

On the Fringes of the International Community: The Making and Survival of “Rogue States”

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Abstract: Studies on “rogue states” often present normative analyses focused on the perspective of Western actors. From a purely analytical point of view, the present article steps away from this tradition and aims to examine the process of designating actors as “rogue states”, its impact on them, and their capabilities to defy stigmatization. The argument developed proceeds in two steps. Firstly, the paper discloses and discusses characteristic features of states that lead to them being labeled “rogue states.” Thereby the paradoxical situation occurs that “rogue states” can be seen either as a part of the international community or as an entity being excluded from this community. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the selection process of “rogue states” is based on biased securitization policies. Secondly, despite being exposed to significant external pressure, most “rogue states” have shown a remarkable resistance to transforming their political conduct. Two main sources of strength are identified: the ability of “rogue states” to draw material and ideational resources from the international system and their disposal over state capacities.

Keywords: Rogue states, pariah states, stigmatization, transformation resistance, authoritarian states

Schurkenstaaten/Pariastaaten, Stigmatisierung, Transformationsresistenz autoritärer Staaten

1. Introduction¹

The term “international community” implies a global unit – be it composed of people or entities governing them. Yet, there are some actors that are excluded from this community, or at least some states of the global community aspire to this exclusion. This leads to the paradoxical situation that “rogue states” are simultaneously part of the international community and excluded from it: Their statehood makes them part of the Westphalian system from which they are banned at the same time (see Saunders 2006). The aim of this article is to study both the process of selection of these outcasts, commonly referred to as “rogue states,” and their ability to survive despite being dismissed by (the most powerful actors of) the international community.

The argument developed in the present article will proceed in two steps. Firstly, the article aims to identify characteristic features of states that lead to them being labeled “rogue states”. What makes a state a “rogue state”; what are the selection criteria; how are these criteria applied; and, above all, in what (security-related) political context is the designation embedded? To start with, the basic question of whether and how the term “rogue state” should be used in the academic arena is to be addressed. It is emphasized that the selection of “rogue states” is based on (biased) securitization policies. Secondly, the patterns of external pressure imposed on “rogue states” will be analyzed in more detail. Despite being exposed to significant external pressure, most “rogue states” have shown a remarkable resistance to transforming their political conduct. Thus, the issue of available structural resources for “rogue states” to maintain

stability despite stigmatization and exclusion from the international community needs to be analyzed. This will be done by focusing on the most widespread and arguably most effective instrument for influencing states’ behavior in the international system, i.e. sanctions. It will be argued that the mainstream literature on the impact of sanctions tends to underestimate both the significant changes taking place in the international system and the central role of the state as a donjon for “rogues.” More specifically, we emphasize two main sources of strength: the ability of “rogue states” to draw material and ideational resources out of the international system and their disposal over state capacities.

2. The concept of “rogue state”

2.1 To use or not to use the term “rogue state” in academic analyses

In general, the concept of “rogue states” is highly controversial. Whereas some argue that the term is sufficiently defined by convention, highlighting specific state behavior (for external behavior: see Segell 2004: 343; for internal behavior: Caprioli/Trumbore 2003: 378-9), critics emphasize that it represents a politicized term that lacks analytical power (Litwak 2000: 74-90; 2001: 376-379) and should therefore be avoided (Thompson 2002: 21). Nevertheless, use of this label increased in recent years and has become a common and popular term in the language of US foreign policy.

Certainly, the term “rogue state” is not born out of a sophisticated theoretical design. Rather, it is a fighting word of actors aiming to delegitimize others, that is, to stigmatize states on behalf of the international community. Yet, this fact should be taken as an argument for using the term “rogue states” in academic debates (in inverted commas). Labeling an actor as “rogue state” is a political speech act with often far-reaching implications, both for the sending state’s options and the tar-

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geted actor's political behavior. Thus, banning the term from academic discourse would abet ignorance of a genuine research object for political science.

