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State Identity Formation in Constructivist Security Studies: A Suggestive Essay

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Abstract

Although any typology of constructivism might be arbitrary, there are, broadly speaking, two distinctive constructivist approaches in security studies as well as International Relations (IR) according to their different meta-theoretical stances: conventional constructivism, on the one hand, and critical constructivism on the other. Indeed, regarding how to understand state identity which is integral to national security, there has meta-theoretically been fierce contention between conventional and critical constructivist security studies. In not ignoring but slightly toning down this contention operating at the abstract level, this article aims to present a pragmatic application of the two different (or conflicting) constructivisms to capturing a more complete picture of state identity formation in substantive empirical research of constructivist security studies. The pragmatic approach is that, without being immersed heavily in the meta-theoretical strife between the two seemingly conflicting constructivist camps, both constructivisms should be treated as different analytical frameworks for examining different (internal and external) faces of state identity formation: the external construction of state identity can be well addressed by conventional constructivism, while the internal one by critical constructivism. In this sense, the relationship between conventional and critical constructivism can be understood as not conflicting but complementary in empirical research, as both constructivisms enrich and deepen our understanding of state identity formation in different ways.

1. Introduction

Security, as Williams and Krause (1997: xi) point out, is 'a derivative concept; it is in itself meaningless. To have any meaning, security necessarily presupposes something to be secured.' It thus seems clear that the concept of security is inextricably tied to that of identity, which helps to address questions about what is to be secured or 'whose security is being assumed' (Walker, 1997: 69). Arguably, as Buszynski (2004: 1) maintains, 'ultimately security is about protection of identity'. Yet, we here need to

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remember the relational nature of identity: often a notion of who and what 'we' are is most clearly defined by 'highlighting who or what "we" are not, and what "we" have to fear' (Campbell, 1998: 48) which serves as a source of insecurity. In talking about national security, therefore, it is essential for us to make sense of definitions of state identity that imply 'definitions of threat and interest that have strong effects on national security policies' (Katzenstein, 1996: 18–19). In short, identity is one of the crucial security concepts in International Relations (IR)[1] as well as an important security issue in international politics.

In both IR and security studies, by stressing the ideational aspects of international politics, such as the intersubjective ideas and discourses, constructivism takes the concepts of 'culture' and 'identity' seriously, both of which have largely been ignored in the mainstream realist approach to national security. Yet, note that constructivism cannot be treated as one single, homogeneous theoretical approach. Rather, due to their different meta-theoretical positions and dissimilar philosophical and sociological backgrounds, 'There are, in fact, not one but several 'constructivisms' in the [IR] literature' (Kubalkova *et al.*, 1998a: X). Likewise, many scholars of security studies have used the term 'constructivism' to represent their differing approaches to national security. Although any typology of constructivism might be arbitrary, there are, broadly speaking, two distinctive constructivist approaches in security studies according to their different meta-theoretical stances: 'conventional' constructivism, on the one hand, and 'critical' constructivism on the other.[2] According to Hopf (1998: 172, 181), 'Constructivism itself should be understood in its conventional and critical variants, the latter being more closely tied to critical social theory . . . [conventional constructivism] is a collection of principles distilled from critical social theory but without the latter's more consistent theoretical or epistemological follow-through' (also see Cho, 2009). In constructivist security studies, an analytical framework of conventional constructivism is elaborated in Peter J. Katzenstein's edited volume, *The Culture of National Security* (1996), and Alexander Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999), while that of critical constructivism is expounded in David Campbell's *Writing Security* (1998) and Jutta Weldes et al.'s edited volume, *Cultures of Insecurity* (1999).

[1] In this article, capital letters refer to the academic field which embraces security studies as a subfield, lower case the practice of world politics.

[2] Note that this paper does not address, what Fierke (2007) calls, 'consistent constructivism' (or linguistic constructivism) which differentiates itself from (and is critical of) both conventional and critical constructivisms. To know more about consistent constructivism, see Fierke (2007). In addition, this article basically understands the term 'critical constructivism' in a broad sense, ranging from critical social constructivism (see Weldes *et al.*, 1999) to poststructuralism (see Campbell, 1998), as they are analytically very akin and are intellectually allied in empirical research. At the same time, however, since the focus of this article is on state identity formation, the usage of critical constructivist literature is limited to critical constructivist writings in security studies placing an emphasis on state policy and national security.

