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Social constructivism in international relations theory

Abstract. *The main emphasis of social constructivism is the place of human consciousness or awareness in world politics. By rejecting the rationalist theory of neorealism and neoliberalism, emphasizing a sociological perspective in world politics, emphasizing normative and even material structures, constructivism emphasizes the role of identity in the formation of interests and actions and the mutual occurrence of factors and structures. Constructivism started with Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), one of the leading thinkers of Realism. Val Dusek argues that Thomas Hobbes and Giambattista Vico, who argue that our knowledge is constructed, are the pioneers of Constructivism. Both thinkers claim that what we know best is what we do or build. Hobbes says that mathematics and its political situation are built by arbitrary decisions. Social Constructivism, especially after the 1980s, has become a common approach in dealing with and examining different issues in the field of humanities and social sciences. This study focuses on the definition of the social constructivism approach within the scope of International Relations (IR) theories and the discussions on this approach. The perspective of social construction is constructivism on change, interests, identity, cooperation, and international norms are evaluated in terms of the discipline of IR. The contribution of constructionism to international organizations and regionalization studies is important. In this context, the article focuses on the effects of social constructionism in the world in the discipline of IR and the research carried out using this approach. This study aims to show the unique aspects of constructivism and its place in IR theories, starting from the common points of the related approaches. In this context, the article first discusses the theoretical development of the discipline and constructivist approaches. Afterward, the article explains social constructivism, which is necessary for a clearer understanding of constructivist IR approaches, within the framework of the basic assumptions that distinguish constructivist approaches from the mainstream of the discipline.*

Keywords: *Social Constructivism, International Relations Theories, Hobbes, Wendt, Giddens.*

Introduction

Theoretical-philosophical reflection on interstate relations goes back a long way in history and is associated with names from political theory and the history of ideas such as Thucydides, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Kant [1; p.198]. The IR emerged as a scientific discipline after the end of the First World War.

On May 30, 1919, the American and British delegations agreed to the establishment of scientific institutes to study international relations at the Paris Peace Conference. This was followed in 1920 by the British Institute of International Affairs, which was called the Royal Institute of International Affairs from 1926 onwards, and the American Institute of International Affairs, which was soon merged with the Council on

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№ 4(137)/2021   35

Foreign Relations [2; p. 276]. This was followed by the establishment of scientific institutions in various countries, the main task of which was to research the causes of war. As early as 1919, the world›s first professorship dedicated to IR was established at Aberystwyth University in Wales [3; p. 137]. Idealistic thinking in international relations was first challenged in 1939 by Edward Hallett Carr, who was appointed to the Wilson Chair at Aberystwyth University in 1936. In his book *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, he demonstrated that the 20 years of crisis from 1919 to 1939 had not created a peaceful world despite the League of Nations, idealistic political advice, and a policy of appeasement. He criticized the lack of the "power" factor in idealistic theory. With the book, Carr earned a reputation for being one of the founding fathers of realism in IR [4; p. 123].

After the Second World War, under American leadership, the UN, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund were largely founded in the spirit of idealism, but against the background of the East-West conflict, the «de facto re-establishment of the academic discipline IR» occurred realism dominated. The writings of Hans J. Morgenthau were groundbreaking for the establishment of the new paradigm, especially the book *Politics Among Nations from 1948* became textbook-like [5; p. 186]. Realism did not become a monolithic block of a theory, but some basic assumptions are shared by all representatives of the realistic school: International politics is based on cooperation or conflict between groups; essentially these groups are motivated by their interests ("egoism"); the interaction between the groups takes place constantly against the background of the possible use of material power with which coercion can be exercised («power-centrism») [6; p. 43].

Initially, idealism (later labeled as such) (also called liberalism in IR) was the discipline›s only line of thought. Decisive for its establishment was the initiative of American President Woodrow Wilson, which he expressed in his 14- point program: End of secret diplomacy, freedom of the seas, free trade, disarmament, peaceful settlement of colonial conflicts, and the establishment of a League of Nations as an instrument of collective Security [7; p. 85]. Idealism is based on a belief in progress and reason. In the long term, the implementation of the principle of reason must lead to a better world in which every conflict and every conflict of interests can be resolved cooperatively through compromise and settlement.

The subject IR (IR) or International Affairs (IA) or Global Studies (GS) or International Studies (IS) is concerned with the studies of politics, economics, and jurisprudence on a global level. Therefore, it forms a discipline consisting of political science, which traditionally deals with the relations between states, as well as economics and law. In recent decades, the focus has also expanded to include the relationship between state and non-state actors. The latter can include, for example, transnational companies or organizations. Since it is a sub-discipline of political science, IR is an independent term and is therefore capitalized [8; p. 103].

Social science research into international politics began after the First World War and went through three major paradigmatics, i.e. fundamental debates by the beginning of the 21st century, through which several schools of thought established themselves in the long term [9; p. 321]. These are themselves interspersed with several heterogeneous currents, which often contradict each other, but rely on the same basic assumptions. Therefore, IR has high theoretical content and great interdisciplinarity, which extends above all to political science, economics, law, history, psychology, and anthropology.

