



Muddled and Confused: A Response to Paul Rogers

David Martin Jones & M. L. R. Smith

To cite this article: David Martin Jones & M. L. R. Smith (2008) Muddled and Confused: A Response to Paul Rogers, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31:12, 1140-1142, DOI: [10.1080/10576100802555251](https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802555251)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802555251>



Published online: 31 Dec 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 68



View related articles [↗](#)

Muddled and Confused: A Response to Paul Rogers

DAVID MARTIN JONES

University of Queensland
Queensland, Australia

M. L. R. SMITH

King's College
University of London
London, United Kingdom

Professor Paul Rogers finds the authors' review of his desultory collection of essays written over a twenty-year period and masquerading as an original "hard-headed and independent look at the response to the original 9/11 atrocities" [sic] composed of "errors of omission, misrepresentation, and fact." Rogers spends over 2,000 words outlining his criticism of the authors' review article, which dedicated little more than 1,000 words to his own account of *Global Security and the War on Terror*. Although pith is evidently not Professor Rogers's strong suit, do these allegations of misrepresentation and muddle have any substance?

First, Rogers repeats at some length the argument contained in his book that was summarized, albeit critically, in the review: namely, that the so-called War on Terror has been a complete disaster, and reflects an outmoded view of security, which Rogers in a somewhat labored attempt at wit terms "liddism." All this, moreover, requires new critical thinking to address the apparently three interconnected problems of the emergence of a new global elite, the marginalization of what was termed in the review the non-Western masses, and global warming that apparently animates Al Qaeda's war on the Great Satan.

In the review the point was made that lumping together a variety of not very obviously related international difficulties that have emerged since the 1990s, and considering them reducible to a single cause of "globalised economic liberalism" (p. 3) that can be solved by an ill-defined regime of "global justice," reinvents a Marxist dialectic that was old hat by the 1980s when Rogers first started penning his observations on the supposed failure of U.S. Cold War strategy. His reassertion of this simplistic account of the evolution of the international order and its putative solution via Rogers's self-proclaimed "innovative critical thinking" does little to change the original appraisal.

More seriously, Rogers accuses the authors of the sins of omission, misrepresentation, and fact. Evidently, the review omitted to mention his eight-page account of the problem of U.S. oil security written in 1992 (pp. 61–68). To be blunt, this discussion was overly descriptive, outdated, and somewhat tangential to Rogers's main concern, which was the globally interconnected threat that faces the United States and its allies, who Rogers now wants to redescribe as a transnational global elite. In this context, Rogers maintains the review misconstrues "*Global Security* as seeing all the problems as stemming from the West,

whereas the analysis is at pains to point to the transnational nature of the evolving global elite phenomenon.” Oh, really. Why, then, does Rogers maintain in his introduction (p. 3) that:

... in the ten years after the Cold War, there was a marked transition from a bitter and immensely costly confrontation as the United States and its allies sought to maintain order in what was seen to be a disorderly, uncertain and even fragile world. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, being an early and uncomfortable response to the idea that a new world order of *Western ordered tranquility* was evolving, and the following years saw the progressive reordering of military postures to provide the means to maintain control. (italics added)

Further elaborating the character of the post–Cold War disorder, Rogers observes—and the authors italicize key phrases that illustrate his fundamental position—that “the *western security paradigm*” insisted “in essence, that international security could best be maintained by the continuation of a global liberal market economy” (p. 153). In the next paragraph Rogers questions this paradigm, arguing that “*an elite world focused mainly on the states of the North Atlantic Community*, was essentially unstable” (p. 153). On the following page he remarks, in a characteristically opaque passive voice construction: “the argument was made that the full impact of these events had not been properly appreciated and that they demonstrated a potential vulnerability of *Western elite systems* to ‘revolts from the margins’” (p. 154). Finally, his concluding chapter opens with the phrase “looked at *from a Western elite perspective*, there are substantial problems in the international security system” (p. 202). Who we might wonder is misconstruing whom?

Rogers subsequently moves from the authors’ apparent failure to grasp the fact that he does not mean the West when he refers to a “western elite perspective” to contend that emblematic of the “muddle” is “the claim that the Asian tiger economies were the product of liberal free market conditions during the Cold War era,” when in fact they were the product of “central planning and corporate growth.” What the review actually said was that “the economic rise of Asia both during and since the Cold War [was] a result of the very economic liberalism and globalized markets that Rogers maintains ‘signally failed to deliver economic and social justice.’” By this the authors meant, as stated in the following sentence, “that the transformation of both the Indian and Chinese economies” were a consequence of their growing openness to globalized markets. At no point did the review argue that the Asian tiger economies were either necessarily liberal or free market. The authors would instead maintain that their dynamic export oriented growth from the 1980s resulted from exposure to the global marketplace. Moreover, in this the authors followed Rogers and his repetitive, but highly critical understanding of “globalised economic liberalism” (p. 3) where “the world economy is now a largely unimodal liberal market system, as distinct from the more bimodal system of the Cold War years” (p. 85). The authors merely disagree with Rogers that the “liberal market system” creates a widening gap between a rich minority “located primarily . . . in North America, Western Europe and Japan, and most of the rest” (p. 89), and cited the rise of China, India, and East and Southeast Asia as a result of their exposure to the unimodal liberal market to counter Rogers’s somewhat outmoded and crudely Marxist caricature of market capital. Who, one might again wonder, is really muddled?

Ultimately, therefore, the authors refute the claim that the review misrepresented Rogers’s work. Instead, the authors would suggest that Rogers’s response not only misrepresents their valid criticisms but his own argument is at best simplistic and at worst a selective and tendentious use of historical data to support a predetermined assumption that

the United States and its allies have created, via the market mechanism, the oppressive global condition to which Al Qaeda responds. Such critical thinking, far from being innovative, is currently the received anti-Western orthodoxy in most Australian and British schools of international relations. Conditioned by this orthodoxy to have his critical views uncritically endorsed, Rogers evidently cannot tolerate the possibility that his understanding of global security might be both contested and criticized.