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The central theme of conventional constructivism is that 'security interests are defined by actors who respond to cultural factors' (Katzenstein, 1996: 2). In this process, 'The concept of 'identity' . . . functions as a critical link between environmental structures and interests' (Jepperson *et al.*, 1996: 59). More to the point, 'changing identities have on political interests and thus on national security policies' (Katzenstein, 1996: 3). Conventional constructivists as epistemological positivists tend to be interested in 'uncovering top–down/deductive mechanisms and causal relationships between actors, norms, interests, and identity' (Checkel, 2008: 72). On the other hand, critical constructivism rests on the principal assumption that 'insecurity is itself the production of processes of identity construction in which the self and the other, or multiple others, are constituted' (Weldes *et al.*, 1999: 10). It is thus argued that identities and insecurities themselves are not pre-given and natural things which exist separately, but 'are produced in a mutually constitutive process' (Weldes *et al.*, 1999: 11). In this non-essentialist sense, rather than looking at what factors caused the self's insecurity – as would conventional constructivists – critical constructivists as post-positivists are interested in exploring 'the background conditions and linguistic constructions (social discourses) that made [such insecurity] possible in the first place' (Checkel, 2008: 73). In spite of both constructivisms' emphasis on the concept of identity in security studies, identities are often treated as explanatory variables for certain security phenomena in conventional constructivism, but in critical constructivism the identities are to be explained to make sense of the cultural production of insecurities (Cho, 2009). Related to this, regarding how to understand state identity which is integral to national security, there has meta-theoretically been fierce contention between conventional and critical constructivism, as will be discussed in a later section.

With conventional and critical constructivist dissimilar meta-theoretical stances toward state identity in mind, this article will present a pragmatic application of the two different (or conflicting) constructivisms to exploring state identity formation in substantive empirical research of constructivist security studies. In other words, this article is concerned with how to capture a more complete picture of the construction of state identity at home and abroad through both conventional and critical constructivist approaches to national security. The pragmatic approach is that, without being immersed heavily in the meta-theoretical strife between two seemingly conflicting constructivist camps, both conventional and critical constructivisms should be treated as different analytical frameworks for examining different (internal and external) faces of state identity formation: the external construction of state identity can be well addressed by conventional constructivism, while the internal one by critical constructivism. Used in this way, both constructivisms offer multiple, significant accounts of a state's identity that is informing its interests and policy toward itself and other countries. It also allows us to grasp important aspects of the state's identity politics associated with its national security, projecting policy-relevant implications for security and diplomacy in international politics.

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As for its structure, the main body of this article consists of three sections. The first takes issue with the ongoing sectarian policing of the rigid IR theory boundaries in the discipline, based largely on the third debate, by regarding the relationship between seemingly conflicting theories as complementary in the sense that different theoretical paradigms can enrich and deepen our understanding of world politics in crucially different ways. The second looks at Alexander Wendt's (1999) constructivism as a leading constructivism among the differing (or contending) constructivisms in IR. In so doing, we will touch upon a contemporary controversial issue regarding the theoretical position of Wendt's constructivism in the mapping of IR theory – the so-called 'via media' debate. In relation to this, we also consider the differing (or conflicting) views on the typology of constructivism in IR, which seem to repeat the third debate in IR in derivative form. Being critical of the over-heated meta-theoretical debates between different IR theoretical camps for securing their own turfs in the discipline, the third examines different (internal and external) faces of state identity through the debate between conventional and critical constructivists, and then considers the uses to which the two meta-theoretically different constructivisms can be put in constructivist security studies' empirical research on state identity formation.

2. A critique of the sectarian policing of rigid IR theory boundaries

It has been more than 20 years since IR scholars engaged in the third debate.[3] Throughout the third debate, as Waever (quoted in Sterling-Folker, 2006: 11–12) points out, 'there is no such repressive tolerance' between rationalists and reflectivists, because 'they rather see each other as harmful, at times almost "evil", definitely not as a legitimate parallel enterprise'. In practice, far from seeing a rapprochement between rationalists and reflectivists, the debate has been heated and bitter. For IR scholars, two decades after the third debate, it might be high time to call into question the third debate, particularly its residue and tenability, by contemplating the following questions. Are rationalism and reflectivism conflicting (or totally different) across the board? In excluding or ignoring each other, have IR scholars in different camps tended to essentialize the differences between rationalism and reflectivism in order to secure their own theoretical turf? Associated with this, what and where is the actual fault line between constructivism and poststructuralism? In addition, what have we gained by regarding the discipline in the rigidly dualistic way (rationalism vs. reflectivism or conventional constructivism vs. critical constructivism) and what have we lost? Is there anything to be reaped from its continued dualistic configuration? More bluntly, is it worth carrying on? If so, what

[3] In this article, the third debate in IR means the intense meta-theoretical debate between the rationalists (positivists, mainstream IR theorists) and the reflectivists (post-positivists, critical IR theorists), which originated in the late 1980s and seems to continue so far. This debate has yielded the issue of incommensurability. Due to this, there has been the middle ground between rationalism and reflectivism, which some constructivists have sought to occupy. See Keohane (1988); Lapid (1989); Goldstein and Keohane (1993); George (1994); Adler (1997); Checkel (1998); Smith and Owens (2005); Smith (2007).

