

Viewpoint on Theory:

Reconciling Realism and Constructivism: An Analysis of National Interests and International Institutions¹

By Jamie Jaafar

Abstract:

Realism and constructivism are regularly portrayed as incompatible approaches to International Relations. However, the overlap between realism and constructivism often manifests in a state's construction of multilateral institutions, which are intentionally designed to advance the state's national interests in diverse ways. The first section of this article assesses the intersection between realism and constructivism regarding the notion of national interests. Section two outlines state construction of multilateral institutions in pursuit of national interests, with specific reference to the United States' establishment of the liberal world order through the Bretton Woods institutions, and the pursuit of Russia's geopolitical agenda through the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Within this analysis, both realism and constructivism are critically assessed. However, the article is structured within an overarching realist framework as it argues that constructivism is an approach selectively used by realist-oriented states to advance diverse national interests.

Keywords:

Realism; Constructivism; National Interests; International Relations Theory; Realist Constructivism; Liberal World Order; Bretton Woods; Eurasian Economic Union; EEU

Introduction: The Pursuit of National Interests

The notion of national interests, traditionally expressed as the French *raison d'État* (literally, 'reason of state'), has underpinned foreign policy since the advent of the Westphalian system. National interests are a state's goals, whether they be military, economic or cultural. The Realist school of thought in International Relations narrowly prescribes state behaviour in the pursuit of these national interests. As posited by Hans Morgenthau, a classical realist, 'objectives of a foreign

¹ The views in *The Culture Mandala* are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views, position or policies of the *Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*. Bearing in mind the controversial debates now occurring in International Relations and East-West studies, the editors publish diverse, critical and dissenting views so long as these meet ethical and academic criteria.

policy must be defined in terms of the national interest'.² Realism, along with liberalism and constructivism, are the three dominant theories of International Relations. The three approaches are seen as inherently incompatible, because each offers a different explanation of the international system. This article seeks to prove that although realism and constructivism are regularly portrayed as incompatible approaches to International Relations, the two often overlap in a state's wider understanding of national interests. The overlap between realism and constructivism often manifests in a state's construction of multilateral institutions, which are intentionally designed to advance the state's national interests in diverse ways. The first section of this viewpoint will assess the intersection between realism and constructivism regarding the notion of national interests. Section two will assess states' construction of multilateral institutions in pursuit of national interests, with specific reference to the United States' establishment of the liberal world order through the Bretton Woods institutions, and the pursuit of Russia's geopolitical agenda through the Eurasian Economic Union ('EEU'). Within this analysis, both realism and constructivism will be assessed. However, the article is structured within an overarching realist framework, as it will argue that constructivism is an approach selectively used by realist-oriented states to advance their national interests.

Realism, Constructivism and National Interests

Traditionally, realism was the most dominant theory in International Relations, and is often a point of reference for other theories.³ Realism is not idealistic, and assesses the conditions of international politics as they are, not as they ought to be.⁴ Within a realist framework, the state is the most important actor in the international system, and is therefore the primary unit of analysis. Realism has two major strands: classical realism and structural realism (or neorealism). There are commonalities between the two strands, and both subscribe to the following three conditions: statism, survival and self-help.⁵ However, classical realism posits that international politics is shaped by human nature, whereas structural realism asserts that international politics is shaped by the anarchical structure of the international system.⁶ Indeed, for early political thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli, the notion of power politics is underpinned by human nature. The roots of classical realism can be found in the works of Thucydides. In his seminal work, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, he explored the cause of conflict between the great powers of fifth century BCE.⁷ Thucydides concluded that international politics is characterised by the struggle for power, which is deeply-rooted in human nature.⁸ As such, classical realism saw direct links between the nature of man, the roots of political power and state behaviour, themes well-developed in 20th century thinkers such as Hans Morgenthau and E.H. Carr.

² Morgenthau, H 1960, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd edn, McGraw-Hill Education, New York, p.528.

³ Chiaruzzi, M 2012, 'Realism', in R Devetak, A Burke & J George (eds), *An Introduction to International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 36.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Dunne, T & Schmidt, B 2014, 'Realism', in J Baylis, S Smith & P Owens (eds), *The Globalisation of World Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 99-112, p. 109.

⁶ Wallin, C 2014, 'Re-conceptualizing the Pursuit of National Interests in World Politics', Master in Political Science with focus on Crisis Management and International Coordination, Swedish National Defence College, Drottning, p. 5.

⁷ Chiaruzzi, M 2012, 'Realism', in R Devetak, A Burke & J George (eds), *An Introduction to International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 36.

⁸ Ibid.

