

ARTICLE

The Peril and Promise of Constructivist Theory

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Postmodernists, critical theorists, and constructivists have not wrought the intellectual apocalypse in social science that some feared. Instead, a middle ground has gradually emerged on which, to be sure, skirmishes about the nature of social science continue.¹ Most students of international relations still carry out empirical research. That is, they still adduce some form of evidence, derived ultimately from the human senses, in support of their claims. At the same time, most would accept the proposition that scholarship cannot divorce itself from normative concerns. They might disagree about how far down the road toward objectivity it is possible to travel, but ultimately most share R. B. J. Walker's skepticism about claims that "ethics is somehow separable from politics" or, indeed, from political science.²

Many would go even further, contending along with David Campbell that "ethics is indispensable to the very being of [a] subject, because a subject's being is only possible once its *right to be* in relations to the Other is claimed."³ With this assertion, Campbell surpasses those who maintain only that the practice of science is inevitably biased. Campbell's position is that ontology - that is, a science's choice of subject matter - itself incorporates certain perspectives and values. Keeping this bold claim in mind, one may properly admire the scholarship of Professor Kei Karasawa, who this volume honors, for its forthright recognition of inevitable linkages between scientific research and values. Professor Karasawa is among those scholars who explicitly and unapologetically take on problems that matter - notably, resource economics and environmental limits - while nevertheless striving for scientific rigor.⁴

Professor Karasawa's research might be placed, more broadly, within the tradition of liberal theorizing about international political economy. Although it takes a nuanced view of the extent to which international cooperation can resolve public goods dilemmas, its outlook is fundamentally positive-sum.⁵ Realism adopts a slightly different premise - not only as a scientific assumption, but also as an implicit value.⁶ If security is the human (and, specifically, national) value most directly threatened by an anarchical system, then it makes sense for scholars to devote their energies to uncovering the limits of conflict rather than the prospects for cooperation. As Campbell has taken great pains to show, however, neither the state's pursuit of security nor scholars' efforts to understand it are ethically neutral.⁷ The very idea of "national security" (which scholars help transmit, after all) serves state interests. That is to say, ontology serves an ethical purpose.

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Similarly, neoliberal investigations of the way international regimes reduce transaction costs and thus promote the generation of national wealth serve another normative purpose.⁸ Security and prosperity are such obvious and common objectives that it is easy to take them for granted as "neutral" fixtures of human experience. They are not. There is no reason, to extend Patrick Henry's oft-quoted sentiments, that people cannot prefer liberty (or something else) to either life or wealth. Pursuit of the latter values is unremarkable because so many people share them, but not because all people *must* naturally do so.

International relations theory in general - and its contemporary structural variants, neorealism and neoliberalism, in particular - are poorly equipped to explore normativity in international politics. Stephen Walt (himself unquestionably a realist) recently suggested in the pages of *Foreign Policy* that the efforts of constructivism to address the problem of normativity may make it a third "pillar" of scholarship on international politics.⁹ If so, however, it is an unusual one. Although constructivist scholars typically accept the proposition that all scholarship (indeed, all agency) embodies some kind of normative conviction, they are mostly silent about what kind of values constructivism itself might embrace. In this lacuna resides both the peril and the promise of constructivist theory. Realism and liberalism have been successful as theories of international politics not in spite of their normative content but precisely because people do, in fact, care about security and wealth. For constructivism to fulfill its promise, it must engage the problem of normativity not only as metatheory but also in its substantive (theoretical) claims about international politics.

Constructivism and Values

If constructivism addresses any substantive problem (other than wealth or security), it is undoubtedly the way people claim for themselves, and confer on others, *identity* as agents. The growth of interest in identity politics has continued unabated since Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil identified its "return" to the field of international relations.¹⁰ One reason for the renewed attention is that identity politics have become simultaneously more interesting and more difficult to explain. Epic contests such as World War II and the Cold War produced a dualist rhetoric that sharply constrained differences of personal ideology and national purpose to well-defined categories. Yet in the welcome absence of such sweeping conflicts, identity becomes less certain. Distinguishing self from other, on many different social levels, presents a greater challenge after the "end of history."¹¹

Fukuyama was of course almost exactly wrong in his choice of title. History, along with ethnicity and religion, has not ended at all. It has come flooding back into the public consciousness as a potent new source of identity (and of conflict). To a degree, constructivists have taken advantage of the times to proclaim a new focus for scholarship in international relations. Their claim is compelling in a world where inflamed passions lead to bloodshed in the name of neither conquest nor class, but instead simply because of *who* the enemy is: a Muslim, a Serb, a Tutsi, a Hutu, a Catholic, a Protestant, an Arab, or a Jew. Realism and liberalism are not incapable of explaining hatred, but they struggle to account for such widespread violence that serves neither Mammon nor the national interest.

