Significance Of The Constructivist School In Security Studies

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Abstract: Before the advent of Constructivism, the conventional theories enjoyed some form of intellectual monopoly in the field of international relations sometimes aggravating to some form of intellectual arrogance, borne out of the assurance of the truth and validity of their grand theorems, and aided by the explanatory power of the sciences. Constructivism on the other hand came in a subtle manner to reveal the inherent flaws and structural deficiencies contained within those dominant theories. Indeed, it has been said by many scholars that no theory is complete in itself, and there is always room for revision and expansion. This critical launch on Realism, Liberalism, and to some extent, Marxism (together regarded as the conventional theories), was quite necessary in order to inject some form of intellectual vigour to the field of International Relations that was gradually becoming rigid and comatose as a result of the somewhat subtle perceptions of the impeccability of the conventional grand theories.

Keywords: Constructivism, Critical School, International Relations, Security Studies, Cold War

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The history of International Relations has been fraught with the debates about the ideal explanation that could be given with regards to the true nature of the relationship that exists between states and the international system at large. This tussle has majorly been somewhat a mutual exclusivity of the two dominant theories of International relations-Realism and Liberalism, and later, Neo-realism of which the former was more dominant until the wake of the70's and 80's. The latter later emerged with a more forceful approach, loaded with heavy criticisms for the preponderance of Realism. Moreover, unfolding events during that period further compromised the exclusive patronage enjoyed by Realism since the end of the Second World War and saw to the growing popularity of liberalism as a theory. One of such prominent occurrences of that period was the "Great Depression" of the 60's and 70's that saw to the temporary weakening of the hegemonic position of the United States in terms of her economy in the global space, yet the International Organizations of which she was a foremost contributor were growing stronger (C. Reus-Smit, 2005:190).

What was experienced during the first great attack on Realism by Liberalism was a chain reaction of criticisms and counter criticisms by the two dominant theories of which Marxism also played a partial role. Eventually, some form of agreements between the two theories begun to be reached with the emergence of the 'Structural Realism' of Kenneth Waltz and the 'Neo-liberal Institutionalism' of Robert Keohane. Structural Realism or Neo-realism of Kenneth Waltz arose in the 70's with dual intentions. The first was to reassert the preponderance of Realism as the dominant theory of International Relations, and the second to was to re-modify the basic assumptions of realism as propounded by Classical Realism, giving it an empirical basis with testable and verifiable hypothesis (C. Reus-Smit 2005:191). Keohane on the other hand arrived at some points of convergence with the structural realism of Waltz, but also diverted at certain points. As an illustration, some of the basic assumptions of Realism such as-the importance of international anarchy in shaping state behaviour, the state as the most important actor in international politics, and the primacy of self-interest in international politics were retained. However, Keohane maintained that global politics is not in total anarchy as realism portends because the potential for exacerbated anarchy

has been ameliorated by the reality of state interdependence especially in economic and political terms. This interdependence has lessened the potential for pure anarchy, thereby creating room for international cooperation (Keohane 1984:57).

This ideological difference with a potential for agreement continued till the end of the Cold War, when the first concerted attack on the conventional theories was launched by the new school of thought known as 'Social Constructivism'. Before then, the area known as Security Studies was regarded as an exclusive reserve for Realism, while Liberalism and Marxism concentrated on other aspects of the study of global politics. Ontological issues pertinent to security studies ignored since the end of Second World War resurfaced through the auspices of Social Constructivism (P. Hough 2008:6). Hence, Social Constructivism instigated several aspects of International Relations that were hitherto taken for granted or even regarded as insignificant which have gone a long way to influence the study of International Relations and Security Studies in recent times. Under this work, we shall be examining the dominant role of Social Constructivism in the shaping of International Relations and Security Studies in this contemporary age. We shall therefore, be adopting the following outline:

- ✓ Abstract
- ✓ General Introduction
- ✓ Conceptual Clarification
- ✓ Theoretical Framework
- ✓ The Role of Constructivism in International Relations
- ✓ The Role of Constructivism in Security Studies
- ✓ Critique of Constructivism
- ✓ Conclusion

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

We shall be examining some important terminologies under this sub-heading with a view of presenting a vivid explanation of the subject matter. These are as follows:

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: It must be dully noted that a definition of International Relations is not exhaustive and it is largely determined by the intellectual temperament of the scholars involved. Hence, the emphasis on some elements contained in the discipline is largely determined by the individual defining it. International Relations can be described as the study of the whole gamut of political interactions between international actors which include states, international organizations, and to a lesser extent, some wealthy-private individuals (P. Hough 2008:2). Another author and in fact one of the earliest intellectuals in the field, F.S. Dunn (1948) would define International Relations as a discipline that may "be looked upon as the actual relations that take place across national boundaries, or as the body of knowledge which we have of those relations at any given time." Though this definition seems comprehensive enough, but we must note that not all contacts across national boundaries may be regarded as International Relations.