2.2 “Rogue States” and the politics of securitization

There are several, almost synonymous, terms such as “renegade regimes,” “pariah states,” “states of concern,” or “problem states” that imply a pejorative connotation with regard to the stigmatized actor. Although the term “rogue state” has been invented fairly recently, it should be emphasized that the social phenomenon of states standing aloof of a more or less broader international community – or being made aloof by this community – is not new; it ranges from the Vandals challenging the boundaries of the Roman Empire to the Leninist Soviet Union and Germany's Nazi government to the “pariah states” of the Cold War, such as South Africa or Taiwan (Henriksen 2001: 350-354; Nincic 2005: 9-12).

Yet, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the historical coining of the term “rogue state” because it shows the particularities of a specific policy of “securitization” (see Buzan/Wæver/de Wilde 1998). The term “rogue regime” was first made public in a *Washington Post* editorial in 1979 when Pol Pot's Cambodia and Idi Amin's Uganda were accused of severe human rights violations against their own people. In this context, Litwak (2000: 47-56; 2001: 377) underscores that the term “rogue state” – in its original sense – referred to repressive internal behavior by a state. This focus on internal politics gradually shifted to aggressive foreign policy that (allegedly) poses a security threat to the “international community” in general, and the West and the US in specific. As is characteristic for policies of securitization, such a policy enables the sender to embark on far-reaching actions that would otherwise be difficult to legitimize.

Thus, when the US began to list state sponsors of terrorism in 1979, the usage of the term “rogue state” was closely intertwined with the imposition of sanctions (Litwak 2001: 377-380). This is especially so today, as, besides the terrorism argument, a further key “rogue state” criterion since the 1980s has been the acquisition or development of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The Reagan administration was preoccupied with the challenge of proliferation. This pending issue has gained an inner dynamic in the last two decades. Consequently, O'Reilly (2007: 306-307) has found that in more than 80 percent of the cases between 1993 and 2004, “rogue states” were accused of acquiring or developing WMDs, leading to a security threat, and showing “irresponsible” behavior. Internal dimensions such as repression or misconduct by the government were only of secondary importance.²

2.3 The double-edged sword of stigmatization politics

When Clinton tried in 2000 to alter and soften the term “rogue state” into “states of concern” and Bush, who initially took a harder stance, changed the term into “problem states” in 2005, the dilemma underlying this term was obvious. When reinforced by the shift from internal towards international deviant behavior, the classification of an actor as “rogue state” is a powerful instrument. It enables a government to impose sanctions on the recipient state. As proven by the example of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the policy of declaring a state a “rogue state” may even enable a state to wage war. But such stigmatizing policy also limits the political leeway. Engaging a “rogue regime” represents an almost impossible option if a government needs to avoid being accused of promoting appeasement policies (Litwak 2001). This dilemma became evident during the first nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula, when only a private mission by former US president Carter to North Korea could end the vicious circle of mounting tensions between the Clinton administration and the regime of Kim Jong II. Because the US government was unable to appease a “rogue”, this spiral could have led even to US military intervention in 1994. Also in the second nuclear crisis, which began in 2002, the US held itself back to fully engage in negotiations due to its usual reserve in dealing with a “rogue.” It remains to be seen to what extent Washington's decision to remove North Korea from its list of state sponsors in October 2008 contributes to a lasting normalization of their relationship.

