

The study on the Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to show how social constructivism has become a dominant international relations (IR) paradigm in a short time. We studied constructivism's ontology, epistemology, and technique in detail. We learned a lot. We also looked into the rising volume of constructivist empirical research, the resulting theoretical refinement, and the advantages and disadvantages of a constructivist approach. Constructivist approaches have made a significant contribution to the study of international relations (IRs) since their inception because they have provided new insights and distinct ways of understanding social and international reality with added value by focusing on the role of ideas, identity and norms in shaping state preferences and world politics.

Keywords: Cognition, evolution, evolutionary branching, disciplinary history, constructivism, identity, idea, international relations, norms.

Introduction:

International relations (IR) theory's social constructivism is a more recent development. Late 1980s, hybridisation of IR research with numerous debates and themes from other disciplines, especially under the influence of critical theories, gave rise to it. Despite the lack of a widely accepted intellectual canon, most of the constructivist research is significantly influenced by modernist and postmodernist thought, with frequent references to Michel Foucault's work on the relationship between power and knowledge and Jacques Derrida's on text.

However, outside of the realm of international relations theory, this new theoretical paradigm is still widely ignored. Contrary to popular belief, constructivism has grown in prominence in the study of international relations phenomena over the last decade [9]. In mainstream IR journals such as International Organization, International Security, and the European Journal of International Relations, as well as well-regarded collections of IR publications like the Cambridge Studies in International Relations and best-selling IR textbooks, this is readily apparent. Even if they are critical at times, the majority of current studies in the field do not ignore this new way of looking at international relations.

How has constructivism emerged as a viable alternative with the rise of rationalist and materialist theories in international relations (IR)? This paper argues that constructivist techniques have contributed significant theoretical and empirical insights into global politics since their emergence. The primary goal of this research is to examine the growth of constructivism in IR during the interparadigm discussion and to explain the overall theoretical foundations of constructivism, including its major ontological, epistemological, and methodological premises.. We also look at a wide range of constructivist empirical studies that have made significant contributions to theory development and refinement during the past two decades. Last but not least, we look at some of the major advantages and disadvantages of constructivism as a methodology.

Some of the key principles of constructivism can be found in IR, as well:

Rationalists and early critical international theorists dominated the 1980s IR interparadigm dispute, sometimes known as the Third Great Debate. In this regard, Robert Keohane noticed the emergence and legitimacy of a new method in his 1988 speech at the ISA Annual Conference, naming it "reflectivist." The rationalists vs. constructivists dispute became increasingly important in this process, as a constructivist approach to IR study emerged in the 1990s. According to Price and Reus-Smit (1998), the "constructivist turn in IR" was triggered by three mutually reinforcing variables that prompted a shift in critical international thought [7]. The first was "the response of neoliberals and neorealists to the critique directed by critical theorists." As emphasised by Keohane, reflective critical international theorists can bring new insights into the intersubjective foundations of IR. The end of the Cold War proved "the failure of the prevailing rationalist theories" in explaining such a drastic change on the international stage, which was the second element. In the third debate, IR experts underwent a generational shift as a result of Third Debate critical theories' illuminating revelations.

Adler (1997) explains that constructivism is the idea that "the way in which the material world influences and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world." Likewise, Guzzini (2000) describes constructivism as a "metatheoretical commitment" based on three key tenets: as an epistemological claim, knowledge is socially constructed; as an ontological claim, social reality is constructed; and finally, as a reflexive claim, knowledge and reality are mutually constitutive. Non-material elements like norms, ideas, knowledge, and culture have been the focus of constructivist research, emphasising the importance of "collectively held or intersubjective concepts and understanding" in IRs [1]. Constructivism is defined by Ruggie (1998) as "human consciousness and its function in international life." Constructivism is a social analysis approach based on the following basic assumptions: (a) material factors do not shape human interaction, but primarily by ideational ones; (b) the most important ideational factors in this context are "intersubjective" beliefs as shared collective understanding; and (c) these beliefs construct the actors' identities and interests. Constructivism in IR has a lot to offer because of its focus on both the "ontological reality of intersubjective knowledge" and the "epistemological and methodological implications of this reality." So to sum it up, constructivism is that IRs are based on social realities that humans can only agree upon.

