Constructivism in International Relations as Another Middle Ground

INTRODUCTION: NATURE OF THE APPROACH AND ITS MIDDLING

IR scholars accept that constructivism is a bridge builder between different realist–liberal and rationalist–reflectivist traditions, as Wendt's 'via media'; and Adler's 'middle ground' between rationalist approaches (realist, liberal) and interpretive approaches (postmodernist, post-structuralist and critical) in IR.[1] Onuf, self-avowed christener of the approach, would agree only after it is settled what constructivism—'a

four-way bridge between phenomenology, post-structuralism, rational choice and functionalism/structuralism'—was the middle ground between positivism/postpositivism; philosophical realism/philosophical idealism or science/art? Onuf also advised these scholars to ask themselves whether they are 'temperamentally inclined to go for the "middle" in most situations they find themselves', between 'zealous "rat choice" theorists [opprobrium for rational choice] and scorched-earth "posties" [satirical term of postmodern/structural/colonial theorists]; between 'fundamentalists of any sort' and whether they are 'disproportionately central on matters of politics'. Presuming that their answers would be in the affirmative, Onuf settles for a matter-of-fact definition of constructivism based on the science of perception and its relation to cognition'.[2]

This digression about the middle ground would help the reader judge critics' points about constructivism as one of the three 'via medias' of 'middling, meddling, muddling' in IR[3] and realize that 'the core of the debate about constructivism…pits a naturalist conception of science, almost entirely based on contested philosophies of science and on physical concepts and theories that physics has long since abandoned, against a conception of social science that is—*social*'.[4]

Why and How the Constructivist Ground Is in the Middle?

But let us first explain how and why constructivism is a four-way bridge in the middle. Realists such as Morgenthau and Kaplan, and neorealists such as Waltz and Gilpin, wedded to positivist and unalloyed materialist philosophies of science, abjured ontological and epistemological discourses, choosing to explain IR as if it was a plain behavioural response to the forces of physics acting on material objects from the outside. On the other side of the fence, post-structuralists (such as Ashley and Walker, James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro), CRITHEOs (such as Cox, Hoffman and Linklater) and feminists (such as Anne Sisson Runyan, Peterson and Tickner) resorted to a 'relativist philosophy of science and interpretivist sociology of knowledge' in order to interrogate the nature of international social relations and consider new ways of studying it, from the position that, in the social and interpreted world in which we live, 'only ideas matter and can be studied'. Studying ideas requires squaring the 'hermeneutical circle', since people's decipherment of a text or expression is contingent on others' reading of it, due to which a rational explanation of a social situation is unattainable, and all are instead destined for appeal to a common understanding of the concerned language. Consequently, even empirical data are subject to question by interpretations, counter-interpretations or readings. Neoliberal institutionalists evade this hermeneutical dilemma by relying on Max Weber's solution that it is material and ideal interests, rather than ideas which influence people's conduct, even if the 'world images' shaped by ideas predetermine the channels of interests-driven action. But even when considering, like realists, behaviour as affected by external physical forces, neoliberal institutionalists reserve, like interpretivists, some space for ideas. However, they understand them in the manner of psychological cognitivists, as 'beliefs held by individuals', and believe that this transformation of individuals' ideas and knowledge into 'variables' possessing causal effects on political choices would enable them to seize a middle ground between realist (positivist) and interpretive (relativist or postpositivist) approaches. But Adler

contends that neither an interpretive version of rationalism, nor some variety of 'reflectivism' in Keohane's description, nor even all sorts of critical theories untidily bunched together by Mearsheimer, can inhabit the true middle ground between rationalist and relativist interpretive approaches. The rightful occupant would be constructivism, understood as 'the view that *the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world*'.[5]

CONTEXT AND GENEALOGY

Readers should know the situational and disciplinary context of constructivism's elective affinity with the middle ground. The situational context covers the stress that the foundational assumptions of realism experienced due to the unforeseen peaceful end of the Cold War, which worsened in the post-9/11 era. A US-centred unipolarity, transnational jihadist terrorism and political Islam, and the problematization of the state-centric orientation of IR by globalization and increased state failure across huge areas of the developing world, revealed a theoretical void and 'a more fluid global context', wherein 'constructivism *matured* as a distinctive approach to global politics'.[6] The word 'matured' is apposite, because, as a school of thought, constructivism had already appeared in what Onuf calls 'IR in the 1980s', where in the 'diorama' of the three constructivist dinosaurs he wants to add John Ruggie to the triumvirate of Friedrich Kratochwil, Wendt and himself, because of Ruggie's joint 'early essay with Kratochwil' and Raymond Duvall (mentor of Wendt and other constructivists). So, rightly contending that the 'end of the Cold War had nothing to do with constructivism's *arrival* on the scene', Onuf critiqued Wendt for wrongly saying 'that 'constructivist thinking was *accelerated* by the end of the Cold War, and for having had first "muddied the waters"'.[7]

Onuf pulled up Wendt also for somewhat indiscriminately discovering a dawning 'constructivist world view' in the writings of Grotius, Kant and Hegel, and idealist scholars between the two World Wars; 'important constructivist approaches to IP' in post-war writings of Deutsch, Haas and Bull; and deciphering 'constructivist assumptions' underlying the 'phenomenological tradition in the study of foreign policy' dating from Snyder, Bruck and Sapin to Jervis and Ned Lebow. Ideas from these and other traditions crystallized into three major strands of constructivist IRT: a modernist strand represented by John Ruggie and Friedrich Kratochwil; a postmodernist strand represented by Ashley and Walker; and a feminist stream represented by Peterson and Tickner. He traced the rise of constructivism rather to the recent 'culture war' in US research universities, where humanities scholars, smarting from the discrimination against the liberal arts in prestige and resources vis-à-vis the natural and applied social sciences, and enthused by the trajectory of continental social theory, announced that the philosophical premises and suppositions undergirding modern science were not valid for their field. Apart from the resultant linguistic turn in social theory and feminist theory, another factor that supposedly inspired this outburst was 'POS', where Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1946–1953) and Nelson Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978) were influential landmarks.[9]

But I caution my readers about a distinction between the genealogy of constructivism in human sciences, philosophy and social sciences, and genealogy within IR.[10] In philosophy, or more specifically epistemology, one strand of constructivism comes from the humanist critique of the Cartesian project by Giambattista Vico, who said long back (in *The New Science*, 1744) that the monomania about certainty may be harmful for a reflective understanding of practice and the historical world. Another strand comes from Kant, who situated knowledge neither in the things themselves, as in the ontological perspective running from Plato up to the scholastics, nor in the Cartesian or Leibnitzian perspective of parallelism between our mind and the world (created by God), or in a mechanical empiricism depending on habits and psychological factors in the vein of Hume. Kant thought that only reason could provide an indefectible foundation of knowledge by serving as its own arbiter. Kratochwil says that, in the 20th century, constructivism was also 'deeply influenced by cybernetics and modern systems theory, which severed the link between determinism and predictability/uniqueness', because the 'same result might be realized by a different path, or the same path might produce a different result'. It jolted the ideas of 'causal necessity' and 'absolute foundation' in conventional epistemology. Apart from jeopardizing previous notions of successive enlightenment and progress, by dispensing with 'preordained end states or teleologies', modern systems thinking 'allowed for equivalent but different solutions'. More importantly, it no more based the new unity in scientific understanding on the application of theories and methods borrowed from the hard sciences to social phenomena but achieved it through a focus on information and communication that straddled the old divide between mind and matter. Revolving around information, rather than the tangible elements of a system, as in Waltz's units, cybernetics transcended the traditional distinction between material and ideal factors, and futile debates about which one was the basis of things. Additionally, 'the original push' for a constructivist perspective was first introduced by biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (1992) and only later imported in social sciences by Niklas Luhmann in *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (1997).[11]

Of course, the linguistic turn in philosophy stemming from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* ([1921]1922) and later *Philosophical Investigations* also helped the rise of constructivism by leading to a recasting of Cartesian philosophical principles undergirding Western philosophy, centring around a differentiation between subjective and objective phenomena of experience in favour of an emphasis on the social nature of language. Athwart conventional notions of language originating in the mind or mirroring objective reality, Ludwig Wittgenstein showed language as a form of action that constitutes the world, which influenced later philosophers of language, such as J. L. Austin, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (*The Social Construction of Reality*, 1987), John Searle, Anthony Giddens, Habermas, Richard Rorty and Francois Lyotard. Wittgenstein's contentions about the dependence of individual speech on a predetermined system of linguistic meaning that precedes intentionality gave the first glimpses of the postmodern crisis of the human subject. Together with Freud and Nietzsche's stress on the unconscious motives and forces that govern human action, these Wittgensteinian ideas put into question Kantian notions of autonomy and control of rational subjects on their actions and generated numerous controversies among philosophers, such as that between Habermas and Foucault.

