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Constructivism in International Relations

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Beyond Identity? Theoretical Dilemma and Historical Reflection of Constructivism in International Relations[*]

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Abstract

The issue of state identity poses many problems for international relations since the end of the Cold War. Drawing support from philosophy and sociology, constructivists problematize the basic assumptions of existing international relation theory and proclaim the inter-state identity evolution. They predict that a 'world state (beyond identity) is inevitable'. This creates a systematic theory of international politics with ideas as its characteristics, and sets a new research agenda from the social perspective. However, this article argues that the confusion between self-identity and proper identity makes constructivists fall into theoretical dilemmas. A matrix of need-power-identity is instead suggested through the comparative studies of international systems between the Chou Dynasty of ancient China and the city-state period of ancient Greece. The article challenges the two conclusions of constructivists: inter-state identity is in linear progression; beyond identity is inevitable. The article ends with the caveat that the future world will not be clear, because the states (actors) would struggle for authority. So-called 'beyond identity' would not be realized without common needs for the same destination.

Introduction

In the past 20 years, international studies has sparked a theoretical debate between 'rationalists' (mainly neorealists, neoliberal institutionalists) and adherents of 'reflectivists' (postmodernists and poststructuralists, critical theorists, and feminist theorists) about international reality (Keohane, 1988; Adler, 1997). This debate is fruitful and cumulative, allowing proponents of the two research programs to sharpen their arguments while simultaneously shedding light on key issues of international relations, for example, state identity. In view of the fact that identity has failed to figure prominently in the most recent

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'debate' of international relations (IR), increasingly, constructivists have begun to expand the debate among highly interested parties since 1990s. The trend cuts across familiar disciplinary divisions and includes both mainstream IR theories (rationalists) and newly created critical voices (reflectivists) (Lapid, 1996: 3).

The first of the mainstream orthodoxies during the Cold War is characterized by the assumption that state, as an egocentric, unitary, rational immutable actor, does not have an identity which is determined by domestic politics and has nothing to do with the activity in the international domain. In short, state identity is given (Waltz, 1979; Keohane, 1989). Neorealists, who harshly marginalize identity, prefer to explain international relations as simple behavioral responses that act on material objects from the outside. However, the peaceful end of the Cold War brought about two important consequences for international studies. The first is the assumption of a 'given' identity (states are immutable, self-help, and selfish actors), which makes it impossible to explain 'the survival of weak states in an anarchy of the strong or of defeated states in an anarchy of the victorious, nor does it explain why the survival rate of modern states differs from that of pre-modern' (Wendt, 1999: 324). The second, the boundary among inter-state identities through cultural selection (recognition, idea, desire, etc.) as the criterion instead of material factors (military, economic power, etc.) to judge who the enemy or friend is, becomes increasingly distinct (Huntington, 1996).

Therefore, the reflectivists began to problematize and criticize the assumption of a 'given' identity as early as the mid-1980s. They derive much of their energy from a sustained interest in precisely the 'given' identity. They propose to debate on the nature of international social relations and discuss ways for studying it, because, in the social world in which we live, only ideas matter and can be studied. For them, the identity of state is agnostic, so that the researcher of international studies cannot make sense of definitive identity (Ashley, 1988).

Although the reflectivists deconstruct the ontological and epistemological concept, and exceed the limit of power and institution studies, they can never provide a rational explanation for international affairs. Therefore, most mainstream IR theorists do refute them.[i] In other words, it is such an asymmetric debate that the two could not connect and communicate with each other at the beginning of 1990. On the other side of the divide, both of them ignore the origin of state identity and the social framework of world politics (Checkel, 1998: 324). All these factors have tended to develop the appearance of constructivism[ii], its preference for 'middle ground' over ontology, epistemology, and methodology, and its potential contribution to a better understanding of IR (Onuf, 1989; Wendt, 1992, 1999, 2003; Finnemore, 1996; Katzenstein, 1996; Ruggie, 1998; Fierke & Jorgensen, 2001).

This article discusses the prevalence of constructivism. The first section provides an introduction of the two 'turns' in constructivism as the 'middle ground' approach in IR. One is the idealist turn that 'state identity is constructed during the interaction'; the other is the holist turn that the 'identity relationship is in linear progression'. The next section points out the dilemmas of the theoretical assumption of constructivism. The issues we discuss in that section do not deal only with the conception, difference and transformation of self-identity and proper identity constructivists ignore. We also have much to say about the power and need relationship constructivists over-underestimate. In the third section, we analyze two transformations of international system—the Chou Dynasty of ancient China and the city-state period of ancient Greece—and challenge the two conclusions of constructivists: the identity of inter-states is in linear progression; beyond identity is inevitable. Finally, in the fourth section, we try to show the reality of identity in the global era and suggest a framework for analysis to IR that the proper identity of the future would show the various results with the various outcome of the struggle for authority.

Constructivist Turns[iii] in the Identity Studies of IR

Drawing support from two approaches of idealism and holism in philosophy and sociology, constructivism challenges not only materialism of interest and power research but also individualism of the function of state agent in identity studies of mainstream IR, and constructs a 'middle ground' between mainstream IR theories and non-mainstream (Adler, 1997).

The Idealist Turn: The Origin of Identity in the Struggle for Recognition

For reflectivists, reality is independent of cognition but can be accurately represented in true descriptions. Constructivists, in contrast, although not denying the existence of material reality, believe that it cannot be known outside human language. They proclaim that (it) 'does not draw a sharp distinction between material and social realities' (Onuf, 1989: 40) but stresses the role of what is socially made (Zehfuss, 2002: 21). Objective fact, for them, 'is not the thing described but rather the intersubjective validity of a characterization upon which a reasonable person can agree' (Kratochwil, 1996: 219). In other words, constructivists admit that the world constituted by material reality (power, interest, etc.) is objective and known. However, only material significance and function are too limited to affect our action without considering the social structure.

For international actors, the fundamental structure is shared ideas but material. 'Five hundred British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the US than five North Korean ones because of the shared understanding that underpins them' (Wendt, 1999: 255). The idea determines the expectation and thinking among states during international interaction and thus constitutes individual and group identities, but it is mediated by material competition. It is the so-called 'struggle for recognition': 'the desire for recognition is about getting recognition from the Other' (Wendt, 2003: 512). In short, self becomes self by other. An agent cannot

identify himself or herself without the other's recognition. That is to say, agent identity is not characterized by egoism, which realists argued, but is determined by the social condition recreated.

