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## **CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

The 1990s were very important years because they introduced a new approach to the International Relations discipline such as Constructivism. These years were also very productive and full of innovations for international relations. Mainstream theories such as Realism and Liberalism, which already exist in the field, failed to predict and explain the end of the Cold War theoretically. Such an environment has created a very suitable basis for the Constructivist approach, which is based on social and political theories. Alexander Wendt's "Anarchy is What States Make of It: Social Construction of Power Policies" has become one of the important works on Constructivism in the discipline of International Relations.

Constructivism; is an approach focused on human consciousness, social interaction and the place of human awareness in world politics. The main philosophy of constructivism is based on the idea that social facts are created by people in human minds, society and social life. According to this approach, the main factor affecting politics is subjective approaches rather than neutral facts (Roskin & Berry, 2014: 57). In other words, the constructivist approach is based on the idea that there is no objective social or political reality independent of our own understanding. Consequently, constructivists do not see the social world as an external world of concrete objects, but instead consider it as an intersubjective awareness. Constructivism rejects Neorealism and Neoliberalism's search for the reality from a rationalist perspective and defends that the facts are created within social contexts and that world politics should be viewed from a sociological perspective. Neorealism, which is the most criticized theory of constructivism, has a materialist approach. While military power and economic capacity give basic importance to the distribution of material power, the constructive approach suggests that the most important factor in international relations is social. (Price and Christian, 2000: 1784)

One of the insights that constructivism is based on is the understanding that people are social beings and what makes us us are social structures. The social world is not a given world, but a created

world (Zefhuss, 2002: 4). Neorealism is one of the most widely accepted movements among the International Relations theories at the end of the Cold War. Because of this situation, naturally, neorealism has received the most criticism by Constructivism. Constructivism was one of the strongest criticisms directed towards Neorealism.

Essentially, the Constructionist approach has entered the International Relations literature with the work of Nicholas Onuf's "World of Our Making". However, the greatest effect on the theoretical structure of the field was undoubtedly by Alexander Wendt and his works. Constructivism is actually a concept that already exists in sociology and social theory. The adaptation of Constructivism to international relations, the creation of its theoretical background and the introduction of works that can be called the basis of Constructivism were realized by Alexander Wendt.

### **Basic Assumptions of Constructivist Theory**

#### **Social Construction of Reality**

The point where constructivists differ greatly from international relations theories, especially Neorealism, is the difference in understanding of the nature of being. Realist and rationalist approaches in international relations have a state and individual centered approach. They think that assets are independent of the social environment in which they are located. According to realist theorists, the facts are given, largely stable and unchangeable to the environment in which they are located. The fact that rationalist and realist theories are the theories that emerged after the great wars makes it understandable that these theories attribute the main emphasis to hard concrete and material facts.

Contrary to this idea, the constructivist approach argues that the individual and the state, which are social entities, cannot be separated from the social situation and the normative sense environment surrounding them. When we consider social theory, constructivism examines the relationship between the social world, social actions and social actors. Constructivism prioritizes human interactions, social structure and the meanings that people attribute rather than material conditions and factors. According to the constructivist philosophy, the social world we live in is not a "given world". Everything that exists in the social world of people is again built by people (Adler, 2005: 96).

He acknowledges that what matters is not material values and facts, but what matters is the meanings and values that people attribute.

However, the point that should not be confused here is that the constructivists do not see social meanings as rivals to material factors. They say that social meanings are completed by making sense of material factors.