Rogue Rage:  
Can We Prevent Mass Destruction?

ERIC HERRING

The concept of 'rogue states' is now well established and used frequently in world politics but with little critical examination of the various perspectives on its meaning. The perspectives considered below are that the label 'rogue state':

• is appropriate for the very serious threats to the United States and its allies and is not applicable to the United States or its allies (the conservative perspective).

• exaggerates threats and is not applicable to the United States or its allies (the liberal perspective).

• exaggerates threats and is applicable also or even primarily to the United States and some of its allies (the left-wing perspective).

• can be understood less in terms of facts than on the basis of asserted values and identities which determine the construction and interpretation of the facts (the interpretivist perspective).

This set of perspectives is an organising device. Its main value is that it stakes out a set of positions broadly shared by groups of politically relevant actors. It shows that there is no single, natural and inevitable way of looking at the issue. This organising device has the limitation of obscuring the nuances of the position of any particular individual. That is an acceptable cost because my objective here is not principally to work out precisely where any individual stands.¹ Having said that, I do discuss the positions of individuals. After all, in claiming the existence of general perspectives, I have to show that some specific individuals adhere to major elements of
those perspectives, even if the particular combinations and weightings of those elements vary.

This essay, explores a range of perspectives of the extent of the threat posed by rogue states. It spends a significant amount of time on the issues of the use or sponsorship of terrorism, violations of international norms or international law, and involvement in the spread of what are normally regarded as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – that is, nuclear, biological and chemical weapons – and related delivery systems. There are two reasons for this.

First, such actions may be interpreted as indirect evidence that rogue states would be more willing than others to violate the norm against the use of WMD in general and nuclear weapons in particular.

Second, my concern is with preventing mass destruction by any means, be it conventional war, terrorism, economic sanctions or whatever. A focus on mass destruction inflicted only through WMD is inadequate. Hence the subtitle is ‘Can we prevent mass destruction?’ not ‘Can we prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction?’ I consider the policy recommendations that are linked to the various perspectives on the concept of rogue states. The conservative line on rogue states has dominated both perceptions and policies thus far in the West. Those writing from the conservative and liberal perspectives simply ignore the left. Ironically, the left’s position is found to be the most persuasive of the three. However, it is also argued that one’s position on this issue is driven less by the facts than by one’s own values and identity. These underly one’s construction and interpretation of the facts (the interpretivist perspective). The conclusion proposes the development of ‘radical security studies’, not only as an approach to the issue of rogue states but as an approach to the study of security generally. Radical security studies aims to integrate and map out the common ground between the perspective of the left and that of interpretivism.

THE CONSERVATIVE PERSPECTIVE: IT’S SOME OF THE WEST’S OPPONENTS, AND THEY’RE VERY DANGEROUS

Rogue states are portrayed by conservatives with great hostility and in emotive terms as wilful violators of the international rules of the road who thus deserve drastic counter-action. All blame is attached to the other party. Any suggestion that both parties share some of the blame for the situation, that both sides are violators of the international rules of the road, that conservatives have double standards in not seeing this, or that some of the motivations of the ‘rogue’ could be defensive and reactive tends to be
treated with scorn and suspicion. This is what I mean by the phrase ‘rogue rage’. Fear of their potential or actual ability to inflict mass destruction is given as justification for preparations to inflict mass destruction on them through limited nuclear war or for the actual infliction of mass destruction on them through conventional war and economic sanctions, as in the case of Iraq. By mass destruction I mean large-scale death and injury among people and large-scale damage to property.

Although rogue states are represented by conservatives in the West as the most important military security threat of the post-Cold War world, the concept of the ‘rogue state’ has been the subject of relatively little analytical attention. Furthermore, the conservative and liberal analyses that do focus on this issue more or less agree on which are the rogue states with occasional disputes about the precise extent of the threat or the required response. The possibility that Western states could be categorised as rogue states is rarely considered: it is just assumed that they could not.

The idea of rogue states is much older than the label. It is the latest in a long series of labels used by Western decision-makers to distinguish themselves from their perceived opponents. Notable examples have been the labels civilised versus barbarian states, moderate (including fascist and Nazi) versus Bolshevik states, status quo or moderate versus renegade, revisionist or revolutionary states, and normal versus paranoid or pariah states.

The concern with rogue states is very reminiscent of the fears of US (and Soviet) leaders in the late 1950s and early 1960s about China’s efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. In 1963 President Kennedy expressed the view that the Chinese attached a lower value to human life and he dwelled on their supposed fanaticism. In July 1963 he contacted the Soviet Union about the possibility of US, Soviet or joint US-Soviet military, and possibly nuclear, action to prevent China from acquiring nuclear weapons. The idea of using force to prevent a potentially hostile state from acquiring nuclear weapons has persisted in US policy circles.

As the Cold War drew to a close, Pentagon and conservative civilian analysts began to argue that the new threat was from less industrialised regional powers with (or seeking to acquire) large high-tech conventional forces and WMD. Such states were portrayed as having hostile intentions towards their weak or even defenceless neighbours and as being engaged in serious rivalries with similar rising powers close by. US military planners considered the military potential of a whole range of states – China, Taiwan, India, Pakistan, North Korea, South Korea, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Egypt. Ever since, the Pentagon has claimed to plan in terms of the
capabilities of all regional powers, ostensibly on the grounds that they might have or develop hegemonic ambitions and WMD. This planning baseline has been set even if those countries are friendly to or allies of the United States, and even though military clashes with other states are more likely. Much of the threat assessment is based on concern about Third World states with actual or potential First World military capabilities. However, this has also been supplemented by a barrage of labels implying malign intentions and behaviour. Such states are referred to variously as ‘rogues’, ‘outlaws’, ‘mavericks’, ‘renegades’, ‘backlash states’ (as Anthony Lake, Clinton’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, put it) and even ‘demons’ (as Colin S. Powell, Bush’s Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, put it). US politicians have tended to focus principally on North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, Cuba and occasionally rump Yugoslavia as possible or actual rogue states.

