

Norm Research in International Relations  
*Series Editor: Antje Wiener*

Carmen Wunderlich

# Rogue States as Norm Entrepreneurs

Black Sheep or  
Sheep in Wolves' Clothing?

# **Norm Research in International Relations**

## **Series Editor**

Antje Wiener, Institut für Politikwissenschaft, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

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# Foreword

This book is refreshing because its approach is counterintuitive. It looks at the despised group of international outlaws or “rogue states” as they are called with their US label from an unusual perspective: What do we see when the lens through which we look presents the “rogue” as a norm entrepreneur that aims not at chaos and disorder, but at a different form of order (maybe one which we would like distinctly, but order anyway). This approach (that must by no means be confused with propagating sympathy with the “rogue”) aims at an enhancement of the debate on norms in the study of international relations. Taking a critical view at the partially silent, partially open ethical basis of most norm research (norms are “good,” and norm entrepreneurs must be “good guys”), she proposes to look at “rogues” as “norm revisionists.” Based on a careful and meticulous research design and much empirical effort, the book investigates whether Iran behaves like a norm entrepreneur of sorts. Thus, it tackles a “hard case,” looking at the archetype of a US-designated “rogue” for forty years, which is fully back in this role those days after a brief interim thaw between 2015—when the nuclear agreement was adopted—and the start of the Trump presidency.

Based on her solid empirical work, she answers her research question in a quite surprising manner: Yes, Iran acts in many respects like a norm entrepreneur, and the Islamic Republic does not even sit at the most radical wing of oppositional norm entrepreneurship. Rather, it ranges between the type “reformer” and “revolutionary.” Our knowledge about norms and norm entrepreneurs in international relations has been considerably enriched by this study. Moreover, Carmen Wunderlich develops operational criteria for indicating “norm entrepreneurship,” a typology of modes of behavior toward norms, and an operational distinction between “reformist” and “revolutionary” norm entrepreneurs that are of great utility as instruments for future empirical norm research.

The book contains many details worth to be known about one of the most disputed and at the same time most active members of the world of states, the Islamic Republic of Iran. The author deals with this tricky subject with a sovereign neutrality, but never uncritically, observing a reasonable distance between herself

and the object of her study. This makes her results and the knowledge she transfers on her readers all the more reliable.

Carmen Wunderlich is one of the rising younger members of Germany's International Relations community and already well established in the international research community dealing with norms at the conceptual-theoretical and the proliferation of mass destruction weapons at the empirical and political level. Her first monography in English language, based on her Ph.D. thesis, makes a significant contribution, theoretically, empirically, and for political-practical purposes.

Frankfurt, Germany

Harald Müller

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Writing a book is always a challenge, and translating and updating it are even more so. I was blissfully unaware of this, when Antje Wiener encouraged me to publish an English version of my dissertation in her promising series “Norm Research in International Relations,” published with Springer International. In fact, I felt flattered that she perceived my argument to hold innovative strength and I thought this a good opportunity to present it in all its details to an English-speaking audience. This book is the revised version of my dissertation that has been published in German in 2017. I am grateful to Springer VS for granting the English translation rights.

Along the journey of writing the dissertation, turning it into a book and working out an English translation, I was lucky to having received the support of several individuals and institutions. It is thanks to Tanja Brühl that I got introduced into the research on norm dynamics during my studies in Frankfurt, and it was Harald Müller who led me the way into academia. Harald was to become not only my mentor, sharing his time and wisdom and opening up invaluable networks, but also one of my dissertation supervisors. To the other, Nicole Deitelhoff, I owe no less gratitude for it was her encouragement and support that guided me through the last, troublesome meters.

While working on my Ph.D. thesis, I have benefitted from the generosity of several institutions that provided institutional and financial support, and of colleagues who shared their critical thoughts and offered helpful comments on drafts. The Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) was to become my intellectual breeding ground that sparked my scientific interest in counterintuitive and unorthodox questions related to the research on global norm dynamics and norms pertaining to the control of weapons of mass destruction. The project group on “international dissidence” made it possible to further act out my liking for analyzing global troublemakers, and in this context I benefitted enormously from the intellectual charisma of Klaus-Dieter Wolf. Numerous other colleagues at PRIF were a



source of great support, be it through providing invaluable comments to drafts of the manuscripts, sharing the “sorrows” of a Ph.D. student’s life or by becoming dear friends over the years.

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In January 2018, I joined the Peace Research Center Prague and profited enormously from the vibrant intellectual environment and interdisciplinary focus of the participating scholars. I am indebted to Charles University Research Centre program UNCE/HUM/028 (Peace Research Center Prague/Faculty of Social Sciences) for providing me with financial support.

