Constructivism : An International Relations Perspective
ทฤษฎีสรรสร้างนิยม มุมมองจากความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศ

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Abstact

      Constructivism is mainly the theory of knowledge rather than the theory of political economy. Since, the term of constructivism is knowledge amassed from a specific social and historical standprint reflecting the interests and culture of the groups in question, the constructivism is also viewed that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretation of the material world. In considering the constructivism, therefore, if composes of trees main variables, namely; identities, interests and norms. The identities can be defined as relatively stable role, Specific understanding and expectation about the self. The interests refer to what toe actor wants and designating motives which help to explain behavior. Whereas, norms means collective understanding which make behavioral claims on actors. Moreover, the constructivism can be classified into tree versions; conventional constructivism offering a general theoretical tool being either rival a completement rationalism, critical constructivism focusing on the identity issues such as ethnicity, race, religion, sexuality, etc, and post-modern is the middle grouped between conventional and ethnical constructivism.

Keywords : constructivism, identities, interests and norms

บทคัดย่อ

      แนวความคิดสรรสร้างนิยมเป็นทฤษฎีความรู้มากกว่าที่เป็นทฤษฎีทางเศรษฐศาสตร์การเมือง ทั้งนี้เพราะคำว่า สรรสร้างนิยม หมายถึงความรู้ที่สะสมมาจากประวัติศาสตร์และลักษณะเฉพาะของสังคมสะท้อนผลประโยชน์และวัฒนธรรมของกลุ่มที่กล่าวถึง สรรสร้างนิยมยังหมายถึงการที่การกระทำของมนุษย์ปรุงแต่งหรือถูกปรุงแต่งโดยโลกแห่งวัตถุซึ่งขึ้นอยู่กับพลวัตของวัฒนธรรมและความรู้ของคนในสังคม ดังนั้นการสรรสร้างนิยมอาจจะแบ่งได้เป็น 3 องค์ประกอบ ได้แก่ อัตลักษณ์ ผลประโยชน์ และปทัสถาน โดยที่อัตลักษณ์หมายถึงความเข้าใจและความคาดหวังในบทบาทเฉพาะที่เป็นตัวตนของบุคคลหรือสังคม ผลประโยชน์ หมายถึง สิ่งที่บุคคลหรือสังคมต้องการหรือเสริมแรงให้บุคคลหรือสังคมมีพฤติกรรม ในขณะที่ปทัสถานหมายถึงความเข้าใจร่วมกันของบุคคลหรือสังคมที่จะทำให้แสดงพฤติกรรมที่ต้องการได้ นอกจากนี้การสรรสร้างนิยมยังแบ่งออกเป็น 3 แบบ คือ การสรรสร้างนิยมแบบดั้งเดิมซึ่งเป็นเครื่องมือในการสร้างทฤษฎีทั่วไปที่เป็นไปตามความเชื่อในเหตุผลนิยม การสรรสร้างนิยมเชิงวิพากษ์เน้นชาติพันธุ์ ศาสนา เชื้อชาติ ลักษณะทางเพศ เหล่านี้เป็นต้น และหลังทันสมัยเป็นกลางระหว่างสรรสร้างนิยมแบบดั้งเดิมและสรรส้างนิยมเชิงพากษ์

คำสำคัญ : สรรสร้างนิยม, อัตลักษณ์, ผลประโยชน์ และ ปทัสถาน

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However, according to David Bonewin, both neorealism and neoliberalism share the same views of the world (ontology) and what counts as reliable knowledge about that world (epistemology). The similarities between neorealism and neoliberalism are four-fold. First, both theories ignore the role of military forces. Secondly, state are rational actors and egoistic value maximisers. Thirdly, state are considered as main actors. Finally, both theories have moved beyond the dichotomy between cooperation and conflict.

Constructivism, according to Gerard Delanty[2], argues that knowledge is amassed from a specific social and historical standpoint reflecting the interest and culture of the groups in question. Constructivism became the typical social sciences methodology of 1980s. Whilst social reality exists independently of research or observation, it has been increasingly recognized that published word on social reality has itself played as active role in shaping of social science knowledge.

