

Q Discuss the main principles of constructivism in International Relations. Give comparative analyses of constructivism and Realism with example.

Introduction:

For decades the prominent theories in IR were Realism and liberalism. Realism was the thesis, liberalism its anti-thesis and then constructivism became prominent as the synthesis of these two. After cold war between west (USA) and east (USSR) while liberalism and Realism failed to predict and then explain the outcome of 44 years long cold war, constructivism explained the outcome in very simple terms.

Proponent of constructivism in IR;

Alexander Wendt quite vocally advocated theory of constructivism in IR. In his article "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics." he openly challenged the core concepts of Realism and liberalism. He criticised the focus of liberalism and Realism on material structure rather than Ideational structure.

Principles of constructivism in International Relations;

Core Concept

"International relations are a social construct."

That are shaped by shared
ideas, norms, images
and identities."

Wendt argued that relations
between states are built on
the foundation of social construct.

⇒ Anarchy is what states
make of it;

Anarchy is built on practice
and practice comes from
ideas. Constructivism's one of
the principles is concept of
anarchy differs from state
to state. Alexander Wendt
explains this concept with
an example 500 nuclear
weapons of United Kingdom
is not an issue for America
but Korea's one nuclear
weapon makes America pull

out big guns."

He referred to this concept as **Ideational structure** - North Korea's

one missile is a threat. while UK's **material structure** of 500 missiles is not.

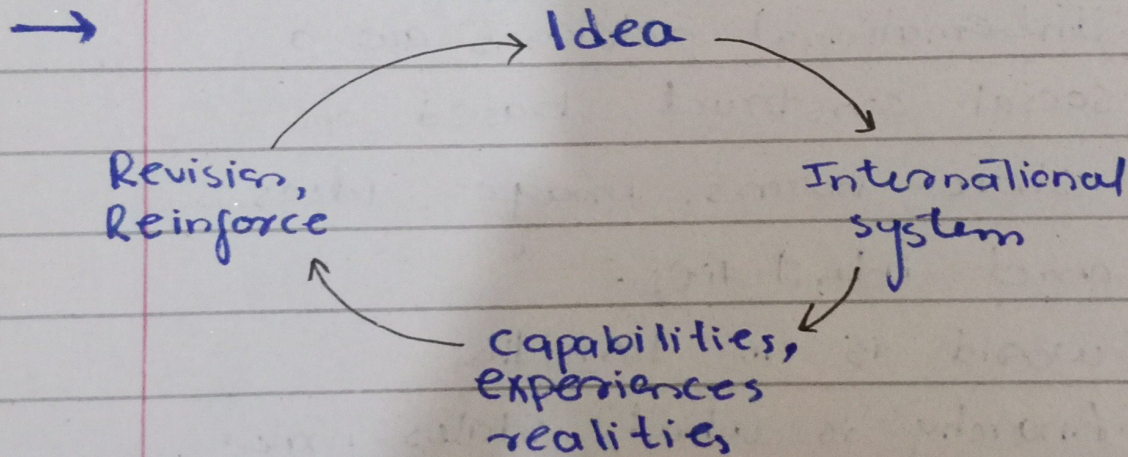
⇒ **World is in transition;**
Realism and Liberalism
both do not touch the
subject of world transition.
Wendt explains today's
idea for a state may not
stay same forever.

Russia's
(USSR) decision to end
cold war was due to
change in idea of Gorbachev
- to end the war and
focus on its internal state
matters - **Change of Idea.**

→ Behaviour of state shaped by Identity.

How the state sees itself shapes its behaviour not the anarchic system.

Example: Identity of a small state will be security, while a big powerful state will focus its identity on economy and military.



Pakistan's Idea -

→ 1947 → India enemy (Idea) → experiences at international level show India is enemy → Idea reinforces India is enemy

During cold war → Pak-Russia
relations not good → later
experience at international level
Positive → **Idea changed.**

1960 — steel mills

2017, 2018, 2019 → Joint military
exercises with Russia.

In summary:-

Main principles
of constructivism are.

- ① International relations are a social construct based on share norms, images, ideas and identities.
- ② world is in transition
- ③ Anarchy is what states make of it.
- ④ ~~worst~~ Ideas can move towards amity or enmity depending upon social construct between states.
- ④ It's the ideational structure that shapes the IR not the material structure.

Comparative analyses of constructivism with Realism -

Realism

Constructivism

①

Proponents -

- Hans J.
Morganthau,
- Kenneth Waltz

Alexander Wendt,
Onuf -

②

Book / article

"Politics among
Nations"

Theory of international
politics.

"Anarchy is what
states make of it:

Social construction
of power politics"

③

Actors

State is
unitary actor.

State and
non state actors.

(4)

Core Concept

Politics is struggle for the pursuit of power to secure national interest.	Politics / International relations are shaped by social construct. That is shared values, ideas, norms and identities.
--	--

(5)

Concept of anarchy

Anarchy exists due to lack of sovereign and difference in capabilities of states.	Anarchy is what states make of it.
---	------------------------------------

(6)

Out come of Anarchy

Due to anarchy self help and maximisation of power to attain national interest is imminent.	Anarchy is not always perceived as a threat by states.
---	--

(7)

Threat of war

war is a reality
that can not be
avoided.

e.g could not explain
end of cold war.

war and peace
are a choice of
states -

e.g end of cold war.

(8)

Approaches to peace

Through,

- ① Balance of power
- ② Military alliances
- ③ maximisation
of power.

Through,

- ① Improving behaviour.
- ② Positive experience
between states
at international
level.

(9)

Pessimistic outcome
conflict, struggle
on war.

outcome can
be optimistic
if social relations
are of positive
approach.

Examples =

WWII (1939 - 1945)

→ Realist perspective:

Power politics model was. The eve of world war two was the time when Realism became dominant. League of nation failed, liberalism failed due to state centric behaviour of its member. The members wanted to attain power for self interest and sovereignty. As a realistic result war happened. Cooperation politics model failed -

→ Constructivism perspective:

After Treaty of versailles 1919 Germany and Italy were left feeling resentful. Idea of nationalism and unjust behaviour was popularised by Hitler and

Mousseline - Idea was of conflict so, war happened.

(2) Cold war

End of cold war

Realist perspective:-

Realism argues that war ended due to the weakened economy of USSR and its inability to pursue further conflict.

Constructivism perspective.

war ended due to the decision of Mikhail Gorbachev to end war. The decision was made due to change in ideas and identity.

Conclusion:-

In conclusion both theories have forthcoming and both also have shortcomings. whether it is underestimation of role of international institutes or neglectation of material power.

At the end its not just one theory of International Relations that exists solely.

In different situation different theories are used for analysing depending on the scenario.

→ Nuclear arsenal → Realism

→ Rising power china is not a threat to pakistan but rise in any capability is of India is perceived as imminent threat by pakistan. → Constructivism

→ Global Markets, open borders of European unions → liberalism.