

Paul Rogers



Paul Rogers: A Pioneer in Critical Security Analysis and Public Engagement

With a Foreword by Jenny Pearce

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With a Foreword by Jenny Pearce



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For Amber and Felix

Foreword

Security and Peace: Building a Creative Interface

Introduction



Over five decades, Paul Rogers has explored the varied aspects of global insecurities. The selection here illustrates the range and depth of these contributions. From trade, development and food security to weapons technologies, in particular the nuclear, to the phases of Britain’s defence posture; to the growing power of sub-state armed actors and the vulnerability of modern cities to asymmetric warfare. Most recently, Rogers has touched the nerve of the twenty-first century by showing the connections between inequality, the environmental limits of human activity and the rise of a new range of ‘threats from the margins’ for which traditional military solutions have no adequate answer.

Though evidently important in their own right, Rogers’ attention to these particular aspects of global insecurity should not overshadow the real significance of his body of scholarship to more universal debates. Rogers has meticulously

researched each of the tangled threads that constitute and reshape global security policy and thinking over time. Simultaneously, however, he has unravelled their logics and demonstrated how successive generations of politicians and policy makers in the West appear to have been incapable of making our world more secure. Indeed, at the time of writing, the headline is that NATO acknowledges that the world is at the greatest risk for a generation. This emerged from a Guardian interview with NATO's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg (*Guardian*, 9/09/2017), who referred to the sheer number of converging threats. Rogers has been tracking our journey to this point for five decades. However, he has done so with a compass. My comments are about how that compass has oriented him to build what I call a creative interface between security and peace.

The Journey and the Compass

Security Seen from the Global South

Rogers' journey begins with his early foray as a young biologist into the 'developing' world, what we now call the Global South. From that starting point of the late 1960s, the compass takes shape. As a Latin Americanist myself, deeply imbued by experiences in that region which enabled me to see the world through the lens of the vulnerable, the dominated and the excluded, I appreciate how Rogers' compass was, at least partly, forged through an encounter with what he calls the 'margins' in Africa. The margins are both a physical location in relationship with a centre, and a state of mind of individuals who feel their powerlessness in varied social relationships. When you live with people in both senses of marginality, of place and social space, you realise that far from powerless, people are often extraordinarily resilient and creative. Their leverage to generate change in their favour, however, is limited. Rogers early on saw the significance of this, when he studied food security and the global international economic order of the 1970s and its failure to prevent famine, despite overall world sufficiency in grain reserves. Rogers' ability to 'see from the margins' has enabled him to understand the frustrations of poverty as unfairness rather than a natural condition of the planet. It is possible to trace this early exposure to the lens of marginality to his empathy for the way some on the margins read the policies and discourses of the 'centre', particularly the USA and its allies in the West.

Thus, it is not the indifference to poverty *per se* which lies behind the chronic failure of Western policy towards the Middle East and elsewhere in the Global South. Rather, it is the relational aspects of marginality that have been misunderstood by those enjoying the privileges of absolute domination over the future of peoples and planet. Blindness to the slow fuse of frustration is what Rogers exposes as his work moves from the marginality engendered by the 'New Economic Order' of the 1970s, to the marginality within the global economic, social, military and political order of the unipolar American world of the post-Cold War era.

Access to education in the global South, which as Rogers describes, has been an important feature of more recent history, can enhance the sense of marginality when it fails to offer a dignified future. The effects are not inevitably lethal, of course. The vast majority channel frustrations into varied forms of resilience and resistance. However, when combined with the way so many cultures foster the performance of masculinity, the effects can be deep on the psyche of young men who cannot fulfill expectations. These might range from that of providing for the family to the need for status and recognition and often includes the search for dominance and power over others. The evidence that over two thirds of homicides are committed by young men on young men suggests that we need to understand much better this variable without crude reductionism. In the recent history of the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere, for instance, male and female frustrations have been channelled into democratising movements as in the Arab Spring. Many men and women have made desperate migratory journeys in search of the means to life. The perverse and dangerous side has been taken up by a minority, as when young men in particular have turned to Jihadist terrorism. When they do, the lethality and destruction have been devastating.

