

Framing the Threat of Rogue States: Iraq, Iran and President Clinton's Dual-Containment Approach to Middle East Peace

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Introduction

An examination of President Clinton's discourses on terrorism and counterterrorism reveals that framing the threat of *rogue states* and *enemies of peace* was one of the significant features of Clinton's terrorism-related discourse. When Bill Clinton assumed office in January 1993, the promotion of peace in the Middle East was seen as a crucial foreign policy task of the administration. In the U.S. security narrative, 'rogue states,' particularly Iraq and Iran, were identified as severe threats to the United States and its Arab allies. These states, according to the U.S. government, sought to possess weapons of mass destruction, financed and supported terrorism, and were involved in domestic human-rights abuses. Moreover, regimes in these countries were hostile to peace and democracy, and, as a result, were enemies of peace.

To promote peace in the Middle East, President Clinton and his national security team formulated a dual-containment approach aimed at tackling Iraq and Iran—the region's most dangerous actors, as defined by Secretary of State Warren Christopher (1995: 21). Based on the narrative of 'rogue states' and the scenario of uncertainty and instability caused by the rogues, the United States asserted the indispensability of its global leadership and justified its policies regarding rogue states and global nonproliferation initiatives. Officials argued that the efficiency of its dual containment and nonproliferation policy could reduce the possibility of future terrorist attacks and

contribute to Arab-Israeli reconciliation.

This paper argues that through the process of discursive practice, or, the way in which discourse is framed and understood, the political reality of the rogues was eventually constructed and constituted in the 1990s as a major policy narrative. The discursive construction of rogue states by the Clinton administration not only conceptualised the common understanding about the rogues, but also suggested a specific way—Martin Indyk’s dual-containment approach—to deal with them. That is, rogues states were constructed as *irredeemable* and *unpredictable*. Hence, they should be monitored and contained. President Clinton’s discourse on rogue states also provided a foundational rhetorical framework for President George W. Bush to shape his ‘war on terror’ discourse and rationalise the American-led global war on terror after the 2001 World Trade Center Bombings. In his state of the union address, President George W. Bush explicitly indicated that Iran, Iraq and North Korea constituted an ‘axis of evil’ arming to threaten the peace of the world (Bush, 2002a). In the tenure of Bush’s presidency, the concept of ‘axis of evil’ was constantly utilised by U.S. elites to emphasise and argue the imminent threats posed by the so-called ‘rogue states.’

This paper is divided into two sections. In the first section, a methodology of genealogy is adopted to trace the discursive origins of ‘rogue states’ and the political usage of the term in the U.S. political arena. It is argued that, based on President Reagan’s first ‘war on terrorism’ discourse which was characterised by state-sponsored terrorism and the interpretation of ‘outlaw states,’ President Clinton and his political aides completed a discursive achievement of so-called ‘rogue states’—one of the key elements of President Clinton’s discourse on catastrophic terrorism. For the Clinton administration, rogue states, together with their evil accomplices, namely, terrorists, international criminals, and drug traffickers, constituted the ‘nexus of new threats’ that threatened the United States and international society in the twenty-first century. Accordingly, these threats should be carefully examined and addressed immediately. Clinton’s interpretation of rogue states also provided a useful rhetorical framework and criteria to describe and assess the threats posed by the rogues.

In the second section, the Clinton administration’s dual-containment strategy is discussed and elaborated. This section argues that the shift of the international system due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War provided a specific context for the U.S. elite to shape, interpret, and reassess the new threats of

rogue states and frame the subsequent dual-containment strategy. The specific perception of the rogue threats profoundly affected the formulation and practices of U.S. foreign policies towards Iraq and Iran in the 1990s. The former stressed the importance of containment plus regime change; the latter concentrated on containment and the gradual development of engagement. It is noteworthy that the aim of the present research, which focuses on Iraq and Iran, is not to assess the efficiency of the dual-containment approach; instead, it aims to analyse the discursive dimension of President Clinton's rogue-states policy. The findings also contribute to the further understanding of President Bush's global war on terror after September 11, 2001.

The Discursive Construction of Rogue States: The Genealogy and Political Reality of the Rogues

An examination of U.S. terrorism discourse shows that rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction are featured significantly in President Clinton's terrorism-related discourses. To shape the public understanding of so-called catastrophic terrorism, the Reagan administration's 'war on terrorism' discourse, which highlighted the danger of international terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism, was employed as a rhetorical foundation by the Clinton administration. During the Clinton presidency, the United States successfully related terrorism to issues of rogues states and weapons of mass destruction, and peace in the Middle East. For the Clinton administration, rogue states, such as Iran, Iraq, and Libya, harboured terrorists within their borders, established and supported terrorist base camps in other countries, and hungered for weapons of mass destruction (Clinton, 1995b). Their hostility towards peace and democracy led to political instability in the Middle East, and caused great suffering. In official language, rogue states were interpreted and identified as an extreme threat to the United States and its Arab allies; they were *enemies of peace* (Christopher, 1995: 21). Because they were deemed irrational and unpredictable, they had to be controlled and contained.

It can be argued that through the production and reproduction of discourses, the political reality of rogue states was eventually constructed and constituted as an accepted term in U.S. politics. In the 1990s, the emerging threat of rogue states was a major concern of the U.S. government and broadly discussed by the Washington's elite and many academics (Hoty, 2000b; Saunders, 2006; O'Reilly, 2007; Homolar,

2010; Miles, 2012). One of the notable political consequences of this discourse was the creation of clear boundaries surrounding the discussion and plan for comprehending and addressing these states. The discursive construction of rogue states also provided a useful framework for the Clinton administration to rationalise and justify its Gulf policy in the Middle East, in particular, the American-led missions in Iraq and multilateral sanctions targeted at Iran.

The common assumption of the political usage of the term *rogue states* is that it originated with the Clinton administration (Hoyt, 2000a, 2000b; Saunders, 2006; O'Reilly, 2007; Homolar, 2010). During the 1990s, President Clinton, Secretaries of State Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright, National Security Advisors Anthony Lake and Sandy Berger, and Secretaries of Defense, constantly utilised the term *rogue states* to label the enemies of the United States. According to Hoyt (2000a: 301), the first reference to so-called rogue states in the U.S. political arena can be traced to January 1994; however, the currency of the term was not widespread until early 1996. By conducting quantitative research and reviewing data that covered the period from 1993 to 1998, Hoyt indicates that the term was mentioned 243 times in American political rhetoric.¹ Besides this, four specific states, namely, Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea, were most frequently designated 'rogues' by the U.S. elite. Among the texts that Hoyt examined, Iran was referred to 71 times in all mentions, while Iraq, Libya, and North Korea were mentioned 69, 47, and 30 times, respectively. Other states, such as Cuba, Sudan and Syria, although they were mentioned considerably less, were also categorised as 'rogues.' Similar to Hoyt, Saunders (2006: 26) investigates data from 1985 to 2001, and argues that before the end of the Cold War, the term *rogue* was indeed rarely mentioned by Washington's elite—perhaps the only exception is Representative Pete Stark's description of Iran as a *rogue* in 1987. In addition, Klare (1995) illustrates an evolution in which concerns about terrorism during the 1980s transformed into an apprehension of a third-world country armed with weapons of mass destruction. Klare claims that since the first Gulf War, the political idea of rogue states had been used by the George H. W. Bush administration to stress the rising threats posed by certain states. The specific interpretation

¹ Hoyt (2000a, 298-99) collected 511 U.S. official documents associated with rogue states (124 from the Department of State, 102 from the White House, 26 from the CIA, and 259 from the Department of Defense) and analysed over 278 relevant documents. Most of the documents were transcripts of speeches and press conferences given by President Clinton and the key figures of his national security team.

simultaneously provided a strong justification for the George H. W. Bush administration to defend its post-Cold War policies, such as the debate on issues of ballistic missile defence and military expenditures (see also Miles, 2012).

However, in contrast to the explanation mentioned, Litwak (2000: 53) locates the political idea of rogue states in the Reagan administration and argues that the rhetorical strategy of labelling foreign adversaries as *rogue*, *pariah*, or *outlaw* states can actually be traced to the late 1970s when the Department of State inaugurated its list of terrorist countries under the Export Administration Act of 1979. Since that time, the term *outlaw* has frequently appeared in the U.S. official lexicon when politicians refer to states associated with terrorism. For example, President Reagan and his aides tended to utilise the term to describe countries associated with terrorism. When giving remarks at the American Bar Association in July 1985, President Reagan explicitly identified Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, and Nicaragua as ‘outlaw governments’ and ‘outlaw states’ (Reagan, 1985). Reagan declared:

the growth in terrorism in recent years results from the increasing involvement of **these states in terrorism** in every region of the world. This is terrorism that is part of a pattern, the work of **a confederation of terrorist states**. Most of the terrorists who are kidnaping and murdering American citizens and attacking American installations are being trained, financed, and directly or indirectly controlled by a core group of radical and totalitarian governments—a new, international version of Murder, Incorporated. (Reagan, 1985).