Still, interest in the contribution of identity to international politics is not new. Almost half a century ago, Kenneth Boulding argued for a new science of "images" that were, he felt, central to

knowledge of the social and even the material world.¹² A decade later, Erving Goffman's pithy analysis of strategies for social interaction began with the observation that, "in pursuit of their interests, parties of all kinds must deal with and through individuals, both individuals who appear to help and individuals who appear to hinder."¹³ To pursue their interests, he continues, "parties - or rather the persons who manage them - must orient to the capacities which these individuals are seen to have and to the conditions which bear upon their exercise.... To orient to these capacities is to come to conclusions, well founded or not, concerning them; and to come to these conclusions is to have assumptions about the fundamental nature of the sorts of persons dealt with." In just a few sentences, Goffman neatly lays out the strategic problem behind ascribing a particular identity ("image," Boulding might have said) to another party. We must live our lives by taking into account what kind of people we are likely to encounter and by acting appropriately when we do. By extension, on a more abstract level, states must also expect and prepare for encounters with different kinds of national "others."¹⁴

Goffman's is a simple but powerful explanation for the importance of identity. In a world of scarce resources, fleeting opportunities, and impoverished mechanisms of governance (indeed, of anarchy at the level of international politics) it is vital to know "who" one might encounter. All states are not the same. It would be extraordinarily wasteful to treat every state as though it posed the same potential threat or offered the same potential opportunities. As evidence for this claim, one might begin with the infrequency of war among democratic polities. Since democratic states are not markedly less conflict-prone in general, the putative restraints of democratic institutions themselves appear to have less to do with this phenomenon than the image of the other. As Kant posited, whether or not another state is democratic is a powerful indicator of its intentions (and not simply its institutions).¹⁵ In the context of contemporary neorealist and neoliberal theory, however, the democratic peace appears more an isolated fact than a logical extension of core postulates. Perhaps this is so because, unlike Kant, neither of these two prominent variants of international relations theory takes normativity seriously.

Because constructivists do take norms seriously, and particularly normative specifications of identity that confer agency on others, they are well-situated to provide what the structural theories of international relations cannot: a theory of agency. So much constructivist scholarship has been devoted to answering neorealism's and neoliberalism's implied determinism on matters of agency, however, that constructivism risks becoming associated with the opposite extreme. Whereas evolutionary neorealism (and neoliberalism, for the most part) expect the international system to socialize states and their leaders to be fundamentally and inevitably self-regarding, constructivism has tended towards an "anything goes" attitude.¹⁶ Those who suggest that "anarchy is what states make of it" are certainly not obliged to say, however, that states can make of it anything whatsoever.¹⁷ Out of the conviction that identities matter, efforts to explain what identities are possible should be of central importance to constructivists.¹⁸

Indeed, a theory of identity is of broader importance for the study of international relations. A better understanding of how national leaders conceive of differences among states is a step toward accounting for the formation of national interest - a topic that is generally excluded from rationalist (neorealist and neoliberal) accounts of international politics on the grounds that no one set of interests is more rational than any other. This exclusion leaves neorealism and neoliberalism without a theory of preferences, and thus without a theory of foreign policy.¹⁹ Little wonder that, as

three former editors of *International Organization* recently put it, "the core of the constructivist project is to explicate variations in preferences, available strategies, and the nature of the players across space and time."²⁰

Alexander Wendt's Cultures of National Identity

If the core of the constructivist project is, in short, to explain how identity is conferred on agents, then its success to date is unremarkable. Alexander Wendt is almost alone among constructivists in pursuing an explicit theoretical bridge between nation-state identity and structural theories of international relations.²¹ His efforts, and particularly his recent *Social Theory of International Politics*, have attracted well-deserved attention. He makes a compelling case that identity plays a crucial role in international relations. Yet the shortcomings of his attempt to theorize the limits on national identity are almost as instructive as his success in arguing for its importance.