However, in 1979, Kenneth Waltz published *Theory of International Politics*, which changed the nature of the debate.⁹ Structural realists, such as Waltz, focused on the anarchical nature of International Relations.¹⁰ That is, in the international system, there is no sovereign higher than the state. Relevantly, Waltz argued that national interests form in response to the anarchic structure of the international system. The condition of anarchy leads states to seek survival by pursuing national interests.¹¹ Survival is the most important endeavour of any state, and subsequently leads to self-help as a dominant strategy.¹² Waltz argued that ‘the aims of states may be endlessly varied... [but] survival is a prerequisite to achieving any goals that states may have...’¹³ Therefore, for structural realists, the structure of the international system is inherently competitive because ‘states are more concerned with the relative distribution of power than with their individual gain’, according to John Mercer.¹⁴ The idea that a state acts in a way that is favourable to its national interests ‘is defined simply as the pursuit of power’.¹⁵ The notion of power remains central to both strands of realism. For example, Morgenthau drew a clear nexus between power and national interests when he proposed that ‘the concept of interest [is] defined in terms of power’, and that ‘rational state actors pursue their national interests’.¹⁶ However, the prominence of classical realism has declined in response to the popularity of structural realism.¹⁷ As such, structural realism will form the basis of analysis for the rest of this paper.

In contrast to realism, constructivism is a social theory.¹⁸ Key constructivism thinkers, such as Alexander Wendt, Nicholas Onuf and Friedrich Kratochwil, argued that global politics is socially constructed.¹⁹ Samuel Barkin argued that constructivism is best seen as a ‘methodology, epistemology, or ontology’, and should not be branded as a paradigm in the same way realism and liberalism are in International Relations. This is because constructivism is not merely a set of assumptions about international politics, but rather ‘a set of assumptions about how to study politics’.²⁰ The concept of state identity is central to constructivism, because identity is the premise on which a state’s political agenda and national interests are formed.²¹ Identity is intersubjective,

⁹ Macat 2015, *An Introduction to Kenneth Waltz’s Theory of International Politics – A Macat Politics Video*, online video, viewed 15 July 2017, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwC4XziSvrA>>.

¹⁰ Wendt, A 1992, ‘Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics’, *International Organizations*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 391-425, p. 395; Wallin, C 2014, ‘Re-conceptualizing the Pursuit of National Interests in World Politics’, Master in Political Science with focus on Crisis Management and International Coordination, Swedish National Defence College, Drottning, p. 14.

¹¹ Mercer, J 1995, ‘Anarchy and Identity’, *International Organization*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 229-252, p. 231.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Waltz, K 1979, *Theory of International Politics*, Waveland Press, McGraw-Hill, New York, 91-92.

¹⁴ Mercer, J 1995, ‘Anarchy and Identity’, *International Organization*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 229-252, p. 231.

¹⁵ Wallin, C 2014, ‘Re-conceptualizing the Pursuit of National Interests in World Politics’, Master in Political Science with focus on Crisis Management and International Coordination, Swedish National Defence College, Drottning, p. 13.

¹⁶ Morgenthau, H 1960, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd edn, McGraw-Hill Education, New York, p.

¹⁷ Carlsnaes, W 2012, ‘Actors, Structures and foreign policy analysis’, in S Smith, A Hadfield & T Dunne (eds), *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 119.

¹⁸ Thaddeus Jackson, P & Jones J 2012, ‘Constructivism’, in R Devetak, A Burke & J George (eds), *An Introduction to International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 104.

¹⁹ Ibid; Barkin, S 2003, ‘Realist Constructivism’, *The International Studies Association*, vol. 5, no.3, pp. 325-342, p. 326.

²⁰ Barkin, S 2003, ‘Realist Constructivism’, *The International Studies Association*, vol. 5, no.3, pp. 325-342, p. 338.

²¹ Carlsnaes, W 2012, ‘Actors, Structures and foreign policy analysis’, in S Smith, A Hadfield & T Dunne (eds), *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 121; Thaddeus Jackson, P & Jones J 2012, ‘Constructivism’, in R Devetak, A Burke & J George (eds), *An Introduction to International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 104.

which means that it exists in ‘the social transactions that people have with each other’.²² Therefore, an actor’s behaviours in international politics are shaped by social norms, ideas and relations, not ‘objective or material conditions’ such as economic capacity and military capabilities.²³ Alexander Wendt posited that ‘people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of meanings objects have for them’.²⁴ In other words, the way a person acts towards a particular object is dictated by the meaning the person attaches to the object, because ‘objects themselves do not determine their meaning’.²⁵ Relevantly, Martha Finnemore argued that ‘interests are not just ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered; they are constructed through social interaction’.²⁶ This reflects the social and relational nature of social constructivism. As such, a state’s national identity can greatly affect the formation of its foreign policy.

