

The Effects of State Identity on International Norms

Author: **Vaishnavi Tannir,**

Ph.D. candidate,

Center for International Politics, Organisation, and Disarmament (CIPOD),

School of International Studies (SIS),

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, India - 110067.

Email: vaishnavitannir89@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper explores the extent to which state-identity exerts influence on national-interest building by a nation-state. The connection between identity and interest induces procedures of international norm-making and norm-adherence into corresponding with national interests. In International Relations (IR); culture, norms, and identity are intertwined concepts that manifest in socio-political institutions. State behaviour can be better understood against the interplay between these three factors that make a combined impact on the participation of states in international norms. State-identity is recognized as a critical influence on national-interest formation exemplified in international norms through interactive processes between states. Producing international norms is procedurally complicated having multiple inputs from states having values and interests to promote, hence, adherence to them are products of several inter and intra-institutional processes. International norms can overlap in issue-areas and are not always codified or institutionalized, making adherence to them ad hoc depending on the state and the norm. Additionally, state behavior is subject to change as national interests evolve, thus affecting international norm-adherence and making state-identity a relevant factor in its operationality.

Key Words: International Norms, State Identity, State Behaviour, National Interest Formation

Background

The start of the Cold War and period of massive decolonisation during the 1940s witnessed the emergence of a number of sovereign and autonomous states in the international system whose relations with each other are guided by international norms. As independent nations in charge of their foreign policies, the decisions to follow or challenge international norms depend heavily on state interests which are derived from the identity or image of a state. Given that some states have openly challenged or flouted certain international norms, for instance; North Korea, Pakistan, and Iran with respect to their nuclear programmes within the global, normative standards of the non-proliferation regime including arms control and disarmament – examining how state-identity determines national interest formation can show what the effects are on state behavior and their inclination to follow or challenge norms that match (or do not match) their interests. A supplementary aspect to acknowledge is the selectiveness with which states are judged for their varying levels of adherence to different international norms in the absence of a singular, universal enforcement agency.

State-behaviour forms an integral portion of studies in IR, and international norms continue to be a crucial marker of it. Studies on norms, hence, are important tools for understanding the key drivers of foreign policy, as well as for managing expectations from the future of state-behaviour. Studies on norms are relevant because international standards, codes, and rules remain indispensable to understanding the processes involved in guiding the actions of states across various demanding situations in international relations. This paper examines the veracity of the statement that state-identity is critical to the adherence or non-adherence to norms. The objective of this research is to study what drives a state to conform or challenge internationally sanctioned rules and norms. This is a complex study since international norms in distinct issue-areas can be simultaneous, overlapping, and competitive with each other, and can lead to issues with hypocrisy, responsibility, and accountability. Furthermore, identities are multifarious and fluid conceptions that have the power to transform norms through the evolution of national interests.

For example, the U.S. is considered a world leader in many areas, including international norms. If the sovereignty of a state is paramount, and human rights must be upheld at all times, how does it legitimise discriminate drone attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan which have a high

estimate of collateral damage? America's identity as a neo-liberal democracy that stands up for human rights and respects state sovereignty supports the norm that humanitarian intervention must be undertaken when needed and justifies actions to the contrary as required for the 'greater good'. What is worth noticing is that as the chief designer of such norms, America has the privilege of following them as deemed fit and faces no substantive penalization if it flouts them. However, if another country like Syria or Iraq (followers and not engineers of norms) were to violate those norms, they would face punishment by way of sanctions or direct military intervention. This paper, however, confines itself to examining the link between state identity and national interests, and their combined effects on international norms.

State behaviour is frequently driven by insecurity, fear, and suspicion which arise when interests, entwined with identity associations, clash with each other. Perceived threats to identity usually lead to conflict. Identity plays an irresistible role in all social matters, and so too in international relations. The cross-sectional experiences of identity serve the purpose of being able to locate the content and context of security and insecurity, having specific connotations as well as communitarian and large-scale implications. Insecurity is, thus, conceived of and developed in large parts through perception, which is in turn influenced by identity-induced interests. When the sites, causes, and parameters of conflict or cooperation are different, they mandate specially designed responses suited to those circumstances. A hugely important portion of decision making involves the perceptions of and attitudes toward those circumstances, which are themselves influenced by identity and which then inform the type of response thought to be most suitable. These different sites, causes, and parameters of conflict or cooperation could also mean that (i) different aspects of identity may be highlighted, or that (ii) distinct identities altogether may be highlighted, called to the forefront because of the situation.

