ANALYZING ALEXANDER WENDT’S STATEMENTS REGARDING "ANARCHY IS WHAT THE STATE MAKES IT"

Nino Zeh Zauzah
Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University

Abstract

Many nations in the global arena are undergoing state system reforms to enhance their countries' conditions. Many nations employ anarchic systems, although the question remains if these state systems will outperform other countries in terms of efficiency. This concept is strongly connected to Alexander Wendt’s statement regarding the nature of anarchy being determined by the state. This statement is strongly connected to Alexander Wendt’s assertion that anarchy is determined by the actions and policies of the state. This study aims to analyse the conceptual framework of these terms and explore the significance of Alexander Wendt’s remarks, particularly their connection to an improved state structure. This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilising several reviews of literature for collecting data. The analysis of this study suggests that Alexander Wendt employs a constructivist framework that will subsequently change the global system for the better. This is because the state is unable to function independently without external intervention, thus requiring transformative changes.

Keyword: Alexander Wendt, Constructivism, State, Anarchy.
INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted in international relations theory that the global world operates under an anarchic framework. The anarchic system is a conceptual framework that characterizes the organization of global affairs from the neorealist perspective. The absence of stability in a global government hinders its ability to effectively regulate all existing facilities worldwide and facilitate interaction among them. In a scenario where a country operates under an anarchic system, it is imperative for its citizens to collaborate in order to ensure the well-being and survival of their population. This is motivated by the belief that other nations pose a threat, as they may encroach upon their rights and privileges. The absence of a guarantee for security in every state within the international community will disrupt their sense of security.

Moreover, different theories suggest different origins for this fundamental state of anarchy, yet ultimately converge on the consensus that anarchy unequivocally prevails. The prevailing theories of Realism and Liberalism in the field of International Relations argue that the behavior of states towards one another can be scientifically and rationally understood based on their perspectives on anarchy. The ideas of Neorealism and Neoliberalism, commonly referred to as 'Rationalist' theories, argue that states behave in a rational manner, driven by materialistic objectives. In a state of anarchy, the lack of a worldwide governing body and the struggle for interests both play a role in shaping the identity and interests of any given state. Every nation has its own motivations for growing its area, since each nation has competitors in shaping its surroundings. Such circumstances are sometimes regarded as manifestations of anarchy.

Moreover, Constructivism is a major theoretical paradigm in the field of International Relations (IR) that challenges classic methods like as realism and liberalism. At its foundation, constructivism emphasizes the influence of ideas, norms, beliefs, and identities in molding the conduct of nations and international players. Unlike realism, which focuses on material elements such as military might and national interest, or liberalism, which emphasizes institutions and

---

3 Alvar Lam. *Is Anarchy ‘What State Make of It’?* (2005):1
collaboration, constructivism contends that the social construction of reality plays a vital role in comprehending international dynamics\(^5\). Constructivism fundamentally asserts that reality is socially constructed, and the significance attributed to events and interactions is not based on objective truths but rather on human interpretation. The fundamental components of constructivist theory encompass the influence of norms and identities in determining the actions of states. Norms, which refer to commonly held expectations and regulations for suitable conduct, serve as guiding principles for governments in their dealings within the international arena. Constructivism places significant emphasis on the significance of identities, specifically how states view themselves and others, in shaping their behaviors and preferences\(^6\). Constructivism posits that state behavior is not only shaped by objective material conditions but is heavily impacted by the subjective perceptions and interpretations of the involved actors. States, according to this perspective, do not simply respond to an established international framework, but actively participate in molding that structure through their interactions. Constructivists contend that the establishment of international institutions, collaboration, conflict resolution, and the structure of the international system are heavily influenced by shared understandings, social norms, and notions of appropriate behavior\(^7\).

