Nuclear Deterrence is a Red Herring
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Abstract

The world has been living with the horror of nuclear weapons since the United States bombed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945 and with the strategy of nuclear deterrence since 1949 when the Soviet Union exploded a nuclear bomb. This strategy has been shown to be illegal, immoral and illogical and yet it remains as a key strategy of nuclear weapons states. In this paper we demonstrate that the strategy of nuclear deterrence persists because it operates as a red herring.

Red herrings are deceptive devices used to persuade citizens into supporting activities benefit others at their own expense. This paper shows that nuclear deterrence shares all the formal properties of other, more easily recognized red herrings. In order to focus on the red herring character of nuclear deterrence, this paper does not address its legal, moral and logical failings which have been clearly exposed elsewhere such as Green’s 2010: Security Without Nuclear Deterrence.)

1. About red herrings

Red herrings are a common mechanism intended to disrupt the political discourse on current social questions including how we as a government allocate our resources for educating our youth, for providing health care and for providing a healthy environment. The purpose of the red herring is to misdirect these resources for the benefit of over-privileged minorities and at the expense of the citizenry as a whole. For this reason, our ability to detect and expose red herrings is of great interest to all.

The red herring complex consists of: 1) a hidden agenda; (2) a solution; (3) a problem which the solution addresses; and (4) a rationale justifying the solution and the problem.

A hidden agenda is an activity which provides privileges (increasing power, influence or wealth) to a minority at the expense of the whole. However, if stated overtly, this agenda would be seen as privileging, and hence unacceptable to voters. This is why its perpetrators prefer to keep it hidden.

To hide this agenda a problem is introduced requiring urgent attention such that failure to attend to the problem will have catastrophic consequences.

A solution is then introduced to address this problem. The success of the solution depends less on its ability to solve the problem and more on how well it serves the hidden agenda.

To promote the solution, and hence the hidden agenda, a legitimizing rationale is offered that shows that the problem can be posed in no other way and that the solution proposed is the best way to solve the problem.

2. Why do we have red herrings?

Red herrings are common in democracies where voters, and not dictators, have the potential to determine the directions of its government. They are used to lead voters to unknowingly support hidden agendas, because the red herring has the capacity to deceive voters into thinking that the solution is in the common interest. Because red herrings pose a threat to democratic societies citizens need to have the ability to recognize them and this is what this paper addresses.
3. Examples of red herrings

The following thumbnail sketches of red herrings (table 1) reveal their common structure (see appendix A for additional sketches of red herrings). Because of the nature of the red herring to deceive, the reader may not agree that some of the following examples are red herrings. At this point, the reader is asked to recognize the common structure of these examples and be open to the idea that each of these examples may be a red herring and to continue reading.

Table 1: Examples of red herrings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The problem</th>
<th>The solution</th>
<th>The hidden agenda</th>
<th>The rationale</th>
<th>Tax Cuts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiroshima and Nagasaki</td>
<td>Winning the war with Japan.</td>
<td>The Chilean government has turned communist.</td>
<td>They shortened the war and saved Allied lives.</td>
<td>The government spends too much money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>The Chilean government has turned communist.</td>
<td>Help the Chilean military to overthrow its elected government and eliminate citizens who resist.</td>
<td>As stated in the Monroe doctrine, we need to preserve democracy and free markets. We don’t like to do these things but they are necessary given the alternative of letting Allende stay in power.</td>
<td>Cut federal taxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Cuts</td>
<td>The government spends too much money.</td>
<td>This activity allows US companies to continue to do business in Chile and to convince US citizens that communism is a real threat.</td>
<td>Americans pay too much tax. Tax cuts will increase disposable income and stimulate the economy.</td>
<td>Reduce the service (socialist) side of government, and cut further the taxes on corporations and the wealthy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Understanding the properties of the red herring

The hidden agenda

While the red herring problem, rationale and solution are publically stated by its promoters, the hidden agenda is not. Thus, the task of identifying and exposing red herring is left to those who operate outside these special interest groups. The key to identifying a red herring’s hidden agenda is to ask who is benefiting (e.g., gaining power or making money) from it? For example in the Iraq war we see that numerous contractors have received no-bid contracts for activities in Iraq and who have also given 95% of their political contributions to Republicans (The Center for Public Integrity 2010). Universities also benefit from defense spending. According to the National Science Foundation, slightly over half of the $40 billion the U.S. spent on research in 1999 was defense related and of that $1.8 billion went to universities (Dwyer and Dwyer 2005).

It also helps to examine the proposed solution and ask what other purposes this solution could serve. For example, the invasion of Iraq and the war on drugs both serve the national security state by promoting military force and violence as the normal means of solving problems.