SECURITY STUDIES: The preoccupation with Security Studies as a separate discipline within International Relations did not occur until the early 90's which coincided with the end

of Cold War. This situation was further buoyed with the realization that International Relations and Security Studies were heavily influenced by other factors divergent from primarily military and strategic issues as proposed by the Realists. Hence, Security Studies came to be recognized in independent fashion and given its own place within the wider scope of International Relations. Security studies can therefore be defined as a discipline that concerns itself with a sub-set of political interactions marked by their particular importance in terms of maintaining the security of actors (state) and individual people (P. Hough 2008:2). The maintenance of this security involves a whole lot of factors hitherto considered irrelevant before the advent of the 90's. These shall be discussed as we progress.

CONSTRUCTIVISM: The beginning of Constructivism as a theoretical basis for analysis started with the rise of an ideological school with the nomenclature "Critical Theory". Though 'Constructivism' agrees with most of the basic assumptions of the critical theorists especially as regards the arrogant and superfluous assumptions of the conventional theories about the rationality of actors, but is divergent from the critical theorists in the sense that it pursues an empirical analysis of international relations quite distinct from the critical theorists who are more meta-theoretical and philosophical in their methods of analysis because of their basic belief in the correlation of theory and practice (Price and Reus-Smith, 1998).

Flowing from the above, Constructivism may be described as the school of thought that emphasizes the important role played by systems of shared beliefs, ideas and values in shaping domestic/international structures and which determine the mode of political interaction through those systems (C. Reus-Smit, 2005:196). It exposes the narrow mindedness and theoretical deficiencies of the dominant conventional theories in their emphasis on the presumed 'rationality' of the actors, be it state or individual.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that shall be adopted in the evaluation of 'Constructivism' which is itself a theory is the "Critical Theory" from which it has its origins. As earlier mentioned, the critical theorists emerged in the early 90's with a new wave of criticisms against the prevalent and dominant conventional theories that held sway during that period. The critical theorists challenged the conceptual framework of certain concepts popularized by the conventional theories, imbuing them with Western connotations, and inducing the rest of the whole field of international studies to view such concepts from such narrow minded perspectives that are stripped of any objectivity (P. Hough 2008:9). Hence, the ontological basis for the conception of such words like 'sovereignty', 'freedom', and 'security' were put under the radar. For example, Wyn-Jones (1999), a prominent critical theorist challenged the traditional conception of the state as an entity with absolute authority, imbued with unassailable rights and privileges. He referred to this as "the fetishization of the state". This for him was the root of most of the problems experienced in the study of international relations as motivated

by the conventional theories. The bedrock of the critical school can be traced back to as far as the Enlightenment and the writings of Hegel, Kant, and Marx, but the twentieth century origins of this theory is found in the emergence of an ideological school known as the 'Frankfurt School' comprising of notable scholars such as Wyn-Jones, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno (R. Devetak 2005:138).

The critical theory as propounded by the Frankfurt school had as its primary point of concern, the understanding of the central features of contemporary society by examining its historical and social development. This is embarked upon in view of rooting out the inherent contradictions that are embedded in contemporary discourses and helping to transcend these conceptual obstacles which promote some unnecessary forms of intellectual and political domination. Hence, the aim of critical theory is not simply intended to eliminate the conceptual abuses inherent in social structures, but to analyze the underlying social structure in order to eliminate such abuses (Horkheimer 1972: 206). The critical school is guided by the belief that knowledge is largely determined and conditioned by historical and material contexts, a belief shared by Hegel and Karl Marx. Hence, its focus of enquiry is basically the society and in fact its primary objects of analysis. An extension of this is the interest in theory because they strongly believe that the act of theorizing cannot be independent of the society (R. Deventak 2005:139).