In 1990, the United States began to plan to fight two such rogue states simultaneously. Iraq had already invaded Iran, had used conventionally-armed ballistic missiles and chemical weapons against Iran, and had a record of brutal domestic repression (including the use of chemical weapons). Its WMD and ballistic missile programmes were well known. The US military had already been using Iraq as a paradigmatic rogue state in training. However, US leaders had downplayed it as a rogue state and had actively assisted it with money, intelligence and technology. It was seen as a useful ally against Iran and it was not seen as particularly threatening to US interests elsewhere in the Middle East. Only once Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990 did the US government portray it publicly as a rogue state. Particular emphasis was placed on the danger of Iraq having or developing WMD, and destruction of these capabilities became a high priority for the US government and US public opinion.

Events in the Gulf were portrayed by the Bush administration as vindication of its claim that the new threat was from rogue states and of its military strategy for dealing with two of them simultaneously and unilaterally. The Pentagon argued that Iraq was enormously militarily capable, that the conflict with Iraq known as Operation ‘Desert Storm’ was the model for future conflicts with rogue states, and that there was a need for substantial expenditure on high technology and force mobility for such conflicts. In the subsequent debate on US military requirements, the participants even calculated in terms of Desert Storm Equivalents (DSEs), with the two main options being either one and a half or two DSEs.

Although (or perhaps because) the Clinton administration is a Democratic one, it has asserted the conservative perspective on rogue states
even more strongly than the Republican Reagan and Bush administrations. A typical characterisation of rogue states is that of Toby Gati, Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research in the Clinton administration:

‘rogue’ states threaten us by maintaining programs for weapons of mass destruction, sponsoring terrorism, often targeted specifically at Americans, and by their hostility toward and active opposition to our political and social systems and those of our friends and allies.\textsuperscript{15}

Clinton’s Bottom-Up Review (BUR) of US military requirements published in September 1993 agreed with the Bush administration that the United States needed to be prepared to fight two Iraq-sized regional powers simultaneously and unilaterally – in other words, it needed two DSEs.\textsuperscript{16} The administration is also investing in capabilities for counter proliferation which include the development of options to use conventional weapons to destroy the NBC capabilities of rogue states.\textsuperscript{17} The Clinton administration sees a role for nuclear weapons in deterring or retaliating against NBC use by rogue states against the United States or against other states deemed important to US interests.\textsuperscript{18} One of the concerns is also to show that possession of WMD would not deter a US conventional response to regional conventionally-armed ‘aggression’ by a rogue state. The US government has funded research into very low yield nuclear weapons for battlefield use. The United States decided in 1997 to increase expenditure on the design and development of new nuclear warheads by $4 billion per year, using computer simulation testing rather than underground explosions in order to stay within the letter of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.\textsuperscript{19} The nuclear war plans adopted by the United States in December 1997 include options for nuclear attacks on states identified as rogues which have ‘prospective access’ to WMD.\textsuperscript{20}

In similar vein, although Britain is planning to cut its Trident nuclear warheads unilaterally by 50 per cent and has scrapped its other nuclear weapons,\textsuperscript{21} efforts are being made to make it more flexible and usable in what the Ministry of Defence labels ‘sub-strategic’ roles.\textsuperscript{22} Rogue states are seen as targets of such weapons.

The Clinton administration has taken a much tougher line on attempts by its designated rogue states to acquire WMD. The most notable example of this was during the crisis in the summer of 1994 when a preventive (probably conventional) attack by the United States to destroy North Korea’s nuclear facilities seemed like a substantial possibility. Late in 1998, the United States deliberately leaked war plans in which it envisaged responding to a North Korean invasion of South Korea by invading North
Korea, overthrowing the regime there, and reunifying the country. Overall, the US military posture is increasingly geared towards dealing with what it seems to be rogue states.

The only substantial study of the rogue states issue from a conservative perspective has been written by Raymond Tanter, formerly a member of the US National Security Council under Reagan. He defines rogue states or leaders as ones that 'have large conventional military forces and that condone international terrorism and/or seek weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological, chemical armaments' and defines rogue behaviour vaguely as 'unacceptable international conduct'. Note that even conservatives would have to accept that the United States and some of its allies fulfil two out of three of these criteria for a rogue state: it has large conventional forces and has WMD. As discussed later, the left argues that the United States has condoned, sponsored and carried out acts of international terrorism. The definition of 'international terrorism' and the assessment of the content of the historical record are crucial political battlegrounds. He asserts that the United States practices what it preaches about acceptable international conduct, that rogue behaviour is clearly identifiable and that, once identified, it creates an obligation to respond to it. If the left had anything to do with it, these words would come back to haunt him. But first I wish to explore the much more mild dissent contained in the liberal perspective.

THE LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE: IT'S SOME OF THE WEST'S OPPONENTS, AND THEY'RE QUITE DANGEROUS

Liberals argue that such an exaggerated sense of threat has led to extreme actions such as those against Iraq and the closing off of otherwise useful policy options. Are the states seen by the United States as actual or potential rogues worthy of the name in terms of military capabilities? Liberals think not. Tables 1 and 2 draw upon and extend the analysis of Michael Klare, who has a liberal perspective on the issue of rogue states. Although the United States would prefer to fight with allies, the DSE as a planning device is based on the United States fighting alone.