Despite Onuf's reference to Wittgenstein, the constructivism that became dominant in IR, christened as 'conventional' constructivism, sprang more from Berger and Luckmann, and Giddens. Another school of thought which named itself radical constructivism borrowed ideas from postmodern thinkers such as Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida.[12] The stage was provided in IR by Debate 4A within the Fourth Great Debate of the early and mid-1980s, between rationalism (i.e., the neo–neo synthesis of neo-realism and neoliberalism) and reflectivism.[13] Here, Cox, Ashley and Walker got busy with deconstructing some of the fundamental assumptions of IR as a society of states ensnared by/in an objective structure of anarchy and were joined by scholars from the geographical margins of Europe and Australia.

In the late 1980s, against the backdrop of the first indications of the end of the Cold War, two articles by Wendt and Ruggie signalled the coming resurgence of constructivism in IR. Wendt questioned the value of neorealism and WST as structural theories of IR from the perspective of '"agentic" theorizing' and showed that the agent–structure problem subsumes

> two interrelated problems, one ontological and the other epistemological. The first and more fundamental issue concerns the nature of both agents and structures and, because they are in some way mutually implicating, of their interrelations.... The second epistemological issue concerns the relative importance of agent-explanations and structure-explanations, of whatever type, in social theory.[14]

Less fundamentally, but yet importantly, Ruggie was showing that traditional IRT was failing to diagnose historical transformations.[15] By this time, the flurry of ideas stemming from the post-structuralist writings of Derrida, Baudrillard, Kristeva, Deleuze and Virilio, and a more systematic use of Habermasian debate, strengthened by the neglected feminist voices of Tickner, Spike Peterson and Sylvester even inside the postpositivist debate 4A, made 'celebration of difference' the main object of social theory.

Coincidentally, at this time, the inexplicably peaceful end of the Cold War and the kaleidoscopic changes in its aftermath started robbing positivist approaches of IR of their 'high moral ground' and, in this mêlée, three things happened that made constructivists' theoretical identity explicit. The first was a counteroffensive by staunch mainstream realists (such as Mearsheimer), accusing constructivists of the inability in conducting empirical research and seeking refuge in naïve political utopias. The second was an attempt by a new breed of younger scholars to apply constructivist metatheoretical lessons to security studies, which, however broadly defined, ranked 'among the last bastions of orthodoxy in IR to accept critical or theoretically sophisticated challenges to its problematic'. Here, while rational choice models 'exogenize the preferences of actors' and then explain theoretically the conditions under which cooperation amid self-interested and egoistic actors happen, social constructivists make these preferences themselves 'part of the explanation'.[16] Concurrently, once their 'celebration of difference' was over, the 'posties' of Onuf had started defining ways of how to best engage with the mainstream.

Wendt's two articles, 'Agent Structure' and 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It', had, besides clearing the ground for constructivism in IR, 'defined its contours', though being charged with excessively accommodating assumptions of the mainstream it was critiquing. Wendt advised liberal institutionalists and Keohane that to

convince (neo)realists that cooperation is possible, their framework did not have to make state identities and interests extraneous to the process. For, a model in which identities and interests evolve through interaction would better shore up the possibilities of cooperation. He told Ned Lebow and other cognitivists, especially those engaged in foreign policy analysis, that their approach, in spite of its lack of philosophical sophistication, is in essence constructivist.[17] Wendt's bridge-building effort later found another early collaborator in Peter Katzenstein (author of another landmark, *The Culture of National Security*, 1996). But this moderate, conventional constructivism of bridge builders had detractors, like some scholars in a 1994 conference at the University of Minnesota who called themselves 'critical constructivists'; or like scholars from different countries in a 1997 academic gathering in Aarhuse-Norsminde, Denmark, who reached only this consensus that no one knew the exact meaning of the term. In the workshop pitted against the dominant constructivism of the American context spearheaded by Wendt, Katzenstein and others were 'the various constructivisms…with origins in diverse traditions drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, or Michel Foucault'.[18]

So the post-Cold War crisis of the explanatory pretensions of neorealists and neoliberals, rationalists' new challenges to CT, the emergence in the 1990s of a new breed of young scholars who accepted many of the propositions of CRINTHEO but wanted their conceptual elaboration and empirically enriched development, and finally the advance of the new constructivist perspective through the moral and academic support of some mainstream scholars disillusioned by the analytical failings of the dominant rationalist theories—these are the four factors which brought constructivism from the periphery of the social science to the centre.[19] The next section will explore if a 'minimal core' or a 'signature argument' to which constructivism of all provenances answer can be identified even after minor/major deviations by a few individual theorists.

MINIMAL, CORE OR SIGNATURE ARGUMENT OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

These diverse sources of constructivism and their differential impacts on various spokespersons make it natural that even the core questions of constructivism would be viewed differently by them. We can state them and see what their detractors within the camp have to say.

Kratochwil contends that being a distinctive way of addressing one of the fundamental issues in social science, namely, 'what we know and how we know it', 'constructivism is neither a theory, nor even an approach to politics, any more than empiricism is'. Rather, both are meta-theoretical, judging 'whether things are simply given and correctly perceived by our senses' (as in empiricism), or 'whether the things we perceive are rather the product of our conceptualizations (constructivism)'.[20] From this comes the related, second, methodological issue of truth versus relativism, which 'concerns the inference based on logic alone to the existence of something in the real world (deductive rigour notwithstanding)'. Here, contrary to 'deconstructionists', denying truth or preaching relativism, constructivists contend that 'things or objects cannot be "true"; only assertions about objects can. To that extent, the concerned

truth is not a property of the "world out there" but, with the exception of purely ana-lytical statements, is always relative to a semantic system', and will 'depend on the conventions of language that make certain assertions analytical' and others synthetic. This relativity would urge us to be more circumspect in fixing the frames within which to argue and make truth claims. This leads to the third methodological problem: our naiveté in posing clear questions to nature when testing or conducting experiments and expecting unequivocal answers. For, nature 'cannot answer us unless it, so to speak, uses a language', normally supplied by our concepts and theories. Owing to this 'theory dependence of our questions, we never directly test against nature…going behind our concepts or theories', making 'direct appeal to the things themselves'.

Beyond these three methodological premises, Kratochwil also thinks that two onto-logical commitments of constructivism constitute its minimal core. The first is that 'agency matters in social life' and accordingly 'agents are not simple throughputs of structures—material or ideal—working behind their backs'. Applying this logic to IR, the statement that 'all states have to choose the same organizational forms if they want to be taken as serious players in the international political game', even if true, 'tells us very little' about the states' actual politics, as would be evident from 'the political development literature and from the experiences of failed states'. By the same token

> precisely because these adoptions might not resonate with local traditions, they are likely to engender resistance and thus, most certainly, do not foreshadow the 'end of history' as sug-gested by the fundamentalist challenge to both the Western political project and the alleged universalism of human rights.