Critical theory is a self-reflective method or approach to the study of knowledge claims. It strives to draw attention to the relationship that exists between knowledge and society and strives to prove that the so called knowledge claims are heavily influenced by political environment defining it and utilizing it to serve certain interests. It is this theory that serves as the ontological basis and foundation for the emergence and evolution of what is now referred to as 'Social Constructivism' which builds largely on the basic assumptions of this theory, but differs in methodology and approach.

IV. THE ROLE OF CONSTRUCTIVISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Despite the ideological disparities existing between the two dominant theories-Realism and Liberalism, and Neorealism/Neoliberalism in recent times, they are both very similar in orientation because they are both based on what C. Reus-Smith (2005:192) would call "the choice theoretic assumptions of microeconomic theory". What he means by this is based on the three general assumptions of both theorems which are –that the political actor, whether individual or state are assumed to be atomistic, self-interested and rational actors in the international sphere. By atomistic, what is meant is that the actors are presumed to be pre-social, their interests and identities are formed prior to their social interactions. Secondly, actors are presumed to be driven primarily by self interest in their various modes of communication and socializing. Thirdly, that actors are rational in the sense that they are capable of establishing the most efficient and effective ways of pursuing and attaining their self-interests in the midst of obstacles posed by the

anarchical system. Flowing from the above therefore, the conventional theories do not see social interaction as a constitutive element of interests. Interests are formed prior to social interactions, and the interactions are not believed to modify these interests in any way, as each actor engages in social interaction with his interests intact and untouched. Therefore, the social sphere is regarded as a strategic domain where actors converge to interact based on their pre-defined interests and choices (C. Reus-Smit 2005:192). This lacuna in the conventional theories, whether deliberate or an over sight, constituted the launch pad of attack from the Constructivists as we shall later see. The pre-occupation with how state interests are formed and what informs them is not a subject of interest to neorealism, but they are primarily concerned with how those interests influence their behaviour in the international domain imbuing them with a special characteristic of survival (Waltz 1979: 91-92).

Constructivism, which is an outgrowth of the critical international theory which developed in the 70's and 80's, launched a critique of these dominant modes of thought at that time. This was based on certain occurrences of the early 90's in which the explanatory models of the dominant theories were found wanting, primarily buoyed by the astonishing self-induced surrender of the USSR, which officially brought an end to almost a century old feud with their ideological enemies. This phenomenon is generally referred to as the end of the Cold War. The rise of the constructivist school can be traced to four factors which are as follows:

- ✓ The first set of constructivists were motivated by the enthusiasm of projecting their own conception of theory and world politics quite distinct from the rationalists who had previously challenged the critical theorists to move beyond theoretical critique to the substantial analysis of international relations. While the critical theorists saw this as an unwelcome development, the new wave of constructivists saw this as a challenge and an ample opportunity to demonstrate the efficacy of non-rational approaches to explaining international phenomena (Walker, 1989).
- ✓ Secondly, the sudden systemic transformation of the global order that occurred in tandem with the end of the Cold War rendered the explanatory power of neorealism and neoliberalism somewhat comatose. None of the conventional theories were ready for the developments that occurred with the end of the Cold War. It also undermined the basic belief of critical theorists that theory is the driving force for practice, as the situation demonstrated a dynamism that contradicted the previous order the world had been accustomed to (C. Reus- Smith 2005:195)
- ✓ Thirdly, the promptings of the new constructivist perspective that emerged in the early 90's was that which sought to be innovative and creative in the conceptual elaborations of the critical school by embracing their basic propositions, but moving beyond mere theoretical critique to the sphere of empirically informed theoretical development and analysis of the international terrain (Klotz 1995:20).
- ✓ Lastly, the vigour and enthusiasm displayed by the mainstream constructivists scholars in embracing the new

perspective and moving it from the periphery to the core of mainstream theoretical debate as a result of their dissatisfaction with the analytical failings of the dominant rationalist theories helped in no small measure in the endorsement and popularity of the new constructivist school of thought, bringing hitherto latent and comatose aspects of the discipline of international relations to the limelight in a profound and dynamic way (C. Reus-Smith 2005:196). These factors were largely responsible for the popularization of the constructivist school and its increased role in the contribution to the study of international relations.

