

Q# Discuss the main principle of Constructivism in IR. Give a comparative analysis of Constructivism and Realism with examples.

Introduction:

Constructivism is a theory of fourth great debate of international relation. Which started right after the cold war era. The frame work of this theory denied to accept the rationales of International anarchy enshrined by neo-realism and neo-liberalism.

Nicholas Onuf is usually credited with coining the term "constructivism" to describe theories that stress the socially constructed character of international relations.

Alexander Wendt is the best-known advocate of social constructivism in the field of international relations. Wendt's 1992 article "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Constructivism of Power Politics" published in International Organization laid the theoretical groundwork for challenging what he considered to be flaw shared by both neo-realists and neo-liberalists, namely, a commitment to a (crude) form of materialism.

Principles of Constructivism:

There are following principles of constructivism.

Its counterpart is not Realism, Institutionalism, or Liberalism, but rather Rationalism. By challenging the rationalist framework that undergirds many theories of international relations, Constructivists create constructivist alternatives in each of these families of theories.

1) World as a social Construct:

• Constructivism sees the world, and what we can know about the world, as socially constructed. This view refers to the ontology and epistemology.

Alexander Wendt offers an excellent example that illustrates the social constructivism of reality when he explains that 500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than five North Korean nuclear weapons. These identifications are not caused by the nuclear weapons (the material structure) but rather by the meaning given to the material structure (the intentional structure). The social relationship between United States and Britain and between the United States and North Korea is perceived in a similar way by these states, as this inter-subjectivity forms the basis of their interactions.

This example also shows that nuclear weapons by themselves do not have any meaning unless we understand the context. It further demonstrates that constructivists go beyond the material reality by including the effect of ideas and belief on world politics. This also entails that reality is always under construction, which opens the prospects for change. In other words, meanings are not fixed but can change over time depending on the ideas and beliefs that actors hold.

Idea of Anarchy ~ "Anarchy is what states make of it"

Constructivist focus on idea of anarchy, but they depart from prior positions on the anarchical system. Specifically, constructivists disagree with the realist position that anarchy inherently leads to competition and war.

As one of the foremost scholars on constructivism, Alexander Wendt, in his influential article *Anarchy is what states make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, says, "Self help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy and that if today we find ourselves in a self-help world, this

is due to process, not structure. There is no "logic" of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interest rather than another; structure has no existence or causal power apart from process." Self help and power politics are institutions, not essential feature of anarchy. He goes on say that "Anarchy is what states make of it." Thus to constructivist, the international anarchical system is whatever the actors want it to be. As constructivist in international relations explain, states often act differently based on the identity, interests, culture, and relationship that the state may have with one another. As Alexander Wendt explains, "states act differently toward's enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not" Speaking on this, he says in more details "Anarchy and Power Politics are insufficient to tell us which is which." As the United States and Soviet Union decide that they are no longer enemies, "the cold war is ended" It is collective meanings that constitute the structure which organize our actions.

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Constructivism and Norms:

Constructivists look at how norms develop, who presses these norms, and who set up different norms from the ones currently set. Thus, scholars look at how norms emerge, how they affect states and non-state, and "which norms will matter and under what conditions?"

As Reus-Smith explains, "identities are constituted by the institutional norms, values and ideas of the social environment in which they act."

One case that constructivists have pointed to help support their theory was the events that led to the fall of the Soviet Union. To the former theories, they had difficulty explaining the shift in relations between United States and Soviet Union. However, to constructivists, the role of the individual (in this case President Mikhail Gorbachev) was critical; his willingness to focus on norms such as "Common Security" (Walt, 1998:41). Gorbachev's shifting of the Soviet Union's policy from one of security concerns to working with other states towards this "new" norm is explained by constructivism.

4) Constructivist Viewpoint On Identities and Interest.

- Constructivists argue that states can have multiple identities that are socially constructed through interaction with other actors. Identities are representations of an actor's understanding of who they are, which in turn signals their interests. A state can thus not act contrary to its identity because this will call into question the validity of the identity, including its preferences.
- This issue might be explained why Germany, despite being a great power with a leading global economy, did not become a military power in the second half of the twentieth century. Following the atrocities of Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime during the Second World War, German political identity shifted from one of militarism to pacifism due to unique historical circumstances.



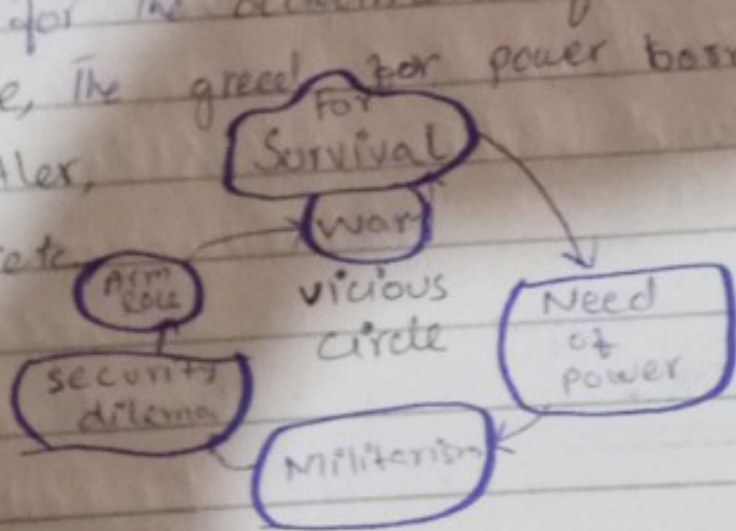
"Constructivist theory emphasizes the meanings that are assigned to material objects, rather than the mere existence of the object themselves."