During the time I worked on my thesis, I was given the chance to present parts of this work at various conferences. I am grateful for the helpful comments I received at these events and during personal conversations with colleagues. Besides those that have already been mentioned, these include Evgeniya Bakalova, Ann-Kristin Beinlich, Alan Bloomfield, Clifford Bob, Lyndon Burford, Marco Fey, Sassan Gholiagha, Regina Heller, Stefanie Herr, Andreas Jacobs, Konstanze Jüngling, Gregor Hofmann, Jeffrey S. Lantis, Daniel Müller, Michal Onderco, Carsten Rauch, Scott Sagan, Richard Price, Maria Rost Rublee, Michal Smetana, Elena Sokova, Nikolai Sokov, Nina Tannenwald, Alexandros Tokhi, Wolfgang Wagner, Irene Weipert-Fenner, Rachel Whitlark, Antje Wiener, Simone Wisotzki, members of the DVPW Thematic Group “Norms in International Relations,” and the members of PRIF’s colloquium of doctoral students. Katharina Hemming, Hiwa Rostami, Steffen Schiklenk, Matthias Schulze, and Manjana Sold provided valuable research assistance. For invaluable, interdisciplinary mental support, I would like to thank my SciMento group, Simone Claar, Melanie Sachs, Claudia Schreider, and Ursula Birsl. Without the meticulous work and tireless effort of Nadine Benedix, this book would never have taken shape. I am much obliged to her for her support in translating and editing the final manuscript. My thanks also go to Anna Güttel-Bellert for language editing the whole manuscript and for providing words of encouragement and support. Finally, I owe special thanks to Johannes Glaeser, Publishing Editor from Springer-Verlag, for his unwavering patience and assistance in publishing this book.

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While numerous people have been involved in the writing of this book, any remaining errors are, of course, my own responsibility.

Bonn, Germany  
May 2019

Carmen Wunderlich

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Norm Breakers as Norm Makers?



The ‘bad guys’ [...] also know quite a lot about norm creation. Human-rights advocates and scholars who study norms are fond of using the term ‘norm entrepreneurs’ to describe people such as Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Mother Teresa. The term is not ill-used; all of these people managed to persuade quite a lot of other people to alter some of their most deeply held beliefs. But if Mandela is a norm entrepreneur, so is Osama bin Laden, and so are the planners of Palestinian suicide bombings. So was Slobodan Milosevic, and so were the Hutu leaders [...] who succeeded in dramatically shifting the normative commitments of several million Rwandan Hutus [...]. Hitler, too, was a norm entrepreneur, a chillingly successful one. (Ehrenreich Brooks 2003: 2326–2327)

The above quote may at first cause discomfort, incomprehension or even dismay among readers: Isn’t the concept of “norm entrepreneur” usually used to describe do-gooders and principled actors who have devoted themselves to working for the civilization of humanity? Such an understanding is at least conveyed by mainstream liberal-constructivist research on norm dynamics in International Relations (IR). Constructivist explanations on the diffusion and change of norms draw as much on structural level explanations as they emphasize agency-related factors. In these models, transnational and local actors—so-called norm entrepreneurs—proactively advocate new ideas or norms which they deem necessary to solve current problems and thus to further develop the current normative order (e.g., Florini 1996; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998).

So far, norm scholars have used the concept of norm entrepreneurship in a rather unsystematic and one-sided way. For a long time, empirical norm studies were confined to analyzing the norm entrepreneurial activities of prototypical liberal and Western norm entrepreneurs dedicated to the genesis and diffusion of (in their view) supposedly “positive”<sup>1</sup> or morally desirable norms. These were usually derived from the same cultural contexts and aimed to reproduce or to gradually reform the prevailing normative order in the direction of improvement.

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<sup>1</sup>Due to its implicit normative connotation, the attribution as “positive” or “negative” is always subjective and is thus closely connected with the perspective of the beholder. This fact will be taken into account in the further course of the work.

This liberal bias has been challenged and overcome by more recent—critical constructivist—approaches to norms which highlight the contested nature and dual quality of norms as both structuring and constructed through social interaction (seminal Wiener 2004, 2007). Rather than analyzing how fixed norms are diffused to normalize the behavior of deviant actors, such approaches are interested in bottom-up processes of norm construction and negotiation taking into account non-Western, non-state centric perspectives (e.g., Acharya 2004, 2011; Wiener 2004, 2018a, b; Adamson 2005; Bettiza and Dionigi 2014; Hofius et al. 2014). Others have pointed toward the existence of “bad norm dynamics” (Heller et al. 2012) and the role of norm challengers (Heller and Kahl 2013) or antipreneurs (Bloomfield 2016) in undermining normative structures through opposing behavior and/or discursive contestation.