The role of constructivism in international relations can basically be grouped into three major blocs of influence of which they opine that these illuminate the sphere of global politics more than the way mere rationalist assumptions do; these shall be examined one after the other.

Their first basic assumption is that which places emphasis on the role which ideological and normative structures play in shaping the behaviour of political actors, and they reiterate the importance of these normative and ideological structures which they insist is at par with the material structures which the rational theories emphasize. Realism may emphasize the importance of military power, while Marxism may emphasize the important role played by economic factors, but the constructivists are of the idea that the so called material structures only acquire meaning for human action in the light of the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded, and these shared knowledge are in turn informed by shared ideas, beliefs and values that inform human action (Wendt 1995:73). As an illustration, for a long time in Europe, especially during the Middle Ages, only Christian monarchies were regarded as legitimate sovereign states in Europe, and these norms, backed by coercive practices served to compromise nationalist or liberal tendencies existing within the European states.

Secondly, constructivists emphasize the need to investigate the non-material structures that influence the shaping of identities of political actors, because this is for them very important in understanding what informs the interests of political actors, and their actions eventually. Constructivists believe that the knowledge of how interests are formed help a long way in the explanation of a wide range of global political phenomena which the rationalist theories take for granted by their deliberate omission of the investigation of the origins of interests, or what informs the formation of interests. Hence, constructivists strongly believe that identities are the basis of interest formation (Wendt 1992:197). As an illustration, it is quite understandable from the constructivist point of view why someone with a liberal democratic disposition would be intolerant towards totalitarian or authoritarian regimes and would rather support democratic dispensations with a capitalist economic preference. The ideological and normative structure of liberalism shapes the personality and identity of the individual which further determines his interest in a particular political sphere or not.

Thirdly, constructivists argue that structures are not formed prior to the actors they produce. For them, both are mutually constituted, developing and growing in tandem. Hence, they strongly believe that the ideological and normative structures that condition identities and interests would be non-existent if there were no prior knowledgeable practices of the actors involved. Hence, institutionalized norms and ideas, which are in turn products of knowledge basis and structure of certain individuals within the society, define the meaning and identity of the actors, as well as their economic, political and cultural activities. Therefore, Wendt would note that constructivists are also structuralists like their neorealist and neoliberal counterparts, only that they can be regarded as better structuralists as a result of their emphasis on the non-material structures that influence shaping of identities and interests (C. Reus-Smit 2005:197). The three assumptions are generally accepted by constructivists. However, constructivists also differ in accord with their point of emphasis on certain elements which they believe shape the international system. Hence, there are various strands of constructivism that can be identified within the field of international relations. These shall be enumerated below.

STRANDS EXISTING WITHIN THE CONSTRUCTIVIST SCHOOL

According to C. Reus-Smit (2005:199) there have been different forms of constructivism since the early 90's, each differing according to the emphasis on whom and what constitutes the primary actor in international politics. The three strands that can be identified within the constructivist school include; systemic, unit-level and holistic constructivism.

SYSTEMIC CONSTRUCTIVISM: This strand of constructivism is basically promoted by the likes of Alexander Wendt and it is also a very rare form of constructivism. This kind of constructivism is quite similar to neorealism in the sense that it emphasizes the role of the state as the primary actor in international relations. It recognizes the status of the domestic clime within the states, but it chooses to relegate it to the background, thereby making the state its major focus of enquiry. Like the normal constructivist fashion, Wendt believes that the identity of the state informs the interest it pursues as well as its actions. The identity of the state can either be social-the conception, role or personality ascribed to the state by the international community (external reputation), and the corporate identity-the internal ideological, cultural and material factors that make a state what it really is. However, Wendt prefers to isolate the corporate image as a result of his preference for systemic analysis, rather focusing on the social identity, about how systemic processes and structural contexts produce different sources of state identity (Wendt 1992;1995) the weakness of this kind of constructivism is its narrow scope which has the tendency to eliminate crucial determinants of how fundamental changes may occur even in the international system or even in the nature of state identity which is primarily influenced by the domestic order.

