its nuclear program and anti-access systems. Reports indicate that the IRGC has been systematically equipping, organizing, and retraining its forces to fight this decentralized form of guerrilla warfare with high-tech capabilities in urban areas and along Iran's constricted lines of communication.³² This evolution of Iranian doctrine suggests a distinctly hybrid character.³³

A series of large-scale exercises have been conducted over the past several years including the Great Prophet series with over 20,000 troops employing mixed or hybrid tactics, anti-armor and anti-helicopter defenses, autonomous tactical units, and night attacks in restricted terrain.³⁴

²⁹ Marc Lindemann, "Laboratory of Asymmetry; The 2006 Lebanon War and the Evolution of Iranian Ground Tactics," *Military Review*, May–June 2010, 105–116.

³⁰ On Iranian doctrine changes and strategy see Steve Ward, "Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 4, Autumn, 2005, 573; Michael Connell, "Iran's Military Doctrine," in Robin Wright, ed., *The Iran Primer*, Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace, 2010, 5. Accessed at <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-military-doctrine>. See also Anthony Cordesman, *Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the Al Quds Force, and Other Intelligence and Paramilitary Forces*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 16, 2007, 5; Eisenstadt, 5; Wehrey, *Rise of the Pasdarans*, 45–46.

³¹ Michael Connell, "Iran's Military Doctrine," in Robin Wright, ed., *The Iran Primer*, Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace, 2010, 5.

³² On the IRGC see Alireza Nader in Robin Wright, ed., *The Iran Primer*, Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace, at <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-military-doctrine>. On the Basij see Ali Alfoneh in Robin Wright, ed., *The Iran Primer*, Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace, at <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-military-doctrine>; Ali Alfoneh, "The Basij Resistance Force; A Weak Link the Iran Regime?" Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Policy Watch*, No. 1627, February 5, 2010.

³³ Steven R. Ward, "The Continuing Evolution of Iran's Military Doctrine," *The Middle East Journal*, Autumn 2005; Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: a military history of Iran and its armed forces*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2009.

³⁴ Lindemann, "Laboratory of Asymmetry," 111–112.

Iranian naval assets continue to evolve along the same lines as the land component, exploiting the unique geographical advantage of Iran in the Gulf.³⁵ Constricting if not denying access is possible given the geography of the Gulf, and Iran's diverse means to produce maritime disorder. Iranian military doctrine suggests that they will employ highly irregular or hybrid tactics that exploit the constricted geography of the Gulf and the advanced systems that they have acquired.³⁶

The evolution of the IRGC navy (IRGCN) into a hybrid force capable of conducting a deadly "guerilla war at sea."³⁷ Its force structure includes a small fleet of fast patrol craft and submarines (including *Ghadir* midget boats and *Hahang* littoral subs).³⁸ While it possesses roughly a dozen such submarines today, more are being produced with modest regularity.³⁹ Iran possesses the world's third largest mine inventory, estimated at 5,000 mines.

IRGC naval doctrine applies a hybrid combination of conventional and irregular tactics and weapons to pose a significant anti-access threat to both military and commercial shipping.⁴⁰ The swarming tactics of the late 1980s are now enhanced with modern speed boats and fast attack craft like the low-signature North Korean-built torpedo boats. The IRGCN has upgraded its fleet to include the modern *Peykoop* boats, *Bladerunners*, and *Bavar* stealth flying boats. This hybrid mixture of submarines, midget submarines, mine-laying trawlers, and stealthy fast-attack craft with anti-ship cruise missiles exploits the constricted terrain of the Gulf. The new fleet of highly maneuverable

³⁵ See CDR Joshua Himes, *Iran's Two Navies, A Maturing Maritime Strategy*, Middle East Security Report I, Washington DC: Institute for the Study of War, October 2011.

³⁶ Fariborz Haghshenass, *Iran's Asymmetric Naval Warfare*, Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Policy Focus #87*, September 2008.

³⁷ On the implications of this particular threat from a maritime perspective see Frank Hoffman, "Hybrid Threats, Neither Omnipotent Nor Unbeatable," *Orbis*, 54, no. 3. Summer 2010, 441–455.