Rogers' compass has enabled him to enter into the mindset of marginality, and to recognise its complex expressions. He has used his insights to write a series of reports *as if* he was part of a fictional Al-Qaeda Strategic Planning Cell, and letters from Raqqa *as if* he was a young male ISIS militant. His compass oriented him to communicate—not to justify—the psychic impact of marginality and the unprecedented kind of security threat it has generated in certain very specific contexts.

Security from the Cold War to the Post-Cold War

Rogers traces the efforts of the West to secure its military dominance during and after the Cold War. His focus on nuclear options and their alternatives opened up to scrutiny the assumptions of NATO in the 1980s that maintaining a policy of early first use of nuclear weapons in the event of catastrophic reversals in a conventional conflict with the Soviet Union could be justified. Similarly, he explores the justifications behind the UK commitment to a nuclear option through Trident, despite eschewing the first use option. Rogers does not endear himself to the defence establishment through these contributions, although he has been frequently asked to give talks to them.

With an acute sense of temporality, Rogers reminds us that the generations under their 40s today do not live under the shadow of nuclear war. They are more influenced by the narratives of the Cold War which saw nuclear weapons as a deterrent. Rogers' journey through time, navigated with his peace compass, reminds us of the contingency around the roles of these weapons. More than ever before, we need to listen to those who argue that rather than deterrence, nuclear war was only very narrowly averted and we came so much closer than anyone dares to recognise during the Cold War. In addition, the Cold War was played out in the theatres of the Global South, such as El Salvador, where I experienced it directly in the 1980s, when the US government in the name of 'preventing communism', played a huge role in preventing a genuine social as well as political transformation in that small

and vulnerable country. As the threat of nuclear proliferation grew in the post-Cold War, the short-sightedness of assuming that nuclear weapons can keep the world safe is clear. However, it is only through activists and scholars such as Rogers, who have navigated with a peace compass the varied phases of their development (alongside other chemical and biological weapons), that we can see the continuities and risks in the discourses of justification by the powerful.

The same compass is apparent as Rogers' insights in the early years after the Cold War revealed how blind were the powerful to emergent threats on their doorstep and their meanings for the future of their own and global security. Already in the 1990s, Rogers saw the devastation (mostly to infrastructure at this stage) of the Provisional IRA's crude bombs in the cities of London and Manchester. He highlighted the significance of the attack on the New York Trade Centre in 1993, which could have opened minds to the kind of violent attack within the belly of a nation, that the West might not even have a concept for yet. It was not long before 9/11 provided that with the 'war on terror'. However, as Rogers' documents so well in his book, *Irregular Warfare*, the West, in particular the USA and the UK, deluded themselves that interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq would quickly contain the new problem and return the world to US hegemony in a market-driven global economy.

Security and the Conditions to Live without Violence

Throughout these contributions, Rogers brings together the world of security policy and the real world it is trying to contain. He is showing the disjuncture between these. As the post-Cold War era enters into the crises of the twenty-first century, Rogers is urging his readers to accompany him on this journey through the complex and apparently disparate threads of security policy, and to see the looming dangers ahead to which it appears to offer no direction. Only, I argue, with Rogers' compass, can these dangers be made visible. Only if one recognises that the *conditions* to live without violence have to be prioritised, can one appreciate the dangers looming on the horizon as well as their immediate expressions. Of course, their immediate expressions are of huge concern. However, an inability to analyse and respond to them through a compass of peace means that military solutions continuously prevail, however much they reproduce more violence, consolidate inequalities and avoid the ultimate shared threat to everyone on the planet of climate change. A military-as-security response has become a kind of 'common sense'. It is this common sense that Rogers' unpacks so skilfully.