When the interests of several interest groups are involved, the hidden agenda becomes a constellation of interwoven agendas that provides benefits for each group. In such cases, an analysis that “it’s all about money” or “it’s all about oil” is insufficient and will not only conceal some of the interest groups but will subject the analysis to the criticism that it is simplistic. To fully understand the hidden agenda of the war on Iraq, for example, we need to see how the different interests of oil, Israel, weapons manufacturers, military contractors, the military and others all benefit from the solution.

1. What groups or individuals benefit from this particular solution?
This is why the activities of the overt agenda may address multiple hidden agendas. For example, tax cuts will not only reduce the taxes on the wealthy, but will also reduce the social services provided by the government to its citizenry.

The problem

Successful red herrings present the problem in such a way that the desired solution is the most obvious solution. This does not mean, however, that the problem posed by the red herring is not real. For example, the fact that some drugs including alcohol are destroying human lives and creating crime is a real problem. However, the drug problem is presented as one of supply and not demand. As a supply problem illegal drugs can only be addressed by using the police and military to interdict supplies. Alternatively, as a consumption problem, drugs are seen as a medical problem with medical solutions. Were the immigration problem posed as an issue of employers illegally hiring undocumented workers at slave wages and undercutting US jobs, then the solution would have to focus on illegal employment and a living wage. Thus, a critical review of the red herring problem involves asking, not whether it is real or not, but by asking why it was posed in this way and whether there are alternative ways to present the problem.

The posed problem commands no loyalty from its promoters beyond its ability to mask their hidden agenda. This is why, when a problem is solved or shown to be nonexistent, it will be replaced by another problem which calls for the same solution. For example, the solution, the invasion of Iraq, was first coupled with the problem that Iraq was collaborating with Al Qaeda. When this problem was shown to be false, a new problem, that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, was proffered. When this too turned out to be false, the US invasion of Iraq was then justified by saying that Saddam Hussein was a despotic dictator and had to be deposed. Thus the offering of a sequence of problems for a given solution, is a clear indication of a red herring at work.

The solution

To be successful, the posed solution must meet two conditions. First, it must be seen as the best way to solve the problem. This is why Leman-Langlois (2000) concludes that “the way the situation is constructed is inseparable from the concomitant construction of its solution.” Second, it must do so in a way that meets the needs of the hidden agenda. For example, the invasion and occupation of Iraq for the purposes of removing their weapons of mass destruction will also fulfill the purposes of the hidden agenda of establishing permanent military bases, to increase American influence in the area, including controlling the flow of oil. In designing a red herring, the solution precedes the problem, for it is the solution and its connection with the hidden agenda that forms the basis for the red herring. In fact, a problem may have to be invented in order for the solution to be seen as important.

All the same, one may find additional activities that are being carried out which have little to do with the stated problem but which meet the needs of the hidden agenda. For example, little fanfare has been given to the building of permanent bases in Iraq or the redrafting of parts of the Iraqi constitution to allow privatized ownership of oil resources in Iraq. These activities are unrelated to any of the problems posed. In fact, the permanent bases provide irrefutable evidence that, far from withdrawing in July 2011 as repeatedly stated, the US intends to maintain a garrison in order to protect its huge investment in enabling US corporations to achieve profits, especially from oil extraction, for the foreseeable future.
In some cases the problem is actually framed by the solution, as in the case of “tax relief.” As Lakoff (2006) points out the term “relief” conjures up the idea that taxes are a problem and that we would be better off without them. Tax relief is an example of a red herring solution that many will see as an end in itself. “Cutting taxes is enough for me; that’s all there is to it.” Because the solution is seen as so straightforward and unproblematic, the hidden agenda becomes even more difficult to uncover.

Sometimes when the current solution has run its course (one can only cut taxes so much) it is replaced by a substitute that will have the same effect. When support for tax cuts began to lag, a new red herring solution arose, namely the demand to balance the budget, which also justifies the downsizing of government. The ideal solution is one that does not really solve the problem, for in such cases there is no need to substitute a new problem when the solution has run its course. The above-mentioned war on drugs is a good example. Nuclear deterrence is another example.

**The rationale**

A rationale is a narrative that attempts to further legitimize the red herring. A rationale consists of both a logic based on worldview and a motivation that appeals to one’s self-interest, idealism or fear. A successful rationale so convincing that no further discussion is needed. Less successful rationales are is open to examination and hence exposure.

**Motivation**

Although an appeal to self-interest will never be the primary motivation for a solution, it can increase support for it. When a tax cut is presented as a sound economic solution to a troubled economy, it is also attractive personally. This personal benefit makes it less likely that one will examine the economics of tax cuts.

A red herring rationale may also appeal to one’s sense of justice or social responsibility such as enabling freedom from a dictatorial tyrant or stopping the importation of drugs that are destroying our youth. While the complete opposite of self-interest, this argument is also effective, because when a solution is the just and moral thing to do, one's motives need not be questions.