Constructivism has two main analytical rivals, according to Finnemore and Sikkink (2001): (a) "materialist theories, which see political behaviour as determined solely by the physical world" and (b) "individualist theories, which treat collective understandings as simply epiphenomena of individual action and deny that they have causal power or ontological status." Concerning rationalism vs. constructivism, Fearson and Wendt (2005) claim that the issue can be phrased in terms of disagreement with metaphysical perspectives (ontology) and empirical explanations of the world. In contrast to rationalism, which relies on individual ontologies, constructivism implies a holist ontology in which wholes cannot be reduced to their constituent components. The constructivists maintain that actors are *homo sociologicus*, which takes the logic of appropriateness, while rationalism follows *homo economicus*, which is fundamentally based on the logic of consequences. They also disagree on whether the preferences or interests of agents are exogenously given or endogenously generated by social interaction. The emergence of constructivism, which has been dubbed the social theoretic approach in IR, has opened the door to using identity, interest, and norms as potential dependent or explanatory variables in global politics research.

The Variants of Constructivism:

There are those who argue that categorisation within constructivism in IR is unnecessary because conventional constructivism is an intellectual outgrowth of critical theory and does not violate the main epistemological, methodological, and normative tenets of critical international theory; however, many IR scholars argue that the distinction can be made based on theoretical and epistemological arguments.

Hopf (1998) divides constructivism into two distinct camps: the conventional camp and the critical camp. Although conceding that constructivism shares some of critical theory's fundamental characteristics, Hopf (1998) believes that "conventional constructivism" is a "degree to which constructivism create theoretical and epistemological space between itself and its origins in critical theory". Conventional constructivists aim to produce new knowledge and insights by accepting that a contingent universalism may be necessary and possible, whereas critical constructivists aim to uncover naturalised order and asymmetrical power relations in our social world by unmasking "minimal foundationalism" While Hopf argues that

conventional constructivism operates between mainstream IR and critical theories, conventional constructivists reject the mainstream position that "the world is so homogeneous that universally valid generalisations can be expected to come from theorising about it." They also reject the critical constructivist presumption that "world politics is so heterogeneous that we should presume to look only for the unique and the dissenting." Similarly, Adler (1997) believes that constructivism, notably conventional constructivism, can serve as a bridge between rationalists (neorealists and neoliberals) and advocates of interpretive epistemologies (such as postmodernists and critical theorists).

Fearson and Wendt (2005), on the other hand, categorise constructivism as either positivist, interpretivist, or postmodern, depending on their epistemological stances. These three constructivisms have different answers to the epistemological questions of "Can knowledge claims about social life be given any warrant other than the discursive power of the putative knower (relativism issue)" and "Are causal explanations appropriate in social inquiry (the naturalism issue)?" Although a positivist stance says yes to both issues, an interpretivist says yes and no, and postmodern constructivists say no. Because of these profound epistemological differences, Fearson and Wendt conclude that "constructivism" cannot be referred to as a single entity.

Despite the stark disparities between constructivism's various sub-varieties, they nevertheless share a number of important theoretical underpinnings. First, constructivists have an interest in analysing how social life behaviours and objects are "created." To put it another way, they try to "denaturalise" the social world by revealing how practises and identities that people generally take for granted as exogenously given are in fact the outcome of social creation by human action. When these facts are properly "contextualised," they emphasise the importance of intersubjective reality and meanings, believing that they are crucial data for grasping the social world. Third, a methodological holist research strategy rather than a methodological individualist perspective underpins all constructivist variations.

Constructivist Approach Methodological Principles:

Constructivism's primary assumption has affected its methodologies and methodology for capturing intersubjective meaning. The dialectical structure of knowledge and reality lies at the heart of constructivism's process-centred philosophy. Because of this, constructivist scholars are wary of claims to "all-encompassing truth"—what Price and Reus-Smit (1998) refer to as "Big-T." Instead, they focus on "small-t" dependent statements. Partially asserted explanations nonetheless constitute causal explanation, albeit in a different sense than realists and liberals do. For Adler (2005), "contingent generalisation does not freeze our understanding; rather, they open up our understanding of the social world" is an epistemology "in which interpretation is an integral aspect of the social sciences" and "emphasised." Similarly, constructivists, according to Finnemore and Sikkink (2001), recognise that "all research involves interpretation, and thus there is no neutral stance from which they can gather objective knowledge about the world," but they disagree about how this interpretation should be one and what kinds of explanation it yields [2].