Conclusion

Rogers is a natural scientist, who has migrated to social sciences. His concerns are material realities not ephemeral ideals. His compass is thus not a series of abstract norms, but a principled realism. In the dialogue between security and peace studies, Rogers has freed himself from the constraints of disciplinary silos and what I have

termed this ‘common sense’ of militarised security paradigms. In so doing, he has created the intellectual potentiality of what it might mean to see security in terms of a more peaceful world not one managed in the interests of a few people and places. Much of Rogers’ writings are about war, but I would argue, they are actually about peace. They highlight how a security approach that focusses on war can actually fail to see the new expressions of collective violence emergent in its entrails. Rogers’ peace compass has enabled him to refine peace thinker, Johan Galtung’s, famous dichotomy between negative and positive peace. He shows that it is the interface between the two that matters. Security policy must be seen in constant dialogue with the task of building the conditions to live without violence. It cannot reproduce more violence. It must recognise the political impacts of inequality as well as their social ones. A peace policy for security is urgent but evidently will not emerge overnight. Without it as a compass, however, we return again and again to mutating expressions of violence in the social relations we construct.

Over the last century, contributions to peace have ranged from Einstein to Malala Yousafzai, from a male German Jewish physicist to a young female Pakistani Muslim educationalist. The circle is widening for peace, and Rogers has done a great deal to widen it further. Having had the fortune of working with Rogers in Bradford Peace Studies, I can affirm that he widens the circle in multiple ways, of which the written word readers have in front of them is only one. A commitment to communicating, in accessible ways, in varied forms and to multiple publics (including the military) with an ‘alternative common sense’ marks Rogers out within academia. This helped shape the Department as one where the compass of peace navigates our journeys of scholarship as well as our role as citizens.

London, UK
September 2017

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Acknowledgements

From Potatoes to Peace

I would like to thank the staff of Springer for their work in seeing this through to completion and the several publishing houses for giving permission for the inclusion of previously published articles. More generally, this volume is due almost entirely to the commitment of Hans Guenter Brauch as series editor and it would not have been developed without his hard work throughout. I would also like to thank Oliver Ramsbotham for his key contribution to one of the publications in this collection, and Jenny Pearce for writing such a thoughtful preface which taught me a lot about what I have been trying to do over the past fifty years.

During that time, I have worked with many different groups in the UK and other countries and have learnt hugely from the interactions and sharing of knowledge and experience. Staff and students in the Peace Studies community at Bradford University are remarkable in their commitment and breadth of knowledge and it has been a hugely valued learning experience to have been part of that community over the past forty years. More personally, I would like to thank my wife, Claire, and our sons, Robert, Thomas, Edward and William for bearing with me throughout—not easy at the best of times.

When Hans Guenter approached me a couple of years ago about including this volume in the series, my initial reaction was to say ‘no’, since I was not at all sure that the work merited this kind of presentation and could readily be seen as a bit of a vanity project. Having thought about it and talked to friends who took a much more positive view, it did seem that there might be some value to it, for three different reasons.

One is that my own career path has been thoroughly odd, starting with a doctorate in the microbial ecology of soil-borne plant pathogens of root crops (common scab disease of potatoes) and ending up in peace studies specialising in research into responses to political violence. It is true that a number of peace researchers have had careers that have involved major changes, but mine is a bit extreme even by those standards. That might give hope to others engaged in the eclectic pursuits so common to peace research and who wonder where they might end up.

The second is that I have tried throughout the whole period to combine academic work with a commitment to engaging in public debate on the issues and that experience does suggest that it is readily possible to do so. The print and broadcast media are weird beasts, and if you are outside the mainstream, then it is not always an easy matter to get your ideas across. Mike MccGwire once told me that the trick was to be able to say outrageous things acceptably. I am still working on that but it surely makes good sense to keep trying.

Finally, what has been both really challenging and thoroughly worthwhile has been trying to make some kind of sense of a worldwide predicament that has so many issues to address and so much new thinking needing to be done. Coming to terms with a global community that is facing pervasive socio-economic marginalisation and environmental limits but with elite communities emphasising the need to maintain the *status quo* means that alternative responses are essential. I have been privileged for most of my career to work in academic environments that still enable people to spend some of their time on their own work, with little limitation as to what they study. With that comes a responsibility to use the time to good effect, and if this collection of articles shows some evidence of that, then it will have served its purpose.