Another type of rationalization presents the solution as the lesser of two evils (table 2). This too discourages further examination. Often such rationalizations appeal to, or even create, fearfulness about the consequences of failing to act. Fear that the individual is in grave physical danger or that our way of life will be destroyed. The threat of nuclear destruction and physical harm in the hands of terrorists are two obvious forms of fear, but arguments about the destruction of our way of life by socialism and big government also rely on fear.

**Table 2: The lesser of two evils reasoning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is wrong to:</th>
<th>But if we don’t then:</th>
<th>And we won’t have:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threaten the use of nuclear weapons.</td>
<td>They will nuke us.</td>
<td>Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invade someone else’s country.</td>
<td>They will get us with their weapons of mass destruction.</td>
<td>Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overthrow a democracy and murder those resisting.</td>
<td>The (Islamic) terrorists will destroy our way of life and economy</td>
<td>Affluence, freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torture people and take away their human rights.</td>
<td>The suspected Islamic terrorists will come and get us</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By arguing that the solution is the lesser of two evils, it is possible to advocate solutions that are wrong, bad, illegal, or immoral. For this reason, this rationale is used to support drastic solutions, like the threat of annihilation with nuclear weapons.

**Worldview**

Red herring rationales, like other types of *legitimating discourses* (Leman-Langlois), also draw from a worldview, which is a framework to view and interpret the world. Following Manheim (1936), the word *ideology* is also used to refer to worldview, however, we prefer to restrict the use of the term ideology to those aspects of a belief system which justify inequality and privilege at the expense of others. For example, some of worldview premises given in Table 1 below are clearly ideological (I1&I2&I7), while others are less obvious (I3 & I5).

One’s worldview consists of a set of premises about the nature of the world. Some premises have to do with the way one should operate in the physical world:

- If it is raining put up your umbrella.
- Steaming water is hot.

With respect to red herrings, most worldview most premises have to do with the nature of the social world and how to interact with other humans. These worldview premises are part of our background knowledge and not directly accessible to us. However, as is the case with all background knowledge, these premises are necessary for our interpretation of narratives, including one’s collection of worldview narratives. For example, the narrative of George Washington’s confession that he was the one who cut down his father’s cherry tree draws on the premise that honesty is a virtue. Worldview narratives also have to do with welfare queens, unlawful immigrants as well as other topics which draw on these worldview premises.

Lincoln (1989) refers to such narratives as *myths*, not because they are false, but because they are accepted as true and thus not in need of proof. He further argues that because they do not require proof, they have more “authority” than statements of fact. In fact, Prasad et al (2009) found that facts that contradict a narrative can actually strengthen it. For example they found, among those who supported the invasion of Iraq, that people tended to strengthen their belief in Hussein’s involvement, after being presented with a statement by Bush that he had never claimed that Saddam Hussein was involved.

Worldview premises can be uncovered from an examination of worldview myths. For example, the Bush administration propagated two red-herring myths to legitimize the invasion of Iraq. One was that Saddam Hussain had weapons of mass destruction; the other claimed that he was in cahoots with Alqeda. Despite the lack of credible evidence, these “myths” persisted and provided the legitimation for the second Gulf war. The authority of these myths can be traced to underlying worldview premises.

1. All Arabs are out to get us and will stop at nothing.
2. All Arabs are single minded.

Given that Alqeda is an Arab organization, it follows that:

- Alqeda and Hussein out to get us and they work together; and

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1 Berger and Luckmann (1967:67) refer to this collection as “sedimentations,” and note that “unless such sedimentation took place the individual could not make sense of his biography.”
2 Prasad et al attribute this strengthening to a number of psychological mechanisms (counterarguing, attitude bolstering, selective exposure, disputing reality, and inferred justification).
3 These premises are derived from more basic premises given in table 1 below as I2 and I3.
Hussein would develop WMDs because he is an Arab.

Note that these myths are sometimes reinforced by facts such as there are Arab suicide bombers and that Iran and Pakistan, while not Arab are Muslim and they have developed or are developing nuclear WMDs.

Thus, the telling of myths both draws on and establishes underlying worldview premises.

Worldview narratives tend to be coherent but rarely are fully so. One may have stories that both support and oppose a given underlying premise. For example there may be a narrative about “illegal immigrants” being the source of crime alongside the story of “the good Samaritan,” that there are others who are compassionate and caring. As a result, one’s worldview is likely to contain some contradictory premises. For example the two previous narratives lead to premises that others are bad, and others are good. Nevertheless, one’s collection of narratives is largely coherent.

While each individual has one’s own collection of worldview narratives and hence underlying premises, these narratives and premises tend to be commonly held by a given society and thus represent what Berger and Luckmann (1967) term common sense. In fact, it is possible for this common sense to be not only common, but absolute, or in Gramsci’s terms hegemonic. The reasons for this commonality have to do with members both interacting with one another, but sharing common institutional structures (Dwyer, 2010 ms).