Still, and quite puzzling, many liberal-constructivist norm researchers stick with a rather positivist understanding of norm diffusion and norm entrepreneurship (compare, e.g., the literature on norm robustness, Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2019). This has not gone unnoticed within the camp of liberal norm scholars themselves. In 2012, Jeffrey Checkel complained about “a tendency to view norm entrepreneurs as heroes, always out to make the world a better place” and concluded “the failure to address norm entrepreneurship of a less feel-good sort is worrying” (Checkel 2012: 3). In fact, such a limited view not only equates norm diffusion with the universal spread of Western liberal ideas about what a normative order should ideally look like. The selection bias also entails further analytical constraints, particularly with regard to the identified instruments used by norm entrepreneurs to achieve their objectives. As Checkel critically observes:

The typical answer in the literature is that entrepreneurs promote new norms by cajoling, persuading, or by the force of their own moral legitimacy. Is norm creation really always and only such a nice affair? (Checkel 2012: 3)

Critical constructivist and poststructuralist works on norm dynamics have demonstrated that normative structures of meaning-in-use rely on interactive bottom-up processes of social construction rather than unidirectional top-down directives (Wiener 2004, 2008; Towns 2012; Widmaier and Park 2012). In fact, scholars argue that norm contestation is the engine driving norm dynamics (Wiener 2014; Müller and Wunderlich 2018) and that actors are always involved in disputes over normative meaning with rival norm entrepreneurs or try to counteract their efforts (e.g., Bob 2012; Heller et al. 2012; Bloomfield 2016).

To sum up, despite some notable effort of critical norm scholars, the liberal-constructivist literature on norms still applies a narrow approach to norm diffusion within the wider liberal world order focusing on Western liberal actors and dismissing a more nuanced and flexible understanding of norms as contested by nature. As a corollary, norm entrepreneurs are stylized as “forces for the good” spreading Western liberal norms universally. Moreover, there is a tendency to dismiss opposition to and contestation of the current (normative) order as mere hostility to norms. This can be clearly seen in the case of so-called “rogue states”<sup>2</sup>—a heterogeneous group of states

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<sup>2</sup>I use quotation marks to illustrate the constructed character of the label.



that is perceived as a threat to world peace and international security and therefore stigmatized by reference to this term. The labeling as a “rogue” does not constitute an objective category to identify states that have committed violations of certain international norms (Nincic 2005: 18). Rather, the “rogue state” label constitutes an ascription (mainly used by the USA) (Wunderlich 2017), a tag that became popular in the second half of the 1990s, and that primarily helped the USA to make certain policies acceptable and to maintain the current status quo (Klare 1995; Hoyt 2000: 307–309).

If we take a closer look at the statements of the stigmatized actors, we can see that they primarily challenge the hegemony of a few states and the liberal structure of the international system as shaped by them. Stigmatization assigns “rogue states” the role of outsiders in the international system of states. They are not recognized as legitimate promoters of alternative concepts of order (e.g., Lake 1994: 45; Litwak 2012: Chap. 1) and thus denied agency. Scholarly accounts on the “rogue state” concept mostly focus on its selective and inconsistent usage (e.g., George 1993; Litwak 2000; Caprioli and Trumbore 2005) and are empirically limited to tracing the deviant behavior of such states (e.g., Litwak 2000; Geldenhuys 2004; Nincic 2005). This view of presumed “rogue states” as being merely norm breakers is also shared by liberal-constructivist norm researchers (e.g., Wendt 1998: 113; Flockhart 2004: 367) who either view them as objects of normative education, addressees of socializing campaigns or norm enforcement and thus as counterparts or even antagonists of norm entrepreneurs (Müller 2011: 72–73). The extent to which “rogue states” act in a manner that is driven by normative considerations and which normative visions of order they advocate, has rarely been the subject of research (for exceptions, see Pirseyedi 2013; Wunderlich et al. 2013, Wunderlich 2014, 2017; Jacobi et al. 2014). As a top-down construction, the concept primarily serves to stabilize a narrative contrasting a Global North following reputable liberal norms with a Global South which is increasingly characterized by “rogues” or “failed states” seeking to destroy the liberal world order.

## 1.1 The Argument: “Rogue States” as Norm Entrepreneurs

This book applies a critical constructivist approach to norms and seeks to critically engage with the narrow perspective on norm diffusion taken by liberal norm scholars. It does so by drawing on recent approaches which emphasize norm construction processes that take as a starting point the contestedness of norms and the diversity of stakeholders included in norm negotiation and diffusion processes. In practice, I seek to overcome two biases: The narrow focus of liberal norm studies on Western liberal norm entrepreneurs on the one hand as well as the tendency to dismiss criticism directed toward the current (liberal) normative order as hostility, e.g., by labeling said actors as “rogue states,” on the other. While the notion of “rogue states” does not fit well with a critical constructivist approach, I use the pejorative label for case selection only—as will become clear in the remainder of this book, I propose to

refuse the usage of this and similar stigmatizing concepts as top-down constructions serving to stabilize dichotomous identities and discourses.

