

4-16-1999

Captive Psychologies: From the Experience of the Speaker of the Cypriot Parliament

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Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (1999) "Captive Psychologies: From the Experience of the Speaker of the Cypriot Parliament," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 6 : Iss. 15 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol6/iss15/1>

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Title: Captive Psychologies: From the Experience of the Speaker of the Cypriot Parliament

Author: Editor

Volume: 6

Issue: 15

Date: 1999-04-16

Keywords: Captives, Kyprianou, Milosevic, NATO, Serbia, Yugoslavia

Abstract. This article describes inferred psychological attributions related to the recent attempt by the Speaker of the Cypriot Parliament to free three United States soldiers captured by supporters of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

The apparently unsuccessful attempt by the Speaker of the Cypriot Parliament, Spyros Kyprianou, to negotiate the release of three United States (U.S.) soldiers captured by supporters of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic can allow political analysts to infer a number of psychological phenomena related to the capturing of soldiers. Although most research has explored the psychology of the captured or the captor, Kyprianou's attempt is most helpful in exploring the psychology of those informed of the capture who are more tangentially involved.

First, Mr. Kyprianou's attempt was influenced by a number of at least partially contradictory comments by representatives of Mr. Milosevic. The Yugoslav Information Minister, Milan Komnenic, suggested that there would be good news about the captives. The Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister, Vojislav Seselj, rejected any such notion. Other sources controlled by Mr. Milosevic suggested that there could possibly be a goodwill gesture over the Orthodox Easter Weekend. Such an ambiguity of messages usually induces the political and military authorities that have lost the captives to plan for a wider number of contingencies--thereby expending more time and assets. This ambiguity also increases the probability that many other political actors--and those acting out through emulating conceptions of political actors--involve themselves in a manner that even further contributes to the complexities faced by the captives' representatives.

Second, Mr. Kyprianou blamed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for his failure to have the captives released. According to Mr. Kyprianou, NATO refused to even briefly stop the bombing and, indeed, had intensified the bombing attacks. It apparently is lost on Mr. Kyprianou that, through his comments, the captor is implicitly blameless. Given that Greece as a NATO ally is formally supporting the bombings against Yugoslavia, Mr. Kyprianou's comments actually subvert the position of Mr. Milosevic's adversaries and reinforce Mr. Milosevic's contention that Yugoslavia and Serbia are blameless as to the entire conflict not just the fate of the captives. This transfer (or discounting) of blame from the captor to the behavior and predilections of the authorities who have lost the captives is a cardinal feature of terrorist hostage taking.

Thirdly, Mr. Kyprianou has insisted that Europe needs peace and that NATO is prolonging war--impeding release of the captives. The implicit message here is that an aggressor can strike quick and hard. If the target--or allies of the target--consolidate assets to rebuff the strike, the aggressor merely needs to simulate stopping in its tracks through a publicly declaimed truce or even to fight on. It is the reactive behaviors on the part of the target that now form the illicit aggression that is blameworthy.

Mr. Kyprianou's attempts to free U.S. captives has only demonstrated how psychologies of other parties become captive as well. (See Erlanger, S. (April 10, 1999). Cypriot fails in effort to gain release of 3 captured G.I.'s. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Hatcher, C., Mohandie, K., Turner, J., &

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Gelles, M.G. (1998). The role of the psychologist in crisis/hostage negotiations. *Behavioral Sciences and Law*, 16, 455-472; Holmes, M.E. (1997). Optimal matching analysis of negotiation phase sequences in simulated and authentic hostage negotiations. *Communication Reports*, 10, 1-8; Santmire, T.E., Wilkenfeld, J., et al. (1998). The impact of cognitive diversity on crisis negotiations. *Political Psychology*, 19, 721-748.) (Keywords: Captives, Kyprianou, Milosevic, NATO, Serbia, Yugoslavia.)