



Constructivism and Identity Formation: An Interactive Approach

Yücel BOZDAĞLIOĞLU*

Abstract

The 1990s have been the most productive years in the discipline of International Relations and in this period the Constructivist theory appeared to be the new alternative to Neorealism. Constructivism in International Relations was introduced by Alexander Wendt whose works on Constructivism have deeply influenced theoretical approaches in the following years. In this article, the main debate between Neorealism and Constructivism is analyzed and a critique of Systemic Constructivism developed by Alexander Wendt was presented. In the following sections, an interactive approach, which takes into account the domestic factors that are important for the formation of state identity, is developed.

Keywords Constructivism, Neorealism, state identity, interactive model

INTRODUCTION

The 1990s appeared to be the most productive years for the discipline of International Relations (IR) and, in the words of Reus-Smit, "witnessed a renaissance in social theorizing about international relations"¹. The end of the Cold War, the United States' first ambivalent and later malevolent hegemonic position, the spread of micro-nationalism, the rise of religious fundamentalism and subsequent terrorism have all challenged the mainstream theorizing in IR and forced IR scholars to re-evaluate the main approaches in the field. Among them Neorealism, by most accounts the dominant paradigm in IR theory, has taken the most assault. Its dominance has been challenged by the emerging approach of constructivism, which has been, by far, the most successful attempt to do so in the last decade. The constructivist critique was especially directed toward the main realist assumption that stresses the primacy of anarchy and the distribution of relative power (the materialist ontology) in world politics. "Constructivists counter that structural realism misses what is often a more determinant factor, namely, the intersubjectively shared ideas that shape behavior by constituting the identities and interests of actors"².

Constructivism is a broad approach that encompasses "Weberian interpretative sociology, Symbolic Interactionism, variants of Marxism, Veblenian institutionalism,

* Yrd. Doç. Dr., Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi, Nazilli İ.İ.B.F, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü.

¹ Christian Reus-Smit, 'Imagining Society: constructivism and the English School', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 4, No. 3, October 2002, pp. 487-509, p. 487.

² Dale C. Copeland, 'The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism', *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Fall 2000, pp. 187-212, p. 187.

post-structuralism(s) and hermeneutics”³. Despite its broad character, constructivism has been popular in the field through influential writings of Alexander Wendt, who pointed out that “IR constructivism draws selectively from social theory and is characterized more specifically by its idealism”⁴. This ‘idealism’, according to Wendt, means that “structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces and identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature”⁵. Therefore, constructivism rests on the intersubjective dimension of human action.

In focusing on “ideas, agency, norms, and transnational connections constructivists have offered path-breaking perspectives in the study of international politics”⁶. Notwithstanding its growing popularity in IR theory, constructivism has also attracted criticism from other schools of thought, especially from structural Realism, for having serious flaws in its critique of realism and for being empirically and methodologically wrong. Some argue that Constructivism is not theory, but a research program that supplements Realism rather than supplanting it⁷. Still others argue that “while it does not form a single unified perspective- it constitutes a general social scientific framework rather than a ‘theory’ as such- it exhibits certain common and distinctive themes”⁸. Finally, a growing body of research on Constructivism contends that “the problem with contemporary constructivism is that it has been dominated by liberalism and idealism”⁹.

I argue that Wendt’s version of constructivism, which can be called ‘Systemic Constructivism’, can be warded off against these critiques by integrating into the constructivist analysis the factors operating at both domestic and international levels. As one scholar rightly points out “it is commonly acknowledged that in order to understand the preferences and behavior of states in international relations, we need to take both domestic considerations and international considerations of states into account”¹⁰. This is especially true for state identity since factors at both domestic and international play important roles in identity formation and therefore, those factors

³ Ronen Palan, ‘A world of their making: an evaluation of the constructivist critique in International Relations’, *Review of International Studies*, 26, No. 4, 2000, pp. 575-598, p. 576.

⁴ Ibid., p. 576.

⁵ Ibid., p. 576.

⁶ Robert S. Snyder, ‘Bridging the Realist/Constructivist Divide: The Case of the Counterrevolution in the Soviet Foreign Policy at the End of the Cold War’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005, pp. 55-71, p. 67.

⁷ Michael C. Desch, ‘The Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies’, *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Summer 1998, pp. 141-170.

⁸ David Patrick Houghton, ‘Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision Making: Toward a Constructivist Approach’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2007, pp. 24-45, p. 27.

⁹ Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, ‘Bridging the Gap: Toward A Realist-Constructivist Dialogue’, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2004, pp. 337-352, p. 338.

¹⁰ Gerry C. Alons, ‘Predicting a State’s Foreign Policy: State Preferences between Domestic and International Constraints’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2007, pp. 211-232, p. 211.

should be analyzed thoroughly. This endeavor requires to show how state identities are formed at the domestic level and how those identities, once formed, can influence state interests and behavior at the systemic level (the interactive model). In this article, I do not aim to propose an alternative approach to constructivism. Instead, my intention here is to increase the applicability of constructivism to a wide range of cases by exploring the possibilities ignored by the systemic constructivist research program. For this purpose, the paper is organized as follows: the first section reviews constructivist critique of structural realism and identifies the key points related to state identity in systemic constructivism. In the second section, I elaborate Wendt's conceptualization of identity and try to explore other possibilities that have been ignored by the systemic constructivist theory. The last section of the paper draws conclusions for IR theory in general.

THE MAIN DEBATE: STRUCTURAL REALISM VS. SYSTEMIC CONSTRUCTIVISM

In his seminal work, *The Social Theory of International Politics*,¹¹ Alexander Wendt labels Kenneth Waltz's neorealist theory as individualist and materialist and argues that it falls short in explaining "what is going on" in world politics today. Instead, he develops his own "idealist"¹², structuralist and holist constructivism¹³ by drawing on structuralist and symbolic interactionist sociology. However, Wendt also "concedes important points to materialist and individualist perspectives and endorses a scientific approach to social inquiry"¹⁴ and thus, tries to find a 'middle ground' between different methodological traditions in social sciences.

Wendt, like Waltz, develops a systemic theory and brackets unit-level processes to avoid reductionism¹⁵ in his methodology, which ultimately makes his version of constructivism a state-centric one. He justifies his state-centric approach on the grounds that "since states are the dominant form of subjectivity in contemporary world politics this means that they should be the primary unit of analysis for thinking about the global regulation of violence"¹⁶. Therefore, according to Wendt, "the possibility of systems theory, of whatever kind, assumes that the domestic or unit and systemic levels of analysis can be separated"¹⁷. The reason that Wendt embraces the systemic theorizing

¹¹ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹² The term idealism here does not refer to the theory 'Idealism' of the 1920s but to a version of constructivism which emphasizes the prominence of 'ideas' in international relations.