Constructivism Defined

Constructivism is mainly **the theory of knowledge** rather than the purely theory of political economy. As Gerard Delanty argued that constructivism was knowledge amassed from a specific social and historiecal standpoint reflecting the interest and culture of the groups in question. Emanuel Adler[3] also explained that constructivism is the view that the manner in which the material world shapped and is shapped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world. Therefore, human capacity has the greatest impact on the manner in which indiviuals and social actors attach meaning to the material world. Hence, collective understanding provide people with reasons why things are and indicates as to how they should use their material abilities and power. Ideas have some structural characteristics which are seen as collective knowledge institutionalized though practices are the outcome of interacting individuals who act purposively on the basis of their personal ideas, beliefs judgments, and interpretations. The main goal of constructivism, therefore, is to provide both theoretical and empirical explanations of social institutions and social change, with the help of combined effects of agents and social structures.

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[2] Gerard Delanty. Social Science : beyond constructivism and realism. Buckingham : Open University Press, 1997, 113.

[3] Emarnuel Adler. "Seizing the middle ground : Constructivism in the world politics" European Journal of International Relations, UK, Vol. 3, 1997, 322.

Variables of Constructivism

While material factors remain important for constructivism, inter-subjective factors such as identities, interests and norms play an important role in foreign policy interactions. These three factors are not stable but change during a given period of time. Norms provide a framework for socialization which can regulate the behavior of states and lead to the development of identities and interests.

Identities :   An identities can be defined as relatively stable role-specific understanding and expectation about them selves. Identities represent names, ideal types, groups, statuses and social categories which allow states to be socially recognized by themselves and others as members of the same group. However, there are four kinds of identity, namely, corporate, type, role and collective.

First, corporate identity originated through the process of the formation and political development of states, prior to or independent from interaction with other states. According to Wendt, corporate identity refers to sets of meaning which actors attribute to themselves, whilst taking the perspective of others as a social object. Sovereignty is considered as corporate identity of states, meaning the international institution of mutual recognition of a governing authority over a particular territory. Corporate identity comprises 4 basic interests : (1) physical security (2) ontological security or predictability in relational with others (3) recognition as an actor by others (4) development in the sense of meeting the human aspiration for a better life.

Secondly, type identity represents regime types and state forms such as capitalist, fascist and monarchical states. **Thirdly,** role identity depends on culture. **Finally,** collective identity is generated from state interactions over a long period of time.

Interests : By definition, interests refer to what actors want, designating motives which help to explain behavior. According to Busse[4], state identities serve as a base for state interests, such as state survival for example. However, George and Keohane[5] pointed out three types of natural interests, namely, physical survival, autonomy (liberty) and economic well-being. Wendt added a fourth type, called collective self-esteem.

Norms : Norms refer to collective understanding which make behavioral claims on actors. They constitute actor identities and interest. Kratochwie noted that norms are standards of behavior defined in terms of right and obligations. Norms help actors to distinguish between normal and abnormal behavior to influence decision-making and

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[4] Nikolas Busse, "Constructivism and Southeast Asian security" The Pacific Review, Vol. 12, No.1, 1999, 44.

[5] A. George and Robert O. Keohane, "The Concept of natural interests : uses and limitations." In A. Georse (ed.) Presidental decision making in forcing policy. Boulder : Westview, 1980, 217 – 237.

legitimize their actions and the actions of others. Norms can be sub-divided into legal-rational and social-cultural norms.

Versions of Constructivism

Peter Katzentein, Robert Keohane and Stephen Krasner pointed out that constructivism has three versions : Conventions, critical and post-modern.

Conventional constructivism, insists that sociological perspectives offer a general theoretical tool which can either rival or complement rationalism.

Critical Constructivism focuses on identity issues such as ethnicity, race, religion and sexuality. It also accepts that it is possible to base social science knowledge on empirical research.

Post – modern constructivism is the middle ground between conventional and critical constructivism. Generally speaking, constructivism is ideally located between the debate of rationalism and relativism.