Against this backdrop, stigmatizing a state as a “rogue state” often turns out to be a self-entrapment for a government. It offers a gateway to lobby groups to interfere in foreign policies. Contrary to realist assumptions of “high politics” as the prerogative of governments, national policies towards a “rogue state” are sometimes transferred into an issue dealt with by actors on the societal level. Moreover, as in other ideologically loaded arenas, political arguments and decisions tend to be based on principles rather than pragmatic considerations. For example, one of the arguments for sanctioning the regime in Damascus presented in the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act (SALSA) was the fact that – contrary to other actors put on the US-list of state sponsors of terrorism – it had previously been spared from sanctions.³

2.4 The selection of “rogue states”

The list of “state sponsors of terrorism” established in 1979 created a basic reference point for US policy towards “rogue states.” Among the first to be placed on this list were Libya and Syria; other prominent outcasts such as Cuba (1982), Iran (1984), and North Korea (1988) followed. After being placed on the list once, the continuity with which these regimes have been labeled “rogues” is striking. O'Reilly (2007: 305) has examined the public statements of key US foreign policy decision makers from 1993 to 2004 and found that Iraq (54 mentions),

2 See also the National Security Strategy of the USA, 2002, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>; 22.5.2008.

3 SALSA is available at <http://www.21a.org/lebanon/syriac2003.htm>; 14.09.2008.

Iran (49), North Korea (34), Libya (21), and Syria (3) are the main “rogues.” In addition, Burma/Myanmar, China, Cuba, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe were each mentioned once.

In general, two main criteria for designating a “rogue state” are frequently emphasized in both politics and political discourses. Firstly, there is the internal appearance as states governed by autocratic, repressive regimes. Actually, there can be hardly any doubt that all “rogue states” are authoritarian. Additionally, Tanter (1998: 6-24) accentuates the prominent role of charismatic leaders. Secondly, “rogue states” are accused of posing a security threat as they actively pursue WMD.⁴ This criterion has gained importance in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Particularly US foreign policy is accused of selecting the “rogue states” almost arbitrarily. Applying both criteria in a coherent manner, however, helps to avoid premature assessments of biased selectivity in the process of designating “rogue states.” For example, although India and Israel have acquired nuclear weapons, they have never been considered “rogue states” because of the democratic character of their regimes. At the same time, many states may simply be considered not “worthwhile” of being listed as “rogue states” because their weapons arsenal is harmless to Western actors. Nondemocratic countries such as Bhutan, Guinea, Thailand, and Tunisia may serve as examples. Moreover, Libya was only removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism after having renounced its program of developing WMDs. Thus, despite its continuous authoritarian rule, Libya no longer met both “rogue state” criteria.

However, there are two groups of countries that indicate a selection bias in the designation process of “rogue states.” Firstly, some actors such as Cuba and Burma/Myanmar have been selected as “rogues” although they are not at the forefront of actors attempting to acquire a strong arsenal of WMD. Secondly, there are some countries that meet both criteria of “rogue states” without having been targeted as such. Pakistan is a current example and Iraq an intriguing historical one. Iraq was removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism between 1982 and 1990. In this case, the readiness of being a foe of a US enemy was sufficient for it to be reintegrated into the “civilized world”: Saddam Hussein appeared as the only local actor able to contain the revolutionary ambitions of Iran. Although the Pakistani regime is both authoritarian and holds nuclear weapons, it serves US interests in its attempts to contain terrorism.

2.5 Splits in the West

As emphasized by Schmittchen and Stritzel (2008), the term “rogue regime” has been widely circulated in American newspapers and official statements, whereas it is avoided by German politicians and all German political parties agree that the term has to be considered as being highly problematic. Furthermore,

⁴ Caprioli and Trumbore (2003) indicate a nexus between these two prima facie heterogeneous criteria by arguing that the internal behavior of a regime in terms of discrimination and violence against its own people significantly increases the use of force in an interstate conflict. Although the correlation is much weaker than the one the theorem of democratic peace is based on, authoritarian regimes actually face much less, if any, internal pressure to refrain from using (inappropriate) violence in their external affairs.

German media tend to refer to “rogue states” not in order to label certain states but rather to describe the focal points of US foreign policy. Minnerop (2004: 300-316) demonstrates that within the member states of the EU only the UK follows the language coined by the US; France openly rejects the term “rogue state.” Yet, the international community is split not only in its usage of language but also in its approaches towards these autocratic regimes. Actually, different speech acts constitute different policies.