We must acknowledge modern constructivists follow comparable methodological chores to rationalists and utilitarians; they acquire data, evaluate it, and arbitrate among explanations. When it comes to gathering credible and relevant information, postmodern or critical constructivists focus more on "discourse," a newly emerging theoretical notion in the social sciences that they draw on. Studies of discourse on the knowledge/power nexus have proliferated across academic fields because they challenge the "scientism" of mainstream IR. Nair (2013), for example, examines how persisting asymmetric power relations between international assistance donors and receivers have been discursively formed in her study of international aid. When "representations about what aid does, its modalities and dispensations" help to reproduce hegemonic aid discourse, they help to restore donor dominance over recipients.

As a result, there isn't a single constructivist research approach or design. Constructivists utilise a variety of procedures and analytical tools to capture intersubjective meanings, including process tracing, interviews, participant observation, structured focused comparison, genealogy, discourse analysis, and content analysis.

Sociological Institutionalism:

Prior to the advent of constructivism as a promising IR paradigm, the sociological institutionalists—so-called neoinstitutionalists or global polity theorists—had presented a new viewpoint on "how 'world culture'

reshaped state policies in many different policy areas." They argued that "contemporary world society fosters common institutional structures and legitimacy among nation-states" as their central thesis. According to Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez, the world polity paradigm highlights the omniscient role of world society models in shaping national-state identities, structures, and behaviour through global cultural and associational processes [3].

To put it another way, the growth of isomorphism in contemporary nation-states, particularly in terms of institutional frameworks and legitimate authority, is a result of globalisation and a single world polity. The structure, rather than the actors, has precedence for sociological institutionalists. A study of "cross-national acquisition of women's suffrage rights" from 1890 to 1990 by Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan (1997), for example, shows that national political factors were less important than the "existence, development, diffusion, and influence of a more inclusive world model of political citizenship" in enabling the universalisation of women's suffrage among many nationstates. The recent rise and diffusion of individual accountability norms for human rights crimes and corruption by leaders are also a product of "an overarching modernist world culture privileging individual rights and responsibilities, as well as rational-legal authority," say Kim and Sharman (2014) through their empirical studies [4].

Despite the fact that we all know that sociological institutionalism and constructivism in IR are not the same thing, they have a number of important similarities nonetheless. First and foremost, "actors are considered not as unanalysed 'givens,' but as beings formed and motivated by enclosing frames." Actors' characteristics are constantly reevaluated and reshaped as the frameworks in which they act evolve. In contrast to rationalist approaches like realism and liberalism, which presume an individualist ontology "in which wholes are reducible to interacting pieces," constructivism and sociological institutionalism share a holist ontology "in which parts exist only in relation to wholes."

The Role of Strategic Agency:

Recent constructivist studies have steered clear of sociological institutionalism's most important tenets, especially when it comes to "the role of strategic agency. These agentic constructivist works have mostly focused on the purposeful exertion of individuals and groups in the political arena who strive to change current norms and regulations or develop new norms and persuade a large number of norm leaders (states) to embrace new norms. Authors have attempted to understand how activists function and what factors may contribute to their success in the norm entrepreneurship literature. Constructionist approaches can fill a void where utilitarian approaches fail to do so.

When it comes to non-state actors generating international standards forbidding antipersonnel land mines and teaching governments, the work of Price (1998) stands out. Price discusses how constructivist techniques can provide insight on traditionally viewed as high-politics issues like security. Keck and Sikkink (1999) distinguish between economic actors/firms and what Hass termed epistemic communities, stressing the growing importance of non-state actors in global politics. Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999) refer to these groups as transnational advocacy networks, which include all of the people working on a certain topic around the world who share common ideals, a common discourse, and frequent exchanges of information and services. Because they focus on the "organised and structuring feature in the acts of these complex actors," Keck and Sikkink (1999) describe the rise of global advocacy networks as a "new and transformative phenomenon" rather than civil society or coalition.