UNIT-LEVEL CONSTRUCTIVISM: This is the reverse of the systemic kind and it places more emphasis on how the domestic order shapes state identity. It focuses on the relationship between the domestic, social and legal norms and the identities and interests of states. Peter Katzenstein (1999), a notable constructivist emphasizes the importance of institutionalized, regulatory and constitutive national and legal

norms in shaping the state identity. He showed this with his analysis of the variant state identity of Germany and Japan who both have a common history of domination, defeat and nascent Great-Power status. While one seems to be inclined towards the Grotian principle of international relations, with its emphasis on the evolution of international legal systems to quell terrorism and protests, the latter is more conservative and passive in international affairs. This method allows for the identification of variations among states, but creates more difficulty in identification of similar patterns among states.

HOLISTIC CONSTRUCTIVISM: this tries to bridge a gap between the two constructivist schools by bringing both the social and corporate identities into a unified analytical view. It is primarily concerned with the dynamics of global change, such as the rise and fall of sovereign states and they concentrate on the mutually constitutive relationship between the global order and the state. It therefore, crates room for the explanation of the grand shifts that have occurred in the international system, and the recent changes within the modern system which are distinctive yet complementary in nature. Though it is less elegant in theoretical construction in comparison to the other two, yet it allows for the explanation of the ideological and normative structures of the present international system (C. Reus-Smit, 2005:201). This shall lead us to a major focus on the role of constructivism in security studies in the next sub heading.

V. THE ROLE OF CONSTRUCTIVISM IN SECURITY STUDIES

Just as the Constructivists initiated an intellectual revolution in the general field of international relations, so they extended this revolution to the field of security studies hitherto regarded as the exclusive reserve of the realist perspective that saw security studies only in the arena of military and strategic studies. They brought in their methodology and analytical tool that favours the sociological and cultural approach in the analysis and explanation of policy making. The end of the Cold War had some implications for the field of security studies in the sense that many statesmen, academics, and the general public at large revived interest in areas or issues that were made latent during the Cold War years as a result of the ensuing super-power rivalry. The receding of the 'Nuclear Armageddon' of the Cold War years enabled erstwhile marginalized and relegated issues to emerge from the blues and reassert themselves on the global agenda (P. Hough 2008:7). However, a prediction into the new constructivist era was already made as far back as 1983, when Ullman defined what constituted security threats in a manner unprecedented. To give a vivid insight into this, Ullman (1983:133) defined security threats as "an action or sequence of events that (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of the state or (2) threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to a government of a state, or to private, nongovernmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state." This was followed by a wave of critical theorists and constructivists who defined security studies exogenously beyond the usual scope of military threat and use of force propagated by the Realists.

Scholars such as Ayoob (1997) emphasized the need to examine the internal threats of LDC's (Less Developed Countries) as constituting the principal security concern for most of those areas rather than external threats. Also, Matthews (1989), flowing from Ullman's stance on security threats, highlighted the security implications of environmental problems such as global warming and ozone depletion and the implications they had for international security at large. Another group of scholars, Lynn-Jones and Miller (1995), emphasized the security concerns posed by issues such as virulent nationalism and the social impact of migration. This widening and deepening endeavour of the constructivist school in security studies was crowned by the emergence of the Copenhagen School who asides from defining what security studies should contain, proceeded in providing a framework for the analysis of what should constitute a security threat or not. Hence, the Copenhagen School made its impact on the field of security studies with its classic, authored by three notable scholars, Barry Buzan, De Wilde and Waever, titled *Security Studies: A New Framework for Analysis.* In this work, the Copenhagen scholars specifically made it clear that security threats could arise from many other areas apart from the military including the social, economic, political, and environmental spheres of the state as long as they constituted 'existential threats'. Apart from these, they went further to identify the criteria that must make an issue a security threat or not. That is, they have to be distinguishable from the usual political parlance and stated as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who generates the endorsement of emergency actions beyond the usual conventions that guide and moderate its operations (Buzan et al, 1998:5). The Copenhagen School added fuel to the wideners and deepeners of security studies by making it clear that an issue could be securitized even if it had no palpable threatening influence on the state, as long as it is given impetus by the securitizing actor through the medium of the 'speech act' (P. Hough, 2008:8)