Table 1 summarises the position with regard to potential rogue states as defined by US military planners. All of them would require at least or vastly more than a DSE were the United States to fight them single handedly. With the exception of Turkey, they also possess or are pursuing WMD and ballistic missiles. However, a survey of their neighbours leaves us with a highly improbable list of states for which the United States would launch a
### TABLE 1

**THE STRATEGIC POSITION OF SUPPOSED POTENTIAL ROGUE STATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential rogue states as defined by US military planners</th>
<th>Conventional military capabilities requiring a US Desert Storm Equivalent?</th>
<th>Possessing/ pursing WMD and ballistic missiles?</th>
<th>Have militarily weak neighbours?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (Burma, Laos, Mongolia, Vietnam) No (Taiwan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (Libya, Sudan) No (Israel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma, Sri Lanka) No (China, Pakistan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (Afghanistan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No (North Korea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (Armenia, Bulgaria) No (Iraq, Greece)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2

**THE STRATEGIC POSITION OF SUPPOSED ACTUAL ROGUE STATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rogue states as defined by US leaders</th>
<th>Conventional military capabilities requiring a US Desert Storm Equivalent (assumes US fighting alone)?</th>
<th>Possessing/ pursing WMD and ballistic missiles?</th>
<th>Have militarily weak neighbours?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>No, but close</td>
<td>Yes, but does not have nuclear weapons</td>
<td>No (South Korea, China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>No, but close</td>
<td>Yes, but does not have nuclear weapons</td>
<td>No (Israel) Yes (Lebanon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>No, but potentially in the longer term</td>
<td>Yes, but does not have nuclear weapons</td>
<td>No (Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>No, but potentially in the longer term</td>
<td>Yes, but does not have nuclear weapons</td>
<td>No (Iran, Syria, Turkey) Yes (Kuwait, Jordan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>No, and not potentially</td>
<td>Yes, but does not have nuclear weapons</td>
<td>No (Egypt) Yes (Chad)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
lone DSE – Burma, Laos, Mongolia or Vietnam if invaded by China; Libya and Sudan if invaded by Egypt; Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma or Sri Lanka if invaded by India; Afghanistan if invaded by Pakistan; and Armenia or Bulgaria if invaded by Turkey. At least on this point Klare bends over backwards to be fair to conservatives in giving some limited credence to the scenario of a Turkish bid for hegemony in the Middle East which leads it to clash directly with the United States.  

If the criteria used by the planners really are just military capability and potential, then countries like Germany and Japan should be on the list. They are not, possibly for fear of causing political offence. Russia is also not on the list, partly for the same reason and partly also because it is seen in the Pentagon as requiring a return to a baseline much larger than a DSE. Although Israel should also figure on the list, it is omitted, according to Klare, because ‘Israel’s military posture is so closely aligned with that of the United States … and the probability of Israel ever severing its links to Washington is so low’. This is putting it rather delicately, and Klare does not address the argument that Israel itself looks in many ways like a rogue state (with the obvious exception of the hostility to the United States criterion).

Table 2 illustrates Klare’s claim that one of the basic weaknesses of the DSE as a planning assumption with regard to the supposedly existing rogue states is that none of them fulfil the combined criteria which would require a DSE.

First, among the supposed rogue states, only two come close to having the requisite conventional military capabilities (North Korea and Syria), two are a long way off such a capability (Iran and Iraq), and the last has no chance of acquiring it (Libya).

Second, and more important, the militarily strongest of them generally face militarily strong neighbours. For example, North Korea faces China and South Korea. Hence planning based on the United States effectively fighting alone is in most cases invalid and likely to remain so. What we are left with is extremely improbable – the United States going it alone to defend Lebanon from Syrian invasion, or Chad from Libyan invasion – or (Klare maintains) very unlikely – the United States going it alone to defend Kuwait or Jordan from Iraqi invasion.

Overall, Klare is unequivocal: ‘The probability of US troops engaging in even one replay of Desert Storm appears to be very low; that of a two-DSE scenario, close to zero.’

Furthermore, Klare rightly argues, contrary to the Pentagon and BUR position, that victory in the Gulf was critically dependent on allies for
funding, bases, petroleum products and political support, and that the circumstances of the victory were unlikely to be repeated. On the latter issue, he points out that the United States had technological superiority, a nuclear monopoly, established logistical facilities in Saudi Arabia and favourable desert terrain. In contrast, Iraq had many military weaknesses, virtually no allies, Saddam Hussein’s incompetent leadership, and domestic rebellion in the north and south to cope with. Rather than Iraq being the archetypal rising rogue state brought to heel by US technological superiority, Iraq was an unlikely to be repeated case of a highly vulnerable and badly led regional power brought (only partly) to heel due to a combination of many favourable circumstances.

Although Klare sees ‘rogue state’ as an appropriate label for North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria, the central thesis of his book is that the threat posed by them has been exaggerated by the Pentagon in order to prevent its post-Cold War budget from being cut. To support this claim he would need to have shown that those in the Pentagon believed the threat to be low, that they agreed to exaggerate it deliberately, and that they did so for the sole or at least primary purpose of budget protection. Klare has not provided the evidence necessary to sustain any of these three claims, yet all three are necessary to bear out his thesis. Instead, he conducted his own threat assessment, decided that the Pentagon one was too high, and jumped to his conclusion. However, the same evidence can be read very differently.

First, it is possible that Pentagon planners are influenced by motivated bias; they sincerely see a relatively high level of threat because they are seeing what they want to see. This motivated bias could be caused unconsciously by a desire to prop up their military budget; self-deception rather than the deliberate deception Klare hints at. Demonisation of the opponent (which tends to be characteristic of those who perceive the existence of rogue states) is seen by Ralph White to be a very negative misperception produced by the workings of political psychology. He argues that things go wrong when decision-makers have a demonised enemy image, an idealised self-image, are overconfident or underconfident, and fail to have empathy with opponents or other parties. He asserts: ‘The demonized enemy image (defined here as an exaggeration of the actual evil in an adversary’s character) is with little doubt the most common concomitant of war and probably the most important direct cause of offensive action.’

Note that to call it misperception requires one to be able to sort out true perception from false perception, no easy task. Those who fear rogue states would insist that the demons are actually demonic, and that liberals are the
ones who are misperceiving, but in the other direction by projecting their positive image onto the opponent in a situation in which the opponent is actually proactive and so on.