Reforming Domestic Politics by Restoring International Standards:

Norms are no longer controversial, thanks to constructivist IR study, which has shown how important they are in international politics (Towns, 2012). International norms often have diverse effects on different agents, contrary to sociological institutionalism's theoretical assumption that focuses solely on one-directional causality. As a result, one of the primary goals of constructivist research is to identify and explain these disparities. Checkel's (1997, 1999) work has made a significant contribution to the literature on the cross-national heterogeneity of international norms' effects in this respect. He argues that the mechanisms by which international norms are socialised and internalised in each domestic political arena vary significantly, and he maintains that the effects of international norms go further; they do not only constrain societal actors as neoliberals argue, but also constitute identities and interests of actors at the domestic level. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) investigate how norms influence political change by developing the ground-breaking theory

of norm "life cycle," which articulates the evolution of norms in three stages—norm emergence, norm cascade, and internalisation. They propose that different actors, motives, and prevailing mechanisms are involved at various points in the process. According to Cortell and Davis (1996), domestic political actors' appropriation of international norms and regulations can have an impact on state policy decisions. Based on a case study of U.S. economic and security policy decisions, they emphasise the importance of domestic structural circumstances as an intervening element in determining the extent to which domestic players appeal to international standards affects state preferences. Acharya (2004) explores how transnational norms influence ASEAN's institutional transformation. When considering normative conflict between developing global standards and preexisting regional standards, he believes that norm localisation can be used to resolve it, with the congruence-building of norm-takers playing an important role. As a result of their work, these academics have developed an IR/Comparative Politics intersectional research agenda.

State Identities, Interests, and its Behavior:

The following thesis, proved by a number of empirical investigations, asserts that an individual's identity impacts their interests, preferences, and behaviours. It's worth noting that Hopf (1998) says that "in informing you who you are, identities clearly indicate a certain set of interests or preferences with respect to actions choices or people in particular domains". "A state's identity entails its preferences and ensuing behaviours." Wendt (1992) and Katzenstein (1996) are pioneers in this field for their work in integrating identity issues into constructivist thinking [8]. In contrast to Wendt's systemic constructivism, which emphasises international variables, Katzenstein places a greater emphasis on domestic surroundings as a crucial source for building state identities. They are vastly different in this regard.

As previously stated, rationalist methods such as neorealism and neoliberalism accept the identities and interests of agents as exogenously given. Wendt, on the other hand, contends that they are a result of interaction. Wendt proposes constructivist theory "in which identities and interests constitute the dependent variable" based on sociological structurationist and symbolic interactionist perspectives, in opposition to the liberal premise that "international institutions can modify state identities and interests." Wendt claims that "identities are the basis of interests" and that "actors do not have a portfolio of interests that they carry around independently of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining circumstance." However, identity is tightly linked to domestic traits in Katzenstein's volume (1996). To put it another way, identity is frequently expressed as "various constructs of statehood" and "various national philosophies of collective distinction and purpose" among countries; as a result, these differences constitute state interests that in turn impact state policy.

The Role of International Institutions:

Despite the fact that the majority of IR scholars agree that international institutions are important, there is less agreement on how international institutions have exact consequences. Some constructivist academics have emphasised on "the function of international organisations in disseminating new international norms and political organisation models." They have dealt with international organisation and norms, but their attention has always been on how standards and a convergence of expectations lead to an international organisation, rather than whether the reversal is conceivable. According to Finnemore (1993), international institutions do develop and promote new norms, and even "educate" states, contrary to what regime literature often thinks. Others have looked at the relationship between international institutions and socialisation, concentrating on the ways in which international institutions socialise. Checkel (2005), for example, reveals a social constructivist perspective on the socialising role of institutions in Europe. Instead than seeing socialisation through the prism of strategic calculations such as punishments or material incentives followed by a logic of consequences, constructivists view it through the lens of a logic of appropriateness. Checkel (2005) goes on to say that "normative suasion" predominantly through "talking" between agents within institutions or organisations plays a crucial role in socialisation, based in part on Habermasian communicative action theory. As a result, he views international organisations as crucial social gathering places.