George Shultz, Reagan’s secretary of state, also mentioned that ‘states that support and sponsor terrorist actions have managed to co-opt and manipulate the terrorist phenomenon in pursuit of their own strategic goals. It is not a coincidence that most acts of terrorism occur in areas of importance to the West’ (cited in Litwak, 2000: 53). These examples illustrate that Reagan’s ‘war on terrorism’ discourse indeed provided a rhetorical foundation for his successors to frame and formulate their discourses on terrorism and counterterrorism, such as President Clinton’s interpretation of *rogue states* and *states of concern* and President Bush’s *axis of evil* rhetoric. In his State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush indicated:

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an **axis of evil**,

arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic. (Bush, 2002a).

Interestingly, it can be argued that the political usage of the term *outlaw* was rooted in a national myth of American culture, namely, the Wild West and the New Frontier (Slotkin, 1998; West & Carey, 2006; Juyan, 2007). In past decades, the New Frontier theme has been utilised by several presidents to structure their political discourse and energise their proposed policies. For example, on July 16, 1960, when accepting the Democratic Party's nomination as a presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy announced:

I stand tonight facing **west** on what was once **the last frontier**. From the lands that stretch three thousand miles behind me, the pioneers of old gave up their safety, their comfort and sometimes their lives to build a new world here in the **West** ... They were determined to make that new world strong and free, to overcome its hazards and its hardships, to conquer the enemies that threatened from without and within ... For the problems are not all solved and the battles are not all won—and we stand today on the edge of a **New Frontier**—the **frontier** of the 1960's—a **frontier** of unknown opportunities and perils—a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats. (Kennedy, 1960).

According to Slotkin (1998), the concept of the American frontier was first articulated by Frederick Jackson Turner, an American historian in the early twentieth century. In his address titled, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History,' Turner indicated that the contemporary crisis of American development is the closing of the old frontier and the delay in finding a new one (Ibid.: 3). Turner's explanation of the American frontier is argued as an essential reading to comprehend the ideologies of both Republican progressives and Democratic liberals (Ibid.).

The *New Frontier* trope was adopted by, in addition to President Kennedy, President Theodore Roosevelt (Dorsey, 1995), President Ronald Reagan (West &

Carey, 2006), and President George W. Bush (Jackson, 2005; West & Carey, 2006) to stress the national values and spirit of the United States—progress and prosperity—and the leadership of the United States in the international arena. Also, in the frontier narrative, there must be a *frontier hero* and an *outlaw enemy*, such as Reagan (the United States) and Communism (the Soviet Union) in the Cold War, and George W. Bush (the United States) and Osama bin Laden (terrorism/terrorists) in the post-9/11 world. Given that the frontier myth is based on the real experiences of American people, it has certain in-built political functions which discursively construct the national identity of the United States and prescribe its behaviour in response to threats defined by elites (Dorsey, 1995: 1). The specific interpretation of the American frontier is actually an inter-subjective understanding or American meta narrative regarding who Americans are and where Americans come from which is widely shared by the American majority; it also discursively stresses the remarkable difference between the United States and the outlaw countries. Thus, when the U.S. President referred to the frontier spirit and connected it to U.S. foreign policy issues, it resonated with U.S. citizens and gained currency within society at large.

When Bill Clinton took office in 1993, one of the more difficult tasks of his administration was to formulate a new U.S. foreign policy to deal with the new challenges. Clinton's National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake (1994: 45), pointed out in a *Foreign Affairs* article that without the major threat from the Soviet Union, the United States and the international society still faced many challenges from some 'recalcitrant,' 'outlaw' and 'backlash' states, in particular, Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and Libya. These states, according to Lake (Ibid.: 46), featured notorious regimes controlling power by coercion and intimidation, infamous records of human rights, and ambitious military programmes in weapons of mass destruction and missile-delivery systems. Lake's article, it can be argued, has an important place special meaning in the construction of the political reality of rogue states, because it elevated the emerging threats of the 'rogues' into official policy and profoundly affected the formulation of President Clinton's 1995 *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Homolar, 2010: 717). Specifically, the concepts of 'counter-proliferation' and the 'dual containment strategy' aimed at tackling the threats posed by the 'rogues' were argued as the integral parts of Clinton's *National Security Strategy* (Ibid.; also see the *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*). The political concern of so-called backlash states actually reconfirmed Lake's previous remarks at SAIS in Johns Hopkins University in September 1993,

which were seen as a brief outline of Clinton's first-term foreign policy. In his speech at SAIS, Lake claimed:

Backlash states are more likely to sponsor **terrorism** and traffic in **weapons of mass destruction** and ballistic missile technologies. They are more likely to suppress their own people, foment ethnic rivalries and threaten their neighbors. (Lake, 1993).

To tackle the threats posed by backlash states, a policy based on multilateral internationalism, was introduced. As Lake said:

Our policy toward such states, so long as they act as they do, must seek to isolate them diplomatically, militarily, economically, and technologically. It must stress intelligence, counterterrorism, and multilateral export controls. It also must apply global norms regarding weapons of mass destruction and ensure their enforcement. (Lake, 1993).

However, despite cooperation with U.S. allies and international norms, Lake (1993) indicated that a military-deterrence approach was indispensable because the source of such threats was *diverse* and *unpredictable*. He asserted:

when the actions of such states directly threaten our people, our forces, or our vital interests, we clearly must be prepared to strike back decisively and unilaterally ... We must always maintain the military power necessary to deter, or if necessary defeat, aggression by these regimes. (Lake, 1993).

Lake's statement about backlash states provided a useful rhetorical foundation for President Clinton to frame the narrative of rogue states and stressed the imminent threat of so-called catastrophic terrorism armed with weapons of mass destruction. Following Lake's 'From Containment to Engagement' speech at SAIS, the term *backlash states* was somehow replaced by *rogue states*, which was more popular and widespread in the U.S. political arena. During the eight years of his presidency, President Clinton mentioned the term *backlash states* only once, in April 1994. When giving a speech to U.S. citizens regarding the new challenges in the post-Cold War

era, Clinton (1994) claimed that ‘there are other threats today also demand our active engagement, from North Korea’s nuclear program to the efforts of Iran and other **backlash states** to sponsor terrorism. We’re meeting those threats with steadiness and resolve.’ By contrast, Clinton mentioned *rogue states* on many occasions. According to O’Reilly (2007: 304), over the course of his administration (from 1993 to 2000), President Clinton mentioned the term 69 times in his public statements, while Secretaries of State Christopher and Albright used the terminology 19 and 43 times, respectively. With regard to specific threats posed by the rogues, President Clinton stressed:

The 21st century will not be free of peril. Aggressive **rogue states**, global crime networks and drug traffickers, **weapons proliferation**, and **terrorism**, all these will continue to menace our security. (Clinton, 1996f).

There is a **nexus of new threats: terrorists, rogue states**, international criminals, drug traffickers. They, too, menace our security, and they will do more of it in the new century. They will be all the more lethal if they gain access to **weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical, or biological**. (Clinton, 1996e).

It is clear that in the U.S. post-Cold War security narrative, the concept of rogue states was discursively linked to other issues, such as terrorism, international criminals, and drug traffickers. The narrators claimed that rogue states intended to support terrorism and sought to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Similar to President Clinton, the discursive construction of an Iraq/Al Qaeda alliance was the central element of President George W. Bush’s ‘war on terror’ discourse (Jackson, 2005; Hodge, 2011). Additionally, most of the designated regimes were criticised for their involvement in human right abuses.