Postmodernism

More resently, sociological theories have tried to go beyond Marx and Weber. With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, Marx's is ideas appear less relevant to the contemporary world than many once thought. Many scholars, in fact, including some who were originally Marxists, now discount Marx altogether. They believe that Marx's attempt to find general patterns of history was inevitably doomed to failure. For such thinkers, linked postmodernism, sociologists should simply give up on the sorts of theories that both Marx and Weber sought to develop-overall interpretations of social change.

The advocates of the idea of postmodernism claim that the classic social thinkers took their inspiration from the idea that history has a shape-it "go some where" and lead to progress and that now this notion has collapsed. There are longer any "grand narratives" or metanarratives-overall conceptions of history or society that make any sense. Not only is there no general notion of progress that can be defended, there is no such thing as history. The postmodern world is not clined, as Marx hoped, to be a socialist one. Instead, it is one dominated by the new media, which " take us out" of our past. Postmodern society is highly pluralistic and diverse. In countless films videos, TV programmes, and websites image circulate around the world us Anthony Giddens, pointed out[6]

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[6] Anthony Giddens. Sociology. Canbridge : Polity Prers, 2002, 680.

"Our world is being remade. Mass production, the mass consumer, the big city, the big brother state, the sprawling housing estate, and the nation-state are in decline : flexibility, diversity, differentiation and mobility, communication, decentralization, and internationalization are in the ascendant. In the process our own identities, our sense of self, our own subjectivities are being transformed. We are in transition to a new era."

One of the theorists of postmodernity is the French author Jean Bandrillard believed that the electronic media have destroyed our relationship to our past and created a chaotic empty world. Baudrillard was strongly influenced by Marxism in the early years. However, he argues the spread of electronic communication and the mass media has reversed the Marxist theorem that economic forces shape society. Instead, social life is influenced above all by signs and images. Hence Baudrillard draws on structuralism, picking up on Saussure's idea that meanings are created by connections between words rather than by external reality.

Michel Foucault

Although he refused to call himself a postmodernist, Michel Foucault (1920-1984) drew heavily on postmodernist thought. Foucault analyzed the emergence of modern institutions such as prisons, hospitals and schools that have played on increasing role in controlling and monitoring the social population. He wanted to show that there was 'another side' to enlightenment idea about individual liberty-one concerned with discipline and surveillance. Foucault advanced important ideas about the relationship between power, ideology, and discourse in relation to modern organizational systems. According to Foucault, power works through discourse to shape popular attitude towards phenomena such as crime, madness or sexuality. Especially in research, Foucault used methodology of 'digging into the past' – making sense of the unfamiliar by drawing analogies with that which is familiar. For example, he explored how the notion of "sexuality" has not always existed, but has been created through process of social development. Foucault attempted to reveal the assumptions behind our current beliefs and practices and to make the present 'visible' by accessing it from the past. However, we cannot have general theories about society, social development or modernity; we can only understand fragments of them.

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is a comparatively recent sociological perspective. Ethnomethodology is term first coined by Harold GarfinKel in 1967. Ethnomethodology means a study of the methods used by people. It is concerned with the methods used by people to construct, account for and give meaning to their social world.

Zimmerman and Weider pointed out that Ethnomethodology attempted to explain "how members of of society go about the task of seeing, describing, and explaining order in the world in which they live" Ethnomethodology had therefore, conducted investigations into the techniques that are used members to achieve the appearance of order.

GarfinKel argues that members employ the 'documentary method' to make sense and account for the social world and to give it an appearance of order. This method consists of selecting certain aspects of the infinite number of features contained in any situation or context of defining them in a particular way, and seeing them as evidence of underlying pattern.   In GarfinKel's words, the documentary method consists of treating an actual appearance as "the document of," as "pointing to" as "standing on behalf of" a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of "what is known" about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other. For example, in the case of Atkinson's study of coroners, those deaths defined as suicide were seen as such by reference as suicide were seen as such by reference to an underlying pattern. This pattern is the coroner's commonsense theory of suicide.   However, at the sametime, these deaths as suicide were seen as evidence for the existence of the underlying pattern.

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