This is well-illustrated by Japan and Germany’s post-World War II defence policies. In the aftermath of the War, Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan was invoked as a central shaper of Japan’s future defence and security policies. Article 9 stipulated that Japan renounced war and the threat or use of force to resolve disputes, and was to have a self-defence force rather than an army, underpinned by non-nuclear principles and the rejection of any aspiration to become a military power.²⁷ According to Andrew Oros, Japan’s policy was formed in response to its devastating defeat in World War II, and its role as the ‘only state victim of atomic bombings’.²⁸ The harrowing history now forms part of Japan’s strategic culture, and underpins its ‘self-contained pacifist discourse’.²⁹ Similarly, Germany’s defence policy has been heavily shaped by its post-World War II identity. Its defence policy is characterised by European integration and multilateralism in institutions such as the European Union (‘EU’), North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and United Nations.³⁰ Arguably, post-War guilt ‘still clings to the German subconscious today’, and Germany is aware of the adverse effects of over-zealous nationalism.³¹ Therefore, it engages in ‘relentless’ self-examination when it comes to engaging in assertive policies, to avoid the risk of being ‘seen as satisfying unilaterally determined German

²² Thaddeus Jackson, P & Jones J 2012, ‘Constructivism’, in R Devetak, A Burke & J George (eds), *An Introduction to International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 105.

²³ Barkin, S 2003, ‘Realist Constructivism’, *The International Studies Association*, vol. 5, no.3, pp. 325-342, p. 326.

²⁴ Wendt, A 1992, ‘Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics’, *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 391-425, p. 396.

²⁵ Guzzini, S 2013, *Power, Realism and Constructivism*, Routledge, London, p. 5.

²⁶ Finnemore, M 1996, *National Interests in International Society*, Cornell University Press, New York, p.2.

²⁷ Matsumura, M 2008, ‘The Japanese State Identity as a Grand Strategic Imperative’, *The Brookings Institution*, viewed 2 August 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/05_japan_matsumura.pdf>, p.27; Oros, A 2014, ‘Japan’s Strategic Culture: Security Identity in a Fourth Modern Incarnation?’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 35, no.2, pp.227-248, p. 232; Ministry of Defense Japan 2017, *Overview of Japan’s Defense Policy*, MOD, viewed 2 August 2017, <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/english.pdf>, p.3

²⁸ Oros, A 2014, ‘Japan’s Strategic Culture: Security Identity in a Fourth Modern Incarnation?’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 35, no.2, pp.227-248, p. 232.

²⁹ Ibid; Matsumura, M 2008, ‘The Japanese State Identity as a Grand Strategic Imperative’, *The Brookings Institution*, viewed 2 August 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/05_japan_matsumura.pdf>, p.20.

³⁰ O’Connell, P 2009, ‘Germany Foreign Policy and National Identity Since 1945’, *Thesis submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University*, viewed 1 August 2017, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/rws_etd/document/get/bgsu1245445696/inline>, p.ii; Belkin, P 2009, ‘German Foreign and Security Policy: Trends and Transatlantic Implications’, *Congressional Research Service*, 20 May, viewed 3 August 2017, <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34199.pdf>>, p.6.

³¹ O’Connell, P 2009, ‘Germany Foreign Policy and National Identity Since 1945’, *Thesis submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University*, viewed 1 August 2017, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/rws_etd/document/get/bgsu1245445696/inline>, p.21.

interests'.³² As such, constructivism posits that a state's interests and policies are formed in response to its identity.

The conventional view is that realism and constructivism are incompatible. Realism perceives international politics in terms of materialism and power, whereas constructivism is ideational and sees international politics as a social construction.³³ Therefore, the two approaches have different understandings of how, and why, national interests are formed. However, Barkin observed that realism and constructivism can be complimentary, which he dubs 'realist constructivism'. He argued that realist constructivism can 'study the relationship between normative structures, the carriers of political morality, and uses of power'.³⁴ As discussed above, constructivists perceive national identity as pivotal to the development of foreign policy.³⁵ The role of national identity has been acknowledged by some realists, however in general, realism does not draw an explicit nexus between identity and interests.³⁶ It is generally accepted that the foundations of a state's interests are 'ideas about needs, [however] many non-constructivists maintain that the *content* of those interests is for practical purposes unchanging and includes some combination of the desires for survival, power, wealth and security'.³⁷ A non-constructivist would argue that even if interests are socially constructed, states pursue them for material purposes.³⁸ This is well illustrated by the U.S.'s policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ('DPKR'). Wendt suggested that '500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than [five] North Korean nuclear weapons'.³⁹ He explained that the U.S. resists DPKR's nuclear weapons because of the hostile social relationship between the two states, while it is less threatened by Britain due to their friendship.⁴⁰ Thus, in forming its policy, the U.S. took into account social and relational factors, which is aligned with constructivism. However, it is worth noting that the U.S.'s interests are formed within the overarching goal of survival, which is aligned with realism. This example demonstrates that realist and constructivist understandings of national interests can overlap. This point is further solidified by reference to the U.S. and Russia's respective use of constructivism to create institutions to advance their national interest.