The Role of Language, Speech Act, and Argument:

Other constructivists, including Wittgenstein, Searle, and Habermas, have studied the role of "language," "speaking," and "argument" as a major social construction mechanism. The scientists of this constructivism variety may have varied research interests, but they all have a common ontological claim: the linguistic production of reality, which could serve as a bridge between constructivism and poststructuralism.

As a result of Searle's (1969, 1995) views on language and speech acts in the field of international relations, Nicholas Onuf believes that "talking is unquestionably our most essential way of making the world what it is." His main premise is that "people always make, or form, social reality, even as their being, which can only be social, is built for them." A Language is a key tool for him in social construction. Further, according to Onuf (2003), when it comes to constructivist language and agency analysis, "language makes us who we are". Ordering International Politics by Mattern (2004), a seminal work in the field reveals how language-power nexus has impacted international identity and order. Mattern investigates how Anglo-American identity was strengthened and, as a result, world order was maintained through the employment of "representational force" in the 1956 Suez Crisis. She concludes by stating that "fastening identity through representational power imposes order back onto disarray [5].

Constructivism and Foreign Policy Analysis:

Scholars have been working to connect the constructivist perspective to foreign policy studies in recent years. According to Houghton (2007), foreign policy analysis has been considered as a "free-floating endeavour," which is not logically tied to a realist or liberalist paradigm in IR. The cognitive psychology approach to the study of foreign policy decision-making, in particular, is one of the most promising logical premises that he proposes as a conversation with constructivist approaches.

To address the "how-possible" question, Doty (1993) proposed that post-positivist critical approaches to foreign policy analysis can resolve the "why particular decisions and actions were made" question. Doty (1993) asserted that conventional approaches to foreign policy are optimised to answer the "why particular decisions and actions were made" question but are not appropriate to examine "how the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed such that certain practises were made possible." As a result, she recommends using the discourse analytical method, which views reality as a language creation and critically examines how foreign policy practices—particularly the divide between "us" and "them," are socially produced..

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Constructivist Approaches:

Overall, constructivism is largely acknowledged to be strong in areas where others are weak and vice versa. As discussed in the second chapter, the comparative advantage of constructivism over rival approaches such as realism and liberalism can be summed up simply as (a) unlike realists, social constructivists in IR provide an alternative understanding that "norms and ideas also constitute power and interests," that is, politics is not only material but truly social [6]. To put it another way, norms play more than just regulatory or restrictive roles; they also have productive and constitutive effects. Furthermore, one of the added values of constructivism is its focus on the "ontological reality of intersubjective knowledge" and the "epistemological and methodological implications of this reality."

On the contrary, this strategy has significant drawbacks as well. In this regard, Hopf (1998) notes that constructivism "does not specify the existence, much alone precise nature of its primary causal/constitutive elements: identities, norms, values and social structure." The constructivist approach also draws criticism because of what is frequently taken to be an underlying weakness, which is referred to as "selection bias." Even when constructivism was recognised as a viable study approach in IR, competing theorists continued to protest about its sole focus on good and nice norms like human rights, environmental protection, climate change, and women's rights, according to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) [7]. To put it another way, this preference for praiseworthy ideals has resulted in less focus on issues like xenophobic nationalism, racism, and the rise of homophobia, all of which have emerged as major study concerns in our time.

Conclusion:

In this paper, an attempt is made to shed light on how the constructivist approach has emerged as a mainstream IR in a very short period of time. We studied constructivism's ontology, epistemology, and technique in detail. We also looked into the rising volume of constructivist empirical research and the resulting theoretical refinement and the advantages and disadvantages of a constructivist approach. It is fair to say that constructivism has made a significant contribution to the study of international relations (IR) by providing new insights and distinct ways of understanding social and international reality with their own added value—by focusing on the role of ideas, identity, and norms in shaping national preferences and global politics. According to the Foreign Policy Ivory Tower Survey, constructivist IR experts (22 percent) outnumbered liberal (21 percent) and realist (16 percent) scholars for the first time in 2011. "From prospect to prosperity" could be the best indicator of the progress and development of the constructivist approach in IR during the last two decades..

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