Comparative Analysis of Constructivism and Realism

Realism is the theory of first great debate and constructivism is the theory of fourth great debate.

1) Core Concern

Realism: The core concern of realism is War and Security. Realist thinks that society operates on the principle of "Right is Right" and "Survival of the fittest". In order to remain fit and survive in international relations, orientation of individuals of a state should be to increase the power of state. So, politics is the struggle for pursuit of power for the attainment of national interest. For example, the greed for power born the leader like Hitler, Mussolini etc.



Constructivism:

The core concern of constructivism is the shared meanings, ideas and images. This theory explains the meanings that are assigned to material objects. For example, constructivist

argue that the nuclear arsenals of United
Russia and China, though comparably
destructive, have different meanings to
United States, that translate into
very different patterns of interaction
(Wendt 1995)

Key Actor

Realism: The real key actor for
realists is statism that state
sovereignty is necessary feature in
politics. "Monopoly of legitimate use
of force in given territory", **Max**
Webber. "We trade our liberty for
guarantee of security," **Hobbes**.
Realists emphasize that power cannot be
exercised in a vacuum. So, state is
the key actor of realism.

Constructivism:

The key actors in constructivism are
individuals and social networks.
Constructivism takes issue with realist
assumption about international system.
It focus on ideas of norms, the development

of structures, the relationships between actors and said structures, as well as how identity influences actions and behavior amongst and between actors, as well as how norms themselves shape an actor's character. For example, constructivists argue that role of the individuals make interactions and Hostilities. As in the example of fall of Soviet Union, the role of President Mikhail Gorbachev was critical; his willingness to focus on norms such as 'common security'.

Central Concepts

Realism:

The central concept of realism is that a state accumulate power to secure its sovereignty and national interest because the absence of international sovereignty leads towards self-help concept. And self-help demands maximization of power and relative gain theory. So, in international anarchic structure, state politics is the struggle for pursuit of power for survival.

Constructivism:

Constructivism, particularly in the formative

work of Wendt, challenges the assumption by stating that causal powers attributed to "structure" by Realists are in fact not "given", but rest on the way in which structure is constructed by social practice. Wendt's 1992 article "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics" explains the flaws of neo-realism.

Approach to Peace

Realism:

According to the realists the peace will come to the world by protection, sovereignty, autonomy and deter rivals through military. Thus, to attain peace the maximization of power is necessary. As realists view that the world is a harsh and dangerous place, the only certainty in the world is power. A powerful state will always be able to outdo and outlast weaker competitors. And the most important and reliable form of power is military power.

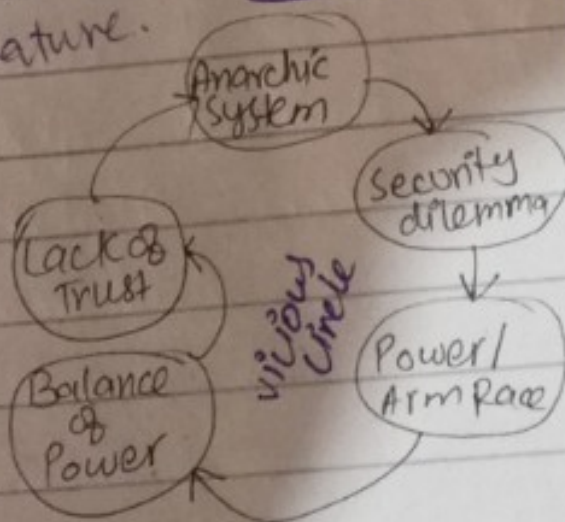
Constructivism:

According to constructivism theory there would be peace in the world by changing the ideas as well as identities of norms. Progressive ideas which encourage states that attached those who is appropriate at international level ensures peace.

Global Level Analysis About

Realism

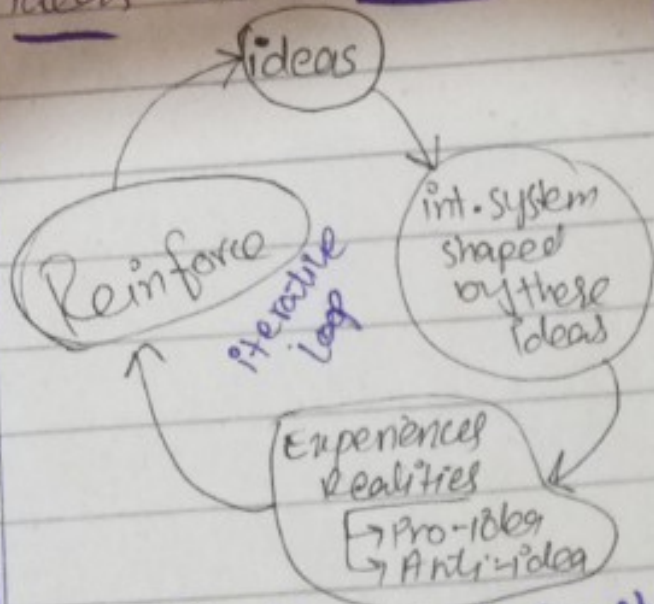
At global level the theory of realism perceives as a pessimistic view e.g Hitler's view etc because according to realists the world is harsh and the man is egoistic in nature.



(vicious circle)

Constructivism

And at global level the theory of constructivism perceives that according to constructivists global prospect depend upon content of prevailing ideas and values.



(Iterative loop of Constructivism)