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Trends. The Political Psychology of Abortion and United Nations Funding

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As of this writing, a deal is being made between the United States (US) executive and legislative branches to authorize paying the US estimate of its United Nations arrears. In return for this authorization, there will be a legal ban on US funding for international organizations that promote abortion rights and constraints on funding for international organizations that advocate family planning activities. This deal has been attacked as the linking of two completely independent policy areas and as a loss of freedom for women (especially as to abortion.) Both attacks can be appropriately countered.

The linking of independent policies in legislation is an old one practiced by representatives of virtually all political persuasions. Attacks are hypocritically made on such linking by the unpersuaded against the persuaded. When the persuaded and the unpersuaded both assert the supreme import of respectively linking or delinking independent policies, political battle ensues often with a resulting compromise in which both sides can declare victory. There is nothing new here except, perhaps, new degrees of sanctimony.

Certainly there is a loss of freedom for women. To a lesser extent, this also is a loss of freedom for men. Is this worth erecting impediments to abortions and to non-abortion related family planning? All of the most freedom-loving of the representative democracies-let alone the lesser lights-allow losses of freedom as means and/or ends of public policy. Moreover, the notion that impeding abortion is a matter of loss of women's freedom and not a matter of loss of life (of the unborn) is at least debatable. In fact, a more intellectually tenable position for pro-abortion forces is to admit that abortion entails the loss of life and to then argue that certain public policies should allow such loss. (Here, the mere convenience for a women might seem highly suspect.)

Hypocrisy reigns in both sorts of attack on the deal linking UN payments with abortion. A further hypocrisy is the attempt to delink values from policy. To argue that religious or other values concerning life should have nothing to do with public policy is to argue for an ideological meaningless that to many people entails a figurative loss of life. To refuse to acknowledge this and to subsequently engage in policy advocacy is to abort political responsibility. (See Batson, C.D., et al. (1999). Moral hypocrisy: Appearing moral to oneself without being so. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 525-537; Fried, C.B. (1998). Hypocrisy and identification with transgressions: A case of undetected dissonance. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 20, 145-154; Fried, C.B., & Aronson, E. (1995). Hypocrisy, misattribution, and dissonance reduction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 925-933.) (Keywords: Abortion, Funding Ban, Political Psychology, United Nations.)