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CONSTRUCTIVISM AND THE ANARCHY PROBLEMATIQUE IN 'WESTERN' INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The Mainstream tradition in International Relations theory is typically Western in nature although, in contemporary times, one may notice the resurgence of several strands of Non-Western IR theory from different parts of the Asian continent, that purports to challenge the Euro-centricism in mainstream IR Theory generally and in particularly challenge the notion of 'inter-state anarchy' on which the Positivist-Mainstream tradition is based. But that sort of a challenge had initially emanated from the very core of the Western tradition itself in the 1980s, as the Cold War was nearing its closing stages.

KEYWORDS: *Non-Western IR theory, Centralized Regulating Authority*

INTRODUCTION

The Westphalian nation-state system has been the primary unit of analysis in IR since its official inception as an autonomous academic discipline in 1919, in the aftermath of the First World War. Although the first theoretical paradigm for explaining the nature of the international system-Idealism or Liberal Internationalism pioneered the process of explaining the dynamics of inter-state relations during the inter-war period, it was the ascendancy of Political Realism in the 1940s, in the backdrop of World War II that really gave birth to the Mainstream tradition of IR Theory-The Realist-Positivist Tradition. The factors leading to the World WarII, the onset of superpower rivalry, Cold War dynamics, arms race, the quest for increasing the spheres of influence, above all the dynamics of power politics, championed the process of gradual dominance of Realism as the dominant paradigm in IR theory. Realism emerged 'victorious' out of The First Great Debate in IR(Idealism vs Realism)

The Positivist Tradition is based on the unquestioned notion of inter-state anarchy which presupposes, taking a cue from Hobbesian analysis, the prevalence of anarchy in the international system, marked by the absence of any form of a centralized regulating authority. The Positivist tradition assumes that the states are the primary actors in a system where anarchy is the organizing principle, which is a pre-state, eternal, immutable condition--states are virtually born in such a condition of anarchy and can only react to such a situation. Human nature is reflected in the nature and behavioral pattern of the states. Following Machiavelli and Hobbes, Realist discourse as spearheaded by E.H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, Reinhold Neighbuhr, Stanley Hoffman, George F. Keenan, etc. holds that human nature is essentially ego-centric, power hungry, self –interested-this gets reflected in the nature of the units that is, the states. States strive for security in this self-help system; security presents itself in the form of a dilemma on part of the states as there is no centralized authority to

regulate and distribute the same among the states(security dilemma) and is a relative concept. To apportion security states relentlessly strive to acquire more and power to meet the end of security. How much secure a state can be is conditioned by the fact that how much secure or insecure its counterparts are in the international system. Hence the International System virtually becomes a war-of all-against-all. States have high regard for the values of national security and survival while living under the anarchical international system. Realists portray national interest as defined in terms of power with less regard for moral norms. It gradually becomes a world dominated by the major powers—the key players in the game of power politics. The First phase of the Cold War could succinctly be explained by such an explanatory theoretical tool designed by the Realist-Positivist paradigm.

A new turn in the Cold War was witnessed following The Cuban Missile Crisis and the onset of 'détente', as superpower confrontation now paved the way for economic, strategic cooperation, arms control agreements; hotline agreement', as well as the developments in the Middle East(oil shock), and the demand for NIEO, showcased the importance of economic factors also in IR. The Neo-Realist or Structural Realist paradigm emerged as a constructive extension of Realism. Neo-Realism goes beyond the unit-level analysis of Realism in analyzing how the structure of the international system can constrain the behavior and actions of states and looks at power not just as an end but as a means and having both militaries as well as economic dimensionality. Neo-Realism harps on the notion of distribution of material capabilities across the states in the international system and treats the state-units as functionally alike but varying in concordance with their material capabilities. The Billiard Ball model(of states deadlocked in a constant collision) was somewhat revised in the Neo-Realist Research program of Waltz, Gilpin, and Krasner, in asserting that states can cooperate to some extent although anarchy acts as a limiting force in the process of cementing long-term cooperation. The Neo-realist paradigm was challenged by the Pluralist and Neo-Liberal institutionalist paradigms that argued how even under conditions set by anarchy, states can go in for effective and durable cooperative ventures, with institutions acting as cementing forces of cooperation as well as they showcased the importance of complex interdependence among states. Various issues on which the superpowers had to cooperate such as arms control, including nuclear non-proliferation, global economic issues, as well as the development of cold war alliances such as Sino-US –Pak nexus and India-USSR alliance could showcase the relevance of the Neo-Realist and Neo-Liberal paradigms during the 1970s.