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that the viewpoint of Alexander Wendt, a renowned scientist, regarding his statement "Anarchy is what state make of it," holds significant influence in the contemporary world. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to clarify the intended significance of Alexander Wendt's statement, "Anarchy is what states make of it." This study aims to clarify the reasons for the essential shift of the global community. To achieve this goal, the paper will clarify the specific conceptual framework he intends to establish in order to improve the global system.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs qualitative research methods, focusing on the researcher's interpretation, as the researcher believes that qualitative research offers valuable insights into the opinions, reasons, and motivations underlying a particular event. In this study, the researcher


explores Alexander Wendt’s statement, "Anarchy is what states make of it," to gain a comprehensive understanding. Qualitative research offers valuable insights and facilitates the development of ideas for expressing thoughts and opinions. The qualitative approaches encompass research methods, data gathering methods, data analysis methods, and data validity procedures. Moreover, qualitative research involves the subjective interpretation of a phenomenon by researchers, who may introduce bias, using various methodologies. The data collection strategy employed is a literature review, which involves gathering information from numerous libraries which hold relevant books, journals, or other materials pertaining to this topic.

This study employs a qualitative approach to facilitate future scholars in investigating case studies related to a certain issue, consequently facilitating the research process for future academics. This research is facilitated by several methodologies, with data sourced from multiple library publications, the internet, books, and other relevant sources. The researcher will analyze and discuss the data in order to draw conclusions from this research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The meaning of statement

The phrase "Anarchy is what states make of it" belongs to the constructivist tradition within the field of international relations theory. Anarchy, in essence, can be seen as a state characterized by inherent rationality, akin to an empty vessel. That is to explain results and behaviour; consequently, this container must be filled with interests and something identity.

Anarchy is characterized as the pursuit of individual interests. These interests will develop spontaneously from time to time, and the state's actions will automatically vary according to the nature of anarchy and will then be influenced. Furthermore, anarchy can be defined as a group

---

12 Libin Farah. “Anarchy is what State Make of it”. Do you agree? (2022): 4
of tranquil nations that establish a mutual system in order to achieve peace\textsuperscript{13}. According to Wendt, the components of self-help and survival should be modified instead of being considered inherent aspects of constitutive anarchy itself \textsuperscript{14}.

The term implies that states are not simply passive entities that react automatically to a dynamic environment. Instead, they play an active role in influencing the nature of the global system by their activities, interactions, and the common interpretations they assign to their relationships. Put simply, anarchy does not determine how nations behave; instead, it is a concept shaped by the ideas, norms, and identities that states and international players form over time \textsuperscript{15}. Wendt's argument highlights the significance of intersubjective understandings between states, indicating that the way states see and interact with one another within the anarchic system is vital. If states perceive each other as potential adversaries and respond by pursuing their own interests, anarchy will emerge in a competitive and conflict-ridden manner. On the other hand, if states establish collaborative ties, trust, and common standards, the anarchic system may exhibit more cooperative traits.\textsuperscript{16}

Moreover, constructivism exerts a tangible impact on the state's behavior in relation to its interests and identity. The neorealist perspective is questioned by their assertion that anarchy plays a role in the emergence of divides inside all nations. This makes neorealism mocked for stating that anarchy is static and has a natural soul \textsuperscript{17}. Furthermore, if a nation adheres to an ineffective ideology, its government will inevitably fail to progress; conversely, if the nation effectively implements its ideology, it will experience growth and advancement. With this, two ramifications occur; the first is that much of the anarchic system depends on the type of normative belief system in the state. The second point is that this is not a system of anarchy, but rather a normative belief system that places a significant emphasis on elucidating competitive dynamics. Anarchy is indistinguishable from other forms of governance\textsuperscript{18}.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} Cynthia Weber. *International relation theory. a critical introduction*. (Routledge, 2013) :64.
\textsuperscript{17} Libin Farah. “*Anarchy is what State Make of it*”. Do you agree? (2022): 4
\textsuperscript{18} Davide Fiammenghi. “*Anarchy is what states make of it*”: true in a trivial sense; otherwise, wrong. (International Politics, 2019) :18
\end{flushleft}
The conceptual framework

Wendt argues that the system of international relations is socially constructed and subject to change in different circumstances. Therefore, the system in our world must adapt and evolve with time, as the methods used in the past may no longer be suitable in the present era. This position diverges from the neorealist viewpoint. He derived strength from his explanations for three specific factors, as stated in this statement: Firstly, the international community, specifically, possesses a dynamic and ever-evolving nature, as the global sphere undergoes periodic transformations to embrace modernity. Second, there is a strong emphasis on norms, values, and language, while rejecting analytical aspects that rely on materialism. This often leads to conflicts in many countries when these aspects are connected with materialistic beliefs. Lastly, this theory dismisses the presence of both national and non-national actors in the international arena due to the impact of disruptive structures that hinder the proper functioning of the regulated system. Additionally, national and non-national actors have altered the dynamics within the international sphere.