The Construction of International Institutions

Within International Relations, there are competing definitions of institutions. This analysis will proceed on the basis of John Duffield's definition, that institutions are 'relatively stable sets of related constitutive, regulative, and procedural norms and rules that pertain to the international

³² Ibid, p.22; Belkin, P 2009, 'German Foreign and Security Policy: Trends and Transatlantic Implications', *Congressional Research Service*, 20 May, viewed 3 August 2017, <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34199.pdf>>, p.6.

³³ Barkin, S 2003, 'Realist Constructivism', *The International Studies Association*, vol. 5, no.3, pp. 325-342, pp. 325, 330; Hurd, I 2009, 'Constructivism', *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, vol. 18, no. 48, pp. 298-316, p. 299; Finnemore, M 1996, *National Interests in International Society*, Cornell University Press, New York, pp. 6-7; Wendt, A 1999, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.29-33.

³⁴ Barkin, S 2003, 'Realist Constructivism', *The International Studies Association*, vol. 5, no.3, pp. 325-342, p. 338.

³⁵ Wallin, C 2014, 'Re-conceptualizing the Pursuit of National Interests in World Politics', Master in Political Science with focus on Crisis Management and International Coordination, Swedish National Defence College, Drottning, p. 5.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Hurd, I 2009, 'Constructivism', *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, vol. 18, no. 48, pp. 298-316, p. 302.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Wendt, A 1995, 'Constructing International Politics', *International Security*, vol. 20, no.1, pp.71-81, p. 73.

⁴⁰ Hurd, I 2009, 'Constructivism', *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, vol. 18, no. 48, pp. 298-316, p. 302.

system, the actors in the system . . . and their activities'.⁴¹ Institutions can form as, for example, International Financial Institutions (e.g. International Monetary Fund) and International Organisations (e.g. United Nations). Realism argues that institutions are a means by which states can secure their goals.⁴² Mearsheimer, a prominent structural realist, asserted that 'institutions are merely an intervening variable in the process [and] largely mirror the distribution of power in the system'.⁴³ Relevantly, Koremenos et al. observed that institutions are 'the self-conscious creation of states'.⁴⁴ States invest substantial time, funds and effort into constructing an institution, because a particular institutional design can shape outcomes.⁴⁵ However, institutions are merely a *means* by which states can achieve goals. As such, a state will only choose to act through an institution if it deems it the most effective way to advance its interests.⁴⁶ Glaser observed that a state's 'willingness to work through international organisations... [should not be confused] with necessity'.⁴⁷

This contrasts with constructivism's perspective on institutions. Constructivism suggests that institutions function with relative independence from individual states and are crucial in developing international norms.⁴⁸ Overtime, an institution can develop its own identity, distinct from the identities of its constituent states.⁴⁹ The identity is established through social interaction and mutual understandings, and can lead to independent bureaucracy or organisational culture within the institution.⁵⁰ Wasseem Abaza and Ronald Fry provided that an institutions internal identity is ' . . . the coherence of the identity by the members'.⁵¹ Sungjoon Cho argued that the formation of an institution's identity is analogist to that of an infant.⁵² Initially, the institution frames its goals in accordance with the goals of its creators (member states).⁵³ However, along the way the institution begins to reshape its goals to meet the demands of the environment in which it operates. Cho argued that 'through this turbulent process (identity crisis) emerges an IO's collective identity, which is distinguishable from its members' individual identities'.⁵⁴ Moreover, in 1949 the International

⁴¹ Duffield, J 2007, 'What are International Institutions?', *International Studies Review*, vol.9, no.1, pp.1-22, pp.7-8.

⁴² Glaser, C 2003, 'Structural Realism in a more complex world', *Review of International Studies*, vol.23, no. 1, pp. 403-414, p.409.

⁴³ Mearsheimer, J 1995, 'The False Promise of International Institutions', *International Security*, vol.19, no.3, pp.5-49, p.23.

⁴⁴ Koremenos, B, Lipson C & Snidal, D 2001, 'The Rational Design of International Institutions', *International Organization*, vol. 55, no.4, pp. 761-799, p. 762.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Glaser, C 2003, 'Structural Realism in a more complex world', *Review of International Studies*, vol.23, no. 1, pp. 403-414, p. 409.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 411.

⁴⁸ Koremenos, B, Lipson C & Snidal, D 2001, 'The Rational Design of International Institutions', *International Organization*, vol. 55, no.4, pp. 761-799, p. 762.

⁴⁹ Cho, S 2014, 'An International Organization's Identity Crisis', *Northwestern Journal of International Law & Business*, vol. 34, no.1, pp.358-393, p.359; Cho, S 2007, 'Toward an Identity Theory of International Organizations', *Chicago-Kent College of Law*, viewed 3 August 2017, <http://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1183&context=fac_schol>, p.4.