Metatheoretical Debates in International Relations

Theoretical discussions of a metatheoretical nature are characteristic of IR. IR reacts primarily to political science debates in the United States. A distinction must be made between three metatheoretical conflict axes in IR:

1.   Discourse on the ontology between a realistic and an idealistic (liberal) understanding of international politics.

2.   Discourse on the epistemology of IR between naturalists and hermeneutics.

36   № 4(137)/2021

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3. Discourse on the social theory of IR and positivism and post-positivism between rationalists and constructivists.

In addition, international cooperation and behavior beyond the nation-states are increasingly the focus of research interest; non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and states are therefore in a space of international communication or interaction. The content of the discipline can be broken down into two different ways: on the one hand, according to the interpretative approaches that used theories, and on the other hand, according to the policy fields dealt with policies [10; p. 147]. In the history of the IB, there have been three so-called "great debates", long-lasting research discussions that have shaped the subject: firstly in the 1940/the 50s between idealism and realism, in the 1960s between scientism and traditionalism, and since the 1980s between Postmodernism and Positivism. So far, the IBs have been strongly influenced by US political science with a behavioral orientation. With Czempiel, the understanding of politics of the IR can be described as the "authoritative allocation of values in the areas of security, welfare and domination" [11; p. 83]

Metatheoretical models

There are three dominant metatheoretical models in IR. The three metatheories represent different attitudes about the question of whether and how a theory has to explain empiricism and what explanatory claims a theory should have. Carl Böhret, Werner Jann, Eva Kronenwetter (1988) suggests the following subdivision:

1st group: normative-ontological, here certain values and norms are simply set within the theories, and it is important to establish this «good» order. So, statements or ideals for social coexistence are formulated within these theories, in the sense that there are objective truths that can be recognized with the help of science.

2nd group: empirical-analytical, the aim is to find out and formulate the relationships between empirically perceptible reality in the form of legal statements. Social reality is assumed

here but is always considered accessible and perceptible, you just have to have the «right» methods and instruments available. However, this metatheoretical perspective does not know absolute truths.

3rd group: critical-dialectical, social reality is understood here more as a product. Furthermore, it is always forms of dialectics that bring about the progress of a society. The rule here is that society must be grasped in its entirety through research.

Rationalism is part of the empirical-analytical understanding of politics; Constructivism is closer to the critical-dialectical understanding. The concept of power and the phenomenon of power function as an important reference tool both in many fields of social sciences and in the discipline of IR. In this context, many subjects, fields, and problems are discussed within the framework of the concept of power and the phenomenon of power. (12 p.27). *Balance of Power Theory* has been a theory used in many studies in the discipline of IR [12; https://www.irtheory.com]. Balance of Power Theory can be characterized as an important theoretical tool used by Realists in interstate relations when examining the problematics that they deal with around principles such as a zero-sum game, relative gains, competition, and conflict [13; p. 58]. Many IR theories, especially Neorealism, have a materialist approach and are used as a military power and economic capacity. While emphasizing the distribution of material power, Builders reject the one-sided material emphasis. They argue that the most important thing in IR is not material but social. Because the social and political world, including the world of IR, is not a physical entity or a material object that is outside of human consciousness. In this sense, the discipline of IR should focus on the factors that affect the thoughts and beliefs of the actors on the international stage and the common understanding between these actors [14; p. 162].

Above all, the end of the Cold War is considered, if not as the hour of birth, then at least as the main reason for the increasing popularity of the constructivist perspective and generally new approaches in the theories of the

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№ 4(137)/2021   **37**

IR. All these approaches, which are often referred to as postmodern or post-positivistic, have in common that they emphasize the inadequate explanatory power of the so-called rationalistic theories about the fundamental change in the international structure due to the end of the East-West conflict. With its prominent representatives such as Wendt, Kratochwil, Onuf, Ruggie, or Risse, constructivism or social constructivism is probably one of the most popular theories or metatheories that postulate a new approach to understanding IR [12; p. 58]

The international system as an analysis level - the systemic approach

At this most extensive level, interaction patterns can be examined to be able to identify possible causalities. Since there is no high uniform level of methodological development, there is no "cumbersome" empiricism, which gives scientists a lot of freedom. The disadvantage of this level of analysis is the clear overestimation of the system›s influence on state actors and the clear underestimation of the state›s ability to influence the international system. It is therefore easy to find a deterministic mode of orientation by neglecting state autonomy. States are also assumed to have a certain degree of uniformity and domestic politics are viewed as a black box, which may exclude important influencing factors. Cultural differences are often not taken into account in the course of generalization. Therefore, the informative value of this analysis level is limited to correlative statements, as there is no adequate basis for causal statements.

The Nation-State as a Level of Analysis - The Subsystemic Approach

Differentiating the actors enables a differentiated analysis. Generalizations, therefore, tend to have greater accuracy when the individual actors are examined more closely. This enables a detailed analysis of the goals, motivations, and purposes of national policies. However, there is great difficulty in attempting to create a sophisticated model for the comparative study of foreign policy because there are many details that make the process difficult. There is also the further risk of over-differentiation, whereby differences are overemphasized. This is supported above all by a certain ethnocentricity, which makes objective statements more difficult.