Wendt begins with three distinct logics of anarchy, which he terms Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian. These three "cultures" (Wendt's term) of international politics are defined by explicit reference to their dominant assumption about the character or "identity" ascribed to other states: enemies (Hobbesian), rivals (Lockean), or friends (Kantian). Cutting across these cultures are three degrees of internalization - it is not quite clear whether Wendt means *acceptance* or *institutionalization* - that express different degrees of commitment to a prevailing international culture.²² Most theories of international relations, Wendt notes, have made a dual progression along these axes.²³ Structural realism combines highly pessimistic, zero-sum assumptions about the structure of international politics with very limited assumptions about internalization ("might makes right"). Structural liberalism may expect rivalry, but it also acknowledges the possibility of cooperation ("enlightened self-interest"). In this view, states are analogous to firms that compete for market share (that is, for provision of goods to their citizens), but that nevertheless share an interest in "internalizing" a broadly cooperative system (of property rights, international regimes, etc.) to provide public goods on a global scale. Finally, most optimistic is a Kantian perspective that anticipates the elimination of security dilemmas within a "pluralistic security community." Wendt maintains that a Kantian culture, like the others, can be either weakly or strongly internalized. Yet in the same way that protons must come very close to overcome the electromagnetic force that would otherwise cause positively charged particles (and thus the atomic nucleus) to fly apart, so states must come sufficiently close in their mutual understanding to overcome the myriad competitive dilemmas that drive them apart. There is little reason to expect that poorly internalized Kantian cultures will persist for long.

Wendt's three logics of anarchy might seem plausible underpinnings for the judgments leaders make about other states. Yet this reverses the direction of causation in Wendt's argument. After eloquently explaining that nation-state identity can be thought of as endogenous to the international system and that the structural position of state actors is certain to affect the identities they ascribe to other states, Wendt then turns the tables and *assumes* three distinct identities - enemy, rival, and friend - as bases for three different international systems. In chapter 6 of *Social Theory of International Politics*, Wendt makes a strong case that identity, conceived as an image of the "other," casts a long shadow over international politics. When he returns to the problem of identity formation

in chapter 7, however, he is no longer able to offer a compelling theory. He submits that processes of both natural and cultural selection may explain the emergence of particular identities. The former argument, unfortunately, is rendered tautological since identity was assumed in chapter 6 to be grounds for the logic of the international system. If the same system is also supposed, in more or less Waltzian fashion, to select the most ecologically "fit" sort of states for survival, then identity has become its own cause. In a world of enemies, Wendt seems to say, it pays to conceive of states as enemies; in a world of friends, friendship may beget new friends. As a theory of identity, these claims are not compelling.²⁴

Wendt divides his other process of identity formation, cultural selection, into two sub-processes: imitation and social learning. Imitation proceeds in much the same fashion as natural selection, except that it is cognitive. It anticipates that states will imitate others that they *perceive* as successful. Imitation is Lamarckian rather than Darwinian selection, but it suffers from the same defect of circularity noted above. Social learning is a more promising source of identity, but it remains underspecified. "The basic idea," according to Wendt, "is that identities and their corresponding interests are learned and then reinforced in response to how actors are treated by significant Others."²⁵ Drawing heavily on symbolic interactionism, Wendt proposes that states will see themselves as reflections or "mirror-images" of how they believe they are seen by other states.²⁶ This mirror-imaging is highly contextual. In a simplistic version of the argument, it might even seem that states are obliged to react to almost any self- or other-presentation by another state. To narrow the range of plausible interaction, Wendt goes on to propose four additional "master variables" - interdependence, common fate, homogeneity, and self-restraint - that inform self- and other-presentation. Freed by this point of the constraints of parsimony, the broad theme of Wendt's work is that international politics, and the identities of the states that carry it out, can be constituted in many forms. Yet those who wish to understand what forms of nation-state identity are most plausible will have little confidence that specific categories of identity can be deduced from Wendt's structural principles.

A further problem is that Wendt associates social constructivism with the most internalized, most ideational (most Kantian) forms of international structure.²⁷ This formulation has the unfortunate effect of letting realists and liberals completely off the hook in matters of social construction, apparently conceding that judgments about matters such as threat or capabilities are primarily material rather than cultural or ideational (probably a position that neither Wendt nor most other constructivists would agree with, stated so bluntly). The way out of this impasse is to recognize that socio-cultural constructions are themselves intrinsic to judgments about threat and capability. Elizabeth Kier argues, for example, that even apparently objective matters such as military efficiency - which are "testable," after all, on the battlefield - actually depend heavily on cultural interpretation. Likewise, Lynn Eden argues that the meanings of weapons themselves are contingent.²⁸

Wendt might, therefore, cast the net of constructivist claims against materialism even more widely than he does. Yet breadth is not a notable failing of *Social Theory of International Politics*. What is ultimately disappointing is that it does not deliver a useful theory of national identity. Although it offers an extended justification for the importance of identity categories such as enemy, rival, and friend, it never explains why these identities and not others should obtain in international relations. No one else has done better at the level of grand theory, but other research does suggest

some useful avenues for extending Wendt's insights to produce a genuine theory of national identity in international relations.