Second, and even more problematic for Klare’s thesis, is the fact that conservatives could even agree that another DSE is unlikely and two simultaneous DSEs extremely unlikely, but could still argue for maintaining or increasing the Pentagon’s budget. This is because conservatives are wedded to military strength as a basic prudential principle. Threat assessment and peering dimly into the future can only get you so far. The other half of the equation is your values, interests and objectives. Conservatives regard lack of current evidence of a likely military threat as being less important than the potential of events to spring very large, very dangerous and very improbable surprises. No amount of liberal analysis can change that. There are different ways of being prudent: you pay as much of your money as you feel you have to and you choose your risks.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LEFT:
IT’S THE WEST AS MUCH AS (OR MORE THAN) ANY OF THE WEST’S OPPONENTS, AND THE WEST IS DANGEROUS

Left-wing critics of the policies of the United States and its allies provide evidence and arguments in support of their claim that, in effect, they are rogue states. Some of them would argue that the United States is the most rogue-like state of all. As John Pilger has written: ‘If we are to speak of truly “rogue” powers, the US leads the pack.’ Some on the left focus on what they see as the double standards of the United States and its allies while others on the left couch the arguments in terms of an underlying single standard of doing whatever is in their perceived interests. Together, they claim that the West engages in the very behaviour which it condemns in supposed rogue states: use of and support for terrorism, violations of international law, defiance of the international community, and assisting the spread of WMD and related delivery systems:

First, the left claims that the United States and its allies condone, sponsor and use terrorism. I take terrorism to mean the threat or use of violence by states or non-state actors targeted against civilians for political purposes. The cases they cite in support of their position include the following:

• The US Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning in Georgia is the target of a campaign to close it down because of the continuing
involvement of some of its Latin American graduates in state terrorism against citizens of their countries.\textsuperscript{35}

- The United States condemned Libya for not handing over for trial two Libyans suspected in the blowing up of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie in Scotland in 1988, yet it continues to shield Cuban exile CIA operative Luis Posada Carriles linked to the blowing up of a Cuban airliner in 1976 and US CIA operative John Hull indicted by Costa Rica in connection with a bomb attack at a press conference in Nicaragua in 1984.\textsuperscript{36}

Second, the United States and its allies are portrayed by the left as violating international norms and international law, and defying the will of the international community.\textsuperscript{37} Examples they see as relevant include these:

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluded on 27 June 1986 that the war the United States was sponsoring was an illegal war of aggression against Nicaragua, and ordered the United States to stop and to pay compensation to Nicaragua. The United States simply ignored the judgement yet turned to the ICJ in support of its case against Libya over the Lockerbie bombing.\textsuperscript{38}

- The economic sanctions enforced unilaterally by the United States against Cuba since 1961 are causing widespread suffering and unnecessary deaths among the civilian population, in spite of extensive efforts by the Cuban government.\textsuperscript{39} The embargo, which includes food and medicine, is opposed by many individuals, groups and governments around the world. In October 1998, 157 states in the UN General Assembly voted for an end to the US sanctions: only the United States and Israel opposed the resolution, and 12 other countries abstained.\textsuperscript{40} Cuban research scientists announced in December 1998 that they had found a vaccine for meningitis B. A team of British medical researchers immediately went to Cuba to assess the vaccine. In other words, British children may benefit from Cuban medical research while Britain does little to end US sanctions which deny Cuban children vital medical treatment.

- UN sanctions, combined with the after-effects of the US-led UN war against Iraq in 1991, have resulted in an increase of around 90,000 deaths per year compared with 1989.\textsuperscript{41} If this figure is accurate, 720,000 Iraqis died due to this policy between 1991 and 1998 inclusive. The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) calculated in April 1998 that the deaths have
disproportionately hit children under five years of age (an increase of around 40,000 deaths per year compared with 1989). This works out at 320,000 children under five between 1991 and 1998 inclusive. This policy has been kept in place by US and British pressure, although widespread international disquiet has meant that some movement in the US and especially British position could be detected in 1999.

The economic sanctions are ostensibly aimed at ensuring Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions passed during and after their expulsion from Kuwait in 1991. Iraq is required, among other things, to dismantle its capabilities to produce WMD and related delivery systems and to submit to long-term UN monitoring of its WMD capabilities. Iraq is entitled to sell some oil in order to pay for things such as food and medicines.

Those in favour of the sanctions argue that all moral responsibility for the fate of ordinary Iraqis is thereby transferred to Saddam Hussein: if he complies, the sanctions will be lifted, they maintain.

However, the critics of the sanctions on the left argue that the sanctions are in violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. They argue that, in violation of the relevant UN resolutions, the United States has indicated its intention to keep the sanctions in place until Saddam Hussein is overthrown even if Iraq complies with the UN's demands; that Iraq has complied extensively if not fully with disarmament and monitoring requirements; that the oil sales programme is totally inadequate to the task of reducing the rate of death and suffering among ordinary Iraqis; and that the United States and Britain have frequently blocked UN approval of humanitarian supplies.

- In February 1998, the United States was seeking the use of force against Iraq (without UN explicit authorisation) for refusing to allow UN inspectors access to certain sites and for objecting to US and British membership of the UN inspection teams. Iraq objected that the US and British inspectors would be hostile rather than neutral and might engage in spying (an accusation which turned out to be true – US personnel were spying under the cover of UNSCOM and passing the information on directly to the United States, which also shared it with Israel).

At precisely the same time, the United States was passing legislation which codified exactly the same exceptions regarding the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Clause 307 of the legislation stated that

"The president may deny a request to inspect any facility in the United
States in cases where the president determines that the inspection may pose a threat to the national security interests of the United States.' Another clause stated that 'any objection by the president to any individual serving as an inspector ... shall not be reviewable in any court'. Furthermore, private companies are to be exempt from inspection. In 1997, the United States refused to cooperate with two members of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (one Cuban and one Iranian) which has the task of monitoring compliance with the CWC. The left point out that no-one called for the bombing of the United States for this rogue behaviour.

