THE IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE

I. Actors and Systems
II. The Role of Ideas
III. Security Dilemma and State Identity
IV. Applying Theory
I. Actors and Systems

- **Realism and Liberalism: States and Anarchy**
- The Identity Perspective focuses on how reality is ‘socially constructed’ (social constructivism)

**Agent-Structure Debate**
- Agents = Actors (State and Non-State)
- Structure = Structure of International System

**Q:** Does the structure of the system shape actors behavior, or do actors shape the structure of the system?
Theories and Agent-Structure

- **Realism**: Nature of the international system shapes states’ behavior
- **Liberalism**: Behavior of actors shapes the nature of the international system
- **Identity**: Actors and system *mutually* constituted
II. The Role of Ideas

- Ideas important in their own right
- Consequences v. Appropriateness
- International Norms: shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by the international community
- Changes in norms lead to changes in state behaviors
- Examples: Sovereignty, Colonialism, Land Mine Treaty
Norms and State Behavior

State Behavior and International Norms “Mutually Constituted”

ACTORS
(States)
• Behavior
• Interests
• Identities

CONTEXT
(System)
• Ideas
• Meanings
• Rules
Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It”

“Self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy...if today we find ourselves in a self-help world it is due to process, not structure....Self-help and power politics are institutions, note essential features of anarchy. Anarchy is what states make of it.” (p. 56)

- Q: Is he implying that states can overcome anarchy easily?
- Q: Do you agree that ‘anarchy is what states make of it’?

“Identities are the basis of interests” (p. 57)

- Q: How does this differ from the realist and liberal conceptions of (national) interests?
- Q: Is Wendt simply ignoring the security dilemma?
III. Security Dilemma and State Identity

- Determinants of national interests
  - US and China versus US and Britain
- National interests (goals) a function of national identity
- Sources of identity domestic (level of analysis)
  - Convergent national identity \(\Rightarrow\) Cooperation and Peace
  - Divergent national identity \(\Rightarrow\) Conflict and War
- Q: If goals are convergent...really anarchy???
Summary of Identity

- States and system mutually constituted in IR
- Ideas (separate from power) are important in shaping international relations
- Whether IR is anarchy or society a function of convergent or divergent national identities
IV. Applying Theory

REALISM
Power
Anarchy = Security
Dilemma = Emphasis on Power

LIBERALISM
Institutions
Anarchy mitigated by IGOs, Interdependence, Common Values, etc.

IDENTITY
Ideas
Anarchy v. Society
National Identity