

Department of Terrible Predictions

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In national security punditry, the more dire your predictions, the wiser you are deemed, as John Mueller [has noted](#). So it's probably futile to note when events prove people's predictions of danger wrong. But like [Justin Logan](#), I am sometimes overcome by the urge to hold other pundits to some standards. I'm taking a shot here.

In writing something else today, I was glancing at *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy*, published in 2000 and edited by Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol. Both are pundit superstars, *Washington Post* columnists, and Iraq war [cheerleaders](#).

In their introductory chapter to that scary book, Kagan and Kristol write:

Ten years from now, and perhaps a good deal sooner, we likely will be living a world in which Iraq, Iran, North Korea and China all possess the ability to strike the continental United States with nuclear weapons. Within the next decade we may have to decide whether to defend Taiwan against a Chinese attack. We could face another attempt by a rearmed Saddam Hussein to seize Kuwait's oil fields.

Ten years are up, and they revealed this stuff to be almost entirely wrong. The only one of these possibilities that came to pass is that China has ICBMs that can hit the continental United States. But of course that was already the case in 2000.

There is plenty more where that came from in the book. The danger that isn't mentioned at all, however, is al Qaeda. It's not in the index. The only contributor that mentions Osama Bin Laden is Reuel Marc Gerecht, and he does so only to attack the CIA's theory that bin Laden, rather than Iran, organized the [Khobar Towers bombing](#).

What these guys write is between them and their publishers. And being wrong a lot doesn't mean you won't be right someday. But in a better commentariat these guys would at least feel compelled to explain why their past dire predictions have not come true before issuing [new ones](#).

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