Kirkburton, Yorkshire, UK
May 2018

Paul Rogers

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Part I
On Paul Rogers



Paul Rogers aged 7 with his mother Eileen and father Lawrence, Chingford, August 1950. *Source* From the author's personal photo collection

Chapter 1

Biographical Background



Paul Rogers was born in Chingford, a suburb in north east London, on 10 February 1943. His father, Lawrence, was a firefighter during the war in the London Fire Brigade and his mother, Eileen, had taught elocution before the war. He had a sister, Mary, two years older, and another sister, Lucy, was born five years later. Paul was too young to remember the war, but has clear memories of the devastation that was still visible across the East End of London and the docklands after the war. Although Chingford was an outer suburb that was away from the main target areas of the docks and industry, there was a very large anti-aircraft artillery battery close to the town, and bombers caught in the bombardment would frequently jettison bombs on the town. It was also hit by V-1 cruise missiles and V-2 ballistic missiles towards the end of the war.

After the war Paul's father developed a small wholesale ironmongery business which he ran mainly on his own, supplying shops across east London and north Kent. The family was Roman Catholic by belief and Lucy, who had severe learning difficulties, was taken to Lourdes in the hope of a cure. It wasn't to be and she died quite young. His mother had long periods of depression and both she and his father died when Paul was in his twenties.

Paul went to a local state school, McEntee Technical school in Walthamstow, and then on to Imperial College at the University of London in 1961. There he took a degree in biological sciences, studying botany, zoology and chemistry, specialising in his final year in plant pathology before going on in 1964 to get a post as a research assistant in plant pathology, also at Imperial College.

His research led to a Ph.D. which was in the microbial ecology of soil-borne plant pathogens and included farm-based field trials. In 1968, at the age of 24, he was appointed to a lectureship in plant pathology in the same department. This was a post funded as part of the UK's international development programme, and the terms of the appointment were that he could be seconded overseas for the majority of the time. He continued with that work for three years, including two years as a Senior Scientific Officer with the East African Agriculture and Forestry Research Organisation, based in Kenya for a few months and then spending most of the period in Uganda.

While a student at Imperial College Paul was active in Catholic student politics at a time of ferment in Catholic social teaching, not least in relation to liberation theology. He also got heavily involved in the early campaigning on international development with groups that went on to coalesce as the World Development Movement. This is now Global Justice Now, which is the UK's largest and most active development activism group. He was also a member of the Haslemere Group which did the first substantive activist-orientated analysis of North-South trading relations and their link to the grossly unequal distribution of wealth. The Haslemere Declaration, published in 1968, provided motivation for many campaigners, and Paul learnt much from his involvement in the group. During this time he worked with many other young development campaigners, one of whom was Claire Skellern who was also researching towards a Ph.D. at Imperial College.

His period in East Africa was hugely influential on him, further stimulating his interest in the politics of development, with a particular concern with food security that stemmed partly from his professional work in a regional crop improvement research programme. This was another considerable learning experience, not least as he travelled many tens of thousands of miles by road throughout Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania engaged in field research on crop pest and disease problems. The three governments had jointly established a programme to breed varieties of sugar cane specifically suited to local climatic and soil conditions rather than rely on varieties imported from other sugar cane growing areas of the world. The aim was to satisfy increasing local demand rather than export refined sugar but it was essential that new varieties had natural disease and pest resistance. Paul's job was to determine the most important pests and disease and then establish a programme to test the newly bred varieties, ultimately handing over to a Ugandan plant pathologist who had recently completed postgraduate training.