The social condition recreated might be broken down into four scenes. The first scene is based on its a priori definition of the situation when Ego engages in some action. Ego gives a signal to Alter, to show the role that Ego wants to take in the interaction and the corresponding role into which it wants to cast Alter. Then, Alter ponders the meaning of Ego's signal. The third is based on this new definition of the situation, and Alter engages in an action of its own. Last, Ego interprets Alter's action and prepares a response. Alter and Ego will now repeat this social act until one or both decide that the interaction is over (Wendt, 1999: 330–31). Thus, the identity between Alter and Ego is constructed during the interaction. As the following figure shows, the first encounter can be considered the starting point of the constructivist's logic.

In the first encounter, 'we would be highly alert, of course, but whether we placed our military forces on alert or launched an attack would depend on how we interpreted the import of the first gesture for our security…the first social act creates expectations on both sides about each other's future behavior…and so on over time' (Wendt, 1992: 405). The identity of state is based on intersubjective understanding and expectations during the interaction. In other words, B is sure to consider A the enemy if A gives a signal with hostility, for example, gun and bomb, and then the shared ideas with hostility and suspicion would lead to the so-called 'dilemma of security' (Waltz, 1979). However, if A gives a friendly signal, they will be friends and will then promote 'the collective community of security'. This is also the logical base of the famous inference, 'Anarchy is what states make of it' (Wendt, 1992).

Figure 1. *First Encounter of Two States (Wendt, 1992: 405)*

State A with identity and interests	(1) Stimulus requiring action
	(2) State A's definition of the situation
Intersubjective understandings and expectations possessed by and constitutive of A and B	(3) State A's action
	(4) State B's interpretation of A's action and B's own definition of the
State B with identity and interests	(5) State B's action
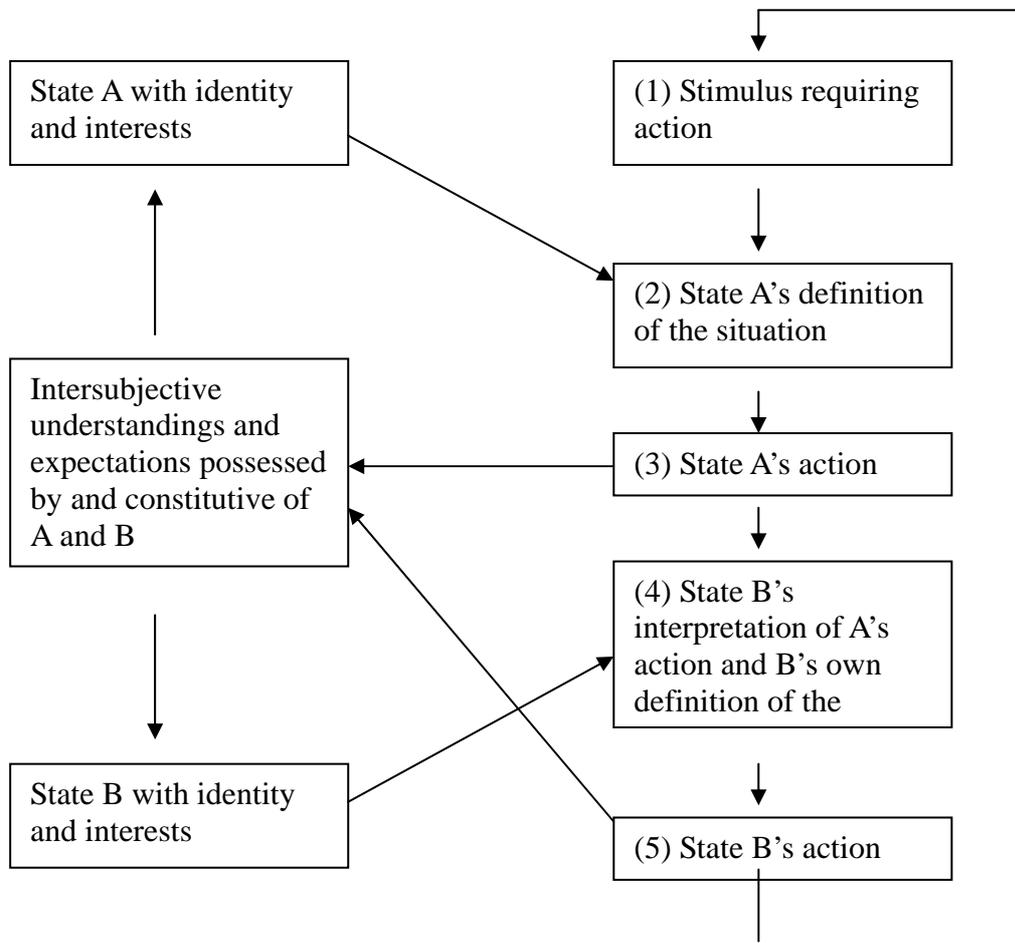
The Holist Turn: the Evolution of Identity in the Logic of Anarchy

Constructivists oppose the rationalists who consider state identity the immutable egoist (Moravcsik, 1997). Constructivists explain the evolution of identity as a linear progressive process because of the struggle for recognition. Through the struggle for recognition, every state will recognize all other states, and the world will not be in a state of anarchy. That is a teleological theory, which suggests that a world state is inevitable, and simultaneously structures of recognition and identity will be transformed from a territorial to a global basis (Wendt, 2003). We describe it as 'beyond identity'.

In the constructivists' view, especially that of Alexander Wendt, there is the final causation to ensure that 'beyond identity' is inevitable. The first reason is (upward) struggle

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for recognition, explained above. Those who are not fully recognized will struggle for it as best as they can, which makes any social order founded on unequal recognition unstable in the long run. And therefore, in Wendt's opinion, rational Great Powers should be clear about the decision 'if the choice is between a world of growing threats as a result of refusing to fully recognize Other versus a world in which their desires for recognition are satisfied' (Wendt, 2003: 524–25).