Against the background of and thus challenging liberal norm studies, in this book I examine countries labeled as “rogue states” and seek to critically explore their strategies of norm advocacy. Can their practices also be considered as norm entrepreneurship? How are these different from the activities of prototypical Western liberal norm entrepreneurs? What are the implications? Do the norms propagated by countries stigmatized as “rogue states” essentially differ from those promoted by Western liberal actors?<sup>3</sup> Are these alternatives to prevailing normative scripts or are presumed “rogue states” also concerned with promoting norms that support the current normative order?

The empirical analysis therefore begins with reconstructing the normative concepts of order advocated by a country that has been labeled “rogue state” with quite some fervor by the USA and with an assessment of how these notions relate to the ruling order. Subsequently, I will investigate whether the policy of the state in question includes elements of norm entrepreneurship. Naturally, it is not my intention to exculpate states that are guilty of fundamental human rights violations and other (internal) political and international law abuses. Nevertheless, I contend that norm scholars miss important insights if they ignore alternative normative meanings as well as the actors propagating them. The assumption that supposed “rogue states” primarily aim to destroy international norms seems worth to be investigated empirically. It might be possible that behind the hostile attitude there is a serious attempt to establish (alternative) norms or to promote normative meanings that fundamentally deviate from the prevailing liberal perspective.

With such a change of view I would like to gain the following insights:

*Firstly*, by taking an analytical view of “rogue states” as norm entrepreneurs, it is possible to show the limitations that liberal-constructivist norm research accepts due to its restricted case selection. In addition, this change of perspective contributes to further theoretical and conceptual developments as the findings show that the exclusive focus on Western liberal norm entrepreneurs obscures insights into the contested nature of norm dynamics, such as the role of so-called norm challengers in norm construction and norm diffusion processes, the particular practices of contestation that they employ as well as causes of the success or failure of norm advocacy.

*Secondly*, addressing the norm entrepreneurial potential of presumed “rogue states” makes it possible to once again reveal the constructed nature of this category and to overcome the usual representation of states labeled so as objects of hegemonic intervention. Rather, the question can be raised as to whether they really are pure norm breakers, as postulated by the concept. Or is authentic norm entrepreneurship obscured by their obstructive behavior? Such a counterintuitive approach calls into question not only the use of the “rogue” label itself. It also allows the analytical

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<sup>3</sup>In accordance with the prevailing definition of norm entrepreneurs other “unorthodox” non-state norm advocates are conceivable, such as the Mafia or transnational terrorist networks like al-Qaeda. In this book, I focus on states whose norm entrepreneurial potential has become a focus of research over recent years.

inclusion of possible counter-hegemonic notions of how the normative order should look like. The knowledge gained in this work can thus be fruitful even beyond norm research.

*Thirdly*, the findings of this work also contribute to the emerging constructivist-inspired research on deviance (Smetana 2020, forthcoming; Wagner et al. 2014; Wunderlich 2017) and dissidence in international relations (Daase and Deitelhoff 2014; Gertheiss et al. 2017) as well as on the “dynamics of dissent” (see the special issue edited by Stimmer and Wisken 2019).

## 1.2 Terms and Definitions

This study takes a critical constructivist approach and sees itself in the tradition of studies that refer to agency-based explanations of normative change (e.g., Risse 2000; Finnemore and Sikkink 2001; Sikkink 2011; or most recently the contributions to a special issue edited by Draude 2017). Directing the focus of empirical research on the practices of individual actors seems to be particularly useful in this regard “because focusing on the propagation, contestation, adaption, adoption, or rejection of norms puts into focus that changes in the distribution of norms are tied to politics” (Bucher 2014: 14).

Since some of the basic concepts used in this work are not clearly defined in IR, they will be briefly conceptualized in the following as far as they are relevant to the empirical analysis.

In liberal-constructivist norm research, according to the standard definition of Katzenstein (1996: 5), norms are usually described as collective, intersubjectively shared expectations of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity (for a critique of this liberal community-based approach to norms see Wiener 2008, 2014). They provide binding rules of action for members of a social group—in the case of international norms, for the global community of states (Checkel 2012: 1). They determine which actions are considered to be socially appropriate and thus permitted and which ones are considered to be inadequate and thus prohibited. By defining standards of appropriate behavior for recurring situations, they produce expectable behavior. As a result of these functions, norms enable orientation in a complex social environment (Elster 1989). In addition, they have a constitutive effect on the self-concept of the actors (March and Olsen 1998: 951–952).