But, as the Cold War entered its final phase following the inception of The New Cold War in 1979(Soviet intervention in Afghanistan being the catalyst), and the emergence of several new issues in IR agenda during the 1980s such as environmental issues, gender, Non-traditional security issues led to a dramatic shift in the realm of IR Theory also. The Post-Positivist approaches emerged virtually as critics of the dominant Realist-Positivist discourse and tried to break the anarchy-power politics determinism and present an alternative to the merely explanatory approach of the positivist discourse and in the course of it, seek the path of an emancipatory approach that could strive to free IR from the 'clutches' of power politics. Among the important theoretical approaches that can be treated as constituents of the Post-Positivist tradition, Constructivism, Feminist approaches, Critical Theory, Post Modernist approaches, Normative Theory, Environmental/ Green theory are prominent, that sought to challenge the hitherto dominant Positivist theoretical tradition by questioning the fixated and eternal and pre-state and unchangeable notion of inter-state anarchy. Although critics put up the question that whether these are theories or merely approaches that are just critical reactions against Realism, and due to significant variations among their arguments, that whether they can be clubbed together under the banner of an alternative theoretical tradition, yet the value of their alternative theoretical research needs to be analyzed. In this paper, an attempt

has been made to analyze Constructivism in details to argue whether there can be any alternative to the principle of anarchy on which the mainstream-positivist tradition is based.

Richard Ashley's seminal publication, "The Poverty Of Neo-Realism" published in International Organization, in 1984, may be said to have acted as a significant catalyst in the process of development of this alternative tradition in IR Theory. Ashley presented a wide-ranging and immensely influential critique of Neo-realism. Ashley began his deconstruction of neo-realism by contending that the so-far dominating theoretical paradigm in IR was an"orrery of errors", "a self-enclosed, self-affirming joining of statist, utilitarian, positivist and structuralist commitments"(Ashley 1984: 228). To Ashley, Neo-Realism suffered from the four following fallacies: Statist, Utilitarian, positivist, and structuralist. Neo-Realism is so fixated on the state-as-actor model of the international system that it cannot visualize or comprehend a world populated by the non-state actors. Neo-Realism is criticized for its blindfold commitment to utilitarian perspectives regarding social order, action and institutional change (S. Chatterjee 1997: 51). Neo-Realist structuralism is inconsistent in that it tends to vacillate between two dialectical notions of structure: one structuralist and the other, atomist(S. Chatterjee 1997: 51). Neo-Realism treats states as having fixed interests and identities and thus cannot see how such interests are created, constructed and transformed by global-historical forces(R Chatterjee 2013 :29). In its theoretical design, it cannot comprehend how global-historical forces can create the very identities, interests, and capacities of states. It is so committed to materialism that it constructs an artificial view of society that is completely devoid of ideas, beliefs, rules (Smidt 2012 21).

Research 'Gaps' in The Theoritical Field of ir / Research Questions.

In the 1980s, the two dominant theoretical paradigms in IR-Neo Realist and Neo-Liberal research asserted that state interests are hard-wired and fixed and that the structure of the international system is conditioned only by material factors such as the distribution of power, technology, geographical resources etc. This material structure constrains state behavior, Hence, ideas, values, and norms cannot possibly shape state behavior

Ashley's devastating critique could expose some of the gaps in the research field of IR theory during the second half of the 1980s. Some of the important questions that cropped may be delineated:

- Do the states have 'fixed' interests and identities defined only in material terms?
- Is 'anarchy' an eternal and immutable condition of the international system?
- The structure of the international system or the units /states – which is more important?
- What is the exact relationship between the units and the structure?
- Human factors, cultural factors, the role of ideas, beliefs, values, norms – what role do they have to play in IR?
- Is the international system and IR a fixed nature, which is unchangeable, or the paradigm and dynamics of IR can be changed and constructed?

Inability of the dominant paradigms in explaining the emerging dynamics of IR in the 1980s, growing interest in social theory, especially Anthony Giddens' structuration theory(that explains how structures not only constrain but also constitute the actors' identities and interests), and Ashley's critique became the basis of an alternative paradigm in IR theory during the late-1980s-that became one of the most influential approaches within the Post-positivist tradition of IR Theory. It was

the Constructivist paradigm in IR Theory that attempted to challenge Neo-Realist research and break the 'theoretical deterministic deadlock' of the typical Positivist-Realist tradition based on an unquestionable and eternal principle of inter-state anarchy.