³⁸ Caitlin Talmadge, "Closing Time: Assessing the Iranian Threat to the Strait of Hormuz," *International Security*, Summer 2008, 82–117.

³⁹ Associated Press, "Iran's Fleet Adds 3 Submarines," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 28, 2011, 6.

⁴⁰ Office of Naval Intelligence, "Iran's Naval Forces: From Guerilla Warfare to a Modern Naval Strategy," Washington, DC, Fall 2009.

attack boats now boast navigational systems and Command and Control assets that allow them to coordinate their attacks and maximize the effects of concentrated missile attacks. They could also function as improvised minelayers in shallow chokepoints along the 500-mile convoy route of the Strait of Hormuz.

In addition to mines, the Iranian naval arsenal includes a modest inventory of improved anti-ship cruise missiles, largely upgraded versions of the Chinese HY-2 *Silkworm*, and the *Noor*, which is an upgraded copy of the Chinese C-802. The introduction of the *Raad* and *Ghader* missile is of interest. With its 1,000-pound warhead and terminal maneuverability, the *Raad* could prove deadly to large warships. The *Ghader* missile represents a slight upgrade to the *Noor* missile perhaps with some extra range (20-40 km). Its low cost makes it ideal for volley firing in swarming attacks.⁴¹

Our forces in the Gulf are well aware of and prepared to address these Iranian developments.

Implications

Hopefully, the potential hybrid threat scenarios discussed here will not come to pass. But their likelihood and shock value are proportional to our ignorance of their probability and impact.⁴² Continuing to overlook the problems presented in this discussion will only increase the risk and penalty.

Our future force structure must remain useful against a wide range of threats.⁴³ We should not flee from reality or race toward our preferred template and technological predispositions. Many would like to shy away from protracted challenges with failed states or irregular wars, but we cannot escape

⁴¹ Galhran, "Iran's New Anti-Ship Missile," *Information Dissemination.com*, September 28, 2011.

⁴² Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios*, 285–300.

⁴³ For force structure implications see Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict," *Strategic Forum 240*, Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, April 2009; F. G. Hoffman, "Strategy and Future Threats," *Infinity Journal*, Fall 2011, 10–15. Structure recommendations are at *Global Strategic Assessment*, Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2009, 45–48.

them or the reality of hybrid threats.⁴⁴ Of course, we can seek to work by and through others, and we can be more discriminate and disciplined about where and how we apply our force with a broader range of operational approaches to insurgencies.

Forces postured to respond across the full spectrum of conflict in the 21st century will have to be ready against a demanding mixture of opponents. In the words of former Army Chief of Staff General George Casey some will be “neither fish nor fowl”.⁴⁵ A force prepared to address these hybrid threats must be “brilliant in the basics”, with both a flexible doctrine and a modular force structure that can mix and match interagency and combined assets from U.S. Government and allies.

While the hybrid threat construct has been most valuable in terms of force posture debates, there remain numerous issues involved in the area of operational art.⁴⁶ That area is ripe for research, and it may substantially counter the effects of our limited appreciation of irregular warfare. The complexity of such hybrid conflicts will demand extremely strong, adaptive and creative small unit leadership and improved tactical skills. It requires a more decentralized command and control philosophy, one that allows junior officers and well-trained sergeants to take the initiative and effectively respond to challenges and opportunities that appear suddenly without recourse to hours or days of delay. This in turn places a premium on cognitive skills to recognize and quickly adapt to the improbable or unknown as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has stressed in his guidance for the development of Joint Force 2020. Leaders must be trained and educated to conduct decentralized missions and make rapid decisions under the highly ambiguous and complex conditions of battle. Effective leadership has been

⁴⁴ Nathan Freier, "The Defense Identity Crisis: It's a Hybrid World," *Parameters*, Autumn 2009, 82.

⁴⁵ Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General G. Casey, Jr., dinner speech, Center for a New American Century, April 1, 2010.