Obviously, this development was met with a vehement resistance on the part of the Realists who feared that security studies would be made to loose focus and articulation if its base was widened beyond the conventional military and strategic studies. Hence, the likes of Walt (1991) and J. Mearsheimer (1990) opined that military threats were more apparent in the Post-Cold War years than ever before which was devoid of the traditional guarantee of state security, and that it was necessary for security studies to return to the basics to rediscover the lost arts of conflict resolution, multilateral diplomacy and conventional defense that defined the Cold War years and its threat of nuclear balance of power. This defiance by the realist school has continued till this very day, as scholars such as Wirtz (2002:311) would opine that if the threat or use of force, or even the logical and technical assistance rendered by military units does not respond to a given problem, it is better not to treat such issues as a security threat. However, as dully noted by P. Hough (2008:9-10), the attempt to define security studies on the basis of whether it involves the use of military threat or not strips the whole enterprise of any real meaning because security is a human

condition that cannot be totally negotiated by the mere attempt of state bodies to secure their boundaries and secure the citizens in a certain dimension. It is negatively presumptuous to subsume human security under the auspices of state security. It totally disregards the uniqueness and aspirations of individuals that make up the state entity. Hence, it is better to define security in behavioural terms rather than excluding certain categories of threats simply because they have no military affiliations. This imbues the whole enterprise with a little objectivity than the subjective endeavour of realism.

There is also a strand of constructivism that strives to deviate a little from the assumptions of other constructivists like the Copenhagen School. While the Copenhagen School and most of other scholars in its route tend to be referred to as 'wideners', there are other constructivists who are more of deepeners in the sense of their critique of the conceptual frame work of the wideners (P. Hough 2008: 8). The major bone of contention is the debate about the place of states in the securitization of issues. The deepeners, just like the neo-liberals, emphasize the prominence of 'human security' above that of state. They opine that the so called 'referent object' propagated by the Copenhagen School, should not be only in reference to the state or sub-state groups alone, but more attention should be directed towards the individuals, institutions and groups that make a state what it really is (P. Hough 2008:8). For example, Falk (1995:146-147), a notable constructivist would argue that security should be regarded as the negation of insecurity as experienced by individuals and groups in concrete situations. He conceives the wideners of security, including the Copenhagen School, as still locked in the web of the elite assessment of securitization

The issue with the Copenhagen School is the fact that, it is a truism they accept the inclusivity of nonmilitary issues as security issues, and they accept that the so called referent object can be something other than the state. However, they insist on the state as being the major securitizing actor. It is this particular situation which Wyn-Jones admits that the aspect the Copenhagen School has not fully taken care of, is what he refers to as 'the fetishization of the state' (Wyn-Jones, 1999). In trying to follow the Copenhagen School line of argument, an issue does not officially become securitized until it is pronounced as so by the state. Hence, the political class is the sole determinant of what should be securitized or not. Issues which may not affect the individuals within the state directly, but may threaten the interests of the political class may become securitized, while issues that threaten individuals directly, but constitute no threat to the interest of the political class may as well be de-securitized or even regarded as irrelevant. As an illustration, the gaze of the world has been drawn to the outright increasing levels of poverty and hardship of the citizens to the level of the violation of their human dignity in North Korea who find it quite difficult to survive in their present political dispensation. This in itself should be of utmost concern to the global community because the human and economic security of that country is gravely threatening. However, the state, embodied in the totalitarian regime of the Kim-Jung dynasty does not see this as an immediate point of concern for they would rather expend the resources of the state in the development and expansion of military incentives. They would spend more money in the recruitment of personnel for the army and development of sophisticated weapons (nuclear weapons inclusive) for the protection of the state. The United Nations has gravely been incapacitated in taking any decisive action against the North Korean government because of the support they enjoy from their allies such as Russia and China. Hence, the government of North Korea sees the referent object of existential threat as the state and not the individuals within the entity, and this informs what they should be securitizing or not.

By adopting the human security framework, therefore, analysts are relieved a little of the burden of speculating on what they think is the most threatening of the myriad of issues on the contemporary political agenda, and they can rather concentrate on issues perceived of as vital and responded to in an extraordinary way of decision-makers. According to P. Hough (2008), the approach is quite pragmatic in the sense that it can be demonstrated through opinion polls what people think is a security threat to them or not, as many people think of security in different terms today than during the Cold War.