The second ontological core belief follows from the first. If we concede that 'the human world is one of artifice, then the notions the actors have about their actions matter', and they cannot be treated as external to the descriptions and explanations of their actions, nor can they be just assumed, 'precisely because the latter often amounts to a naturalizing move contradicting the first commitment'. This insight helps us to cir-cumvent 'the entirely fruitless debate of whether interest or ideas are primary', since much depends on which game the actors are presently engaged in. Even the definition of a resource 'changes dramatically, depending on the framing conditions'.[21]

In the field of IP, three core arguments/elements are said to differentiate construc-tivism from other approaches. First, contending that global politics is shaped and steered by inter-subjectively shared ideas, norms and values held by actors, construc-tivists lay stress on the 'inter-subjective dimension of knowledge', and the role of ideational structure in constraining and shaping behaviour of social and political actors, whether individuals or states, no less importantly than material structures. While neorealists prioritize the material structure of the balance of military power and Marxists emphasize that of the CW-E, constructivists contend that bodies of shared ideas, beliefs and values also possess structural attributes and exert strong pressures on social and political action. They are important for two reasons: (a) (as Wendt says) material factors are endowed meaning for human action via the structure of shared knowledge in which they find place (one can compare here the meaning for America [or its foreign policy] of Canada [ally] and Mexico or Cuba [problematic or adversar-ial]), though all three are powers existing just outside American borders and (b) nor-mative and ideational structures shape the identities of political actors. One may

again ponder here how, in the age of Absolutism (1555–1848), only Christian monarchies were deemed legitimate forms of sovereign state, whereas Muslim, liberal or nationalist polities were not, and how, even in modern times of post-liberalism, Muslim or communist states are suspect. Liberal states are deemed most legitimate, even if they employ coercive practice backed by norms to keep their pride of place.

Second, the effects of the ideational structure on actors are 'constitutive and not just regulative', which means that the structure induces actors 'to redefine their interests and identities in the process of interacting' and be 'socialized' in the process. So, contrary to rationalist theories including neorealism and neoliberalism, for which interests and identities are exogenously determined constants for isolating causal roles of power and international institutions, constructivism judges how ideational structures shape the very way actors define themselves—including their identity, their goals and the roles they believe they should play. Neorealists or neoliberals, as rationalists, are not bothered about from where their preferences emanate, only about how they seek to further them. For constructivists, however, unless we have understanding of how actors acquire their interests, a good part of IP remains opaque, as to the rationalists too. But the understanding of the actors' interest formation is impossible without knowledge of their social identities. For (as Wendt says), identities are the springs of interests.

Third, 'ideational structures and actors ("agents") co-constitute and co-determine each other'. Normative or ideational structures may well constitute actors in terms of their interests and identities, but structures are also produced, reproduced and altered by the discursive practices of agents. This element enables constructivists to question the determinacy of neorealism, claiming that structures are never reified objects that actors can do nothing about, except responding to. Rather, structures find existence only through the reciprocal interaction of actors, which in turn implies that agents can, through acts of social will, alter structures and 'thereby emancipate themselves from dysfunctional situations that are in turn replicating conflictual practices'. Although Wendt's later writings on the 'supervening' potential of structures and the tendency of some constructivists to study how norms shape behaviour unmediated give the wrong impression that constructivists are also structuralists like their rationalist or Marxist rivals, closer scrutiny shows that they are really 'structurationists'. For, not remaining content with just emphasizing the impact of non-material structures on interests and identities, they also show the role of practices in preserving and transforming these structures. They show how institutionalized norms and ideas not only fix the meaning and identity of individual actors and the appropriate types of economic, social and cultural activity they engage in but also show that it is through the interaction between ideational structures and behavioural practices that our interests and identities get defined. For example, the international norms that present liberal democracy as the putatively best mode of modern statehood and authorize both humanitarian and free trade-promoting intervention find their sustenance in the behavioural practices of leading liberal democratic states and influential NSAs.[22]

While agreeing that the core of constructivism is hard to define, Ned Lebow suggests two other constituent themes. The first consists in according importance to social structure, whether appreciated sociologically (as in the institutionalist analyses of Martha Finnemore and others) or linguistically (as sought to be done by Ruggie, Onuf and Kratochwil). The second lies in the recognition of the mutual constitution

of agents and structures. The 'thicker', linguistic version of constructivism is preoccupied with the logic of intelligibility, basically showing what makes some actions more conceivable and likely than others. The 'thin' version accords more importance to the role norms play in furthering interests than to the creation of norms by identities.[23]

DINOSAURS CROSSING THE MINIMAL CORE: WENDT, ONUF AND KRATOCHWIL

Wendt

At first, it would seem impossible to depict Wendt as crossing the core, being mostly associated with the conventional core of constructivism, which describes constructivism as

> a structural theory of the international system that makes the following core claims:
>
> - states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory;
> - the key structures in the states system are intersubjective, rather than material; and
> - state identities and interests are in important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics.
>
> The second claim opposes realism. The third opposes systemic theories that are rationalist in form, whether they are 'as if' theories that bracket interest formation, or unit-level, 'reductionist' ones [in the Waltzian sense] that say interests 'really are' exogenous. The result is one form of structural idealism or 'idea-ism'.[24]

But Wendt does go beyond this minimal core. Although in his early works he came close to a more extreme constructivist line, in his later writings, he thought that constructivism in its multiple versions is concurrently both 'too extreme and too limited' in its opposition to neorealism. It veers to the extreme side when it claims that it is 'ideas all the way down', meaning that every aspect of human existence and identity is constituted by socialization through discursive practices, since material forces do exist and exert independent causal pressure on the behaviour of agents, particularly as the state is a concrete self-organized actor, endowed with certain basic interests even before it starts interaction with other states. Constructivism becomes too limited when it simply matches ideas as causal factors against realist variables such as power and interest, without examining first the extent to which these seemingly 'material' variables are also constituted by ideational processes, and without considering that if so much of what scholars assume to be material causes is really a product of historical social practices, then realism's boast of dealing with the reality of IR falls flat on its face.

Where Wendt differs most from the extreme constructivists is that as primary actors in world politics and as 'self-organized units constructed from within by the discursive practices of individuals and social groups', states exist in the collective knowledge of

many individuals and not in the thinking of a lone person. Besides, as organized entities and possessing a 'corporate' identity as a sovereign actor that is not contingent on interaction with other states, they acquire some special needs related to physical survival, autonomy, economic well-being and collective self-esteem and so on. Wendt thinks that only by means of this starting premise about the state as a 'pre-social' actor endowed with certain basic needs, we can see the impact of interaction on the interests and identities of states at the system level. Had states been purely a fruit of interaction, there would be no independent matters that interaction could have impacted and, besides, the state could never appear to be acting as an autonomous agent using rational deliberation to change its situation, instead of seeming a cultural automaton. Much unlike more extreme constructivists, Wendt shows that at least, initially, the state evinces a tendency to behave egoistically in its relations with others. But since the lesson of social identity theory is that this self-referential egotism of members of groups towards members of the out-group is temporary and may change later, and true to the lesson of symbolic interactionism it is through interaction with other states that state actors can get significant redefinitions of self, they can, contrary to the lessons of neorealism, learn to be more other-regarding and cooperative. Through interactions with other states, two hypothetical states, 'ego' and 'alter', can, through role-taking and alter-casting, contingently on the type of behaviour exhibited, reach one of two outcomes: (a) a reproduction of initially egoistic conceptions of self and others continue, or (b) a change in the shared ideational structure to one that is more collective and other-regarding. Each scenario shows that there is no reality of a structure apart from its instantiation in process, and structure 'exists, has effects, and evolves only because of agents and their practices'.[25]