Since the 1990s, the alleged ambitions mentioned were utilised by academics and by the elite to assess a ‘rogue,’ and were accepted as a common ‘grid of intelligibility’ (see Milliken 1999) that was widely shared by policy makers (Henriksen, 2001, 2012; Miles, 2012). For example, Henriksen (2001: 357) indicated in his research on U.S. rogue-state policy: ‘rogue rulers rejected international norms, sponsored terrorism, pursued the acquisition of megadeath weapons and threatened the peace.’ Madeleine

Albright also claimed that ‘the risk that the leaders of **rogue states** will use **nuclear, chemical or biological weapons** against us or our allies is the greatest security we face’ (Henriksen, 2012: 3). Furthermore, through the process of discursive practice—the way that discourse is created and understood—a political reality of ‘rogue states’ and a ‘nexus of new threats’ was eventually constructed and constituted through official documents and policy practices. Importantly, this specific interpretation established the parameters around how the subject of rogue states could meaningfully be discussed and comprehended. That is, they financed and supported terrorism, hungered for weapons of mass destruction, and violated the universal value of human rights.

Apart from that, it is noteworthy that, despite the discursive connection between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, President Clinton’s rogue-states narrative highlighted the idea of borderless threats due to the side-effect of globalisation. On the other hand, the utilisation of the meta narrative (see Baker, 2006)—globalization—also illustrated how the nature of international structures, as well as social and political contexts, influenced the production and reproduction of discourses. When giving speeches associated with the borderless threats, President Clinton indicated:

problems that start beyond our border can become problems within our border. No one is immune to the threats posed by **rogue states**, by the spread of **weapons of mass destruction**, by **terrorism**, crime, and drug trafficking, by environmental decay and economic dislocation. (Clinton, 1996a).

While the international perils of the 20th century, fascism and communism, have been defeated, new dangers are rising up to take their place as we enter the 21st. New technologies and the rapid movement of information, money, and people across borders bring us closer together and enrich our lives. But they also make us all more vulnerable to **rogue states**, crime, drugs, and **terrorism**. (Clinton, 1996c).

These discourses illustrated that the particular international context (due to the end of the Cold War) and the tendency of globalisation prompted policy-making elites to reinterpret the new international order, and re-define and reassess the new threats to

the United States in the post-Cold War world. In U.S. foreign policy discourse, new threats, such as rogue states and terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction, replaced the Cold War enemies—Communism and the Soviet Union—as the new enemies. In addition, the forces of global integration and interdependence made each country more vulnerable to the *nexus of new threats*. As President Clinton said, ‘we’re all vulnerable to the reckless acts of **rogue states** and to an **unholy axis of terrorists, drug traffickers, and international criminals**’ (Clinton, 1997). Given that the United States is the sole superpower, as officials constantly claimed, it had a special responsibility to develop ‘a strategy to neutralize, contain and, through selective pressure, perhaps eventually transform’ (Lake, 1994: 46) the so-called rogue states into the international community. Similarly, after the 2001 terrorist attacks, the ‘axis of evil,’ featuring the characters of rogue states and their linkage with terrorism and terrorists, was explicitly articulated in President George. W. Bush’s ‘war on terror’ discourse (see Bush, 2002a). Clearly, both of the Presidents adopted the same cultural and historical trope of Nazi Germany in the Second World War to frame and structure their discourse on so-called ‘rogues.’

In addition to the discursive construction of rogue states, it is noteworthy that over the past decades, the concept and definition of rogue states had undergone a significant change, which shifted from condemning the domestic policies of some particular regimes to describing states that posed severe threats to the United States and international society. Prior to the 1980s, the terms *rogue*, *pariah*, and *outlaw* were initially utilised to depict the oppressive regimes that brutally repressed their citizens and political dissidents, such as Pol Pot in Cambodia and Idi Amin in Uganda (Litwak, 2000: 50). In the 1970s, however, some political analysts, namely, Richard Betts (1977) and Robert Harkavy (1981), particularly used the term *pariah state* to characterise a set of diplomatically isolated states who intended to pursue the acquisition of nuclear weapons, such as Israel, South Africa, Taiwan, and South Korea. These states, according to Harkavy (1981: 136), shared similarities: They were small, weak countries that were isolated from big-power benefactor(s), such as the Western powers, the Soviet Union, and the Third World blocs; they were countries whose national origins or present constitutional statuses were widely questioned; they were countries that face a severe security dilemma, and whose adversaries were supported by at least one superpower; and they were countries whose national defence largely relied on conventional weapons and who suffered a lack of military capability to defend themselves. In short, the term *pariah state* referred to ‘a small power with

only marginal and tenuous control over its own fate, whose security dilemma cannot easily be solved by neutrality, nonalignment, or appeasement, and lacking dependable big-power support' (Harkavy, 1981: 136). Thus, in order for survival, these states necessarily have strong motivations to develop and acquire nuclear weapons.

In the 1980s, the definition of rogue states changed from internal to external behavioural criteria, in particular, highlighting the link between the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy. The criteria of a state's external behaviour was notably utilised by the Reagan administration to interpret the 'outlaw' and 'terrorist states' (Reagan 1985).² In the 1990s, the definition shifted again due to the emphasis on human-rights values in the international arena. As a result, a state's human-rights record was perceived as another significant criterion for assessing the rogues. Nincic (2005) argued that rogue states were usually condemned for the pursuit of a broader set of policies which were seen as implicitly threatening to the international community, in particular, massive internal repression, and over-aggression against other states.

Similarly, O'Reilly (2007: 307) has indicated that in U.S. political discourse, rogue states were usually portrayed as 'having repressive governing regimes oppressing their populace, committing torture, and eliminating political opposition.' For example, the violation of the human-rights value was explicitly stressed in President Clinton's discourse on rogue states. Through the process of discursive practice, the criteria—supporting terrorism, pursuing weapons of mass destruction, adopting a specific foreign policy that threatened U.S. interests in key regions, and violating the human-rights values—was adopted by elite and academic pundits to categorise and interpret the 'rogues' (Morton, 2004: 171-2; Saunders, 2006: 26; O'Reilly, 2007: 297, 307-8). Importantly, the discursive construction of 'rogue states' created a clear set of parameters around how these particular countries should be meaningfully discussed, understood, and dealt with.

To summarise, the political usage of the term *rogue states* can be traced to other relevant terminology, such as *pariah states*, *outlaw states*, and *backlash states*. Initially, the concept of categorising specific countries in this way was introduced and mainly used by academics when talking about the issue of nonproliferation, in

² In his remarks at the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association, President Reagan officially defined regimes in Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, and Nicaragua, as 'outlaw governments,' as the 'core group of radical and totalitarian governments,' and as the 'confederation of terrorist states' (Reagan, 1985; also see Homolar, 2010: 711).

particular, in relation to nuclear weapons programmes. Subsequently, in the 1980s, it was used to refer to state-sponsored terrorism and terrorist states, such as in President Reagan's 'war on terrorism' discourse. In the 1990s, due to President Clinton's discursive construction, the concept was understood to indicate states that supported terrorism, possessed or pursued weapons of mass destruction, and violated universal values of human rights. It is worth noting that in the last year of the Clinton presidency, the term *rogue states* was replaced by *states of concern* when the United States sought to improve its foreign relations with Iran (which will be discussed later). When George W. Bush assumed office in 2001, both the terms *rogue states* and *axis of evil* were constantly mentioned by the key figures of his administration. According to data from *The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, during the tenure of his presidency, President Bush mentioned the terms *rogue states* and *axis of evil* 13 and 28 times, respectively.

Containing the Rogues: Iraq, Iran and the Interpretation of Dual Containment

Historical Background of the Dual-Containment Approach

As previously discussed, the dramatic shift of international context due to the end of the Cold War prompted U.S. policymakers to rethink the United States' role in international society and reformulate U.S. foreign policy. On May 18, 1993, Martin Indyk, the special assistant to President Clinton for Near East and South Asian affairs at the National Security Council (NSC), introduced the *dual-containment strategy* in a symposium at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. As the designer of the dual-containment strategy, Indyk (1993) indicated that, without the threat from the Soviet Union, the United States was undoubtedly the 'unchallenged dominant power' in the Middle East, and 'all sides now look to Washington to exert its influence.' Indyk (1993) further argued that from now on the United States would no longer continue the traditional containment strategy presented by George Kennan in the 1950s, and manipulate the balance-of-power in the Middle East; instead, a new strategy of dual containment was indispensable for the United States to deal with its post-Cold War enemies, namely, Iraq and Iran. Indyk's interpretation of dual containment was subsequently adopted by the Clinton administration as a guideline to formulate its Middle East policy and profoundly affected U.S. foreign relations with its allies and so-called rogue states in the 1990s (Gause III, 1994: 57-8; Dumbrell,

2009: 152).³

The essence of dual containment, according to Indyk (2009: 36-41), was to tackle the threats posed by Iraqi Saddam's regime through 'aggressive containment'⁴ and to modify Iran's behaviour by 'active containment.' During the Cold War period, U.S. Middle East policy was established on the orthodox realist understanding of international politics characterised by geostrategic calculations and George Kennan's interpretation of containment. Washington's elite argued and insisted that, in order to protect America's national interests in the region, in particular, the free flow of oil from oil-rich states, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Qatar, realist balance-of-power diplomacy was indispensable. In the U.S. security narrative, states in the Gulf, mostly Sunni Arab dominant countries, were U.S. allies and governed by pro-Western regimes; one of the similarities these states shared was that they all faced severe threats from regional powers—Iraq and Iran—in terms of their military superiority and political ambitions towards the Gulf region. To deal with the rising powers and maintain U.S. hegemony in the Gulf, U.S. administrations argued that a balance-of-power diplomacy relied on one balancing the other, which was believed to be a feasible approach to sustaining the stability in the area and in accordance with America's national interests.

