Deviant Conduct in World Politics

Also by Deon Geldenhuys

FOREIGN POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT: REMAKING STATES IN THE POST-COLD WAR
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ISOLATED STATES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

THE DIPLOMACY OF ISOLATION: SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

(WRITING AS TOM BARNARD): SOUTH AFRICA 1994–2004: A POPULAR HISTORY

Deviant Conduct in World Politics

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Introduction</i>	ix
1 Pariahs, Outcasts and Rogues: the Limitations of Popular Labels	1
Pariahs and outcasts	1
Meanings of the term 'rogue'	3
The rise of rogue states	4
Implications of America's rogue state policy	6
Bush II: confronting the axis of evil	9
Conclusion	11
2 Deviant Actors in World Politics: an Analytical Framework	13
Theories of deviance	13
The meaning of international norms	17
Deviant states and international order	22
Sins of contemporary deviant states	23
Non-state deviance	37
External actors: defending international norms	40
Ends and means in anti-deviant actions	41
A typology of deviants	46
Deviant responses to external pressure	47
In lieu of a conclusion	50
3 From Turkey to Rhodesia: an Assortment of Outcasts	51
Ottoman Empire	52
Bolshevik Russia	53
Weimar Germany	55
Fascist Italy	56
Francoist Spain	57
Salazarist Portugal	59
People's Republic of China	61
German Democratic Republic	63
Rhodesia	64
Conclusion	66
4 Principal Pariahs of the Cold War Era	68
Republic of China	68
Israel	70
Chile	76

South Africa	79
Conclusion	83
5 Iraq	85
From empire to imperial ambitions	85
Labelling the deviant	90
Iraq's transgressions	91
International demands and objectives	98
Foreign action against Iraq	101
Iraq's reactions to external pressure	109
Conclusion	110
6 Iran	112
From king of kings to mullah of all Muslims	112
Naming the deviants	118
Iran's transgressions	119
Foreign demands	129
External responses to Iran's deviant conduct	132
Iran's reactions to foreign pressure	138
Conclusion	140
7 Libya	142
Libya's road from obscurity to notoriety	142
On deviants and dogs	147
Libya's transgressions	148
Foreign demands and objectives	158
International responses to Libya's deviance	159
Libya's responses to outside pressure	164
Conclusion	166
8 North Korea	168
Leaders great and dear	168
Naming the deviants	174
The DPRK's contraventions	175
Foreign demands and objectives	189
International responses to North Korean deviance	190
North Korea's reactions to outside pressure	194
Conclusion	197
9 Cuba	199
From clientelism to defiance	199
Naming the deviants	205
Cuba's transgressions	206
Foreign demands and objectives	213
Foreign reactions to Cuba's deviance	216
Cuban responses to foreign pressure	222
Conclusion	224

10 Myanmar	226
The road to internal turmoil and international diversity	226
Deviants and darlings	233
Myanmar's transgressions	234
External demands and objectives	239
International responses to Myanmar's errant behaviour	241
Rangoon's responses to international pressure	250
Conclusion	253
11 Yugoslavia	254
A doomed state	254
Yugoslavia III: leaner and meaner	257
Naming and shaming the deviants	260
Yugoslavia's contraventions	261
External demands and objectives	265
International measures against Yugoslavia	268
Yugoslavia's response's to foreign pressure	275
Conclusion	278
12 Additional African states	279
Nigeria	279
Rwanda	284
Sudan	292
Conclusion	302
13 Some Other Deviant States	303
Afghanistan	303
China	311
Syria	319
Conclusion	327
14 Non-State Deviants	328
Terrorist organizations	328
Rebel movements	334
'Blood' diamonds	338
Mercenaries	341
Transnational criminal organizations	348
Conclusion	350
Conclusion	351
Notes	361
Index	434

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Deon Geldenhuys

Introduction

This is not another '9-11' book, nor a *post-mortem* on Saddam Hussein's rule. The study began before the terrorist spectacular of 11 September 2001 – widely blamed on Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization – and would have continued regardless of the attacks on the US. Likewise, Iraq would have featured as a case study irrespective of the war that toppled Saddam in April 2003. These two dramatic events have nonetheless focused international attention on the ongoing problem of delinquent conduct in world politics. The present inquiry is informed by the fact that such behaviour extends far beyond the actions of any single organization or state, however abhorrent.

