

U.S. classes "rogue states" but world may not agree

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WASHINGTON, April 14 (Reuter) - Iran, Iraq and North Korea are among a small group of countries the United States regards as "rogue states" but Washington's attempts to isolate them politically and economically may be hard to enforce.

The phrase "rogue states" is increasingly heard from U.S. policymakers. Sometimes they are also referred to as "outlaw or pariah states" but the intent is the same. These countries, in Washington's view, should be put outside the pale.

In a lecture earlier this week, Washington's United Nations ambassador, Madeleine Albright, said there were four classes of states in the world today.

The first and largest she called "international good citizens" - countries which followed the rules and wanted to live in peace.

A second class, she said, were emerging democracies aspiring to complete their transformation and become good citizens. A third group were countries that did not have the wherewithal to exist as coherent states - countries like Somalia, Liberia and Rwanda.

Finally there were what Albright called the "rogue states." Her list included Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, Sudan and Serbia - countries that did everything they could to disrupt the orderly conduct of international relations either by acquiring or spreading nuclear or unconventional weaponry, or by sponsoring terrorism, trafficking in narcotics or by engaging in wars of aggression and ethnic conquest.

National Security Adviser Anthony Lake used the term "backlash states" in an article that appeared last month in the journal Foreign Affairs.

He said the United States had a duty to "neutralize, contain and through selective pressure eventually transform" these countries. He rejected the idea of trying to offer positive inducements, such as trade or aid concessions or loan rescheduling, to persuade them to improve their behaviour.

Many of these countries appear on the U.S. annual list of states deemed to be sponsors of terrorism or on its list of countries trafficking in narcotics.

As such, they are banned from receiving most categories of U.S. aid and credits and Washington votes against granting these countries loans in international financial organisations.

But the United States now seeks to isolate these countries even further. Lynn Davies, undersecretary of state for military affairs, told reporters last week Washington wanted the successor to the old Cold War Cocom organisation to include rules not to sell advanced military or dual-use technology to what she called “rogue states.”

Analysts believe there is scant hope of this happening because different countries pursue different interests and there is no internationally accepted consensus of what constitutes a rogue state.

“It is a denial of international relations and a projection of the naive concept that all politics are like domestic U.S. politics,” said Paul Goble, an analyst with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Iranian scholar Shahram Chubin doubts that the “outlaw state” concept is much use when dealing with Iran because Washington’s allies are also its commercial competitors, anxious to take advantage of whatever opportunities exist.

In the case of Iraq, countries as diverse as Russia, France, Turkey and Jordan would like to see international sanctions eased so they could recoup commercial losses and take advantage of a major market.

In the case of Iran, Russia’s interests are very different from America’s. Russia has already sold submarines to Tehran and more weapons could be in the pipeline.

As researcher Geoffrey Kemp points out in a new book on U.S.-Iranian relations, even Washington confounds its own rhetoric, allowing U.S. companies to export almost \$1 billion to Iran last year.

This included major oil drilling and engineering equipment, while U.S. oil companies bought up to \$4 billion of Iranian oil, providing Tehran with valuable hard currency.

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