The Limits of National Identity

Constructivists have been more eager to explore the possibilities of difference in national identities than the limits on identity. This is understandable since, as already noted, neorealist and neoliberal theories insist that states are interchangeable - differing in capabilities and resource endowments, perhaps, but not in function or type. To prove that identity matters, constructivists must first show that it is, indeed, variable. Enough work of this sort has now been published that most constructivists regard it as axiomatic that national (and other socio-political) identities vary in consequential ways.²⁹ Along the way, they have also hinted at some of the forces at work forming these identities.

The most obvious explanation - but ultimately an unsatisfying one - is that identities are created in service of interests. Erik Ringmar's recent effort to explain why Sweden entered the Thirty Years War is a sophisticated example of this genre.³⁰ By all (realist) accounts, Sweden had no business fighting a protracted war against Habsburg Catholics on the continent. It had neither the economic base nor the manpower nor, ultimately, the diplomatic connections with other Protestant states. Yet Sweden did go to war in 1630, successfully for a time, but also at great cost. Ringmar's explanation is that Sweden's interest was in being taken seriously as a member of the European family of nations. The war served neither Swedish bankers nor its generals; it merely served the Swedish. By establishing Sweden as a power that other European states could not ignore, the war helped to create Swedish identity.

The interests that affect national identity need not be specifically national interests. They may be subnational, as when Russian generals and nationalist politicians link the survival of Russia's identity as a major power to its nuclear arsenal and to taking steps to reverse the decay of its military forces.³¹ Or, to take another example of direct relevance to Russia, they may be conditioned by collective interests embodied in international organizations such as NATO. Frank Schimmelfennig argues that NATO enlargement is less an exercise in rational adaptation to new or changing threats than it is an effort to inculcate Euro-Atlantic or Western values - of legalism, civil-military separation, civil liberties, and so on - in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. In short, NATO is engaged in "international socialization" to produce new Eastern European political identities.³² Thomas Risse finds a similar process at work within NATO during the Cold War, shaping not only self-definition (NATO as a *democratic alliance*) but also defining the other as enemy. Threat, he argues, was as much consequence as cause of the North Atlantic Alliance.³³ Martha Finnemore shows that the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the World Bank have also profoundly influenced what it means to be a modern, legitimate nation-state.³⁴

Most of the constructivists cited here have a nuanced view of the relationship between identity and interests. Although they find evidence of agents working self-consciously to promote certain identities (*major power, democratic partner, law-abiding international citizen*, and so on), they do not take interests for granted. Actors must define these interests, and they may do so by drawing on their sense of self using what Finnemore calls a "logic of appropriateness" - asking "What kind of situation is this?" and "What am I supposed to do now?" rather than, "How do I get what I want?"³⁵

Recognizing this contingency is important for Finnemore since she intends to contribute directly to a problem noted earlier in this essay: the failure of neorealism and neoliberalism to produce a theory of preferences and, thus, a theory of foreign policy. Identity may reflect certain interests, but it takes on a life of its own and thereby shapes interests.

As with Wendt, the potential for circularity is evident here. Finnemore readily admits that she has "no grand theory as to why or under what conditions one type of logic (of appropriateness or of interests) might prevail."³⁶ Offering no general theory, she cannot be accused of tautology. Yet if, as this essay argues, a theory of identity is not only valuable but the *central* value constructivists have sought to explain, then such indeterminacy offers little succor. In short, none of these interest-based accounts lend themselves to a theory of limits on identity that would be helpful, in turn, for explaining interests.

More promising, though less common, are efforts to identify practical or discursive limits on identity construction in the patterned interaction of agents. Practical limits (if they exist) are imposed by the world in which international relations takes place. This world may be ontologically dependent on knowing and speaking subjects, but it exists independently from them.³⁷ It is possible to conceive of limits on global oil reserves, for example, in different ways: as a *constraint* on economic development or, if one lives in Qatar or Saudi Arabia, as an *opportunity* for development. Yet it is not useful - it is scarcely meaningful - to conceive of the planet's oil reserves as *unlimited*; the material world penetrates the social too much for that.