At the same time, the split in the West reflects a conflict over means rather than ends. European actors share US concerns that WMD should not fall into the hands of regimes that might threaten Western actors and their allies, respectively. Yet, on the basis of its identity as a “civilian power,” the EU in principle prefers dialogue-oriented policies to sanctions (Mauil 2000). For example, before and even after the US had indexed Iran as a member of the “axis of evil” in early 2002, the EU in general and Germany in particular pursued its “critical dialogue” with the regime in Tehran. Thereby, the EU was not driven by the belief that the Iranian regime per se meets the criteria of a Western ally. Rather, the “critical dialogue” was meant to strengthen reform-oriented segments of the Iranian regime. Only after the election of extremist Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as Iranian president in 2005 did the EU align itself with the American course.⁵

3. External pressure and the survival of the “rogues”

Most “rogue states” have shown a remarkable resistance to transition despite heightened and lasting external pressure. In the following, the stigmatization process of being labeled a “rogue state” will be subsumed in the wider context of the research on sanctions. Sanctions are broadly defined as mechanisms to change deviant state behavior by imposing pressure (see Peuckert 2006: 245). Generally, the research on sanctions offers quantitative studies on the effectiveness of sanctions (most notably Hufbauer et al. 2007; critical: Pape 1997) as well as a broad range of in-depth (single) case studies, but lacks comparative analyses in which context factors are taken into closer account. This deficit leads to divergent, even contradictory predictions on the effects of sanctions.

To structure the debate on the sanctions’ effects, we propose two levels of analysis that should be distinguished for analytical reasons. Firstly, the international level should be considered. Particularly in respect to stigmatization, the extent to which the targeted regime is internationally delegitimized and isolated should be examined. Secondly, the internal dimension of the sanctioned country must be addressed. Thereby, we start with a critical discussion of the academic literature on “rogue states,” then add an aspect that is basically neglected by the mainstream: statehood as a stronghold of “rogue regimes.”

⁵ Ahmadinejad’s election may be perceived as a failure of both the European and the US approach. From the first perspective, it proved that the “soft” European approach towards Iran was naive. According to the latter, it was the aggressive US policy towards Iran that weakened moderate segments of the regime in Tehran.

3.1 The effects of stigmatization

3.1.1 International delegitimization

Being labeled as a “rogue” obviously has consequences in the international arena. To stigmatize a certain state behavior as deviant to international norms aims at isolating the respective regime internationally and at keeping “them outside the boundaries of ‘normal’ international politics” (Saunders 2006: 28). From a constructivist viewpoint, Klotz (1995: 151-164) illustrates the effects of imposing sanctions on a state. By examining the case of South Africa, she discusses effects of external pressure which constitute constraints for a “rogue state” to unfold its military, economic, social, and political potentials on the regional and international level. However, it has to be stated that these international norms which are allegedly violated by “rogue states” cannot be seen as fixed. Rather, their development should be regarded as being subject to certain life cycles and as an open process in which states may act as norm entrepreneurs and in which sanctioned states can also systematically try to undermine the legitimacy of coercive measures, as the case of Libya has recently shown (Hurd 2005; see also Finnemore/Sikkink 1998; Saunders 2006). Nevertheless, combined with the underlying idea of isolating the “rogue” internationally, this labeling is used to gain international support for the sender’s policy, which can be of importance as multilateral sanctions are generally characterized as being more effective than unilaterally imposed measures. This is mainly due to the fact that the political and economic leeway of the targeted regime is narrowed when a broad coalition of senders is involved (for a critical discussion see Kaempfer/Lowenberg 1999 and Drezner 2000).

3.1.2 Do sanctions strengthen or weaken the targeted regime?

On the internal level of the targeted state, the research on sanctions highlights two contrary effects. On the one hand, an impact that is counterproductive from the perspective of the sender is observable: the rally-around-the-flag effect which strengthens the sanctioned regime unintentionally. On the other hand, most researchers are confident that the original political aim of weakening the ruling regime is (partially) achieved.