Contents of International Relations

The core area of IR is dealing with conflicts. The aspects of the parties to the conflict, the subject of the conflict, the conflict environment, the difference in position, and the outcome of the conflict are to be analyzed. The different theories of IR each offer different analysis concepts and conflict resolution strategies. In the German-speaking area, the concept of the Tübingen School (Rittberger, Hasenclever, etc.) is particularly important, whose conflict analysis is based on a procedural political concept on the one hand (focus: peaceful conflict resolution) and the other hand is deeply rooted in peace research. International policy issues include foreign policy, diplomacy, development policy, peace research, global environmental policy, globalization, international trade policy, international nuclear policy, conflict research, the Middle East conflict, north-south conflict, east-west conflict, strategic studies, and international law [16; p. 37].

Theoretical framework

This article begins with a brief illustration of constructivism in the field of sociology and philosophy. This is intended to make the background and the elementary principles of constructivism more transparent and understandable. It should and can of course only be a rudimentary and simplified representation in this work. The main part of the work then deals with social constructivism as a (meta) theory of IR. In the first short section, a small impression of the diverse social constructivist ideas in the IR is given. The scope of the paper, on the other hand, only allows a more detailed presentation of the two main protagonists. First, the constructivist model by Alexander Wendt is sketched [17; p. 93]. Although he is severely criticized by some

38   № 4(137)/2021

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‹more radical› constructivists and in some cases not recognized as a true constructivist, in the professional world he is nonetheless one of the most prominent representatives of constructivism (or at least of the American school). Central to Wendt is his examination of neorealism according to Waltz, who wrote with his book *Theory of International Politics (TIP)*, probably one of the most cited textbooks of the IR like Waltz, Wendt moves on the systemic level and integrates some of the Core points of rationalism or neorealism in its approach. Although Wendt cannot be regarded as representative of the entire range of constructivist approaches, his approaches offer a good analysis of constructivist questions and enable a relatively simple introduction to the otherwise often very complex and highly philosophical ‹effusions› of constructivism [18; p. 72]. Second, as a counterpart, an alternative constructivist analysis of IR is discussed, which shows Thomas Risse (Kappen) as the main representative. Not least as director of the Center for Transatlantic Foreign and Security Policy at Freie Universität Berlin, he has made decisive contributions in recent years to the further development of the constructivist perspective (in Europe), where he primarily plays the role of transnational actors in IR. Risse is considered to be one of the main representatives of a so-called liberal-institutionalist constructivism - or sociological-institutionalist perspective, as he prefers to call it - is particularly popular in Europe. In the last part, there is an appreciation of the two authors discussed and a few concluding remarks on social constructivism in the IR.

Social Philosophical Origin of Constructivism

We must accept that constructivism is not an entirely new approach but thought with deep historical roots. It is accepted that this approach dates to the 18th-century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) as an old methodology. Today we encounter the concept of constructivism in fields as diverse as literature, painting, architecture, mathematics, philosophy, sociology, pedagogy, or even psychology. In the context of this work, we are interested in the meaning of constructivism in the context of the theories of IR (so-called social constructivism). Representatives of social constructivism in the IR were inspired, among other things, by the work of Berger and Luckmann and Anthony Giddens from sociology. A real understanding of social constructivism as a "theory" of IR is therefore only possible if the background or the basic idea of constructivism in sociology or philosophy has been presented at least in outline beforehand. Berger, Luckmann, and Giddens are among the authors who are most frequently cited by constructivists in the IR. It is therefore advisable, especially in the context of a seminar paper, to concentrate on the presentation of the concepts and considerations of these authors. There are also scientific sources of constructivism, which go back above all to the biological-cognitive constructivism of Maturana and Valera and in its extreme form goes up to the complete negation of reality outside or independent of our perception. The basic thesis can be summarized as follows: Even if an objective reality existed, we can't recognize it directly. What we recognize is only our construction of reality, which can more or less coincide with real reality. Valera and Maturana want to emphasize that ‹our› world only exists in our brain. With the act of knowing we create a world of our own, since our sensory organs do not construct a representation of reality but rather a reality of their own to give the organism as a whole the ability to act. Now, however, Valera and Maturana do not go so far as to assert the existence of all reality outside of their existence, but they acknowledge an environment with which the individuals communicate in some form. This communication or how successful (Valera uses the term viable) is, determines the construction of our reality. So we construct our reality together with others. Such a radical application of the constructivist concept would probably not be ‹suitable for everyday use› for the IR. The roots of social constructivism as the theory of IR, therefore, go backless to the ‹natural science› perspective of Maturana and Valera, but to the application of this new perspective in sociology [19; p. 191].