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are we expected to gain for the future development of IR? Moreover, is the continuation of the sectarian policing of rigid IR theory boundaries something that the discipline desires? Does this sectarian policing possibly prevent us from considering other ways of understanding the discipline and world politics? (Waever, 1996; Patomaki and Wight, 2000; Wight, 2002)

Indeed, understanding the various IR debates is important in the sense that 'the meanings generated by IR theories are conditioned by the specific context in which theoretical debates take shape' (Steans and Pettiford, 2005: 18). As Waever (2007: 300) mentions, the various IR debates (in particular, great debates) have been part of the disciplinary structure of IR, so we should take these seriously in order 'to understand how our discipline works, and there are power and privileges at stake'. Besides, for the sake of pedagogical simplicity and analytical clarity, it is useful to map out various IR theories in a dualistic way, such as the third debate. Although grasping the various debates in IR, two decades after the third debate, it is now worth problematizing the ongoing sectarian policing of rigid IR theory boundaries, based largely on the third debate's meta-theoretical dualistic form. This is not to say that meta-theoretical discussions are meaningless or unimportant. Rather, this article would call into question the ongoing, turf-securing-purpose way of debating, which has displayed lack of respect toward meta-theoretically different theoretical camps.

As Wight (2002: 40) points out, 'The idea that one has to declare which tribe one belongs to and that this determines one's ontological frame of reference, epistemology and appropriate methods seems a bizarre way for a discipline to proceed.' In a similar vein, Hay (2002: 7) also maintains that 'The conventional "textbook" presentation of the discipline's principal fault-lines has never been much more than a crude and distorted cliché – a one-dimensional depiction of a multi-dimensional reality' in political studies. Furthermore, when understanding the IR discipline as a 'structured field permeated by relations of power' or 'institution' (Waever, 2007: 289–90), the sectarian dualism has 'implications for professional status and job security' (Klotz and Lynch, 2007: 108–9) in the IR scholarship. Partly for this reason, the dualistic framing of IR theory remains tenacious, showing that 'we [IR scholars] benefit more from arguing with each other than from learning with each other' (Klotz and Lynch, 2007: 108–9; also see Klotz, 2009; Sil and Katzenstein, 2010). The sectarian policing of IR theory boundaries thus deters a constructive conversation among IR scholars in different camps, obstructs us from shedding light on substantive issues of importance, and misrepresents the multi-dimensional issues. More importantly, it secures the domination of the existing mapping of IR theory while possibly keeping us from having a new perspective of understanding the discipline and world politics.

Hence, this article would argue that, depending on particular research questions, it is possible (even more productive at times) to denaturalize an ossified artefact of the dualistic representation of the discipline in substantive empirical research. As is often the case, in practice, an IR scholar has various academic interests regarding the particular social, global phenomenon s/he wants to examine. There can thus

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be different sets of research questions (which are, at times, multi-paradigmatic) in his/her mind. Perhaps some questions can be well addressed by rationalism, while others by reflectivism. It seems not at all strange and wrong for IR researchers to deal with different puzzles using different theoretical frameworks, as scholars of comparative politics often do (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001: 404). IR researchers can choose the theoretical lens and methods that are best suited to their particular research questions, without avowedly positioning themselves in one specific 'ism'. In this pragmatic sense, we can assume that the relationship between rationalism and reflectivism need not necessarily be conflictual all the time, unlike the case of the third debate. Rather, the relationship can be complementary, in the sense that both camps enrich and deepen our understanding of world politics in different ways. In other words, making sense of different (even contentious) theories can provide us with the various ways of observing and grasping the multiple aspects of any particular event or topic.

In fact, no single perspective can fully render all of the intricacy of contemporary world politics, and, at some point, all approaches become ambiguous and short of full coherence: 'Each perspective . . . illuminates slightly different elements of a given topic or event and hence patterns relevant to it, revealing aspects and details that were not obvious or particularly pertinent in other perspectives' (Sterling-Folker, 2006: 5). Considering all of the discussion, based on various research questions that one might have in mind, in substantive empirical research, one would be better off with a various array of competing ideas rather than a single orthodox theoretical perspective in order to explain the different puzzles relating to his/her specific case. There is no need to either overturn the rationalist mainstream or marginalise the reflectivist alternatives (see Crotty, 1998; Waever, 1998; Walt, 1998; Smith, 2000a, 2007; Barnett, 2005; Rengger and Thirkell-White, 2007; Sil and Katzenstein, 2010).