The situation in the United States, like most western societies is not hegemonic, but bipolar, meaning that there are two opposing prototypic worldviews with members embracing all or parts of each. While these opposing worldviews are commonly referred to as liberal and conservative, or Democrat and Republican, we prefer to call them individualist and collectivist for two reasons. First the terms more accurately describe the two worldviews. Thus collectivists see themselves as members of a group working together working for the common good while individualists see themselves as looking out for their own interests. Second the existing terms of liberal and conservative carry with them other premises that are in conflict with one view or the other. For example, many conservatives support social security and national health care, while many liberals support a system of privilege based on capitalism.

Table 3 provides examples of premises from each of these worldviews. It is likely that with additional analysis, some of these basic premises can be shown to be derived. Table 1 was constructed to contrast the extremes of these world views. Thus most individuals are likely to find themselves embracing more moderate versions of these premises, e.g., we are generally good, others are generally good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Individualist Worldview Premises</th>
<th>Basic Collectivist Worldview premises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We/they</td>
<td>C 1 Others are no different from us in terms of basic human qualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Nature</td>
<td>C 2 People are good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>C 3 Humans are basically nonviolent and work together cooperatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social order</td>
<td>C 4 When threatened with violence, people will stiffen their resolve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We/they</td>
<td>C 5 Measured force is applied with discretion; Violence is wanted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others are sometimes bad.</td>
<td>C 6 Violence is both physical and structural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people will be bad when they can get away with it.</td>
<td>C 7 Conflicts are best resolved through negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will obey when threatened with violence,</td>
<td>C 8 Structural inequalities are correctable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence is part of human nature.</td>
<td>C 9 Helping others is an important moral principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence is necessary to protect ourselves.</td>
<td>C 10 Force is sometimes necessary to restrain asocial individuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good means moral, honest hardworking, law abiding; bad means immoral, dishonest, lazy and law abiding.
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Morality

I 9  Good behavior should be rewarded.
I 10  Bad behavior must be punished.
I 11  Goodness is a virtue.
C 11  Morality is sustained by our respect for others.
C 12  Asocial behavior is either a response to structural violence or reflects a mental disability.
C 13  Hard work is a virtue.

Rights

I 12  Every unborn child has a right to life.
I 13  I have a right to do what I want.
C 14  Children learn morality through evaluation and reflection.
C 13  Every human has a right to life.

Duties

I 14  I have a duty to support my family.
C 14  I have the responsibility to respect just social institutions.
C 15  Hard work is a responsibility.

Because these premises are quite abstract, they do not often appear in everyday discourse which is much more likely to employ more practical statements or heuristic premises which can be derived from the more abstract premises.

Table 4 offers examples of premises derived from the two sets of worldview premises given in table 1.

**Table 4: Examples of individualist and collectivist derived worldview premises**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We/they</th>
<th>Derived Individualist Worldview Premises</th>
<th>Derived Collectivist Worldview Premises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Nature</td>
<td>A We are worth more than other people (I1, I2).</td>
<td>A Poor people are often victims of structural violence (C6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B People of ethnic group X are sometimes bad (I1, I2).</td>
<td>B Capital punishment is never justified (C4, C13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C Our country is the best (I1, I2).</td>
<td>C Asocial behavior is often a product of physical and structural violence (C4, C6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>D There are people who will try to take what I have earned (I3).</td>
<td>D Poverty can be eliminated by ending structural violence (C7, C8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E Violence is justified to control bad people (I1, I2, I3, I4, I6, I9).</td>
<td>E War can be eliminated (C3, C7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F Capital punishment is sometimes justified (I2, I9).</td>
<td>F Inequalities in social opportunities is correctable (C8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social order</td>
<td>G Poverty will always be with us (I2).</td>
<td>G Social order is best maintained through nonviolent mechanisms (C2, C3, C7, C8, C9).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H War is inevitable (I5).</td>
<td>H Our country has some correctable faults (C8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I 9/11 happened because we failed to be vigilant (I7).</td>
<td>I When social order breaks down, force is necessary (C10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J People will not be bad if they know that they will be punished (I4).</td>
<td>M Asocial behavior is either a social problem resulting from social inequities ((C6) or a health problem requiring medical assistance (C12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>K Hardworking people deserve their wealth (I1, I8).</td>
<td>N We have no right to impose our way of life on others (C1, C2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L We are justified in imposing our way of life on others (I1, I2, I6).</td>
<td>P Rich people are born with a structural advantage (C6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M I have the right to protect myself from bad people using violence (I2, I4, I6).</td>
<td>Q 9/11 happened because we failed to respect the rights of others (C4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N I have a right to own a gun (M).</td>
<td>R I have the responsibility to change unjust institutions (C14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N Social institutions (government) do not have the right to impose on me (12).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lakoff (2006) suggests that the worldview for most people is not as clear cut as the prototypes given here, because most people have a worldview that embraces assumptions and principles from competing worldview prototypes. This is because neither the set of individualist nor collectivist worldview assumptions explains all of the fact one encounters. Thus in comprehending a given situation an individual will use those worldview assumptions that lead to an understanding of it.