Scholars (Gause III, 1994: 59; Katzman et al., 2001: 82-3) argue that America's political and military involvement in the Gulf can be traced to the 1980s (or earlier),⁵

³ The Clinton administration's Middle East policy, according to John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2007; also see Dumbrell, 2009: 150), was profoundly affected by officials with close connections to Israel or prominent pro-Israel organisations, such as the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. The former was noted as a pro-Israel lobbying organisation in the United States; the latter was a well-known pro-Israel think tank. Besides, Martin Indyk was the former deputy research director at AIPAC and the first Jewish U.S. Ambassador to Israel.

⁴ To effectively deal with the threats posed by Iraq, the Clinton administration decided to adopt a covert coup effort aimed at overthrowing Saddam's regime, and an overt policy of 'aggressive containment.' Specifically, in its public posture, the U.S. administration would clothe its policy in international legitimacy by demanding Iraq's full compliance with all U.N. Security Council resolutions that were made in the early 1990s. From the perspective of NSC principles, the combination of sanctions and a series of covert operations would eventually lead to the collapse of Saddam's regime (Indyk, 2009: 38-9).

⁵ Jacobs (2011: 26-7) argues that Alfred Thayer Mahan was one of the first Americans who noted the political and strategic importance of the Middle East. In his 1902 *National Review* article titled 'The Persian Gulf in International Politics,' Mahan indicated that the Persian Gulf emerged as 'one terminus of a prospective interoceanic railroad' that would become 'one link ... in a chain of

when President Carter declared the Carter Doctrine and asserted that the United States should prevent any hostile power—in particular, the Soviet Union—from dominating the region.⁶ Three significant events occurred between 1979 and 1981: the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the doubling of world oil prices. These events prompted the Carter administration to alter its foreign policy and decide to actively engage in Middle East affairs (Ibid.). President Carter's policy was continued by President Reagan and President George H. W. Bush. Both Reagan and George H. W. Bush adopted a balance-of-power approach to tackle the threats posed by Iraq and Iran. The most notable practice was the U.S. role in the Iran-Iraq war. Before the 1979 Revolution in Iran, the United States firmly supported the Iranian shah and encouraged Iran to assume the role of regional policeman (Ibid.). However, when Iranians succeeded in repulsing Saddam's invasion and laid siege to Basra, the second largest city in Iraq, the Reagan administration decided to bolster Saddam's regime as a counterweight to the Islamic Republic, because a balance-of-power approach required the United States to support the losing side and ensure that neither country could become the dominant power in the region (Indyk, 2009: 34). Apart from that, despite the fact that Iraq was a Soviet ally at the time, President Reagan also removed Iraq from the State Department's terrorism list in order to provide Saddam Hussein with critical intelligence data (Ibid.). Even after the war, the United States retained the balance-of-power policy and treated Iraq, essentially, as a check on Iranian power. The shift of U.S. foreign policy illustrated how the U.S. policy-making elites comprehended the new security environment and, critically, how they sought to formulate new foreign policy discourse in accordance with perceived interests.

When George H. W. Bush assumed the presidency, the concern with geopolitics and balance of power continued to guide U.S. Middle East policy. After the first Gulf War, the George H. W. Bush administration decided to leave the Iraqi Saddam regime in place, expecting it could constrain Iran's political influence in the Gulf. The assumption of the Bush Sr administration's policy was that the American-led war had

communication between East and West, alternative to the all-water route by Suez Canal and the Red Sea.' Mahan also suggested that the United States should be concerned by its increasing interests in that area due to its expanding economy and its increasing international power.

⁶ The Carter Doctrine was a policy proclaimed by President Jimmy Carter aimed at deterring the Soviet Union. President Carter (1980) explicitly stated in his State of the Union Address in 1980: 'An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.'

destroyed much of Saddam's army; accordingly, the Iraqi people could overthrow Saddam's regime without any foreign assistance (Indyk, 2009: 35). However, the miscalculation of the Bush Sr administration led to great suffering in Iraq. That is, Saddam Hussein and his loyalists were allowed to suppress their domestic dissidents, including the Shiites in Southern Iraq and the Kurds in the North (Ibid.). According to Indyk, approximately 60,000 Iraqi Shiites and 20,000 Iraqi Kurds were slaughtered after the George H. W. Bush administration had called on the Iraqi people to rise up against the dictator. In addition, around 2 million Kurdish refugees fled to the Turkish border (Ibid.). Saddam Hussein's violation of human rights was subsequently condemned by international society; since that time, Iraq has been constructed as a threat to the United States and subsequently designated as a rogue state by the Clinton administration.

Iraq

As the first U.S. president whose presidency governed exclusively in the post-Cold War world, Bill Clinton reformulated U.S. Gulf policy towards Iraq and Iran and connected the dual-containment approach to his Arab-Israeli peace reconciliation plan. For President Clinton's national security team, because the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War had weakened both Iran's and Iraq's military capabilities and the United States had become the dominating power in the Gulf area, the United States no longer needed to implement a balance-of-power strategy as it had in past decades. Clinton's policy towards Iraq was instead based on an aggressive-containment approach aimed at demanding Saddam's full compliance with all U.N. Security Council resolutions which were made during and after the first Gulf War, particularly Iraq's military programme regarding weapons of mass destruction and the repression of the Iraqi people. The theoretical assumption of aggressive containment was that a combination of sanctions endorsed by the international community and covert operations led by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) would ultimately contribute to regime change in Iraq. Moreover, in order to maintain Iraq's stability after Saddam's collapse, Clinton's national security team⁷ decided to support the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an opposition group led by Ahmed Chalabi. They anticipated that the pro-Western INC

⁷ Clinton's first-term national security team, also known as the NSC principles, was mainly organised by National Security Advisor Anthony Lake and Leon Fuerth, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell, and the Director of the CIA, Robert Woolsey.

could establish a democracy in post-Saddam Iraq. To achieve this goal, in 1995 the CIA asked Congress to provide 15 million dollars per year for covert actions so that the U.S. agencies could destabilise Saddam's regime and finance Iraqi opposition groups (Sick, 1998: 7).

On the other hand, in the international arena, the United States closely cooperated with its allies, namely, France and the United Kingdom, to conduct U.N.-authorised missions—military overflights of the no-fly zones—in northern and southern Iraq. The main purpose of these actions was to protect the Kurdish people from Saddam's repression and constrain Iraq's further invasion plans. Consequently, during the course of Clinton's presidency, the United States launched several strikes to deter Iraq's outlaw behaviours, such as the military operations in 1994, 1996, and 1998 (which will be discussed later). In its public posture, Clinton's Iraq policy was to make every effort to contain Saddam's leverage in the Gulf; yet, covertly, it aimed to overthrow the regime through any means (Indyk, 2009: 38).

The first test of Clinton's dual containment approach was the Iraqi assassination plot against former President George H. W. Bush in April 1993. Prior to Bush's visit for the anniversary of Kuwait's liberation, the Kuwaiti government arrested sixteen people, including two Iraqi nationals, who had crossed the border with an SUV loaded with bombs and detonators (Clarke, 2004: 81). The evidence provided by the CIA and FBI revealed that the Iraq government was deeply involved in the plot, and that Saddam Hussein was the mastermind (Ibid.). In order to respond to the assassination plan targeted at the former U.S. President, the Clinton administration decided to launch a military retaliation targeted at the Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad. The operation had special meaning because it was the first time in his presidency that President Clinton ordered the use of force and it demonstrated U.S. policy towards terrorism: that is, 'make no concessions or deals with terrorism and terrorists.' In his speech regarding the military strike, President Clinton said:

We should not be surprised by such deeds, coming as they do from a regime like Saddam Hussein's, which is ruled by atrocity, slaughtered its own people, invaded two neighbors, attacked others, and engaged in chemical and environmental warfare. Saddam has repeatedly violated the will and conscience of the international community. But this attempt at revenge by a tyrant against the leader of the world coalition that defeated him in war is particularly loathsome and cowardly. (Clinton, 1993b).