⁵⁰ Abaza, W & Fry, R 2010, 'The social construction of internal and external identities of international institutions', *Weatherhead School of Management Working Paper Series*, viewed 3 August 2017, <<https://weatherhead.case.edu/departments/organizational-behavior/workingPapers/WP-10-07.pdf>>, p.32; Cho, S 2007, 'Toward an Identity Theory of International Organizations', *Chicago-Kent College of Law*, viewed 3 August 2017, <http://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1183&context=fac_schol>, p.4.

⁵¹ Abaza, W & Fry, R 2010, 'The social construction of internal and external identities of international institutions', *Weatherhead School of Management Working Paper Series*, viewed 3 August 2017, <<https://weatherhead.case.edu/departments/organizational-behavior/workingPapers/WP-10-07.pdf>>, p.7.

⁵² Cho, S 2014, 'An International Organization's Identity Crisis', *Northwestern Journal of International Law & Business*, vol. 34, no.1, pp.358-393, p.382

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.383.

Court of Justice handed down an advisory opinion which suggested that international organisations could be recognised as ‘International Legal Persons’ for the purposes of international law.⁵⁵ The EU is a good example of an institution forming an identity beyond its unitary members. Abaza and Fry argued that through the EU, ‘European nations have created and strengthened a European identity highlighting a regional commonality’.⁵⁶ This demonstrates that an institution can possess an identity separate to its constitutive states. However, interest-driven-states can still use constructivism to design institutions in a particular way to export norms and codify values favourable to them. In doing so, the powerful state attempts to normalise its preferences. This was the case with the U.S.’s construction of the Bretton Wood’s institutions.

The 1944 Bretton Wood’s Conference (originally the United Nations Monetary and Finance Conference) was attended by delegates from forty-four nations.⁵⁷ Following World War II (1939-1945), the U.S. and United Kingdom wanted to create a ‘stable international monetary system for international economic activity and peace’.⁵⁸ However, the U.S. was in a better position to create the new system because the U.K. was indebted to it after the war.⁵⁹ As such, the global market was effectively recreated by a U.S.-led agreement.⁶⁰ At the time of the Bretton Woods Conference, the U.S. was the most prominent democracy in the world, partially due to its economic productivity.⁶¹ The Bretton Woods conference established the gold standard system to help stabilise currencies and in the long run to encourage global trade.⁶² Under this system, the U.S dollar was pegged to gold (\$35 to one ounce of gold), and other states fixed their currencies to the US dollar.⁶³ The gold standard system hoped to ‘encourage people to have faith in the unchanging value of the key currency’.⁶⁴ Subsequently, the US dollar became the de facto global currency, which gave the U.S. leverage on Western economic and financial trends.⁶⁵

Importantly, the Bretton Woods Conference led to the creation of two institutions: the International Monetary Fund (‘IMF’) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (‘IBRD’, today the World Bank).⁶⁶ The role of these institutions was to ‘oversee the operation of the

⁵⁵ See *Case Concerning Reparation for Injuries Suffered in the Service of the United Nations*, Advisory Opinion, 1949, I.C.J. 174 (April 11). Note that the Court was quick to caution against elevating international organisations to the same level as states. The ICJ expressly stated that ‘[international organisations’ ILP] is not the same as saying...that its [the UN] legal personality and rights and duties are the same as those of a state.’ Rather, ILP in this context means that the UN has rights and owes obligations under international law in its own capacity. These rights include the capacity to, in some circumstances, make claims under international law for breaches. Moreover, the obligations owed by international organisations are generally the duties to not infringe global public goods.

⁵⁶ Abaza, W & Fry, R 2010, ‘The social construction of internal and external identities of international institutions’, *Weatherhead School of Management Working Paper Series*, viewed 3 August 2017, <<https://weatherhead.case.edu/departments/organizational-behavior/workingPapers/WP-10-07.pdf>>, pp.35, 37.

⁵⁷ O’Brien, R & Williams, M 2016, *Global Political Economy: Evolution and Dynamics*, 5th edn, Palgrave, London, p. 149.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Pettman, R 2000, *Commonsense Constructivism, or the Making of World Affairs*, Taylor and Francis, Armonk.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² O’Brien, R & Williams, M 2016, *Global Political Economy: Evolution and Dynamics*, 5th edn, Palgrave, London, p. 149.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ In 1971 the US abandoned the gold standard in hopes of re-establishing its economic competitiveness. However, in 1973, many currencies were delinked from the US dollar. This led to a new global system of floating currencies, which subsequently devalued the US dollar. See: Pettman, R 2000, *Commonsense Constructivism, or the Making of World Affairs*, Taylor and Francis, Armonk; O’Brien, R & Williams, M 2016, *Global Political Economy: Evolution and Dynamics*, 5th edn, Palgrave, London, p. 153.