Unfortunately, but understandably, constructivists intent on demonstrating the proposition that the world can be constructed in different ways have been loathe to explore material constraints on its construction. There is nothing inherently "un-constructivist" in believing, however, that some constructions make more sense in a given environment than do others. Frederick Jackson Turner's classic account of how an open Western frontier shaped American identity is a good example. That Native Americans were not much of an impediment to conceiving of the frontier as "open" shows social construction at work. But the entire discussion of frontier would have made no sense in, say, pre-Meiji Japan.³⁸ The material state of Japan's economic and military resources after Commodore Perry's arrival in 1853 also had implications for identity. Japan's feudal elite (*daimyō*) could, and did, interpret Japan's position differently, but for both the shogunal government (*bakufu*) and its opponents, it was hard to mistake the lesson taught by Britain's humiliation of China. Japan's elite disagreed on whether the first order of business should be resisting the West or placating it while building up the wherewithal to resist more effectively. None disputed that both development and defense were necessary. And these conditions, in turn, contributed to sense of Japan as a nation under siege - a form of national identity that continued to influence Japanese foreign policy in the early twentieth century.³⁹

Practical limits are certainly relevant to identity, therefore, but they often are not that "limiting." In any case, they vary widely and thus lead, as in the above examples, to accounts of identity development that are more descriptive than theoretical. Discursive limits on identity depend, on the other hand, not on what it is possible to do with things, but on what it is possible to do with words.⁴⁰ To the extent that language works in particular ways, it may be possible to generalize more effectively about linguistic constraints on identity.

Consider, for example, Jonathan Mercer's critique of the claim that "anarchy is what states make of it." Drawing on a theory of social psychology (social identity theory or SIT), he argues that even

in a materially permissive world where social constructions might vary widely, the psychologically robust tendency to attribute negative qualities to relatively unknown outgroups will cause people to construct a Hobbesian world very much in keeping with realist assumptions about security dilemmas.⁴¹ Mercer is usually taken, and may well consider himself, as a critic of constructivist arguments. Yet SIT is a psycho-linguistic theory of constraints on the way people construct their social environment. The negative stereotyping of the "other" described by SIT - indeed, the phenomenon of stereotyping in general - is widely explained by psychologists as a way to accommodate cognitive limitations on the brain's ability to process language and complexity.⁴² Although Mercer may overestimate the extent to which SIT requires particular (negative) representations of the other, his exploration of limits on social construction is instructive. It is entirely compatible with a constructivist perspective.

Mercer is not alone. An important theme in Ted Hopf's recent collection of essays on Russian foreign policy is that "states find their own identities in others."⁴³ One contributor, Henrikki Heikka, takes the Lacanian position that specific discursive positions give rise to characteristic desires for identification. Crudely put, Russia finds itself in the position of seeking legitimation from Western authorities privileged by the fall of Soviet communism. One way of doing so, prominent in contemporary Russian discourse according to Heikka, is to emphasize Russia's unique cultural heritage and identity as a way of reclaiming that authority.⁴⁴ Foreign policy image theorists, such as Richard Cottam and Richard Herrmann, draw on yet another body of psychological research (Heider's balance theory) to make a similar argument. Images of national other - as *enemy*, *ally*, *imperialist*, *(neo-)colony*, and so on - are wielded to maintain a positive conception of national self.⁴⁵ Cottam, Herrmann, and others building on their insights are sensitive to the way language works to produce cognitive balance (although they do not formalize this part of their argument). Finally, Stephen Walker has led an effort, using sociological theories of symbolic interaction and social roles, to explain the emergence of images of national other similar to those identified by Cottam and of national self such as those described even earlier by Kal Holsti.⁴⁶

Mercer, Heikka, image theorists such as Cottam and Herrmann, and symbolic interactionists such as Walker all draw attention, then, to the ways social interaction can limit the possibilities of identity. These diverse efforts do not yet add up to a coherent approach, and none is specifically and self-consciously constructivist. Their cumulative effect is to suggest, however, that theorizing the limits of national identity is not a futile task. If constructivists wish to explain the impact of identity on international politics, then they should not hesitate to take the same path. A better understanding of what it is possible to say about identity may be the key to understanding what agents *do* in the name of their own and others' identities.

Conclusion

One reason language is so important to constructivist analysis is that speech binds together *is* and *ought*. Speech varies not only in its propositional or locutionary content, but also in its illocutionary force whereby a speaker promises, requests, or describes.⁴⁷ To the extent that a speech act somehow affects one or more recipients (a perlocutionary act), it has normative consequences. Choosing to agree, to disagree, to support, to deny, or simply to ignore are all expressions of this normativity. It is for this reason, and not because scientists might be clumsy in

their efforts to avoid bias, that constructivists view understanding (and therefore science) as an intrinsically value-laden enterprise. Negotiating the path between illocution and perlocution is always normative.