¹³ Palan, 'A world of their making', p. 578.

¹⁴ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*

¹⁵ For systemic and reductionist theories, see Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Systemic and Reductionist Theories', Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 47-69.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

mainly results from his desire to show that state identities and consequently interests are endogenous to state interaction and can change depending on that interaction rather than exogenous and fixed as Waltzian Neorealists assume. Once Constructivists could prove that this hypothesis holds up then it would be easier for them to explain structural change, which has always been a problematic issue for Neorealists. However, one should keep in mind that this Constructivist argument largely rests on the assumption that the structure of the international system is primarily social rather than material, which constitutes the main ontological difference between Constructivists and Neorealists. Thus, Wendt contends that “the ontology of international life is idealist and holist”¹⁸.

Materialism vs. Idealism: Structure and Structural Change

According to Neorealism, “a system is composed of a structure and of interacting units”¹⁹. Waltz argues that in order to define structure, one has to “leave aside, or abstract from, the characteristics of units, their behavior, and their interactions”²⁰ to be able to distinguish between unit level and system level variables. The definition of a structure also requires “ignoring how units relate with one another (how they interact) and concentrating on how they stand in relation to one another (how they are arranged or positioned)” because interaction takes place at the unit level while “the arrangement of units is a property of the system”²¹. Therefore, in Neorealism, the arrangement of units acquires a high explanatory power since it determines what goes on afterwards. Waltz’s conceptualization of the nature of structure involves three main dimensions: *ordering principles* which refer to the principles by which elements of structure are organized, *character of units* which refers to the functions performed by the system’s elements, and finally the *distribution of capabilities* which refers to the extent to which material power resources are concentrated in the system²².

According to Waltz, the international systems are ordered based on the principle of its members’ sovereign equality and it is therefore de-centralized and anarchic. Since there is no supreme power that is entitled to command, “the parts of international-political systems stand in relations of coordination”²³. Anarchy, in this account, then becomes the main (and the only) ordering principle, which is held as a constant. This anarchic nature of the international system brings us to the second dimension of struc-

¹⁸ Samuel M. Makinda, ‘Reading and Writing International Relations’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 54, No. 3, 2000, pp. 389-401, p. 392.

¹⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, ‘Political Structures’, Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 70-97, p. 70.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 88-99.

²³ Waltz, ‘Political Structures’, p. 81.

ture: the character of units which is defined in terms of the functions that units perform. Neorealism holds that unlike hierarchical systems such as in domestic political structures where system's parts are differentiated by the functions they perform, units in international systems where anarchy prevails do not show the same functional differentiation. "Anarchy entails relations of coordination among a system's units, and that implies their sameness"²⁴. In other words, units in the international system are functionally similar because anarchy imposes on them certain rules, which in turn force units to behave similarly. This functional similarity, then, produces like units as long as anarchy endures. If anarchy is a constant and the states are functionally similar then what explains variation in international structure and thereby generates varying outcomes? In Neorealism, only the third dimension, the distribution of material capabilities, constitutes variation in international structure. "States are differently placed by their power"²⁵. In assessing the structure of the international system, according to Waltz, what matters is only the number and power of states. "It is this step in the argument which ultimately makes Waltz's theory of structure materialist"²⁶. Waltz's materialist ontology, then, explains structural change in terms of changes in the number and power of states in the international system- "namely transitions from one distribution of power to another"²⁷. According to Wendt this explains structural change only in one sense. "But the kind of structural change the critics have in mind is less material than *social*/the transition from feudalism to sovereign states, the end of the Cold War, the emergence of peace among democratic states, and so on. Neorealists do not consider such changes 'structural' because they do not change the distribution of power or transcend anarchy"²⁸.

Neorealists assume that once structure is developed it becomes a force above the system's units on which they cannot have any influence. Structure on the other hand imposes on states certain behaviors that states have to follow if they wish to succeed in the system. In other words, taking the Darwinian evolutionary process as an example, Waltz argues that structure rewards some kind of behavior while punishing others that do not conform to structure's requirements. Since the main goal of states in the system is survival, they have to behave in accordance with structural requirements, which eventually make them acquire selfish identities and interests. Waltz here makes a motivational assumption that since states are security-seeking actors they have to be egoistic or self-regarding²⁹. "Combine this assumption with anarchy, and states will not enjoy even an imperfect guarantee of their own security unless they set out to pro-

²⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

²⁶ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁹ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 91.

vide it for themselves, which means the international system is by definition a 'self help' system"³⁰. Therefore, in Neorealist account, the reason for states to have selfish identities and interests is a structural requirement and they are imposed on states by the structure, and thus exogenous to state interaction. As a result, "structure relates to agents by affecting their behavior 'indirectly' through two processes, competition and socialization"³¹. While competition helps produce like units, socialization affects only the behavior of units. However, according to Waltz, the socialization process is purely materialistic and his behavioralism reduces norms and rules to a patterned behavior. Therefore, this socialization process does not have any effect on the properties of states. Instead, the properties of states are given and the socialization process understood in materialist terms affects only behavior. Here, state identities and interests are treated in a rationalist fashion. At the behavioral level, "social constructivism contends that human actors follow rules that not only regulate behavior (that is, constitute a causal effect) but also define social identities and national interests"³². Constructivists maintain that "what actors do in international relations; the interests they hold, and the structures within which they operate are defined by social norms and ideas, rather than by objective or material conditions"³³.

Wendt defines political structure as a social rather than material phenomenon. He contends that "since the basis of sociality is shared knowledge, this leads to an idealist view of structure as a distribution of knowledge or 'ideas all the way down'"³⁴. According to Wendt, the structure of any social system contains three elements: material conditions, interests and ideas. "The significance of material conditions is constituted in part by interests...Similarly; interests are constituted in part by ideas"³⁵. Wendt's argument makes an important contribution to the issue that has been neglected in mainstream IR: the extent to which material forces are constituted by ideas. The issue has very important implications for IR theory because "it bears on the transformative potentials of the international system"³⁶.

According to Wendt, "the key premise of idealist social theory is that people act toward objects, including each other, on the basis of the meanings those objects have for them"³⁷. For Constructivists, "material consequences are the result of how we have

³⁰ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* 90.

³¹ Ibid., p. 100.

