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# PERSPECTIVES

## Making sense of an irrational world

*Perhaps the foolishness of U.S. policy is a way to fool our enemies into thinking we might drop the bomb*

Finally, it all makes sense. I've been alive for more than 21 years now, and with the exception of the first couple, I've spent the time following the news and wondering what the heck was wrong with this country.

Admit it, you've wondered yourself. During any given week, the combination of hypocrisy, poor reasoning and pure malevolence on the part of government lead one to suspect a poorly run conspiracy or an assortment of idiotic coincidences.

Now, finally, The Associated Press (of all sources) has explained it to me. According to an AP story from Monday's Oregonian, a military study argues that part of the U.S. nuclear strategy should be to appear irrational.

By acting like a bunch of homicidal lunatics, the report argues, we will convince nations not to attack us out of fear of nuclear reprisals.

In the words of the 1995 study: "Because of the value that comes from the ambiguity of what the United States may do to an adversary if the acts we seek to deter are carried out, it hurts to portray ourselves as too fully rational and cool-headed."



OPINION  
 Mike Schmierbach

In other words, the raving mad general from "Dr. Strangelove" wasn't a careful critique of the military assembled by Stanley Kubrick; he was an important part of a U.S. military propaganda campaign.

Perhaps not. The AP story does point out, however, that "the idea of projecting an aura of irrationality was not original to [the study's

authors]." Instead, the story traces the idea to the early 1960s and Harvard Professor Thomas Schelling.

Additionally, the idea was apparently influential in the foreign policy of at least one president; the AP reports Richard Nixon took the idea into account during his bombing campaign against North Vietnam and several other nations in the region.

An overview of foreign and domestic policy since the 1960s suggests the notion of irrationality may be more pervasive than official history suggests.

This is, after all, the nation that backed an El Salvadoran government known for killing nuns while paying for an underground army dedicated to fighting a Nicaraguan government known for raising literacy rates and providing clean water.

It's the nation that threatens to bomb Iraqi civilians because their leader might be hiding chemical weapons while U.S. industry

stands in direct violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention ratified by Congress last year.

It's the nation that proposes drilling for oil in the currently pristine Alaska National Wildlife Refuge even as Congress fails to increase fuel economy mandates for auto manufacturers or regulate sport utility vehicles that cause fatal accidents while getting 12 miles to the gallon.

And it's the nation where the National Organization of Women won't admit President Clinton would be guilty of sexual harassment for sleeping with a woman half his age who worked for him as an intern, but Newt Gingrich, a man who some say abandoned his cancer-stricken wife, has no problem accusing Clinton of harming the First Family.

If our "enemies" make a hobby of reading American newspapers, they undoubtedly have no trouble finding signs of irrationality in our policy and public behavior. Perhaps the whole mess is really just a way of frightening folks into

thinking we could arbitrarily launch a nuclear strike at any time.

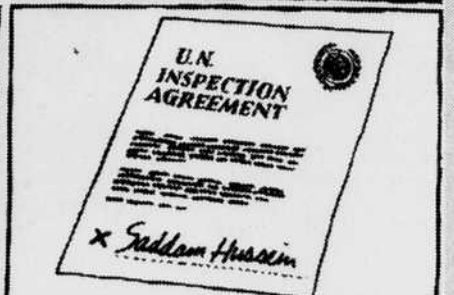
Otherwise, how can we explain a nation whose domestic policies consistently slight the working-class majority and whose foreign policies regularly support — in the interest of global democracy — foreign dictators who reduce their people to impoverished laborers.

Clearly, America's leaders aren't stupid; they've just been acting stupid to fool the rest of the world. Any other explanation would be unpatriotic or unapologetically liberal, either suggesting our leaders are buffoons or business lackeys.

And we all know liberalism and lack of patriotism are far more dangerous than arbitrarily threatening to lob nuclear missiles at the world.

Mike Schmierbach is the editorial editor for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

## DRAWING BOARD



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Critique rape claims

I would like to point out a fact that seems to be going unnoticed or unvoiced by the various news commentators around the city: Just because someone claims she has been raped is by NO MEANS proof that she has been raped. The case against Graham-Preston is a case of their word against his, nothing more. That is very, very far from any kind of proof, let alone conclusive proof, that these women should be believed. Recovered memories are notoriously unreliable, and in the case of the other woman, I fail to see how she can call it rape when she neither voiced dissension to the act nor offered resistance to it.

Perhaps the calls for filing criminal charges have more to do with believability of the claims than with a desire to see a court case come about. If these women really believe they were raped and that labeling Graham-Preston as a rapist is justified, then why won't they file charges? Perhaps the answer is that their stories are

not true in the first place. Supporting true victims of rape does not mean that one must blindly accept as gospel truth all claims of rape at face value. There are many cases on the legal books of girls having accused men of raping them when in fact, no sexual contact of any kind ever took place. Those men's lives were severely damaged by the accusations. The bottom line as I see it is that this case boils down to a decision between whose word we are to believe: his or theirs. One wonders why the University community has so automatically embraced their story without even really hearing his.

Juliana E. Coons  
 Romance languages

### Identification inappropriate

I am furious with the Police Beat article regarding an assault on myself and my brother (ODE, Feb. 25). Several times statements were made describing us as "the brothers," also calling us "University students" and ended noting we are "members

of the Delta Sigma Phi fraternity." People I know approached me the day of the article saying they saw it in the Emerald. I am not afraid to have it known who I am, but describing us as brothers and naming our fraternity is irrelevant to the story and could have potentially put us in danger. The report is completely irresponsible and is a disgusting use of University resources.

Brian Jennaro  
 Pre-business

### Kitzhaber admirable

This letter is in response to Peter Enslow of the College Republicans (ODE, March 2). I suggest you (and anyone else who is interested) call Gov. Kitzhaber's office and ask for a list of legislation that he has vetoed since his term began. The list would be far too long to review here, but each piece of legislation vetoed was clearly not in the best interests of the majority of Oregonians, some ridiculously so. If anything, the governor should be commended for representing the majority of the electorate

time and time again. Perhaps it would be more constructive to "can" most of our current Legislature, who clearly represent only special interests. Now, consider the Republican alternative to Kitzhaber. That's downright scary.

On the issue of gasoline taxes, the argument they are regressive just doesn't wash. The poorest segment of the population can't afford to own automobiles, let alone need to buy gasoline to put in them. Most of these folks use alternative forms of transport like walking, biking or mass transit. If anything, the tax on gasoline should be increased (mass transit exempt, of course) so that we pay as much for gasoline as Europeans do, more in line with the true environmental and social costs of consuming fossil fuels. One nation uses 40 percent of the world's natural resources, yet makes up only 5 percent of the world's population. Guess which one.

James Palandri  
 Eugene