Because of this one can frame a political issue in a way that resonates with either a individualist or collectivist worldview. In the example above, Lakoff noted that the frame of illegal immigration suggests that migrant workers were the source of the problem thus linking it with an individualist worldview which justifies increased expenditures for border patrols, whereas an alternative frame of “illegal employment” fits with a collectivist perspective which considers unscrupled employers as the problem.

Furthermore, he adds that when a given frame “is repeated, the stronger the frame gets, along with the system [i.e., worldview] the frame is in. And the weaker the frames of the contradictory system gets. The stronger the high-level frames are, the more effective the frames that fit them will be. And the less effective frames that contradict them will be.”

From the work of Prasad et al and Lakoff, it is clear that the political struggle for worldview does not involve a confrontation of facts, but a struggle to represent the facts as a manifestation of one’s favored worldview.

The rationale for nuclear deterrence

Nuclear deterrence begins with the general concept of deterrence, which states that others will refrain from attacking you if they understand that you are willing and capable of retaliating in a way that they will find unacceptable, a logic that is consistent with the assumptions and principles of the individualist worldview described above, and inconsistent with the collectivist worldview. Interestingly the logic of general deterrence is rarely challenged in American society reflecting the virtual dominance (near hegemony) of the supporting individualist worldview assumptions with respect to general deterrence.

Nuclear deterrence involves this same logic, but in this case, the threat of retaliation involves use of nuclear weapons. However when it comes to nuclear weapons as the deterrent the logic of deterrence breaks down because of the incredible destructive power of nuclear weapons and their potential to destroy all human life.

According to Robock et all (2007), the climatic effects of the detonation of 2000 thermonuclear weapons, would produce a “ice-age conditions” lasting for at least ten years curtailing food supplies and the probable starvation of a billion people and according to Toon et al (2008), would lead to the extinction of humans and other animals with body weights of more than 50 pounds. Even a “regional” exchange of a 100 Hiroshima-sized weapons, according to Starr (2008, 2010), “could produce as many fatalities as World War II and would significantly disrupt the global climate for at least a decade” and would lower average surface temperatures significantly shortening growing seasons and reducing average global precipitation.

Bringing worldview assumptions to light

Most societies entertain competing worldviews, though these views differ in their popularity and it is often the case that one is overwhelmingly dominant. In our own (western) society, views on the existence of god, the success of capitalism and the belief in general deterrence as an effective mechanism are virtually hegemonic.

9. Has the problem been framed in a way that promotes the solution?
Counter-hegemonic worldviews, and their assumptions and principles may arise from religious, professional or even personal beliefs. For example, many groups, religious and secular, oppose the idea that people are evil or that violence is necessary and effective. People with such counter-hegemonic worldviews find it easier to see that a red-herring rationale is faulty. If people are basically nonviolent, we need to know the causes of some people becoming violent and work to remove the causes. If poverty isn’t inevitable, then we need to find the causes of poverty. When one or more of the common-sense assertions is not held, the validity of the red herring rational becomes suspect.

Worldview assumptions also come to light when a problem develops. For example in a discussion or debate with someone else about a red-herring issue like the invasion of Iraq, the other may assert “you have to understand that these are bad people” or “nonviolence is ineffective.” When these assertions become overt, they provide an opportunity to explore them more critically. For example, we could ask “have we met anyone who is truly evil? If so, how did that person become evil? Why would God make evil people?” Or with respect to nonviolence we can cite examples of successful nonviolence (Gandhi, South Africa) or for that matter, the numerous cases where violence has failed to achieve ends and at great cost.

Worldview assumptions can also be brought to light by using a technique known as *problematizing* which involves challenging the common sense assumptions (assumptions) by asking about them directly. Why are people poor? Does torturing captives provide good information? Why is the war on drugs seen as a problem of demand and not supply?

**Consistency**

Red herring solutions may not apply to all instances of the problem. We may say that this dictator needs to be replaced (Noriega, Chávez, Hussein) but that dictator does not (Pinochet, Suharto); marijuana, but not alcohol, needs to be criminalized. Iraq, Iran and North Korea should not develop nuclear weapons, but it is acceptable for India, Pakistan and Israel to do so. One needs to ask if this rationale is consistent with other solutions. For example the rationale of restoring democracy and human rights is often offered as a justification for intervention in another country, but at the same time there are many other countries with similar problems which do not receive the same attention.