That is why, in Wendt's cultural theory of IP, 'the deep structure of an international system is formed by the shared understandings governing organized violence, which are a key element of its political culture'. Here, three ideal types of cultures of anarchy are treated—Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian—borrowing the language from Martin Wight and the English School. Each is presumed to have 'different rules of engagement, interaction logics and systemic tendencies'. While in Hobbesian culture, prevailing in world affairs until the 17th century, states cast each other in the role of 'enemy', in the Lockean counterpart which marked the modern state system since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, states have regarded each other as rivals prone to use violence to advance their interests, but generally have refrained from attempts to eliminate each other. However, in the Kantian culture, which has emerged only recently in relations between democracies, states are inclined to assume the role of friends, not using force to settle disputes among themselves, rather working as a team against common security threats. In his view, the 'contemporary international system is mostly Lockean, with increasing Kantian elements'. The three cultures, in turn, are rooted in and constitute different role relationships between states: enemy, rival and friend.[26] There are four factors, or 'master variables', which can direct structural change from one culture to another, namely interdependence, common fate, homogenization and self-restraint. Each of them can be instantiated or realized concretely in multiple ways and help in collective identity formation. The result is a model of structural change, backed by a simple causal theory of collective identity formation under anarchy.[27] So Wendt's reading of the anarchy problematic is 'thick', against the thin anarchy of (neo)realism, and it is the saving grace of his thin structure-oriented constructivism.

Onuf

Despite the apparent, deceptive similarity with normal, norm-based statements of constructivism discussed in its minimal core, Onuf built his arguments around rules, not norms, as is evident in the very subtitle of his famous book,[28] which presented the first constructivist theory in IR, coined the term *constructivism* there, but still lost out to Wendt's 'Anarchy' article and *Social Theory of International Politics*. Onuf found rules important in any analysis of social life rules because they instruct people what they should do, 'set standards and prescribe conduct meeting those standards', thereby providing guidance for human behaviour and making shared meaning possible and facilitating the creation of agency.[29] People as well as social constructs like states become social agents only by following rules.

While social relations 'construct us into the kind of beings we are', through acts and deeds, humans use the raw materials provided by nature to construct the world as it is. So, though only meaningful deeds, whether speech acts or physical actions, can constitute the world, their meaning is possible only if rules exist, 'not just as inferences, but as things, however protean or transitory' by virtue of the talk persons do about reasons for following them. According to Onuf, rules do not just regulate various aspects of the world, but they also constitute situations in the first instance. Rules provide agents with choices, including the most basic choice of observing or flouting them. Goal-oriented agents try to attain their goals with the resources nature and society provides them, by acting within an institutional context created by a stable pattern of rules and allied practices but, at the same time, acting on this context. While they sometimes alter this context, they cannot do it according to their own choosing because actions frequently have unintended outcomes. So rules, institutions and these unintended outcomes together form stable patterns known as structures.[30] One says that all of this makes up a new version of constructivism. Apart from structure-based constructivism (SBC), most famously represented by Wendt, and the norm-based constructivism (NBC) of Ruggie, the rule-based constructivism (RBC) is spearheaded by Onuf with Kratochwil.[31]

Onuf's conceptualization of rules refers back to Habermasian 'speech acts', since '[s]peaking a language is engaging in a (highly complex) rule governed form of behaviour', an 'act of speaking in a form that gets someone to act', thereby referring to a performative view of language, and accordingly questioning not only positivist, but also empiricist and realist philosophies of science.[32] All is social in this, since 'the proposition that human beings…would not be human but for our social relations' is fundamental to constructivism.[33] Kubálková says that the 'key point of difference between this form of social constructivism and that offered by Wendt is that it sees a different kind of social world, one in which actors, whoever they are, are governed by language, rules and choices'. Its intellectual roots lie in Wittgenstein and Peter Winch's works and, accordingly, do not partake of Wendt's naturalism and subscribe to its view of the state as a 'pre-social' given. While Wendtian social construction leaves little or no room for social construction of foreign policy from within the state, as 'self-consciously a structural theory', the Onufian version keeps ample scope for domestic influences and is facilitative for the study of foreign policy.[34]

Ling shows that Onuf's constructivism 'subverts—and does so *subtly*'. While drawing from classical thought from Aristotle to Kant, and postpositivist thinking of scholars such as Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Manuel Castells, which generated

mainstream, Eurocentric IR scholarship, Onuf could stretch the field's usual moorings in realism/liberalism, both classical and neo, by including inputs from Daoism. Its resultant democratization of IR and potential transmutation is manifest in *Making Sense, Making Worlds* (2013).[35] Onuf enriches both constructivism and IR by (a) showing through his extensive publications the area where IR and international law meet, (b) focusing on the political character of IR, (c) turning the study of IP into a contribution to social theory and (d) locating it inside an operative paradigm of political society. His fond hope is that this refashioning of the study of IP will have an impact on the social world.

> Far more evidently than with the operative paradigms attributed to nature, social reality, and thus its operative paradigms, can only be constituted by human practices. Constitutive claims on behalf of the social science disciplines and the project they engender, are among these practices. Clearly they affect the ensemble.

This is truer for the discipline of IR than for economics, which was 'constituted long ago' and 'any operative paradigm inspiring its development' has itself been transformed by the discipline's impact on it, whereas IR has constituted itself under 'the belief that it corresponds to an operative paradigm', making intelligible the claim that IR make up a bounded and distinctive social reality. Constructivism has the capability to apply to all fields of social enquiry, where even the disappearance of IR as an operative paradigm would mean nothing. Onuf thinks that 'were International Relations not to exist, international relations would still be seen rather much as they are now—and always have been'. But if it is kept with reconstruction, it 'requires that the discipline be stripped of its current pretensions'. If this does not signify a constructivist 'abandonment of IR (the discipline as it is)', I do not know what else does.[36]

Kratochwil

In an article with Koslowski, Kratochwil argued that 'in all politics, domestic and international, actors reproduce or alter systems through their action', but left no scope for doubt that, in contradistinction to the importance given to norms and structure by Wendt, and rules by Onuf, he makes 'practices' the centrepiece of his constructivism. As manifest in this quote of him:

> Any given international system does not exist because of immutable structures, but rather the very structures are dependent for their reproduction on the practices of the actors... Moreover, reproduction of the practice of international actors (i.e., states) depends on the reproduction of practices of domestic actors (i.e., individuals and groups).[37]

For Kratochwil, practices are intimately connected with the human capacity of creating symbols. They 'create meaning by structuring our universe, building up images far removed from the immediacy of sense perceptions'. Since 'symbolic structures cannot be unequivocally tested against reality...deception but also persuasion are possible'. Since practices are seen as 'the fundament upon which the different fields can be thought in parallel', this 'fundamental claim' makes 'the analysis of practices the pivotal point for understanding politics, theory and science'. Kratochwil says, 'Actors...reproduce and change by their practice the normative structures by which

they are able to act, share meanings, communicate intentions, criticize claims, and justify choices. Thus, one of the most importance sources of change…is the practice of the actors themselves'.

This claim generated many corollaries. The first is the thick linguistic route to constructivism. Fundamental to the connection between shared meanings and understandings informing typical action and the creativity of practice is the role of language, in which the starting point of political analysis has to be inter-subjectivity and therefore habitual or routine action, as in 'social practices'. But practices, like language, adapt and lack any historically fixed framework. Kratochwil learnt this role of practices in his understanding of world politics at the time, specifically against the background of the Cold War and its diplomacy, and elaborated it, first by using Henry Kissinger's study of international order and imparting an inter-subjective–symbolical and linguistic twist to it. Kratochwil's early preoccupation with the role of practice and the evolution of common references during the Cold War left him unsurprised at the end of the Cold War, though he would not have 'predicted' it.

The second corollary of the centrality given to the role of human practices was that a social theory of positivist nature grounded in efficient causality becomes unfeasible. Theorizing had to begin from the social ontology of human practices. Guzzini finds its notable features to be, 'the role of language and interpretation, background knowledge and symbolic communication, open systems of meaning and an open history, one that is non-teleological and non-cyclical', in short 'reflexive theory'.