³² Yakub Halabi, 'The Expansion of Global Governance into the Third World: Altruism, Realism, or Constructivism', *International Studies Review*, 6, No. 1, 2004, pp. 21-48, p. 36.

³³ Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, 'Bridging the Gap', p. 338.

³⁴ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* 129.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 139.

³⁶ Karen Smith, 'A 'mixed media' approach to International Relations', *Politics* Vol. 30, No. 1, 2003, pp. 83-96, p. 86.

³⁷ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* 40.

socially constructed the meaning and relevance that material objects have for us"³⁸. Ideas in systemic constructivism are reduced to 'knowledge' since the category of ideas is too broad. Knowledge in sociological sense is defined as "any belief an actor *take* to be true"³⁹. On the question of knowledge, however, Wendt seems to be fundamentally a positivist and a naturalist. "The crucial distinction is that whereas Wendt ends up painting a world that seems very similar to that painted by rationalists"⁴⁰.

These beliefs (or knowledge), according to Wendt, are socially constructed (an epistemological claim)⁴¹ and can be private or shared. However, as soon as actors start interacting with each other, privately held beliefs immediately become a 'distribution of knowledge'. When two actors meet for the first time, each side begins to encounter with private, domestically rooted beliefs about 'Self' and 'Other'. These beliefs help actors define the situation and constitute their interests. For the sake of his systemic theory, Wendt at this point argues that "even if states' private beliefs are completely exogenous to the international system, in other words, when aggregated across interacting states they become an emergent, systemic phenomenon in the same way that aggregate material capabilities are a systemic phenomenon"⁴². Thus, Wendt discards privately held knowledge from his analysis and focuses on socially *shared* knowledge or *culture* which is rooted in the relative experience of actors. Through this move, Wendt "therefore advocates the beginning one's theorizing about international politics with the distribution of ideas, and especially culture, in the system, and then bringing in material forces, rather than the other way around"⁴³.

After Wendt defines the structure in social terms, he rejects Neorealism's individualist ontology on the grounds that "it fails to recognize that agents might be constructed by social structures and that the nature of states might consequently be bound up conceptually with the structure of the states system"⁴⁴. According to Constructivism, therefore, structure can not only have causal effects but also constitutive construction effects on agents. Thus, Wendt discards the Neorealist assumption that actors' interests and identities are independent from the social structure. This argument gives Constructivists an opportunity to show that actors' identities and interests are endogenous to and arise out of state interaction. By re-conceptualizing the structure of international system in idealist, rather than materialist, terms Wendt argues that "it

³⁸ Carol Atkinson, 'Constructivist Implications of Material Power: Military Engagement and the Socialization of States, 1972-200', *International Studies Quarterly*, 50, No. 3, 2006, pp. 509-537, p. 534.

³⁹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*⁴⁰. Italic is in the original.

⁴⁰ Brent J. Steele, 'Liberal-Idealism: A Constructivist Critique', *International Studies Review*, 9, No. 1, 2007, pp. 23-52, p. 27.

⁴¹ Vincent Pouliot, 'Subjectivism: Toward a Constructivist Methodology', *International Studies Quarterly*, 51, No. 2, 2007, pp. 359-384, p. 361.

⁴² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*⁴¹.

⁴³ Smith, 'A 'mixed media' approach', p. 87.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

becomes possible to ask constitutive questions that might lead to progress in the system's evolution"⁴⁵.

In addressing the anarchy 'problematic', Constructivists contest the most important Neorealist assumption that "state egoism in anarchy begets self-help"⁴⁶. In other words, "while neorealist pessimists assume international politics will always consist of self-regarding and relative-gain-seeking states, constructivist optimists assume that what is, need not always be"⁴⁷. According to constructivists, the causes of state egoism do not justify always treating it as given. Alexander Wendt, for example, argues that Waltz's definition of political structure based on ordering principles (anarchy) and the distribution of capabilities, by itself, predicts little about state behavior. "It does not predict whether two states will be friends or foes, will recognize each other's sovereignty, will have dynastic ties, will be revisionist or status quo powers... These factors, which are fundamentally intersubjective, affect states' security interests and thus the character of their interaction under anarchy"⁴⁸. He argues that Neorealism assumes only a single logic of anarchy. Wendt rejects this assumption and instead articulates three logics or cultures of anarchy- Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian⁴⁹. "These cultures of anarchy are based on three different kinds of role through which states represent 'self' and 'other', namely; enemy, rival and friend"⁵⁰. Wendt asserts that among these cultures "only the Hobbesian structure is a truly self-help system"⁵¹. According to Constructivism, then, Neorealist assumptions are valid only in one sense and do not explore other possibilities. In other words, even though there is only one anarchy, it does not mean that it has to be a self-help system. The self-help system is only one culture of anarchy and transformation from one culture to another is always possible.

The Constructivist argument, presented above follows from the question of whether anarchy is compatible with more than one kind of structure and therefore logic. Wendt argues that to answer this question, it is important to distinguish micro- and macro-level structures. In Neorealism, this distinction refers to the domains of foreign policy and international politics. Both theories hold that micro- or interaction level anarchic structures vary. According to Wendt, "the real question is whether the fact of anarchy creates a tendency for all such interactions to realize a single logic at the macro level"⁵². Neorealists believe that they do. According to Neorealism anarchies are

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Mercer, 'Anarchy and Identity', *International Organization* Vol. 49, No.2, 1995, pp. 229-252, p. 229.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 229.

⁴⁸ Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization* Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, pp. 391-425, p. 396.

⁴⁹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* 246-311.

⁵⁰ Makinda, 'Reading and Writing International Relations', p. 392.

⁵¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* 247.

⁵² Ibid., p. 247.

inherently self-help systems that have the tendency to generate military competition, balances of power and war. Constructivists, on the other hand, argue that “anarchy can have at least three kinds of structures at the macro-level, based on what kind of roles-enemy, rival, and friend- dominates the system”⁵³. Without these representations, then, anarchy would be an empty concept and would have no intrinsic logic. “Anarchies acquire logics as a function of the structure of what we put inside them”⁵⁴.

