

A Mission Bound to Fail?: The United States as Socializer of Democratic Norms in Post-War Iraq

by Trine Flockhart

“Don’t make us thieves or terrorists. Loaf + honorable life”
—Graffiti on a wall opposite the entrance to the Governing Council compound in Baghdad¹

INTRODUCTION

The graffiti in the epigraph above expresses a very important sentiment. Not only does it express the fundamental wish most Iraqis presumably have for a decent and honorable life, but it also expresses a deep frustration about being judged on the basis of the bad and sometimes downright evil actions of the few. Had the graffiti been written by an American soldier, it would probably have read something along the lines, “Don’t make us into oppressors and torturers. Democracy + freedom.” Sadly, although only a few Iraqis are thieves or terrorists and only a few Americans are oppressors or torturers, events have unfolded in post-war Iraq so that the always ongoing judgment of each side is now based on the negative images of carnage and chaos. These include images of insurgent attacks, hostages in their orange Guantanamo-inspired suits before being brutally killed, traumatized children being horded out of their homes at gun-point, or appalling images and horrifying accounts emerging from the Abu Ghraib prison. Unfortunately, this state of affairs in Iraq is more than just sad and very unpleasant, but may also have very real repercussions for the future of Iraq, perhaps rendering the stated mission of establishing democracy in Iraq an impossible one.

In this article, I want to suggest that the efforts to promote democracy currently underway in Iraq and previously attempted in other post-conflict situations are in effect processes of state socialization² leading to identity constructions, in which a new norm set is being socialized. It is suggested that because democracy promotion may be conceptualized as a process of norm socialization, an understanding of what norm socialization entails is needed. Such an understanding may be derived from a constructivist account using Social Identity Theory (SIT), particularly self- and other

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categorization processes. These are the keys for explaining why some examples of state socialization are successful while other, apparently similar cases, are not.

The argument is based on a theoretical model for norms socialization, called “Complex Socialization,”³ which suggests that successful state socialization will be dependent on positive self- and other categorization processes between socializer and socializee, at both the mass and elite levels. Given the importance of a positive relationship between socializer and socializee, the problem with socializing democratic norms in Iraq, with the United States as the main socializer, should be clear. As the United States and Iraq increasingly display a significant ideational distance from each other, the United States may in fact not be the most suitable socializing agent, especially as the appalling security situation and the evidence of the use of torture in the Abu Ghraib prison gradually seem to have given rise to *negative* self- and other categorization processes between Iraqis and American forces.

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By utilizing a social constructivist account with an emphasis on socialization, the analysis presented here is clearly somewhat different from the type of account that one might expect from an analysis based on more traditional democratization studies. It must be stressed, however, that the present analysis and evaluation of the prospects for achieving democracy in Iraq is not intended as a substitute or an alternative for more traditional democratization studies, but is rather seen as a precondition for *all* externally generated processes of democratization, including constitutional, institutional, and developmental factors. As the self- and other categorization processes have to be positive in order for socialization to be successful, the logic of the model suggests that socialization of democratic norms has poor odds for success if the socializer is cast as uninvited, unrestrained, and ideationally remote, which seems to be the case with the United States in Iraq. Although the model and its supporting argument may be somewhat abstract, it seems clear that the findings generated from the use of the model are policy-relevant, and that a practical application of the model may contribute to the policymaking process by structurally mapping out strategies and avenues for socialization as well as underlining the continuous importance of positive self- and other categorization processes.

COMPLEX SOCIALIZATION: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING ELITE AND MASS SOCIALIZATION

Norms can be regarded as “inter-subjective beliefs about identity and behavior encoded in organizational culture.”⁴ Norms are generally highly stable structures acting as constraints on agents’ behavior and as a constitutive factor in their identity formation, which act as a framework for policymaking. It is generally agreed that although norm change may take place gradually over time, profound norm change is a costly exercise that will only be undertaken in specific circumstances following a so-called critical juncture or destabilizing shock, which has destabilized or delegitimized the existing norm set. In such a situation, there is no longer a norm set that can provide cognitive consistency and order in a complex world,⁵ rendering policymaking difficult. Such a situation is described as “ideational vacuum”⁶ or within classical sociology as “anomie”⁷ or “normlessness.”⁸ Within a condition of ideational vacuum or anomie, agents are highly receptive to new ideas and open to new social group memberships. In that sense, the ideational vacuum period provides a window of opportunity for socialization of new norms.