While this article has argued for denaturalising the ossified artefact of the dualistic representation of the discipline in substantive empirical research, this is not to say that meta-theoretical debates are unimportant or useless. Simply, being critical of the ongoing sectarian policing of rigid IR theory boundaries between rationalism (or conventional constructivism) and reflectivism (or critical constructivism), we need to tone down the over-heated meta-theoretical debates and concentrate more directly on substantive empirical research through different theoretical perspectives to capture various aspects of complex international relations today.[4] This strategic suggestion

[4] Similarly, using the term 'analytic eclecticism' which supports the spirit of intellectual pluralism, Sil and Katzenstein (2010) have vehemently argued for problem-focused research rather than paradigm-centered research in the study of world politics, to which this article also subscribes. Yet, their analytic eclecticism would seem to strive for a pragmatic dialogue among theories based only on the positivist epistemology and minimal essentialist ontology (such as realism, liberalism, and conventional constructivism), while not taking those theories based on post-positivist epistemology and non-essentialist ontology (such as critical constructivism) seriously. In this sense, the analytic eclecticism can be understood as not an inter-paradigm but intra-paradigm approach to world politics, which

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for IR empirical research would prefer to 'leave the 'bigger [epistemological and ontological] question' to the world's philosophers' (Steans and Pettiford, 2005: 13; also see Klotz and Lynch, 2007: 105–11; Klotz, 2009).

3. Constructivism(s) and the unflagging third debate in IR

In IR, although Nicholas Onuf introduced the term 'constructivism' in 1989 in his book entitled *World of Our Making*, to many within the discipline, it is connected with Alexander Wendt (1999). In spite of aiming to build a structural account of international politics, Wendt (1999: 1–44) explicitly pits himself against Kenneth Waltz's (1979) neorealism (structural realism). For neorealists, in international politics, the structure of the system is anarchic, and thus the nature of the international system is a conflictual Hobbesian world which is immutable and a priori. Under this circumstance, state action should be based on the notion of self-help for national survival. Therefore, what matters for the state is not its function but its capability: states show similar foreign policy behaviour regardless of their different internal systems and contrasting ideologies. In this respect, 'we need not be concerned with the functions performed by the units [states], since they are functionally alike' (Keohane, 1986: 14). This neorealist indifference to the state in itself reveals that, although states can change their actions, it is impossible for them to change themselves – their identities and interests. More to the point, the state's identity and interests are unproblematic in the anarchical international system, and are exogenously pre-given on the basis of a power-maximising rationality. The above neorealist understanding of the relationship between states (agents) and the international system (structure) eventually leaves aside an investigation of the changes in states' identities and interests (Nye, 1988).

For Wendt (1992: 294–5), on the contrary, anarchy is necessarily neither conflictual nor cooperative: 'There is no "logic" of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process . . . *Anarchy is what states make of it.*' It is in this context that the interaction between states determines the nature of anarchy in international politics, and self-help is an institution as produced and sustained by states' interaction. The international system, formed by the states' practices, is thus 'a social rather than material phenomenon' (Wendt, 1999: 20). Moreover, a state's actions do rely on its identity and interests, which are changeable. Unlike neorealism (more broadly, rationalism), therefore, identities and interests are neither fixed nor pre-given. Here, against a materialist feature of neorealism, stressing the importance of idealism in IR, it is argued that socially shared knowledge, such as the manifested norms, is important, in that the knowledge not only regulates the state's actions but also constructs its character which serves as a basis for the national interests (Jepperson

is different from this article's stance of using meta-theoretically contending theories in a pragmatic way, focusing on a scholar's diverse research questions regarding his/her substantive topic in empirical research.

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et al., 1996; Wendt, 1999). It is thus crucial for constructivists to examine how identities and interests, which in turn shape the national policies, are constructed – how they are shaped or generated in and through specific international interactions defining the character of the international system (Weber, 2005: 61–8).