⁴⁶ Major Brian Fleming, “The Hybrid Threat Concept: Contemporary War, Military Planning and the Advent of Unrestricted Operational Art,” Monograph, Ft. Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2011.

and will continue to be central to success in conventional or irregular forms of warfare, and everything in between

The future also requires r general purpose forces to integrate with Special Operations and law enforcement units. It will also call for rapid decisionmaking and the immediate application of lethal force when needed, often in close proximity to noncombatants in densely populated urban environments.⁴⁷ Heavy- or well-armored forces will have a role in this environment, as well as infantry.⁴⁸ Hybrid threats focus extensively on denying freedom of maneuver to intervening forces, while simultaneously presenting a low signature themselves. Finding and identifying these elusive elements is part of the daunting challenge presented by hybrid threats, as close engagements under prepared conditions work to the defender's advantage. This mandates very close combined arms coordination to generate precision and tight "kill chains." It also suggests that we need to go a lot further with force protection for our ground forces, and that the dawning of the robotics age has come just in time.

Conclusion

The hybrid threat construct was developed based on history, research drawn from foreign sources, and recent combat experience. Building upon concepts like General Charles Krulak's "Stepchild of Chechnya" with historical case studies and prudent projections, this sort of research and foresight has fostered much innovative thinking about future threats and challenges. These projections, in turn, have been borne out partially in the Middle East, especially Hezbollah's actions in Lebanon. The hybrid construct, has been further refined by subsequent gaming and analyses directed by the most senior Joint and Service leadership. By being introduced into the lexicon of the debate

⁴⁷ Richard J. Norton, "Feral Cities," *Naval War College Review*, Autumn 2003, Vol. LVI, No. 4, 97–106.

⁴⁸ See also Dr. David E. Johnson, "Minding the Middle: Insights from Hezbollah and Hamas for Future Warfare," paper presented at the Naval Post-graduate School, Monterey, CA. At http://www.nps.edu/Academics/Centers/CCC/Research-Publications/StrategicInsights/2011/Oct/SI-v10-FoW_pg124-137_Johnson.pdf.

over the character of future conflict, the concept of hybrid threats should help avoid the erroneous belief that we face only the straightforward choice between optimizing forces for counterinsurgency or just conventional conflict. That would be a false choice, and it misses the “messy middle” of the conflict spectrum where some if not many adversaries will seek to gain an advantage. In the words of Dr. Dave Johnson from RAND, we should “mind the middle.”

Thinking about the future is not impossible, nor is it easily done. The complexity of this problem is not to be underestimated, but must be faced. Evaluating trends and prospective challenges of performance against potential enemies is an acutely difficult problem of defense planning, but it is not insolvable.⁴⁹ The alternative approach, of waiting for events to unfold and then adapting afterwards, is not without potentially high costs. A nation like ours— with global interests and a leadership position—has a large “in box” of possible contingencies to prepare for. We cannot fulfill our role or secure our interests with our eyes blinkered.

The hybrid threat is neither ten-feet tall nor a hypothetical boogeyman of epic martial proportions. Opponents seeking operational or tactical advantage by blurring various conflict modes are not necessarily a new challenge. Just as clearly, they reflect a challenge with growing frequency and lethality that we have not yet created a solution for. Nor do I think hybrid as a category or threat doctrine sows confusion, quite the opposite.⁵⁰ The enemy does “get a vote” and has little incentive to meet us on our own terms. We can and should exploit history, including our own, to examine and decisively address this threat.

⁴⁹ Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, eds., *Calculations: Net Assessment and the Coming of World War II*, New York: Free Press, 1992, 1.

⁵⁰ Colin Gray, “Categorical Confusion,” Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, April 2012.

Over time, our country as a whole has not been very good at predicting the next fight.⁵¹ We can and must do better at anticipating the evolving character of modern conflict. While we cannot predict or prepare for every contingency, expanding our scenario set to incorporate the hybrid threat appears necessary for the Nation's overall strategic readiness.

⁵¹ Antulio Echevarria, Jr., "Anticipating Contemporary War: How Well Did We Do?" Carlisle, PA: Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, September 11, 2011.