⁶⁶ O’Brien, R & Williams, M 2016, *Global Political Economy: Evolution and Dynamics*, 5th edn, Palgrave, London, p. 149.

international financial system'.⁶⁷ However, beyond this, the institutions became exponents of the U.S.'s preference for neoliberalism.⁶⁸ Pettman critically observed that from a realist perspective, 'the language of liberalism serve[d] only to obscure superpower preponderance and sovereign self-concern'.⁶⁹ For example, the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programs ('SAPs') meant that states seeking loans had to 'negotiate structural reforms with the IMF' before they had access to funding.⁷⁰ The SAPs were formed on the basis of the 'Washington Consensus', a liberal idea which endorsed open markets.⁷¹ The SAPs helped export liberalism by making markets more accessible, which was desired by the U.S.⁷² Similarly, when developing countries sought funds from the IBRD, it was contingent upon 'liberalist conditions'.⁷³ The U.S. was able to enforce these conditions because it dominated the IMF and IBRD. Today, the IMF and World Bank continue to play a major role in the international monetary system. However, the ambit of these institutions has evolved to meet the demands of the contemporary global economy. The IMF provides short and medium term loans to help states 'build and maintain strong economies'.⁷⁴ In contrast, the World Bank assists low-middle income states by offering long-term loans aimed at poverty reduction and fiscal development.⁷⁵ However, through the initial operation of the IMF and IBRD, 'U.S. constructivism toward liberal[ism]' became evident.⁷⁶ Similarly, Russia's constructivism in Eurasia is manifesting through the Eurasian Economic Union.

The establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union ('EEU') is another example of a reasonably powerful state, Russia, constructing an institution in pursuit of national interests. President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan was the first to propose regional economic cooperation in the post-Soviet space.⁷⁷ In 1994, Nazarbayev proposed a 'Eurasian Union' that purported to establish a regional trading bloc.⁷⁸ His proposal was driven by economic interests and a political vision for 'Eurasian solidarity'.⁷⁹ Although various agreements were formed to deepen regional integration, Nazarbayev's Eurasian Union gained little traction. However, in 2010, Vladimir Putin adopted the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Pettman, R 2000, *Commonsense Constructivism, or the Making of World Affairs*, Taylor and Francis, Armonk.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ O'Brien, R & Williams, M 2016, *Global Political Economy: Evolution and Dynamics*, 5th edn, Palgrave, London, p. 150; Pettman, R 2000, *Commonsense Constructivism, or the Making of World Affairs*, Taylor and Francis, Armonk.

⁷¹ O'Brien, R & Williams, M 2016, *Global Political Economy: Evolution and Dynamics*, 5th edn, Palgrave, London, p. 150.

⁷² Pettman, R 2000, *Commonsense Constructivism, or the Making of World Affairs*, Taylor and Francis, Armonk.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ International Monetary Fund 2017, 'The IMF and the World Bank', *International Monetary Fund*, 16 May, viewed 18 September 2017, <<http://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2016/07/27/15/31/IMF-World-Bank>>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Barkin, S 2003, 'Realist Constructivism', *The International Studies Association*, vol. 5, no.3, pp. 325-342, p. 338.

⁷⁷ Tarr, D 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and the Kyrgyz Republic: Can it Succeed where its Predecessor failed?', *Eastern European Economics*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 1-22, p. 17;

⁷⁸ Russia Today 2014, 'Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan sign 'epoch' Eurasian Economic Union', *Russia Today*, viewed 18 September 2017, <<https://www.rt.com/business/162200-russia-bealrus-kazakhstan-union/>>; Nazarbayev, N 2011, 'Nazarbayev: There is and there will be no 'restoration' of the USSR in the Eurasian Union', *Tengri News*, 27 October, <https://en.tengrinews.kz/politics_sub/Nazarbayev-There-is-and-there-will-be-no-restoration-of-the-5293/>; Mostafa, G 2013, 'The Concept of 'Eurasia': Kazakhstan's Eurasian policy and its implications', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 160-170.