In the same speech, Clinton also stressed:

The Iraqi **attack** against President Bush was an **attack** against our country and against all Americans. We could not and have not let such action against our Nation go unanswered ... A firm and commensurate response was essential to protect our sovereignty, to send a message to those who engage in **state-sponsored terrorism**, to deter further violence against our people, and to affirm the expectation of **civilized** behaviour among nations. (Clinton, 1993b).

Saddam Hussein has demonstrated repeatedly that he will resort to **terrorism** or aggression if left unchecked. Our intent was to target Iraq's capacity to support violence against the United States and other nations and to deter Saddam Hussein from supporting such **outlaw behavior** in the future. Therefore, we directed our action against the facility associated with **Iraq's support of terrorism**, while making every effort to minimize the loss of innocent life. (Clinton, 1993a).

It can be argued that this specific interpretation was structured by a set of narratives which explicitly distinguished the difference between the United States and the Saddam regime. In the narratives, Saddam's regime apparently isolated itself from the international community and the civilised world (the narrative of civilization and barbarism), because its governance was based on the implementation of coercion and intimidation, and it severely violated international law and human-rights norms. Given the fact of Iraq's invasions of its two neighbours—Iran and Kuwait—and the brutal repression of Iraqi citizens, Saddam's regime was no longer to be tolerated by civilised society. The principles of international law and the human-rights values were widely shared by the members of international society, and Iraq's perceived outlaw behaviour illustrated that it did not qualify as a civilised country.

Additionally, in presidential rhetoric, Saddam's regime was linked to terrorism and terrorists because it resorted to terrorism and supported terrorists. Although the assassination was eventually uncovered, it was still an attack and an act of terrorism. Terrorism, as defined by the U.S. government, was an *act of loathsomeness* and a *cowardly act*. The United States could not accept these outlaw behaviours, and,

therefore, should respond decisively (the narrative of cowards and heroes). To justify military retaliation, President Clinton utilised a specific language, which referred to the history of the United States and the deep cultural identity narratives of Americans, to structure its political discourse. He claimed that ‘from the first day of our Revolution, America’s security has depended on the clarity of this message: Don’t tread on us’ (Clinton, 1993b), and that ‘the limited and proportionate action taken by the United States Government will frustrate and help deter and preempt future **unlawful** actions on the part of the Government of Iraq’ (Clinton, 1993c).

Clinton’s military retaliation was seen as a successful practice of dual containment. In his first decision to use military force, President Clinton demonstrated that his administration’s Gulf policy would emphasise containment rather than aggressive operations. More specifically, it sent a clear message: during the Clinton presidency, military force would be utilised to deter Saddam Hussein rather than to overthrow his regime through targeted killing (Indyk, 2009: 150). Clinton’s decision was supported by the U.S. Congress. No one in either the Senate or the House objected to the President’s actions (Hendrickson, 2002a: 144). In addition, polling data provided by the *New York Times* illustrated that the military strike was strongly supported by an American majority. Three days after the strike, 61 per cent of U.S. citizens approved of the action, and the President himself received an 11-point increase in public approval (Ibid.). It is also worth noting that, until the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, there was no clear evidence to prove that Iraqi intelligence services were involved in any terrorist or assassination attacks aimed at killing American citizens or Western targets (Clarke, 2004: 84). This helps to explain why the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement communities were so doubtful about President George W. Bush’s interpretation of the link between Saddam Hussein, Usama bin Laden, and the 2001 World Trade Center Bombings (Ibid.).

Subsequent to the 1993 military retaliation, Indyk’s dual-containment approach, along with the limited use of force, continued to direct the Clinton administration’s Iraq policy. Before President Clinton left office, the United States conducted another three significant military operations aimed at containing Saddam’s regime. In October 1994, when the U.N. Security Council considered lifting sanctions as an incentive for Iraq’s cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), Saddam Hussein dispatched his elite troops—Hammurabi and al-Nida Republican Guard divisions—to the Kuwaiti border and sought to pressure the Security Council to lift the sanctions (Indyk, 2009: 152-3). To deter Saddam Hussein, the Clinton

administration conducted *Operation Vigilant Warrior* and swiftly redeployed U.S. combat troops in Kuwait, including the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division and a few hundred extra high-tech aircraft (Freedman, 2009: 288). Under coercion from the United States, Saddam Hussein quickly withdrew his troops, and the crisis was eventually averted.

In September 1996, Saddam's regime once again mobilised military forces in northern Iraq when the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) accepted military support from Iran and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) asked Saddam Hussein to intervene (Hendrickson, 2002a: 147). Saddam Hussein decided to wage a fierce battle in Irbil, and brutally suppressed the opposition. According to the CIA and the INC, 96 Kurdish dissidents were killed in the conflict, and more than 2,000 individuals were captured by the Iraqi Army; most of them were later tortured and killed by Iraqi forces (Freedman, 2009: 293). The Clinton administration responded by launching 44 cruise missiles targeted at Iraqi military outposts in southern Iraq. In justifying the military operation, President Clinton claimed that the operation was based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 688, which authorised member states to use all necessary means to protect the Kurds; the U.S. leader also sent a clear message to Saddam Hussein that 'when you abuse your own people or threaten your neighbors, you must pay a price' (Clinton, 1996d). Soon after the strikes, public opinion once again demonstrated that the American majority supported President Clinton's decision and that 58 per cent of Americans approved of the military operation, and only 31 per cent disapproved (Hendrickson, 2002a: 148). Moreover, in the U.S. Congress, although there was some hesitance, the Senate passed a resolution 'commending the U.S. armed forces for their successful attack' by a 96-1 vote (Ibid.).

The diplomatic clashes between the United States and Iraq continued in the second term of Clinton's presidency. In 1998, when Iraq gradually distanced itself from its past promise—allowing the UNCOM to access its military facilities and investigate its weapons of mass destruction programme without any pre-conditions—the Clinton administration decided to initiate a series of strikes and threatened to use military force. On November 15, a date prior to the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the United States, along with the United Kingdom, conducted *Operation Desert Fox*, a series of military strikes lasting four days (Hendrickson, 2002b: 321; Freedman, 2009: 296-8). When justifying the military operation and interpreting the threat posed by Saddam Hussein, President Clinton claimed:

The international community had good reason to set this requirement. Other countries possess weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. With Saddam, there's one big difference: He has used them, not once but repeatedly, unleashing chemical weapons against Iranian troops during a decade-long war, not only against soldiers but against civilians ... not only against his own people, gassing Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq ... that left unchecked, Saddam Hussein will use these terrible weapons again. (Clinton, 1998a).

Similarly, while giving an address to Arab nations regarding the missile attacks on December 19, 1998, Clinton stated:

Saddam has ruled through a **reign of terror** against his own people and disregard for the peace of the region. His war against Iran cost at least half a million lives over 10 years. He gassed Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq ... He massacred thousands of his own people in an uprising in 1991 ... Saddam simply must not be allowed to threaten his neighbors or the world with nuclear arms, poison gas, or biological weapons. (Clinton, 1998b).

It is clear that in this presidential rhetoric, the narrative of rogue states was utilised to describe Saddam's regime. In addition, the term *reign of terror*—a special phrase which invokes historical meaning from the French Revolution and from Nazi Germany, as well as from Stalin's *Great Terror* was adopted to interpret Iraq's political situation. Because the Iraqi government was deemed irredeemable and unpredictable, it had to be carefully monitored and controlled.⁸ The Iraqi leader had to know, as President Clinton said, that 'if you act recklessly, you will pay a heavy price' (Clinton, 1998a). Clinton also asserted that, as well as the military strikes, a plan for regime change was necessary. He explicitly stated:

The fact is that so long as Saddam remains in power, he threatens the

⁸ According to Indyk (2009: 81), in January 1993, President Clinton first used the word *irredeemable* to describe Saddam Hussein when he accepted an interview with Thomas Friedman. In the interview, *irredeemable* was deliberately deployed to end speculation that the president, despite subsequent denials, had signaled his real intentions toward Saddam.

well-being of his people, the peace of his region, the security of the world. The best way to end that threat once and for all is with a new Iraqi Government, a Government ready to live in peace with its neighbors, a Government that respects the right of its people. (Clinton, 1998a).