Thus, this paper hypothesizes that the extent to which a culturally sanctioned state identity has an impact on determining, sustaining, or challenging international norms depends heavily on its national interests. The research further postulates that national interests are derived from state identity which in the global domain are achieved through externally aimed foreign policy. Some drivers of rogue state behavior, therefore, can also be located in the relationship between state identity and international norm adherence.

Introduction

The meanings attributed to theoretical concepts in IR are not universal. A clear articulation of what is meant by terms such as culture, norms, and identity in the contextual study, is necessary before proceeding to explain complex phenomena like state behaviour. In layman terms, ‘culture’, refers to all those sets of values, customs, beliefs, principles, norms, traditions, practices, habits, and attitudes that embody and symbolize differences in the ‘ways of life’ of societies around the world. Culture is reproduced by subsequent generations through socialization and is subject to change over the passage of time with the advent of newer ideational and material movements. Sets of cultural beliefs and practices become institutionalized and routinized (formally and informally) into the organizational structure of a state. Anthropological culture at the national level plays a significant role in developing the identity of a nation-state, and eventually shapes its national interests as well.

The extended concept of ‘international culture’ has been understood as a universally appealing, acceptable, and a somewhat standardized way of life that states ought to follow. In this respect, international culture is proscriptive and aspires to establish universal standards according to which states should act. In the context of IR theory, a global culture refers to collectively shared and held beliefs and values that are predominantly accepted as ‘ideal’, and helps to operationalise and foment state identities in the international system. Political regimes have individual cultures that influence its identity as a state (as a liberal, totalitarian, democratic state, etc), which functions at the international level in relation to other state identities who act according to their interests produced by their identity. Individual identities influence the interaction between two states and this interaction is regulated by collective norms present in the international culture.

‘International norms’ are those rules and regulations that are typically associated with a specific code of conduct for state behavior, based on widely held beliefs on morals and ethics. However, morality and ethics being subject to interpretation means they cannot have universal value, making norms which represent them also subject to variance. In the absence of an overarching “Leviathan”, to borrow Hobbes’s term, in the international system to regulate the behaviour of all its members, selectivity and lax implementation of norms is natural. The Westphalia conception of sovereignty ensures this condition and prevents a singular organization from becoming the sole proprietor of rules. As a result, norms – whether widely shared and held or not – remain suggestions to states that may choose to follow them or not, as opposed to regulations or procedures which are in

general formally explicated. Therefore, norms have stronger impacts on some states and weaker impacts on other states. This then begs the question – Do states who have not participated in the establishment of norms feel obliged to conform to them?

In the context of international politics, ‘state identity’ is the outward public image that a state seeks to promote in the international community, and is attached to the desire to create a reputation. Identity, thus, refers to the distinctive characteristics and qualities conferred to an individual, or shared by members of a particular social category or group by virtue of their culture. In other words, identity is the conception or expression of one’s individuality or group affiliations. State identity is at once national, cultural, political, and social in nature, and parts of these multiplicities become emphasized in different situations. Identity exists socially, thus judging its effect on state behaviour is complex because these identities operate inside a social container which compels actors to behave in a certain manner. One is expected to control base impulses and conform to socially accepted standards in the public arena. Foreign policy decision-making is certainly influenced by state identity, but are constrained by the desire to remain socially legitimate or the expectation to conform. In other words, behaviour in the public realm is constantly subject to observation by others, which in turn limits or binds behaviour and is meant to force actors to act within acceptable standards.

National or state identities are multiple, layered, and mutually inclusive. The terms ‘state’ and ‘national’ are used interchangeably here, although it is acknowledged that sometimes the socio-cultural connotations invoked by the use of one or the other term can be quite different. They are religious, political, cultural, economic, and social all at the same time and flow from historical experiences and interactions. For instance, India might be considered Hindu, non-violent, spiritual, democratic, or socialist depending on the parameters of the international issue which can elevate one or few aspects. A specific issue or situation would cause India to choose an identity most relevant to the situation, and choose a course of action to respond to that situation which is least damaging to the integrity of that identity and corresponding interests. To illustrate, India’s non-aligned movement during the Cold War was an expression of its commitment to international peace and tolerance in line with its principles of non-violence and justness begotten from its derogatory experience with colonialism.