Unsurprisingly, Kratochwil consistently castigates any attempt to reduce ideational phenomena such as ideas, norms, values and regimes to antecedents that 'cause' behaviour, since this misunderstands the inter-subjective essence of these phenomena, to mistakenly situate them in an objectivist explanation supposedly existing independently of actors' discernments. Kratochwil reminds us that 'the causal arrows run from our (or the agent's) understanding to the world and not from "the world" to our understanding or theory'. Therefore, social causality, even when as potent as natural or efficient causality in a situation, is different from it. One theoretical ramification of this is that all social practices are deemed open. Another is an ethical commitment, which, even if not fully elaborated, made a liberal anti-totalitarian ideal meet a post-structural sensitivity with a doubt against all meta-narratives or grand historical designs.[38]

In one of his last works, Kratochwil emphasized that

> in the social sciences we are concerned with action, namely with accounts of what actors have done and said, believed, and desired, since institutions also 'are' only because they are reproduced through the actors' actions. An analogy to nature and its 'facts' is, therefore, misleading, since for action the temporal dimension of irreversible time matters. This irreversibility of time, calling attention to the performative aspect of actions, requires some finalistic explanation schemes that are quite different from accounts in terms of efficient causes. In short…because a characteristic of praxis is the problem of action taking place in irreversible time, different epistemological and methodological tools are required than those of 'theory' as understood by the unity of science position.[39]

So how to summarize where the three dinosaurs differ? As Zehfuss puts it, the central message of constructivism is that human behaviour is understandable only in the context of meaning, interpretation and judgement, which is 'embedded in an inter-subjective context'. And all three presiding constructivists concur that the meaning of

human behaviour and social reality, which is critically important for the analysis of IR, 'is neither awaiting discovery in the world "out there", nor does it merely exist in the minds of the single individual'. So their differences can be teased out only when we 'focus on *how* meaning is created and what is meant by the inter-subjective context in which it is embedded'. If, for Wendt, 'the intersubjective context arises from a "conversation of gestures," for Onuf and Kratochwil, it is created by speech acts and institutionalized by norms [or rules: insertion mine]. The main difference is in the theoretical position of language'. Wendt's mute actors do not speak and merely 'signal to each other'. But Onuf not only explicitly includes 'words spoken' in his conception of deeds, deemed as the beginning of social construction, but world and words are constitutive of each other. Kratochwil gives language a transcending potentiality. It 'frees us from the here and now and thus makes remembrance and planning possible'. So Zehfuss does not consider constructivism as a homogeneous perspective. Here, if, apart from focusing on identity, Wendt makes enormous concessions to realist and neorealist theories, Onuf and Kratochwil focus on rules and practices, and visualize a linguistically formed inter-subjective context.[40]

TYPES OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism has been variously typologized in IR, and the typologies overlap. We have already mentioned Burch's classification of Wendt's SBC, Ruggie's NBC and Onuf's RBC.[41] Bearing in mind the four streams of thought that have influenced constructivism in IR, namely neo-Kantian 'objective hermeneutics', linguistic 'subjective hermeneutics', CT and pragmatist POS, Adler detects four IR constructivist approaches: modernist, modernist linguistic, radical and critical. Each of these draws directly or indirectly on one or more of these currents of thought and devises strategies for bridging between them. Neo-Kantianism represents essentially an 'objective approach to hermeneutics', because of stressing the need to understand consciousness even while working within the limits of reason, believing in the possibility of attaining empirical knowledge about society unmediated by language and yet rejecting Carl Hempel's strong version positivism and 'the "weak programme" of constructivism in the social sciences'. It leaves its imprint in the modernist versions of IR constructivism. Its 'strong programme' in the social sciences revolves around a shift from consciousness to language and from objective to subjective hermeneutics in the tradition of Martin Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Winch and so on. Adler places CT from the Frankfurt School to Habermas within 'the weak and strong programmes of constructivism in the social sciences' and regards the pragmatist tradition from Charles Peirce, John Dewey, William James and so on as a bridge builder between the weak and strong programmes of constructivism.

The modernist brand of constructivism, spearheaded by Adler and Michael Barnett, Mlada Bukovansky, Jeffrey Checkel, Martha Finnemore, Jeffrey Legro, Ruggie, Risse-Kappen, Katzenstein and Wendt, seeks to 'uncover the causal social mechanisms and constitutive social relations that make IR more intelligible'. Modernist linguistic (or 'rules') constructivism, springing out of the 'combination of subjective hermeneutics with a "conservative" cognitive interest in explaining and understanding social reality', and expounded by Onuf and Kratochwil, has followers such as Karen Litfin, Neta

Crawford, Reus-Smit, Jutta Weldes and Ted Hopf. Radical constructivism in IR often comes close to adopting postmodern and post-structuralist perspectives, and arising from the mix of a radical turn to language (and thus subjective hermeneutics) and a dissenting emancipatory or de-constructivist take on knowledge in general, existing on the extreme margins of the strong constructivist programme of the social sciences, not always questioning the existence of material reality and, very frequently, resorting to empirical research (as in the writings of Der Derian, Roxanne Doty, Cynthia Weber, Lene Hansen and so on). But since they were also agnostic about the representational possibility of material reality, many radical constructivists (such as Ashley, Janice Bially Mattern, David Campbell, Hansen, Walker and Zehfuss) chose to focus on discourse, narratives and texts. A few feminist scholars, including Enloe, Sylvester, Tickner, Birgit Locher and Elisabeth Prügel and so on, also adopted radical constructivist perspectives in their analysis.

Critical constructivism in IR is an outgrowth of the combination of Habermasian objective hermeneutics with a Coxian or Linklaterian nonconformist interest in the emancipatory effects of knowledge, as seen in the research of Heather Rae, Paul Keal[42] and Craig Murphy, who also believe that effort for a better understanding of the mechanisms in which social and political orders are rooted 'is also a reflexive move aimed at the emancipation of society'.[43]

Reus-Smit differentiates between systemic (clearly Wendtian), unit-level and holistic constructivisms and thinks that Wendt's writings 'represent the only true example of this rarefied form of constructivism'. Unit-level constructivism is the opposite of systemic constructivism and, unlike its preoccupation with the external, international realm focuses on the nexus between domestic social and legal norms and state interests and identities, the elements black-boxed by Wendt. A good example of this type of constructivism is Katzenstein's writings on national security in Germany and Japan. To solve the puzzle of how these two states, sharing the same experiences of shame of military defeat and foreign occupation, pride of economic development, shift from authoritarianism to democracy and nearness to great power status, have pursued so widely divergent internal and external national security policies emphasizes the importance of institutionalized regulatory and constitutive social and legal norms. Although Katzenstein does not downplay the impact of international norms on the identities and interests of states, he attracts attention to the domestic determinants of national policies.[44]

While systemic and unit-level constructivisms replicate the traditional IR divide between the international and the domestic, holistic constructivists attempt a bridge-building exercise. They include all factors shaping the identities and interests of states, combining both the corporate and the social into a single analytical perspective which treats the domestic and the international as two facets of one and the same sociopolitical order. Preoccupied with explaining the dynamics of global change and their repercussions for the survival or demise of sovereign states, holistic constructivists pay attention to the mutually constitutive relationship between the globalizing order and the territorial state and generate two resultant distinct but mutually relevant prognoses of international change. While the first relates to 'grand shifts between international systems', the second concerns 'recent changes within the modern system'. Exemplar of the former tradition is Ruggie's seminal work on the rise of sovereign states from the morass of European feudalism, which underscores the significance of changing social epistemes and knowledge systems. Instance of the latter is