The above argument has important implications for structural change. Whereas Neorealists explain structural change in terms of the distribution of capabilities, Wendt explains structural change as a move from one culture of anarchy to another, and “this evolution of identities takes place through natural and cultural selection”⁵⁵. In this logic, Wendt uses an extension of Chicago style ‘symbolic interactionist’ methodology and places social process at the center of change. He posits that “it is only through the interaction of state agents that the structure of the international system is produced, reproduced and sometimes transformed”⁵⁶. He further argues that “the logic of interaction at a given moment will reflect the characteristics of state agents and the systemic structures in which they are embedded, but the process of interacting adds an irreducible and potentially transformative element which must be studied on its own terms”⁵⁷. Wendt assumes that continuous interaction among states may have a transformative effect on role identities of states (in other words how they see ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ by changing their ideas and therefore role identities) and consequently, on their interests. Unlike rationalist models, which assumes that what is at stake are behavioral choices only, the Constructivist model assumes that the identities and interests (properties) of the agents who make these choices themselves are not given, but assumed to be in process as well. Therefore, the properties of agents rather than just their behaviors are at stake. According to Wendt, in the process, actors instantiate and reproduce identities, “narratives of who they are, which in turn constitute the interests on the basis of which they make behavioral choices”⁵⁸. Wendt argues that this assumption does not have to create a contradiction between rationalist and constructivist models of social process because identities and interests may sometimes endure over the course of an interaction and thus render rationalist models plausible. What Wendt criticizes is the fact that rationalist models overlook the possibility of change in state identities and interests through social interaction. As a result, while state identities and interests are always given and fixed in rationalist models and therefore exogenous, Constructivists assume that they can change and become endogenous to state interaction.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 247.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 249.

⁵⁵ Makinda, ‘Reading and Writing International Relations’, p. 392.

⁵⁶ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 366.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 366.

The Constructivist argument on the possibility of change in state properties through interaction carries important connotations for the role of structure in the construction of agents, most commonly known as the 'agent-structure debate'. As mentioned before, Neorealists assume that the distribution of capabilities form structure and once formed, structure becomes a force above states and imposes certain rules states have to follow in their behaviors in order to survive. Structure in Neorealism then have only regulative effect on agents. In Constructivist logic, however, not only do anarchic structures regulate behavior but also they constitute the identities and interests of states, and the three cultures of anarchy can be internalized to three different levels in state identities. Thus, while Neorealists assume that structure has only causal effects on state behavior, Constructivists argue that "holist hypothesis that the structure of international politics has also construction effects on states"⁵⁹. Their argument is that the fundamental structures of international politics are social rather than material; and these structures shape actors' identities and interests⁶⁰. When arguing this point, Constructivists "focus largely on the intersubjective dimension of knowledge, because they wish to emphasize the social aspect of human existence- the role of shared ideas as an ideational structure constraining and shaping behavior"⁶¹. That is, the structure leads actors to redefine their identities and interests in the process of interacting and thus, actors become 'socialized' by the process. This assumption, unlike Neorealism, which holds interests and identities constant in order to isolate the causal role of power, in turn, allows Constructivists to show "how ideational structures shape the very way actors define themselves- who they are, their goals, and the roles they believe they should play"⁶².

The Constructivist definition of structure also challenges the determinacy of Neorealism in an important way. In the Constructivist approach, ideational structures and actor (or agents) co-constitute and co-determine each other. As explained above, Waltz's structural model describes structure as the unintended positioning, standing, or organization of units. Once structure is formed it becomes a force that rewards behavior that perpetuates its existence and that punishes deviant action. Strategies that states design to evade its influence are at best futile exercises. As David Dessler points out:

The job of structural theory is to explain the connections between the conditions of action and action itself. Structural theory 'brackets', or sets aside, considerations of the agential powers underpinning action. It attempts to explain the various modes of enablement and constraint operative in given interactive settings, leaving aside considerations of the capacities and liabilities of agents who respond to those conditions of actions. Of course, any

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 248.

⁶⁰ Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', p. 392.

⁶¹ Copeland, 'The Constructivist Challenge', p. 189.

⁶² Ibid., p. 190.

social action is the product of both structural and agential forces, and therefore a strictly structural explanation of action will necessarily be incomplete

Constructivists, on the other hand, advocate that structures are not reified objects that actors can do nothing about, but to which they must respond. "Rather structures exist only through reciprocal interaction of actors. This means that agents, through acts of social will, can change structures"⁶⁴. The Constructivist definition of structure in social terms suggests that human agents and social structures are, in one way or another, theoretically interdependent or mutually implicating entities"⁶⁵. This, in turn, allows Constructivists to challenge the Neorealist assumption that states are locked into dysfunctional situations that are in turn replicating conflictual practices. Therefore, "the Neorealist presumption that there are universal laws of international politics that work across space and time, driven by the given reality of structure, must be discarded"⁶⁶.

As the above discussion implies, for Constructivists, an actor's reality is the product of historical social practices and "thus can, at least in theory, be transcended by instantiating new social practices. This process of cultural change may be slow...but even the most embedded structures can be altered by acts of will"⁶⁷. In other words, Constructivists place human activity and social practices at the center of change.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SYSTEMIC IDENTITY FORMATION

Identities in constructivist analysis play a very significant role because they provide the basis for state interests. According to constructivists "explanations based primarily on interests and the material distribution of power cannot fully account for important international phenomena and that analysis of the social construction of state identities ought to precede, and may even explain, the genesis of state interests"⁶⁸. Wendt discusses that what kind of anarchy (or cultures of anarchy) that will prevail depends on "how [actors] construe their identity in relation to others"⁶⁹. They suggest that collective identity could emerge endogenously at the systemic level and such a process would generate cooperation⁷⁰.

⁶³ David Dessler, 'What's at stake in the agent-structure debate', *International Organization* Vol. 43, No. 3, 1989, pp. 441-473, p. 444.

⁶⁴ Copeland, 'The Constructivist Challenge', p. 190.

⁶⁵ Alexander Wendt, 'The agent-structure problem in international relations theory', *International Organization* Vol. 41, No. 3, 1987, pp. 335-370, p. 338.

⁶⁶ Copeland, 'The Constructivist Challenge', p. 191.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁶⁸ Mlada Bukovansky, 'American Identity and Neutral Rights from Independence to the War of 1812', *International Organization* Vol. 51, No. 2, 1997, pp. 209-243, p. 209.

⁶⁹ Maja Zehfuss, 'Constructivism and Identity: A Dangerous Liaison', *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 7, No. 3, 2001, pp. 315-348, p. 318.

⁷⁰ Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', p. 392.

The exploration and appreciation of identity occupy the central place in the constructivist research program. However, systemic constructivism developed by Alexander Wendt also rules out the most important aspects of that identity –especially the internal dimension of it- from the analysis. This inattention to the domestic sources of identity – internal dimension- and its interaction with the external dimension essentially weakens the constructivist argument. Wendt also makes implicit assumptions, which, if analyzed thoroughly, may threaten to undermine the possibility of his constructivism.