Through the process of discursive practice, the political reality of a rogue state was constructed and constituted through official documents and policy practices, which then shaped the common understanding of Saddam's regime and rationalised the U.S.-led missions in Iraq. A Gallop poll showed that 74 per cent of U.S. citizens approved the U.S.-led *Operation Desert Fox* (Hendrickson, 2002a: 156). In addition, 70 per cent of the American majority thought that if military force had to be used, it should be utilised to overthrow Saddam Hussein rather than merely support UNSCOM missions (Freedman, 2009: 297). The House also passed the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 by a vote of 360-38 in October 1998 (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007: 244). Public opinion showed, at the end of 1998, that both U.S. citizens and the U.S. Congress all expected a regime change in Iraq.

After the 2001 World Trade Center Bombings, the George W. Bush administration discursively linked Iraq to al Qaeda and thereby justified the American-led war in Iraq. In his October 2002 speech in Cincinnati, President Bush explicitly indicated the 'grave threat' from Iraq. He said:

Tonight I want to take a few minutes to discuss a **grave threat** to peace and America's determination to lead the world in confronting that threat. The threat comes from Iraq. It arises directly from the Iraqi regime's own actions—its history of aggression and its drive toward **an arsenal of terror** ... It possesses and produces **chemical and biological weapons**. It is seeking **nuclear weapons**. It has given shelter and support to **terrorism** and practices **terror** against its own people. The entire world has witnessed Iraq's 11-year history of defiance, deception, and bad faith. (Bush, 2002b).

Bush's 2002 speech in Cincinnati was seen as an important statement which launched the push for war in Iraq (Hodges, 2011: 72; 2007: 68). However, it can be argued that prior to President Bush's war declaration, President Clinton conducted a series of operations aimed at destabilising Saddam's regime, both overtly and covertly.

President Clinton's discursive construction of rogue states and so-called catastrophic terrorism also provided a foundational framework for President Bush to structure his 'war on terror' discourse and justified the global war on terror. Importantly, the particular discourse on Iraq and Saddam Hussein constrained the policy options for subsequent administrations to deal with the perceived threats from the 'rogue,' and made the war virtually inevitable.

Iran

Another challenge to Clinton's dual-containment approach was Iran's hostility towards the United States. Since the Iranian Revolution, Iran has been portrayed and identified as a state that firmly supported international terrorism and financed many terrorist groups, in particular, Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Moreover, in U.S. foreign policy discourse, the Iranian regime rejected any efforts associated with Arab-Israeli reconciliation and sought to subvert pro-American governments in the Arab world. It is conceivable that containing Iran would be more difficult than deterring Iraq, in part because of U.S. sanctions against Iraq after the first Gulf War which were supported by the international community and the United Nations, partly because most U.S. allies, especially European countries and Japan, expected to develop closer commercial and trade relations with Iran during that time. Thus, in sharp contrast to the Iraq policy, the U.S. Iran policy was not focused on the promotion of regime change; instead, it was based on active containment aimed at transforming Iran's behaviour through multilateral sanctions and a direct, official dialogue with the Iranian regime.

As previously mentioned, since the 1979 Revolution and Hostage Crisis, Iran has been perceived as a great threat to the United States and to Western countries. In previous decades, Iran was accused of supporting international terrorism, a number of worldwide assassination plans—including a plan to assassinate Salman Rushdie, the author of *The Satanic Verses*—and its great ambition of becoming a regional hegemon. In order to maintain political equilibrium in the Middle East during the Cold War period, U.S. administrations traditionally followed the Carter Doctrine aimed at preventing any outside power from dominating the region. In addition, a balance-of-power approach was adopted by President Ronald Reagan and President George H. W. Bush to frame their Middle East policies. In the 1990s, however, the balance-of-power approach was modified by the Clinton administration due to the

new security condition identified by policy-making elites, namely the vacancy of a great power in the Middle East and rising threats from several regional powers. The realist interpretation of power politics and U.S. foreign relations was continued and employed by the Clinton administration to draft its post-Cold War foreign policy towards the Middle East. Consequently, Kennan's containment strategy was replaced by Indyk's dual containment approach, which particularly concentrated on regional threats, namely, Iraq, and Iran, rather than on an external threat from the Soviet Union.

While introducing the new U.S. Middle East policy, Martin Indyk (1993) explicitly indicated that Iran posed a five-part challenge to the whole world: its support of international terrorism; its support of Hamas and Hezbollah and attempted sabotage of the Arab-Israeli peace talks; its subversion through supporting Islamic movements in Sudan and elsewhere; its acquisition of offensive weapons that would allow Iran to become a dominant power in the Gulf; and its prospective acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and the technology of delivering those weapons. Warren Christopher (1995: 21), Clinton's first-term Secretary of State, also claimed that Iran and Iraq were the *most dangerous actors* in the Middle East and were the *enemies of peace*. In his 1995 *Foreign Policy* article, Christopher wrote:

Iran is **the world's most significant state sponsor of terrorism**, and the **most ardent opponent of the Middle East peace process**. It supports those who commit atrocities from Tel Aviv to Buenos Aires, and throughout the Arab world. The international community has been far too tolerant of Iran's **outlaw behavior**. Others have sold arms and given Iran preferential economic treatment, making it easier for Iran to divert resources to **terrorism** and to building **weapons of mass destruction**. That must end. The evidence is overwhelming: Iran is still intent on projecting **terror** and **extremism** across the Middle East and beyond. Only a concerted international effort can stop it. (Christopher, 1995: 22).

Indyk's statement and Christopher's interpretation demonstrate that Iran was perceived and identified as a great threat by the Clinton administration, which challenged the United States and the international community. Also, Iran's outlaw behaviours apparently fit into the discursive criteria of so-called rogue states, and it was indeed a member of the 'rogues,' as the key figures of the Clinton administration

frequently argued. As well as his political aides, President Clinton also repeatedly dubbed Iran *a rogue state* in his public speeches. For example, upon departure for the G-7 summit and regarding the 1996 Khobar Towers Bombing in Saudi Arabia, the President claimed:

Our struggle at the end of the cold war is to deal with these **new perils**: the **rogue states like Iran and Iraq**; the smugglers who would poison our children with drugs; those who deal in sophisticated weapons or **weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological and nuclear**; **terrorists** who strike not just in Saudi Arabia but in the subways of Tokyo, in the streets of London, in the Holy Land, and in America's heartland; usually people in the paralyzing grip of religious, ethnic, and racial hatred. (Clinton, 1996b).

In response to the particular threat of Iran and international terrorism, Clinton also said:

Iran has presented a particular problem to the **peace process** of the peoples of the Middle East ... we have moved to counter **Iran's support of international terrorism** and in particular **its backing for violent opponents of peace in the Middle East** ... we have tried to stop its request to acquire **weapons of mass destruction**, which would make it a threat not only to its neighbors but to the entire region and the world. (Clinton, 1995b).

In short, in the discourse, Iran was identified as a rogue state and a member of the new nexus of threats. Its military, political, and religious ambitions threatened the Arab-Israeli peace process, its Muslim neighbours (most of them pro-American), and the international community. Most importantly, the specific interpretation suggested a particular way—through strict multilateral sanctions—to contain Iran and isolated it from international society. To achieve this goal, closer international cooperation was indispensable. As Indyk (2009) indicated, the efficiency of active containment depended on multilateral sanctions rather than on the unilateral sanctions executed by the United States.

As previously discussed, the interpretation of Iran's outlaw behaviours and the

justification of U.S. leadership can be argued and traced to the cultural myths of the Old West and New Frontier, which were widely utilised by the U.S. elite to structure its political discourse and to stress U.S. global leadership. It is argued that the associations with frontier ‘outlaws’ were actually rooted in the American cultural psyche; that is, the cattle rustlers and gunslingers of the Wild West (West & Carey, 2006: 387). Although the term *outlaw* in these contexts might not be intended to directly reference the cowboy’s nemesis, it suggests someone outside the rules of society, and, importantly, constructs Iran’s ‘subject position’ (Doty, 1993).⁹ Subject positioning together with other textual mechanisms, namely, presupposition and predication, functions to construct and constitute specific kinds of subjects and objects, and the relations among them (see *Ibid.*: 306). In other words, the discursive construction of rogue states creates particular background knowledge and meanings of the ‘rogues’ (i.e., presupposition and predication), and establishes a clear parameter around how these ‘subjects’ should meaningfully be discussed and dealt with. Clearly, Iran was the cattleman excluded by the international community, and the United States was the guardian gunslinger making efforts to transform Iran’s outlaw behaviours. An examination of American political rhetoric, clearly shows that the cattleman and outlaw references were constantly utilised in the elite’s rhetoric, such as President Reagan’s Cold War discourse and President George W. Bush’s ‘war on terror’ discourse. In U.S. presidential rhetoric, frontier heroes had clear enemies: they were communists in the Cold War, rogue states and evil terrorists in the 1990s, and recently, bin Laden and al Qaeda in the post-9/11 world (Slotkin, 1998; West & Carey, 2006; Juyan, 2007). These enemies, according to U.S. administrations, should be punished, and justice should be swift, certain, and complete.