However, despite their stabilizing function, norms are not static. As various (critical constructivist) works have shown, the practices arising from them and vis-à-vis them are highly interpretative and constantly transform themselves through interactive processes of negotiation and contestation (seminal Wiener 2004, 2008; Sandholtz 2007). In this study, I therefore follow authors who propose a discursive understanding of norms as processes (e.g., Wiener 2008: 41, 2014; Krook and True 2012: 106). As a result, norms can be interpreted as historically contingent, intersubjectively shared and situation-specific standards of appropriate behavior. They influence the

interests and identities of actors just as they are influenced by them. As such, norms can be understood as “works-in-progress” (Stimmer and Wisken 2019: 517).

Although a large number of empirical studies have traced the role of different norm entrepreneurs in processes of norm diffusion, a uniform usage and operationalization of the term is still lacking. The present work is based on the definition proposed by Björkdahl (2002) in her seminal study on Sweden’s role as a norm entrepreneur in international conflict prevention. In this context, Björkdahl emphasizes in particular the purposive behavior of actors: “By identifying or creating opportunities, actors committed to a particular idea set out to change the existing normative context and alter the behavior of others in the direction of the new norm” (Björkdahl 2002: 46).

She refers in particular to the initiating function of norm entrepreneurs of proposing completely new “norm candidates” for solving existing problems or providing existing norms with new meanings. Other authors use the term “norm entrepreneurs” more generally in the sense of norm advocates for actors who are involved in promoting, institutionalizing or implementing, maintaining, and strengthening norms (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001: 401; Johnston 2007: 127; for a further operationalization see Chap. 5).

In referring to the “rogue state” concept, this study follows the (linguistic) usage and political practice of the USA for countries that are alleged to have transgressed universally accepted standards of behavior. Developed by the first Clinton administration, the label was to become one of the defining features of the US security narrative for the past decades (Homolar 2011). As a socially constructed category, the “rogue” label demarcates the designated countries as outsiders and attributes a special responsibility to the USA, as the only remaining superpower, to transform these states into constructive members of the international community (Lake 1994: 45–46). In particular, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Cuba, and North Korea have been labeled “rogue states” on a regular basis (Hoyt 2000; O’Reilly 2007).

While the US administration justified the labeling with reference to four core normative transgressions, namely engaging in hostile activities, violating human rights at home and abroad, supporting international terrorism, and seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (White House 2002), the concept does not represent an impartial, objective classification of a group of states (e.g., George 1993; Litwak 2000; Caprioli and Trumbore 2005). Rather, it is a top-down construction that serves the demarcation between presumed outsiders and “decent” members of the international community. In this way, it is used to strategically shape the space for political action.

### 1.3 Research Design

The case selection takes a reverse perspective compared to the mainstream liberal research on norm entrepreneurs and applies a “most counterintuitive” or “least likely case” design (Goertz and Mahoney 2012: 84). While all types of different norm challenger are conceivable, I apply the concept of norm entrepreneurship to so-called

“rogue states.” According to the dominant scholarly perspective (which is oriented toward a US American political understanding), these states are to be understood primarily as norm-averse or norm-violating actors. Their actions and rhetoric are aimed at undermining and destroying the normative order. A radical opposition to and rejection of the (basic tenets) of the ruling liberal world order lead these states to a willingness to use radical strategies. This serves to overthrow the existing system and establish a new order that clearly defines boundaries that separate it from the overthrown order. Based on these assumptions, two alternative explanations for the behavior of “rogue states” toward norms can be distilled drawing on liberal research on norms. According to the literature, countries labeled as “rogue states” either adopt a hostile attitude toward and are thus supposed to be more reluctant to accept international norms, or they respond to global norm diffusion processes in a purely reactive way. Norm compliance and norm entrepreneurship—as formulated in the critical constructivist based hypothesis guiding the research—is not to be expected.

Whether my hypothesis of supposed “rogue states” acting as potential norm entrepreneurs can be plausibilized or whether the alternative hypotheses develop greater explanatory power will be central to the empirical investigation of the present study. In order to test the hypotheses, I apply the concept of norm entrepreneurship to a country that has been perceived as prototypical “rogue state”: The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has long been a permanent member of the group of alleged “rogue states,” which have been described by the USA as members of an “axis of evil.”<sup>4</sup>

The research is structured as follows: In a first step, Iran’s foreign policy and notions of world order are empirically traced. This will be done in the form of a “within case analysis” (Goertz and Mahoney 2012: 71) that takes into account three levels:

First, I will explore Iran’s normative world order concepts,<sup>5</sup> which are assumed to be the guiding principles for Iran’s foreign and security policy decisions. The aim is to create a normative profile that will provide information on the extent to which Iran’s politics can be described as counter-hegemonic in the sense of fundamentally attacking the ruling order as such. This will also reveal whether Iran’s actions are geared toward destroying or promoting norms. It is possible that Iran’s propagation of the revolutionary ideology could already be seen as norm entrepreneurship. However, whether this is the case will only become apparent in the empirical analysis. The analysis draws on secondary literature and primary documents, such as programmatic speeches given annually by the Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers at the United Nations General Assembly. From the text corpus, a weighted random sample was drawn which was then analyzed by means of inductive qualitative content analysis. In addition, the data was triangulated with the help of expert interviews.