The second is the logic of anarchy, which through downward causation struggles for recognition in the way of tolerable violence (Wendt, 2003: 517). There are five systems of the culture of anarchy: (1) The system of states of complete non-recognition before the Westphalian Treaty in 1648, what is called the state of 'war of all against all' or 'Hobbesian culture' (Wendt, 1999: 259–78); (2) the society of state or 'Lockean culture' (Wendt, 1999: 279–97), which recognizes each other's legal sovereignty as independent subjects; (3) a universal pluralistic security community, to which adds the requirement of non-violent dispute resolution to the boundary conditions of the system; (4) collective security or 'Kantian culture', which recquires its members to recognize each other's sovereignty and to practice non-violent dispute resolution; they are expected to defend each other against threats on the principle of 'all for one, one for all'; and (5) world state or beyond identity. 'Individual and states alike will have lost the negative freedom to engage in unilateral violence, but gained the positive freedom of fully recognized subjectivity. The system will have become itself and "individual"' (Wendt, 2003: 525). This imposes boundary conditions that increasingly constrain the interactions of the system's parts so that each culture is a relatively unstable stage in this process until the stage of world state—state sovereignty to be transferred to the global level individual recognition, which emerges within 100–200 years. 'Were a "completed" EU to be globalized it would be a world state' (Wendt, 2003: 506).

Thus, constructivists such as Wendt—arguing that state identity is constructed by the international system during interaction and then evolves in linear progression, finally will be beyond identity—admit not only the material objectivity of rationalists but also conscious activity of reflectivists. Constructivists also seize the 'middle ground' between the immutable identity of rationalists and the agnostic identity of reflectivists. More importantly, constructivists make a prophecy of the post-hegemonic world and set a new research agenda from the social perspective (Alker, 2000: 150). Also, these academic progresses achieve potent support from many theorists (Alder, 2002: 98–100).

In sum, a constructivist turn in the identity studies of IR involves three distinct dimensions: from givenness to constructedness, from immutability to change, and from recursion to linear evolution. However, we turn now to criticize the starting point of the logic of constructivism and offer a systematic reconstruction of first encounter. In the next two sections, we focus on the theoretical dilemmas of the constructivists' logic and the historical falsity of the generalization of constructivism.

Theoretical Assumption: Dilemmas and Reconstruction in the Identity Studies of Constructivism

'Action depends on the probabilities we assign, and these are the key part of the function of what the aliens do; prior to their gesture, we have no systemic basis for assigning possibilities. If their first gesture is to appear with a thousand spaceships and destroy New York, we will define the situation as threatening and respond accordingly. But if they appear with one spaceship, saying what seems to be "we come in peace", we will feel "reassured" and will probably respond with a gesture intended to reassure them' (Wendt, 1992: 405).

The plausible hypothesis seems to give us a new perspective on the origin of state identity. However, in our opinion, the hypothesis of the first encounter is full of flaws. The

first is about identity of identity (Smith, 2000: 160) to decide on the appearance of aliens with a thousand spaceships or one spaceship. Who created the aliens' identity (just as their expectation) before interaction? In other words, if A, as above, decided B's identity, during the interaction, then who or what can decide A's?

The second is whether symmetric identity can be constructed. Let's imagine. If aliens are so powerful that we cannot defend ourselves against them, should we choose the way of capitulation instead of resistance? If the aliens' power is very weak, should we be sure not to intervene in their living instead of being reassured? In fact, the hypothesis of responding accordingly to construct symmetric identity was disproved by many histories. For example, the first official encounter between China and England in 1793 began with the peaceful visit of Lord Macartney but ended with Macartney's humiliation because of Chinese insistence on over-elaborate formalities, especially on the way that Macartney bowed and knelt before the emperor. This indirectly led to the Opium War in 1840 (Zhang, 2001: 59). The same is true for asymmetric identity between the colonialists and the exploited during colonization.

The third is how to maintain the existing identity. Will we identify ourselves with aliens if their power, technologies, policy and culture and so on can better solve our needs or kinds of problem, for example, pollution? And then, will we forsake a similar identity if aliens decline? In other words, is the process of the relationship of identity, as Wendt said, '(at least) not be worse' (Wendt, 2003: 312)?

Unlike those of the constructivists, these queries of the hypothesis of first encounter will not be answered accurately without analysis of power and needs. The constructivists exaggerate the autonomy of ideas in shaping the identity so that their prescriptions of the multifaceted interactions in the world are not adequate in understanding international relations.

In Snyder's (2002: 7–8) words, '(constructivists) overlook the decisive interplay between situational constraints and the creation of culture'.

Therefore, beginning from the two fundamental assumptions in identity formation of constructivism (Bartelson, 1998: 306), we will reconstruct the first encounter. First, constructivists assume that identities are never given prior to social intercourse; as Wendt (1992: 404) stated, 'Neither actor has biological or domestic imperatives for power, glory, or conquest, and there is no history of security or insecurity between the two'. Second, identities are profoundly intersubjective insofar as their existence depends on socially constituted and shared meanings in order to create symmetric identities.

However, the first assumption makes constructivists evade an approach of domestic and social factors, and confuses the difference between state as a whole and state as individual (Wright, 1999), which is the most important element of the construction of identity.[iv] For people, state is a whole of governance. For the international system, state is only an actor. That is to say, two dimensions, in our view, should be separated from identity formation. One is self-identity (also called 'self sense') from the domestic, and the other is proper identity from the uncertainty and variability of international interaction.

From Self-identity to Proper Identity

If we abandon the two assumptions as above (they are too far from reality), we can arrive at two points. First, it is the existence of self-identity independent of international action. Mann (1986: 49–82) states that the self-identity of the state, as a whole, was originated in the process of state formation. For example, the sense to property needs an arbitrator; the sense to irrigation needs an organizer; the sense to conflict needs an authoritarian. Nevertheless, arbitrator, organizer or authoritarian can demonstrate that the self-identity of the state first

depends on domestic self-sense and is independent of the interaction among international units.

Then, self-identity will be transformed into the needs of identity externalization (such as Taiwan nowadays) and material needs, which embody the expectation before interaction. For instance, aliens need to interact with us either with the signal 'destroy New York' or 'saying what seems to be "we come in peace"'. Simultaneously, their material needs, one of self-identity, cause them to decide on the appearance with a thousand spaceships or with one spaceship.