Third, support for the spread of WMD and related delivery systems is deemed to be a characteristic of a rogue state, and the left argues that Western countries have been extensively involved in this process. For example:

- The United States has shown itself very willing to allow Israel to acquire technology from US manufacturers which is vital to its nuclear weapon programme.44

- Germany is funding three Dolphin-class submarines to give Israel an undersea platform for nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) being developed under the bizarre name Popeye Turbo. Israel had scrapped plans to deploy SLCMs. The project was only saved by the German intervention. The objective of the programme is supposedly to give Israel a secure retaliatory nuclear capability should Iran develop a nuclear arsenal of its own.45

The left construes Israel as being a rogue state on all three counts of terrorism, violating international law and norms, and spreading WMD and related delivery systems. It has persistently defied UN Security Council resolutions, has secretly built up a substantial nuclear arsenal, was involved in assisting the acquisition of nuclear weapons by South Africa, officially approves of torture in its jails, invaded Lebanon in 1982, has occupied and terrorised much of southern Lebanon ever since, and uses terrorist tactics against Palestinians. Frequently Israel has been able to avoid international censure due to the threatened or actual veto of the United States on the UN Security Council.

Social scientists try to adjudicate between the three perspectives outlined thus far by assessing their internal logical coherence and their fit with empirical evidence. We can all do better or worse at engaging in the social science exercise. In particular, claims about rogue states can be tested
in their own terms: criteria have been specified for what constitutes a rogue state and claims have been made about which states fulfil them. By social science standards, Tanter’s conservative perspective fails. Klare’s liberal perspective fares better but still falls at the basic hurdle of failing to provide the evidence and connected arguments necessary to support the claim that the Pentagon’s concern to prop up its budget is behind its position that rogue states are a major threat. The liberal perspective also does not consider the possibility that the United States or its allies could be considered rogue states. In contrast, much plausible evidence can be gathered in support of the position of the left that the United States and its allies can be classified as rogue states too, using the criteria laid out by conservatives and accepted by liberals.

Conservatives do not give a response to the left although I am sure they could think of one. They refuse to engage, and act as if the left-wing perspective simply does not exist. In the manuscript of the forthcoming revised edition of *Rogue Regimes*, Tanter responds to what he sees as my arguments in an earlier version of this study. First, he asks: ‘Is it unreasonable to fear the potential and actual ability of hostile states to inflict mass destruction?’ My answer is of course not, and that was not my point, which is that we should not have double standards – we should oppose rogue behaviour, whoever it is that carries it out – and that Western states indulge in rogue behaviour. Tanter does not address this argument and continues:

the present study contrasts sharply with the critical approach. The alternative outlook argues that the Pentagon manufactured a rogue state threat. That approach claims that the US policy of containment of the USSR shifted to containment of rogue states simply to maintain approximate levels of defense spending in the post-Cold War days.

Note that Tanter refers to ‘the critical approach’ in the singular, with the critical approach being that of Klare, even though in the introduction of the earlier version of this work I criticised the work of Tanter and Klare specifically as follows: ‘The possibility that Western states could be rogue states is simply never considered: it is just assumed that they could not.’ The liberal-conservative dispute is a cosy one because it leaves a shared positive image of the United States and its allies intact. Left-wing arguments are defeated not through engagement and social scientific disconfirmation but non-engagement and marginalisation.

It is not simply that some of the debate is about potential, future threats. It is also that the analyst’s own values and objectives will to a substantial
degree be what drives the outcome rather than theoretical and empirical evidence. A conservative will tend to plump for larger military investment as they best way to hedge against uncertainty whereas a liberal will tend to fall back on a general scepticism about the threats touted by armed forces and politicians. And so on.

In other words, the analysis can have a pre-determined outcome and everyone will continue to occupy their usual positions and feel vindicated. Yet their claims of vindication will be presented as being based on the general truth of their world views combined with ‘the facts’, and those who continue to hold an alternative position will tend to be dismissed as stupid, malign or both. I have no illusion (or, as will become clear below, desire) that self-appointed adjudication by any individual will close the debate.

THE INTERPRETIVIST PERSPECTIVE:
THREAT ASSESSMENT IS AS MUCH ABOUT ASSERTING VALUES AND IDENTITIES AS ASSESSING THREATS

As a means of trying to be better social scientists we have a great deal to learn from what might be called ‘interpretivism’. Interpretivists claim to reject the political game of asserting and imposing single supposed truths. The aim is not finding answers to win and end the debate but finding answers in such a way that debate can still exist. It is an ethic which values contestation highly. Following on from the work of Michel Foucault and others, its principal exponent in the field of international security studies is David Campbell. I present here my take on interpretivism, with the aim of offering a version of it which is easy to grasp and which can be readily applied to the issue of rogue states.

Interpretivism is not interested in the truth or falsity of knowledge claims, but in the relationship of knowledge claims to power, and argues that knowledge is inseparable from power. When a question is posed, such as ‘To what extent is our security threatened by potential or actual rogue states?’, social scientists seek to provide the best single answer based on the most objective theory and evidence possible, while accepting (I hope!) that it may be supplanted subsequently by better theory or new evidence.

Interpretivists do not try to provide a single answer to the question. Instead, they seek to develop several answers and ask ‘What exercise of power is served by the question and the various answers to the question?’

Simplifying interpretivism into six separate points allows me to generate the following analysis of the rogue state issue:
• Deconstruction involves ‘unsettling concepts and conceptual oppositions which are otherwise taken to be settled’. The rogue versus non-rogue state distinction is widely (though not unanimously) taken to be settled. The conservative perspective is the dominant one among the United States and its allies. Liberals and the left argue over who is to be labelled a rogue or how serious is the threat but they tend not to challenge the basic conceptual opposition.

• The purpose behind deconstruction is to reveal the effects of conceptual oppositions. If you accept the rogue versus non-rogue state distinction, you are more likely to take action against those states labelled ‘rogue’ and to act leniently towards states not so labelled, even if they do the same things. Hence the infliction of mass destruction on Iraq through economic sanctions and the planning for possible use against rogue states of those things more usually classified as WMD. At the other end of the political spectrum, the left is trying to mobilise against the United States and its allies.