Perception inherently implies interpretation, and a great deal of interpretation depends on lessons learnt from past experiences, ie; interactions with others, whether they were positive or

negative, etc. Judgement of past experiences depends on what identity tells us is valuable or worthless, just or unjust, legitimate or illegitimate, and identity is further strengthened by these experiences. Therefore, interpretation occurs when identity functions. In other words, identity and interpretation, and ergo perception, are deeply intertwined. This has important implications for the relationship between identity and norms.

The puzzle then is; why do some states rebel against the norms which regulate the behaviours of other states? Do the identities of states have anything to do with why or to what extent they conform or rebel? Many scholars have concluded that identities of states are indeed important and sometimes cultivated in the contextual political analysis of state behaviour. According to Constructivists, state identity is a fundamental component of culture as well as being a repository of norms, making it a crucially important concept that enables and holds together much of the constructivist argument. Their main focus is on whether “the interests of states are shaped by their identities, while state identities (and therefore interests) themselves are subject to change in the process of interaction” (Alexandrov, 2014.) Less literature exists on how and when these identities are accentuated, given the variance of norm impacts across time and space.

Literature Review and Analysis

As per author Amy Gurowitz, literature on international norms have moved beyond the generally accepted belief that identity does in fact matter. Scholars are now focusing on when and why they matter for the operationalization of norms, given that norms can be accepted and followed in differing degrees. Gurowitz argues that state identity has rarely been considered a determinant in analyses of norm impacts. International and national actors alike sometimes use norms to “*back-up and make arguments for which they often have few or weak domestic resources*” (Gurowitz, 2006.) She further argues that the context in which these norms are invoked are mutually inclusive of a state’s identity since the “*...mobilization and invocation of international norms domestically occurs within the context of a state's identity and the degree to which those norms are helpful to the actors who use them depends, among other things, on the identity of the target state*” (Gurowitz, 2006.) This article elaborates on diffusion of international norms in the domestic arena by studying the two cases of Germany and Japan involved in the incorporation of non-citizens. She concludes after a comparison of these cases that state identity and related issues such as ‘identity crises’ are critical in understanding the variegated diffusion of international norms (Gurowitz, 2006.)

Other scholars like Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink dwell on the puzzle concerning how norms change and how they change other political actors and situations in 'International Norm Dynamic and Political Change'. This is a fascinating scholarship which can be closely related to the role of state identities in establishing and challenging international norms. A norm is defined by them as *"a standard of proper behaviour for an actor with a given identity that is socially defined and regulated"* (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998.) How norms change and affect political actors and situations is a matter of determining the status of norms, or how strong or weak they are. They argue that the sociology of knowledge in IR has undergone a paradigm shift because of ideational factors, and that norms have 'life cycles' and each life cycle is dominated by a different behavioural logic. For example, slavery was widely accepted until massive decolonisation projects began in the 1940's, and after which anti-apartheid movements fast gained popularity demonstrating the replacement of one norm by its another owing to the emergence of a new dominant logic (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998.)

According to Finnemore and Sikkink, the influence of norms happens in a three-stage-process: norm emergence, norm cascade, and norm internalization. This might be traced through the extensive examination of empirical examples which indicate norm emergence and acceptance. What is appropriate or desirable is known when the majority in community or society judge behaviour as acceptable or unacceptable because it generates approval or disapproval. Norms are generally raised when actions need to be justified (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998.) This definition begs the questions: Who defines these standards? And how many actors should agree on something (share it) before it becomes a norm? *"Norms do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents (norm entrepreneurs) having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behaviour in their community"* (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998.) As they have stated, norms do not exist or operate in isolation or a vacuum, rather; norms emerge in a normative framework and have to compete and interact with existing norms and perceptions. Interestingly, to challenge existing logics of appropriateness (which might be highly internalized by actors), activists may need to act explicitly inappropriate to break the hold. Good examples of this are feminist movements and demonstrations around the world, for instance in North East India, where women exposed their bodies as a manner of protest against sexism and other social malaises related to women, manifest in politico-legal government acts like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 (AFSPA). In this case, the social identity of gender

must come in contact with domestic and international identities which are responsible for instituting those legalised norms, whether informally or formally.

All 'norm entrepreneurs' are required to operate through an organizational platform for advancement of their norms on the international level. Norm entrepreneurs can create such platforms to promote specific norms (such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) like Peace One Day that promotes world peace through global campaigns) or they can attach themselves to existing organizations that have agendas other than simply promoting norms (for example, International Organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), or the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA)). Whereas international organisations can, to a certain degree, exert pressure on their member states, NGO's generally need to persuade and convince state-actors through lobbying. Whatever their chosen platform, norm entrepreneurs need the support of state leaders to adopt their norms and to promote these toward other state leaders.