In the first encounter, the needs (especially material needs) among states are always different. The most important reason is misunderstanding from divergence (of culture evolved from self-identity formation) among 'selves', which will lead to antagonistic relationships among states. Thus, it is the logic that can solve the paradox of Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* between the pluralistic possibility of identity formation in the theoretical assumption (whether the identity relationship is enemy, rivalry or friend depends on the consideration of the purpose of the adversary's gesture in the first encounter) and monistic starting point in the historical survey (international history began from Hobbesian Culture, called the state of 'war of all against all').

As constructivists argue, interaction can frequently create shared ideas (Wendt, 1999) that can probably promote the formation of moderate identity. However, this hardly seems to demonstrate the evolution of identity in linear progression. The reason is that the disparity of powers brings about the contingency in fulfilling needs to different degrees, which leads to variation of identity in the way of contingency during the kinds of interaction, for example, negotiations, trade, conflict, deterrence, and colonialism.

Thus, the social process from self-identity to proper identity might be broken down into four scenes, as in Figure 2. The first is self-sense: 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) constituted by domestic/interior factors, and then inherent divergence of kinds of need (Davies, 1991). The third is fulfilling needs of different degrees, resulting in actors' satisfaction, comfort or worry, fear, or discomfiture. Finally, the proper identity will be created after the mutual understanding of actors of the history, present and future of interaction.

Figure 2. Reconstruction of First Encounter
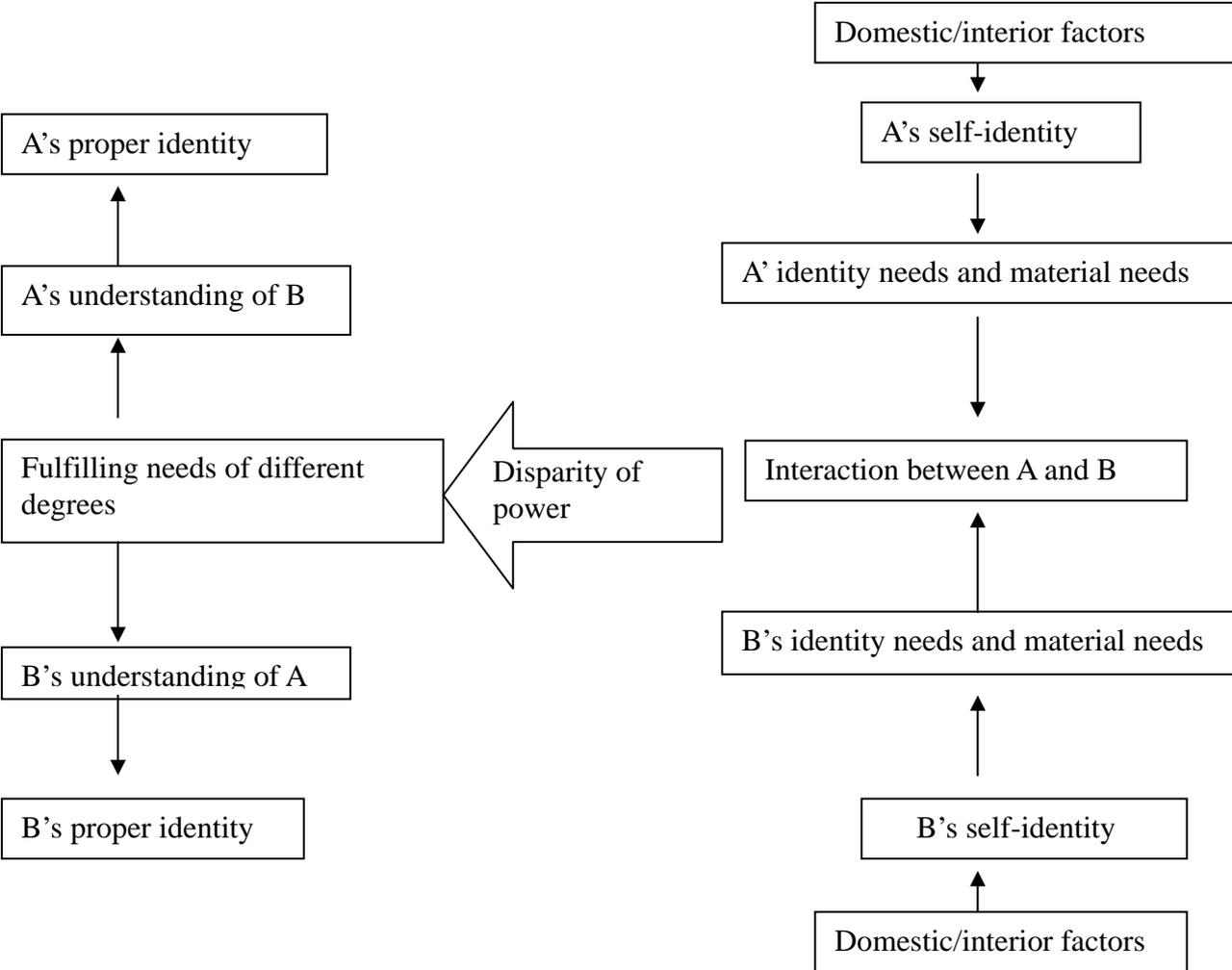
The Character of Proper Identity

Self-identity should be figured as a necessary precondition of all kinds of analysis. As Nietzsche (1968: 309) once remarked, '[t]here would be nothing that could be called knowledge if thought did not first re-form the world in this way into "things", into what is self-identical'. What is self-identical discerns two main positions. One is attributed to the basis of the actual distribution of power within a given state; the other is attributed to the basis of the legitimacy of that distribution of power. According to the former, an effective de facto monopoly on the use of violence is a sufficient condition of statehood. According to the latter, this monopoly has to be supplemented as a sufficiently homogeneous, de facto national identity by a sufficient degree of international recognition. In short, states are states by virtue of being both exclusive of each other and exhaustive of the international domain together (Bartelson, 1998: 299–301).