To tackle the threats from Iran, the NSC initially outlined three options: positive incentives, sanctions and isolation, and military action (Indyk, 2009). The first suggestion was immediately excluded due to Iran’s animosity towards the United States, as it was explicitly articulated in U.S. political discourse. With regards to military action, the NSC elites feared that a military-based operation might irritate the Iranian regime and lead to retaliation; Iran could disrupt the flow of oil from the Gulf and use its leverage with Hezbollah and PIJ to launch a series of terrorist attacks targeted at U.S. citizens. Accordingly, sanctions and isolation was seen as the most

⁹ Doty (1993: 306) argued that the production of subjects and objects is always vis-à-vis other subjects and objects. She further explained that what defines a particular ‘subject’ is, in large part, the relationships that this subject is positioned in relative to other ‘subjects.’

reliable and feasible option. The discussion within the NSC illustrates how discourse affects and constrains policy practices—that is, it makes some options seem nonsensical and others seem logical and legitimate (Jackson, 2005; Winkler, 2007; Hodge, 2011). Given that Iran’s regime embraced a deep animosity towards the United States, a policy based on negotiation, dialogue, and offering positive incentives, was comprehended as infeasible and subjectively excluded by the elite.

However, the efficiency of active containment was based on the assumption that other countries—in particular, key European allies and Japan—could cooperate with the United States so that international sanctions could be enforced. Officials argued that unilateral sanctions implemented by the United States could not simply constrain Iran’s outlaw behaviour, and other countries’ foreign investment in Iran would certainly contribute to Iran’s promotion of international terrorism and the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. By considering this, the Clinton administration’s Iran policy concentrated on persuading international society to comprehensively isolate Iran through strict sanctions. The most remarkable political achievement was the legislation of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 (ILSA) and the rapprochement between the United States and Iran after Khatami’s election in 1997, though the rapprochement was temporary.

In 1995, the Clinton administration suffered great pressure from its Republican colleagues. The Republican-controlled Congress asked the Clinton administration to modify its Iran policy, and a full sanctions proposal was subsequently suggested. Indeed, the United States was criticised by its European allies for its double standards regarding the multilateral sanctions; by 1995, the United States was, in fact, Iran’s third-largest trading partner and largest oil purchaser (Freedman, 2009: 302). Most European countries doubted the credibility of international sanctions and expected to establish closer foreign relations with Iran. Given that Iran had potential markets, vast oil resources, and an advantageous geopolitical location, the Europeans argued that the country should not be isolated from international society, and an alternative approach, namely, *critical dialogue*, was argued as more pragmatic (Indyk, 2009: 167-8).¹⁰ To convince EU allies, in March 1995 the Clinton administration first vetoed Iran’s new oil production contract with Conoco, an American oil company, which was assumed to offer advantages to a French oil company named Total

¹⁰ The basic assumption of the so-called *critical-dialogue approach* was that European countries could trade with Iran as long as the Iranian regime listened to complaints about terrorism and its death threats against Salman Rushdie, the author of *The Satanic Verses*.

(Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007: 288). With the veto, Christopher pointed out that the contract was inconsistent with containment. However, more information showed that Edgar Bronfman, Sr., the former head of the World Jewish Congress, and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) played key roles that affected the Clinton administration's decision (Ibid.).

Following the veto, in May 1995 President Clinton signed two further executive orders (EOs), namely, EO 12957 - Prohibiting Certain Transactions With Respect to the Development of Iranian Petroleum Resources (Clinton, 1995a) and EO 12959 - Prohibiting Certain Transaction With Respect to Iran (Clinton, 1995c). With the legislation and the presidential executive orders, all trade, trade financing, loans, and financial services to Iran were banned. From that time on, American companies could no longer purchase oil or invest in any commercial project in Iran.

On June 19, 1996, the U.S.-led international sanctions against Iran reached a peak when the House approved the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 (ILSA) by a vote of 415-0. One month later, the Senate passed the act by unanimous consent. On August 5, President Clinton signed the ILSA into law, and Senator Edward Kennedy added Libya—another rogue state identified by the Clinton administration—for good measure because of its involvement in the 1988 Lockerbie air disaster (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007: 289; Indyk, 2009: 169). The ILSA 1996, for the first time, authorised the U.S. president to impose secondary sanctions on any non-American company investing over 40 million dollars in Iran. As anticipated, the legislation of ILSA 1996 caused strong resistance from European countries. The European Union (EU) argued that imposing U.S. law on other countries was prohibited under the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and, therefore, organised a series of actions as countermeasures, including action against the United States in the WTO (Freedman, 2009: 305). In 1998, in order to break the stalemate, the Clinton administration eventually agreed to grant waivers for European companies from ILSA. However, in return, the EU agreed to support a U.S.-proposed hard-line approach targeted at Iran, especially on the issues of nonproliferation and counterterrorism (Ibid.: 306).

With regard to the rapprochement between the United States and Iran, after the Iranian presidential campaign in 1997, the newly-elected President, Mohammad Khatami, considered altering Iran's U.S. policy if the United States would agree to lift sanctions against Iran. On January 7, 1998, when giving an interview on Cable News Network (CNN) to Christiane Amanpour, the new Iranian leader explicitly expressed his attitude towards the key issues that deeply concerned the U.S. government and

citizens. While taking questions regarding terrorism, Khatami said:

Terrorism should be condemned in all its forms and manifestations; assassins must be condemned. Terrorism is useless anyway and we condemn it categorically ... Supporting people who fight for the liberation of their land is not, in my opinion; supporting terrorism. It is, in fact, supporting those who are engaged in combating state terrorism ... Any form of killing of innocent men and women who are not involved in confrontation is terrorism. It must be condemned, and we, in our turn, condemn every form of it in the world. (Khatami, 1998).

Although Khatami's statement was seen as controversial in the U.S. political arena because the information provided by the U.S. intelligence community showed that Iran was deeply involved in the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing (Freeh, 2005), President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright, believing that the new Iranian leader could contribute to the rapprochement which broke down following the 1979 Revolution, still decided to support the Khatami regime. Clinton and Albright's decision eventually led to a confrontation between different agencies within the administration. During his time of civil service, Louis Freeh, the director of the FBI, strongly doubted President Clinton's determination and his promise to the American public regarding the investigation of the terrorist attacks targeted at U.S. Marines in Saudi Arabia (see Freeh, 2005). Freeh himself also claimed that former President George H. W. Bush's assistance and his personal relationship with Saudi's Royal family actually made great contributions to the FBI-led investigation in Dhahran, rather than the Clinton-led administration (Freeh, 2005: 26-8).

In terms of Arab-Israeli conciliation and Iran's nuclear programme, Khatami (1998) mentioned that 'we have declared our opposition to the Middle East peace process because we believe it will not succeed,' and that 'we have clearly said that we don't intend to impose our views on others or to stand in their way ... Palestinians have the right to express their views about their land ... they too have a right to self-determination.' Khatami also stressed that in opposition to a nuclear Israel who still refused to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran was a member of the NPT, and had accepted several inspections organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the past. Iran, he argued, was not a nuclear power and it did not intend to become one (Ibid.). At the end of the interview, the new

Iranian leader further proposed an exchange of the two countries' professors, writers, scholars, artists, journalists, and tourists (Ibid.). On June 17, 1998, in response to Khatami's *dialogue of civilisations*, Secretary Albright said:

We have supported cultural and academic exchange, and facilitated travel to the United States by many Iranians ... As the wall of mistrust comes down, we can develop with the Islamic Republic, when it is ready, a road map leading to normal relations. Obviously, two decades of mistrust cannot be erased overnight. The gap between us remains wide. But it is time to test the possibilities for bridging this gap. (Albright, 1998).