The model outlined below is designed to explain how socialization of international norms⁹ at both the elite and mass level takes place within a domestic society, and why such norm change may be successful in some instances, but not in others. The model is different from other socialization models through its emphasis on self- and other categorization processes, which result in a structured model that is able to account for differences in outcome in apparently similar cases and to pinpoint exactly where in the process problems may exist.¹⁰ It is suggested that the many micro-processes involved in norm socialization are dependent on the initial self- and other categorization processes between socializer and socializee, in effect making self- and other categorization processes the key independent variable of the model. The self- and other categorization process is conceptualized as “filter 1” in the model (see fig. 1).

Within most literature on identity constructions, attention is focused on the role of “the other” for defining “the self.” However, the view presented here is that identities are not solely constructed or evaluated purely in terms of “the other,” but are, perhaps more so, constructed in relation to “the we.” Just as each identity within a specific realm¹¹ has a specific “other,” which is of great significance for defining “the self,” each identity also has a “significant we,” within a constellation of several “we’s.” The “significant we” defines what the “self” strives towards and holds in great esteem, whereas “the other” defines what the “self” seeks to distance itself from. Each of the “we-groups” within a specific realm are likely to be valued differently, but nevertheless, all have a shared conception of who and what constitutes “the other” and the “significant we.” The result is a hierarchical system of different “we’s” sandwiched between the “other” and the “significant we.” The different “we’s” are referred to as “out-groups,” 1–4 in the model, whereas the socializer is seen as the “significant we” for some of the agents involved in the socialization process.

According to Social Identity Theory, such out-groups or “we’s” may be conceptualized as “social groups,” which are groups that are psychologically significant for its members and to which they relate themselves subjectively for social comparison and for the acquisition of norms and values.¹² Studies from SIT suggest that individuals attach high value to their social group membership and that belonging to a highly valued social group is very important for self esteem. Therefore, individuals will be more inclined to have a positive view on norms emanating from a highly valued social group than from a negatively valued group. Generally, individuals are more likely to adopt the norms of a highly rated social group and unlikely to adopt the norms of a negatively valued group. Unless the socialized norm set is a norm set belonging to a “we-group,” which is highly valued by the socializee, receptiveness to the socialized norm is likely to be poor. In the case of democratic norm socialization in Iraq, it means that as the Iraqis gradually recast the United States from being a highly valued social group to one with less value, perhaps even in some cases as “the other,” prospects for successful socialization are likely to decline.

Most socialization theory within international relations has been overtly concerned with socialization at the elite level, while practically ignoring the mass level.¹³ However, clearly, norms such as democracy are socialized into a domestic setting, which includes a state/elite level and a mass level, conceptualized here as a nation/people level.¹⁴ Attention exclusively focused at the elite level is therefore not sufficient. One cannot assume that the same self- and other categorization processes are present at both levels, as the two domestic levels may, in effect, constitute separate social groups, which may have different salient self- and other categorization processes with different conceptions of what constitutes the “significant we” hence also giving rise to different conceptions of interests and political preferences. With such considerations in mind, four different constellations of in-group/out-group categorizations emerge, which are likely to have very different socialization outcomes. These different constellations are dependent on whether the social group in question views the socializer as “significant we” or not. The four resulting out-groups are illustrated in table 1.

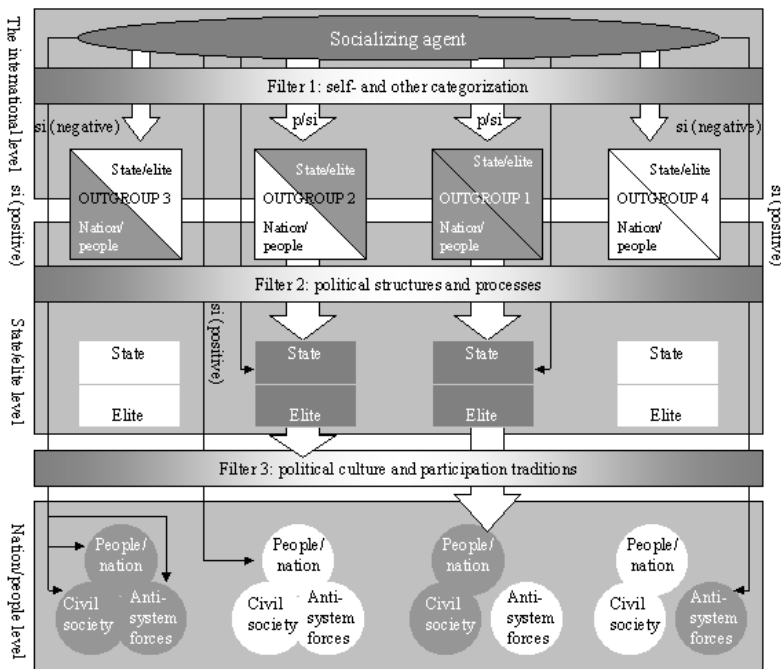
Table 1. Ideational Orientation between In-Group (Socializer) and Out-Group (Socializee)