It is, however, very far from an accurate description of many of the states that exist, and have existed, in the international system. After all, most of the weak states' monopoly on the use of violence cannot be recognized. The so-called 'international recognition', or what can be termed international legal sovereignty, does not imply that a state will have identity itself, de facto rather than *de jure* identity (Krasner, 2000). Actually, weak states have only formal (*de jure*) externalization of self-identity, but not de facto autonomy. More powerful and larger states constrain or dictate the externalization of their weaker counterparts' in order to lead to the variation from self-identity to proper identity. The variation is just the result of compromise and mutual understanding after powerful and weak states fulfill their needs. In earlier historical periods, it is based mostly on the death of weak ones in the way of lower costs of direct governance. In modern historical periods, it is based on the endurable costs of powerful states: colonialism (e.g. British foreign policy in the 18–19th century), intervention (e.g. Grenada in 1984), invasion (e.g. Iraq in 2003), negotiations (e.g. Taiwan nowadays), or

indirect governing (e.g. US to Afghanistan nowadays). In other words, proper identity is the outcome that self-identity cannot be fully externalized. We cannot make sense of the proper identity without the analysis of the disparity of power.

According to constructivism, the end of the struggle for recognition is the actualization of the world state of 'beyond identity'. The greatest hurdle to Wendtian 'world state' formation is the choice of rational Great Powers. Constructivists argued, as mentioned in the first section, the choice is only 'between a world of growing threats as a result of refusing to fully recognize Other versus a world in which their desires for recognition are satisfied' (Wendt, 2003: 524–25). That is to say, the recognition among states is based on the assumption of the Great Powers' scruple to Others.

However, the disparity of power among states creates a series of disparities, including strategy, policy, etc. Great Powers have enough capability to achieve hegemonic stability—both refuse to fully recognize 'Other'—and a satisfied world, instead of Wendtian double choice above. *Pax Romana*, *Pax Britannica*, *Pax Sinica*, and *Pax Americana* are good examples. It is hardly easy for 'Other' to threaten the Great Powers because of the disparity of power. Hence, the proper identity of Great Power and 'Other' would not coincide unless there is an eternal balance of power (so that Great Powers have to recognize 'Other') and all states have the common needs of destination (to 'world states of beyond identity').

It is difficult to realize the two conditions above in reality, discussed in the fourth section of this article. On the one hand, there is no eclecticism to compromise the identity needs, both powerful and weak actors, into the recognition of each other. On the other hand, there is the contradiction between infinite material needs of international actors (progressivism) and relative limited resources of the world (water, oil, etc.), and there is no authoritative

mechanism to coordinate this. In other words, the over-optimistic picture of the international system in constructivists' eyes has already been characterized by organized theoretical hypocrisy.

The poverty of historicism (Popper, 1964) means we are unable to predict the future accurately. As Krasner (2000: 131) said, 'Our theories shape the way we see the world but they cannot remake the world in their own image'. The success of constructivists in the research agenda, in our view, is as great as their drawback of over-optimistic prediction.

However, state identity, as stated above, is decisively the issue of empowerment and needs (Friedman, 1994: 117). The relations among power, needs and identity, discussed in the next two sections, will form a matrix by which one might begin to understand the histories and tackle the problems at hand in the global era.

Historical Studies of Identity Politics in Ancient China and Greece

'Constructivism's programme' (Adler, 2002: 97) of identity studies in the IR is expressed as a project in the tension between theory and history (Albrow, 1996: 30), in connection with the Hobbesian, then Lockean and Kantian culture, and finally to 'beyond identity'. Their theorization of the histories, in our opinion, becomes confused with its essence because of its Western-centrism. First, it is almost 'evidently true that Europeans created the first global international system by bringing all parts of humankind into regular economic and strategic contact with each other' (Buzan & Little, 2000: 20). Second, it firmly believes that the European present is the world's future. However, as Hedley Bull said, 'the theories that are available are almost exclusively Western in origin and perspective. Can they convey an adequate understanding of a world political system that is predominantly non-Western?' (Bull, 1972: 49)

Therefore, in order to escape from the Western-centric fallacy and make an empirical study of the authoritative mechanism in the need-power-identity matrix, we choose the Chou Dynasty of ancient China (from the early Chou era of about 1100 B.C. until the end of the Warring States in 221 B.C.) and the city-state period of ancient Greece (from the Archaic period of the 8th century B.C. until its conquest by Macedonia in 338 B.C.) for the studies of identity politics, for which both are the clue to exploring civilization (Toynbee, 1961: 217). They offer support for the two propositions: (1) the process of the relationship of identity does not look like what the constructivists said '(at least) not be worse' (Wendt, 2003: 312), and (2) the end of 'recognition' does not imply 'beyond identity'.

The Chou Dynasty: Why was there Retrograde 'Beyond Identity'?

The political influence of the Chou (周) Dynasty, which lasted from the 12th century B.C. until the Warring States period in 221 B.C., extended only to the territory between the Yellow River (黃河) and the Yangtze River in present-day central China. Aside from the sporadic involvement with the other groups, such as *yi* (夷), *man* (蠻), *rong* (戎), *di* (狄), the Chou (inter-feudal-states) system developed in isolation from the rest of the world (Holsti, 1995: 25; Yang, 2003a). The vassals (at least 130) were dispensed land, titles and favors by the Chou king and carried out their commitments including symbolic allegiance. They also followed the king in wars and expeditions against the other groups, guarded the frontiers of the Chou lands. The Chou king ruled directly over extensive tracts of territory near the capital, and the vassals had de facto economic, political and religious autonomy (Tian & Zang, 1996). These characteristics create two different proper identities and two forms of interaction. One is 'beyond identity' as the constructivists say, of the interior of the system. The feudal states identified themselves with the king, the 'Son of Heaven (天子)', and coexisted peacefully. The other is the identity of territorial defense or expansion aiding the other groups. The

system did not begin to collapse until the *Zheng* (鄭) sent armed forces to suppress the *Wei* （衛）in 721 B.C. (Gu & Zhu, 2003), which was the first war between feudal states. It broke the hierarchy of 'beyond identity' after the vassals had been deriving authority from inheritance rather than from the central monarchy for more than 400 years. Then the number of units was reduced with each new conquest or absorption, so that only seven major states and three smaller entities remained as independent units at the end of the 4th century B.C. (Yang, 2003b).