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№ 4(137)/2021   39

The construction of reality

Social constructivism in sociology goes back to a large extent to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. The two sociologists interpret constructivism on a social level, as an interaction between the individual and society. In their book The Social Construction of Reality, they begin with an analysis of the everyday world. The aim of their analysis is the construction of reality as we experience it every day, to make it comprehensible. Berger and Luckmann develop their thoughts based on the socialization of people. The human being, although in part genetically determined, only develops into an individual through interaction with his environment. On the one hand, he is shaped by society (and nature) and on the other hand shapes it by his actions (interaction with other individuals, children). Thus the human being produces himself as a social being and thus the society in which he lives. Humans and society are inextricably linked and cannot be viewed or examined in isolation from one another. Society is not just a collection of people but is primarily constituted by common rules, which receive their validity through the collective observance of these rules by individuals. Rules are of immense importance to people because they give their existence stability and predictability. In this context, rules should not only be understood to mean laws but all forms of routines and informal rules of conduct. Without these rules, we would be faced with an infinite number of behavioral possibilities in any situation. This so-called capitalization enables the specialization and direction of those actions that are not genetically and biologically predetermined for humans [20; p. 372].

The institutionalization of these trading routines results in actual social stability by making these rules binding and sanctioning them if they are not complied with. Using the example of family formation, Berger and Luckmann explain this process. Two people meet and are initially strangers. Through communication and interaction, they begin to internalize the other›s trading routines and the strangeness diminishes

and common trading routines emerge. But this does not yet establish a society, because this only arises when a third party, the child, joins them. For the child, the trading routines are objective facts that are viewed as part of the rest of the ‹real› world. The interaction with the child leads to a consolidation of the existing structures and thus further constructs this› society›. The consequence of this process on the social level is an ‹illusion› of objective natural facts, which, however, comes from the people produced by themselves.

Identity and roles

A person›s knowledge of the social world that surrounds them is made up of personal experience, traditional knowledge, and memories. According to Berger and Luckmann, the most fundamental experience is the so-called vis-a-vis situation, in which two individuals exchange ideas in direct contact. Typifications play an important role in this. Every statement, facial expression, or gesture made by the other person is interpreted and classified accordingly. In everyday life, the

The individual helps himself with typifications to successfully shape his social interaction. To a certain extent, the environment is ‹pigeonholed› to be able to orientate oneself better and to better understand others and be able to treat them accordingly. This type of typification does not end in the face-to-face situation, which represents only a small part of the contact with the environment. Rather, the individual and the society that he belongs (which consists of individuals) extrapolate this classification to so-called roles (images) (policeman, civil servant, Englishman, Jews, etc.). In this way, society has "institutionalized" certain types, patterns of action, and character, and thus combines certain expectations. This includes not only the roles of individuals but also general rules of behavior, such as road traffic behavior, table manners, etc. The collective knowledge of a person about these roles and behavioral patterns becomes for his knowledge and at the same time an objective truth [2; p. 261] The common knowledge of these roles and standardized behavioral patterns and

40   № 4(137)/2021

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the acceptance of these, forms the definition of social institution. Namely a frequently repeated pattern of action in which the actors interact as types. Roles are nothing more than generally known and institutionalized types. Everyone acts consciously or unconsciously at any time within one or more of these roles and will identify with them. How he understands his role and how it is accepted, respected, and reflected by his environment shapes his understanding of himself and forms his ‹identity› or ‹personality›. Only through the social world can the individual define himself, which is why his identity depends on the environment [21; p. 127]

Giddens› theory of structuring

In a certain sense, Giddens takes up the considerations of Berger and Luckmann and in doing so develops his theory of how the structure of a society and the individuals who constitute it mutually condition and therefore ‹construct› each other. He explicitly opposes a structural-functional theory in which the individual is confronted with an overpowering and objectively predetermined social structure and the individual's actions are merely a product of this. At the same time, however, he also rejects exaggerated hermeneutic approaches that society regards as freely malleable by its members. He, therefore, defends himself against both absolute structuralism and exaggerated individualism [22; p. 141] For Giddens, the actors play a central role in his theory. He ascribes two central skills to these actors: the ability to reflect and intentionality. Their knowledge of the structure of society is not complete but is mostly limited to the everyday structures, i.e., the routine patterns of action in which they find their way. Intended (‹intentional›) actions are an important element in education and training further development of social structures [23; p. 57] However, not all consequences of their actions can be foreseen by the actors, which is why unexpected aspects and developments of human activity and thus of society arise. For Giddens, a social system is nothing more than recurring actions by actors over a certain period and in a certain area. He