	Out-group—State/elite level	Out-group—Nation/people level
In-group values + norms	1 ✓	✓
	2 ✓	x
	3 x	✓
	4 x	x

Positive ideational orientation = ✓; Negative ideational orientation = x

Apart from the determining effect of the initial self- and other categorization processes, each of the domestic levels also have an additional filter through which socialization efforts must proceed and which will determine the ease or difficulty in gaining access to opinion leaders at both domestic levels and hence, the likelihood of establishing the socialized norm as a “winning idea set,”¹⁵ by ensuring its institutionalization in political structures and behavioral processes. The two filters at the domestic level largely follow well-established research on domestic structure and policy change, where the state/elite level filter is conceptualized as political structures and processes, representing the relationship between state and society and the individual characteristics of the state level in terms of openness, coalition-building processes, and institutional factors. The filter at the nation/people level is conceptualized as political culture and participation traditions, paying more attention to the rules, norms, values, and practices according to which politics and the use of power is played in the interaction between state and society, and within the societal level itself. The two domestic levels may have very different conceptions of what constitutes the “significant we,” and they may have diverging institutional and cultural channels for adapting to new norms and ideas. A graphical illustration of the model is outlined in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Complex Socialization*



*Similar color between socialising agent and socializee at both domestic levels denotes ideational closeness.

As suggested in the graphic representation of the model (fig 1), the four different out-groups are likely to have very different socialization processes with various socialization strategies available to the socializer, resulting in markedly distinct prospects for success. Traditional elite-focused analyses of norm socialization have tended to focus on, and assume the existence of, an overall norm set of a specific country that has led to the false impression that only two out-groups are in play, which either categorize the socializer in a positive or in a negative way. However, by also taking account of the domestic mass level, the model presented here operates with four out-groups, where only out-group 1 has positive self- and other categorization processes at both the mass and elite level. Given that SIT tells us that positive self- and other categorization processes are a pre-requisite for successful socialization, it follows that socialization can only be expected to be achieved successfully at those levels where such positive self- and other categorization processes are in place. In the model presented here, out-groups 1, 2, and 3 have at least one level that sees the socializer as the "significant we," indicating that socialization within either both or one of the domestic levels may be successful. However it also indicates that unless a norm receiving country such as Iraq can be cast as an out-group 1 country, serious obstacles are in the way for successful socialization to move from one domestic level to the next. The problem seems to be that Iraq has been assumed by the Bush administration to be an out-group 1 country, where in actual fact it ought to have been categorized as an out-group 2 country.¹⁶ It was simply assumed that if given the opportunity, the Iraqi people would be against Saddam Hussein and in favor of democracy. However, it does not necessarily follow that because the majority of the population is against Saddam Hussein, that the Iraqi people will categorize the United States as the agent with the (for them) most persuasive norm set (liberal democracy), and hence as the "significant we." This is a serious problem for successful socialization of a liberal democratic norm set in Iraq, because as can be seen from the graphic illustration of the model, the only out-group with initially good prospects for successful socialization is out-group 1, followed by out-group 3 and then 2.¹⁷

It would appear that Iraq should be placed in out-group 2 rather than out-group 1, albeit that classification is not straightforward as the Iraqi people and elite are clearly deeply divided on the issue of what constitutes the most attractive norm set. The first democratic elections held in January 2005 showed that millions of Iraqis were willing to defy threats to their personal safety in order to participate in the first democratic elections of their lifetime; yet, the government eventually produced by the election may well turn out to have more in common with Shia Iran than with liberal democratic and secular America. The problem with an out-group 2 categorization is that values at the nation/people level are usually deeply embedded in long held traditions that are more difficult to change than the more "fickle" elite views. This means that socialization of democratic norms in Iraq is not impossible, but even if the political elite following the January election remains positively inclined to the socialized norm set, socialization at the nation/people level is likely to be a slow process even under optimal conditions without violence and a strained

relationship with the occupying forces. From the model, it is possible to hypothesize that socialization is only likely to proceed successfully through all filters and in cases in which both domestic levels have a positive self- and other categorization with the socializing agent and the promoted norm set has a high degree of domestic salience,¹⁸ resonating with its intended audience. In addition, with democratization, one will have to add the further preconditions incorporated in traditional democratization studies on whether the country in question actually has all the necessary preconditions for democratization to take hold. Hence successful socialization—consolidation and institutionalization of democracy—cannot be assumed to be possible unless Iraq gradually can be transferred from out-group 2 to out-group 1, probably through slow and patient on-the-ground persuasion.

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METHODS AND CONDITIONS FOR SOCIALIZATION

The graphical representation of the socialization processes in figure 1 indicates that the extent and form for socialization will vary with out-group position. Out-groups 1 and 2 have robust socialization processes into the state/elite level, but it is only in the case of out-group 1 that the process continues to the nation/people level. Similarly, different strategies (represented with arrows labeled “P” and “SI”) are available in the case of each out-group. This is important because the literature on social learning and socialization¹⁹ suggests that the actual method and manner of socialization may itself partly determine the level of successful socialization. I distinguish between two different socialization strategies, known as “social influence” (SI) and “persuasion” (P). “Social influence” elicits pro-norm behavior through the distribution of social rewards and punishments. In contrast “persuasion” encourages norm adoption through a process of interaction that involves changing attitudes without use of either material or mental coercion or material rewards.²⁰ Strategies of the “persuasion” type are generally believed to be more efficient for changing attitudes rather than merely changing behavior,²¹ but the use of persuasion is only possible under certain conditions.

Jeffrey Checkel has identified a number of conditions that appear to be necessary for successful socialization to take place.²² As already emphasized, the absolutely

necessary pre-condition for successful socialization is the existence of positive self- and other categorization processes. Before either “social influence” or “persuasion” can take place, the socializee must, at a minimum, identify with the in-group and its socializing agent, and the in-group must accept the out-group as an acceptable candidate for social group membership. As evidenced in the difficulty in constraining unwelcome behavior in “rogue states,” the absence of a desire for membership and rejection of the in-group’s norm set makes socialization impossible. Generally, socialization is most likely to take place if the socializee is in a novel and uncertain environment and hence, cognitively motivated to analyze new information, has few prior ingrained beliefs that are inconsistent with the norm set promoted by the socializer, the socializer appears to behave in a reasonable manner without demanding or lecturing to the socializee, and the socializer does not expect behavior that the socializee either cannot or will not adhere to. Furthermore, it is important that the socializer always behaves in a way that is consistent with the norm set being socialized and that the socializee has a clear understanding of what constitutes the desired behavior.

THE POST-CONFLICT SITUATION IN IRAQ

In many ways the democratization process in Iraq started out as a positive socialization process, which may well have had reasonable prospects for swift success, had the initial quite positive self- and other categorization been maintained. The United States administration was initially careful to point out that their quarrel was with Saddam Hussein and his supporters and not with the Iraqi people, and that any new political system would be designed with careful consideration for all of Iraq’s ethnic and religious groups and with consideration for Iraq’s complicated clan structure, and above all, with their active participation. Indeed, there was initially considerable success in working with Iraqis in their villages and neighborhoods to restore basic services, rebuild schools, and restart the local economy.²³ The result was that even in March 2004, despite a highly unsatisfactory security situation, Iraqi public opinion remained largely favorable to reconstruction showing more concern about the Americans leaving too soon than overstaying their welcome.²⁴ The majority of Iraqis seemed well aware that the credit for bringing down Saddam Hussein and his regime was due, principally, to the United States administration. Accordingly, many Iraqis welcomed the coalition forces as liberators, which ought to have started the socialization of democratic norms off on a good footing. However, the escalation of violence starting in March 2004 and followed by the scandal surrounding the use of torture in Abu Ghraib, as well as the failure to acknowledge, let alone, register Iraqi civilian casualties, has been immensely damaging.

The feeling that the occupation and the democratization process has not shown the respect for Iraqi concerns is quite widespread and pre-dates the escalation of violence from March 2004. The reason that the occupation, despite good intentions, has not gotten off to a good start is partly due to the fact that the United States-

appointed Interim Governing Council did not really establish any popular base, but was regarded with significant disdain and was generally seen as an American puppet unfamiliar and unconcerned with the Iraqi people.²⁵ However, it is the failure in establishing the necessary security for on-the-ground implementation of reconstruction and democratization that has been the most damaging. Nearly eighteen months after the fall of the Saddam regime, Iraqis saw their fear of Saddam Hussein and his repressive agencies replaced by terror of a different kind in the form of a surge in crime from petty theft to kidnappings, rape, and revenge killings as well as roadside bombings. They also increasingly fear arbitrary arrest and imprisonment with interrogation methods that are more akin to the discredited Ba'athist regime than to a liberal democratic one with commitments to the rule of law and human rights. In addition, they have been deprived even of the few basic necessities of daily life they used to enjoy, such as electricity, water, and fuel, not to mention their jobs.²⁶

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Because of the appalling security situation, all interim government officials and the few remaining aid workers are confined to the so-called Green Zone with little contact with Iraqi society.²⁷ When officials do venture out of the Green Zone, they do so under heavy guard and with as little contact with the Iraqi people as possible. In fact, the unexpected attacks by insurgent groups has meant that, in practice, the United States occupying forces have put security mission number three — protecting United States forces— first, to the neglect of missions number one and two — protecting the Iraqi people from lawlessness and protecting the Iraqi people from attack from remaining Saddam supporters.²⁸ The result is that those who should provide the Iraqis security are cut off from the general populace and only seen on rather infrequent high speed patrols in “Humvees” (fighting vehicles HMMWVs), or when conducting raids against suspected insurgents.²⁹ This goes against all experience from post-conflict reconstructions, where the value of foot patrols backed by helicopter and/or vehicles is well documented in both Northern Ireland and the Balkans.³⁰

The occupation also started out with a number of unfortunate mistakes, such as not foreseeing the immediate need for policing and security, and for not acknowledging and accepting responsibility for civilian casualties. Relations with the people in Falluja are said to have been damaged early on in the process when the United States

liberating forces not only shot dead a significant number of innocent Iraqis, but also failed to acknowledge their mistake and guilt and failed to offer the customary compensation.³¹ It is greatly resented by Iraqis that a great deal of attention is paid to the death of American soldiers, whereas the much larger death toll of ordinary Iraqis is not even recorded, let alone acknowledged and compensated. Another unfortunate mistake is the so-called Bremer decree on “de-Ba’athification.” Just as the post-war German occupation started out with an overriding concern with “de-nazification,”³² so the Iraqi occupation started out with wiping the slate clean through the destruction of existing institutions, which amongst others, included the dismantling of the army, police, and government ministries, leading to thousands of Iraqis losing their jobs.

“COMPLEX SOCIALIZATION” IN A COMPLEX SITUATION

It seems clear from the, albeit rather superficial, account written in this paper that the current process of democratic norm socialization in Iraq cannot be described as a socialization process that is located in the out-group 1 category, which had good socialization prospects. Although it is not completely straightforward to localize Iraq into any of the four out-groups, because both the state/elite level and the nation/people level seem split in their ideational orientation, the trend seems to be that the ideational distance between socializer and socializee is widening rather than narrowing. It is not completely clear who actually constitutes the state/elite level, whether it is the Interim Government and soon the democratically elected government or whether it is the religious clerics. Nor is it yet clear how their influence is distributed within the population. The problem is that although the religious clerics who have taken on a political role may have a significant influence at the mass level, they may turn out to have a very different conception of democracy than that promoted by the occupying forces. On the other hand, the Interim Government, whose conception of democracy may be closer to the promoted norm set, does not have the emotional tie with the people; nor does the security situation allow for the necessary extensive contacts at the nation/people level. In the current unsatisfactory security situation, such a close relationship does not seem likely with the new democratically elected government, although that obviously will be endowed with a greater degree of legitimacy, but which might nevertheless remain as distant from the people as their American predecessors were, hence, making their socialization ability rather weak.

The situation in the area of personal security is immensely damaging to the prospects for establishing positive self- and other categorization processes. As it has simply not been possible for the United States occupying forces to establish an acceptable level of security for ordinary Iraqis and for the reconstruction process to proceed swiftly as originally anticipated, an unfortunate negative self- and other categorization process has been started. The result of the unsatisfactory security situation has resulted in deep frustration and perhaps a degree of lost respect for the

Americans on the part of Iraqis, who care more about freedom from torture and other sources of insecurity, as well as a functioning society and economy, than they do about liberal democratic principles. The United States has never been held in great esteem by the Iraqis because of its Middle East policy and its betrayal of the Shiite uprising following the first Gulf War, and partly because of general anti-Americanism. However, following the end of hostilities in April 2003, America was seen as a liberator rather than an occupier. This is no longer the case for a sizeable proportion of Iraqis, who now cast the Americans as occupiers or, at the very least, as incompetent liberators.

The only way socialization can be successful is through the use of positive social influence and persuasion strategies through partnership and dialogue, in which the socializer and its representatives behave in a manner that is not patronizing.

The negative categorization of the United States increased dramatically with the revelations of the use of torture by American forces. It is a clear precondition for successful socialization that the socializer behaves in a way that is wholly consistent with the socialized norm set. Therefore, even isolated instances of torture or indeed any behavior that does not correspond with human rights and democratic norms will be perceived as being inconsistent with the promoted norm set, and is therefore likely to be damaging for the prospects of successful norm socialization. As norm socializer, the socializer and *all* its agents must remain “squeaky clean” on all counts of the socialized norm set in order to maintain its position as a highly valued social group and “significant we.” Iraqis are not only (quite rightly so) outraged at the revelations about torture and other bad behavior within the occupying forces, but they also feel they are being patronized. They are mistrustful because it is feared that the American democracy initiative has more to do with Western security concerns than with genuine concern for the benefit of the Iraqi people.³³ Unfortunately, the situation on the ground is like a vicious circle. The only way socialization can be successful is through the use of positive social influence and persuasion strategies through partnership and dialogue, in which the socializer and its representatives behave in a manner that is not patronizing and does not involve “lecturing or demanding;” yet, as the security situation has deteriorated, American forces on the ground have increasingly recast the Iraqi people from “liberated victim” to “dangerous enemy,” leading them to behave in not just a patronizing manner, but in a downright disrespectful and unacceptable manner. Thus, what should have been a facilitating democratization process based on positive cooperation between the Iraqi people and the American military and CPA/Interim Government, has in effect turned into a fight for security with corresponding behavior that is not conducive for successful socialization. As expressed by Kenneth Pollack, “the priority placed on force

protection comes at the expense of the larger mission—the safety, psychological disposition, and dignity of the Iraqis.”³⁴ The problem is that although it is necessary for security reasons to presume that anyone targeted for a raid is “a bad guy,” even if he wasn’t before the raid, too often when the raid is over, he has *become* “a bad guy.”³⁵ Once such a negative dynamic has been started, it is difficult to reverse, giving rise to an ever spiraling cycle of negative self- and other categorization processes, with resulting detrimental effects on the possibility for socialization.

Extent of critical juncture

The war in Iraq and the subsequent end of Ba’athist rule certainly constitutes exactly the kind of critical juncture followed by an ideational vacuum, which is seen as a necessary pre-condition for norm change to take place. However, such a “window of opportunity” for socialization does not automatically mean that the norm set that is eventually adopted will be the one promoted by the occupying forces. Several different norm sets are being promoted by different norm promoters, which are likely to be in competition with each other. Different factors are likely to influence which norm set eventually will be the “winning idea set.” In this connection, it is important to note that only the Ba’athist regime and its norms have been destabilized, leaving cultural, ethnic, and religious norms in place, many of which may be incommensurable with a liberal democratic norm set. This is a problem as internal socialization from the state/elite level to the nation/people level is conducted partly by the new political elite in the form of the Interim Government and remaining aid agencies, but also partly by religious leaders, whose aim with democracy may well be the establishment of an Islamic state closer to the regime in Iran than to that envisaged by the United States.

The Bush administration has repeatedly used the example of post-war Germany and Japan as examples of successful socialization of a democratic norm set in a post-conflict situation. While the parallel undoubtedly is there, there are also important differences, which will make the socialization of democratic norms in Iraq less likely to be internalized than the norms were in post-war Germany and Japan. One of these factors is that the destruction of the social fabric in Iraq has been nowhere nearly as extensive as it was in post-war Germany and Japan. Although years of a repressive regime has rendered the general Iraqi civil society underdeveloped, there is more to build on in terms of civil society structures from within its religious and ethnic make-up. However, these initially positive “hooks” for hanging democratization efforts on can also turn out to be a liability when different interests have to be satisfied.

Identifying the “other” and “significant we”

Another way in which present day Iraq is very different from post-war Germany and Japan is the lack of a clearly identifiable “other.” The post-war German and Japanese socialization processes were not particularly successful until the onset of the Cold War in 1947, which clearly cast the Soviet Union as “the other” and the United States as the “significant we.” In the case of norm socialization in Iraq,

however, there is no clear-cut position within the population on who/what constitutes “the other.” “The battle” for categorizing “the other” seems at the moment to be fought between the insurgent groups who are categorizing the United States as “the other” and the occupying forces, who are doing their best to categorize the insurgents as “the other.”

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Just as there is no clearly identified “other,” neither is there a clearly identified “significant we.” The Iraqi people (and its constituent parts in terms of ethnic and religious groups) have several other alternatives than to cast the United States as its “significant we,” some of which may be more in keeping with Iraqi history and traditions. Democracy may be of overriding importance to returned exiled Iraqis, and certainly seemed to have been valued by the many particularly Shiites who voted in the January elections, but there are linkages between religion and politics that have not been sufficiently addressed, and which may well have a significant influence on the process ahead. In particular, the different ethnic and religious groups at the nation/people level seem likely to have very different self- and other categorization processes and priorities from what has (artificially) been constructed as the Iraqi political elite. In the case of Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds, the ideational distance to the United States is significant in terms of identification with democracy and in cultural terms, which in each case seem unlikely to cast the United States as a “significant we,” although there may be elements of the socialized norm set that will appear attractive and useful with a post-Saddam Iraqi society. Therefore as suggested at a recent conference on democratization in the Middle East,³⁶ Western involvement in the democratization process has to take place on the basis of partnership and dialogue with the actors in the region, with much closer attention paid to the cultural and religious linkages with politics and differences from Western culture and religion. As such, what emerges is a much more complex and ultimately “murky” picture, that does not place the United States in a particularly strong position as the “significant we,” but merely as a source of inspiration and, within some segments of Iraqi society, categorized as the “other.” The result is that the socialization process lacks a clear direction and clear parameters for evaluating the socialized idea set and other competing idea sets, despite the many and varied socialization projects (using both social influence and persuasion strategies) undertaken in Iraq. This is not to say that democracy is not possible in Iraq, but merely to say that a model that is so explicitly based on a Western, liberal, Christian, and ultimately American outlook, may not be the obvious choice in the long run for Iraq or other countries in the Middle East, and that the United States may not be the best agent for promoting the norm set.

CONCLUSION

The situation in Iraq is clearly still in a stage of flux, which makes it very difficult to assess accurately how well socialization of the democratic norm set is proceeding. A wide variety of socialization projects have been undertaken, including television ads and radio programs, community-based projects around specific issues, and a clearly targeted re-education of previous Ba'athists, as well as many other projects. Yet, without a clearer definition by the Iraqi people on who constitutes the "significant we" and "the other," and without more positive self- and other categorization processes between Iraqis and the occupying forces, the prospects for successful socialization of a *Western* style liberal democratic norm set are not good. This is, of course, not good news for the Bush administration, whose policy in Iraq seems to have been part of a much more grand and daring plan for the greater Middle East, in which the toppling of Saddam Hussein and rapid democratization of Iraq was only a first step in a process to unleash a "democratic tsunami" in the whole Middle East.³⁷ Success will to a large extent depend on the Bush administration's willingness to accept a culturally specific version of democracy in Iraq (and the wider Middle East), and for it to accept that democratization is a slow process, which is likely to be characterized by many setbacks and only few "leaps ahead." The Bush administration must also understand that although democracy promotion in Iraq has turned out to be much more complicated and difficult than first anticipated, the task ahead in other Middle Eastern countries, which do not have the prerequisites seemingly in place in Iraq, is likely to be even more challenging. It may be that Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries can be democratized, but democratization at gunpoint is unlikely to be successful in the long run, and a true copy of Western liberal democracy is likely to remain an illusion.

Notes

¹ Described in David Aronovitch, "So this is free Baghdad," *The Guardian*, April 9, 2004.

² There is a rapidly growing literature on state socialization, but as yet no "consensus definition" on what it entails. For a general definition on socialization I follow Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) in using Barnes et al. 1980 definition of socialization that is "the induction of new members...into the ways of behaviour that are preferred in a society," Barnes, Carter and Skidmore, *The World of Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980). By so doing socialization not only presupposes a society, but also that what is to be socialised is already practised by others.

³ The model is described in more detail in T. Flockhart, *Socializing Democratic Norms. The Role of International Organizations for the Construction of Europe* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2005).

⁴ T. Farrell, "Transnational Norms and Military Development: Constructing Ireland's Professional Army," *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 7, 2001, 64.

⁵ Practically all models of socialization such as the "Spiral Model" (Risse et. al., 1999); the "norm life-cycle model" (Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norms Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization*, vol. 52, 1998, 887– 917); and the "ideational life-cycle model" (M. Marcussen, *Ideas and Elites: The Social Construction of Economic and Monetary Union* (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 2000)) operate with a window of opportunity for norm socialization following a critical event, which may have destabilised the existing norm set.

⁶ Marcussen, *Ideas and Elites*.

⁷ E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1964).

⁸ A. Giddens, *Durkheim* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1978).

⁹ By international norms, I follow Finnemore and Sikkink in viewing such norms as the diffusion of "a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity, where the actors of the given identity are states, and where the process of norm diffusion takes place across state borders." Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, 888.

¹⁰ For an analysis of the differences between democratic norm socialization in post-war Germany with post-conflict Iraq see T. Flockhart, "Uses and Abuses of Hegemony: Socialization of Democratic Norms in Post-war Germany and Post-war Iraq," paper presented at the International Studies Association Convention, Montreal, 2004.

¹¹ A realm in this connection is understood as a specific domain around a particular issue area around which social groups compare themselves. For example, football teams will undertake self- and other categorization with other football teams, but are unlikely to engage in such processes with hockey teams. An individual can belong to several social groups operating within different realms at the same time.

¹² J. Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 1.

¹³ Q. Ken Wang, "Hegemony, Socialization and US-Japanese policy cooperation," *Review of International Studies*, vol. 29, (2003): 99–120.

¹⁴ The term people/nation level is preferred to the term "mass level," because the term "people" denotes a we-feeling that the term "mass" does not, and because membership of a nation is a form of identity that is emotionally significant to people, but which does not necessarily denote emotional attachment to the associated "state."

¹⁵ T. Risse-Kappen "Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War," *International Organization*, vol. 48, no. 2 (1994): 185–214.

¹⁶ To be fair, Iraq is not an easy country to categorize as the elite in question would have to be the elite in exile rather than the Saddam supported elite, and as the ideational orientation of a violently suppressed people clearly has been difficult to assess. It is still not clear to what extent "significant we" orientation at the national/people level sees those promoting freedom and democracy as their "significant we" or those promoting the opportunity to freely follow a Shiite norm set.

¹⁷ The prospects for successful socialization in out-group 3 is dependent on regime change either through persuasion or through a critical juncture, both of which effectively will turn an out-group 3 country into an out-group 1 country, and hence speed up the process of socialization. Croatia after the death of Franco Tudjman made such an out-group switch and proceeded to rapid democratic norm socialization.

¹⁸ A. Cortell and J.W. Davis, "How Do International Institutions Matter? The Domestic Impact of International Rules and Norms," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 4 (1996): 451–478.

¹⁹ A. Johnston, "Treating International Institutions as Social Environments," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 45, (2001): 487–515.

²⁰ Johnston, "Treating International Institutions," 499.

²¹ There is clearly a methodological problem in claiming that attitudinal change has taken place as a result of socialization, where the "safer option" is to concentrate purely on behavioural change, which can after all be measured. However, logic dictates that attitudes do change and that for example Germans do more than merely "behave" like democrats, and that a significant attitudinal change has taken place since the end of the Second World War.

²² The following list of conditions for successful socialization relies in large measure on the conditions compiled by J. Checkel in "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," *World Politics*, vol. 50, no. 2 (1998): 324–348; "Social Construction and Integration," *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 6, (1999): 545–560; "Why Comply?: Social Learning and European Identity Change," *International Organization*, vol. 55, (2001): 553–588.

²³ K. Pollack, *After Saddam: Assessing the Reconstruction of Iraq*, The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, 2004, 1–35.

²⁴ Jyllands-Posten, 17/3, 2004.

²⁵ Jyllands-Posten, 17/3, 2004.

²⁶ G. Atiyah, "Wanted in Iraq: A Roadmap to Free Elections" *Open Democracy*, vol. 16, 2003.

²⁷ M. Kaldor, "Iraq—the democratic option," *Open Democracy*, vol. 13, 2003.

²⁸ Pollack, *After Saddam*, 9.

²⁹ Pollack, *After Saddam*, 10.

³⁰ This point was made by NATO representatives at a NATO-Parliamentary Assembly seminar in Bratislava, 2002.

³¹ DR Nyhederne, 12/4, 2004.

³² This was done in spite of the fact that it is widely acknowledged that de-nazification was a mistake, which led to a high degree of German resentment, and which slowed down the post-war socialization process. See also Flockhart, "Use and Abuses of Hegemony."

³³ H. Malmvig, *Democratization and Security in the Middle East: Challenges and Possibilities*, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2005.

³⁴ Pollack, *After Saddam*, 14.

³⁵ Pollack, *After Saddam*, 14.

³⁶ "Democratization and Security in the Middle East: Challenges and Possibilities." Conference hosted by the Danish Institute for International Studies in Copenhagen, December 6-7, 2004.

³⁷ M. Ottaway and T. Carothers, "The Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start," *Carnegie Endowment Policy Brief*, no. 29, 2004.