It is evident that the characteristic of 'beyond identity' has transformed since 8th century B.C.. The change originated from two points. One is the formation of feudal states' self-identity; the other is the decline of the king's power.

Before the 8th century B.C., the 'Mandate of Heaven (天命)', which considered the Chou king the 'Son of Heaven', had been the greatest esteem for the vassals in connection with consanguinity. The political structure of cosmopolitanism was identified as the institution—'all the earth the king's territory; all the people the king's subjects (普天之下，莫 非王土；率土之濱，莫非王臣)'. Simultaneously, the disparity of power between the Chou king and the vassals—the Western-Six-Divisions (西六師), Yin-Eight-Divisions (殷八師), and the hand-picked troops the king possessed were tenfold more powerful than the vassals' (Ishii, 1999: 6)—was so great that no vassals could burgeon extravagant hopes or needs which usurped the throne through wars. In fact, the vassals needed the protection of the Chou king against the other groups rather than being independent.

By the 8th century B.C., the monarchy of the Chou King eroded as the capital was occupied by other groups in 771 B.C. as well as the vanishing of deification of 'beyond identity'. The idea of equalization—'both king and people are based on the principle of

improving their bodies (自天子以至於庶人一是皆以修身爲本)' (Gu & Zhu, 2003)—was provoked so that people transformed the admiration of the 'Son of Heaven' to the difference in dialects, customs, religion, and cults among the states. By the 5th century B.C., people believed that they were fighting not just as a duty to a feudal lord but for the independence and honor of their own state (Holsti, 1995: 27). Because of the decline of the Chou Dynasty and the rise of the feudal states, larger states needed the position of hegemony, and conflicts had to be resolved directly among feudal states instead of being controlled by the Chou King. By the shifts of hegemony in turn, the earlier proper identity ('beyond identity') of the Chou Dynasty completely collapsed.

Most Chinese scholars argue that the collapse of Chou Dynasty originated from the change of the Chou's power. According to the constructivists' logic, it is the outcome of the change of shared ideas. In our opinion, the variety of needs and power should be considered as common variables of analysis rather than the ideas, as analyzed above.

Ancient Greece: Why Was There No 'Beyond Identity'?

The city-states (*polis*) were the fundamental units of political organization throughout the Greek world from the 8th century B.C. until Philip of Macedonia conquered the peninsula in the late 4th century B.C.. These units have an apparent similarity and an intricate alliance and collective security system in order to resist the invasion of the Persian Empire during 492–77 B.C.. Then, some *polis*, such as Athens and Sparta, dominated the actions and transactions of the smaller units around them on one occasion, because of their rapid growth and extension of military and commercial strength by the middle of the 5th century B.C. (Thucydides, 1954). A few wars over territory, personal rivalries, and frontiers ended in the total destruction of some *polis*. However, there were few permanent hierarchies of dominance-dependence among *polis*. The *polis* developed a number of rules that regulated diplomatic relations and the conduct of

warfare, which gave recognition to the independence and equality of the units (Holsti, 1995: 37–41). The recognition and the culture of anarchy, the fourth stage according to the constructivists, maintained stability in the Greek world for four centuries. Each *polis* maintained its identity instead of 'beyond identity'. Why?

The most significant thing, for the Greeks, is the autonomy of the *polis*. This idea creates interdependence between *polis* and citizen. They are bound by a common cause and face all challenges together. As Thucydides (1954: 158) wrote, 'when the whole *polis* is on the right course it is a better thing for each separate individual than when private interests are satisfied but the *polis* as a whole is going downhill. However well a man may be in his private life, he will still be involved in the general ruin if his country is destroyed; whereas, so long as the *polis* itself is secure, individuals have a much greater chance of recovering from private misfortunes.'

In the opinion of the ancient Greeks, the nature of difference between Hellenic and non-Hellenic is that the Greeks lived in the *polis*. The properties of *polis* must become the starting point and precondition of externalization of any identity. Any opposition to the autonomy of the *polis,* such as 'empire' and 'beyond identity' in the Greek world, would be defeated. This caused them to refuse any hegemony including Persian, Athenian and Spartan, unless the institution of such an empire could fulfill the needs of the *polis* or the disparity of power it possessed was enough to restrain the externalization of self-identity of *polis* (Lebow, 2001).

Just as during the hegemony of Athens by the middle of the 5th century, the proper identity of the other *polis* externalized in the way of accepting Athenian laws, courts, and currency. It was not created solely by Athens' commercial superiority or even by the

imperialism of Cimon and Pericles. But the Athenian institutions were more admirable than their own arrangement, to provide many services for other *polis*, such as leading the alliance against Persia, clearing the seas of pirates and organizing trade connections with non-Hellenic peoples (Bozeman, 1960: 86). Once the relationship of needs broke, the Empire came close to collapse.

All the facts are there. Whether 'beyond identity' is maintained or authoritative mechanisms are realized is decided by the relationship between needs and power. If the self does not need the existing authority, the deprivation of self-identity could not possibly be 'beyond identity', but just the governance by power. There is ample evidence of Macedonian conquest and that of Alexander the Great, the establishment of Byzantium and the following implantation of Ottoman rule. However, we will not pretend to write a full European history here.

Moreover, the histories above—the transformation from 'beyond identity' of earlier the Chou Dynasty to 'Hobbesian Culture' of the later Chou Dynasty, the end of the struggle for recognition in the ancient Greek world—do not only challenge the linear progression conclusion of identity evolution of the constructivists such as Wendt but also enlighten us in analyzing the identity of the global era.

Reality: The Reflection of Identity in the Global Era—A Framework for Analysis in International Relations

Western countries have increasingly brought most of the rest of the world (e.g. Africa) into their own system of identification, since the 16th century (Brysk, Parsons & Sandholtz, 2002). Simultaneously, the *Pax Sinica* in East Asia did not break up until the 19th century (Huang, 1992). The conception of sovereignty that was created in the Westphalian Treaty in 1648 was a strange idea for them (Duara, 1995). As Mann (1993: 25) said, there is no general

evolution aiming at the identity of the nation-state. It is the error of constructivism that wants to find projects in every epoch. The ancient world, in the stated context, was not configured in this way. Nor is the global age nowadays (Albrow, 1996).