**Authorship and advocates**

While it is sometimes possible to trace the source of a red herring to a particular individual, it is more common for red herrings, like myths, to be anonymous. This is not so much because the authors wish to remain unidentified as it is that, as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss 1964:20 noted, such myths invent themselves.

We don't suggest therefore that men think in myths but that myths work themselves out in the minds of men unconsciously.”

From our perspective, a myth is a narrative that draws on a particular worldview. These narratives could be folktales, but they could be simple stories like George Washington and the cherry tree, the honesty of Abe Lincoln, or in our case, the red herring. It also follows here that each worldview will have its own collection of myths.

Myths are important for several reasons. First, are accepted as true and require no further validation. Second, because myths draw on worldview principles, they aver the truth of the underlying principles.
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And third, because myths, unlike principles are directly accessible to users, they are the practical repository of world view principles. [Examples of myths that support principles]

Although Lévi-Strauss did not refer to red herrings in his study of myth, it was clear that he was aware of mythical quality of red herrings when he said “nothing resembles mythical thought more than political ideology” (Lévi-Strauss 1958).

Importantly, because myths are taken to be true, they need no author to assert their validity and without authorship, myth are taken to be part of a society’s cultural patrimony. Furthermore, without authorship, the validity of the myth becomes even more difficult to question.

This is why when looking for red herrings we are not likely to find individual authors. However, one can identify advocates who are connected to the beneficiaries. For example, lobbyists in federal, state and local government are paid to represent interested parties. The number and extent of lobbying is substantial. According to the Center for Responsive Politics (2010), there were more than 17,000 federal lobbyists in 2008 with a total of over $16 billion, and this sum does not include campaign contributions. Thus the rationales offered by lobbyists can be connected with their sponsors can lead us to the source of the red herrings.

Advocating for a red hearing, does not require belief in the red herring. For example, the above-mentioned lobbyists will advocate for almost anything if the price is right.

4. Red herrings and the national security state

We are currently living in what Raskin and LeVan (2005) call a national security state possessing the following properties:

- it functions as a limited democracy;
- it allocates roughly half of its national budget to security-related activities (military, police, weapons, etc.);
- it is preoccupied with secrecy and surveillance to the extent that it abrogates the fundamental rights of its citizens and prefers to use violence to solve problems, and is involved in ongoing preparation for war.

While this characterization may conjure up a dictatorship with absolute powers, western democracies also fit this definition. As Eisenhower in 1961 warned, “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.”

The national security state can be seen as part of a red herring complex whose hidden agenda directly benefits several elite minorities including most notably the manufactures of conventional and nuclear armaments and the military and gives them, as Eisenhower noted, “unwarranted” influence over the democratic process.

The national security state (below) frames its problem in terms of providing security to its citizens. As the table below shows, this use of the word security is much narrower than the general concept. This narrowing allows us to accept the use of violence as the way of providing security (table 5). Security, in its broader sense includes food security, health security, housing and education as well, these types of security cannot be achieved through the application of violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Examples of word narrowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperate</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Usually, the national security state is presented as a solution to the problem of an external threat. In the US, the threat was initially posed as an attack from the Soviet Union and the spread of communism. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and with it, the specter of international communism, the continuance of the national security state was in question and people began to speak of a peace dividend. But the peace dividend did not happen because the Soviet peril was replaced by a new threat: international terrorism.

Although the two problems, the Soviet threat and the terrorist threat, call for a national security state, the two problems have different properties and require somewhat different solutions. The problem of the Soviet threat was used to justify nuclear deterrence and lingers in the case of terrorism. However, nuclear deterrence is worse than useless against terrorists, because a determined – especially suicidal – terrorist would welcome such an indiscriminate overreaction. In fact, with this shift of problems, the inutility of nuclear weapons becomes more apparent.

Although the problem, solution and rationale promoting the national security state crowds out nonviolent solutions, such solutions are possible, though this may involve posing the problem differently. For example, by broadening the concept of security, nonviolent solutions are not only conceivable, but more reasonable. Also, when the threat of terrorism is posed as a criminal and not a military matter, the solution involving international criminal courts emerges as an alternative, more effective and less costly solution.

As mentioned above, problem of drugs and its posed solution, the war on drugs, is consistent with the National Security State’s use of military force to interdict the shipment of drugs to the United States. This further legitimizes the use of violence to solve problems and further marginalizes alternative, less violent solutions.

5. Nuclear deterrence a red herring

Throughout this paper we have posed questions that help to identify red herrings. In this section we apply these questions to nuclear deterrence. As we show below, the responses show that nuclear deterrence possesses all the properties of a red herring, a hidden agenda, a problem, a solution, a rationale and authorship. Furthermore, the concept of nuclear deterrence is consistent with the practices of the national security state.