defines it as constantly reproduced relationships between actors (or collectives) that have been institutionalized (as regular social practices). Giddens's "theory of structuring" claims that the rules of the social system are based on the actors› production and reproduction of social action [22; p. 144] In and through their activities, the actors reproduce the conditions that make their actions possible. According to the so-called duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the result of the practices that organize and limit them recursively. For Giddens, the stability of society (or the ‹reproduction› of it) is based on human practice. But the unintended and unexpected consequences and aspects of this action mentioned above can create new conditions or structures for future actions through so-called causal feedback loops. According to Giddens, the society represents a social system in the sense of mutual circular causality, and he thus defends himself against any form of reductionism. Man is a social being that is shaped by society, while he is the same society shaped by social actions. The human being is thus both creator and creation of society, which Giddens describes with the so-called duality of structure [22; p. 147] Man is: «*A social, self-conscious, creative, reflective, cultural, symbols and language-using, active natural, laboring, producing, objective, corporeal, living, real, sensuous, anticipating, visionary, imaginative, designing, cooperative, wishful, hopeful being that makes its history and can strive toward freedom and autonomy"*. The ongoing development or transformation and re-creation of society are driven by this very person. Both the intended and unintended consequences of his actions change and maintain the structure of society ceaselessly. However, these transformations are not mechanistic inevitable. Rather, in terms of IR, the story of (Social) constructivism is an approach, school, theory or metatheory.*"The structuration of events in time and space through the continual interplay of agency and structure: the interconnection of the mundane nature of day-to-day life with institutional forms stretching over immense periods and space"*. The same results can have different causes and vice versa. So, according to Giddens, there are no universal

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№ 4(137)/2021   41

laws of society independent of space and time. All laws exist only in their historical context and history is always redefined by human creativity and self-transformation. Giddens describes this concept as ‹conjunctures›, which are always tied to a certain place and time and have a decisive influence on social change. Giddens rejects all determinism in the social sciences and questions and criticizes the concept of mechanical causality [22; p. 157]

Social Constructivism in the IR
Concept, approach, school, theory, or metatheory?
Classification of Social Constructivism Within in IR

Today, social constructivism in the IR is mostly subsumed under the various currents of so-called post positivism and thus the Third Big Debate of the

IR. Others even speak of social constructivism as part of the Fourth Debate, with an independent role in the IR. Wherever social constructivism is to be located in the complex network of diverse theories of IR, it cannot and should not be discussed in more detail in this work. After all, it turns out that the term itself subsumes a wide variety of approaches and that its protagonists use or interpret it in very different ways. It seems clear that social constructivism found its way into the theories of the IR on the one hand through the increasingly critical examination of the dominant, positivist, or scientist schools of rationalism (neorealism/neoliberalism) up to the 1980s and on the other hand the increased influence of constructivist ones, Owes' ideas and theories from sociology. The breakthrough and great popularity of social constructivism in the IR finally came from the postulated inability of rationalist theories to foresee the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War or to describe it with satisfaction [24; p. 118]

Representing Various Protagonists

Although no comprehensive description of the diverse, sometimes very divergent approaches of constructivism can be made

within the scope of this work, a small impression of the diversity and breadth of constructivism in the IR should be given at this point. Antje Wiener positions constructivism like Checkel as a bridge between rationalism and reflectivism (hermeneutics or interpretative classical analysis, see above). Constructivists simultaneously show a fundamental willingness and ability to communicate with both poles, whereby ontological differences are discussed above all. According to Menzel, social constructivism positions itself specifically against the group of rational choice theories and above all against its most prominent representatives, neorealism and neoliberalism or liberal institutionalism. What these two approaches have in common is the assumption that states pursue their interests rationally and thus act in a comprehensible and calculable manner according to the model of homo oeconomicus [25; p. 321] By contrast, social constructivism postulates a social role for the state and sees it more as homo sociological. While rationalists see international politics as determined by material (and thus quantifiable) structures that impose a certain behavior on the actors, according to social constructivists material structures determine the IT, and many (or even all) so far fundamental assumptions of the IR are only constructs. The social reality is a construction of the actors, which results from the interaction in the transnational relationships and their underlying norms, ideas, and identities. John Ruggie, another prominent representative of social constructivism, describes social constructivism as a project that has almost as many variants as representatives. In his opinion, constructivists believe: *"That the building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material; that ideal factors have normative as well as instrumental dimensions; that they express not only individual but also collective intentionality; and that the meaning and significance of ideational factors are not independent of time and place".* This interpretation is strongly reminiscent of the theory of structuring according to Anthony Giddens [22; p. 153]

The only thing that all social constructivist approaches have in common is what can already be deduced from the naming: social reality is

considered socially constructed. This means that it is only created through the interaction of the actors and their perceptions, ideas, and ideals. To what extent this construction goes, what it contains, how changeable or stable it is, or whether there are any objective truths in the IR are still ongoing arguments and there is (currently) no agreement within the constructivist movement.

Social constructivism as a metatheoretical counterproposal

Although the various representatives of social constructivism in their concrete approaches take clear opposing positions to various theories of IR, most do not understand social constructivism as a ‹theory› of IR, but rather as a metatheory or a new epistemological and/or ontological approach – sentence. Social constructivism does not represent an alternative to a specific theory of IR, but rather both a counterproposal to rationalism or positivism as well as to the classic traditionalist theories of IR (realism, idealism, etc.). The detailed description of these two great schools of IR is beyond the scope of this article however it must be pointed out that arguments about them shaped the so-called Second Great Debate of the IR in the 1960s. While positivists would like to be oriented and measured consistently by the successful model and methods of the natural sciences, the traditionalists understand themselves as classical humanists and make use of interpretive approaches, ie hermeneutic methods [26; p. 52] Positivism has prevailed in many areas primarily in the USA and later on in Europe (except the so-called English School) [27; p. 321] According to Hollis, positivism is based on four epistemological assumptions:

- Knowledge of the real (social) world is possible.
- Man, and society are part of this world and can therefore be grasped with the same methods as nature.
- Reliable knowledge can ultimately only be gained through the scientific methods of observation and experiment.
- Human consciousness does not play a role in behavior.