Globalization is a historical process, which transforms the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, generating transcontinental or interregional networks of interaction and the exercise of power (Held & Mcgrew, 1999a). Whether the transformation will end with a World State (beyond identity) is a complicated problem. However, it does not prevent us from exploring the many possibilities of identity evolution with the need-power-identity matrix in the global era.

Pluralistic Self-identity

Constructivists often cite the progressive evolution of identity with Robert Carneiro's (1978: 213) estimate that in 1000 B.C. there were 600,000 independent political units in the world, and today there are only about 200. State-centrism[v] does not give a true picture of the real world as well as the prediction of the future.

On the contrary, it is neo-medievalism (Kobrin, 1999: 167) that proclaims that one of the greatest characteristics of globalization is to promote the outburst of various kinds of actors' power (Dougherty, 1976: 603). Substantive data prove that the state is no longer in command of its territory; governments have mostly lost control of national affairs. Other actors participate in the distribution of international value and authority (Strange, 1996; Shokiji, 1999: 2–6). There is a marked shift towards 'heterarchy'—a divided authority system—in which the tasks of governance are shared by the complex array of the emergence of 'overlapping communities of fate' (Held & Mcgrew, 1999b: 221).

Thus, new identity studies must begin from how to grasp pluralistic self-identity instead of 'the global flux of social relations within which the international system floats, and to explore the manifold dimensions of these relations' (Shaw, 1994: 113). We divide the identity of international actors into four dimensions: sovereign state, trans/supra-national organization, non-state actor or organization such as transnational company and religious organization, and multitude such as weak nations, extremists, refugees, and the poor.

Figure 3. *Pluralistic Self-identity in the Global Era*

Self-identity	Origin	Characteristics	Boundary	Example
Sovereign state	Relative balance of power of Western European countries in the 17th century	Definite and stable identity	Territory	UK, France
Trans/supra-national organization	Harmonize the interactions among states	Definite but unstable	Institution	UN, EU
Non-state actor	Social and economic development	Indistinct but stable	Function	Microsoft, IRC
Multitude	Difference of wealth and value view	Indistinct and unstable	No boundary	Al-Qaeda, Refugees

Asymmetric Needs Relationship

The difference in origin, as the second section points out, creates different needs. In our view, there are asymmetrical needs in the global era, as below. The first is the asymmetry of mutual needs among sovereign states. The sovereign states have been developing in parallel with capitalism, in order to create the core-periphery international system, since the 17th

century (Wallerstein, 1974). The weak states in the periphery of the world economy are losing out in the globalization race so that the weak increasingly depend on the core; however, the cores' needs for the weak increasingly declines. Simultaneously, the weaks' needs of identity externalization are not in pace with that of the cores. For the former, the most important need is substantial, internal and external state autonomy; for the latter, it is operational, post-modern and shared institutions (Sorensen, 1999: 97).

The second is asymmetric authoritative needs between trans/supra-national organization and the sovereign states. The former, as a coordinator of inter-state interaction such as cooperation, conflicts, negotiations, need the authority—based on the institution, rule, regime and treaty—above states, which is contrary to the needs of sovereign states' moral, customary and legal authority (Rees, 1950: 507–9).

The third is asymmetric boundary needs between sovereign states and non-state actors. The transnational company based on flexible manufacturing systems (Cerny, 2000: 634–35), the non-profit organization aiding the kinds of human problem, such as the International Red Cross and various religious groups, do not need the territory boundary in order to adapt to changing conditions. Thus, sovereign states fall into the dilemma of choice between losing sovereignty as a result of open boundary versus unstable sovereignty as a result of facing different kinds of pressure from several non-state actors.

The fourth is the symmetric institution needs between multitude and states. Multitude is different from the people, who, in the political concept, are the result of modern states. This serves the legislation of state sovereignty, enduing with a consistent common desire in order to maintain homogeneity inside and exclusivity outside. The liberal institution of states arranges people. However, multitudes such as terrorists, refugees, and beggars, interspersed

within the society, seem to stand against the people. They are eager to achieve equality of value and living opportunity, so that they became an inconceivable power to break up the existing order (Hardt & Negri, 2000).

The Decentralization of Power and Indistinct Future of Proper Identity

As the constructivists say, universal supranational authority is one of the most important steps to the world state (Wendt, 2003: 505). Obviously, it is difficult to conform to the asymmetric needs of all international actors, according to the analysis of realities above, in the absence of authoritative power. Ironically, the bifurcated struggle of power between state-center and multi-center (Rosenau, 1988) has increasingly led to fragmentation and decentralization because of the decline of state power and the rise of other actors. It is obvious that the transformation of power, which used to belong to the state, can be divided into four directions—horizontal transformation from the weak and small states to strong and great states, onward transformation from the states to trans/supranational organization (Strange, 1996), downward transformation from states/government to the region and sub-region (Ohmae, 1993), and the multitude's actions such as 9/11, which probably affect the direction of power transformation.

The diversity of realities is always more complicated than the simplification of theories. Unlike the constructivists, we emphasize the kinds of the possibility with the realistic manipulation of power. The caveat is that the proper identity of the future will show at least two kinds of result with the indistinct outcome of the struggle for authority (Hoffman, 2002: 106), as in the figure above. In our opinion, if the outcome were the permanent balance of power, all actors would seek the eclecticism of an accepted legalization international mechanism—supra-national jurisdictions, which would promote the creation of world government. If universal value is created, all of the actors will identify themselves with the

'Greek era'—intense self-identity and non-aggression. Although this is close to the world state of beyond identity, it does not have enough reason to prove the inevitability of the world state without common needs for the same objective. If the outcome were the creation of a supra-powerful state, all actors would live under an unstable Empire (Cooper, 2002). Although we cannot eliminate the possibility of an eternal empire aiding finally a world state after the assimilation among actors of self-identity, the matter may develop towards the collapse of the Empire because of the struggle for the self-identity externalization.