Rule-oriented constructivism (ROC) - the sort of constructivism, that is, that views science as fundamentally a linguistic performance - offers up the tools of language as the tools of science. The most important theorists of ROC in international relations, Onuf and Kratochwil, address the problem of normativity broadly and don't associate normativity specifically with the problem of identity.⁴⁸ As metatheory, ROC is a broadly-conceived system that seeks to build new foundations for social science in the face of postmodern criticism about the ontological status of scholarship. It solves problems that social scientists care about. When Walt describes constructivism as a third pillar of scholarship in international relations on a par with realism and liberalism, however, he suggests that it can also solve problems that practitioners of foreign policy care about.

One should not invest the distinction between scholars and practitioners with too much meaning. ROC is at pains to point out that speech is a form of practice (again, "saying is doing"), and scholars help to create the social worlds in which we all live. Yet the work of scholars (such as Professor Karasawa) who make their normative intent clear (to promote, for example, awareness of ecological constraints) is a pragmatic reminder of what critical theorists argue at length: science must ultimately be judged not within a closed normative system of its own devising, but in the open-ended, "contaminated" normative system of efforts to solve human problems. Metatheory is not problem-solving theory.

Whatever their faults, realism and liberalism give rise to problem-solving theories addressing the most basic human needs, satisfaction of material desires and security in the expectation of their future satisfaction. By targeting identity, constructivism addresses a higher order, but still very real, need - to belong. The need to identify with others, and to be recognized by others, may be less important than survival. Maslow, at least, argued that it was in his famous hierarchy of needs.⁴⁹ There is no reason to assume, however, that international politics is motivated by only the most basic human needs. Constructivists have generated considerable evidence that higher-order constructs of political meaning also matter. Identity politics are central, in fact, to foreign policy choices. Identity is the medium through which national leaders and ordinary citizens alike translate recognition of similarity and difference (in threat, capabilities, and so on) into ontological statements about international relations. It is the way they "construct" the world they hope to affect through their foreign policies, populating it with agents. Constructivism is ideally positioned to offer a theory of agency and, in so doing, to make a vital contribution to the study of foreign policy. This is the promise of constructivist theory. The peril is that, fascinated with language as they are, constructivists will content themselves instead to make use of a trendy new vocabulary of "identity" and "normativity" to repeat in a more obscure way what realists and liberals have already said about the "traditional" values of international relations.

Abstract

The work of scholars (such as Professor Kei Karasawa) who address problems that clearly matter (such as environmental limits on sustainable development) serves as an important object lesson for constructivist theory. Constructivism is ideally suited to explore normativity in

international politics, but to do so it must itself take a normative stand. The value of belonging is the logical candidate for the attention of constructivists, who have already devoted considerable effort to demonstrating that identity politics matter. They have not succeeded, however, in articulating a theory of national identity. Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* is a step in the right direction, but its core propositions suffer from circularity and indeterminacy. Other recent efforts to clarify practical and discursive limits on national identities offer a possible way forward. This paper argues that understanding the limits of national identity is crucial to establishing constructivism as a theory of foreign policy and not merely as a body of metatheoretical statements about international relations.

Notes

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- 1 Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 3 (1997), pp. 319-363.
- 2 R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 79.
- 3 David Campbell, *Politics Without Principle: Sovereignty, Ethics, and the Narratives of the Gulf War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), p. 92, emphasis in original.
- 4 See, for example, Kei Karasawa, *Petroleum and Global Economics* (石油と世界経済) (Tokyo: Chūei Keizaiisha, 1991); Kei Karasawa, *Environmental Resources and Growth Economics* (資源環境と成長の経済学) (Tokyo: Chūei Keizaiisha, 1995).
- 5 Grieco holds that positive-sum and zero-sum conceptions of international politics constitute the basic distinction between neoliberalism and neorealism. See Joseph Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42 (1988), pp. 483-508.
- 6 Neorealists typically cast their structural theories of international relations in instrumental terms. Earlier realists, such as Morgenthau or even Machiavelli, were more explicit about the values behind their assumptions.
- 7 David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
- 8 The best-known example of this genre is probably Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
- 9 Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110 (Spring 1998), pp. 29-32. On Walt's own inclination toward realist assumptions, see not only his claim in this article that "realism remains the most compelling general framework for understanding international relations" (p. 31), but also "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 35 (June 1991), pp. 211-239. Another recent work proposing constructivism as a new paradigm for research on international relations is Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner, eds., *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics* (Boston: MIT Press, 1999).
- 10 Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996).
- 11 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