The rally-around-the-flag effect (Galtung 1983) is the most prominent effect noted by opponents of coercive measures. The argument is that the imposition of pressure leads to unintended counter-pressure and ultimately has stabilizing effects on the target country. Nincic (2005: 110-112) differentiates in this context between an ideological and an economic dimension. The tendency to stick together when under pressure can be instrumentalized by the political elite to strengthen social cohesion. In this context, external pressure constitutes “ideal” circumstances for ideological reinterpretation. As most ideologies are based on a dichotomous distinction between “good” and “evil,” the external pressure can be seen as a self-reinforcing phenomenon used by the regime elite, either as a scapegoat factor for economic decline, as seen in North Korea, or as

a means to produce diffuse support by strengthening national identity, as seen in almost all “rogue states.” In the Iranian case the regime acquires legitimacy by actively presenting itself as an ideological alternative to Western capitalism and liberal democracy. Furthermore, according to Nincic’s (2005: 116-122) line of reasoning, contrary to the original sender’s strategy, sanctions tend to create a “symbiosis” of the regime with economic elites that benefit from sanctions, particularly operators of black market activities.

Recent research on sanctions concentrates on the concept of “smart sanctions” (Cortright/Lopez 2002). After the problematic experiences in Iraq in the 1990s, where the civilian population was hit hard by UN-imposed sanctions, the mainstream reaction in politics and research alike was to make sanctions “smarter” in order to minimize the affection of groups non-affiliated with the ruling regime. However, although most scholars actually agree that the “classical” view, according to which the effects of sanctions are evaluated on the basis of their overall negative effect on the targeted country, is obsolete, no consensus exists whether “innocent bystanders” should be spared from the effects of sanctions under all circumstances. Rather, Major and McGann (2005: 338-343) argue that the opposite may sometimes hold true. Based on the assumption that the proper aim of sanctions is a policy alteration rather than punishing the regime, “innocent bystanders” may be an appropriate target if they are in the position to put effective pressure on the regime. However, a minimum of pluralism is required to make such a mechanism work. Yet, as we show in the next paragraph, the degree to which the ruling elites of “rogue states” control the political system is not to be underestimated.

3.2 Neglected categories for analyzing “rogue states”

Although the literature discussed above is enriching our knowledge on sanctions and their impact on target countries, it appears to us that the mainstream tends to neglect some important aspects that would lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Firstly, the effect of international delegitimization needs to be put in perspective. Secondly, the understanding of the state’s relations with both the international community and its own society should be redesigned.

3.2.1 The “rogue state” in the international system

The ability of the “rogue state” to draw strength out of the international system should be reconsidered. Thereby, two aspects must be taken into account, one of which is related to power, the other of which is based on ideas.

After the end of the Cold War a unipolar system under US hegemony emerged that would remain in effect for the rest of the twentieth century. Accelerated by the immediate reactions to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the US managed to gather other Western actors, especially the EU, behind it. Still, contrary to the war in Afghanistan in 2001, the one waged against Iraq in 2003 brought to light some “cracks in the West”

(Mayer/Rittberger/Zelli 2003). All in all, US-European relations regarding “rogue states” were manifold after the Cold War, resulting in a sometimes inhomogeneous and therefore partially ineffective sender coalition. This becomes especially apparent when analyzing Western relations with the Middle East. Apart from the highly disputed case of Iraq, the US managed to convince the EU to give up their policies towards other major “rogue actors”. In the case of Iran, the EU forwent its own approach of a “critical dialogue”. Regarding policies towards Lebanon, the rare case of an axis between Washington and Paris emerged in 2004 when both actors strongly condemned the Syrian role in Lebanon, which ultimately resulted in Syria’s withdrawal from Lebanon in the following year. However, an association agreement with Damascus is still on the European agenda, whereas the US imposed sanctions in 2004. Last but not least, the EU abandoned a genuine policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when they adhered to the US policy of boycotting Hamas after its victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006. The EU thus broke with its policy of fair balance towards the conflict opponents as established in the Declaration of Venice in 1980 (Beck 2006).