In Wendt's analysis, "interests presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is"⁷¹, which in turn depends on their social relationships⁷². Therefore, identities become crucial in constructivist analysis because they provide the basis for interests. States "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"⁷³. Constructivists focus on constitutive processes and argue that identities are always in the process of being formed and reformed⁷⁴.

If the identities of actors are the basis of their interests, then, how do they acquire those identities? How would they define 'self' and 'other'? In order to explain identity construction, Wendt makes a distinction between the corporate and social identities of states. "Corporate identity refers to the intrinsic, self-organizing qualities that constitute actor individuality"⁷⁵. This type of identity generates four basic interests: 1) physical security 2) predictability in relationships to the world 3) recognition as an actor by others 4) economic development⁷⁶. How a state satisfies these corporate interests "depends on how it defines the self in relation to the other, which is a function of social identities at both domestic and systemic levels of analysis"⁷⁷. A social identity (or role identity) on the other hand, is defined as "a set of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object"⁷⁸. While actors have one corporate identity, they usually have several social identities. Social identities enable actors to determine 'who they are' in a situation and exist only in relation to others. For example, "one cannot be an 'anticommunist' if

71 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 231.

72 Ron Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 33-75, p. 59.

73 Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', p. 396.

74 Atkinson, 'Constructivist Implications of Material Power', p. 534.

75 Alexander Wendt, 'Collective Identity Formation and the International State', *American Political Science Review* Vol. 88, No. 2, 1994, pp. 384-396, p. 385.

76 Ibid., p. 385. Also see Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 235-237.

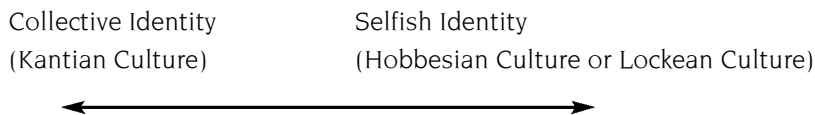
77 Wendt, 'Collective Identity Formation', p. 385.

78 Ibid., p. 385.

there are no communists around, nor a 'balancer' if there is no one to balance"⁷⁹.

For Wendt, interests and identities of actors emerge only in an interactive process. This brings us to the conclusion that the structure of identities and interests in the system is constituted intersubjectively. In other words, "the meanings in terms of which action is organized arise out of interaction"⁸⁰. The nature of the system- Hobbesian, Lockean or Kantian- is determined by a *history* of interaction. Whether or not states acquire 'selfish' or 'collective' identities and interests depends on the nature and "manner in which social identities involve an *identification* with the fate of the other. Identification is a continuum from negative to positive- from conceiving the other as anathema to the self to conceiving it as an extension of the self"⁸¹. Figure I. illustrates the point:

Figure I: Identity Continuum



As Figure shows Hobbesian culture occurs when states constitute Other as enemy and does not recognize its right to exist and will not willingly limit their violence toward Other. The Lockean culture, on the other hand, has a different logic from the Hobbesian culture "because it is based on a different role structure, rivalry rather than enmity. Like enemies, rivals are constituted by representations about 'Self' and 'Other' with respect to violence, but these representations are less threatening"⁸². Thus, rivals are expected to respect to each other's sovereignty and their right to exist. Finally, in the Kantian culture, prevalent at least in the West, states identify with each other positively and "non-violence and team play are the norm, in which case there might not be any such return to the past"⁸³. According to Wendt, Waltz's treatment of anarchy at best refers to the Lockean culture because in his analysis, states are 'security-seekers', that is, *status quo* powers. States under anarchy try to guarantee their security by maintaining their power positions, not to change it. The Hobbesian culture on the other hand refers to a culture in which states are after each other to kill and conquer, that is, they are *revisionist* powers.

⁷⁹ Alexander Wendt, 'Identity and Structural Change in International Politics' Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds.), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR* (The Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), pp. 47-64, p. 51.

⁸⁰ Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', p. 402.

⁸¹ Wendt, 'Collective Identity Formation', p. 386.

⁸² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 279.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

The representations of enmity, rivalry and friend are in essence interaction- or micro-level phenomena based on subjective images or perceptions. For Wendt, “in most cases, however, micro-level role relationships are embedded in macro-level, *collective* representations. Collective representations have a life and logic of their own cannot be reduced to actors’ perceptions or behavior”⁸⁴. Accordingly, as more and more members of a system represent each other as enemy, rival or friend, eventually a ‘tipping point’⁸⁵ is reached at which one of these representations (that is, the representation that most members share) will take over the logic of the system, thus forming a culture. In other words, if most members of a system represent each other as enemies, then, the Hobbesian culture will prevail in the system. “At this point actors start to think of enmity as a property of the system rather than just of individual actors, and so feel compelled to represent all others as enemies simply because they are parts of the system”⁸⁶. Consequently, while the nature of structure formed by shared ideas of its members compels states to behave in a certain manner, it at the same time constitutes their individual properties, namely their identities. If Hobbesian culture endured over a long period of time, then, it would be useful to think of the system in rationalist terms. When, however, evolution from one culture to another occurs, rationalist theories become no longer valid. These identities in turn constitute the ‘material base’, which has been ignored by mainstream International Relations theory. The main principle of constructivist social theory is that “people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them. States act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not”⁸⁷. Therefore, material capabilities acquire meaning for states according to who has those capabilities, that is, a friend or an enemy, which is a function of collective representations at the system level. Thus, Constructivism does not deny the existence of a material world, external to thought. However, it argues that “besides brute facts, there are some facts which exist only because we attribute a certain function or meaning to them”⁸⁸. Their existence, therefore, depends also on an intersubjectively shared set of meanings.

The basic idea here is that identities and their corresponding interests are learned and then reinforced in response to how actors are treated by significant Others. Thus, the nature of systemic interaction is of crucial importance in the construction of identities and interests. In order to illustrate his point, Wendt assumes two actors, Ego and Alter meeting in a *first encounter* world without shared ideas. According to Wendt, what Ego and Alter bring to their interaction will affect its evolution. “They bring two

84 Ibid., p. 264.

85 Ibid., p. 264.

86 Ibid., p. 264.

87 Wendt, ‘Anarchy is What States Make of It’, p. 397.

88 Stefano Guzzini, ‘A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 6, No. 2, 2000, pp. 147-182, p. 160.

kinds of baggage, material in the form of bodies and associated needs, and representational in the form of some a priori ideas about whom they are"⁸⁹. However, in Wendt's analysis, Alter and Ego do not share these representations that they bring to their Encounter. Even though Wendt recognizes the importance of the preconceived or shared ideas that form the basis of actors' corporate or role identities, he still does not consider their significance because they are exogenous to the interaction. Furthermore, Wendt implicitly assumes that actors hold those representations about themselves and assign roles to other according to these representations. That is, Ego and Alter do not have any ideas about each other before interaction. This assumption is needed for Systemic Constructivism because "the Constructivist strategy treats identities and interests as endogenous to interaction and thus a dependent variable in process"⁹⁰. Wendt is more interested in showing how states, through systemic interaction, construct social identities at the systemic level and how self- and collective interests are produced. As part of their corporate identities, states often define their interests in egoistic terms and they are likely to start their interaction with others on the selfish side of the identity continuum. Through social interaction, states may as well define their interests in collectivist terms, creating new definitions of 'self' and 'other' during interaction, which may lead to a structural or cultural change⁹¹.