- 12 Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1956).
- 13 Erving Goffman, *Strategic Interaction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), p. 3.
- 14 The problem of properly identifying the nature of social interlocutors (individuals, groups, states, or other agents) is very different from another identity problem that, if anything, has received even more attention from social scientists: What confers status as an agent? In the case of corporate agents such as the nation-state, the latter question has provoked much debate.
- Identity demarcates a boundary with the expectation of homogeneity within and difference without. Most accounts of national identity emphasize the first of these two functions, unification, in an effort to explain the emergence and success of the nation-state as an institutional form following the Peace of Westphalia. Important studies of the nation-state's internal cohesion include: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966); Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism* (London: Verso, 1977); Barry Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security* 18 (1993), pp. 80-124; Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Charles Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).
- On the distinction between "internal" and "external" theories of identity, see Paul Kowert, "National Identity: Inside and Out," *Security Studies* 8, 2 (Winter 1998/99), pp. 1-34. Also see Alexander Wendt's four-fold distinction in *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 224.
- 15 Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Parts I and II," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (1983), pp. 205-235 and 323-353.
- 16 On evolutionary dynamics in international relations, see Takashi Inoguchi, *The Standpoint of Global Change* (世界変動の見方) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1994); and George Modelski et al, "Special Issue: Evolutionary Paradigms in the Social Sciences," *International Studies Quarterly* 40 (1996), pp. 315-431.
- 17 Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46 (1992), pp. 391-425.
- 18 Jeffrey Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," *World Politics* 50 (1998), pp. 324-48.
- 19 See Jeffrey W. Legro, "Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-Step," *American Political Science Review* 90 (1996), pp. 118-137; Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review* 88 (1994), pp. 384-396; and Albert S. Yee, "Thick Rationality and the Missing 'Brute Fact': The Limits of Rationalist Incorporations of Norms and Ideas," *Journal of Politics* 59 (1997), pp. 1001-1039.
- 20 Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner, "International Organization and the Study of World Politics," *International Organization* 52 (1998), p. 682. Also see Legro, "Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-step."
- 21 See Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*; Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State." Discussions of other constructivist approaches to identity can be found in Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," op cit; and Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, "Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 451-497. Another explicitly structural constructivist theory is developed in Paul Kowert, "Place, Politics, and International Identity," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, August 28-31, 1997; and Paul Kowert, "The Role of Culture and Identity in National Economic Crises," *Ritsumeikan Journal of International Relations and Area Studies* (立命館国際地域研究) 16 (March 2000), pp. 53-70.

- 22 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 246-312.
- 23 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 254.
- 24 Wendt acknowledges this potential for circularity but considers it "benign" (Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 342). His point, that social processes are often recursive, is fair enough. But this does not make it good theory. If there is a natural feedback loop between national identity and the international system, it is also fair to ask a theory of identity to explain the permissive conditions of this system. Failing to do so, one is left with the system itself as the prime mover of international politics - a Waltzian position that Wendt sets out to criticize.
- 25 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 327.
- 26 See Judith Howard and Peter Callero, eds., *The Self-Society Dynamic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); George McCall and Jerry Simmons, *Identities and Interactions* (New York: Free Press, 1978); Sheldon Stryker, *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version* (Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company, 1980); and Sheldon Stryker, "Identity Theory: Developments and Extensions," in Kryisia Yardley and Terry Honess, eds., *Self and Identity: Psychosocial Perspectives* (New York: Wiley, 1987), pp. 89-103.
- 27 See Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 250.
- 28 Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars," *International Security* 19 (1995), pp. 65-93; Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). Lynn Eden, *Deconstructing Construction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).
- 29 See, inter alia, Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Politics: The Struggle against Apartheid* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest, and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Ted Hopf, ed., *Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).
- 30 Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest, and Action*.
- 31 Sherman Garnett, "Russia's Illusory Ambitions," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (March/April 1997), pp. 61-76.
- 32 Frank Schimmelfennig, "NATO Enlargement: A Constructivist Explanation," *Security Studies* 8 (1998/99), pp. 198-234.
- 33 Thomas Risse-Kappen (now Risse), *Cooperation among Democracies: the European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), esp. p. 32.
- 34 Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). Also see Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Bringing Transnational Relations Back in : Non-state Actors, Domestic Structures, and International Institutions* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights : International Norms and Domestic Change* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- 35 Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, p. 29.
- 36 Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, p. 31.
- 37 Here, I part company from post-modern and anti-foundationalist thinkers. Wendt's scientific realism provides one justification for doing so (although Wendt himself claims to be ontologically "post-positivist"; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 91). Onuf's formulation, that "the material and the social contaminate each other," speaks directly to this point. See Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), p. 40.
- 38 Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, 1920). An account of Japan's spatial relationship with China and its effect on Japanese national identity during the Tokugawa period can be found in Ronald P. Toby, "Contesting the Centre: International Sources of Japanese Identity," *International History Review* 7 (1985), pp. 347-363. Other discussions of the contribution of physical geography to national identity include Daniel Deudney, "Ground Identity: Nature, Place, and Space in Nationalism," in Lapid and Kratochwil, eds. *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, pp.