State identity assumes functional significance because international regimes or organizations are constituted primarily by relatively more powerful states like America, Britain, France and other Western (considered modern and developed) countries. Their state identities play a crucial role in engineering norms since they contribute to national interest development. Furthermore, as hegemonic states with superior resources and opportunities dealt by history, they are capable of manipulating the international system to suit their interests at the cost of other states. As per the authors, the norm reaches a 'tipping point' 'when a considerable number of states have been convinced to become norm leaders (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998.) It is difficult to anticipate when a tipping point will occur, but empirical evidence suggests that it usually happens when at least a third of the total states in the system adopt the norm. After the tipping point has been reached, more states begin to adopt these norms at a more rapid pace and sometimes without domestic pressure. This happens through a process of international socialization which is a type of 'peer pressure' among nations (Finnemore, 1996.) State identities are linked with the international structures that they belong to, and therefore they will adopt norms that are accepted in their specific structures. States that see themselves as democratic for example, will exhibit a higher propensity to adopt norms that have been promoted by other democratic states as they are considered essential for democracies.

Norms are also predominantly regulative in the first and second stages and ultimately become constitutive when internalized. Since norms have shelf lives that are prone to morph with different dominant logics, Rational Choice theorists and Constructivists remain engaged in a zero-sum game when trying to delineate norm driven explanations. This is a fruitless endeavour, they believe, as hierarchies and types of interests are not universal for all states. Nevertheless, the authors credit Constructivists with distinguishing between types of norms, namely; (i) Regulative norms, (ii) Constitutive norms and (iii) Evaluative norms. Regulative norms are those norms that order and constrain behaviour akin to the neo-realist logic of systemic constraints. From this view, such international norms compel actors to behave in a certain way. Constitutive norms, on the other hand, are those norms that create actors, interests, and actions. Units choose their interests since they have an intrinsic agency which they use to deal with systemic constraints and this ultimately results in constituting norms. There is, thus, an emancipatory or empowering thrust in constitutive norms, and they often work in opposition to regulative norms. Evaluative norms define what is appropriate and what is not (Finnemore, 1996.)

Moreover, they argue that domestic norms tend to operate through political entrepreneurs while international norms filter in through domestic norms and structures. Norms might remain individual in nature, but they always have the possibility of becoming shared. The shared quality of a norm implies a procedural or instrumental basis to facilitate its operationalisation if it is to be successful. It is plausible, then, that a state's identity is called into play during this process of operationalisation. If norms clash with state identity, it might also be the cause of rebellion, causing states to withdraw from institutions and structures that do not correspond with the needs or interests of their identity.

For example, India, like several other developing nations, has never signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty on grounds that it is discriminatory and dis-favours developing nations who hope to avail the benefits of nuclear science and technology for tasks of nation-building. Despite the fact that Indian leadership has remained committed to nuclear disarmament and upheld its traditional and public image of 'non-violence' and 'non-alignment' which falls in line with the larger principles and ideas of the non-proliferation treaty, India finds itself unwilling to sign a treaty that will ultimately constrain its ability to grow into a viable international nuclear contender – a right that it

feels it has and is in line with its reputation for restraint as a responsible and morally advanced nation. In practice, India's identity as a non-violent nation committed to the prevention of further nuclearisation of the world, while falling in line with the norm of non-proliferation, does not match with its national security interests that are more directly determined by its hostile and nuclear South Asian neighborhood. State identity is not the only important factor driving state behaviour, nor is it this paper's claim that it is so.

State identities plausibly play a significant role in how international situations are perceived, interpreted, and responded to. When norms operate within these situations, the choices a state (or state leadership) makes are contingent to some extent upon the identity and public image it wishes to project on the wider global community. Extending the aforementioned example, we might consider that India's image as a non-violent, non-interfering, democratic nation is in keeping with an identity that values peace and harmony seen its non-aligned policy and anti-imperial, anti-colonial, and anti-racism stances in international issues. Yet, the biased and asymmetrical nature of the non-proliferation 'norm' prompted India to compromise that image so that it would be able to keep the nuclear option open for its choosing to further serve its evolving national interests. Alternatively, it might suggest that India wished to create a fortified and exemplary identity of emancipation and assertion born from the legacy of colonial injustice, by standing up to what Indian leadership has called the norm of 'nuclear apartheid', in tandem with its reputation for restraint that has been prized as a morally superior quality of a nation-state.