⁷⁹ Russia Today 2014, 'Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan sign 'epoch' Eurasian Economic Union', *Russia Today*, viewed 18 September 2017, <<https://www.rt.com/business/162200-russia-bealrus-kazakhstan-union/>>; Nazarbayev, N 2011, 'Nazarbayev: There is and there will be no 'restoration' of the USSR in the Eurasian Union', *Tengri News*, 27 October, <https://en.tengrinews.kz/politics_sub/Nazarbayev-There-is-and-there-will-be-no-restoration-of-the-5293/>; Mostafa, G 2013, 'The Concept of 'Eurasia': Kazakhstan's Eurasian policy and its implications', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 160-170.

same spirit of regional economic integration.⁸⁰ As such, in 2010, a Customs Union was established as a precursor to the EEU, which imposed a common external tariff.⁸¹ The EEU was formally established in 2015, and today comprises Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Russia.⁸² *Prima facie*, the EEU appears to be an economic initiative, however, it has been observed by various scholars that the EEU is a geopolitical project for Russia, rather than an economic one.⁸³ Arguably, the EEU forms part of Russia's Eurasian integration project, which is a 'geopolitical response' to the EU eastward integration efforts and China's efforts to engage Central Asia.⁸⁴ The EEU celebrated a small victory against the EU when Armenia decided to join the EEU in 2015, withdrawing from negotiations for closer relations with the EU, though from late 2017 it is considering the signing of a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU.⁸⁵ The EEU is often criticised as Putin's attempt to institutionalise Russia's primacy in the post-Soviet area.⁸⁶ While Putin may aim to reinstall the influence of Russia among former states of the Soviet Union, he denied that the EEU is an attempt to revive the Soviet Union.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, it is assumed that the EEU is driven by Russia's desire to solidify its position as a leading power.⁸⁸

To date, the EEU has secured limited economic outcomes.⁸⁹ The EEU successfully negotiated a Free Trade Agreement ('FTA') with Vietnam in 2016.⁹⁰ Moreover, Putin hopes to link the EEU with China's

⁸⁰ Podadera Rivera, P & Garashchuk, A 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union: prospective regional integration in the post-Soviet space or just geopolitical project?', *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 91-110, p. 96; Kirkham, K 2016, 'The formation of the Eurasian Economic Union: How successful is the Russia regional hegemony?', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 111-128, p. 117.

⁸¹ Vinokurov, E 2017, 'Eurasian Economic Union: Current state and preliminary results', *Russian Journal of Economics*, vol.3, no.1, pp.54-70, p.54; Tarr, D 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and the Kyrgyz Republic: Can it Succeed where its Predecessor failed?', *Eastern European Economics*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 1-22, p. 1.

⁸² Tarr, D 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and the Kyrgyz Republic: Can it Succeed where its Predecessor failed?', *Eastern European Economics*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 1-22, p. 1.

⁸³ Bordachev, T, Kazakova, A & Skriba, A 2016, 'Institutions for a Peaceful Eurasia', *International Organisations Research Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 23-39, p. 23; Podadera Rivera, P & Garashchuk, A 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union: prospective regional integration in the post-Soviet space or just geopolitical project?', *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 91-110, p. 101.

⁸⁴ Podadera Rivera, P & Garashchuk, A 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union: prospective regional integration in the post-Soviet space or just geopolitical project?', *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 91-110, p. 102; Sakwa, R 2016, 'How the Eurasian elites envisage the role of the EEU in the global perspective', *European Politics and Society*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 4-22, p. 4; Kirkham, K 2016, 'The formation of the Eurasian Economic Union: How successful is the Russia regional hegemony?', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 111-128, p. 113; Bordachev, T, Kazakova, A & Skriba, A 2016, 'Institutions for a Peaceful Eurasia', *International Organisations Research Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 23-39, p. 23.

⁸⁵ Kansikas, S 2015, 'The Eurasian Economic Union, Russia's Integration Policy and the EU Challenge', *Journal on Baltic Security*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 108-116, p. 110.

⁸⁶ Sakwa, R 2016, 'How the Eurasian elites envisage the role of the EEU in the global perspective', *European Politics and Society*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 4-22, p. 11.

⁸⁷ Ibid; Tarr, D 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and the Kyrgyz Republic: Can it Succeed where its Predecessor failed?', *Eastern European Economics*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 1-22, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Podadera Rivera, P & Garashchuk, A 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union: prospective regional integration in the post-Soviet space or just geopolitical project?', *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 91-110, p. 101; Kirkham, K 2016, 'The formation of the Eurasian Economic Union: How successful is the Russia regional hegemony?', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 111-128, p. 113; Kansikas, S 2015, 'The Eurasian Economic Union, Russia's Integration Policy and the EU Challenge', *Journal on Baltic Security*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 108-116, p. 110.