The hidden agenda

1. What other purposes could the proposed solution serve?

_The US alone has spent more than 6 trillion dollars developing 70,000 nuclear weapons and deploying them. Currently the US and Russia each have about 10,000 (Center for Defense Information 2010). These funds could have been spent on other services including universal health care or not spent at all thus lowering taxes._

_In addition to being profitable, this red herring contributes to the legitimation of the national security state, the use of violence to solve problems and the supposed utility and acceptability of nuclear weapons._

The problem
2. Can the problem be posed differently so that it calls for a different solution?

The national security state defines “security” as a problem requiring the use of violent force. This narrow use of the term not only excludes important types of security (jobs, health, emotional) but defines solutions in terms of violence. When these other types of security are included, nonviolent solutions become apparent. Furthermore when it comes to nuclear security, The International Court of Justice’s Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996 made it clear that the only practicable and lawful solution to nuclear terror is complete nuclear disarmament.

The solution

3. Are there some activities that are inconsistent with the solution?

Yes. During the cold war U.S. and USSR had manufactured a combined 70,000 nuclear weapons. It is now recognized (Starr 2010, 2011) that a detonation of 2000 weapons would eliminate mammalian life on earth.

In the post cold-war era, the US still maintains over 1,000 nuclear bombs poised for launch within half an hour even though there is no longer the possibility of a major nuclear attack. Russia is no longer seen as an enemy and China, once considered an adversary, is now seen as a potential ally. With the end of the Cold War, the problem has shifted from the threat godless communism to the terrorism of religious fanatics for whom the threat of nuclear annihilation is not seen as a deterrent.

While purporting to make the “free world” more secure, the manufacture of nuclear weapons, required by nuclear deterrence, are highly profitable. These weapons manufacturers promote this red herring by hiring lobbyists to promote this rationale to elected officials.

4. When the problem is eliminated, does the solution continue as a response to a new problem? Does the solution really solve the problem?

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the problem of communism disappeared. However, it was argued that there were still hostile nations with nuclear weapons (China, Iran, and North Korea) that could be deterred by nuclear weapons as well as ruthless terrorists who might attempt to smuggle nuclear bombs or chemical or biological weapons into the United States. Although an examination of these substitute problems shows deterrence to be ineffective, the US still adheres to the policy.

5. Does the solution really solve the problem?

No. From the perspective of the red herring, nuclear deterrence is an ideal solution for two reasons. First, it cannot be shown to not work - until it is too late. Conversely, the absence of nuclear war so far can speciously be claimed as evidence that nuclear deterrence does work. However, shifting the problem from the Soviets to terrorists raises a serious fresh problem: how do you deter a suicide bomber or someone who feels so strongly about an issue that his or her life is of no importance?

The rationale

6. Does the rationale for the red herring take the form of being the lesser of two evils or even necessary for survival?

Yes. Proponents claim that even if the threat or use of nuclear weapons is illegal and immoral, they are necessary for our survival.

7. Does the rationale for the red herring appeal to fear?
Yes. The promotion of both international communism and religious terrorism involved an appeal to fear.

8. What worldview assumptions and principles support the rational?

They are supported by all the relevant individualist assumptions and principles. It is not surprising, therefore, that until recently the rationale for nuclear deterrence has not been subjected to serious criticism by the general public or for that matter, the establishment.

9. Has the problem been framed in a way that promotes the solution?

Both the statement of the problem and its elaboration in the rational use the assumptions that they will attack us if they have the chance and the only way to prevent such an attack is through deterrence. This framing precludes the possibility of nonviolent alternatives such as negotiation and conflict resolution, as recommended by the World Court of Justice.

10. Is the rationale consistently applied?

No. In some cases the US argues for diplomatic solutions as opposed to force. Also, the U.S. does not challenge the possession of nuclear weapons by India, Pakistan and Israel, even though they are fraught with danger.

Authorship and advocates

11. Can advocates for the red herring be identified? How are the advocates related to those who benefit from the practices undertaken by the solution?

The concept of nuclear deterrence can be traced to the pentagon, but not to specific authors. Needless to say it has been embraced by the US military-industrial complex consisting not only of the military, the weapons industry but unions, academics, politicians, all of whom benefit from this red herring, though in less substantial ways than the weapons industry.

12. Are there any indications that proponents do not genuinely support the red herring?

Serving military leaders go along with the dogma of nuclear deterrence; but when they retire, they frequently acknowledge its irrationality and impracticality. Such conversions have been made by former strategists and civil servants (e.g., Henry Kissinger and Robert McNamara). The problem has been invented by the, and then presented as a solution to the predictable response by the USSR/Russia, China and now North Korea, possibly to be followed by Iran and other potentially hostile states.