The kamikaze attacks on New York and Washington have taken terrorism to an unprecedented level of death and devastation. The destructive power at the disposal of a non-state organization has been highlighted as never before: the target whose vulnerability was so starkly exposed, was none other than today's sole superpower. The world now knows for sure that seriously offensive behaviour in the realm of high politics – directly threatening the peace and security of countries – can no longer be associated with fellow-states only; it can also emanate from non-state actors, especially terrorist organizations. It is then only logical that al-Qaeda gained overnight notoriety in large parts of the world and bin Laden became America's – and indeed the wider Western world's – most wanted person in the wake of 11 September. Although US security agencies had earlier identified him as a dangerous terrorist suspect and put a \$5 million reward on his head, the attacks on the US catapulted bin Laden to the status of a true international outlaw. The terrorist chieftain became even more of an international villain than the leaders of, say, Iraq or North Korea.

The events of 11 September 2001 occurred at a time when the US was heavily preoccupied with what American policymakers labelled rogue countries. These were regarded as a new class of states bent on challenging what the US considered some fundamental, universal norms of behaviour: they were accused of pursuing weapons of mass destruction, supporting international terrorism, and committing aggression in their neighbourhoods. Such actions, Washington feared, posed a threat to international security. Iraq, among the principal rogues identified by the Americans, eventually paid heavily for its alleged misdeeds when US forces invaded and occupied the country to impose wholesale regime change.

Although the term rogue state is of recent origin, there have all along been countries breaking widely accepted standards of behaviour applicable at the time. The present study takes a broad look at what will be called

deviant behaviour in world politics. The phenomenon will be traced back several decades, but the focus will be on rule-violating conduct by states in the post-Cold War era. Countries characterized as rogues will form a central part of the investigation, but we will not be constrained by this paradigm. Attention will also be paid to transgressions committed by countries not on the Americans' roster of rogues. The rogue state paradigm, it will be argued, is also sorely deficient in that it emphasized particular aspects of the external conduct of errant states, while ignoring several other forms of rule-breaking behaviour that also merit critical attention. And as the rogue state designation furthermore implies, it is confined to the offensive behaviour of states only. We have already suggested that non-state actors need to feature in a study of deviant conduct in world politics; they too influence the process of 'who gets what, when, how'. In practice, state and non-state deviants are not travelling in separate orbits, so to speak, but may be closely connected. Symbiotic relations do, for instance, exist between some states and terrorist organizations or crime syndicates.

It must already be apparent that a critical part of the inquiry is the charges of misconduct levelled against delinquent actors – both states and non-state organizations – in terms of the rules of conduct they were said to have challenged or defied. The analytical framework guiding the investigation draws on the sociology of deviance, which focuses on the violation of generally accepted behavioural standards. For our purposes these are codes of conduct enjoying wide acceptance within the world community. Other key components of the proposed framework are the responses of international actors to instances of deviant behaviour, and the ways in which deviants reacted to foreign pressures related to their errant ways. It is an analytical framework that reaches both wider and deeper than the American rogue state paradigm.

Since deviance occurs over a broad front in international affairs, a study of this nature cannot investigate every state or non-state actor displaying rule-breaking behaviour. Among the countries excluded are Saudi-Arabia under its absolute monarchy, Sierra Leone and Côte D'Ivoire under military rule at the end of the previous century; Indonesia in the dictatorial Suharto era, especially during the final stages of its brutal occupation of East Timor; Pakistan under the military rule of General Pervez Musharaff since October 1999; several former Soviet republics – including Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan – where human rights were being systematically abused, and Zimbabwe in the grip of authoritarianism since the late 1990s. The chosen case studies nonetheless represent a wide range of contemporary states, including both designated rogue countries and others not on the US blacklist. Due to space constraints not all cases are examined in equal detail; some are 'mini' case studies. The cut-off date of the inquiry is the first half of 2003.