By introducing his version of constructivism in IR, which is often called conventional or modernist or sociological constructivism, Wendt (1999, 394) locates his theoretical position within the framework of the third debate between rationalism/positivism and reflectivism/post-positivism: 'My objective . . . is to build a bridge between these two traditions . . . on behalf of the liberal claim that international institutions can transform state identities and interests.' Towards this end, Wendt (1995: 72, 1999: 1) argues that 'constructivists are structuralists' who are more concerned with idealism than materialism in international politics – 'structural idealism'. Viewed in this way, the world we want to know is social and not static, which shows an idealist ontology. Wendt (1999: 75) adds that 'Constructivists . . . are modernists who fully endorse the scientific project of falsifying theories against evidence', which reveals a positivist epistemology. The above meta-theoretical positioning gives birth to the significant facet of Wendt's constructivism *vis-à-vis* other theoretical paradigms. In his *Social Theory of International Politics*, drawing on scientific realism, Wendt (1999, 38–40) states that ontologically he is post-positivist, while epistemologically he is positivist. Based on this meta-theoretical position, Wendt (1999, 40) believes that his constructivism can provide the 'via media' (the middle path) between rationalism and reflectivism, in the context of the third debate in IR. This is really the gist of the debate, in the light of contemporary IR, between Wendt and the radical reflectivists (see Campbell, 1998: 207–27; 2001; Alker, 2000; Doty, 2000; Keohane, 2000; Krasner, 2000; Smith, 2000b; Wendt, 2000). This article will not repeat the details of this contemporary via media debate here. Yet, it is worth briefly examining the different views on the typology of constructivism prior to offering a novel way of using both conventional and critical constructivisms in security studies empirical research on state identity formation in the following section.

In philosophy and sociology, constructivism is an incredibly broad movement covering various schools of thought, such as hermeneutics, Weberian interpretative sociology, variants of Marxism, symbolic interactionism, structuration theory, communication theory, postmodernism, and so on (Palan, 2000; Adler, 2002; Delanty, 2005). Owing to this diverse background and different related meta-theoretical positions, 'There are many constructivists, and thus perhaps many constructivisms' in IR (Price and Reus-Smit, 2000: 1811). Due partly to this reason, IR scholars are still having trouble pinning down what constructivism is. It is thus common in IR to talk explicitly or implicitly about what sort of constructivism is indicated in one's academic work, when engaging with constructivist empirical research on a substantive issue. According to Zehfuss (2002: 7), 'The definitional problem of what constructivism is is not just a matter of whether different scholars claiming the constructivist label are engaged in the same project, of how diverse the constructivist camp is.'

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Here, the controversial point is whether we should treat postmodernism (more specifically, poststructuralism) as a variant of constructivism or not. Katzenstein *et al.* (1998: 678) argue that we should sharply differentiate constructivism from postmodernism in IR, since 'postmodernism falls clearly outside of the social science enterprise, and in international relations research it risks becoming self-referential and disengaged from the world'. Postmodernists are thus seen as being unwilling to openly join in a scholarly debate with rationalists. (Kubalkova *et al.*, 1998b: 20) also argue that, although constructivism takes issue with rationalism, it rejects 'neither empirical research nor social science as such' (also see Farrell, 2002; Fierke, 2007). Rather, constructivism 'rejects the "slash-and-burn" extremism of some post-modern thinkers who leave nothing behind them, nowhere to stand, nothing even for themselves to say' (Kubalkova *et al.*, 1998b: 20). By understanding the term 'constructivism' in a broad sense, conversely, some include postmodernism under the banner of constructivism in IR (Ruggie, 1998: 35–6; Hobson, 2000: 145–73; Pettman, 2001: 256–7; Adler, 2002: 97–8). Some postmodernists, on the other hand, reject any inclusion into the constructivist domain, because constructivism is likely to serve as a mere complement to empiricist social science, such as rationalism, at the expense of the postmodernist critical ethos (Doty, 1996: 163–71; Campbell, 1998: 218–21, 2001; Smith, 2001; Zehfuss, 2002: 8).

Again, this discussion on the inclusion and exclusion of postmodernism into the constructivist domain possibly leads us to engage in an occupying-a-position problem within the positivist(rationalist)/post-positivist (reflectivist) spectrum, like the via media debate. In the typology of constructivism, if one includes postmodernism as one of the constructivist variants, in effect, constructivism appears to bridge the gap between rationalism and reflectivism. Or, in categorising constructivism, it is possible to position critically informed theory on constructivist turf, ruling out postmodernism. This could also be seen as bridging the gap between rationalism and reflectivism. In this respect, the meta-theoretical discussion on how to define and classify constructivism could be seen as a hybrid of the via media debate. Partly for this reason, it seems that some constructivists and postmodernists still attempt to draw the boundaries of their own theoretical domain by means of either the inclusion or exclusion of radical reflectivism. Related to this, furthermore, it could be argued that the via media debate, including different (at times conflicting) views on constructivism's theoretical scope, is considered as a derivative of the third debate in the broad context of IR theory. In fact, it is difficult to think of the via media debate without its starting ground; that is, the third debate between rationalism and reflectivism. The via media debate has thus become embedded in the continuum of the third debate. Considering this, despite the recent success of conventional constructivism in IR, it would seem that the third debate has yet to finish; rather, it exists in derivative forms. As argued earlier, in not ignoring but slightly toning down the meta-theoretical contention operating at the abstract level, the following section presents a pragmatic application of the two different (or conflicting) constructivisms to capturing a more complete picture of state identity formation in substantive empirical research of constructivist security studies.