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<sup>4</sup>For a representation of Iran as a “rogue” par excellence, see Geldenhuys (2004).

<sup>5</sup>In accordance with the terminology of the Frankfurt Cluster of Excellence “The Formation of Normative Orders,” normative orders are conceived here as justification orders. They are understood as a complex of norms and values that legitimize the basic structure of a society (or the structure of inter-, supra- or transnational relations), namely the exercise of political authority and the distribution of elementary living or basic goods (Forst and Günther 2011: 15). Normative orders are characterized by their dynamic, never-ending and process-like as well as conflictuous nature.

For the analysis of Iran's potential to act as a norm entrepreneur, I turned to a specific policy field: the multilateral control of weapons of mass destruction. This policy sector represents a central building block in the international security policy architecture (Müller 2013: 3–4). With regard to the stigmatization of “rogue states,” it is concepts of order in the realm of security policy in particular that are perceived as threats and intentional counterproposals by the supporters of the ruling order. The analysis takes into account the three relevant regimes for the control of weapons of mass destruction: The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Within this context, I will search for the focal points of Iranian engagement in arms control policy, the assumption being that this may provide clues regarding instances of Iranian norm entrepreneurship. The analysis takes into account the positions toward and interpretations of the relevant regime norms advocated in each case. For these aims, the analysis draws on a qualitative content analysis of speeches given by Iranian delegates at the regular review conferences of the treaty regimes, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the relevant United Nations (UN) forums. As in step one, the data is triangulated by an analysis of secondary literature and expert interviews.

The arms control policy profile obtained enables the identification of potential norm entrepreneurial activities by Iran. If available, in a third step, such “instances of norm entrepreneurship” are studied in detail and analyzed with the help of a catalog of criteria which summarizes the central characteristics of prototype norm entrepreneurship as used in the liberal norms literature (see Sect. 5.2.1). In so doing, the type of norm entrepreneurship shown by Iran can be mapped, “[in order to] capture the nuance, dynamism, sense of process, and mechanisms at work in any given instance of entrepreneurship” (Checkel 2012: 4).

In a final step, in order to be able to draw further conclusions about the nature of Iranian norm entrepreneurship and with regard to implications for the concept as such, a comparison with the prototypical norm entrepreneur Sweden and the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea—known as a notorious norm breaker—is conducted. The latter comparison will reveal whether norm entrepreneurship is arbitrary and whether every state can ultimately qualify as a norm entrepreneur. In addition, the contrasting cases also allow an exploration of the explanatory power of the alternative explanations derived from liberal norms literature.

## 1.4 Outline of the Book

In the chapters following the introduction, I present the state of the art of norms research and the theoretical framework of the study (Chaps. 2–4). The main focus is on the concept of norm entrepreneurship as developed in the context of liberal-constructivist research on norms.

The presentation of the state of the art unfolds in three steps: First, the shortcomings identified in the respective approaches are presented—the normative bias

of liberal-constructivist norms research (Chap. 2) and the stigmatization of so-called “rogue states” as norm breakers (Chap. 3). These two analytical limitations are then contrasted with the hypothesis that countries labeled as “rogue states” can also act as norm entrepreneurs (Chap. 4).

In detail, Chap. 2 starts with an overview of the research on norm dynamics in IR and traces the normative bias inherent in liberal-constructivist norm studies. The chapter further reconstructs how the concept of norm entrepreneurship has been applied in various empirical norm studies and discusses the consequences of its selective and arbitrary usage. Subsequently, gaps in research that are inherent to the concept will be discussed.

Chapter 3 deals with the “rogue states” concept and traces its evolution both in the US foreign and security policy discourse as well as its role in scholarly debate. It concludes with an account of the relationship between “rogue states” and international norms as portrayed in the literature.

In Chap. 4, I develop the hypothesis guiding this study that “rogue states” can also act as norm entrepreneurs. The chapter ties in with a few innovative works that have already applied the concept of norm entrepreneurship to non-Western and non-liberal actors and takes into account insights from critical constructivist research on norm contestation and resistance toward norms. The chapter concludes with alternative explanations put forward in liberal-constructivist literature on norms, which could serve as an alternative explanation for Iran’s behavior toward norms.

The research design is presented in Chap. 5. I explain the case selection, operationalize the central concepts and hypotheses and introduce the methods of data collection and analysis. The following chapters represent the empirical analysis underlying this study (Chaps. 6–8).

