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Trends. Syria, Israel, and the Power of Money

Editor

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Author: Editor

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One common assumption concerning any successful march to peace between Syria and Israel is that the United States (US) will foot some of the bill. US tax dollars may go to buying arms and security-related technology for Israel, at least partially funding the move of Israelis now living on the Golan Heights, supporting various aid packages to Syria, and deploying US forces and other foreign forces on the Golan Heights.

However, there are some opponents of such expenditures who argue that these dollars would actually mitigate against peace, not nurture it. These opponents maintain instead that Israel and Syria must bear the financial sacrifice, indeed, that financial sacrifice must go hand and hand with a real, long-lasting peace. Certainly, this would be looked on favorably by US fiscal conservatives and other who appreciate the zero-sum game of budgeting within constraints--even the smoke and mirrors variety of zero-sum practiced by the US executive and legislative branches. But could switching the burden of financial sacrifice from the US to Syria and Israel be buttressed by a psychological foundation?

Although not a significant element in current discourse on psychotherapy, a recurrent hypothesis has been that the more one pays--at least up to a point--the more committed an individual may be to change and the more change may occur. Similar notions may be identified in the vast social psychological literatures--e.g., on sunk costs--even as there are some contrary notions--e.g., cognitive dissonance.

Political psychologists might profitably carry out research to identify money-change linkages and afford negotiators and foreign policymakers a valuable data base from which to elaborate. (See Aron, L., & Hirsch, I. (1992). Money matters in psychoanalysis. In N.J. Skolnick & S.C. Warshaw (Eds.). *Rational perspectives in psychoanalysis*. Analytic Press, Inc.; Cooper, J. (1998). Unlearning cognitive dissonance: Toward an understanding of the development of dissonance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 34, 562-575; Gunime, J.M. (1977). Fee reduction as an aid to therapy. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 8, 88-94; Lievano, J. (1967). Observations about payment of psychotherapy fees. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 41, 324-338; Lippe, S.D. (January 13, 2000). Costly Mideast peace. *The New York Times*, p. A28; Zeelenberg, M., & van Dijk, E. (1997). A reverse sunk cost effect in risky decision making: Sometimes we have too much invested to gamble. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 18, 677-691.) (Keywords: Foreign Aid, Israel, Political Psychology, Security, Syria.)