- 129-145; and Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
- 39 William G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).
- 40 This formulation offers a way around the dualism that often besets studies of identity politics: either identity is intrinsic to a given agent or else it constructed and therefore bears no particular connection to an agent. A few examples of this unfortunate opposition include: David Klugman, "Existentialism and Constructivism: A Bi-polar Model of Subjectivity," *Clinical Social Work Journal* 25 (1997), pp. 297-313; Elizabeth Mertz, "A New Social Constructionism for Sociolegal Studies," *Law and Society Review* 28 (1994), pp. 1243-1265; Andrew Sayer, "Essentialism, Social Constructivism, and Beyond," *The Sociological Review* 45 (1997), pp. 453-487; and Virginia Tilley, "The Terms of the Debate: Untangling Language about Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20 (1997), pp. 497-522.
- 41 Jonathan Mercer, "Anarchy and Identity," *International Organization* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 229-52. For other applications of SIT to identity politics and international relations, see Glenn Chafetz, "The Political Psychology of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime," *Journal of Politics* 57, no. 3 (August 1995): 743-75; and Paul Kowert, "Agent versus Structure in the Construction of National Identity," in Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas G. Onuf, and Paul Kowert, eds., *International Relations in a Constructed World* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 101-22.
- 42 Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. ch. 4; John Turner, "Toward a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group," in Henri Tajfel, ed., *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 15-40; and Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin, eds., *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986).
- 43 Ted Hopf, "Introduction: Russian Identity and Foreign Policy after the Cold War," in Hopf, *Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy*, p. 11.
- 44 Heikka's analysis is more subtle than this brief explanation indicates. See Henrikki Heikka, "Beyond Neorealism and Constructivism: Desire, Identity, and Russian Foreign Policy," in Hopf, *Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 57-107. Heikka considers himself a critic of both neorealism and constructivism. Yet in fact, as with Mercer, his argument is broadly consistent with constructivism (though not, perhaps, with Wendt's version of it). Another Lacanian study of national identity is Diane Rubenstein, "Hate Boat, National Identity, and Nuclear Criticism," in James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro, eds., *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), pp. 231-255.
- 45 Richard Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation: A General Theory and a Case Study* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Richard K. Herrmann, *Perceptions and Behavior in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985); and Richard K. Herrmann, "The Power of Perceptions in Foreign-Policy Decision Making: Do Views of the Soviet Union Determine the Policy Choices of American Leaders?" *American Journal of Political Science* 30 (1986), pp. 841-75. On balance theory, see Fritz Heider, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations* (New York: Wiley, 1958).
- 46 Stephen Walker, ed., *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987); Stephen Walker, "Symbolic Interactionism and International Politics: Role Theory's Contribution to *International Organization*," in Martha Cottam and Chih-yu Shih, eds., *Contending Dramas: A Cognitive Approach to Post-war International Organizational Processes* (New York: Praeger, 1992), pp. 19-38. Also see Philippe G. Le Prestre, *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997). Holsti's descriptive study of national self-images is described in Kal J. Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* 14 (1970), pp. 233-309.
- 47 See Onuf, *World of Our Making*, esp. ch. 2; and John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
- 48 Onuf, *World of Our Making*; Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of*

Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

49 Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954).

コンストラクティヴィズムの危険性と将来性

唐沢敬教授が行ったような資源と発展の限界についての研究は、コンストラクティヴィズム（構成主義）にとって、科学の実用的な意図を思い出させるのに役立つだろう。コンストラクティヴィズムは国際関係の規範分析にそもそも適しているが、そのためには自ら規範的な立場を自覚的に取らねばならない。そこで、コンストラクティヴィスト理論が国際関係の分析の中で「帰属意識」を重要視するのは道理に適うことである。だがコンストラクティヴィズムは、不幸にも、アイデンティティ政治を深く研究し、その総合理論を作ることに成功していない。アレクサンダー・ウェント（Alexander Wendt）の *Social Theory of International Politics* は注目すべき好例であるが、国際システムとナショナル・アイデンティティの各々が互いに循環論法に立ち、分析の核心がやむなく空転している。しかし、コンストラクティヴィズムはナショナル・アイデンティティの限界を掘り下げることができ、そのため、メタ理論的な言説よりも実用的な外交政策論に貢献することができる。