Paul Rogers at 25 on the Uganda-Sudan border, December 1968. *Source* From the author's personal photo collection

When he returned to the UK in 1970, he and Claire got married and they moved to live in her home village of Kirkburton in West Yorkshire. By this time his academic interests had already moved towards the politics of resource use rather than just the scientific elements and Paul took a post at one of the new and pedagogically innovative polytechnics. He worked at Huddersfield Polytechnic (now a university) for eight years, being heavily involved in a radically new degree programme that integrated the study of politics, economics, ecology, geography and human health studies into a single degree programme in Human Ecology. Over that period he edited four books, co-authored a biology textbook with Claire and wrote widely on environmental issues, especially those concerned with resource conflict. Much of this revolved around the concept of environmental limits to growth and came to the fore internationally on the occasion of the first UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972.

During this time his earlier interest in North-South trading relations, which had included some published articles in the late 1960s, was further developed by the advent of “producer power” through the actions of the oil producing organisation, OPEC, in 1973–74. The surge in commodity prices led in turn to calls for a New International Economic Order through the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and a Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 1974. During the same period of international economic and political ferment there developed a world food crisis which resulted in an emergency UN World Food Congress in Rome in November 1974. Paul attended the conference representing the World Development Movement. Writing for their magazine enabled him to gain a press pass which, in turn, gave him something of an inside view of the complex politics of international food policy.



Claire and Paul Rogers on holiday, Norfolk, July 1971. *Source* From the author's personal photo collection

At the end of 1978 and after eight years at Huddersfield, a senior lectureship was advertised at the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University, then a small department that had been established just five years earlier. He was to stay there in full-time posts for the next 32 years, being awarded a professorship in 1992. From 1993 to 1999 he was head of the Department and also spent a period as Chair of the University's Social Sciences Faculty and Deputy Chair of the University's Research Committee. He was also active in the British International Studies Association and in 2002 he was elected to a two-year term as Chair of the Association.

When Paul joined the Peace Studies Department in 1979 it was just as renewed East-West tensions were coming to the fore, with successive leadership crises in the Soviet Union combining with more forceful political attitudes in key western countries, most especially after the election of President Ronald Reagan in the United States and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom. In the very early 1980s a number of new nuclear weapons systems were being developed, including US cruise and Pershing II mobile missiles being deployed in Western Europe and Soviet SS-20 mobile missiles being deployed in Eastern Europe. The heightened tensions were exacerbated by crises in the Middle East and the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan, with one result being the growth of mass-movement anti-nuclear organisations, especially in Western Europe.

During this period Paul worked with two other colleagues in Bradford, Malcolm Dando and Peter van den Dungen, to research and write on nuclear issues. These frequently provided a critical perspective on security trends and were rarely popular with governments. They were also subject to critical scrutiny by other academics who might take a more positive view of nuclear developments. The scrutiny proved to be a very useful aid to improving the empirical and analytical quality of the work at Bradford. This period during the 1980s enabled Paul to study and analyse wider military developments, a task further stimulated by Britain's war with Argentina over control of the Falklands/Malvinas islands. While often taking a markedly independent if not critical position on defence and security issues he received regular invitations from 1982 onwards to lecture at Britain's senior defence colleges. This is a connection that continues to this day and has also involved many briefings to the UK Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Home Office, the Cabinet Office and national police, security and intelligence organisations.



The family at Kirkburton in July 2006. From left: Rob and Pauline, Will, Tom, Claire, Ed, Paul.
Source From the author's personal photo collection

Within a year of the ending of the Cold War, the 1990–91 Iraq crisis and war broke out and Paul was heavily engaged in a critical analysis of the war and its early aftermath. From 1992 onwards, and in light of an evolution in the Northern Ireland conflict involving the Provisional IRA's (PIRA) change of strategy towards economic targeting of the City of London, he began a study of the evolution of paramilitary movements, especially in relation to their strategies and tactics. By the mid-1990s he had developed a view of trends in international security that pointed to the risk of what might be termed "revolts from the margins" in a world in which widening socio-economic divisions combined with environmental limits to growth would lead to an unstable security environment in which smaller paramilitary organisations might have an impact out of all proportion to their apparent capabilities.