The debate’s focus on cracks in the West and their resolution, however, diverted attention from another structural transition in the international system, that is, the creeping erosion of the unipolar system and the emergence of (regional) “counter-hegemonic powers” (Levitsky/Way 2002: 61). For the purpose of this article, the debate on whether the unipolar system will vanish and be replaced by a fully fledged multipolar system is only of secondary value. However, newly emerging powers, especially in Asia – namely, China and India – actually constrain the ability of Western actors to effectively sanction “rogue states.” This applies particularly to those “rogue actors” which possess natural resources that China and other states need in order to feed their rapidly growing industries. In the case of Iran, for instance, recently increasing unity of Western actors is outweighed by the increasing demand of energy resources from newly emerging powers in particular: Multipolarization of the international system impedes the effectiveness of sanctions (Beck/Shabafrouz 2007). Moreover, even states with no significant export sector benefit from the new rivalry in the international system. For example, in the case of Burma/Myanmar, it is mere geographical location that drives Chinese interests in protecting the country from US domination. Another telling example is North Korea: the current negotiations at the Beijing Six-Party Talks mirror the divergent national interests of the participating countries. The supporting role of China and (remarkably) the South Korean engagement policy, aimed at regime survival for North Korea, contrast with the harder stances of the US and Japanese administrations and are ultimately stabilizing the North Korean regime (Gerschewski/Köllner 2008: 182-186).

Yet, it is not only hard power politics that constrains sanctioning countries in their relations with “rogue states.” The West also faces limits in terms of “soft power” (see Nye 2004: 1-32). In order to legitimize extraordinary measures such as sanctions, universal values are invoked. As a means of defense, targeted actors often accuse the sender of being hypocritical, that is, basing its policy on double standards. For instance, in Middle

Eastern discourses it is a both popular and effective argument to refer to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the US support for the Jewish state in order to devalue US demands on the fulfillment of “Western” norms as an expression of imperialism. Another normative argument that “rogue states” frequently use in order to reject external intervention is the principle of noninterference in internal affairs. The ideological power of this principle has been further strengthened by the emergence of new regional powers, since they were exposed to imperialism in their own past. Thus, the perception that declaring a state as “rogue” might just be a hidden form of imperialism that has been gaining momentum in the course of the decline of unipolarity. Moreover, if combined with the ideology of nationalism, which is still strong in most authoritarian states, the international system’s value of noninterference may be charged with sentiments that can mobilize internal defensive forces against external powers. This leads to another aspect that is often overlooked: resources available to the “rogue state” from within.

3.2.2 The “rogue state” as a weak – and strong – actor

In the mainstream literature, the states of “rogues” are considered to be weak. There are actually good reasons for such an assessment. Especially if compared to the state apparatuses in OECD countries, the institutions of authoritarian states are weak. State capacities to react to the challenges constituted by globalization (such as effective responses to climate change or to adjust the education system to new labor-market needs) are normally very limited in authoritarian states in general and in “rogue states” in particular.

Thus, the “rogue state” is weak if state strength is measured in terms of its ability to provide instruments for effective responses to (post)modern challenges (see Ikenberry 1986: 106). Yet, for the purpose of the issue discussed in the present article, an alternative criterion for state strength ought to be taken into account: the state’s capabilities vis-à-vis its own society. The logic of (“smart”) sanctions is based on the liberal assumption that they may strengthen the internal opposition. However, in many authoritarian states the opposition is simply too weak to challenge the state.