Finally, the Constructivist School have helped to answer some fundamental questions pertaining to the field of security studies which were hitherto beclouded by the primacy of military strategy. Hence, they have heightened deliberations on securitization by asking questions such as: Who are being secured? Who is doing the securing? What is to be secured? Which were largely ignored prior to the end of Cold War, have actually been given prospects for resolution by the Constructivist School. We shall now attempt a critique of the Constructivist School as no theory is perfect in itself, neither is it totally nonsensical.

VI. CRITIQUE OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

The first critique of constructivism by the realist school is the unconvincing emphasis placed on the importance of norms and values by the constructivists, especially in the international sphere. The realists insist that the existence and role of norms cannot be doubted in international relations, but they have reservations about the effectiveness of such norms. They insist that international history since the pact of Westphalia has been characterized by constant violation of sovereign rights of weaker states by more powerful states. The realists insist that the quest for power and domination by states will continue to render the adherence to norms and values quite impotent (J. Robert and S. George, 2006: 172-173). Another implication of the constructivist submission is that the international space is not a mere 'strategic realm' were actors pursue their pre-formed interests, but a 'constitutive realm' were those interests may be formed by social interaction. However, realists like Mearsheimer would dismiss the validity of such stance, and would imply from the constructivist stance that the international system is a place where states can make friends by social interaction. For realists, anarchy, offensive capabilities, and uncertain intentions of other states leave states with no choice than to pursue an aggressive self-interested agenda. The aspiration towards communitarian norms is therefore acceptable in principle but not in praxis (Mearsheimer 1995:367).

Another critique of constructivism against neorealism is the claim that the quest for power and the serving of the self-interest of states has been a constant reoccurrence in the international arena, and that there is hardly any new development or change in the orientation of states towards self-aggrandizement and acquisition of power since the time of Thucydides one of the earliest Greek historians who wrote on relationship among states. In fact, the likes of Mearsheimer will claim that the realist stand point has been at play since the early Middle Ages. In contrast to this, constructivists believe that change has been a constant factor in the history of international politics and this can be discovered by the analysis of social interaction through the various epochs which include the evolution of norms, culture, and institutions that inform relations among states. However, Robert Jervis, a neorealist opposes this constructivist argument and claims that the constructivists have not really set out to explain the processes at work in political life. Not much has really been said about how norms are formed and identities are shaped through the historical evolution of international politics (J. Robert and S. George, 2006:173)

A prominent criticism against constructivist school in the field of security studies, especially as espoused in the ideas of the Copenhagen School, is the potential misinterpretation of the idea of 'extraordinary measures' in the tackling of security threats. Extraordinary measures imply the tackling of security issues beyond the usual political strategies used in day to day governance. However, scholars have called attention to the feasible misinterpretation and abuse of the concept by both developed and developing countries. The concept could be used to justify human rights abuses especially in authoritarian dispensations and over-militarization of normal security situations in tackling challenges within the domestic clime. Realizing the implications of this idea, the Copenhagen school suggested the de-securitization of issues to remove them from the 'extraordinary' clime and re-introduce them into the usual political parlance (Aihie 2016).

A very popular claim made by many constructivists is that constructivism is not a theory, but a mere tool of analysis and critique. To a very large extent, they have tried to sustain this stand by avoiding the formulation of grand theorems like that of realism and liberalism. Part of what informs their argument is that international politics is subject to the law of dynamism which often renders grand theories obsolete and irrelevant after some time, and this they claim that the conventional theories have fallen prey to. However, they (constructivists) have somewhat fallen prey to what they have been avoiding. Theories are sets of statements arranged in a logical manner to give an explanation for the occurrence of certain phenomena. If we are to view the conception of theory from this angle, then constructivism has ended up roping itself in what it has been denying. By the endorsement of culture, ideas, and values as responsible for shaping interests and identities of actors, be it state or individual, it has ended up formulating a paradigm for the assessment of international politics which every theory does. Hence, it is not just a mere tool for analysis but a standard for assessment.

Apart from these subtle challenges to constructivism, the theory has gone a long way to change the face of international relations in a special way. In fact, it has reinvigorated the discipline in a way most have not imagined. One of such contribution is the breaking away from the monotonous conception of international relations as a discipline locked in a chain of repetition and reoccurrences by the continual replay of the egoism and self-interest of actors across all epochs. Constructivism has brought to the fore the importance of studying the particularities of culture and identity especially with the twists introduced into international politics by the phenomenon of globalization after the Cold War. This has in turn resuscitated the interest of the intellectual community in the return to the study of international history and the processes that shaped monumental events of those periods (C. Reus-Smit 2005:206).