In 1987, Alexander Wendt introduced IR scholars to the agent-structure problem and its relationship to international politics. The question, according to Wendt is: how should International Relations scholars conceptualize the relationship between agents(states) and structures (structure of the international system)? Waltz's approach, he ergued, began with states, examined the aggregate properties of states capabilities to determine a structure defined by the international distribution of military power, and then posited that this structure constrains what states can do and generates patterns of inter-state behavior(Baylis and Smith 2005: 254). The problem, according to Wendt, is that Waltz fails to see how structures do more than constrain agents; they also construct or constitute the identities and interests of agents/states. Structures are also defined by ideas, norms, and rules, in other words, structures contain normative and material elements. The challenge, therefore, is to recognize that the normative structures can create agents and that agents can create and possibly transform those structures. Employing Anthony Giddens' concept of structuration, Wendt argued that an international normative structure shapes the identities and interests of states, and through their very practices and interactions, states re-create that very structure and sustain it(Barnett 2005: 255). Norms do not operate behind the back of the actors-rather actors determine what they are. Frequently actors reproduce these norms without much thought, acting reflexively as a consequence of taken-for-granted knowledge, habits and routine, yet at times they self-consciously construct new norms that might affect not only the incentives for certain behavior but also the very structure itself. Agent, in this way, might knowingly attempt to transform the structures too. (Barnett 2005: 255)

Thus, Wendt laid the foundation of The Constructivist approach in IR theory, in which Nicholas Onuf, Peter Katzenstein, Friedrich Kratchowil are other leading figures. Constructivism may be defined as an approach to international politics that concerns itself with the centrality of human ideas and consciousness and stresses a holistic and idealist view of structures. As Constructivists have explained world politics, they have been broadly interested in how the structure constructs the actors' identities and interests, how their interaction is organized and constrained by that very structure, and how their very interaction serves either to reproduce or transform such structures(Barnett 2005: 259).

Main Assumptions of Constructivism

The focus of constructivism is on human awareness or consciousness and its place/ role in world affairs. Like critical theorists of IR constructivists believe that there is no such external, objective social reality as such which cannot be comprehended by human beings. Constructivists hold the view that society, human relations and the world including the international system are not just natural and physical or material, they are shaped by human thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. The international system does not exist on its own like the 'solar system' (Jackson and Sorenson 2003:257). According to constructivists, the international system exists as inter-subjective consciousness among the people – it is a human creation not of a physical or material kind just of a purely intellectual and ideational kind. It is a set of ideas, a body of thought, a system of norms – which has been arranged by certain people at a particular time and place(Jackson and Sorenson 2003:258).. If such thoughts and ideas change the system will change as well. Culture, identities, norms, institutions are parts of the inter-subjective world that are created rather than a material objective world that is discovered. (Jackson and Sorenson 2003:258).

Every material manifestation in IR bears the meaning given to it by human beings. Various manifestations in IR including cooperation, conflict, interests, power distribution, capabilities of states are subject to human interpretations(Jackson and Sorenson 2003:258).. War is made in the minds of men and it is in those minds that place can be ensured (Jackson and Sorenson 2003:258). Cooperation and conflict are reflective of agreements and disagreements of the human mind. According to Wendt, international systemic structure, like social structures emerge through human ideas. Ideas precede matter in IR. The crux of the Constructivist research program can be analyzed through the following analysis of Alexander Wendt, who may be treated as *a la* Morgenthau for the Realist school.

The Realist – Constructivist Debate on Anarchy / Alexander Wendt's Conception of "Anarchy is What The States Make of it.

In his celebrated article published in the Spring issue of International Organization in 1992, entitled "Anarchy Is What. States Make Of It: The Social Construction Of Power Politics", Alexander Wendt has focused on the main arguments of the constructivist research program.

- The fundamental attitude of the constructivists is not different from the realists on the question of interstate anarchy. Wendt argues that while non – state actors, international organizations, MNCS are relatively important actors in the international system, the sovereign states still remain as its dominant political actors. In this sense, Wendt may be analyzed as a'statist and realist'. Wendt and the constructivists are strong defends of the anarchical interstate system and they nowhere suggest the need for transforming the prevailing anarchical interstate system into a democratically constituted hierarchical system or a world government system. But Wendt believes that state identities and interests can be collectively transformed within an anarchical context by various factors individual, domestic, systemic, by norms, values, ideas, etc.