Realistic constructivism according to Wendt

Alexander Wendt is one of the most prominent representatives of constructivism. Through various publications in various journals since the mid- 1980s, he has become one of the most cited authors within the social constructivist school. Last but not least, his book *Social Theory of International Politics* generated enthusiastically but also very critical voices from both constructivist and other (especially neo-realist) representatives of the IR [28; p. 467] Wendt is here as an example of a (main) current of social constructivism in the IR to be taken. This approach is characterized by a state-centered and systemic perspective. The approach owes this parallel to the neorealist analysis of the IR to its label of ‹realistic› social constructivism. At the same time, however, its main criticism applies to rationalism and, in particular, to neorealism according to Kenneth Waltz [29; p. 10]

Wendt sees himself as a bridge-builder between different schools and based on his analysis of the much-discussed actor-structure problem, he has developed his thoughts and approaches over the years into his ‹social› theory of international politics. Through a series of influential articles, Alexander Wendt delivered one of the most complex and apt reviews of structural (neo) realism. While Wendt did not call his approach constructivist at the beginning, but only referred to the structuring theory of Anthony Giddens, his later work converged more and more with a constructivist analysis. In a reply to Mearsheimer›s “The False Promise of International Institutions” [30; p. 18], he locates constructivism as a member of the family of so-called critical theory. He sees himself primarily as a bridge-builder between the extreme fringes of the rationalist and constructivist camp, as well as between modern and postmodern variants of constructivism.

According to Wendt, constructivism can be summarized with three key statements:

1. The states are the most important units of the analysis of the IR

2. The key structures in the state system are more intersubjective than material

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№ 4(137)/2021   **43**

3. State interests and identities are constructed to a more important extent by these structures than if they were given by human nature or domestic politics. [17; p. 77]

Ideas all the way down?

For Wendt (and all social constructivists) a ‹mistake› of neorealism lies in the overemphasis on material factors. Materialists claim that the fundamental foundations of society reside in the nature and organization of material forces. By this, they mean human nature, natural resources, geographical location, forces of production, and forces of destruction. Although these do not exclude the effect of ideas, their importance for international politics is regarded as secondary. According to Wendt, the key message of (neo) realism is not that the nature of international politics is shaped by power relations, but that the effects of power are primarily based on "brute material forces". Idealists or constructivists, on the other hand, argue that power is primarily constituted by ideas and the cultural context and that it is these that give power meaning in the first place [31; p. 7] For Wendt, the international structure is more socially than materially constructed. It is not the distribution of power but the distribution of knowledge that is the foundation of the international structure and thus it is about ideas "all the way down" [32; p. 53] Although he does not, like more radical constructivists, deny. The reason for this lies in the fact that the nature of IR above all is determined by the expectations and convictions of the states and these are primarily constituted by social and non-material structures. However, this does not mean that power and material factors play no role, only that their importance is determined by the social structure surrounding them: *«Power and interest are just as important and determined as before. The claim is rather that power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up.»* Wendt does not claim, like neoliberal approaches, that ideas or institutions can provide a more precise or better explanation for state action (or international politics) than material capacities or power structures. The constructivist perspective asserts, however, that material resources are only given meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge since it is embedded in this structure. Wendt gives an impressive example to illustrate this. Why are the five nuclear warheads in North Korea is accepted as a greater threat to the US than 500 of them in the UK? The relatively trivial answer is obvious: Because Britain is a friend of the US and North Korea is not. But friendship and enmity are not material structures, but functions of shared understandings. With this, Wendt means that he has shown that material capacities per se do not explain anything. Wendt describes this difference between neoliberalism and constructivism in the interpretation of the meaning of ideas in international politics as causal vs. constitutive. By this he means that in neoliberalism ideas only play a role if they have an effect on international politics beyond that of power and interests [10; p. 147] Constructivism, on the other hand, asks to what extent ideas constitute these supposedly material causes in the first place. Wendt›s central message is: The meaning of power and the content of interests are largely a function of ideas [33; p. 50] Nonetheless, Wendt contradicts - in contrast to more radical constructivists - the assumption that material forces should not have any independent effects on international politics at all. Material structures can have independent effects in at least three ways:

1. Material abilities influence the possibility and probability of certain events: Militarily inferior states cannot normally conquer superior states.

2. The same applies to the «composition» of material capabilities, especially technology: possession of nuclear weapons and the simultaneous indestructible second-strike capability reduces the risk of a nuclear attack or war.