Chapter 6 begins with an overview of the institutional and ideological foundations of Iranian foreign and security policy. I assess and discuss Iran’s world order concepts based on an analysis of primary documents and interviews. Above all, the display of an antagonistic attitude toward the Western liberal world order and the strategic propagation of a normative alternative can be interpreted as challenging international norms. Teheran’s career as “rogue no. 1” and the normative misconduct attributed to Iran are also discussed.

Chapter 7 comprises the empirical core of this study tracing three instances of Iranian norm entrepreneurship in a selected policy field. The chapter begins with a brief description of Iran’s rhetorical and practical behavior regarding the control of weapons of mass destruction, in particular its policies within the three regimes on biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons. This overview reveals three focal points of Iranian engagement which are further studied by means of a detailed process tracing in the subsequent sections. Drawing on the blueprint of the concept of norm entrepreneurship as was derived from norm literature, and the three instances of norm entrepreneurship are thoroughly reconstructed and traced by means of qualitative content analysis (Sects. 7.2–7.4). The last section evaluates the strategies and means through which Iranian norm entrepreneurship unfolds.

Chapter 8 begins with a summary and discussion of the findings of the empirical investigation in light of the hypothesis guiding the research, as well as the alternative



explanations. Before I turn to a discussion of the consequences of the findings of this study in the last chapter, Sects. 8.2 and 8.3 present the results of a comparison of the peculiarities of Iranian norm entrepreneurship with two contrasting cases. The comparison with the prototypical norm entrepreneur, Sweden, in Sect. 8.2, serves to reveal differences between the applied normative strategies. The comparison with North Korea (Sect. 8.3) helps answer whether other countries labeled as “rogue states” also act as norm entrepreneurs and under what circumstances resistance to the ruling order might transform into activism or isolation.

Based on the empirical results, in the concluding chapter, the concept of norm entrepreneurship is revisited. In Chap. 9, I reflect upon the implications of “rogue states” being norm entrepreneurs for both critical constructivist scholarship on norms and for research on “rogue states.” I further discuss practical implications for dealing with Iran. I end with an outlook on further research.

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## Chapter 2

# Dedicated to the Good: Norm Entrepreneurs in International Relations



Social constructivist research on norms was established in the late 1980s in the course of the so-called “constructivist turn in IR” (Checkel 1998), according to which ideational factors, such as ideas, norms, or world views, have a constitutive impact on the behavior of collective actors. Offering a social perspective on international politics, constructivism holds that actors are shaping the international system as much as they are shaped by its normative structure. While on the one hand, structures constitute actors’ interests and preferences, on the other, agents are actively shaping and changing the structures within which they act. Structures and agency are thus mutually constitutive (seminal: Wendt 1992).

Nowadays, a huge constructivist research program on norm dynamics has been established (Wunderlich 2013: 20), exploring the construction, dissemination, change, and most recently also the decay and contestation of norms. The concept of “norm entrepreneurship” has played an important role in providing explanations for the successful formation and diffusion of international norms (e.g., Florini 1996: 375; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 893).

The forthcoming chapter introduces the conceptualization of international norms underlying the study and gives an overview of how the scholarly discussion on norms has evolved over time. The main focus is on actor-centered models and the concept of norm entrepreneurship as developed in *liberal* constructivist research on norms. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the current state of the art in research on the role of norm entrepreneurs in the process of norm dynamics. Therefore, the concept of norm entrepreneurship will be reconstructed and made analytically comprehensible on the basis of its use in empirical (liberal-constructivist) norm research. The questions guiding the literature review are: How has the concept of norm entrepreneurship been used so far? Which actors are commonly referred to as norm entrepreneurs and which characteristics are attributed to them? How do norm entrepreneurs act and what motives drive their actions? How does “successful” norm entrepreneurship manifest itself and what are the conditions for it? And above all: How can we identify norm entrepreneurs? In concluding, I will also point out

analytical biases and research gaps in agency-based norm research, which are caused by the one-sided use of the concept by liberal-constructivist norm scholars. Taking a critical constructivist view, in this book I aim to overcome such a limited view (see Chap. 4).

## 2.1 Conceptualizing International Norms

What exactly do social scientists mean when they talk about (international) norms?<sup>1</sup> As alluded to in the introductory chapter, in liberal-constructivist norms research, norms are conventionally defined as collective, intersubjectively shared expectations of behavior (Katzenstein 1996: 5). In IR, the concept of norms is often used in an extremely heterogeneous way. As a result, the concept has been criticized several times for lacking clarity (e.g., Thomson 1993: 67; Hurrell 2001: 143; Reich 2005: 215). Social constructivist scholars, however, agree on three central characteristics of norms.