The argument demonstrates that players within a nation has the capacity to select and adapt the nature of their relationships based on the requirements of their territory, hence facilitating progress from previous conditions. This contrasts with the realism perspective, which posits that the behavior of a country is shaped by the anarchic structure of the international system and is resistant to change or permanence. Realism also emphasizes that the state is constrained by external factors when making decisions. Conversely, Wendt posits that all events occurring in the international realm arise from a process of mutual understanding between nations worldwide, which is shaped by their interactions within the international system. Moreover, Realists contend that the major motivation behind the actions of states is the pursuit of national interest, which is typically characterized by concerns of security and power. States are anticipated to strategically prioritize their actions to optimize their relative power in comparison to other states, and this quest for power might result in rivalry and war. Realism underscores the significance of military

capabilities and alliances in the global system, as nations strive to safeguard their security in a self-reliant setting²². Anarchy is characterized by a multitude of perspectives that possess distinct interpretations and fluctuate according on the individual involved, rather than being determined by a single viewpoint. Ultimately, the international community must adapt its current system to the ever-evolving times. Society must embrace this reality in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the global community under the new system.

The constructivist perspective offers a reconceptualization of the concept of anarchy, which is frequently emphasized in realism theories. Contrary to the belief that anarchy inevitably results in conflict, constructivists claim that the lack of a central authority enables the ongoing development and reformation of norms and identities. International institutions and organizations are regarded as significant entities that contribute to the formation and strengthening of these commonly held perceptions²³. It is a theoretical framework that suggests our comprehension of the past is not an unbiased and direct representation of historical truth, but rather influenced by social, cultural, and cognitive mechanisms. The constructivist method of history became prominent in the late 20th century as scholars aimed to surpass old, positivist perspectives that claimed a direct alignment between historical events and its portrayal. Constructivists, drawing from postmodern and poststructuralist ideologies, contend that historians shape historical narratives by incorporating their own viewpoints, prejudices, and cultural backgrounds. This approach questions the idea of a single and universally accepted historical reality, highlighting the diversity of interpretations that might arise from various views and experiences²⁴.

The constructivism movement in history is based on the notion that historical knowledge is a product of social construction, influenced by the interactions among historians, the sources they employ, and the wider cultural and political environments in which they function. Historians, in accordance with constructivist concepts, are not passive spectators of the past but rather engaged contributors in shaping historical significance. This approach promotes a thorough analysis of historical processes, scrutinizing the process of selecting, interpreting, and presenting data in the creation of historical narratives. Scholars in the constructivist school frequently emphasize the significance of acknowledging the variety of historical viewpoints and the impact of power

²³ Pouliot. The essence of constructivism. (Journal of International Relations and Development, 2004): 326
dynamics on crafting historical narratives.  

However, there are other elements that contribute to the development of constructivism. Rationalists advocate for theorists to go from theoretical criticism to the empirical examination of international relations in order to reaffirm the significance of their ideas regarding theory and global politics. In light of these circumstances, it is imperative for the international community to promptly overhaul the existing system in order to foster progress. Furthermore, the conclusion of the cold war undermined the claims of both neorealists and neoliberals, as neither of these theories could sufficiently account for or predict the systemic changes that reshaped the global hierarchy. Furthermore, in the early 1990s, a cohort of young scholars emerged who shared the views of critical international theory but also saw the potential for innovative thinking in the process of empirically informed conceptual elaboration and advancement. Thus, this will confirm the hypothesis that both rationalism and constructivism prioritize individual social structures, but with distinct perspectives on these structures in the global context. The distribution of material capacities is mostly influenced by state action in the system. This supports Wendt's notion that the state will strive to ensure its survival by adopting a competitive and self-reliant approach.