- Wendt and the constructivists have present on alternative view regarding the constituting process of interstate anarchy – they challenge the realist – positivist agreements regarding the notion of anarchy as a pre-state, pre-existing construct which is eternal and immutable(Bandopadhyaya 2003: 46). They argue that there is no objective international world apart from the practices and institutions that states arrange among themselves – there are no such international institutions and arrangements and practices that are outside the preview of state activities and beyond regulation of the norms made by the states – even there is not state which is above such rules norms and practices. From this perspective, Wendt argues that anarchy is not external objective reality but is a construction of the states through their mutual interaction process and then it becomes a core principle based on which their relationships are governed. States are not 'prisoners' of the anarchical structure of the international system – rather the constitute 'anarchy' which becomes the fundamental principle based on which the interstate system operates (Bandopadhyaya 2003: 46)

- Wendt links ideas to the identities and interests of the states. The distribution of material capabilities across states is subject to the ideational causality rooted in the changing identities of states. States create a non – material structure of ideas which mutually constitute them. This structure is embedded in the very identities of states and their interests are determined object. These identities are build up by the ideas, values, beliefs, norms of the people of the states – are a part of human activity – nothing social exists outside human activity or independent of it. Wendt portrays states as having 'constituted' their relations in terms of their shared ideas about what a state is

and accordingly what its interests are. Identities and interests of the state are not fixed and are not determined only by material factors, as the neo-realists believe states are not merely reactive to a condition of anarchy and build their relations on the basis of it. Wendt portrays states as perfectly free to create anarchy as they want to. States are not merely constructed by material factors – their identities and interests are determined by human ideas, values, norms which can be changed.

- States are handmaidens of their own construction (Jackson and Sorenson 2003:258). Waltzian neo-realism presented a 'static' model of the international system. States find themselves in a situation which they themselves have created. Material interests of the states and identities are not fixed but determined by ideas, values, norms made by the human beings who are the constituents of states. As these factors change, states' identities and interests can change and the international system also changes. Everything is in a state of flux – nothing is given or certain. Anarchy is a condition made by the states and the nations of 'self – help' and 'power – politics' are essential features of anarchy and not its institutions; 'security dilemma' is not an immutable condition but is a condition created by the states themselves. States not just react to a pre-set condition of anarchy but constitute anarchy and then are subject to it. If self-help is not a constitutive feature of anarchy, it must emerge causally from processes in which anarchy plays only a permissive role.(Wendt 1992: 403)
- Actors acquire identities-relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self-by participating in such collective meanings. Identities are inherently relational: "Identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world. Each person has many identities linked to institutional roles such as brother, son, teacher, and citizen, etc. Similarly, a state may have multiple identities such as 'sovereign', 'leader of the free world', 'imperial power', and so on" (Wendt 1992: 397). Identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a portfolio of interests that they carry around independent of social context, instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations.(Wendt 1992: 397)

Although the Constructivist research program argued for the prevalence of anarchy as the principal factor conditioning inter-state relations, yet its unchangeable, pre-determined, immutable nature was challenged using the alternative framework that the anarchical structure of the international system is virtually a construction of the states and not merely material manifestations and wherein human ideas, beliefs, norms, rules, values have a significant constitutive value. Nothing in IR is fixed but constructed by the states in their mutual relations where human beings as the constituent element of the states and their ideas, values, beliefs have a significant role to play.

The significant contribution of the Constructivist approach is that it tried to break the anarchy-power politics deterministic deadlock of the Realist-Positivist school in analyzing that every material manifestation in IR –cooperation, conflict, allies, enemies, power, interests—bears the meaning given to it by human beings. Human relations, based on inter-subjective beliefs can be both cooperative and conflictual. There can be agreements and disagreements among people that may lead to cooperation and conflict. Constructivism tries to find out the causes behind such cooperation and conflict. But Constructivist research analyzes that that conflicts or cooperation in IR are not due to material considerations alone; these are reflected through agreements or disagreements of human minds. For a constructivist, cooperation happens because people may want to achieve it. In other words, constructivists may visualize cooperation as agreements or

adjustments of two minds or mindsets. For a Positivists, on the contrary, cooperation may take place due to material advantages, such as economic benefits. A neo-realist would establish anarchy as the reality in international politics; a constructivist, on the other hand, would search the roots of anarchy in human minds. Nothing in IR is natural but created by human agency, everything is a product of conscious construction by human beings (A Chatterjee 2010: 48). Social structures, according to Wendt, are created through human ideas. There can be different, sometimes opposing, social structures in IR, but they are all dependent on human ideas. From the Constructivist viewpoint, a 'security community', like, the NATO—may be treated as a social structure created by men, as also the 'security dilemma' of states, where on country views the other as its opponent or enemy(A Chatterjee 2010: 49)..