CRITIQUE OF SYSTEMIC CONSTRUCTIVISM: THE INTERACTIVE MODEL

Alexander Wendt's re-conceptualization of interest "as the product of intersubjective processes of meaning creation"⁹² does not provide an adequate account of interest and preference formation, because he, like realists, continues to treat states as unitary actors with a single identity and a single set of interests. As Steele points out "Wendt's work does not fully accommodate interest formation given that domestic social practices are either bracketed or only considered in the initial stage of institutional preference innovation"⁹³. He even accuses Neorealists of not being structural enough⁹⁴. Treated in this way, then, "the state itself becomes a black box, internal workings of which are irrelevant to the construction of state identities"⁹⁵. Therefore, the identities and interests of states are created only through and restricted to systemic interaction. Systemic interaction, then, becomes the starting point in Wendt's analysis. Wendt's

⁸⁹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 338.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 336.

⁹¹ Ibid., 336-337.

⁹² Jutta Weldes, 'Constructing National Interests', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1996, pp. 275-318, p. 279.

⁹³ Steele, 'Liberal-Idealism', p. 27.

⁹⁴ Alexander Wendt, 'Constructing International Politics', *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1995, pp. 71-81, p. 72.

⁹⁵ Weldes, 'Constructing National Interests', p. 280.

call for a “minimalist view of the state, stripped of its contingent forms”⁹⁶ might be a convenient move for his theoretical purposes; however, it essentially weakens the constructivist argument.

Wendt’s systemic Constructivism places an enormous weight on the first encounter because it determines what goes on afterwards. Despite the centrality of this concept in the constructivist analysis, Wendt, however, does not consider “its significance or deeper heritage. What brings alter and ego together? Why do alter and ego take any ‘interest’ in the other?”⁹⁷. In Wendt’s theory, Ego and Alter come into contact accidentally. This deficit results from his inattention to the sources of foreign policy because his theory is more about exploring “the effects of international social structure on state identity, not the latter’s effects on state action”⁹⁸. Wendt’s theory cannot explain why states take interest in each other in the first place and what their intentions are in such a relationship. We actually have to wait and see whether states will become friends or enemies at the end of their interaction. Thus, *history* becomes the main determinant in the construction of state identities and consequently the cultures of anarchy. This point, however, does not adequately challenge the main Neorealist assumption that emphasizes the role of *uncertainty* about two temporal dimensions- first, the *present* intentions of the other, and second, the *future* intentions of other. “Both of these dimensions are at the heart of the Realist understanding of the security dilemma”⁹⁹. Constructivists define uncertainty as “the indeterminacy of a largely socially constructed world that lacks meaning without norms and identities. More often than not, these meanings are implicit”¹⁰⁰.

Furthermore, Wendt argues that any change in strategic practice can change the identities of states from collective to selfish or vice versa. He does not, however, explain what would change the nature of practice and why states would want to change it. Therefore, the predictive power of his theory diminishes. This uncertainty, to some extent, can be overcome by a reference to the internal dimension of state identity, which is ignored by systemic Constructivism.

Wendt ignores domestic processes to focus on the effect of interaction between states. However, states do not form a conception of themselves only through interaction. “Socialization processes internal to a state can change the state’s identity and

⁹⁶ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

⁹⁷ Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, ‘Knowing Encounters: Beyond Parochialism in International Relations Theory’, Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds.), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), pp. 65-84, p. 72.

⁹⁸ Thomas Banchoff, ‘German Identity and European Integration’, *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 5, No. 3, 1999, pp. 259-289, p. 261.

⁹⁹ Copeland, ‘The Constructivist Challenge’, p. 199.

¹⁰⁰ Brian C. Rathbun, ‘Uncertain about Uncertainty: Understanding the Multiple Meanings of a Crucial Concept in International Relations Theory’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 51, No. 3, 2007, pp. 533-557, p. 534

interests independently of such interaction"¹⁰¹. Wendt captures this point by identifying four forms of identity: 'corporate', 'type', 'role', and 'collective'. The first two develop through processes within the state. Corporate and type identities –internal dimension- reflect the self-organizing aspect of the unit and do not require the recognition of other states. Role and collective identities –external dimension-, on the other hand, are constituted only through interaction between states. In the Constructivist analysis, corporate identities of actors are not tied to interaction with other states because these identities arise from states' nature as self-organized political units. Even though Wendt differentiates between two dimensions of state identity-internal and external- he does not give any account about the interaction between these dimensions because the internal dimension does not interest his systemic analysis. As noted above, interaction between these two dimensions carries important implication and should be integrated into the Constructivist analysis.

Internal dimension of state identity usually "is often labeled national identity, the set of shared norms and narratives that sustain 'we-ness' through time"¹⁰². External dimension, on the other hand, refers to "the self-placement of the polity within specific international contexts"¹⁰³. Once an identity is constructed, states institutionalize that identity at both domestic and international levels. Domestically, while states develop their identities "they also develop myths and institutions to protect them"¹⁰⁴. Internationally, "states seek to enact their identities (potentially shifting or multiple ones) in interstate normative structures, including regimes and security communities"¹⁰⁵. While states try to institutionalize their identity at both domestic and international levels, their identities are also shaped by domestic and international environments, especially by cultural and institutional ones¹⁰⁶.

Wendt implicitly assumes that only social interaction determines in-group/out-group members. He also assumes, contrary to more extreme constructivists, that the state, at least initially, has a tendency to be egoistic in its relations with others. Wendt, at this point, concedes to the Neorealist assumption that states by nature have egoistic orientations. Therefore, pre-social states will more likely start the interaction at the selfish side of the identity continuum. This point is, however, misleading. Once we define the content of the state's corporate identity, we can predict who will be regarded as in-group or out-group members by the state prior to their interaction. If the def-

¹⁰¹ Copeland, 'The Constructivist Challenge', p. 203.