To address the issue of this option's existence, the key is to foster the interchange of ideas on identity among countries that are mutually interested. This will enable the development of a system inside each country that aligns with its own goals, aiming to achieve a balanced social structure rather than focusing just on materialistic aspects. Furthermore, Wendt devised three ways to convert concepts in global politics. The first concept is that of the Hobbesian struggle. The second perspective is the Lockean view, which can be understood as a state of animosity or rivalry. The third perspective is the Kantian view, which refers to the idea of collaboration and relationships, as described by Wendt.

---

Hobbesian theory posits that identity and interest are key components of constructivism, which necessitates a transformation of the existing system to a new one\textsuperscript{31}. Moreover, Hobbes asserts that individuals, acknowledging the inherent volatility and peril of the state of nature, engage in a social agreement to establish a commonwealth. The social contract refers to a mutual agreement between individuals to relinquish certain inherent rights to a governing body in return for protection and the construction of a structured society. Hobbes argues that the sovereign is given complete authority to ensure peace and security in the state. This autocratic leader functions as a Leviathan, symbolically representing the unified determination and might of the populace, guaranteeing stability and averting the onset of disorder\textsuperscript{32}.

Lockean said that it is the responsibility of the state to ensure security in order to protect against external threats, as all countries engage in competition with one another to attain their goals\textsuperscript{33}. Moreover, Locke's views have significantly influenced the advancement of democratic administration and the establishment of constitutional norms. His focus on individual rights, restricted government, and the concept that political authority is derived from the consent of the governed has had a significant impact on the creation of constitutional documents and the formation of democratic institutions. Locke's theory is a fundamental pillar of liberal political thought and has played a significant role in shaping the intellectual basis of numerous contemporary democratic regimes\textsuperscript{34}.

Kant argued that establishing a system of interdependence among nations is crucial for promoting equality in domestic development and minimizing the likelihood of conflicts. This is because all countries, just like individuals, rely on one another for survival in the international arena \textsuperscript{35}. The core principle of Kantian ethics is the categorical imperative, which is a moral law that applies universally and requires individuals to act based on principles that can be consistently applied to all individuals without any contradictions. Kant posits that ethical conduct necessitates adherence to rational principles and is driven by a sense of obligation rather than individual wants or inclinations. He presents the concept of regarding persons as autonomous entities, underscoring

\textsuperscript{33} Nine. A Lockean theory of territory. (Political Studies, 2008): 150
\textsuperscript{34} Bogart. Lockean provisos and state of nature theories. (1985): 830.
the importance of honoring the innate worth and self-governance of each human. 

Furthermore, Kantian theory emphasizes the need of universal moral standards and rationality. Hobbesian theory, on the other hand, highlights the necessity of a powerful central authority to maintain order and avert anarchy. Lastly, Lockean theory emphasizes individual rights, limited government, and the idea that the government should only exist with the consent of the governed. Every philosophy offers unique viewpoints on ethics and political structure. The birth of the Hobbesian paradigm, characterized by inter-state aggression and disputes in the international arena, coincides with the advent of modern civilization, which provides ample opportunities for governments to foster collaboration and mutual benefits. The current dynamic state of international relations has resulted in significant shifts from the Lockean system to the Kantian system and vice versa. Changes from the Lockean to the Kantian system are more frequent in international relations than changes from the Kantian to the Lockean system. This suggests that the Kantian system is superior than the Lockean system in today's international relations.

According to Wendt, the shift from John Locke's system of settlement or competition to Immanuel's plan of friendship or cooperation can be facilitated by four key factors. The first factor is homogeneity, which refers to the ability of countries in the world to comprehend and embrace their differences. By understanding and acknowledging these differences, the international community can more easily progress and develop. The second scenario involves the equitable treatment of the community. A condition of harmony will be established between the government and the community, fostering a sense of solidarity that effectively prevents the outbreak of war. The third principle, self-restraint, is applied in neorealism theory to avoid aggressive characteristics and promote defensive ones. The final concept is interdependence, which refers to the mutual reliance of countries on one other to achieve a harmonious development of their own nations. The establishment of interdependence among nations serves as a means to prevent conflicts by maintaining a balance in the outcomes derived from mutual cooperation. This interdependence fosters advancements in the field of international relations, ultimately leading to a decrease in the occurrence of wars. These four criteria enable the field of international relations.