As well as Albright's positive responses, in April 1999 President Clinton announced that the United States would lift sanctions that prevented Iran from importing food and medicines from the United States (Indyk, 2009: 224). Even Martin Indyk, the designer of dual containment, claimed: 'the United States has made it clear repeatedly that we have nothing against an Islamic government in Iran ... We are ready for a dialogue' (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007: 291). Clinton's efforts of improving U.S. Iran relations were supported by his Republican colleagues, in particular, senators from the farm-belt states, because the shift in foreign policy enabled the United States to export foodstuffs to Iran (Ibid.). Furthermore, in February 2000, after Iran's Majlis elections, which Iranian reformers swept in the campaign, Albright even made a forthright apology for the U.S. role in the 1953 Mossadegh coup, and offered Iran a dialogue with the United States with no preconditions (Freedman, 2009: 307). However, these unilateral efforts still could not create the rapprochement and engagement that the Clinton administration expected to achieve because the prior hostile discourse was too deeply sedimented for real change. As President Khatami mentioned during his first visit to the United States in 2007, 'the misunderstandings and mistrust between the two sides was so deep' and 'the pressure that existed on both sides' was so great (Indyk, 2009: 229). President Khatami and Iranian reformers, though supported by the broader public, could not challenge the powerful supreme leader, Khamenei, and the hard-line clerics. Facing strong resistance from the conservatives, the newly-elected president still needed to make a compromise on highly contentious issues, such as the normalisation of relations with the United States (except on the civilisational level), the relaxation of pursuing weapons of mass destruction, and a reduction in support for international

terrorism, so that he could effectively maintain his political leverage.

It is also worth noting that the political conditions in Iran—Khatami's triumph in the elections—and the reassessment of U.S. Iran policy, considering the shift of policy from containment to engagement, led to the shift in the U.S. political discourse. In the last year of Clinton's presidency, the Department of State decided to stop using the old epithets of *rogue*, *outlaw*, and *terrorist state* when referring to Iran. Simultaneously, the term *rogue states* was replaced with *states of concern* in the U.S. official lexicon (Katzman et al., 2001: 81). On June 19, 2000, when accepting an interview on The Diane Rehm Show, Secretary Albright clearly stated that 'we are now calling these states "states of concern" because we are concerned about their support for terrorist activity, their development of missiles, and their desire to disrupt the international system' (Albright, 2000). The political shift in interpretation from *rogue states* to *states of concern*, according to Litwak (see Katzman et al., 2001: 81), was a utilitarian response to changed circumstances; it shifted in focus from a unilateral American perspective to a focus on violations of agreed international norms. Moreover, the political usage of *states of concern* also functioned to promote U.S.-suggested multilateral cooperation on the 'problem' of Iran (Ibid.). However, it can be argued that the discursive change of U.S. Iran policy only reflected minor adjustments rather than major changes in discourse. Iran, as Albright (2000) indicated, was still identified and considered as one of the critical threats to the United States, and therefore, a continuous monitoring is necessary.

In short, the transformation of U.S. post-Cold War Gulf policy illustrated how the nature of the international system (the specific social and political context) and the worldview that elites embraced affect the discursive construction of threats, dangers, and risks. Through the process of discursive practice and the reproduction of discourses, the common threat of the rogues was eventually shaped and constituted. These discourses also served to conceptualise the so-called rogue regimes, maintain the counter-rogues regime of truth, and affected the real practices of foreign policy. Further, what we can learn from the Clinton administration's rogue-states policy is that discourse per se might not necessarily determine concrete policies; rather, they were determined in a dialectical relationship in which discourse, structure, and material interests interact. In the 1990s, the Clinton administration discursively linked terrorism to its broader Middle East policy, such as weapons proliferation, rogue states, and the Middle East peace. For the Clinton administration, these issues should not be discussed separately; instead, they should be noted, carefully concerned, and

dealt with.

Conclusion

An examination of President Clinton's terrorism-related discourses demonstrates a clear continuity of the American-led war on terror, from the administrations of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton through to George W. Bush. President Reagan's first 'war on terrorism' discourse and the articulation of 'terrorist states' or state-sponsored terrorism provided a useful discursive structure for President Clinton to frame the so-called 'catastrophic terrorism' discourse and stress the rising threat of rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction. In the U.S. post-Cold War security narrative, a political reality of 'rogue states' and a 'nexus of new threats' were framed and constantly reiterated by key figures in the Clinton administration. Officials argued that rogue regimes, together with terrorists and weapons of mass destruction, severely challenged the United States and international society. Their outlaw behaviours, such as their support for terrorist attacks and other forms of radical violence, their pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and their violations of human-rights all illustrated that they were politically and ethically immoral. These regimes isolated and excluded themselves from the civilised world that was symbolised by freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, and the trend of globalisation—issues that were the focal points of President Clinton's foreign policy—and, therefore, they were on the wrong side of history. Given that the threats posed by the 'rogues' were urgent and unquestionable, as officials frequently argued, it was clear that the United States should act decisively and help these countries constructively transform.

It can be argued that the political usage of the term *rogues* was not neutral; instead, it fulfilled certain political functions. The connotation was that the rogues had to be controlled and contained, either through aggressive containment or active containment, because they were crazy, irrational, and unpredictable. And, because they were thought to be irredeemable, a policy of regime change was argued as an alternative option for tackling the undeterrable regimes. In the 1990s, there was a strong demand for regime change in Iraq, supported mainly by neoconservatives (see Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007; Freedman, 2009), and the Clinton administration, indeed, conducted a series of covert and overt actions targeting the Iraqi Saddam regime, such as the U.N.-authorised missions in 1994, 1996, and 1998, and the legislation of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. Although the Clinton administration tended to contain

rather than overthrow Saddam's regime through the use of military force, the promotion of regime change was broadly discussed in the U.S. political arena, especially during President Clinton's second term. The U.S. Congress and the American public also strongly supported the policy of regime change in Iraq, even if military means had to be employed.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the George W. Bush administration discursively linked Saddam Hussein to Osama bin Laden and the World Trade Center bombings. In the name of counterterrorism, the Bush administration launched a global war on terror and overthrew Saddam's regime (see Rogers, 2004, 2005, 2008). After a decade's efforts and debate, the United States eventually established a Western democracy in Iraq and expected the new Iraq to be a model state in the Middle East. However, it is conceivable that the Bush-led war on terror was actually not a revolution of U.S. foreign policy: Presidents Reagan and Clinton had already provided an established discursive framework embedded in official documents, institutions and practices for President Bush to formulate the 'war on terror' discourse, and many of their policies were continued by the Bush administration, such as the plan for regime change in Iraq, containment and sanctions against Iran, and the promotion of democracy in the Middle East.

Finally, the present research demonstrates that discourses, material interests, and ideology actually reinforced each other and co-constituted the social world that people live in. The discursive construction of 'rogue states' and the shift of U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s partly explains how the U.S. policy-making elites understood the new international order of the post-Cold War world, and sought to establish America's role in accordance with the interests identified. More specifically, through the process of discursive practice and social practice, the American perspective on world order—stability in the Middle East, U.S. primacy and hegemony in the Gulf, and global liberal capitalism—was constituted and sustained. In the 1990s, the so-called 'rogues threat' was stressed and frequently mentioned by key figures in the Clinton administration, and was broadly accepted as part of a common 'grid of intelligibility' by U.S. policy makers. Official interpretation of the rogues also conceptualised the subject of *rogue states*, which then created clear boundaries around discussions and plans for dealing with rogues.

Additionally, the transformation of social and political contexts forced the political elite to reconsider and reformulate a new discourse—the catastrophic terrorism discourse—featuring the *nexus of new threats*, and provided a

dual-containment approach to tackle threats from Iraq and Iran. Clearly, the essence of the dual-containment approach was to prevent Iraq or Iran from becoming the dominant power in the Gulf, so that the United States could maintain its political leverage in the region, continue providing its security commitments to both Israel and pro-American Arab governments, and secure the flow of oil and commerce. Although the Clinton administration suffered harsh resistance, both domestically and internationally, when it tried to promote its rogue states policy, it eventually acquired the necessary support from Congress and the American public, and successfully convinced key European allies to adopt a harsher line on issues of counterterrorism and nonproliferation. Examination of Clinton's dual-containment approach also illustrated that U.S. domestic politics—particularly the resistance from the Republican Party—and interest groups in Congress, such as the oil lobby and the Israel lobby in the case of containing Iran, played essential roles in the discursive construction of rogue states, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction.

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