The National Security State

13. Does the solution involve the use of violence and promote a perpetual war footing?

Yes. Nuclear deterrence requires a state of perpetual preparedness.

14. Can the problem be posed so that a nonviolent solution to the problem becomes apparent?

Yes. Once the problem is reframe as one of nuclear weapons in general and not their possession of nuclear weapons, the solution becomes getting rid of all nuclear weapons. Furthermore, this reframing results in a greater emphasis on collectivist, as opposed to individualist assumptions stated in part 3.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have identified fourteen properties commonly found in red herrings and from that developed fourteen questions which can be used to test for red herrings. The answer to each question shows that nuclear deterrence tests positive and we can conclude that it is therefore a red herring.
As long as nuclear deterrence is rationalized through an individualist worldview and motivated by an appeal to fear, the arguments about its illegality, immorality and illogic will be ignored. However, once we expose the strategy of nuclear deterrence as a red herring, its other defects (illegality, immorality, and ineffectiveness) will be seen more clearly. Thus the key to nuclear disarmament is to expose the rationale of nuclear deterrence as a red herring that masks more sinister underlying intentions and to reframe the problem as one of the existence nuclear weapons.

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## Appendix A: Examples of red herrings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hiroshima and Nagasaki</th>
<th>The Cold War</th>
<th>Chile</th>
<th>Tax Cuts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The problem</strong></td>
<td>Winning the war with Japan.</td>
<td>The communist Soviet Union is our adversary.</td>
<td>The Chilean government has turned communist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The overt agenda</strong></td>
<td>Bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki.</td>
<td>We need to maintain a high level of military preparedness.</td>
<td>Help the Chilean military to overthrow its elected government and eliminate citizens who resist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The hidden agenda</strong></td>
<td>We need to test these bombs and to demonstrate our strength and ruthlessness to our rivals, especially the USSR.</td>
<td>Under the umbrella of the cold war the we can meddle with other governments to protect our economic interests while at the same time enriching arms suppliers who in turn make politicians dependent on their donations.</td>
<td>This activity allows US companies to continue to do business in Chile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>rationale:</strong></td>
<td>They shortened the war and saved Allied lives.</td>
<td>Unless we guard against communist aggression it will destroy our way of life</td>
<td>As per the Monroe doctrine, we need to preserve democracy and free markets. We don’t like to do these things but they are necessary given the alternative of letting Allende stay in power.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The War on Drugs</th>
<th>The 2nd Gulf War</th>
<th>Illegal Immigration</th>
<th>Terrorists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The problem</strong></td>
<td>Bad people are selling drugs to our people who are ruining their lives and resorting to crime.</td>
<td>Iraq’s despotic leader is threatening the stability of the Middle East and supporting terrorism.</td>
<td>People are coming from other countries illegally to work for low wages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The overt agenda</strong></td>
<td>Stop the importation of drugs using military resources.</td>
<td>invade and occupy Iraq and remove its leader.</td>
<td>Make illegal entry a felony; build a wall to prevent them from coming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The hidden agenda</strong></td>
<td>Reduce resources available for the common good, including drug treatment programs. Promote the military and the use of violence as a normal way of solving problems.</td>
<td>Support the Zionist agenda in a strategically key region, by establishing permanent bases in Iraq and controlling pricing and availability of oil there. Also, Balkanize Iraq to ensure it remains weak and in perpetual civil war, and encircle Iran.</td>
<td>US employers prefer undocumented aliens because they work for lower wages than US workers resulting in lower prices for the consumer but more unemployed US workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>rationale:</strong></td>
<td>Military intervention is the only way to stop drug trafficking.</td>
<td>1. Iraq had direct connections with Al Qaeda. 2. We need to destroy Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction to be safe. 3. The Iraqi people deserve a democratic government.</td>
<td>The worker not the employer is breaking the law.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: The red herring checklist

The hidden agenda
1. What groups or individuals benefit from this particular solution?

The problem
2. Can the problem be posed differently so that it calls for a different solution?

The Solution
3. Are there some activities that are inconsistent with the solution?
4. When the problem is eliminated, does the solution continue as a response to a new problem?

The rationale
5. Does the solution really solve the problem?
6. Does the rationale for the red herring take the form of being the lesser of two evils or even necessary for survival?
7. Does the rationale for the red herring appeal to fear?
8. What worldview assumptions and principles support the rational?
9. Has the problem been framed in a way that promotes the solution?
10. Is the rationale consistently applied?

Authorship and source
11. Can advocates for the red herring be identified? How are the advocates related to those who benefit from the practices undertaken by the solution?
12. Are there any indications that proponents do not genuinely support the red herring?

The National Security State
13. Does the solution involve the use of violence and promote a perpetual war footing?
14. Can the problem be posed so that a nonviolent solution to the problem becomes apparent?