⁸⁹ Podadera Rivera, P & Garashchuk, A 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union: prospective regional integration in the post-Soviet space or just geopolitical project?', *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 91-110, p. 101

⁹⁰ Sakwa, R 2016, 'How the Eurasian elites envisage the role of the EEU in the global perspective', *European Politics and Society*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 4-22, p. 13; Putz, C 2016, 'Eurasian Economic Union's First External FTA to Come into Force', *The Diplomat*, 21 September, viewed 5 August, < <http://thediplomat.com/2016/09/eurasian-economic-unions-first-external-fta-to-come-into-force/>>;

Silk Road Economic Belt.⁹¹ Internally, the EEU provided for a common market through the free movements of goods, services and people.⁹² However, the weakening of the Russia rouble slowed down economic integration. For example, Kazakhstan joined the EEU because of its tendency to support Russia diplomatically.⁹³ However, it is now hesitant about integration through the EEU due to devaluation of the rouble, which can no longer 'be regarded as a safe anchor for Kazakhstan's currency'.⁹⁴ In 2014, Kazakhstan's tenge was devalued by 19%, which was an effort to 'stay ahead of the roubles decline'.⁹⁵ This demonstrates that the condition of the Russian economy cross impacts EEU states. This is because Russia economically dominates the EEU. Its 2016 GDP (PPP) was int'l\$3.397 trillion, which was 304 times larger than Kyrgyzstan and nine times larger than Kazakhstan.⁹⁶ Member states' economic capacities greatly differ, and each has 'different market-economy transformation processes'.⁹⁷ Russia will need to incentivise smaller states such as Armenia, Belarus and Kyrgyz Republic to implement EEU regulations by offering 'subsidies... in the form of cheaper energy, loans, or politically motivated investments'.⁹⁸ While the EEU's economic success has been limited, Putin has demonstrated a commitment to the institution, which is likely due to his geopolitical objectives. Therefore, Russia arguably constructed the EEU as a mechanism to pursue its national interests. This supports the proposition that realist states often use constructivism to create multilateral institutions favouring their own interests.

⁹¹ Galuzin, M 2016, 'Russia's engagement into the Asia Pacific Affairs', Valdai Club, 19 December, viewed 1 April 2017, <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-engagement-into-the-asia-pacific-affairs/?sphrase_id=54469>; Koldunova, E 2016, 'Russia and Regional Institutions in the Asia-Pacific Region', *Russian Politics and Law*, vol. 54, no.5-6, pp.516-532, p. 529.

⁹² Podadera Rivera, P & Garashchuk, A 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union: prospective regional integration in the post-Soviet space or just geopolitical project?', *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 91-110, p. 96; Tarr, D 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and the Kyrgyz Republic: Can it Succeed where its Predecessor failed?', *Eastern European Economics*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 1-22, p. 17.

⁹³ Kudaibergenova, D 2016, 'Eurasian Economic Union integration in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan', *European Politics and Society*, vol.17, o.1, pp.97-112.

⁹⁴ Kourmanova, A 2015, 'The Tenge Dilemma in Kazakhstan', *Center for Strategic International Studies*, 5 February, viewed 6 August 2017, <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/tenge-dilemma-kazakhstan>>.

⁹⁵ Schenkkan, N 2015, 'Impact of the Economic Crisis in Russia on Central Asia', *Russian Analytical Digest*, 17 March, viewed 6 August 2017, <<http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD-165-3-6.pdf>>, p. 4; Rabbobank 2015, *Country Report Kazakhstan*, RaboResearch – Economic Research, viewed 6 August 2017, <<https://economics.rabobank.com/publications/2015/june/country-report-kazakhstan/>>.

⁹⁶ World Bank 2017, *GDP, PPP (current international \$)*, World Bank, viewed 20 July 2017, <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?locations=RU-AM>>; Podadera Rivera, P & Garashchuk, A 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union: prospective regional integration in the post-Soviet space or just geopolitical project?', *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 91-110, p. 100.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.101.

⁹⁸ Tarr, D 2016, 'The Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and the Kyrgyz Republic: Can it Succeed where its Predecessor failed?', *Eastern European Economics*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 1-22, p. 17-18.

Conclusion

Although realism and constructivism are traditionally seen as divergent approaches to International Relations, the two overlap in terms of national interests and the construction of institutions. For structural realists, national interests are formed in response to the anarchical nature of the international system. Therefore, states must seek survival, which is done by pursuing national interests with a focus on security and power enhancement. In contrast, constructivism posits that the international system is socially constructed. State identity plays an important role in foreign policy, because it is the foundation by which a state's national interests are formed. Importantly, identity is intersubjective, and is therefore shaped by social transactions, norms and ideas. From the perspective of realism, even if national interests are socially constructed, these interests are pursued for survival and material purposes. This was demonstrated by assessing the U.S.'s construction of the Bretton Woods institutions, the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs, and the propagation of neoliberal values. The same is demonstrated by the EEU, whereby the institution's economic agenda is secondary to Russia's geopolitical goals. These two case studies suggest that realism and constructivism can be complementary modes. As such, although realism and constructivism are traditionally seen as incompatible approaches to International Relations, the two overlap in a state's understanding of national interests. The overlap between realism and constructivism often manifests in a state's construction of multilateral institutions, which are intentionally designed to advance the state's national interests as it interacts with other actors in partly structured organisational settings.

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