---

particularly constructivism, to effectively implement its goal of transforming the system\textsuperscript{39}.

Neorealism offers a systematic and structural viewpoint on international relations, contrasting with previous traditions that frequently focused on human nature, ideology, or internal politics. Although neorealism has exerted significant influence, it has faced criticism. In response, other theories like neoliberalism have tried to include non-material variables and international institutions into the examination of global politics\textsuperscript{40}. Furthermore, neorealism posits that in the absence of a central authority, states must rely on their own resources to ensure their security and protect themselves from external threats. By prioritizing state security, neorealism aims to enhance a state's safety and improve its overall condition. Moreover, Neorealism exhibited distinct variations in numerous artistic fields, but its fundamental principles of genuineness, emphasis on ordinary life, and refusal of ornamentation remained constant. It was a reaction to the difficulties and emotional distress caused by the aftermath of a war. It helped people to understand and deal with the complicated nature of human life and stressed the significance of actively connecting with the genuine experiences of individuals in both creative and philosophical endeavors\textsuperscript{41}.

Contrary to Wendt's viewpoint, Guzzini and Leander argue that homogeneity, common fate, self-restraint, and interdependence are crucial factors that determine whether a country becomes an adversary in competition leading to war and conflict, or becomes an ally in maintaining the stability of the nation and taking collective action\textsuperscript{42}. In the absence of these four characteristics, conflict will emerge in the global arena, leading the country to compete with other nations, as exemplified by the situation between Russia and Ukraine. Russia regards Ukraine as a constituent part of its territory due to the presence of a significant population that shares the same language. Russia supports Ukraine due of their shared ethnic heritage with the Russian population. The sovereignty of the Ukrainian state will be compromised as a result of this situation. Historically, Russia's territorial boundaries do not align with the current state. The international community perceives Russian identity as synonymous with the act of annexation, which entails the encroachment against the territorial boundaries of other nations, so contravening established international standards. Internationally, Russia's military actions are perceived as hostile,

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 343-379.
expansionist, and aggressive, while Russia itself views them as a moral battle\textsuperscript{43}. This can be seen as either a manifestation of ignorance or as a result of the state's inability to uphold its own distinctiveness. As Wendt argues, the state's identity is crucial for its own well-being, as it forms the foundation for its interests and shapes interactions with other states. This, in turn, contributes to the establishment of strategic security and the prevention of conflicts, ultimately fostering global peace\textsuperscript{44}. The concept of national identity holds significant importance for a country as it serves to fortify the nation's resilience and survival. The country's development and advancement will be enhanced by maintaining its own character, as global systems continue to evolve in the face of modernization.

CONCLUSION

In summary, when examining the essence of anarchy, constructivists and neorealists hold differing perspectives in their interpretation. Neorealists contend that in the absence of a global authority in the international realm, the international community will engage in competition for survival, as there is no alternative but to compete with other nations. International nations will experience a sense of insecurity in such a scenario due to the absence of regulations in the global arena. Constructivists contend that the international realm has experienced substantial transformations due to the presence of social interactions shaped by the ideas and attitudes of states. In the modern era, both national and non-national actors are compelled to continuously engage in power struggles and security efforts, leading to the ongoing development of the state over time. Constructivism posits that a state's motivation to form connections with other actors in international relations is not solely driven by self-interest. Rather, it is influenced by the identity, intents, and outcomes of human interactions conducted by these actors. Consequently, the global community will achieve peace through the implementation of adaptations that align with contemporary circumstances. Furthermore, Wendt's contributions include three highly powerful elements that drive system change or constructivism in the international arena: Hobbesian, Lockean, and Katian.

\textsuperscript{43} Libin Farah. “Anarchy is what State Make of it”. Do you a free? (2022): 5.
REFERENCES