Kratochwil's studies on the end of the Cold War, which emphasize the role of changing ideas of international order and security. In Reus-Smit's view, though less rigorous than systemic constructivism, the holistic via media can better capture the formation of normative and ideational structures within the present international system together with the social identities they have spawned.[45]

APPLICATIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM IN IR

Regarding applications of constructivism in IR, I have mentioned just above Kratochwil's constructivist explanation of the rise and demise of the Cold War, Katzenstein's writings on national security in Germany and Japan, and Ruggie's studies on the rise of sovereign states from the cauldron of European feudalism. Kratochwil isolated two important factors that led to the Cold War: (a) change crafted by the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin in 'a constitutive rule of the classical European states system', from the 'previous norms of great power interaction' and (b) a violation committed by US universalism and its stress on liberal openness of 'the exclusivity associated with the traditional notion of [state] sovereignty in important respects'. Both of these changes brought about the emergence of the bloc politics that dominated three decades of post-war history. These constitutive norms received a jolt from Gorbachev's revocation of the Brezhnev doctrine, which signalled the end of the informal Soviet empire and, thereby, the rationale of the Cold War. This foreign policy decision was not driven by system constraints, as neorealists claim, but was rather a policy choice induced by crucial developments in the domestic politics of both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, including perestroika and the 'new thinking' upheld by Gorbachev. 'Gorbachev's decision to end the Brezhnev doctrine reconstituted the international system by changing the constitutive norms of bloc politics and thereby the rules governing superpower relations'. Kratochwil considers that the constructivist approach is best equipped to capture all of this because it 'analyzes the links between domestic and international change without subscribing to the idea of the historical inevitability of liberal democracy'.[46]

Finnemore researches the role of international institutions and organizations in issues of international security, and the effects of international norms on them, in the context of three case studies: (a) the UNESCO and creation of state science bureaucracies, (b) the International Red Cross and Geneva conventions and (c) the World Bank and poverty, thereby showing how norms shape behaviour internationally and determine 'how states know what they want' and for whom. Her 'systemic approach to understanding state interests and state behaviour by investigating an international structure, not of power, but of meaning and social value' establishes that states as institutions are implanted in 'dense networks of transnational and international social relations that shape their perceptions of the world and their role in the world'. This normative context also impacts the behaviour of national decision-makers and parts of the citizenry, which constricts their decisions. In each of the three cases, international organizations

> socialize states to accept new goals and new values that leave deep and durable imprints on the conduct of war [as in the case of the Red Cross and Geneva conventions], the workings

of the international political economy [as in the case of the World Bank], and the structure of states themselves [as in the case of the UNESCO, since states like Lebanon and East Africa, created national science bureaucracies in compliance with norms suggested by it].[47]

All of this convinced her that a 'constructivist logic of appropriateness'[48] is not only equally able as rationalists' 'logic of consequences' in predicting state behaviour but may even be better. For, while the former can 'predict similar behaviour from dissimilar actors because rules and norms may make similar claims on dissimilar actors', the later 'would predict only dissimilar behaviour from similar actors'.[49]

Katzenstein's edited volume on the culture of security takes as its point of departure the failure of both neorealism and neoliberalism to predict the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and many post-Cold War regional developments, and traces this failure to 'two underattended determinants of national security policy: the cultural–institutional context of policy on the one hand and the constructed identity of states, governments, and other political actors on the other'. Twelve wide-ranging case studies on alternative approaches to IR and national security in the book—including those by Ronald L. Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein on culture and security, Dana Eyre and Mark Suchman on the proliferation of conventional weapons, Robert Price and Nina Tannenwald on nuclear and chemical weapons, Finnemore on humanitarian intervention, Elizabeth Kier on military doctrine, Alastair Johnston on China, Robert Herman on Soviet foreign policy, Thomas Berger on national security in Germany and Japan, Thomas Risse-Kappen on NATO, Michael Barnett on alliances in the Middle East, and Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro on national identity theory—seek to address this lacunae by illustrating 'how social factors shape different aspects of national security policy, at times in ways that contradict the expectations derived from other theoretical orientations'. The discussions are woven around the concepts of norms (not only regulative but also and mostly constitutive), identity and culture 'as summary labels to characterize the social factors'. While the concept of *norm* 'describes collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors with a given identity', and *identity* is 'a shorthand label for varying constructions of nation and statehood', *culture* is 'a broad label that denotes collective models of nation state, authority or identity, carried by custom or law'. The central argument of the book is that 'security interests are defined by actors who respond to cultural factors'. The essays show that because the two neo–neo approaches do not incorporate cultural, national or identity perspectives, they cannot account for many puzzles of state behaviour such as (a) China's departure from hard realpolitik when it concerns relations with Taiwan and Japan, or China's participation in the Korean War, when Chinese behaviour becomes less than rational (Johnston); (b) the readiness of states to frequently shoulder unrewarding burdens of humanitarian intervention (Finnemore) and (c) the initial origin and subsequent endurance of NATO, inexplicable from both crude and refined realist theories of alliances, except when attention is given to norms that govern the domestic decision-making process within liberal systems during interactions in international institutions like NATO (Risse-Kappen), in whose view democracies 'externalize their internal norms when cooperating with each other'.[50]

Seeking to solve the puzzle of the application of sanctions against South Africa's apartheid regime from 1960 to 1989, both multilaterally (by UNGA, UNSC, Commonwealth, EC, Nordic countries and OAU) and bilaterally by the USA, Britain,

West Germany, France and Japan even against material incentives, Klotz thought that 'a systematic though preliminary explanation' might be provided by the increasing salience of a 'global norm of racial equality, achieved through the efforts of advocates including the anti-apartheid movement'. But, according to him, the 'crucial question is…how a contested norm, such as racial equality, becomes institutionalized, both globally and domestically'. To answer this question, Klotz bridges the gap between regime theorists and interpretivists, and sees norms not only as constraints but also as motives that not only legitimize means but also goals. The transmission mechanisms that link norms to policy choices are community and identity; reputation and communication; and discourse and institutions.[51]

Constructivism has been applied in really diverse settings. Houghton has employed it to explain the Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979–1981.[52] Magued has employed it to tease out an Islamic IRT from the writings of Sayyid Qutb, and Ahmed Davutoğlu, on the basis of Qutb's concept of *hakimiyya* or governance, and Davutoğlu's 'alternative paradigm' through the lens of constructivism, and has shown how these two concepts are related to the main components of constructivism, such as 'collective identity, common interests, shared knowledge and practices'.[53] But the most ambitious application of constructivism is in the context of construction of Europe and its integration,[54] heretofore neglected in its literature. There, Christiansen et al. have sought to 'stress the impact of "social ontologies" and "social institutions" on the continuing process of European integration', since '[i]f the process is to be explained, it cannot be done within a research context which is closed to interpretative tools'.[55]

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A CRITIQUE AND EVALUATION

My critique of constructivism does not include the substantial criticisms originating from theoretical perspectives subsumed by positivism, which stress causal laws and generalizable explanations of social reality without any reference to people's thinking about them, since constructivism originated in specific repudiation of it. But, even outside positivism, theories marked by constructivist assumptions are critiqued because they 'are not parsimonious or elegant, their causality is indeterminate and relationships are not clearly specified'; and because they 'devise cumbersome models including different actors and describe complex mechanisms of influence and scope conditions that are difficult to apply beyond the situations and processes under their investigation'.[56] This basically means that constructivist research has a problem in moving from the idiographic to the nomothetic, which is the forte of rationalism.