• Conceptual oppositions are not natural. They are a product of power rather than of the inherent characteristics of the phenomena the concepts purport to describe. The rogue-non-rogue state distinction did not simply emerge from the neutral, progressive, universal and scientific study of world politics but in the context of promoting the power of the United States and its allies as the Cold War drew to a close.

• Conceptual oppositions are not neutral but hierarchical, with one claimed to have good characteristics the other lacks. Rogue states are assumed to be bad states, non-rogue states good ones.

• Totalisation or closure (i.e. the conclusive achievement of clearly separate oppositions) is impossible, in spite of great efforts to achieve it. It is not that objective reality does not exist but that we cannot apprehend it directly. Facts are inevitably imbued with value and only take on meaning through interpretation. Effort is put into lambasting supposed rogue states and lauding supposed non-rogue ones, and those who dissent are seen as flying in the face of ‘reality’. Yet the pesky awkward squad which persists in seeing it differently never quite goes away and cannot be proven wrong decisively.

• Technologies (i.e. power-knowledge combinations) of normalisation (e.g. conceptions of prison, psychiatry, military intervention, economic sanctions) are supposedly neutral ways of eliminating or at least
minimising the number of or danger from deviants (criminals, the insane, sexual perverts, terrorists, rogue states), when what they actually do is define into existence these deviants and thus ensure their existence. The existence of these deviants is primarily about defining who ‘we’ are (identity politics): whether or not there is a real threat from them is secondary. Interpretivists argue that what is needed is an understanding of how difference becomes represented as dangerous other-ness. Social scientific commentaries on rogue states are invariably permeated with assertions of a particular, morally superior, ‘us’. The entry price of being part of conservative, liberal and left-wing discussions of rogue states is buying into a particular identity involving the assertion of ‘our’ moral superiority: that matters more than scepticism about the extent of threat from rogue states. This may be the moral superiority of the West in the eyes of conservatives and liberals or the moral superiority of those opposing Western hegemony in the eyes of the left.

Reactions from social scientists to interpretivism tend to take two highly contrasting forms. One objection is that interpretivism is dramatically different from social science, and that interpretivism leads to morally and intellectually paralysing relativism, with an inability to judge between moral claims or truth claims. The opposite objection is that interpretivism is merely saying what social scientists can already say and can say more clearly: from this viewpoint, interpretivism is merely social science dressed up in fancy continental clothes. This is a question that goes way beyond the scope of this analysis: it is a vast, sprawling debate on the whole nature of moral and intellectual endeavour. I will limit my response here to two points.

First, interpretivism does not have to lead to relativism. It is striking, and it is a point made frequently by interpretivists, that some social scientists tend to base their greater willingness to rely on facts (even while accepting in principle their constructedness) not on the reliability of facts but on the fear of the moral consequences of taking the position that meaning cannot flow directly from facts but is a product of interpretation. Interpretivism is a product not of a lack of moral commitment but of a different moral commitment. From an interpretivist perspective, the rogue-non-rogue state dichotomy is an expression of the broader phenomenon of ‘biopolitics’, namely, the process of pervading all aspects of human activity with economy (efficiency), order (government) and measures of normality (and hence unacceptable abnormality), ostensibly to ensure the survival, health and happiness of the population. From the perspective of interpretivism,
the shared biopolitical outlook of conservatives and liberals (but to a much lesser extent the left, with whom interpretivists tend to have an affinity), their division of what it means to be into the right and wrong way to be with related notions of control, underlies the will to mass destruction. And nothing less than the rejection of biopolitics becomes necessary to the avoidance of mass destruction.

Second, different epistemological emphases (different views of how we know what we know) have substantially different political and ethical consequences. John Mueller and Karl Mueller argues that chemical and biological weapons are not really WMD because they have not been and still are not very effective at killing masses of people, whereas economic sanctions can be WMD because they can bring about the deaths of masses of people. Similarly, one of my students, Vanja Buljina, who describes herself as ‘a southern Slav’, argues that nationalism is a WMD. Should one rule this claim in or out?

To give another example, there were 600,000 tobacco-related deaths in China in 1990. With the marketing skills of Western tobacco firms which are gaining access to China, that death toll is predicted to rise many fold to the point where it will eventually kill one in three of the 300 million Chinese men currently alive under the age of 29. Those who sell tobacco could be construed as inflicting mass destruction on the Chinese people.

Another characteristic often attributed to WMD is that only small numbers of them are needed to inflict mass destruction. This is another reason Mueller and Mueller give for not counting chemical and biological weapons as WMD. With current (though, I would argue, possibly not future) technology, large numbers of them would be needed to inflict large numbers of casualties. Yet it is difficult to know how to apply the small numbers criterion to economic sanctions: the phrase is plural but how many of them are needed for economic sanctions to cease to be a WMD in Mueller and Mueller’s terms? Ought tobacco to be categorised as a WMD? Is it singular (tobacco) or plural (billions of cigarettes)? What about intentions? Tobacco firms do not want smokers to die, because then they can not make money from them. For every smoker that dies, another must be hooked if tobacco firms are even to stand still. Then again, whether or not the tobacco firms intend it, it is a knowable consequence of their profitmaking. Hence Chomsky’s labelling of them as the real narcotraffickers. One more point: should tobacco be left out of the WMD category because it does not wreak its destruction at high speed?

Social scientists try to sort this sort of question out by pointing to the facts of the phenomena being investigated and by using theories to try to
extract further meaning from those facts. Mueller and Mueller argue for the recategorisation of chemical and biological weapons as not being WMD and economic sanctions as being WMD on this basis. They attribute what they see as the current miscategorisation to the distortions introduced by professional pessimists. Their writing has a tone which implies deliberate deception on the part of those professional pessimists: the use of words of mass deception about weapons of minimal destruction.

In the debate over what constitutes WMD and use of WMD, social science protagonists often aim to show that they have the objectively right definition of concepts and categorisation of activities. They see those with whom they disagree as offering knowledge that is inaccurate because it has been corrupted by power. Knowledge is presented as something which can and should be separable from power.