Another contribution of constructivism is the way they have been able to demonstrate the power of norms and values in shaping relationship amongst states. The dominant theories had always viewed the sphere of ethics or normative science as having little effect on the study of relationships among states that are primarily driven by self-interest and the protection of their space in the global community. Constructivism in turn has proved that norms and indeed values affect the general outlook of actors in the manner they go about pursuing their interests. Their interests are not formed from the blues, but a whole lot of sociological and cultural factors influence the formation of such interests of which norms and values in a society play a very prominent role.

Constructivism has also downplayed the over bloated emphasis placed on material structures by the conventional theories who emphasize an aspect of relations among states such as military capability, economic interest and political might. The erection of international politics based on these material structures alone is an oversimplification of the matter. It makes the whole intellectual endeavour appear haphazard. A thorough understanding of the whole processes that inform the actions of states and individuals cannot be achieved without the understanding of the non-material ideas and principles that guide the formation of the material structures. No material structure is built without prior knowledgeable practices of certain groups and individuals who have perpetuated those practices over time, thereby making them institutionalized.

These contributions of Constructivism cannot therefore be neglected or waved aside. In fact, constructivism has contributed in no small measure in the new image the discipline of international relations carries in recent times.

VII. CONCLUSION

The following summations can be made from the plethora of issues that have been discussed thus far which will help to present a clearer picture of the discussions above. The summations are as follows:

✓ International relations was like a garden or farmland predominantly covered in the trees of the conventional theories, realism most especially, with occasional criticism from close rivals such as Liberalism and Marxism, with all thereby mutating into some exclusive and 'elect' theorems for explanation of occurrences in the

international sphere. This situation was already giving the discipline a rigid and 'finished product' kind of outlook.

✓ A real attempt at challenging the basic assumptions of the conventional theories, thereby bringing their exclusive dominance in international relations and security studies to a halt, came with the rise of the 'Critical Theorists' who were mostly associated with the Frankfurt School. They basically challenged the theoretical foundations of the conventional theories in mostly a meta-theoretical and abstract way.

✓ The Constructivists, taking a cue from the critical theorists, and influenced by sociological discipline, continued in the line of criticisms against the conventional theories. They however differed from the critical theorists in their approach, preferring an empirical/analytical instrument in the analysis of events in the international sphere, and in widening the scope of security studies to cover a plethora of issues hitherto taken for granted, or paid less attention to.

✓ Constructivism propelled the pertinence of examining international phenomena and actors from the lens of the culture, ideas and values that shape them, rather than the mere treatment of actors or issues as mere atomistic in nature with little or no influence from their environment and relationships. In the field of security studies on the other hand, constructivists brought to the fore, the need to examine issues that affect human security in a profound way, which is not just about what the state feels security should be, but also, what really determines the individual conception of what it means to be secure or not. They were able to bring to the fore issues which breed insecurity, and are more devastating than military threats. Issues which affect the day to day living of the average human being on the street, irrespective of his or her continent and demographic affiliation.

As a way of providing more concrete evidence of the effect constructivism has had in recent policy formulations of the international community, we shall be mentioning some situations worthy of mentioning to show the role constructivism has in shaping the new face of international relations and security studies in the 21st century. We can see the influence of both constructivist and liberal schools in the formulation of some United Nations policies. For example, it was clearly stated in 1993 UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) report, that "the concept of security must change from an exclusive stress on national security to a much greater stress on people's security, from security through armaments to security through human development, from territorial to food, employment and environmental security."(UNDP 1993:2) Another major influence of the constructivist school is the movement of nations towards the consideration of non-military issues as more paramount in their policy formulation. For example, at the Lysoen Conference of 1998, the Canadian and Norwegian governments launched the 'Human Security Network' that advocates for the development of global policies that take human security interests into perspective whether these affect state interests or not. As at 2007, eleven other states (Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Republic of Ireland, Jordan, Mali,

Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Thailand) had keyed into it (P. Hough 2008:15).

Hence, constructivism has buoyed the vitality of the discipline of international relations and security studies in a very profound way, its influence will for a long while continue to shape the face of international relations and blaze the trail for future incentives in these two important disciplines.

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