¹⁰² Banchoff, 'German Identity and European Integration', p. 268.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 268.

¹⁰⁴ Glenn Chafetz, 'The Struggle for a National Identity in Post-Soviet Russia', *Political Science Quarterly*, 111, No. 4, 1996-97, pp. 661-688, p. 665.

¹⁰⁵ Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 62.

¹⁰⁶ Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security', Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1996), pp. 1-32, p. 22.

inition of state identity is close to that of another state or group of states in the system, then, the state, even before the systemic interaction, will identify with them positively and seek to institutionalize its identity in international economic or security arrangements. In this case, it is highly likely for the state to start interaction with in-group members somewhere close to the collective identity side of the identity continuum. The state's relations with the perceived out-group members will follow the opposite manner in which the interaction is likely to start at the selfish-identity side of the continuum. In other words, before systemic interaction, state identity –whether it be corporate, type or role identities- informs who is likely to be friend and who is not. Therefore, it becomes a crucial independent variable in the formation of social identities at the systemic level.

An important question that should be asked here is how state identity at the domestic level is created and how this identity is carried into the systemic level. If identities, in essence, are meaning creation, then those “meanings which objects, events, and actions have for ‘states’ are necessarily the meanings they have for those individuals who act in the name of the state”¹⁰⁷. These state officials have some ideas about the world, the international system, and the place of their state within that system. These ideas, in turn, are “necessarily rooted in meanings already produced, at least in part, in domestic political and cultural contexts”¹⁰⁸. As Roxanna Sjöstedt rightly points out since “policy makers are also members of the societal community, they are as much affected by the values shaped by various domestic identities as any other citizen, and their understanding of an external Other relates to their understanding of the identity formations within their own state”¹⁰⁹.

Actors usually construct themselves and others long before the actual contact most often through discursive practices; that is through *representation*¹¹⁰. Depending on the nature of these representations (negative or positive), actors produce and reproduce meanings and identities that make a certain course of action possible or impossible. This does not, however, mean that everybody in a country shares the same representations about others since those representations are closely related to cultural and political contexts within which they are produced. By the same token, individuals, state institutions, other domestic groups that are involved in foreign policy making process and that have different cultural backgrounds and identity conceptions will act differently when faced with different situations. The reason for this is “the notion that

¹⁰⁷ Weldes, ‘Constructing National Interests’, p. 280.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 280.

¹⁰⁹ Roxanna Sjöstedt, ‘Discursive Origins of a Doctrine: Norms, Identity, and Securitization under Harry S. Truman and George W. Bush’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2007, pp. 233-254, p. 238.

¹¹⁰ Roxanne Lynn Doty, ‘Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 37, No. 3, 1993, pp. 297-320 and Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

human behavior is guided by socially shared and transmitted ideas and beliefs. Cultures as such comprise beliefs about the way the world is- including at the most basic level beliefs that define the individual's and the group's identities- and the ideas about the way the world ought to be"¹¹¹. In pluralistic societies, the state's identity will emerge as a result of a domestic struggle among various groups- each pressing for an identity that would conform to their identity conceptions¹¹². In this respect, "Communities and societies can be understood as engaging in a continuous debate over their collective identity"¹¹³. In the words of Edward Said, society "is the locale in which a continuous contest between adherents of different ideas about what constitutes the national identity is taking place"¹¹⁴. This debate may trigger an identity crisis, which in turn further affects the role identities of the actors engaged in the debate.

It is therefore safe to assume that implementing a certain foreign policy would require *consent* and *consensus* among different groups that are involved in identity and interest construction and that have different role identities. In pluralistic societies, then, a state's identity and consequently its interests arise out of a struggle among different domestic groups trying to influence the course of the state's foreign policy in accordance with their identity conceptions.

In the end, we expect that the definition of national identity (and consequently the state's identity) will be dominated by the most powerful groups or individuals. These groups or individuals during the state-building process will try to impose their own ideas and identities and institutionalize them in legal, political, and social structures. Whether or not they will succeed in their endeavor will depend on their relative power vis-à-vis other groups and their relations with society. "The congruence between culture and polity has been sufficiently achieved when internal political conflicts-no matter how fierce- do not intrinsically threaten the existence of the state itself"¹¹⁵. Any disagreement over the definition of identity between the state polity and large segments of society will start a debate on what constitutes the collective identity. In this case, the debate is highly likely to trigger an identity crisis that may or may not change the definition of the state's identity depending on who dominates the political discourse. Once constructed, the identity will shape the interests and preferences of states as well as the construction (or representation) of others. States will carry those identities and preferences into the international system through their interactions with others.

¹¹¹ Thomas U. Berger, 'Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan', Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 317-356, p. 325.

¹¹² Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach* (New York & London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 26.

¹¹³ Michael N. Barnett, 'Identity and Alliances in the Middle East', Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 400-447, p. 411.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Barnett, 'Identity and Alliances in the Middle East', p. 411.

¹¹⁵ William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 58.

This is an interactive process in which systemic interaction can shape the identity by adding more elements (such as norms and values) that may exacerbate the debate over the national identity at the domestic level, which may or may not cause a new identity crisis. Resistance to any change (especially at the collective end of the identity continuum) may also affect the nature of interaction. Any conflict with the in-group members of a broader community defined as part of 'us' will be likely to result in a negative interaction that would produce another identity crisis.

Another important point that should be mentioned in the constructivist analysis is the importance of reciprocity or reflected appraisals in identity formation. "Actors learn to see themselves in the roles that other actors, especially powerful ones attribute to them"¹¹⁶. States often internalize that identity. However, as a result of a change in a state's internal or external environments, "a given state's identity may fail to conform to international expectations of the state's role"¹¹⁷. This may mean rejection by others who are thought to hold similar identities. In this case, lack of a clearly defined role may result in an identity crisis because human beings need approval and recognition from others. As Axel Honneth puts it:

*For up to the present day, in the self-descriptions of those who see themselves as having been wrongly treated by others, the moral categories that play a dominant role are those- such as insult and humiliation- that refer to forms of disrespect, that is, to the denial of recognition. Negative concepts of this kind are used to designate behavior that represents an injustice...because it injures them with regard to the positive understanding of themselves that they have acquired intersubjectively*¹¹⁸

Human beings need approval of others because their normative self-image is dependent on the possibility of being supported by others. "The experience of being disrespected carries with it the danger of an injury that can bring the identity of the person as a whole to the point of collapse"¹¹⁹.