Figure 4. *Indistinct Future of Proper Identity*
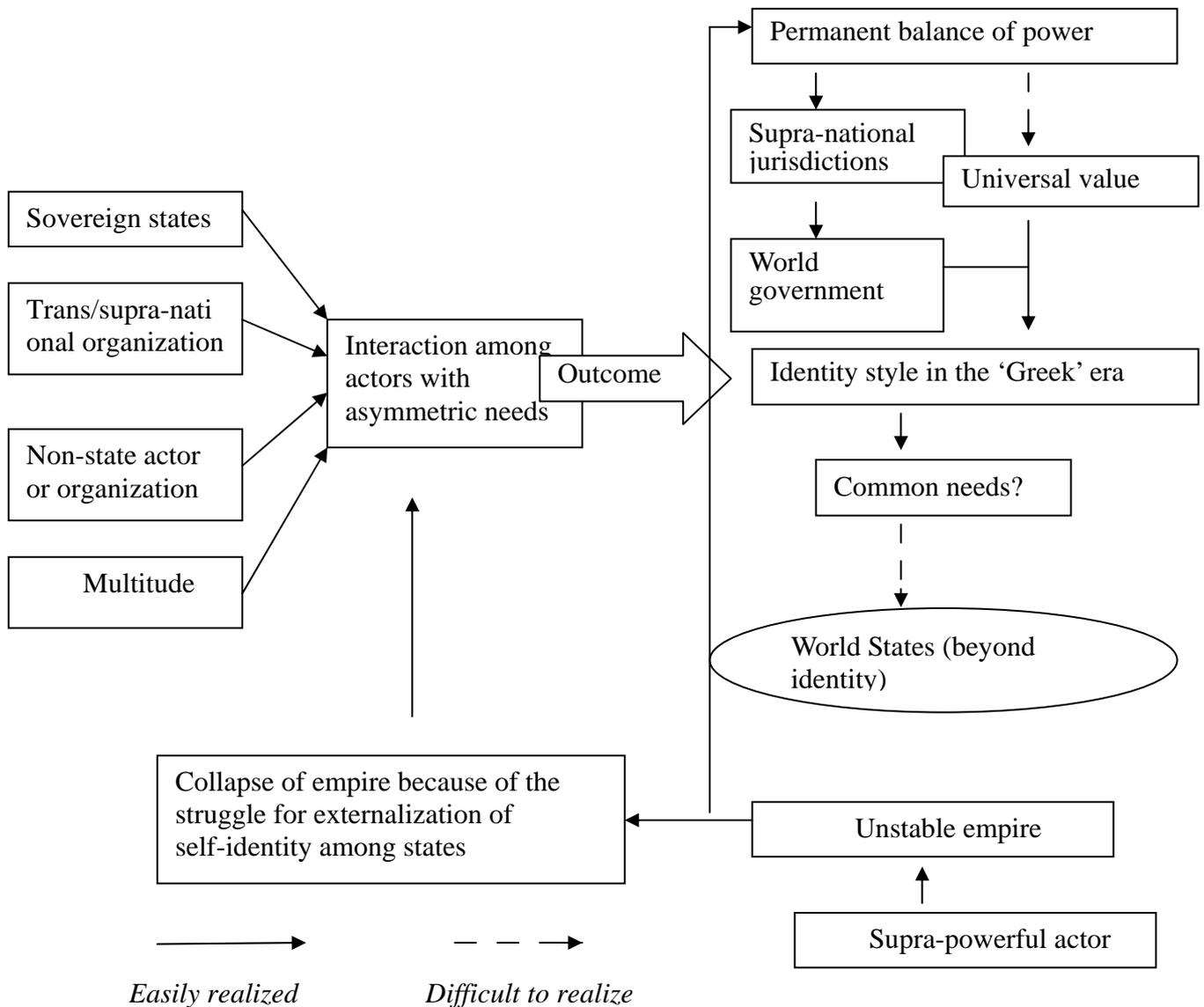
Conclusion

Although constructivists consider the idea the foundation of power and construct the middle ground of the existing theory, then pave the ideal road toward the world state of 'beyond identity', it is treated as a kind of method rather than theory (Nye, 2000: chap 1; Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 2001: 7; Waltz, 2003: preface) because of their impalpable studies of idea. After all, it would seem from the evidence above that the international actors' behavior in anarchy is not fundamentally altered by variations in culture, identity, and idea. As we have emphasized, the effects of the needs and power are the fundamental factors toward sources of changes of identity. There could be 'beyond identity' without permanent balance of power and needs of unanimous destination. Maybe the world ought to be a world state of 'beyond identity'. However, what 'is' in the world and what 'ought to be' are very different and must be kept separate. Contemporary empirical research on identity should aim precisely at showing how the 'ought' becomes the 'is' (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 916).

The histories, as well as the unpredictable future, are difficult to interpret. For the scholars of international studies, the missions should develop in two possible directions at least: one is the interpretation of international histories; the other is the understanding of the authenticity of international reality rather than the inevitability of the future. It is indeed paradoxical that, in the period of the absence of accepted authority and the common needs for the same objective, mainstream constructivists struggle to maintain a myth of world state. The statement of Sahlins (1993: 3) may describe the dilemmas of constructivism in IR: 'Ironic…that Western social scientists should be elaborating theories of global integration just when this "new world order" is breaking down into so many small-scale separatist movements, marching under the banners of cultural autonomy'.

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Endnotes

[i] Having neglected non-mainstream IR theory, Baldwin describes the contemporary debate as being between neorealism and neoliberalism, in the introduction of his edited book. See Baldwin, 1993.

[ii] Constructivism in the article refers to mainstream constructivism represented by Alexander Wendt. On lineage of constructivism, see Fierke & Jorgensen, 2001.

[iii] This heading is Reus-Smit's (1996).

[iv] Wendt proclaims several times in *Social Theory of International Politics*, 'I do not address' (p. 11) and 'just happen not to be interested in today' (p. 36) domestic factors. See Wendt, 1999: 28, 246.

[v] The mainstream model of IR theory has been repeatedly accused of this 'state-centeredness'. For one thing, it assumes that states are unitary, as it were, monolithic actors, so that it neglects the domestic politics or the important domestic actors such as the executive, the legislature, the military, bureaucracies, political parties, interest groups and so on, which can seriously affect state behavior. Also, it ignores the roles of multinationals, international organizations, terrorism, and so on.

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