By the end of the process, norms might become so widely endorsed that they achieve a 'taken-for-granted' quality (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998.) These internalized norms can become remarkably powerful but also difficult to detect since they are generally accepted without being challenged. For instance, the idea that homosexuals are 'unnatural' compared to heterosexuals is based on a social belief that has been internalized over a long period of time and that has been challenged only in recent years. This belief has found expression in laws such as article 377 of the Indian Penal Code that criminalises homosexual behaviour and prohibits same-sex marriage, and was challenged as late as 2018. For perspective, in 2019, only 28 countries in the world have decriminalised these outdated laws. Social identities are one such normative frameworks which comprise different values, principles, and beliefs having roots in the environment we live in.

Ultimately, these identities are the basis of state interests and crucially define the way that state actors behave towards each other. Inter-state cooperation in the European Union, for instance, the Schengen Agreement, was a product of social interaction and the resultant change of the ‘norm of war’ to the ‘norm of peace’, one of the consequences of their long legacy of war. When states follow the same norms, cooperation has an improved chance for success. When norms are perceived as being violated, obstructed, or challenged – the behavior of the defaulting state is considered as inappropriate and conflict becomes more likely. This can be seen in the relationship between adjusted and rogue/rebel states who almost always have divergent state identities. Normative frameworks are unique and differ from those that exist in other parts of the world where the course of history, and therefore norm internalization, have led to opposing or contrasting developments.

Rational Choice Theorists Gary Goertz and Paul Diehl devolve a theory of international norms, discussing four conditions necessary for norms, namely; regularity and consistency of behaviour across situations, the extent to which norms conflict with self-interests where consistency of behaviour is critical, and the violation of norms trigger sanctions and hence give norms a moral force. The elements of norm theory, according to them, are sanctions, self-interest, and de-ontology. There are three components of ‘cooperative norms’; (i) one’s that correspond with the self-interest of actors, (ii) ones whose violations do not trigger sanctions and (iii) norms whose deontology is minimal and there is very little influence of those outside of the norm or standard. The constituents of ‘hegemonic norms’ are; (a) partial conflict between norms and self-interest, (b) sanctions imposed by hegemonic actors and a moderate level of support from affected actors (Goertz and Diehl, 1992.)

Goertz and Diehl elaborate on ‘decolonization’ as an example of hegemonic actors who engineer norms. Most contemporary literature focuses on ‘decentralized norms’ where there may be; (1) complete conflict between norms and self-interest, (2) diffused sanctions based on the willingness of actors to pay for sanctions and (3) popular support from affected actors. Methodological issues pertaining to what they call ‘internal’ and ‘external’ norms. External or objective norms and their manifestations offer direct measures of norm effectiveness, such as following traffic rules in densely populated areas. Internal or subjective norms and their manifestations, however, offer indirect

measures because they are not easy to see or record as they tend to stem from metaphysical notions of morals and ethics (Goertz and Diehl, 1992.)

Norms can be measured by identifying behaviour that corresponds to the strengthening or weakening of norms based on consistency. This can be done by examining historical accounts that reveal the consistency with which actors have, or have not, conformed to norms. State behaviour and structures demonstrate varying degrees of norm acceptance or rejection. Measuring can be done by opinion polls or public polls, surveys, and interviews, content analysis of leadership speeches, archival research of historical documents, and so on (Goertz and Diehl, 1992.) However, they assume self-interest to be universal or a historical, and can thus only be seen as the starting point for norms. But a rejection of the cultural context yields a partial understanding of the measurement of norms, and what influences its strength, weakness and future trends. Moreover, modes of measurement can be misleading for several reasons, such as polls and surveys. Also, links between internal and external norms cannot easily be broken. Very often, norms of different kinds overlap each other and function simultaneously, affected by numerous factors from domestic and international sources. These authors, therefore, display a clear Eurocentric and Rational Choice bias.