Similarly, White's approach to the issue of demonisation is premised on an ability to separate correct perception from misperception – that demons are not actually demons, for example. And he asserts that there is little room for doubt that his conclusions are right.

In contrast, an interpretivist approach is concerned to a greater extent with viewing all claims to knowledge as power moves. This allows for a more reflexive position even on those views with which one agrees. I tend to be persuaded by the basic argument of the left that the United States and its allies operate on the basis of double standards, underlying which there is a systematic single standard of serving perceived US interests. However, interpretivism reminds me that the facts that have so persuaded me could be reinterpreted by conservatives and liberals to show that the double standards do not exist because differences between the paired examples means that the apparent double standards are actually an illusion. This does not mean that anything goes, but that finality and certainty are unachievable, that imposition of a single perspective on all is a form of political oppression, and that arguments about fact are often really arguments about value. We need to proceed not only on the basis of what we think is correct, but also on the basis that what we think is correct may be wrong.

BEYOND ROGUE RAGE: RADICAL SECURITY STUDIES

Some may see what they define as Western interests as being best served by violating international norms as often as they think they can get away with it while imposing them (through means which often violate the same or other international norms) upon perceived enemies. Some Western conservatives will frankly simply not care about analyses which argue that
they have double standards in that they define as rogue behaviour things done by other states, but do not call those same things rogue behaviour when done by their state or their allies. For them, this is justified as part of a propaganda battle in a war of national interests. In other words, if there is a way of delegitimising their opponent’s violations of international law but not their own, then they are happy. Their moral imperative is the defence of what they call the national interest. Hence, they are only interested in rogue states and rogue behaviour which they perceive as threatening to themselves. Indeed, they might argue that drawing attention to the existence of their double standards is short-sighted and dangerous because it makes harder for them to defend the national interest.

However, rogue rage is a form of demonisation. While demonisation can serve to mobilise people in defence of norms worth defending, it can have substantial costs. It can lock you into an unnecessarily high level of conflict. It can cause you to impose higher costs upon everyone, including third parties, than you would otherwise have done. It can encourage you to feel morally and prudentially justified in violating the very norms you are supposedly defending. You can assume that you are right simply because you are you. All of these costs have been associated with the demonisation of some states as rogue states.

Rogue rage has brought about mass destruction by the United States and its allies in the name of preventing mass destruction by others, and the focus on preventing the use of WMD by supposed rogue states has distracted attention from the actual mass destruction taking place in the world. Accusing the United States and its states of double standards in their behaviour does not have to be the same thing as asserting their moral equivalence with other actors or states. The opposite can be the case. Western states claim to be morally superior, and in accusing them of having double standards, some people may be hoping that they will act in accordance with their asserted higher standards more often. In other words, to accuse someone of having double standards can be indicative of some faith in them.

Equally, asserting that the United States and its allies are not morally equivalent to states such as Iraq is not an adequate justification for double standards. It is precisely because they claim not to be morally equivalent that they must have at the very least consistent standards. In addition, the ‘rogue state’ label should be ditched altogether. Interestingly, not all opponents are demonised, and so it might be valuable to analyse when opponents are demonised and when they are not. This could be done at a host of levels. For example, individual cases could traced for when
demonisation begins and when it ends. Particular countries could be examined for the pattern of their tendencies to demonise or not. Different countries could be compared for when they demonise at the same time or in the same way, and when they do not.

There is much to be learned from existing work on norms in international relations. However, we should listen also to the sceptical voices of the interpretivists and the left, who in their different ways would caution us about the potential for promotion of norms to turn into the infliction of mass destruction on the demonised rogue other in new, more respectable clothes. Many on the left think this is already happening through the much-vaunted norm of humanitarian intervention as exemplified by NATO’s military action against Yugoslavia in relation to Kosovo.

This engagement with the issue of rogue states illustrates my wider belief that there is much to be said for a general approach to security studies which I would label “radical security studies”. This would combine the left’s detailed empirical engagement and insistence that the United States and its allies be held to account for the vast amount of destruction they inflict on other societies, with interpretivism’s problematisation of the implicit claim of some that their position is a product of facts which can be perceived by those who are not ideologically blinkered.

Those on the left delve into the nasty detail of the foreign and security policies of liberal democracies. They offer direct engagement with the issues of the day in a way which is generally comprehensible to a wider audience. Their work also involves a fundamental critique of the limitations of liberal democracy, of the antipathy to liberal democracy contained within realism, of the importance of material forces in world politics, and of the importance of money and power in the role played by the media in undermining real democratic control of policy.

It might be objected that the approaches of the left and the interpretivists are simply incompatible. However, a metatheoretical middle ground which can be used to bring them together not only is possible but already exists. Radical security studies has the potential to combine the problematisation of knowledge with a serious engagement with the detail of policy in the service of common humanity rather than any supposed national interest. Without this combination, it may be that mass destruction in the future cannot be prevented and the mass destruction which is already being inflicted cannot be brought to an end.
I am very grateful to Noam Chomsky, Lene Hansen, Carolyn James, Pat Morgan, Yannis Stivachtis and those who participated in the discussion when I presented this study as a paper at the Pan European International Relations – International Studies Association annual conference in Vienna on 16 September 1998 for their valuable comments. The opinions expressed in this contribution are solely those of the author.

1. Nevertheless, that would be a worthwhile research objective. If one developed a more complex picture based on cross-pressured, ambivalent preferences, one might grasp how coalitions of preferences could play an important role in influencing how perspectives on rogue states shape world politics. For the application of this kind of approach to the politics of nuclear weapons policy, see James DeNardo, *The Amateur Strategist. Intuitive Deterrence Theories and the Politics of the Nuclear Arms Race* (Cambridge: CUP 1995).


12. There is much less awareness of the fact that Iran used chemical weapons against Iraq. See Carolyn C. James, ‘Iran and Iraq as Rational Crisis Actors: Dangers and Dynamics of Survivable Nuclear War’, this volume.