In many ways this was a continuation of his earlier work linking development and environment issues, not least interdisciplinary work with Tony Vann back at Huddersfield Polytechnic in the early 1970s. His book, *Losing Control: Global Security in the 21st Century*, written in the late 1990s and published a year before the 9/11 attacks, developed this analysis further, pointed to the risk of catastrophic attacks and predicted accurately how the United States and other western states

would respond. After the attacks the book sold widely and was translated into a number of languages including Chinese and Japanese.



Paul working on barn roof, 1994 and the finished barn. He started building it in 1988 towards the end of the Cold War. He thought it would take three years but it took him ten, by which time a new global disorder had emerged. *Source* From the author’s personal photo collection



In the decade after 9/11, Paul published extensively on the evolving war on terror while remaining at Bradford University, the published output ranging from journal articles and books through to substantial web publishing. While he retired from his full-time post at Bradford at the age of 67 in 2010 he was asked to stay on for six more years on a part-time basis before taking up an emeritus professorship in 2016 where he retains a continuing commitment to the work of the Department, including some teaching. He combines this with an association with the London-based think tank, the Oxford Research Group, which works on non-military responses to security challenges, and also with the web journal, *Open Democracy*.

For the whole of the past half century he has combined an academic career with extensive writing and lecturing in support of peace and development activism, contributing well over a thousand articles, many of them in recent years being web-based outputs with a world-wide readership. These include over 850 weekly articles for www.opendemocracy.net and close to 150 monthly analyses for the Oxford Research Group. He continues to take up frequent invitations to speak at senior defence colleges and is an Honorary Fellow of the UK's Joint Services Command and Staff College. Over three decades he has provided extensive informal advice to political leaders and has also served as an expert witness for the defence in court cases involving peace activists taking direct action at nuclear and other installations.

Paul's academic output has included 29 books and over 150 papers and chapters, and his work has been translated into many languages including Russian, Catalan, Turkish, Farsi, French, German, Polish, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and Greek. Since 1974 Paul has been a regular contributor to radio and television stations and networks throughout the world, including BBC, ITV, Al-Jazeera, CNN, CBC, US National Public Radio, Radio France International, RTE Dublin, FM4 in Vienna, ABC, Monocle 24, RTV Hong Kong and Radio New Zealand. He has done thousands of interviews and still averages over 200 each year.

Paul and Claire have four sons, Robert, Thomas, Edward and William, and five grandchildren. All four sons took science or engineering degrees and are now scattered around Europe, currently working in the UK, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Claire and Paul still live in the same house in Kirkburton and have a few acres of land where they grow a range of fruit and vegetables and keep some livestock. Claire worked for many years as a biology lecturer and was an examiner for the Oxford and Cambridge schools examination board for twenty-five years. She has long been active in local politics including time as a case-worker for a Labour member of parliament. She is also a bee-keeper. Although both are now non-theists they are regular change ringers – a form of church tower-bell ringing that originated in England around four hundred years ago. Paul remains a keen amateur builder and is also an occasional hill-walker.

Paul's approach to international security might best be expressed by a summary of his most recent book, *Irregular War: the New Threats from the Margins* (London: I B Tauris, 2017):

ISIS, al Qaida, Boko Haram, Al Shabab and the Taliban are all separate manifestations of a new non-state dynamic which is now driving international conflict through asymmetric and hybrid warfare, but their real significance is much more fundamental. The problem for the future is not a clash of civilisations but revolts from the margins with ISIS, in particular, having been a proto-movement for wars in an increasingly divided and constrained world. The underlying drivers of future conflict are far more than the growth of extreme Islamist movements. They stem from a deeply flawed world economic system that is producing greater inequalities and marginalisation, combined with the onset of persistent global environmental limits, especially climate disruption.

The failed war on terror shows that the consequences of these drivers cannot be controlled by military force and we cannot close the castle gates. What is required is a fundamentally new approach to security if we are to avoid a highly unstable and violent world - an age of insurgencies which might even involve weapons of mass destruction. We need radically to change our understanding of security, a change that is possible but requires vision and commitment.