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4. Constructivst approaches to internal and external faces of state identity in security studies

In an effort to promote conceptual clarity of state identity in constructivist security studies, this section begins by looking at Wendt's discussion on state identity. In his theoretical work, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Wendt (1999: 224–33) discusses four sorts of identity: (1) corporate; (2) type; (3) role; and (4) collective. Of these kinds of identity, attention should be directed to corporate and collective identities[5] in order to grasp the tension between conventional and critical constructivists and then display the practical necessity of both constructivisms in substantive empirical research to understand different aspects of state identity formation.

According to Wendt (1999: 224–5), corporate (or in the case of individuals, personal) identities 'are constituted by the self-organizing, homeostatic structures that make actors distinct entities . . . states are actors with certain essential properties. This identity always possesses a material base; for example, people and land for states. More importantly, corporate identity as a purposive actor's identity has an awareness and memory of Self as a distinct site of thought and activity. In this sense, members of a state have joint narratives of themselves as a corporate agent, and, to that extent, corporate identity takes the collective identity of individuals as fact. The formation of the state's corporate identity is more internal than external, which is often bound up with constructing nationalism aimed at consolidating internal cohesion. Hence, the state as a 'group Self' is capable of group-level cognition (Wendt, 1999: 215, 225). In a similar vein, Kowert (1998/9: 4, 7) uses the term 'internal identity' which is defined as 'the cohesion or uniformity of the nation-state's parts and, in particular, the way such cohesion manifests itself in loyalty to the nation-state', in comparison with the term 'external identity' which is 'somehow distinct from other nation-states, with different interests, purposes, preferences, and so on'.

By imputing anthropomorphic properties, like desires, beliefs, and intentionality, onto the state, the above understanding of corporate identity can allow conventional constructivists to take the ontology of states for granted in international relations: 'states are ontologically prior to the states system, [and the] state is pre-social relative to other states in the same way that the human body is pre-social' (Wendt, 1999: 198). This indicates that, in conventional constructivism, the state as an intentional actor is essentialized, and the corporate identity is understood as the foundational identity which is 'a site or platform for other identities' (Wendt, 1999: 195, 197–8, 201, 225). In the same sense, the sociological thrust of *The Culture of National Security*'s (Katzenstein ed., 1996) argument is based on the ontological idea that 'nation-state actors are somehow contextless or ultimately "real"' (Jepperson *et al.*, 1996: 71). Indeed, for conventional

[5] Indeed, the fault lines between these two identities are not clear-cut all the way down and sometimes blurred together. 'Yet they have given rise to very different sorts of theories, and they cannot be the same use by students of international relations' (Kowert, 1998/9: 5). And, for detailed accounts of type and role identities, see Wendt (1999: 224–33).

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constructivists as well as rationalists, since corporate identity refers to the internal coherence of the nation-state, taking it for granted creates 'a permissive condition for international relations (both the academic discipline and its subject matter)' (Kowert, 1998/9: 7). However, against IR rationalism, which is based on the thick essentialism regarding a state's ontology, conventional constructivism strips down the state, arguing that many of the properties often assumed to be inherent to states (such as power-seeking, egoism, the meaning of power, the terms of sovereignty, and so on) are, in fact, contingent, shaped by the international system (Wendt, 1999: 198, 245). Overall, regarding state identity, conventional constructivists defend a minimalist vision of foundational (or essentialist) theory.

Compared with conventional constructivists, in seeking a deeper understanding of state identity, critical constructivists see the state as open and malleable, and have a non-essentialist view of its subjectivity. For critical constructivists, the state cannot exist of its own accord, for it has no ontological foundation apart from the many discursive practices of self/other and inclusion/exclusion that bring it into being. As Weber (1998: 78) argues, the sovereign state 'is the "ontological effect of practices which are performatively enacted" . . . "sovereign nation-states are not pre-given subjects but subjects in process"'. In the parallel non-essentialist sense, Campbell (1998: 12) also argues that 'states are never finished as entities . . . states are (and have to be) always in a process of becoming'. As a consequence, in Benedict Anderson's (1991) terms, the nation-state is 'imagined' in the sense that it does not exist as a complete and exclusive unity, given that it is unceasingly performing: 'there is statecraft, but there is no completed state' (Devetak, 2005: 181). What emerges here is the key ontological difference (or tension) between the conventional and critical constructivists: 'whether we want to take the constitution and nature of agency seriously . . . or whether we are happy in the final instance to merely posit the importance of certain agents' (Campbell, 1998: 220). Conventional and critical constructivists thus frame their initial concern – state identity – in crucially different ways (either essential/foundational or non-essential/non-foundational), and it leads them to adhere to different protocols of inquiry.