More scholarship on state identity includes the Wendtian 'Social Theory of International Relations' which outlines the core tenets of Social Constructivism and distinguishes between 'thin' and 'thick' constructivism on the construction and forms of state identities. For Social Constructivists, the state remains the central unit of analysis. Central structures are inter-subjective, cultural bodies that are more than material. The inter-subjective nature of structures and institutions implies that all actors are subjects (as opposed to objects) and are endowed with an agency of their own. This process of inter-subjectivity also means that actors and structures gain definition, substance, and identity through constant interaction with others. Wendt argues that identities and interests are constructed by these inter-subjective structures rather than imposed exogenously. In direct contrast to Realist assumptions, he asserts that there are no pre-conceived or pre-decided hierarchy of interests, nor are they universal. State interests are predicated on state identities, and interests are produced by the interaction of state identities with each other (Wendt, 1994.)

Identities are inter-subjective or co-constituted, constructed by internal and external actors and is the subjective property of an intentional actor that produces motivational and behavioural dispositions. Wendt also explains that state identities precede state interests that gain substance only

in the context of identity. Identities are of four kinds, namely; (i) Corporate, (ii) Type, (iii) Role, and (iv) Collective. As a corporate body, each state is comprised of certain common elements such as a defined territory, populations, governments, etc. 'Type' identity is more specific but emerges from the corporate identity, and alludes to the type of political regime that will come to be – liberal, democratic, socialist, etc. The 'Role' identity is conferred upon a state because of roles they have typically tended to perform (outlier, leader, and so on), or the roles they have been expected to perform. At last, the 'Collective' identity is the most sophisticated of identities and is shared among more than one state (Wendt, 1994.)

Echoing the Kantian idea of a world state, Wendt argues that an international state is inevitable because identity helps overcome the problems of unpredictability and intentions by progressing through five stages: the system of states, the society of states, the world society, collective security, and the final 'world state'. He claims that *"...interaction at the systemic level changes state identities and interests. The causes of state egoism do not justify always treating it as given. Insights from critical international relations and integration theories suggest how collective identity among states could emerge endogenously at the systemic level. Such a process would generate cooperation that neither neorealists nor neoliberals expect and help transform systemic anarchy into an "international state"- a transnational structure of political authority that might undermine territorial democracy"* (Wendt, 1994.)

Maja Zehfuss critiques Wendtian constructivism for inadequately using identity as an analytical concept in IR theory *"...Alexander Wendt's constructivism needs identity as a central concept but that this very concept threatens to undermine the possibility of his constructivism. It is further suggested that this problem has some relevance to other constructivist approaches positioned in the middle ground between rationalist and reflectivist theorizing"* (Zehfuss, 2001.) In her work 'Constructivism and Identity: A Dangerous Liaison', she argues that states have identities prior to interaction with others. The significance of identity in social constructivism runs deep, where identity building is at the core and is important for the systemic nature of international affairs. Identity is constructed and given by the inter-subjective structures and interactions between and among them. One identity may stand out more than others depending on the context and inter-subjective structural interactions within it. The unity of constructed and given identities in the social constructive framework is both necessary and impossible. Since no identity exists in isolation, they

change when they interact with the larger system comprised of more identities. Wendt would argue that constructed identities come to light within a context and are prone to change with changes in situation. Zehfuss argues that the coherence between the two comes from the inter-subjective interaction (Zehfuss, 2001.)

Identity is defined in Wendtian constructivism as relatively stable (or consistent), role-specific, and based on expectations about the self. Collective meaning produces motivational and behavioural dispositions, or in other words, collective interactions determine interests that are distinct from individual or domestic interests. However, this resembles the Realist notion of overbearing systemic constraints and a general lack of agency. Also, identities define interests and they develop through interactive processes. Yet, this precludes the possibility that interests can precede the formation of identities, especially 'Role' and 'Collective' identities that can be inculcated in order to meet interests. Here, again, the issues of perceptions and intentions become important as tools for interest fulfillment and identity construction.

The functions of identity in social constructivism are threefold. The nature of the state identity drives the kinds of interest a state chooses to pursue with others. A positive identity (socially acceptable) with others leads to collective security building like North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). This positive identity, in turn, leads to security turning into altruism rather than a private affair. However, is a harmony of interests truly possible? This notion of a positive identity suggests a uniform identity, and echoes the sentiments of Idealist/Utopian thinkers who envisaged a League of Nations that would be based on collective security. But many contend that if states are to retain their individual identities, there is no possibility of matching interests, disallowing the possibility for any collective endeavour. This has been evidenced by functional problems with economic regional groupings like South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) that have struggled with the bilateral problems in the Indo-Pak relationship. It might also explain why South Asia, in spite of its many historical, ethnic, and cultural ties, has been seen as one of the last regions to develop a successful security collective.

However, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been viewed as a constructive inter-governmental grouping that has committed itself to cooperation and the championing of mutually beneficial military, socio-political, economic, and political integration under the motto of 'One Voice, One Identity, One Community', presenting a counter example that

illustrates how collectivizing identities can be used to match national interests. Zehfuss's critique concerns the conditions under which identities become more or less collective or egoistic. She critiques the Wendtian notion that states have no interests prior to identity, as discussed before. Moreover, his framework does not account for the impact of corporate identity on collective identity. Lastly, she argues that the Wendtian systemic interaction excludes domestic elements of identity which are crucial to interest formation (Zehfuss, 2001.)

In his work, Jan Aart Scholte talks about the significance and indispensability of national territories as a critical factor in identity construction, namely by the development of the 'Self-Other' dichotomy and binary. Though his work is regarding social identities at the local social level, his understanding of identity construction can be valuable within the larger inter-state setting. He argues that the changing nature of the nation-state in the face of globalization has meant a corresponding change in its scope and role as well and details the forms of collective identities of communities in the current world. His conceptualization of globalization is also geographical in that it emphasises 'supra-territoriality', which impacts existing identities, as well as serves to engender new ones (Scholte, 1996.) Scholte argues that the creation of the modern nation-state required boundaries and borders for nationality and nation-building. From his viewpoint, globalization has been credited with having the power to encourage forceful reaffirmations of nationalism, especially when globalization is construed as universalisation or homogenization. This has had deep implications on identity construction within and beyond state boundaries, and provoked nationalistic reactions to them (Scholte, 1996.)

At the same time, it is worth considering that such boundaries are informal and intangible to a great extent, and populations who have shared longstanding histories in geographical proximity view the 'others' across the border as appearing and sounding the same, and whose identities coincide. Indigenous tribes and communities in far-flung areas having poor territorial demarcations often would not be aware of contemporary segregations, indicating that identities draw much of their content from grassroots level realities of physical environment and society. Nation-state identities in such neighborhoods are also impacted. A severely neglected section of studies regards precisely these porous border areas which have deep implications on identity formation, nationalism, and thusly on international affairs.

Scholte then looks at devolving a peaceful manner of approaching and coping with this multidimensionality, fluidity, and uncertainty of identity. He recommends the assertion of a 'politics of identity' which does not emphasise 'opposition, exclusion, hierarchy, and violence'. This sentiment has been echoed by scholars like Nancy Frazer who also advocate the celebration of differences, because differences will always persist, rather than a negative view of distinction in direct relation to homogenization. Scholte also asserts that global governance, global economy, global ecology, and security are privileged areas of study compared to global neighborhoods.

With globalization shattering the rigidity of identity, essentialist and reductionist versions are no longer sufficiently viable tools for understanding sociological, political, economic, and cultural phenomenon. Moreover, a complete cut off from the 'other' is neither possible nor desirable (Scholte, 1996). Scholte elucidates that social movements around the world have normally been organized along national lines, an indication that national boundaries continue to be considered the most cogent articulation of interest aggregation. Yet curiously, he finds that despite the high socio-cultural value and politico-economic viability of identity, the concept has not received adequate attention in IR studies (Scholte, 1996.)

Conclusions

A bulk of the literature on culture, norms, and identity in IR are concerned with their intimate relationships and their impacts on each other. The extent of the influence exerted by state identities in following or challenging norms can be evidenced in in-depth analyses of foreign policies, as well as domestic politics where often there is considerable rhetoric that remains fixated on a country's 'identity as a nation' in relation to key international issues. The traction between the national identity and state identity has assumed a far more central position in some scholars' interpretation. While some use national identity to explain what is obviously state identity (Berger, 1996), others deconstruct identity into internal and external dimensions (Banchoff, 1999.) In the end, the national narrative of a community living together in one space, also relate them to other nations giving identity an overlapping touch.

If the logic of this interpretation is extended, then it is pertinent to raise the issue of what makes states conform or rebel against accepted norms (labelled as 'rogue' or 'rebel' nations, a hint at perception and misperception). Is it the nation's perception of itself (state identity) or the perception

of that state to the international community (public image) that assumes prominence in international affairs, and if so, when? Can the two be separated across situations? If state identities are understood as shared beliefs about the 'Self' and the 'Other', and when the resulting national identity dynamic influences foreign policy formulation and implementation, it can be observed that aspects of both image and identity are in play.

