‘ROUGUES’, HAWKS, AND DOVES. LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES AND DILEMMA OF RESPONSE TO ‘ROGUE STATES’

‘Rogue states’, deviant members of the international community, became associated with the main threats to international peace and security in the post-Cold War era, well before the era of George W Bush and far beyond the United States.

The differences have existed among the democracies about how to deal with the ‘rogue states’ already for some time. Whether Qadhai’s Libya, Iraq of Saddam Hussein, or nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea, very clear differences are obvious even to a casual follower. This dissertation asks why some states prefer accommodation and others confrontation when it comes to facing ‘rogue states’.

One intuitive explanation – rooted in the liberal theory of international relations – is that states would pursue their economic self-interest and would not endanger it by taking confrontational steps. In other words, the stronger economic relation with a ‘rogue state’, the more preference for accommodation towards the ‘rogue state’. What emerges from this dissertation is a critique of the economic liberalism. In the quantitative analysis, I show that economic interests of states are only weakly – if at all – correlated with states’ positions towards ‘rogue states’. Instead, domestic norms, relations with the United States and military power matter.

The dissertation starts with presenting the dependent variable measured by the expert survey. The policies toward countries aspiring to acquire nuclear weapons continue to be heavily contested, differing even among countries that consider nuclear proliferation as one of the main threats to international security. This chapter maps the actual policies of liberal democracies toward Iran and North Korea along a continuum from confrontation to accommodation. The data from an expert survey shows that a) policies toward both Iran and North Korea have become increasingly confrontational over time; b) no policy convergence was observed among the states studied and notwithstanding the adoption of joint sanctions, differences remained between states preferring confrontation and those opting for accommodation; c) states maintained remarkably stable policy profiles over time and d) despite obvious differences between the norm violations of North Korea and Iran, states generally followed remarkably similar policies toward both countries. In conclusion, states exhibit stable preferences for either confrontation or accommodation toward nuclear aspirants.
The next two chapters of this dissertation, provides an empirical quantitative analysis of the policies of liberal democracies towards Iran (Chapter 3) and North Korea (Chapter 4). These two chapters set out to examine why some democracies prefer accommodation while others plead for confrontation. Using the dataset presented earlier, Chapter 3 assesses the impact of power positions, commercial interests and domestic political cultures while controlling for government ideology.

While the analysis finds little support for any impact of power positions, ‘cultures of dealing with deviance’, have a substantial and statistically significant effect on state policies. There is also qualified support for commercial liberalism: whereas high levels of total trade do not have the expected effect of making states more accommodationist, high levels of trade in strategic goods such as oil do.

Chapter four presents an analogous paper focused on analyzing policies towards North Korea, focusing on the influence of domestic culture of dealing with deviance and military superiority on the policy towards North Korea. While due to peculiar position of North Korea, the influence of commercial interests is not formally tested, though such test is included as a robustness measure. The results in Chapter 4 indicate that while norms of dealing with deviance are always positively and statistically significantly associated with policy towards North Korea, military superiority is significantly associated with confrontationist policy only for democracies other than the United States.

Chapters 5 and 6 (respectively) offer in-depth foreign policy case studies of South Africa’s and India’s policy towards Iran’s nuclear program. Chapter 5 builds on field research in South Africa and detailed case study of South Africa’s response to Iran’s nuclear program. This policy has been extremely puzzling — a rising power in the international system, subscribing to a global norm of nuclear non-proliferation but challenging the interpretation and application of that norm. This paper asks why this is the case, and demonstrates that South Africa’s policy towards the Iranian nuclear programme has been clearly marked by a strongly held belief regarding the value of negotiations, a distrust of the global North, and a preference for a wide multilateral approach in institutions.

Chapter 6 too is based on field research in India and provides a detailed account of India’s response to Iranian nuclear program. India’s response has been far more cautious and been marked by attempts to appease the global hegemon, the United States, while maintaining reasonably good relations with Iran. This policy was critically received in both the United States (where it lead to disillusionment about India’s role as a rising power) as well as in Iran (which has seen this policy as courting the United States). This paper finds that the India’s foreign policy has been driven by the same forces as have been driving it since its reorientation in 1990s. Indian foreign policy became
more focused on serving the domestic goals – of economic development and growth. As the leaders’ understanding of the Indian foreign policy changed, it also called for a more cautious role for Indian foreign policy, carefully weighting costs and benefits of individual moves.

The case studies showed clearly that country’s positioning towards the United States seems to have influence on how states respond to ‘rogue states’. It is, however, far from easy to gauge reliably how states position themselves towards the United States for a quantitative analysis. Voting patterns in international organisations are not a reliable indicator and in different regions states can use different strategies of aligning with the United States – thus cross-regional comparison may be difficult.

With this in mind, I devised a test using an alternative sample – the EU member states, in Chapter 7. Policy commentators frequently ascribed this difference to diverging economic interests of Europeans, but this link remained underexplored. In this paper the empirical link between the economic interests and positions towards Iran is explored. The results suggest that while trade plays a certain role in the shaping of the policies, the effect of the strength of the alliance with the United States explains a large part of the puzzle. The article thus casts shadow on the established policy narrative of economic interests being the driver of the EU members’ Iran policy and confirms that positioning towards the United States plays a significant role in formation of policy towards ‘rogue states’.

Chapter 8 provides an epilogue – a story of how ‘rogue states’ end. While the study of the emergence of ‘rogue states’ abound, it is far less frequent to study their end. Yet when we acknowledge that the renegade statehood is socially constructed, the end of such social construction is a matter of re-construction. This chapter explores how the US and British governments managed the transformation of the image of the Libyan regime from one of a renegade to the one of a respected partner. By looking at the reversal of the frames, we learn about the ability of the policymakers to steer the public opinion by re-construction of frames.

This dissertation makes a triple contribution to the study of comparative foreign policy and wider field of international relations. Firstly, it makes a theoretical contribution to the study of roots of foreign policy and specifically, it contests the argument about economic interests driving the foreign policy of countries. This finding suggests that even if correlation between economic interests and foreign policy exists, it may be either spurious, causally reverse or confounded by a different variable. Secondly, the dissertation provides empirically rich study of foreign policy towards nuclear aspirants. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, papers included in this dissertation describe and
analyze policies of multiple countries towards one issue, providing a rich comparative study, including an in-depth study of two non-Western countries. Thirdly, this dissertation suggests that realism is not quite as dead as the state of the international relations as a discipline may suggest, though its understanding needs to move beyond the structural realism towards the richer accounts provided by different varieties of realist thought (whether classical or neoclassical). Realist explanations for the influence of trade as well as (the perceived need of) positioning towards the hegemon suggest that explanatory power of realism should not be discounted. Given hegemonic origins of the notion of ‘rogue states’, such finding should not be too surprising.