


10-13-2000

Identifying the Rule of Law, Democracy, and Human and Civil Rights Through Identification: An Intelligence Analyst's Dilemma

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Recommended Citation

Editor (2000) "Identifying the Rule of Law, Democracy, and Human and Civil Rights Through Identification: An Intelligence Analyst's Dilemma," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 9 : Iss. 13 , Article 3. Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol9/iss13/3>

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Volume: 9

Issue: 13

Date: 2000-10-13

Keywords: Identification, Intelligence

Abstract. This article describes psychological issues in discerning the success of several political goals--viz., achieving the rule of law, democracy, and human and civil rights throughout the world.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States, many of its allies, and some neutrals and adversaries have promulgated the virtue and necessity of helping to achieve the rule of law, democracy, and human and civil rights throughout the world. A change of government in Yugoslavia, commemorations of German unification, and presidential leadership in Uganda are just some relevant phenomena bearing on the virtue and necessity of such political goals. How to identify when these goals are obtained remains problematic, even if the various nation-states could agree on definitions and exemplars for these goals.

The essence of the problem appears to be evaluating the synchronicity of the various exemplars and other indices that approach these exemplars with the leaders and citizens of the nation-states in which the political goals are desired. In other words, is a new political life fully taking root or not? Or, is it real or is it Memorex?

The psychodynamic construct of identification and its variants can be useful in trying to answer such a question. Identification often denotes the earliest emotional tie with another person. An individual wants to be like that other person, actually takes this person into one's self in the sense of that person becoming the model for one's self, and with time the individual may become more and more like the identified person.

Identification need not directly involve another person but, instead, a way of life that would affect all or many people--as in some imagined or idealized world with a rule of law, some sort of representative democracy, and some Western or Eastern variant of human and civil rights. Here, the individual would try to live in truth with truth approaching the imagined or idealized world taken into the self. And this living in truth could even constitute attempting to induce others to live in the same manner.

However, identifying such identification is not an easy manner. The external behaviors that may serve as exemplars or indices of these exemplars of identification may be nothing more than examples of complying with political prescriptions. Complying may follow various cues signifying threat and/or opportunity and may cease upon the absence of or the reduction in intensity or change in frequency of these cues.

The intrapsychic phenomena that may serve as exemplars or exemplar indices of identification are usually inferred from external behaviors that are so difficult to discriminate from exemplars or indices of complying. Sometimes these intrapsychic phenomena are directly inferred without intermediary variables--at least ones of which the inferrer is conscious. However, this direct inference process is fraught with epistemological difficulties and borders on mindlessness.

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As opposed to merely complying, individuals also may internalize another person or other object--e.g., a way of life--as a substitute for a sexual (libidinal) or aggressive tie. The self may not change in any significant way. Instead, an impeded external behavior is engaged in internally. Or aspects of the internalized object are modified to satisfy libidinal or aggressive instincts. Given that very primitive instincts are being satisfied through this internalization, external behavioral compatibility with political goals--viz., the rule of law, democracy, and human and civil rights--may suddenly and severely change, thereby bucking, subverting, and overwhelming apparent political trends.

The intelligence analyst preparing an estimate of the status of desired political goals in a nation-state inevitably becomes a psychodynamic hermeneuticist. And, of course, the analyst is subject to his or her own set of identification, complying, and internalization phenomena that interact with those of others. From the analyst's perspective in developing an intelligence estimate on the presence of desired political goals, compliance may be the most conservative conclusion, identification the least, but identifying the correct phenomenon remains a task whose success or failure makes or breaks that estimate. When added to the omnipresent political, professional, and personal demands and constraints on the analyst including those from the analyst's policymakers and political leaders, this task should reinforce expectations for intelligence shortfalls. (See Blanco, I.M. (1941). On introjection and the processes of psychic metabolism. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 22, 17-36; Compton, A. (1985). The concept of identification in the work of Freud, Ferenczi, and Abraham: A review and commentary. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 54, 200-233; Koestner, R., Losier, G. F., Vallerand, R. J., & Carducci, D. (1996). Identified and introjected forms of political internalization: Extending self-determination theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 1025-1036; Pollock, G.H. (Ed.). *Pivotal papers on identification*. Madison, CT, USA: International Universities Press, Inc.; Vansina-Cobbaert, M.-J. (1974). S. Freud's views on the relationship between incorporation, introjection and identification. *Psychologica Belgica*, 14, 83-92.) (Keywords: Identification, Intelligence.)