If one accepts the definition that a rogue state is not only the one that does not follow the rules but is also a perennial violator in that it violates all accepted international norms and laws, then does it do so due to its identity as a state, or due to the external environment? Furthermore, is rebellious behaviour unanticipated when the rules were framed? What are the norms a state believes in that allows it to wage covert war against another state, or proliferate weapons of mass destruction, or support the work of terrorist groups or, commit human-rights abuses against its own citizens? These questions of international law and legal regimes must be framed keeping in mind the role of individual leaders who are ultimately champions of state identity.

In so far as rogue or rebel states go, the role of leadership often operates above and beyond state identity in the eyes of other states. The case of North Korea, for instance, reveals the significant and very singular role leadership can have on driving state behaviour. In such cases, the identity of a state can also become synonymous with its leader, and may perhaps not reflect the beliefs of the population. In the Pakistani example, Islamic identity has been a key consideration in framing domestic and foreign policy and its state identity to the world. Pakistani national interests are based on its desire to protect and promote this identity within the Muslim world as well as the rest, forcing leadership in that country to be aligned with its ideologies lest they be pushed out.

The diffusion of international norms is filtered through domestic structures and institutions, as Finnemore and Sikkink discuss, and come in contact with local culture and identities to produce a version that can be internalized (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998.) The larger point that state identity plays a role in whether or not states adhere to or challenge international norms remains relevant. Prominent literature suggests that states which engineer norms are also at the forefront of international regimes (having also created them), are hence less likely to face punishment for their violations. Double standards have been historically rampant in IR. For instance, Egypt and Israel, at one point the two biggest recipients of American aid in the Middle East, have escaped criticism from the U.S. despite having refused to ratify the CWC, same as Syria. As can be seen, the complexity of

these issues runs into several related areas. The interests and identities of each state are deeply intertwined, and together play a role in norm adherence (or a lack thereof.)

It has been widely acknowledged that powerful or hegemonic states are more successful in engendering and spreading norms. This is considered but natural since these states have had a first-hand role in instituting the international structures which uphold and enforce these norms. There is no conclusive evidence, however, to indicate that a specific type of state identity is inherently inclined to be more successful in creating and setting norms, or that a particular type of state identity is more inherently inclined to challenge norms. These generalisations are misleading and perhaps somewhat unhelpful, the meat of the issues lies in the specificities of the context, which as discussed earlier, serve to highlight certain identities or aspects of identities. The neo-liberal, democratic framework that has been valourised as ideal has been a product of historical processes.

The future of norms can be expected to continue in much the same fashion. States which enjoy the privilege of generating norms have to assert their identities in different issue areas in order to appear legitimate. Rogue states will continually pose challenges to existing norms, especially if they believe their interests and identities are being challenged. What is useful for theorists and policy-makers alike is the knowledge that understanding the key dynamics of state identity can be very telling of a state's inclination to support or defy international norms, and that this state identity is constructed by cultural values and is cognisant of its national interests.

References

Alexandrov,Maxym 'The Concept of State Identity in International Relations:A Theoretical Analysis' http://ir.lib.hiroshima-ac.jp/metadb/up/74007022/JIDC_10_01_03_Alexandrov.pdf, Accessed on 1 May, 2014.

Banchoff, T. (1999), German identity and European integration, *European Journal of International Relations*, 5(3), pp 259-289.

Berger, T. U. (1996), Norms, Identity and National Security in Germany and Japan, P. J. Katzenstein ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp 317-356.

Finnmore, Martha (1996), 'Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention' in Peter J Katzenstien (ed.) *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press.

Finnemore, Martha and Kathryn Sikkink (1998), 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization*, 52 (4).

Goertz, Gary and Paul F. Diehl (1992), 'Towards a Theory of International Norms: Some Conceptual and Measurement Issues', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 36 (4).

Gurowitz, Amy (2006), 'Diffusion of International Norms: Why Identity Matters', *International Politics*, Volume 43, pp 305–341.

Scholte, Jan Aart, (1996) "The Geography of Collective Identities in a Globalizing World", *Review of International Political Economy*, 3 (4).

Wendt, Alexander (1999), *Social Theory of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Chapters 1 and 2.

Wendt, Alexander (1994), 'Collective Identity Formation and the International State', [*American Political Science Review*](#), 88 (2), pp 384-396.

Zehfuss, Maja (2006), 'Constructivism and Identity: A Dangerous Liason', *European Journal of International Relations*, 7 (3), pp 315-348.