Another set of critiques is generated by the hold-all nature of constructivism. Zehfuss says that the 'intellectual diverseness of work that is represented as constructivist, either by its authors or by others, makes it difficult to critique the approach at all', as it is not clear which claims and assumptions the whole spectrum of constructivist thought embraces. This diversity again stems not only from placing different concepts as the core of this approach but also from basing itself on widely divergent traditions of sociology and Wittgensteinian thought.[57] This amounts to a lack of specificity as to what precisely constructivism represents in the scholarly practice of IR.[58]

A general critique is, however, still possible if we remember that basically constructivism is marked by four core emphases on (a) a departure from materialism (meaning being 'socially constructed', (b) (social) construction of state interests, (c) co-construction of structure and agents, and (d) divergent logics of different types of anarchy.[59] Regarding the first point, Barkin says that in definitions of constructivism, especially of the American variety, the simple dichotomization of these two concepts of idealism and materialism misleads by beclouding their complex relationship and 'in the process both creating a straw man of realism and confusing core definitional assumptions of constructivism'. Missing the distinction between 'issues of ontology (the materiality of things) and issues of epistemology (whether or not we can study politics in the abstract)', it 'obscures the relationship between both constructivism and realism on the one hand and various other approaches to the study of international relations on the other'. This critique of oversimplification, however, applies to Wendt, but not to Adler, who 'puts constructivism between materialism and idealism, rather than squarely on the idealist side'.[60] Kratochwil has done the same thing.

That constructivism has inadequately defined its position vis-à-vis realism and various other IR approaches, generally non-constructivists, come out clearly when dealing with the second point of construction of state interests. Non-constructivists argue that the socially constructed nature of state interests does not affect the truth that 'the primary interests that drive states are prefigured by the material resources and situation of the states, and so states are…"minimally constructed"'. Besides, it is not true that, contrasted with constructivism, other approaches take interests as immutable and given, or that only constructivists claim that state interests may be formed by forces operative at the international level. Among non-constructivists, Moravcsik and Krasner (discussed in **Chapters 13A, 14 and 15**) show how states come to acquire interests that structure their decision-making from domestic and regional contexts. And, at the international plane, Pevehouse employs rationalist arguments to show how membership and participation in international organizations impacts the constitution of states. The second point also brings out the problem that while constructivists have done good research on the constitution of identities of individual states, 'on the making of meso-level norms and practices, and on the constitution of the international system', they have ignored other levels. This stress on forces and actors at one level over others may be justifiable on pragmatic grounds, and the research contexts and interests of individual scholars, but the logic of the mutual constitution of agents and structures implies that 'there is no impetus in constructivism for a zero-sum debate over "which" level provides the most leverage over puzzles'. There is no gain in constructivist research from arguing 'whether, for instance, domestic politics "matters" or not in IR'. A related epistemological problem is that taking states as given so as to explore the structuring of their interactions by a set of international norms/rules resulting in new state identities and rules/norms 'sets aside the (prior) social construction of the state as a social institution'. This creates another ontological problem, in that 'the historical construction of states as sovereign may well be an important element of any story about how states interact with norms'.[61]

Now, the mutual constitution of agents and structures is not also immune to criticism as constructivists have been charged with an 'inability to disentangle the mutually constitutive relationships and establish their temporal sequence: what comes first, a norm that affects the identity of the actors, or actors' identities that influence

the nature of the norms?' Omelicheva thinks that the 'simultaneity of interaction makes it very difficult to capture the self-reinforcing nature of norms, institutions or cultures, and the way in which states, individuals and other social agents create and change the social order of things'.[62] Checkel thinks that agency should be brought in should mutual constitution be taken seriously as a way of understanding the social world if constructivists want to shake off the charge that 'they are reducing one unit of analysis—agents (states, decision-makers)—to the other—structures (norms)'. There are three factors that explain the failure of constructivists to consider agency: (a) their reliance on the 'insights of sociological institutionalism' while thinking about the social world, (b) their 'focus on collectively held, inter-subjective understandings (norms) and (c) the bracketing of 'individual agency as a factor to be explained by mutual constitution' by Wendt. Checkel says that

> Constructivists, despite their arguments about mutually constituting agents and structures, have advanced a structure-centered approach in their empirical work. Moreover, Wendt's theoretical stance has led to a neglect of domestic agency. The result is that constructivism, while good at the macrofoundations of behavior and identity (norms, social context), is very weak on the microlevel. It fails to explore systematically how norms connect with agents.[63]

Besides, by rooting their analysis in impalpable ideational structures, constructivists expose themselves to two knotty and naughty methodological challenges, demonstrating the existence of norms and shared beliefs, and isolating their impact on the behaviour of states. For the first, constructivists have relied on 'artifacts of actors' interactions, such as public statements, decisions of authoritative bodies or official memoirs'. They have also searched for dregs of culture in domestic and international legislations. For the second, that is, pinpointing the meaning that constructivists accord to social facts and scenarios, they have resorted to 'interpretive methods and a narrative mode of explanation', both regarded as less than robust methodological tools of research.

Other critiques include the liberal–idealist orientation of constructivism towards the good norms of democracy, human rights, multilateralism, and so on, and neglect of 'bad norms and pathological identities', though work on it has recently started. One result of this selective bias has been the false representation of the West and Western organizations as the only purveyors of salubrious norms and progress in IR. Besides, the overemphasis on good norms and ideational structures as sufficiently potent facilitators of change in IR, and an inadequate reference to 'material coercion and contestation in world politics' have made constructivism 'dismissive of the role of power in the creation and dissemination of norms and ideas'. Relative inattention to the advantages that material resources and power provide to some social actors in IR leads to obliviousness of the 'significant interrelated effects of social and material inequalities on the nature, patterns of diffusion, and ultimate success of international practices and norms'. Omelicheva thinks that this relative neglect of power in the writings of some constructivists (though not all) is traceable to an extent to 'insufficient attention to domestic politics and the lack of a theory of agency in constructivist research'. Constructivism appeared on the crest of the seething discontent with neorealist individualistic and systemic orientation, yet it 'has been conspicuously inattentive to the state-level accounts of world politics'.

However, as Omelicheva says, most of the defects of constructivism are not incurable, even if chronic. Future research, methodological and substantive, can cure

these. The desiderata that need to be addressed are as follows: (a) allowing more role to power in the social world; (b) explaining why certain norms are 'more successfully diffused, promoted and adopted by international actors' than others; (c) more conversation and dialogues among constructivists of different genres to achieve greater coherence and cohesion; and (d) broadening and refining future research designs, and honing methods of empirical investigations.[64]

Regarding the last point, Checkel suggests first that constructivists move beyond empirical research focusing on single countries to cross-national (latitudinal) or longitudinal designs, which 'would help reduce the problem of overdetermination that is evident in many constructivist analyses' about norms. Those cases should also be considered 'where state identity/interests, in the presence of a norm, do not change'. Second, constructivists are advised to give 'equal attention to the bad things in world politics that are socially constructed', so that they not only can avoid the jibe of 'peaceniks' by detractors but can also 'direct their attention to important unexplored issues such as the role of social construction in ethnic conflict and war'. Third, greater perspicacity is needed in the definition of key terms, such as institutionalization, used in nearly every analysis of norms, without clarifying 'what the process entails'. In the first scenario, constructivists will have to 'pay greater attention to developing the often-implicit cognitive models in their analyses'. In the latter case, where norms cause socialization at the aggregative level, constructivists could gain from 'the insights of historical institutionalists and of those in the ideas literature who have studied such dynamics'.

As for the ontological challenge facing constructivists, I have already shown how and why Checkel thinks agency should be brought in.[65] Regarding the second challenge of theory building, Checkel thinks that, as presently constituted, 'constructivism is, like rational choice, nothing more than a method'. Here, the 'missing element is substantive, middle-range theory, which would provide constructivists with a set (or better, competing sets) of research questions and hypotheses that could be tested in various cross-national and longitudinal studies'. Theory is even more direly needed at the domestic level, 'where the constructivist "norm" is empirical ad hocism with all sorts of implicit models of domestic politics and key actors being invoked'. He gives broad guidance about how and where theory building and constructivist analysis can improve the performance of its central task of connecting agents to structures.[66]

Methodologically, the most ambitious suggestions for perfecting the research programme of constructivism come from Barkin and Sjoberg's ambitious book, where eight scholars have suggested the application of statistical models (four articles), and formal and computational methods (four articles).[67] It is a huge task but worth undertaking since it is the only way to preserve this beautiful middle ground that mediates between realist–neorealist, rationalist and reflectivist approaches of all hues in IR.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the nature of the middle ground held by constructivism in IRT? How is its elective affinity to the middle ground brought out by the context of its emergence and its genealogy?