3. Geography and natural resources determine or limit the possibilities of a state [34; p. 90]

These effects interact with the interests and ‹cultures› of the states and lead to concrete behavior. But only in this interaction do material forces have the effects they have. The fact that

44 № 4(137)/2021

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Germany is militarily superior to Denmark restricts Denmark›s foreign policy options vis-à-vis the Federal Republic of Germany, but this does not matter at all as long as neither of the two considers a war (or threatens or fears it). For Wendt, materiality is not the same as objectivity and he emphasizes that cultural phenomena can be just as objective, restrictive, and real as power and interest. Wendt thus follows one of the basic theses of constructivism, according to which material abilities or capacities should represent the only relevant factors in international politics [32; p. 10] Although he does not, like more radical constructivists, deny material factors (independent) significance, he believes that they only have a restrictive effect on a state›s scope for action. They only create their real impact through the importance attached to them by the states and thus it is more about ideas than material abilities, such as power. Waltz›s thesis is therefore not wrong in this context, it is merely incomplete [13; p. 12] Wendt correctly points out that even the neorealist model cannot do without implicit ‹idealistic› assumptions The conclusion that states resort to the concept of self-help to guarantee their security in an anarchic system is logical, but not imperative. Wendt fills Waltz's "empty vessel" of anarchy with various ideal cultures of the international system [34; p. 71]

The Actor Structure Problem -The Construction of The Identity

For Wendt, the constructivist question revolves around a classically liberal topic, namely the role of ideas and interests and how they are formed. His criticism of neorealism and neoliberalism is explicitly based on their common commitment to rationalism. His focus is on the assumption of rationalism that the interests and identities of the actors are exogenously given in the IR and are therefore considered unchangeable [17; p. 93] From this it is concluded that structures can only change the behavior of the actors, but not their interests, let alone their identity. But not all neoliberalists share this assumption and Wendt would also like to build a bridge between those liberal approaches that consider a transformation of the actors to be possible and the constructivism that presupposes such a transformation.

Conclusion

While some accept constructivism as a new breath in the theories of IR, some see it as a bridge between different approaches. There are even arguments that constructivism is a theory of IR, a philosophical category, a meta-theory, or a method for empirical research. It is widely believed that social constructivism is not a theory, it only provides a framework, so it would be more appropriate to describe it as an approach [35; p. 164] Wendt presented social constructivism as an inclusive social theory of IR, worked system-oriented just like Waltz, and criticized his theory. Wendt advocated an epistemological position called «scientific realism» [34; p. 52] On the other hand, it is stated that the predecessors of social constructivism and the English School are feminist theories. Social constructivism emerged as an important approach in the discipline of IR in the late 1980s, especially in North America. This period corresponds to an important transformation in the global system. Rational theories fell short of explaining especially the Mikhail Gorbachev era and the post-Cold War era that followed [24; p. 117]

The main discussion topics of the builders are discourse knotted in the concepts of the norm, identity, and socialization. Constructivism differs from critical theory and postmodernism because of the value it places on empirical analysis. It can be said that social constructivism constitutes a middle ground between rational and interpretive theories. According to constructivism, the material world is shaped because of intersubjective relations [27; p. 328] The epistemological and normative interpretation of the material world also determines the behavior of actors. The identities, interests, and foreign policy practices of the actors result in the normative influence and change of the international structure. The international structure is a social structure and affects the behavior of actors and their definitions of identity and interest. Individuals, states, and non-state actors are in communication with each

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BULLETIN of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. Political science. Regional studies. Oriental studies. Turkology Series

№ 4(137)/2021   45

other and therefore a shared knowledge and acceptance emerges among them. Intangible structures, identities determine interests, interests determine foreign policy decisions and actions of actors. In addition, the interests of actors do not take their final form unless they engage in social interaction. Because interests are formed in the process of social interaction.

Constructivism focuses on the identities and interests of states as well as transnational organizations and international organizations. According to the constructors, the international structure is a social structure, and this structure includes norms and international law rules. IR is not taken much into account as they are subject to change and rebuilt. Constructivism has given world politics a social and intersubjective dimension. Constructivism argues that IR and international structure are guided by intersubjectively shared

and institutionalized norms, rules, ideas, beliefs, and values. Accordingly, concepts such as terrorism, sovereignty, human rights, refugees, humanitarian intervention are interstate shared and socially constructed concepts, institutional and normative structures.

All this may indicate that Constructivism is not a monolithic theory. However, it is undeniable that Constructivism has brought a different approach to the discipline of IR by seeking answers to critical questions such as the role of identity, norm, and causal understanding in the formation of national interests. In particular, it cannot be overlooked that it sees identity as the essence of national and transnational interests [36; p. 51] In the analysis of the international system, the emphasis on intellectual factors rather than material factors has gained importance again with constructivist approaches.