Based on the above critical constructivist stance, Smith (2001: 50–1) argues that, as states are 'pre-social' and ontologically pregiven in the *Social Theory of International Politics*, 'Wendt's account of the foreign policy behavior of states leaves no room for domestic factors'. It thus seems that, in Wendt's constructivism, states' identities and interests are produced and altered through social interactions with one other in the international system, rather than as a consequence of occasions in their foreign policy decision-making processes. As for Wendt's conceptualization of state identity, Zehfuss (2001: 335, 337) also argues that 'Wendt's anthropomorphic concept of the state cannot cope with identities which are unstable in themselves' and that Wendt overlooks 'the constitution of states as subjects in the first place', which means corporate identity remains unspecified in conventional constructivism. Zehfuss (2001: 316) goes on to argue that Wendt's rendering of relatively stable and circumscribable state

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identities 'threatens to undermine the possibility of his constructivism'. From a critical constructivist point of view, conventional constructivism is unable to interrogate the practices that constitute the states themselves, particularly the state's corporate identity which is intrinsically linked to the question of what is to be secured.

In the *Social Theory of International Politics*, however, in focusing on not capturing the formation of state identity but building a social theory of the international system,[6] the corporate identity issue is largely toned down: 'systems of states presuppose states, and so *if* we want to analyze the structure of those systems we cannot "de-center" their elements all the way down' (Wendt, 1999: 244). Due to this author's academic interest in the international system, Wendt (1999: 229) pays special attention to collective identity which 'is a distinct combination of role and type identities, one with the causal power to induce actors to define the welfare of the Other as part of that of the Self, to be "altruistic." Altruistic actors may still be rational, but the basis on which they calculate their interests in the group or "team."' Related to this, Wendt's typology of an enemy (Hobbesian), rival (Lockean), and friend (Kantian) implies different collective identities among plural states. As such, the collective identity is the crucial intersubjective meanings that construct the social fabric of international relations – the international system. This identity emerges from social interaction, and perhaps changes through social interactions in international relations. States interacting in a given culture come to know one another as the bearers of certain identities. When this happens, the states appeal to certain prospects as to each other's actions based on these identities (Kahl, 1998/9: 104–5; Wendt, 1999: 318–43). In this respect, the collective identity subsumes reputation; having a particular collective identity is enough to supply the necessary diagnostic information about a state's likely behaviour with reference to other states in particular cultures (Hopf, 1998: 190). In short, focusing on social interactions among states, the construction of collective identity is more external than internal, which often tells us to what extent the state feels secure or insecure in relation to other states in a certain international system. On this basis, conventional constructivism (more specifically, Wentian constructivism) is mainly concerned with environmental structures and their effects on agents (changes in the distribution of collective identity) in taking the state itself (corporate identity) for granted in international relations. Using conventional constructivism, therefore, we can make sense of the construction of collective identity among states which has been ignored in rationalism.[7]

Yet, it is important here to remember that, as Hopf (1998: 195) points out, 'Any state identity in world politics is partly the product of the social practices that constitute that identity at home. In this way, identity politics at home constrain and enable state identity, interests and actions abroad.' To have a more complete picture of state identity

[6] Throughout the book, Wendt (1999: 11) repeatedly argues that 'Like Waltz, I am interested in international politics, not foreign policy ... in fact explaining state identities and interests is not my main goal either. This is a book about the international system, not about state identity formation.'

[7] For a detailed account of conventional constructivist analytical framework, see Jepperson *et al.* (1996), Wendt (1999), Cho (2009).

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formation affecting the policy, therefore, attention should be paid to 'not only how [the] state's identities are produced in interactions with other states, but also how its identities are being producing in interaction with its own society and the many identities and discourses that constitute that society' (Hopf, 2002, 294). Given this valid point, the conventional constructivists 'focus on the construction of identity through norms only covers half the relations that produce identity' (Callahan, 2004: xxiii). Even Wendt (1999: 11) admits that the international system bears on state identity formation 'in ways that are consequential for thinking about international politics, but state identities are also heavily influenced by domestic factors that I do not address'. It is thus necessary to consider not only collective identity but also corporate identity to grasp how national interests are defined and what security policies they lead to. Regarding the construction of state identity at home, Wendt (1999: 275–6) hints that David Campbell's *Writing Security* (1998) offers 'the hypothesis that discourses of danger produce the distinction between "internal" and "external" in the first place and as such constitute the whole idea of a distinct group on which the state's corporate identity depends'. Indeed, critical constructivism, which often interrogates the performative practices that produce the state itself through the exclusion of difference, is a useful tool for examining the construction of corporate identity which sets broad limits on security-policy choices.[8]