These systemic interactions and their effects on the identity will be debated and interpreted differently at the domestic level, which is likely to reproduce new definitions of 'the self' and 'the other'. "Changes in systemic patterns, caused by transnational, economic, or military politics, can trigger wide-scale domestic change and debates concerning the collective identity and the state's relationship to the wider community"¹²⁰. As a result of changes either in domestic politics or in the international system, states will continuously produce and reproduce meanings and re-definitions of 'the self' that will stabilize or change their identifications with others in the system- from selfish to collective or vice versa.

¹¹⁶ Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 60.

¹¹⁷ Chafetz, 'The Struggle for a National Identity in Post-Soviet Russia', p. 665.

¹¹⁸ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), p. 131.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 132.

¹²⁰ Barnett, 'Identity and Alliances in the Middle East', p. 412.

Domestic political developments can transform identities in several ways. First, domestic developments independent of systemic interaction such as revolutions can change a state's identity and replace it with a new one. Second, through domestic institutional arrangements or elections, the role of domestic political groups/state institutions or individuals in the foreign policy making process can be altered. In this case, the foreign policy discourse can be dominated by entirely new organizations or individuals with different identity conceptions that may perceive the national interest in a different way. This is an important contribution to the constructivist approach because Wendt argues that any change in strategic practice can change the identities of states from collective to selfish or vice versa. He does not, however, explain what would change the nature of practice and why states would want to change it. Considering domestic roots of that change would be a good starting point in the constructivist analysis.

In conclusion, states start systemic interaction with an already defined corporate identity. The corporate identity of the state, depending on its definition, informs states with whom to interact and with what intention. In the light of this argument, then, Wendt's identity continuum needs to be modified. If we assume that states bring their corporate identities into interaction, then, depending on their corporate identity and consequently, the definition of self and other, they may start their relations on either side of the identity continuum. The most important implication of the above argument is that once constructed, corporate identities determine the *direction and intention* of states' foreign policies. In other words, states will identify positively with those with similar corporate identities –in-group members- while they distance themselves from others with different identities-out-group members. In the light of this argument, one can argue that understanding the state's preferences and its choice of alliance partners require an analysis of corporate identity at the domestic level. This analysis also reduces uncertainty about others' both present and future intentions and therefore increases the predictive power of the theory.

Does the argument that states construct their identities before they start interacting with others lead us to the conclusion that identities are exogenous to the system? The answer could be 'yes' or 'no' depending on the effect of systemic interaction on a state's identity. Systemic interaction (behavioral or rhetorical), depending on its nature (positive or negative) can *confirm or transform* the already held identity from selfish to collective or from collective to selfish. If the identity is confirmed to stay stable for a long period of time, then, like realists, we would assume that the identity is exogenous to the system. If, however, systemic interaction transforms the identity that states brought into the system and creates a different identity, then, constructivist claim that identities are endogenous to the system prove right. While the presence of similar corporate identities, interdependence (in economic and security matters), a

common threat, and acceptance by others contribute to the formation of a collective social identity by fostering a positive interaction among states, the absence of these variables will contribute to the formation of a selfish identity.

Identity formation at both domestic and systemic levels is a continuous process in which corporate and social identities interact with each other and in which states produce and reproduce new definitions of 'self' and 'other'. Any changes in the corporate identity of the state as a result of domestic political developments will eventually affect the identity formation at the systemic level where states will try to reorient their preferences in accordance with the new identity. Changes in corporate identity can vary from simple modifications to a complete transformation of the identity. While simple modifications may include changes in the emphasis of the defining features of corporate identity, a complete transformation may replace the old identity with a completely new one. If the latter occurs, the state's foreign policy orientation will be altered drastically.

Systemic developments can also affect corporate and social identities. First, states' identities will be enforced by contact with others. During the process, states may add new elements to the definition of their identity to fit in new circumstances. Any modification in social identity will eventually lead to changes in corporate identity to maintain the congruence with the social identity at the systemic level. Second, rejection or exclusion of a state by in-group members due to the failure to conform to the new identity may trigger an identity crisis. This will threaten the state's individual sense of identity and cause anxiety. In this case, either the state will try to protect the already held identity by refusing to make any changes or "a new synthesis of identifications is made appropriate to the situation and its constraints"¹²¹.

CONCLUSION

This paper tried to present a critique of systemic constructivism by exploring the key points ignored by the adherents of this approach. The systemic approach denies the international relations theory "a clear test of their relative predictive power...Without a theory of interests, which requires analysis of domestic politics, no theory of international relations can be fully adequate"¹²².

The main argument of the paper is that states construct their identities before systemic interaction and those identities inform them about who is friend and who is enemy. States form their preferences based on their corporate identities and start their interaction in accordance with those identities. In this sense, as Neorealists argue, preferences are exogenous to the system. However, my argument differs from Neorealism in that once states start interaction, their identities can change depending

¹²¹ Bloom, *Personal Identity*, 39.

¹²² Katzenstein, 'Introduction', p. 14.

on the nature of interaction. States, therefore, may form new identities or reinforce the existing ones, which makes them endogenous to interaction.

Constructivists ignore identity changes at the domestic level, which can change the nature of systemic interaction. By taking into account identity changes at both domestic and systemic levels, the paper offers an interactive model of international relations. The interactive model argues that states come into systemic interaction with an already constructed identity. In this sense, it warrants the Neorealist argument that state identity is exogenous to the system. It differs from Neorealism, however, in that systemic interaction can transform that identity and produce a new identity and a new set of interests, which makes it endogenous to the system.

Both domestic and international factors can influence identity formation in important ways. The acceptance of a state to a society of states can further confirm the state's identity. However, any rejection of that identity by in-group members is likely to produce an identity crisis. An identity crisis that occurred at the international level may also have important implications at the domestic level. It will be used by the excluded groups to weaken the dominant group's political position and to present their identity as the alternative. If these groups' efforts prove successful, then, they can alter the course of the state's foreign policy altogether.

It is important to analyze the states' international and domestic environments because most often, cultural and institutional contexts of those environments shape states' identities¹²³. Cultural contexts do not only constrain actors or regulate their behavior but also "help to constitute the very actors whose conduct they seek to regulate"¹²⁴. States try to institutionalize their identities in the international system as well. This often involves recognition of their sovereignty and membership in international organizations, which confirm or transform their identities. In other words, international society can produce and reproduce a state's identity through legal and institutional arrangements.

¹²³ Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 58.

¹²⁴ Katzenstein, 'Introduction', p. 22.