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Серия Политические науки. Регионоведение. Востоковедение. Тюркология.
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Халықаралық қатынастар теориясындағы әлеуметтік конструктивизм

Аңдатпа. Әлеуметтік конструктивизмнің негізгі екпіні – адам санасының немесе санасының әлемдік саясаттағы орны. Неореализм мен неолиберализмнің рационалистік теориясын жоққа шығара отырып, әлемдік саясаттағы социологиялық перспективаға баса назар аудара отырып, нормативтік және тіпті материалдық құрылымдарға баса назар аудара отырып, конструктивизм мүдделер мен әрекеттердің қалыптасуындағы тұлғаның рөлін және факторлар мен құрылымдардың өзара кездесуін атап көрсетеді. Конструктивизмді реализмнің жетекші ойшылдарының бірі Томас Гоббспен (1588-1679) бастағандар да бар. Вал Душек біздің біліміміз құрастырылған деп даулайтын Томас Гоббс пен Джамбаттиста Вико конструктивизмнің бастаушылары деп санайды. Екі ойшыл да біз ең жақсы білетін нәрсе - біз жасайтын немесе жасайтын нәрсе деп мәлімдейді. Гоббс математика және оның саяси жағдайы ерікті шешімдер арқылы құрылады дейді. Әлеуметтік конструктивизм, әсіресе 1980 жылдардан кейін, гуманитарлық және әлеуметтік ғылымдар саласындағы әртүрлі мәселелермен айналысу және зерттеуде ортақ көзқарас болды (Дусек, 2006: 198). Бұл зерттеу халықаралық қатынастар (IR) теориялары аясындағы әлеуметтік конструктивизм тәсілін анықтауға және осы тәсілді талқылауға бағытталған. Әлеуметтік құрылыстың перспективасы конструктивизмнің өзгерістерге, мүдделерге, сәйкестілікке, ынтымақтастыққа және халықаралық нормаларға IR пәні тұрғысынан бағаланады. Конструкцияның халықаралық ұйымдар мен аймақтандыру зерттеулеріне қосқан үлесі маңызды. Осы тұрғыда мақалада IR пәніндегі әлемдегі әлеуметтік конструкцияның әсері және осы тәсілді қолдана отырып жүргізілген зерттеулерге назар аударылады. Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты конструктивизмнің бірегей аспектілерін және оның IR теорияларындағы орнын сәйкес көзқарастардың ортақ тұстарынан бастап көрсету болып табылады. Бұл тұрғыда мен алдымен пәннің теориялық дамуын және конструктивистік көзқарастарды талқылаймын. Одан кейін мен конструктивистік IR тәсілдерін нақтырақ түсіну үшін қажет деп санайтын әлеуметтік конструктивизмді конструктивистік көзқарастарды пәннің негізгі ағымынан ажырататын негізгі болжамдар шеңберінде түсіндіруге тырысамын.

Түйін сөздер: Әлеуметтік конструктивизм, халықаралық қатынастар теориялары, Гоббс, Вендт, Гидденс

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Социальный конструктивизм в теории международных отношений

Аннотация. Главный упор социального конструктивизма - место человеческого сознания или осведомленности в мировой политике. Отвергая рационалистическую теорию неореализма и неолиберализма, подчеркивая социологическую перспективу в мировой политике, нормативные и даже материальные структуры, конструктивизм усиливает роль идентичности в формировании инстересов и действий, а также взаимное возникновение факторов и структур. Есть также те, кто ведет отсчет конструктивизму с Томаса Гоббса (1588– 1679), одного из ведущих мыслителей реализма. Вал Дусек полагает следующее: Томас Гоббс и Джамбаттиста Вико, утверждавшие, что наши знания конструируются, являются пионерами конструктивизма. Оба мыслителя утверждают, что лучше всего мы знаем то, что делаем или строим. Гоббс говорит, что математика и ее политическая ситуация построены на произвольных решениях. Социальный конструктивизм, особенно после 1980-х годов, стал обычным подходом к рассмотрению

48 № 4(137)/2021

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и изучению различных вопросов в области гуманитарных и социальных наук. Это исследование фокусируется на определении подхода социального конструктивизма в рамках теорий международных отношений (IR) и обсуждениях этого подхода. Перспектива социальной конструкции - конструктивизм в отношении изменений, интересов, идентичности, сотрудничества и международных норм - оценивается с точки зрения дисциплины IR. Важен вклад конструкционизма в международные организации и исследования регионализации. В этом контексте рассматриваются эффекты социального конструкционизма в мире в рамках дисциплины IR и исследования, проводимые с использованием этого подхода. Цель данного исследования - показать уникальные аспекты конструктивизма и его место в IR-теориях, исходя из общих точек связанных подходов. В этом контексте автор сначала останавливается на теоретическом развитии дисциплины и конструктивистских подходах, после этого пытается объяснить, что представляет собой социальный конструктивизм, который, на его взгляд, необходим для более четкого понимания конструктивистских подходов к IR в рамках основных предположений, которые отличают конструктивистские подходы от основного направления дисциплины.

Ключевые слова: социальный конструктивизм, теории международных отношений, Гоббс, Вендт, Гидденс.

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№ 4(137)/2021   49

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50   № 4(137)/2021
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