Considering all this discussion, to explore state identity formation at home and abroad, we can be better off with both conventional and critical constructivisms in substantive empirical research of constructivist security studies: collective identity is well addressed by conventional constructivism, while corporate identity by critical constructivism. Whether one adopts either constructivism depends not on selecting the correct way to comprehend the nation-state, but rather on research purpose and question. In this sense, this article would argue for adopting a pragmatic way of using conventional and critical constructivism in empirical case studies addressing state identity formation in constructivist security studies. The pragmatic approach is that, without being immersed heavily in the meta-theoretical strife between the two seemingly conflicting constructivist camps, both constructivisms should be treated as different analytical frameworks for capturing different (internal and/or external) faces of a state's identity and relating practices with which a scholar wants to deal in his/her research: scholars in security studies can use conventional constructivism in looking at the external construction of state identity, while using critical constructivism in examining the internal one. Hence, in focusing more on the analysis of state identity formation rather than on constructivist meta-theoretical concerns per se, researchers can use both, albeit meta-theoretically conflicting, constructivisms to look at the state's collective as well as corporate identities in their substantive empirical research on national security. This is not to say that this article strives for the synthesis of conventional constructivism with critical constructivism; rather, these two contending

[8] For a detailed account of critical constructivist analytical framework, see Campbell (1998); Weldes *et al.* (1999); Callahan (2004); Cho (2009).

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constructivist analytical perspectives should be applied and judged, as far as possible, in their own fashion in empirical research, according to research questions as to internal and/or external faces of state identity. In so doing, we do not feel as obliged to maintain a consistent theoretical identity or ensure that our empirical researches secure a particular 'camp' in the IR theory trench wars. We do not need to determine which constructivism is superior, but rather assess which analytical tools and concepts are useful for understanding particular aspects of a certain case. Therefore, in examining state identity formation, the pragmatic usage of different constructivisms will not be undertaken in a competitive spirit, and they just differ in the questions they enquire about state identity in international politics and the methods adopted. Used in this pragmatic way, both constructivisms offer various, significant accounts of a state's identity formation that informs its interests and policies towards itself and other countries. It also allows us to grasp important aspects of the state's identity politics associated with its national security, projecting policy-relevant implications for security and diplomacy in international politics.

5. Conclusion

It is widely accepted that constructivism has become one of the most influential recent theoretical developments in not only IR but also security studies. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, owing to their different meta-theoretical positions and different philosophical and sociological backgrounds, there are different, plural constructivisms in the literature, and there have been serious tensions between different constructivists. In particular, with regards to how to define constructivism and classify its variants in the discipline, the controversial point is whether to treat postmodernism (more specifically, poststructuralism) as a variant of constructivism or not, which may lead us to engage in the occupying-a-position problem within the theoretical mapping of the third debate. This meta-theoretical discussion could be regarded as a hybrid of the via media debate between Wendtian constructivism and radical reflectivism. It would appear that, despite the recent success of sociologically informed constructivism in IR, the third debate has yet to finish; rather it exists in derivative forms.

In being critical of the ongoing sectarian policing of rigid IR theory boundaries between rationalism (or constructivism) and reflectivism (or poststructuralism), this article has argued that, depending on one's plural research questions in his/her mind, it is possible (even more productive at times) to denaturalize the ossified artefact of the dualistic representation of the discipline in substantive empirical research. In line with this, this article has argued for adopting the pragmatic use of two meta-theoretically different constructivisms when exploring state identity formation which is integral to national security: we should treat conventional and critical constructivism as different analytical frameworks for capturing the construction of a state's identity at home and abroad. More to the point, we can use critical constructivism to explore corporate identity while conventional one collective identity in constructivist empirical research. In addition, note that neither conventional nor critical constructivism is

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intrinsically superior to the other, and they ask characteristically different questions on state identity. Used in the pragmatic way, we can have a more complete picture of state identity formation which has been of importance to security as well as diplomacy in a rapidly changing world in which the meaning of the state identity can no longer be taken for granted. Similarly, the pragmatic use of both constructivisms can provide us with a useful analytical approach to capturing various, significant aspects of the state's identity/security nexus that is guiding its policy towards itself and regional countries in international politics. Against all the backdrop, this article ends by calling for further empirical case studies, adopting the pragmatic strategy of applying two meta-theoretically different (conventional and critical) constructivisms to exploring the external and internal faces of state identity in relation to national security.

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