

3-31-2000

Trends. Syria, Lebanon, and Israel: Is There a Psychological Difference Between The Abusive and the Abused?

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Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (2000) "Trends. Syria, Lebanon, and Israel: Is There a Psychological Difference Between The Abusive and the Abused?," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 8 : Iss. 12 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol8/iss12/5>

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Title: Trends. Syria, Lebanon, and Israel: Is There a Psychological Difference Between The Abusive and the Abused?

Author: Editor

Volume: 8

Issue: 12

Date: 2000-03-31

Keywords: Abuse, Control, Israel, Lebanon, Syria

There is extensive psychological literature addressing the seeming oddity of those who are abused remaining with those who abuse. Often the abused's beliefs about material contingencies are offered. For example, the abused may believe that they have nowhere else to live or no other sources of income. Or the abused's beliefs about beliefs are posited. For example, the abused may believe that they deserve to be abused, that they can't find a way out, or that they can't do any better.

A more controversial dynamic is that the abused control those who abuse through being abused and that loss of the abused status equates to a loss of control of the abuser. Such may be the case to explain the otherwise puzzling threats emanating from Syria and Lebanon after Israeli statements of an upcoming withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon. Why should the first two governments react in a hostile fashion to foreign military withdrawal from sovereign territory? Unlike the recent situation in East Timor in which a government-in-waiting feared an Indonesian withdrawal for legitimate reasons of collapsing law and order, the Syrian and Lebanese governments may fear a loss of control over Israeli political behavior.

The above dynamic suggests that there is little psychologically different between the abuser and the abused. Whether inferior or superior status, the issue is control of the other. Is this additional human similarity among foes even more reason to bury the hatchet or even more reason to use it? (See After the Syrian setback. (March 30, 2000). *The New York Times*, p. A30; Belknap, R.A. (1999). Why did she do that? Issues of moral conflict in battered women's decision making. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 20, 387-404; Moffit, T.E., et al. (1997). Do partners agree about abuse in their relationship?: A psychometric evaluation of interpartner agreement. *Psychological Assessment*, 9, 47-56; Rhodes, N. R., & McKenzie, E. B. (1998). Why do battered women stay?: Three decades of research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 3, 391-406; