Abstract. At present, International Relations scholars use the metaphor of 'state socialization' in mutually incompatible ways, embarking from very different starting points and arriving at a bewildering variety of destinations. There is no consensus on what state socialization is, who it affects, or how it operates. This article seeks to chart this relatively unmapped concept by defining state socialization, differentiating it from similar concepts, and exploring what the study of state socialization can contribute to important and longstanding theoretical debates in the field of international relations.

Introduction

Norms are gaining ground in the study of International Relations.¹ Not only are they the focus of extensive conceptual and theoretical work, but international norms are increasingly seen as weight-bearing elements of explanatory theories in issue-areas ranging from national security to the study of international organization.² Regime theory continues to generate an extraordinarily fecund research programme,³ and its central insight—that relations among competitive sovereign states are shot through with norms of cooperation—links contemporary scholarship to long-standing reflections on the nature of the international.⁴ Constructivist scholars, for their part, argue that social norms offer a radical alternative to interest- and power-based accounts of international politics.⁵

¹ As readily attested by the contributions to the recent fiftieth anniversary edition of International Organization, 52: 4 (1998). See, in particular, contributions by Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane and Stephen D. Krasner (esp. pp. 674–82); John Gerrard Ruggie (pp. 855–85); Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (pp. 887–917); and Miles Kahler (pp. 919–41).
While the salience of shared norms continues to attract increasing attention, scholars have neglected the mechanisms by which norms become shared. Some important work has appeared recently, but there remains little consensus on the mechanisms and motivations that lie behind international normative diffusion. What is clear is that ‘state socialization’ is central to this process. According to this metaphor, states, like people, can be expected to internalize patterns of behaviour and role expectations which characterize the groups in which they interact. Unfortunately, a clear conceptual analysis of this phenomenon has been lacking. This article seeks to contribute to the increasingly sophisticated norm literature in international political studies by charting this relatively unmapped concept in International Relations theory.

There are three steps in my argument. In the first section, I define state socialization as the process by which states internalize norms arising elsewhere in the international system and unpack in some detail the two components of this definition: the nature of ‘internalization’ and the nature of ‘norms’. The second part of this article explains what state socialization is not—that is, I further clarify the concept of state socialization by situating it in relation to contrasting and cognate terms. Finally, the third section illustrates why introducing the term ‘state socialization’ is a useful conceptual move in the context of contemporary International Relations theory.

What is state socialization?

At present, International Relations scholars use the metaphor of ‘state socialization’ in mutually incompatible ways, embarking from very different starting points and arriving at a bewildering variety of destinations. There is no consensus on what it is, who it affects, or how it operates. Neorealists use the term ‘state socialization’ in a narrow sense, to refer to the way in which the international system, through the filtering effects of anarchy and trial-and-error learning, insinuates the fundamental norms of ‘security egoism’ and balance of power politics into the behaviour of states. Finnemore and Sikkink define state socialization as an active mechanism whereby newly articulated norms ‘cascade’ through the international system, propelled by a combination of material sanctions and symbolic ‘peer pressure’ among states. The term ‘state socialization’ has also been used to describe the soft penumbra of hegemonic power, the homogenization of social and economic systems, the incorporation of new and non-Western states into the institutions of

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traditional international society, and the re-education of ‘rogue states’. For constructivist scholars, in contrast, ‘state socialization’ takes on an altogether more encompassing meaning referring to ongoing and ubiquitous cognitive and social processes by which international interaction constitutes state identities and interests. For sceptics, this variety indicates conceptual confusion. State socialization is often dismissed as a misleading anthropomorphism.

In this section, I will set out firm conceptual foundations for the study of state socialization. There are three main aspects of this ground-clearing exercise. I begin by defining state socialization as the process by which states internalize norms arising elsewhere in the international system. I then address what we mean by ‘internalization’ when we are speaking of corporate actors such as states. Finally, I make some comments on the normative content of state socialization.

Our point of departure is to define state socialization. Just as Krasner’s ‘consensus definition’ of international regimes (as ‘sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations’) helped to clarify and focus an emerging field of research, so the nascent literature on state socialization would benefit from a common conceptual starting point. I define ‘state socialization’ as the process by which states internalize norms originating elsewhere in the international system.

This definition draws attention to the common ground that unites the various perspectives outlined above. Although students of state socialization differ over how they characterize the domestic and international conditions favourable to normative internalization, the causal mechanisms through which its effects are produced, who the relevant actors are, and whether symbolic or material factors are more important in causing international social change, they all share the insight that interaction within the society of states shapes the foreign policy repertoire available to decision-makers. Defining state socialization as an outcome, as the internalization of norms arising elsewhere in the international system, provides a much-needed focal point around which various perspectives on state socialization can coalesce. It provides a common vocabulary with which to tease out underlying similarities between cases of international normative diffusion which are usually treated separately within distinct empirical literatures. It also (hopefully) shifts attention away from arid conceptual debates over the nature of state socialization and toward a substantive debate between rival explanatory accounts of its causes and consequences. The important questions in relation to state socialization are empirical rather than conceptual.

Having defined state socialization as the process by which states internalize norms originating elsewhere in the international system it is necessary to provide answers to two important questions: what do we mean by ‘internalization’ in the context of states; and what is the normative content of state socialization?

First, what is normative internalization? We all know what internalization looks like when we are speaking about individuals: a child has internalized a social norm when he or she no longer needs to be told what to do or refrain from doing and no sanctions need to be applied to ensure compliance. We even know what internalization feels like: we are unlikely to litter, even when there is no one around to cast a disapproving glance. There exists an ‘internal gyroscope that keeps … [people] … adhering steadily to norms, independently of the current reaction of others.’\(^\text{15}\)

The image of an internal gyroscope precisely captures what it is that we want to explain, but it does little to help us explain it. This is especially true as we shift our attention away from the experience of individuals to states. There is an unfortunate tendency among scholars writing on state socialization to resort to psychological imagery to describe (and explain) an intrinsically political process. The state is a corporate actor, composed of many individuals performing distinct roles. When we say that the state ‘internalizes’ a norm arising elsewhere in the international system, we are not saying that each individual who plays a part in this institutional structure of governance has undergone a subjective ‘conversion experience’. Clarifying and studying the avenues of normative internalization within states is one of the key tasks for students of state socialization. I have found it useful to think in terms of three distinct processes. One—but only one—aspect of state socialization is individual belief change. The second set of processes is political. Finally, normative internalization depends crucially on how well norm advocates cement their gains within the domestic institutional framework. Committed individuals exercising political power can produce behavioural compliance, institutionalization is required to make it stick. Let us explore each of these three processes in turn.

Attitude change on the part of judges, business leaders, politicians, students and members of the public is part of what we mean when we say that a state ‘internalizes’ norms arising elsewhere in the international system. Actions which previously appeared justified—from slavery to torture to tolerating pollution—come to be seen as improper, illegitimate, and morally distasteful.\(^\text{16}\) Individual internalization can produce dramatic results when the individuals acquiring new principled beliefs are very influential (for example, Gorbachev or de Klerk). More usually, individual internalization proceeds slowly, at the sometimes glacial pace of diffuse social change. Either way, individual internalization is a key element of state socialization. At this level of analysis, tools derived from cognitive and social psychology can help uncover why individuals ‘change their minds’ about important principles, beliefs, and attitudes.\(^\text{17}\)

The second dimension of normative internalization is political, corresponding to the efforts of domestic actors to pressure or persuade governments to comply with specific international norms. Political internalization takes the form of pressure where domestic actors successfully lobby for norm compliance. Consider the ultimately successful domestic opposition to Reagan’s Strategic Defence Initiative


\(^{17}\) Cognitive psychology provides particularly useful tools in this regard. For a relatively recent overview in the context of foreign policy decision-making, see Deborah Welch Larson, ‘The Role of Belief Systems and Schemas in Foreign Policy Decision-Making’, *Political Psychology*, 15 (1994), pp. 17–33.
In the short term, the Reagan Administration was able to push forward with SDI over the objections of domestic constituencies favouring arms control. In the longer term, however, domestic and inter-allied debates over SDI’s strategic wisdom became intertwined with disputes over the legal validity of the Administration’s ‘reinterpretation’ of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty and its apparent circumvention of the US Senate. Although the issue never made it to the courts, the legal issues involved provided a focal point for extensive and ultimately successful political mobilization against SDI in Congress and in the broader public sphere. Domestic interest groups, legislators and courts can operate within the state in a manner analogous to subjective sensations of guilt and shame within the individual. They can act as internal sanctioning mechanisms punishing violations of international norms.

Political internalization can also take the form of persuasion. Persuasion is an important aspect of socialization where individuals and groups of individuals are successful in ‘selling’ policies that have been inspired by foreign examples. Such individuals are political entrepreneurs, ‘advocates for proposals or the prominence of an idea … [willing] … to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return.’ Thus, in contrast to Finnemore and Sikkink, who have highlighted the role of norm entrepreneurs only in the initial stages of the ‘life cycle’ of an international norm, I would argue that political entrepreneurs also play a crucial role in the politics of internalization. State socialization is always a project of domestic social and political actors as well as a process that unfolds in the international sphere.

Institutionalization is the defining feature of state socialization. At its most basic, an institution is a practice which one expects to continue into the future and whose reproduction over time does not require active intervention. A strategy of institutionalization involves raising the costs of organizing against the reproduction of a particular practice hence ‘tilting the playing field’ in favour of continued norm-compliance.

Several institutionalization strategies are available to domestic norm-advocates. One of the most important is legal internalization. ‘Legal internalization occurs when an international norm is incorporated into the domestic legal system through judicial sanctioning and the incorporation of international norms into the domestic legal system that some scholars have defined normative internalization exclusively in these terms. See Schimmelfennig, ‘Internationale Socialisation’, p. 340.

23 So important are processes of judicial sanctioning and the incorporation of international norms into the domestic legal system that some scholars have defined normative internalization exclusively in these terms. See Schimmelfennig, ‘Internationale Socialisation’, p. 340.
executive action, judicial interpretation, legislative action, or some combination of the three.\textsuperscript{24} A second main avenue of institutionalization is the creation of bureaucratic actors mandated to enforce or promote particular norms. Analysts of foreign policy decision-making have long noted the importance of bureaucratic ‘standard operating procedures’ in accounting for policy continuity.\textsuperscript{25} Bureaucratic actors also preserve particular normative orientations because they can be expected \textit{as organizations} to seek to ensure their own survival and access to resources. Their representatives participate in subsequent policy debates, promoting the norms on which they were founded.\textsuperscript{26} Finally, institutionalization occurs at deeper levels as well. Norms are most entrenched where they are disseminated throughout the organizational fields which compose the polity, permeating society at a variety of levels.\textsuperscript{27} At these deeper levels, institutionalization not only alters incentives but also shapes the cognitive categories through which the world is perceived and strategies are crafted.\textsuperscript{28}

To summarize, the internalization of norms by state actors is composed of three distinct processes: individual belief change, political pressure and persuasion, and institutionalization. Unlike Finnemore and Sikkink’s ‘life cycle’ approach to the emergence of international norms, I do not claim that these aspects of internalization take place sequentially. Socialization can begin with individual schema change (on the part of a key leader or ‘norm entrepreneur’) and proceed through political contention to institutionalization. Or, the process might begin with a political party cynically advancing support for an international norm for short term gain. To the extent that such a tactical ploy results in institutionalization—which then goes on to cause individual belief change and alter the structure of political competition to favour norm-supportive actors—the gambit may lead to genuine socialization. Finally, one might begin with institutions, in the most likely scenario imposed by an external actor. To the extent that this strategy of institutionalization works, as it did in post-war Japan and Germany, a self-supporting process of socialization may ensue.

The second question that we must address concerns the normative \textit{content} of state socialization. In asserting the centrality of international norms—and one can hardly speak of ‘state socialization’ without them—we are obliged to take up a position within one of the deepest and most persistent debates in the social sciences: between those who picture social actors as \textit{Homo economicus}, rationally seeking to translate preferences into outcomes; and those who conceive of human beings as \textit{Homo sociologicus}, cultural animals which act on social norms, internalized values, and identities.\textsuperscript{29}

Today, the bulk of International Relations scholarship lies within the \textit{Homo

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\textsuperscript{24} Koh, ‘Why Do Nations Obey?’, p. 2657.
\textsuperscript{29} Jon Elster, \textit{The Cement of Society}, p. 97.
For instance, the orthodox position among ‘new’ liberals and ‘new’ realists alike is that: (a) norms matter; and (b) they are a product of (rather than a constraint on) the self-interest of states. For realists norms are imposed by the strong (whom the norms favour) on the weak (who, in turn, follow them out of a rational interest in avoiding punishment). For liberal institutionalists, norms are slightly more even-handed. They arise and are followed because they help self-interested egoists overcome collective action and coordination problems. Amongst mainstream scholars who do pursue norm-oriented explanations there is a pronounced tendency toward eclecticism. This eclecticism comes in two main forms. Some scholars argue that norm-oriented and interest-oriented behaviour occur sequentially: norms may help to define national interests before utilitarian rationality comes into play, but then states attempt to secure these interests strategically. The alternative view holds that norms and self-interest are rival causes of human (and state) behaviour. Outcomes are the resultant of consequentialist calculations and non-consequentialist imperatives. Goertz and Diehl elevate this ‘weak’ rationalist approach to the status of a methodological principle when they stipulate that ‘to demonstrate the positive impact of a norm, it is necessary to control for self-interest’.

There are many reasons to be dissatisfied with this eclecticism. Not only is it intellectually sloppy, it also makes its own set of assumptions about the relationship between norms and interests which are all the more pernicious because they are so seldom examined. Leaving aside the problem of whether norms and interests are really ‘additive’, this kind of approach also leads us to neglect as irrelevant the very real and often tragic moral and pragmatic dilemmas that individuals face, especially those who hold positions of responsibility.

One answer to these difficulties would be to jettison Homo economicus in favour of Homo sociologicus. Constructivists take issue with rationalist perspectives on norms partly on these very grounds. Norms, they argue, work by creating shared meanings rather than restraining behaviour. According to constructivists, the dissemination of international norms shape state behaviour through the reconstitution of conceptual categories rather than by changing a payoff structure external to the actor.

Neither rationalist nor constructivist accounts of international norms are entirely satisfactory as a basis for thinking about state socialization. In general, either normativity is forsaken in favour of (at least partially) interest-based explanations, or norms are placed centre-stage but the causal mechanisms linking them to behavioural outcomes are left obscure.\textsuperscript{37} As Finnemore and Sikkink have pointed out, neither approach helps us to make sense of the phenomenon of ‘strategic social construction’ which plays so important a role in political life.

A full theoretical treatment of the relationship between norms and interests in state behaviour is a pressing task, but it is a task that lies outside the scope of this article. For our purposes here it will suffice to argue that the normative content of state socialization must be construed broadly. State socialization encompasses the internalization of foreign-inspired instrumental norms, which are ‘rules of thumb’ about how the world operates; \textit{and} regulative norms, which constrain the menu of ‘legitimate’ state actions; \textit{and} ‘constitutive’ norms, which define the fundamental rules of the international system by constituting its participants.\textsuperscript{38}

Moreover, the normative content of state socialization extends beyond behavioural regularities (norms as ‘normal, usual or customary practices’\textsuperscript{39}) and prescriptions (norms as ‘shared expectations about appropriate behaviour held by a community of actors’\textsuperscript{40}) to include ‘norms’ understood as constellations of shared interpretive schemas and templates for action.\textsuperscript{41} In the words of Ann Swidler, ‘a culture is not a unified system which pushes action in a consistent direction. Rather it is more like a “tool kit” or repertoire from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action.’\textsuperscript{42} Norms, in this sense, are concrete recipes for action which set out the ingredients and proportions required to produce desired outcomes. ‘Norms’, in the words of Peter Katzenstein, ‘are prefabricated action channels that establish links between the values that individuals hold and the problems they seek to solve’.\textsuperscript{43}

While the normative content of state socialization is diverse, this diversity is subject to one important qualification. The content of state socialization is limited to the durable adoption of ‘public norms’: explicit beliefs or implicit assumptions about what actions are possible, permissible, or advisable for state authorities to perform or to refrain from performing, or which constitute the category of sovereign political authority and its identity in interaction with other entities. Examples of public norms include sovereignty norms, notions of the appropriate balance between public and private sectors of the economy, and beliefs about legitimate systems of

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\item[40] Martha Finnemore, \textit{National Interests and International Society}, p. 22.
\end{itemize}
governance. By this proviso I suggest that we restrict the study of state socialization to the field International Relations, and set it off from the purely sociological inquiry into the emergence of a global culture with which it overlaps. The concept of state socialization should not be defined so inclusively as to extend to the cross-border spread of fads and fashions.

In short, state socialization is more than a mere metaphor. Defining state socialization as the internalization of foreign norms prepares the ground for a rigorous exploration of the transmigration of norms in the international system.

What state socialization is not

Asserting that state socialization is the process by which states internalize norms originating elsewhere in the international system is not sufficient. As Ngaire Woods points out, ‘useful definitions will specify both what a term is and, just as importantly, what it is not and what its opposite or contrasting term might be’.44 In this section, I will do two things to further clarify the notion of state socialization. First I will specify contrasting concepts, then I will distinguish the notion of state socialization from three terms with which it might easily be confused: ‘foreign policy learning’, ‘diffusion’, and ‘normative evolution’.

It is useful to focus on two contrasting terms. First, ‘state socialization’ is opposed to a decision-theoretic approach to compliance. Such approaches suggest that behavioural compliance results from the tactical adaptation to immediate environmental imperatives. As circumstances change, so too will state behaviour. Many International Relations scholars make exactly this assumption in explaining decision-making outcomes. Students of state socialization, in contrast, are interested in ‘sticky’ behavioural change which is not dependent on immediate environmental imperatives. Scholars may disagree about what kind of incentives cause state socialization to occur, but it is impossible to speak meaningfully about state socialization without accepting the notion of an ‘internal gyroscope’ which keeps states behaving in certain ways even as external conditions change.

Second, the notion of ‘state socialization’ entails a rejection of ‘endogenism’, the belief that international change is driven primarily by social or economic developments within states or national societies.45 In other words, endogenism suggests that similar but distinct processes occurring within states will entail social change among states.46 The quintessential endogenist account of international social change is ‘modernization theory’, which suggests that industrialization leads individuals to acquire rationalistic (‘modern’) values, states to converge on a common bureaucratic style of national politics, and the international system to grow more homogeneous

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and pacific. In contrast, the metaphor of ‘state socialization’ takes a systemic perspective, suggesting that the external environment shapes the internal constitution of state identities and puts limits on permissible state actions.

It is also necessary to elaborate on the definition of state socialization by carefully distinguishing it from similar terms. I will focus on three such cognate terms: ‘foreign-policy learning’, ‘diffusion’, and ‘normative evolution’. Let us begin by distinguishing the concept of socialization from ‘foreign policy learning’. Reviewing this burgeoning literature, Jack Levy offers the following definition: experiential learning is ‘a change of beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one’s beliefs) or the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience’. The foreign policy learning literature addresses two sets of questions: first, what are the psychological conditions under which individuals alter the kinds of conclusions they tend to draw from events? and, second, in what organizational and political contexts does this individual learning matter?

Foreign policy learning, as defined by Jack Levy, is similar to the notion of state socialization, but the two are distinct in important ways. First, the learning literature emphasizes how and why individuals change their beliefs. The study of state socialization, as defined here, centres on how and why foreign norms are internalized within a state, and brings causes at all levels of analysis—individual, domestic, and international—to bear on this question. Second, the content of these ideas differs. The learning literature emphasizes changes to beliefs, ranging from notions about how the social or material world works to more complex readings of an adversary or the international situation. State socialization, in contrast, focuses on norms (albeit understood broadly). Third, the very notion of ‘learning’ carries an implicit assumption of progress, a connotation which is absent in the notion of state socialization. While many scholars are careful to disclaim any faith that ‘learning’ is necessarily progressive, this implication is not easy to dispel from the overall direction of the foreign policy learning research programme. Finally, socialization has an explicitly political dimension which the psychologically-inspired literature on learning lacks. In any social setting, interactions between socializing agents and the subjects of socialization are marked by inequality. Applying this idea in the context of states reminds us that power and inequality are central to explanations of international social change.

A different kind of problem occurs when trying to situate the concept of state socialization in relation to its close cousin, the ‘diffusion’ of norms in the international system. These concepts are so closely interrelated that that for stylistic purposes, the two are treated together.

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reasons the terms ‘state socialization’, ‘the transmigration of norms’, and ‘international normative diffusion’ may be used interchangeably in a descriptive sense. This is appropriate because state socialization entails international normative diffusion: if a state undergoes socialization, the geographical reach of a given norm is extended and this norm has in effect been ‘diffused’ in the international system. But ‘diffusion’ also refers to a substantial and long-standing social science tradition concerned with the geographic spread of social practices and technological innovations.52 It is important to distinguish state socialization from those concepts which International Relations scholars have borrowed from this tradition such as ‘contagion,’ ‘demonstration’ and ‘snowballing’ effects.53

Socialization and diffusion invoke different causal mechanisms. Samuel Huntington brings out these differences well in his discussion of possible explanations for ‘political waves’. Contagion, or diffusion, means that ‘an important cause for x in one country may be the occurrence of x in another country’.54 A revolution in one place can trigger a revolution in another, either by acting as a model, through the provision of material resources, or because it is construed as evidence that a previously formidable restraining force has been removed.55 In contrast, socialization causes states to react in a similar way to different initial conditions.56 This is what Huntington refers to as the ‘prevailing nostrum’ mechanism:

Just as six individuals may more or less simultaneously take aspirin to cure six very different physical complaints, so six countries may simultaneously engage in similar regime transitions to cope with very different sets of problems: inflation in one, breakdown of law and order in another, deepening economic recession in a third, military defeat in a fourth, and so on.57

Using Huntington’s vocabulary, we might say that state socialization is the process by which a parochial nostrum becomes a prevailing nostrum.

Third, ‘state socialization’ should be distinguished from ‘evolutionary’ approaches to normative change in the international system. Cultural evolution has recently emerged as a metaphor, or ‘metaparadigm’, for explaining the growth and decay of norms in the international system, one which turns away from mechanistic assumptions derived from physics and toward methodologies based on biological sciences, ecology and natural history.58 Axelrod’s influential work provides both a precursor and exemplar of this paradigm.59 The crucial conceptual step is the drawing of an analogy between genes and norms. According to the evolutionary

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54 Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 33.
57 Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 33.
perspective, both genes and norms are sets of instructions which determine unit traits (morphological in the case of genes, behavioural in the case of norms), they are transmissible (one by genetic inheritance and the other by cultural learning and emulation), and they are both ‘contested’ (in the sense that norms compete with other norms for reproduction in the same way that genes ‘use’ their hosts to propagate).\(^\text{60}\)

Admittedly, some mileage is to be made from such analogies, but there are important differences between ‘evolution’ and ‘socialization’ as guiding metaphors for explaining international normative change. First, natural selection explanations are appropriate only in relation to the survival of traits within populations; they carry no explanatory punch at the level of individual units. In contrast, socialization focuses on why individual states internalize similar norms. Second, the socialization metaphor has a special place for the notion of ‘socializing agents’ and hence preserves the role that powerful states can play in shaping the texture of international society. Evolutionary analogies, by contrast, make policy secondary to process. Finally, the evolutionary analogy, if understood strictly, implies that once a particular international social institution is extinct its re-emergence becomes impossible. Death is rarely so final in the realm of international politics because institutional practices are kept alive in the collective historical consciousness of foreign policy practitioners.

State socialization, understood as the process by which states internalize norms arising elsewhere in the international system, is a distinctive feature of world politics. It is similar to, but distinct from, a number of other processes which International Relations scholars have studied in some detail. However, to say that state socialization is distinct does not in and of itself make it worthy of study. Its neglect is only blameworthy if focusing on state socialization would be a rich source of theoretical insights. The next section argues that this is indeed the case.

Why state socialization?

So far, I have defined state socialization as the process by which states internalize norms arising elsewhere in the international system and situated it in relation to contrasting and cognate terms. A final set of issues to be addressed in this article concern the justification for introducing this term into the already crowded lexicon of International Relations theory. There are really two questions here. First, what is the rationale for introducing a new term to describe the internalization of foreign norms? Second, what is the ‘value-added’ in the concept of state socialization in relation to the main streams of International Relations theory?

My first question relates to the reasons for introducing the notion of ‘state socialization’ to describe the internalization of foreign norms by state actors. I will put forward four justifications for doing so. First, International Relations scholars have tended to neglect the issue of normative internalization, despite the fact that the transmigration of norms in the international system features as prominently in

world history as war and diplomacy. Highlighting a new concept—‘state socialization’—to denote this abidingly important aspect of interstate interaction will have the effect of raising its academic profile.

Second, introducing the concept of state socialization may help to tease out some of the underlying similarities and causal connections among real-world phenomena which are usually treated separately within distinct empirical literatures. Studies of specific cases of normative internalization do exist, from democratization to the diffusion of science bureaucracies, to the adoption of common forms of military organization, to the spread of international human rights norms, but these studies have often been based on incompatible methodological and conceptual foundations. Labelling these as cases of ‘state socialization’ might highlight what such developments have in common and help to remove some of the obstacles to cumulative research in this area.

Third, introducing a new term is important because the processes which state socialization refers to are easily confused with other phenomena in international politics. State socialization does not denote policy change nor does it mean merely habitual patterns of compliance. Instead, it refers to a more complex and active process by which international interaction influences domestic political debate so that certain policy options are no longer ‘on the menu’ or, conversely, previously unimaginable courses of action become acceptable and even routine. This is a fundamental point that bears repeating: state socialization refers to normative internalization not behavioural compliance. The question is not whether states obey but is rather why states obey. Carving out a distinct category to refer to this cluster of processes serves to clarify the issues at stake and to focus the debate on the issues that matter.

Fourth, the very connotations implicit in the notion of state socialization help to focus our thinking in fruitful ways. As mentioned above, the socialization metaphor draws our attention to power and inequality in processes of international social change. All too often constructivists correctly emphasize the social construction of international reality but ignore its more power-political aspects. Also, talking about state socialization allows us to link our theoretical vocabulary with long-standing concepts in international theory, as well as focusing our attention on normative internalization where it matters most: in the policies of governments rather than in the minds of individuals.

There are also risks involved in introducing the concept of state socialization. These arise in part because of the metaphor’s undesirable connotations. We would do well to make these explicit in order to avoid them. For example, the notion of state socialization has an unfortunate resonance with paternalistic arguments formerly used in support of European imperialism. The term ‘state socialization’—as defined here—in no way refers to tutelage relationships between countries nor does it imply that less ‘mature’ societies require instruction by more ‘advanced’ peoples.

More importantly, the notion of state socialization is often understood to privilege homogeneity and stability over time and to portray individual actors as the passive vessels of systemic constraints. Part of the confusion here arises because International Relations scholars tend to draw on out-dated notions of socialization. Sociology, especially Parsonian sociology, has in the past tended to emphasize social reproduction, conformity, the inculcation of common values, and the social restraint of individual impulses as defining features of socialization. But more recent work
has criticized this tradition as leading to an ‘oversocialized’ model of human agency.\footnote{Dennis R. Wrong, ‘The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology’, \textit{American Sociological Review}, 26 (1961), p. 192.} Today, attention is paid to how socialization enables agents to articulate aspirations, to work together, and to become self-directed actors.

It is on the basis of this image of socialization that the study of state socialization must be founded. The notion of state socialization in no way compromises agency. Indeed, as I have emphasized above, state socialization is always the project of domestic social and political actors; it is never the direct impress of external imperatives upon a passive and plastic national society. Understanding state socialization from the inside out means abandoning the search for ‘transmission belts’ which mechanically transport norms from the international to the domestic levels, in favour of explaining how international society enables, strengthens, or constrains domestic advocates of foreign norms. Thinking about state socialization does not privilege conformity over diversity, any more than it privileges stability over change. Instead, it serves to identify the conditions under which stability wins out over change, and the avenues through which innovations become the new international orthodoxy. The question of directionality is left entirely open.

The second question outlined in the introduction to this section concerned whether the notion of state socialization ‘adds value’ to contemporary International Relations theory. I would argue that the internalization of norms is a neglected theme in the academic literature on international relations. Bringing sustained attention to bear on state socialization will help clarify puzzles left unresolved by realism, constructivism, regime theory, and in international legal scholarship.

It is seldom noted that the debate between classical and ‘neo’-realists is a debate over the nature and relative weight of state socialization in the international system. Classical realists saw a shared sense of legitimacy among major actors as one of the determinants of a pacific international order;\footnote{Henry A. Kissinger, \textit{A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812–1822} (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1957).} the presence of ‘heterogeneity’ in the international system contributes to its proneness to conflict and war.\footnote{Raymond Aron, \textit{Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations} (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), pp. 99–104, 147–9.} According to classical realists, socialization processes are central to broader security goals, but are difficult to achieve. For neorealists, in contrast, systemic constraints of anarchy push and mould all states into ‘like units’; revolutions only briefly interrupt the normal functioning of the international system. Socialization is not an important policy question precisely because it is so common and so inevitable.\footnote{For discussion see Walt, \textit{Revolution and War}.} Exploring the process of state socialization opens up a promising avenue for development within the realist tradition.

Developing a theory of state socialization is as important for realism’s critics as it is for its proponents. Constructivism emerged as a critical response to the rationalist assumptions of neorealism (and neoliberalism). In contrast to these, constructivists take a normative view of state actors: mutually-constituted identities and shared norms and beliefs shape state action and constitute their very material interests. But constructivist scholars have been slow to provide convincing theoretical accounts of how norms and identities become shared. As Jeffrey Checkel notes, ‘[h]aving demon-
strated that social construction matters, they must now address when, how, and why it matters, clearly specifying the actors and mechanisms bringing about change, the scope conditions under which they operate, and how they vary across countries.65 State socialization, the ubiquitous and ongoing processes by which states are said to internalize norms and identities, is the critical mid-level mechanism linking metatheoretical pronouncements on the social construction of international reality to real-world outcomes. Elaborating the notion of state socialization and shifting the emphasis away from individual-level psychological categories would bring greater coherence to the constructivist research programme and bear heavily on the persuasiveness of constructivism’s central claim that states are best conceived as social actors.

The question of normative internalization is also critical for international regime theory. With its emphasis on principles, norms, and rules, regime theory and socialization theory would appear to be deeply complementary. Instead, regime theory developed out of an explicit rejection of ‘sociological’ modes of understanding cooperation. As Robert Keohane put it in a neglected footnote, ‘if we were to drop the assumption that actors are strictly self-interested utility-maximizers, regimes could be important in another way: they would help to develop norms that are internalized by actors as part of their own utility functions. This is important in real-world political-economic systems … [but] … it is outside the scope of the analytical approach taken in this article.’66 Having rejected the possibility that normative internalization could be analysed in a rigorous fashion, neoliberal institutionalists have found themselves increasingly unable to make sense of the world. For instance, as Robert Keohane and Stanley Hoffmann note, international institutions played a much more substantive role in post-Cold War Europe than a narrowly instrumentalist analysis would suggest:

International institutions can affect not merely the interests of states, by affecting constraints and opportunities (thus incentives), but also their more fundamental preferences … The new east European democracies adapted to western laws and norms not only because they had to, but also because they admired western institutions, and sought to imitate them, to become western style democracies.67

While regime scholars (and some neorealists) have increasingly come to appreciate the potential importance of norm internalization, the attempt to bolt sociological elements onto basically instrumentalist explanations is unsatisfactory. It is time to return to the road not taken. The vocabulary of regime theory would be both enriched and strengthened by renewed efforts to come to grips with the concrete processes by which states internalize foreign norms.

Socialization is also crucial in international law. In the absence of an effective international court or overarching sovereign power, legal norms articulated at the intergovernmental level are always enforced, in the first instance, by mechanisms within the state. These ‘enforcers’ include domestic courts, the moral scruples of

individual leaders, the incorporation of international legal standards into bureaucratic operating procedures, and domestic public opinion. The study of state socialization can help us to understand and compare the operation of these domestic ‘enforcers’. International lawyers tend to restrict their attention to the system of prescriptions which make up the field of law itself, ignoring the fact that the force of these prescriptions results from the social process whereby norms are internalized within the domestic polity. There are grounds here for a potentially fruitful exchange between International Relations scholars and international lawyers, and some international legal scholars have already begun to address these issues.68 This ‘no-man’s land’ between politics and law is especially important in the context of contemporary trends in the international legal system. Increasingly, in areas such as environmental protection, human rights, and non-proliferation regimes, international legal agreements are intruding into the regulation of private actors by state authorities.69 In large areas compliance no longer derives from the consent of states but from the effective implementation of intergovernmental agreements within national jurisdiction, or, to use the language developed in this article, ‘state socialization’.

These recent legal trends hint at an important point: ‘state socialization’ is central to many of today’s leading foreign policy issues. One could point to the increasing attention paid in international economic policy debates to ‘deep integration’, that is, the adoption of common regulatory frameworks, tax agreements, and other efforts at policy harmonization. Regional integration long ago proceeded beyond the level of purely intergovernmental agreements. And the discourse of human rights and democratization have become common political currency around the world. These issues also feature prominently in contemporary security debates. From ‘rogue states’ to the rise of Chinese power, Western foreign policy is to encourage others to become ‘responsible members of the international community’ (by which is usually meant that they behave more like Western states).

Despite its importance, our understanding of state socialization is inadequate. Consider the policy challenges posed by ‘rogue’ states in the international system, where debates are often couched in terms of ‘confrontation’ versus ‘constructive engagement.’70 Beneath these often acrimonious debates there is an underlying consensus. Writing in 1994 on US strategy toward ‘rogue states’, then-National Security Advisor Anthony Lake expressed this consensus well when he suggested that ‘selective pressures’ may eventually ‘transform … backlash states into constructive members of the international community’.71 Strikingly similar debates are heard in connection with contemporary efforts to extend international respect for human rights. Hawks may advocate the ‘stick’ and doves may emphasize the ‘carrot’, but both assume that states internalize norms of restraint on the basis of instrumental calculations, so that material incentives—whether rewards or punishments—are an effective tool of state socialization. If this underlying model is incorrect, and

68 Koh, ‘Why Do Nations Obey’?
students of state socialization tend to doubt that it is sufficient, then the policy prescriptions which flow from it ought to be re-examined.

Understanding state socialization will clarify and elaborate important questions in International Relations theory, ranging from realism to international law. The study of state socialization will generate new insights and new lines of inquiry, as well as making better sense of old puzzles. Perhaps more importantly, world politics itself is increasingly occupied with questions of sameness and difference, homogeneity and heterogeneity. Very immediate questions about how best to provide for political and economic order within today’s international society are at stake, but we lack the basic concepts and categories for understanding how norms become shared across national boundaries. This is a serious lacuna indeed.

Conclusion

Understanding state socialization is a crucial task for international political studies, yet a coherent state socialization research programme has yet to emerge. This neglect does not reflect a paucity of empirical evidence or interesting applications but rather the fact that the concept itself has been too vague to support cumulative research efforts. This article has sought systematic foundations for research on the causes and consequences of state socialization.

One of this article’s contributions lies in providing a particularly crisp definition of state socialization. Although definitions are no substitute for empirical inquiry, a good definition can lead the empirically-minded in promising directions. State socialization is defined here as the process by which states internalize norms arising elsewhere in the international system. Defining state socialization in terms of an outcome—specifically, in terms of internalization—has the advantage of shifting attention away from metaphysical debates about what state socialization is and onto concrete questions about its causes. Currently, there are neorealist accounts of state socialization, neoliberal accounts, constructivist and English School accounts, as well as accounts of state socialization which emphasize transnational networks of experts and/or activists. The concept of state socialization—when defined as the internalization of norms arising elsewhere in the international system—provides a focal point around which these very different perspectives can converge, looking on similar questions from alternative vantage points and investigating a wide range of substantive issue areas. This diversity is not a sign of conceptual weakness, it is the mark of fruitfulness in an emergent research area.

As envisaged here, the state socialization research programme would encompass two main branches. State socialization must be understood ‘from the inside out’ and ‘from the outside in’. From the inside out, the study of state socialization consists in exploring the diverse avenues through which foreign norms may be incorporated within domestic legal systems, the mandates of bureaucratic actors, the ‘world-view’ of decision-making elites, and come to permeate the polities that compose international society. Single-country case studies are a useful means of cataloguing

in detail the wide range of mechanisms through which internalization occurs. But the best results are likely to arise within a comparative context. For instance, comparative work on the power of ideas to shape policy outcomes has highlighted cross-national variations in political centralization to explain patterns of influence. As Jeffrey Checkel concludes, in his study of political entrepreneurship and policy change in the Soviet Union and the Russian federation:

In centralized states, there are fewer pathways by which ideas can reach élites; their initial adoption is thus more difficult. Once adopted, however, such ideas stand a greater chance of being implemented and thus of altering state behaviour … In less centralized states, there are a greater number of pathways by which new ideas can reach élites; their initial adoption is thus less problematic. Once adopted, however, such ideas are less likely to be implemented in a way that has a lasting effect on behaviour.

Confirming and generalizing such results and discovering other factors influencing the reception of foreign norms by national polities is one of two main planks in the state socialization research programme. Investigating state socialization ‘from the outside in’ is the other major plank. In both popular and academic discourse, the spread of norms in the international system tends to be explained by one of four ‘stories’ of state socialization. These alternative accounts attribute state socialization to: (1) inter-state competitive pressures, (2) coercive incentives applied by powerful actors, (3) transnational penetration, or (4) the existence and enlargement of international communities. From democratization to the spread of military innovations, these four stories shape our understanding of normative diffusion either as full-blown ‘theories’ with predictive power or as unspoken assumptions. At present, these four ‘stories’ are too vague to offer sufficiently precise predictions for empirical testing and it would therefore be a mistake to conceive of the task ahead as subjecting them to some form of ‘head-to-head’ testing. Rather, the immediate task for students of state socialization is to unpack the causal mechanisms underpinning these theory-like generalizations and to investigate the international and domestic conditions under which they are most likely to play a role. Focusing on the concrete mechanisms which influence the uptake of foreign norms by state actors also has the advantage of remaining open to the possibility that they might mutually reinforce one another when they operate in conjunction. There is nothing to be gained (and much to be lost) by assuming prematurely that the environmental influences on processes of state socialization can be subsumed under a single ‘causal factor’.

In addition to empirical investigations, a state socialization research programme would highlight normative questions as well. Western leaders increasingly view the projection of domestic values abroad as a legitimate (and achievable) foreign policy goal. Such reformism is likely to remain an indelible feature of the post-Cold War


75 For a recent example of an analytic approach to this question, one which provides numerous hypotheses for empirical testing, see Andrew P. Cortell and James W. Davis, ‘How do International Institutions Matter? The Domestic Impact of International Rules and Norms’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 40 (1996), pp. 451–78.
world. There is a pressing need not only to evaluate the domestic and international conditions which might favour such exercises in international social engineering, but also to realistically appraise their practical and moral limits. In what situations is socialization an achievable goal? Are efforts to socialize foreign countries a ‘good’ thing? Who is to judge what is ‘good’, and for whom? In the contemporary global system the lines between legitimate and illegitimate difference among members of the international community are shifting, although no one is in a position to predict where they will eventually come to rest. The study of state socialization takes us beyond a preoccupation with conflict and cooperation and forces us to think seriously about the appropriate balance between universalism and particularism within the society of states.

The fact that states, otherwise jealous of their independence and sovereignty, tend over time to adopt prevailing norms of international behaviour and domestic organization is a puzzling yet recurrent outcome. ‘State socialization’ has emerged as a compelling metaphor to describe the normative pressures exerted on states interacting in international society, yet there is little scholarly consensus on what it means or how it operates. The absence of a common conceptual framework has inhibited the emergence of a substantive research programme, with very real consequences. Many contemporary foreign policy questions could be better answered if a more acute understanding of international norm diffusion and state socialization were available. The conceptual framework elaborated in this article provides a rigorous foundation for this emerging research field.