2. State the signature argument of constructivism in IRT. Are all major constructivists confined within its parameters? If not, does it indicate the unfeasibility of a signature argument of constructivism?
3. Show how Wendt, Onuf and Kratochwil cross the boundaries of the minimal core of constructivism, indicating their similarities and differences in the process.
4. 'Zehfuss does not consider constructivism as a homogeneous perspective'. Comment.
5. Comment on various types of constructivism, their bases of typologization and pay-offs when employed to analyse IR.
6. 'States as institutions are implanted in "dense networks of transnational and international social relations that shape their perceptions of the world and their role in the world"', which constructivist approaches does this statement apply to? State with reasons.
7. Describe the many applications of the constructivist approach to recent IP and discuss their superiority over rival approaches in capturing its dynamic.
8. Give a summary of the many-faceted critique of constructivism in IRT. Do they make constructivism irretrievable?

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16. See 'Preface' and Thomas Risse-Kappen, 'Between a New World Order and None: Explaining the Reemergence of the United Nations in World Politics', in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, eds. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (London: UCL Press, 1997), 255–297; and articles by Simon Dalby, Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, Robert Walker, Ken Booth, Fierke and so in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, eds. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, first published by UCL Press in 1997 (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), vii and 256.

17. Wæver, 'Figures of International Thought', 24–26; note 68 of Chapter 1.

18. Fierke and Jørgensen, 'Introduction', 4, 6–7.

19. See Christian Reus-Smit 'Constructivism', in *Theories of International Relations*, eds. Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 215–216.

20. This statement will be challenged by commentators such as Jackson and Jones, who regard constructivism as 'the newest but perhaps the most dynamic of the main theories of international relations'. See Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Joshua S. Jones, 'Constructivism', in *An Introduction to International Relations*, 2nd ed., eds. Richard Devetak, Anthony Burke, and Jim George (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 104.

21. Kratochwil, 'Constructivism', 80–83, 86–87.

22. For these 'core' statements and numerous citations for them, see Dale C. Copeland, 'The Constructivist Challenge to International Relations: A Review Essay', *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000): 187–212, especially 189–190; also reproduced in Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander, *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and His Critics* (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 3–4; Reus-Smit, 'Constructivism', 216–218.

23. Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 162–163.

24. Alexander Wendt, 'Collective Identity Formation and the International State', *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (1994): 384–396, especially 385.

25. See citations from Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It'; 'Constructing International Politics', *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 71–81; and *Social Theory of International Politics* in Copeland, 'The Constructivist Challenge to International Relations', 191–193.

26. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 43, 247–258, 260–262, 279–280, 298–299, 309, 313.

27. Ibid., 44, 317.

28. Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*, first published in 1989 (London; New York, NY: Routledge, [1989]2013).

29. Nicholas Onuf, 'Everyday Ethics in International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations* 27, no. 3 (1998): 669–693, here 669–670.

30. Nicholas Onuf, 'Constructivism: A User's Manual', in *International Relations in a Constructed World*, eds. Vendulka Kubálková, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert (Armonk, NY; London: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 59–68; 'The Constitution of International Society', *European Journal of International Law* 5, no. 1 (1994): 1–19, especially 6. Available at http://ejil.org/pdfs/5/1/1229.pdf (accessed on 6 October 2020); Onuf, *World of Our Making*, 21–22, 52, 60, 66, 69.

31. Kurt Burch, 'Toward a Constructivist Comparative Politics', in *Constructivism and Comparative Politics*, ed. Daniel M. Green (Armonk, NY; London: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 64–68.

32. Onuf, 'Constructivism', 66; *World of Our Making*, 82–84.

33. Onuf, 'Constructivism', 59.

34. Steve Smith, 'Foreign Policy Is What States Make of It: Social Construction and International Relations Theory', in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. V. Kubálková (Armonk, NY; London: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 52.

35. L. H. M. Ling, 'Onuf's Radical Subtlety', in *The Art of World-Making: Nicholas Greenwood Onuf and His Critics*, ed. Harry D. Gold (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 54.

36. Onuf, *World of Our Making*, 15–16, 27.

37. Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, 'Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System', *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 215–247, here 216.

38. For this analysis and Kratochwil with citations from his books and articles—*International Order and Foreign Policy: A Theoretical Sketch of Post-war International Politics* (London: Routledge, 1978); *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); 'History, Action and Identity: Revisiting the "Second" Great Debate and Assessing the Importance for Social Theory', *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 1 (2006): 5–29; 'Errors Have Their Advantage', *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (1984): 305–320; 'Constructivism', 94–97, see Stefano Guzzini, 'Imposing Coherence: The Central Role of Practice in Friedrich Kratochwil's Theorising of Politics, International relations and Science', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 13, no. 3 (2010): 301–322.

39. Friedrich Kratochwil, *Praxis: On Acting and Knowing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–2.

40. Maja Zehfuss, 'Constructivism in International Relations: Wendt, Onuf and Kratochwil', in Fierke and Jørgensen, *Constructing International Relations*, 54–75, here 68–72.

41. See Note 31 above.

42. See notes 54–56 of Chapter 24.

43. Emanuel Adler, 'Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates', in Carlsnaes et al., *Handbook of International Relations*, 115–117.

44. P. J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and Transformation in the World Polity: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); *Tamed Power: Germany in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), cited in Reus-Smit, 'Constructivism', 220.

45. Ruggie, 'Continuity and Transformation in World Polity', 131–157; 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations', *International Organization* 47, no. 1 (1993): 139–174; F. Kratochwil, 'The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-realism as the Science of Realpolitik Without Politics', *Review of International Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 63–80; Koslowski and Kratochwil, 'Understanding Change in International Politics', all cited in Reus-Smit 'Constructivism', 221.

46. Koslowski and Kratochwil, 'Understanding Change in International Politics', 223, 228.

47. See Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1–5, 69–88, 89–127, 24–28, 34–68, 137–139.

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49. Finnemore, *National Interests in International Politics*, 29–31.

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53. Shaimaa Magued, 'Constructivism in the Islamic Approach to International Relations', in *Islam in International Relations: Politics and Paradigms*, eds. Nassef Manabilang Adiong, Raffaele Mauriello, and Deina Abdelkader (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 83–99.

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55. Christiansen, Jørgensen and Wiene, 'Introduction', in Ibid., 1–2.

56. Mariya Y. Omelicheva, 'Constructivism', in *21st Century Political Science: A Reference Handbook*, Vol. 1, ed. John T. Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning (Thousand Oaks, CA; London; New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2011), 474.

57. Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9.

58. Bertucci, Hayes and James, 'A New Look at Constructivism' in *Constructivism Reconsidered*, 12.

59. Ian Hurd, 'Constructivism', in Reus-Smit and Snidal, *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, 299–305.

60. J. Samuel Barkin, *Realist Constructivism: Rethinking International Relations Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 31, 31–49 for his whole argument.

61. Jon Pevehouse, *Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), cited in Hurd, 'Constructivism', 302–303, 306.

62. Omelicheva, 'Constructivism', 474.

63. Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', *World Politics* 50, no. 2 (1998): 324–348, here 340–342.

64. Omelicheva, 'Constructivism', 474–475.

65. Checkel, 'The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', 339–342.

66. Ibid., 342–347.

67. J. S. Barkin and Laura Sjoberg, eds., *Interpretive Quantification: Methodological Explorations for Critical and constructivist IR* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017).