Again, a fundamental principle of constructivist theory is that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have towards them. States act differently towards enemies than they do towards friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not. Anarchy and the distribution of power are insufficient to explain which is which. USA 's military power has a different significance for Canada than for Cuba, despite their similar 'structural positions', just as British missiles have a different significance for USA them do Soviet missiles(during the Cold War) (Wendt 1992: 399). The distribution of power may always affect states' calculations, but how it does so depends on the inter-subjective understandings and expectations, on the distribution of human knowledge that constitutes their conceptions of self and other. Mutual perceptions of actors are important. If the USA and the Soviet Union could have decided that they are no longer enemies, the cold war may have been over-constructivist logic harps on this note. Constructivists may argue that it was USA's perception(or misperception) of Soviet Union's communist aggressionist designs, stimulated by George F Keenan's Long Telegram, that led it to design the containment policy which in fact led to onset of the Cold War rivalry-it has been explained also as 'a mirror image syndrome'. Regarding the process of the end of the Cold War, Constructivists strive to present an alternative explanation(to the Neo-Realist structural explanation) that it was not a change in the material capabilities, principally the military capabilities of the superpowers and other structural causal factors that led to the Soviet demise and precipitated the end of Cold War days, but, they attribute the same to a change in the Soviet way of thinking regarding domestic politics, economics, and international affairs, spearheaded by Gorbachev's, 'New Thinking'(Glasnost Perestroika) that precipitated the process of 'collapse' of the USSR. Wendt argues' by acting on that understanding to conciliate the West, the Gorbachev regime virtually single-handedly ended the Cold War"(Kololdzlej 2005: 286)

But Constructivist logic of 'anarchy is what the states make of it' cannot possibly be extended to explain the weakness of the United Nations and its inability to function as a World Government authority-something which could have led to a recognition of a truly regulating authority in the global order—which could possibly have been somewhat of a solution to the problem of anarchy, power politics and war (an alternative which the post-positivist tradition has been hankering after). If states are responsible (major power politics) for the 'crippling' 'undemocratic', 'oligarchic' nature of the UN, why cannot they deconstruct the same? Herein the Constructivist research program fails to progress any further. Realist-Positivist explanatory paradigm and its timeless wisdom do prevail thereby.

Yet there can be a scope for further research in IR theory taking a cue from the Constructivist research program. An attempt has been made to explain the same at the end of this paper

If one dwells into the realm of IR Theory to explain the security dynamics in India-Pakistan relations, one may harp on the Realist-Neo-Realist chord by analyzing that Kashmir is an undeniable aspect of power struggle between the two states of India and Pakistan in an anarchical world order where there is no overarching authority and the pressures of the global hierarchical systemic order acting as a constraint on both the states. Structural constraints like nuclear proliferation across the globe and USA and China's support to Pakistan's militarization(In February 2016 US President Obama has pledged to sell fighter aircraft to Pakistan despite his earlier assurance to India to stop military aid to Pakistan) and nuclearization process imbued India to tread the nuclear path, setting off a nuclear arms race in South Asia. Terrorism as an aspect of Pakistan's India-centric policy is aimed at indirectly boosting Pakistan's power potential in an alternative yet negative way, vis-à-vis India in 'the battle over Kashmir'. But the Realist-positivist school of IR theory somewhat fails to provide any solution to the same although explaining how the same is being sustained. If one turns to the so-called 'emancipatory' research projections of the Post-Positivist Constructivist paradigm, one can explain how the *ideas, values, interests of leaders on both sides of the border* are at least attempting to dilute the discordant spirit bolstered by cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, vis-a-vis alternative pressures from the 'terror industry' that are working to derail the same. Modi and Sharif's recent initiatives at initiating a composite dialogue process and bring back Indo-Pakistan ties.somewhat back on the track can be highlighted although the Pathankot terror attacks have been acting as a vehement constraining force on the same. Yet a question remains-can any theory of IR really theoretically address the questions of causes of terrorism in India-Pakistan relations and suggest any measures to root out the same?

CONCLUSIONS

The Constructivist logic of 'anarchy is what the states make of it' may not be able to research further on the *same yet out of its theoretical folding emerges the notions of identities, interests, norms, values, cultural norms, human factors,* which can be used for further theoretical research in the context of the deep-seated cultural factors, factors of exclusion, disillusionment, identity crisis of the minorities –a people-centric approach that can be utilized to dilute the causes that grow and sustain terrorism, the terrorist mindset and the terror-industry. Meager Realist advocacy of military means cannot be a long-term solution to the problem of terrorism since it cannot remove the real causes of terrorism. Hence there remains a further scope of research in the theoretical field of IR in this aspect which can also be useful in the context of terrorism as a prime security imperative in the context of India-Pakistan relations as also of the global order, plagued by the rampages of global terrorism.

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