Firstly, norms differ from individual idealistic concepts such as ideas or beliefs due to their *intersubjective* and collective character. They provide standards of behavior for a group of actors who share a common identity (e.g., Klotz 1995a: 14; Jepperson et al. 1996: 54; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 37, 89). Actors comply with norms because they want to belong to a certain social group. In order to be accepted, they have to adhere to specific behavioral patterns (Nadelmann 1990: 524; Klotz 1995a: 166). Global norms define which behaviors are expected by members of the international community and which ones are prohibited.

Secondly, on this basis, norms form *regular patterns* of behavior for the reference group they are related to (e.g., Goertz and Diehl 1992: 636–637; Finnemore 1996: 23; Florini 1996: 164). This in turn allows the actors to establish mutual expectations. In the words of Jon Elster, norms are the “cement of society” (Elster 1989). In fact, they shape the actors’ scopes of action by defining what constitutes and what can be expected of an actor in a particular situation (Raymond 1997: 214; March and Olsen 1998: 951–52).

Thirdly, norms formulate “‘oughtness’ claims” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 916) in the form of prescriptions and proscriptions for behavior. In doing so, they distinguish between what is permitted or desirable and what is forbidden. Furthermore, they are able to (de)legitimate certain actions and practices.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, actors follow norms because they believe they are doing the right thing (Raymond 1997: 217; March and Olsen 1998: 951–952).

There is disagreement regarding further characteristics of norms, such as whether they have an inherently moral content (e.g., Nadelmann 1990: 481–482; Goertz and Diehl 1992: 638–639; Price 2008: 3) or can also merely be functional (e.g., Bull

<sup>1</sup>Parts of this and the following section are based on Wunderlich (2013).

<sup>2</sup>Appropriateness can refer to different dimensions of moral and functionalist argumentation, e.g. good/bad, right/unjust, right/false, or purposive/unpurposive.

1977: 53; Elster 1989: 89–90). It is also up to controversy whether norms have to be reinforced through sanctions in order to have an effect (e.g., Axelrod 1986; Goertz and Diehl 1992: 638) or not (Katzenstein 1996: 21).

While these two characteristics are of less relevance to the present study,<sup>3</sup> the relationship between norms and interests (see Goertz and Diehl 1992: 637) is of importance, particularly with regard to the question of why actors follow norms or even promote them. Quite often, adherence to a norm that is geared toward satisfying a collective interest (and which thus follows a “logic of appropriateness”) may collide with the pursuit of one’s own interests. Nevertheless, there can also be situations in which norm compliance corresponds to rational considerations. In practice, actions are usually based on a complex combination of motives that are both norm-guided and aimed at the free pursuit of interests (Klotz 1995a: 13; Finnemore 1996: 30–31).<sup>4</sup>

While scholars often portray the relationship between norms and interest as conflicting, I follow scholars who argue that what actors define as their interests is socially constructed and as such always embedded in a normative context and can follow a “logic of appropriateness”—or conversely, that appropriate behavior may at times and under certain circumstances mean following rationalist–utilitarian considerations (Müller 2013: 7–8). Norms and interests should not be understood as clearly distinguishable categories to be analyzed as if they belonged to separate realms. Rather, they are inextricably interwoven and mutually dependent: Norms not only represent institutionalized interests; these interests are also shaped by the prevailing normative context. Following this logic, even rational utility maximizers are always embedded in social structures and depend on normative argumentation (Jepperson et al. 1996: 54; Müller 2004). Norms can therefore be both: An expression of the authentic belief in doing the right thing and the legitimate pursuit of rational interests (Müller 2013: 9).<sup>5</sup> If in the following I use both terms separately, this is not meant as an ontological statement, but serves exclusively analytical purposes. Ultimately, I do not intend to determine whether and when actors act primarily in accordance with norms or interests, but I rather want to show interwoven motifs.

Some other conceptual remarks are also useful when dealing with norms. On a metatheoretical level, different types of norms can be distinguished by the scope (social, legal, moral, etc.) and range (local, national, regional, and global) of their application as well as by their degree of abstraction. In contrast to these horizontal typologies, vertical typologies classify norms according to the importance attributed to them (for an overview: Raymond 1997: 223–279). These models are based on the assumption that there are basic or fundamental norms from which all other norms

<sup>3</sup>I agree with Deitelhoff (2006: 43–44) that norms always have an implicit moral component, albeit a weak one. Even assumed purely functional norms are always embedded in normative structures. Norm acceptance or deviant behavior is always morally charged because any potential violation of the norm can be understood as a challenge to the normative order as such.

<sup>4</sup>Constructivist studies on the effects of norms assume that actors follow different logics of action depending on the situation (e.g., Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 888; Checkel 1999b).

<sup>5</sup>Authors also argue that it is hardly possible to methodically ascertain whether an action is based on self-interest or on norm-induced motivation, e.g., when self-interest is justified by alleged moral motives (Nadelman 1990: 480; Müller 2013: 7–9).