Preventing the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction

by Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research before the Senate Select Committee on
terrorism/970205.htm>. See also Lake ‘Confronting Backlash States’(note 10). Lake’s list of
backlash (i.e. rogue) states is Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya and Cuba.
17. See James Wirtz, ‘Counterproliferation, Conventional Counterforce and Nuclear War’, this
volume.
1996.
Nov. 1998. This has strong and not very reassuring echoes of the US invasion of North Korea
in 1950. The fact that starvation and malnutrition is rife in North Korea makes conservatives
worry that it will attack South Korea conventionally or develop nuclear weapons and create a
nuclear crisis. In contrast, liberals and the left argue that the dire situation in North Korea
makes such a war or crisis less likely. They also argue that the hardliners in North Korea and
the United States are in a symbiotic relationship (officially they may exist to eliminate each
other, but the existence of the other is vital to their identity, mission and status). See John
24. Tanter, Rogue Regimes (note 3) pp.ix, xi, 40. Unacceptable to whom, one might ask.
25. Tanter’s list of rogue states is Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya and Syria (with Sudan as its
surrogate). Unusually among conservatives, Tanter does not see Cuba as a rogue state
because he sees it as no longer exporting terrorism or revolution and no longer seeking
WMD. Ibid. Ch.6.
26. See James, ‘Iran and Iraq’, this volume, and Mueller and Mueller, ‘Methodology of Mass
Destruction’, this volume.
28. Ibid. p.3.
29. Ibid. p.206.
31. Ibid. p.22.
oneself as reactive, defensive, benign, and directed towards no-one in particular, and the
opponent as pro-active, offensive, malign and directed against you, see Wirtz, ‘Counterproliferation’,
33. Pilger, “Humanitarian Intervention”’(note 3). Brief discussions by Chomsky of the issue of
‘rogues’ can be found in World Orders, Old and New (London: Pluto Press 1994) pp.72–3;
34. For many claims from the left of examples, see Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, The
Political Economy of Human Rights (Boston, MA: South End Press 1979) 2 volumes; Noam
Chomsky, Pirates and Emperors: International Terrorism in the Real World (NY: Claremont
1986); Noam Chomsky, The Culture of Terrorism (London: Pluto Press 1989); Alexander
George (ed.) Western State Terrorism (Cambridge: Polity Press 1991); and Zunes, ‘Function
of Rogue States’ (note 3).

36. Zunes, ‘Function of Rogue States’ (note 3). In April 1999, Libya did hand over the two suspects to face trial in The Netherlands under Scottish Law.

37. For additional examples, see Geoff Simons, *Vietnam Syndrome: Impact on US Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1998) and *Scourging of Iraq* (note 2).


44. Zunes, ‘Function of Rogue States’ (note 3).

45. Julian Borger and Martin Kettle, ‘Israel Goes Underwater to Counter Arab Bomb’, *The Guardian*, 2 July 1998. Note the topsy-turvy perspective of *The Guardian*: German assistance for the Israeli nuclear weapon programme is presented as countering an Arab bomb, even though there is at present no Arab bomb to counter, and serious dispute over whether Iran is actually seeking nuclear weapons.


47. Samuel Huntington made a similar move. He wrote that ‘While the United States regularly demonises various countries as “rogue states”, in the eyes of many countries it is becoming the rogue superpower.’ However, the rogue behaviour he has in mind is anodyne stuff – merely leaning a bit too hard on allied governments. The much more robust rogue accusations made by the left are omitted from his discussion. See Samuel P. Huntington, ‘The Lonely Superpower’, *Foreign Affairs* 78/2 (March/April 1999) p.42. In the same issue Gary Wills presents a slightly tougher version of the same line as that of Huntington. See Gary Wills, ‘Bully of the Free World’, *Foreign Affairs* 78/2 (March/April 1999) pp.50–9.

48. The same sort of ideas tends to be labelled post-structuralism, post-positivism or post-modernism. Of course, this is just a broad cluster of ideas, and there are deep disputes among those who might be categorised with these labels. Tainter also does not engage with the interpretive perspective on rogue states outlined in my Vienna paper.


53. Trish Saywell, ‘Death Sentence’, *Far Eastern Economic Review* 161/50 (10 Dec. 1998), pp.54–6 and Sarah Bosely, ‘Tobacco Will Kill 1 in 3 Chinese Men’, *The Guardian*, 20 Nov. 1998. Although the US tobacco industry agreed to hand over $120 billion to various US authorities to compensate for the mass destruction they cause, with US government help they are using international trade regulations to gain access to people in less industrialised countries to replace this lost profit.


55. For a fascinating application of this kind of thinking to a debate over whether or not US behaviour contradicts its professed principles, see Toby Robertson, Stephen Reicher, *An Analysis of the Construction and Contestation of Contradictions in a Debate Between Noam
Preventing the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction


56. For example, Chomsky argues that ‘Typically, the thugs and gangsters whom the US backs reach a point in their careers when they become too independent and grasping, outliving their usefulness.’ At this point, he claims, they become demonised by the United States and treated as foes to be crushed. Deterring Democracy (note 5) pp.161, 201–02.


59. Michael Sheehan also uses the phrase ‘radical security studies’. The extent to which he and I mean the same thing by it remains to be seen.

60. For a statement of the common ground between social science and interpretivism, see Georg Sørensen, ‘IR Theory After the Cold War’, Review of International Studies 24/3 (1998) pp.83–100. One of the many virtues of Campbell’s interpretivist work is its detailed engagement with empirical material. However, Campbell is intent mainly but not exclusively upon emphasising what divides him from those working from a social science perspective: see Barry Buzan and Eric Herring, The Arms Dynamic in World Politics (Boulder, CO: Lynne Riener 1998) pp.193–8. Chomsky’s position is that social science already fully accepts that interpretation is unavoidable, that there can be no such thing as an uninterpreted fact, and that, in this sense, a social science-interpretivism dichotomy is false. I agree that social science generally accepts this in principle: what I have in mind is are spectra in which interpretivists tend to be more or differently preoccupied with the difficulties and pitfalls of choosing one interpretation over another.