A prime example is the modern rentier state. When the state budget is fuelled by external income such as the export of oil or other primary commodities, the classical relationship between state and society is reversed: Instead of financing the state by paying taxes, the society is alimeted by the state (see Beblawi/Luciani 1987). In such a case there are few if any autonomous social groups able to challenge the state, even if the latter is weakened by actors in the international system. Thus, the Iraqi regime, whose state capabilities were eroded due to the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent UN sanctions, was still strong enough to oppress its own society up until 2003.

Yet, economic rents as derived from exporting commodities are not the only source of rentier states. For instance, Syria and Cuba were put in a strong position in relation to their own societies by foreign aid for decades. Although not to the same

degree as oil states, these actors have also managed to mobilize economic and social resources to counter external pressure. In comparison, the strengthening effect in relation to the internal opposition has been marginal. A telling example is the history of Middle Eastern reception of the first *Arab Human Development Report*, edited by the UNDP in 2003, which was written exclusively by Arab authors. Initially, although very critical of the socioeconomic and political development of the Arab world, it received a fairly sophisticated reception in the region. However, when Bush used the report to legitimize his Iraq policy, the authors of the report ended up in a defensive normative position because they were accused of being Western henchmen. In some resource-poor “rogue states”, such as North Korea, a strong state-centered ideology, whose exclusivity has been enforced by a state-controlled repression apparatus, has served as a functional equivalent for external funds, promoting a state whose capabilities remain unchallenged by social opposition groups.

4. Conclusion

The international community constitutes a (global) system that has produced its own boundaries beyond which stigmatized actors exist: “rogue states”. At the same time, it is not the very existence of “rogues” but the allegedly devastating performance of their governments that the Western stigmatization policy is based upon. While the process of designating such a type of actor has been presented in this article as a specific form of securitization policy, it has also been shown that the selection process for “rogue states” is highly complex, since the international community is becoming increasingly fragmented and the degree to which selection criteria are coherently applied is limited.

By being stigmatized, “rogue states” appear as objects of international relations. Yet, they are also subjects. Actually, many of them have managed to stabilize their political systems despite the external pressure placed on them. This can be partially explained by the fact that senders’ policies, such as the imposition of sanctions, only have limited effects; sometimes, contrary to the intentions of Western actors, “rogues” are even able to mobilize resources as a result of being designated an outcast. Moreover, what tends to be overlooked both in politics and academic analyses on “rogue states” as demonstrated: many of them draw strength from the changing international system and possess capabilities superior to those available to their societies. This is why so many of them impress by maintaining stability.

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"Responsible Members of the International Community"?

Multilateral Agreements and Environmental Protection in Post-Soviet States

Amy Forster Rothbart*

Abstract: Post-Soviet states have attempted to demonstrate their willingness to be good global citizens by joining multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). They rapidly signed on to many of these treaties without consideration of what implementation would require. This does not necessarily mean that the commitments are simply empty promises. International organizations and domestic implementation constituencies strive to put the commitments into action with mixed results. This article considers implementation in Kazakhstan and Ukraine based on interviews with government officials and NGO leaders in the two countries and the review of treaty-related documents.

Keywords: Post-Soviet states, multilateral environmental treaties, treaty implementation, international law
Postsowjetische Staaten, multilaterale Umweltabkommen, Vertragsumsetzung, Internationales Recht

1. Introduction

A banner on a main avenue leading to Almaty, Kazakhstan's central square proclaims: "Kazakhstan has become a full-fledged and responsible member of the international community.¹" Printed in Russian, the banner

is addressed to the city's residents and other Kazakhstanis coming to do business in the country's "southern capital". The message is one that the Kazakh government has been actively transmitting both at home and abroad, through banners on the streets, presidential addresses, and multi-page spreads in international publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Economist*. One particular path through which Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet states have attempted to illustrate their willingness to be good global citizens is by joining multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

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1 The words on this banner, as well as other similar ones around the city, were drawn from the President's Annual Address to the People of Kazakhstan, delivered in March 2007.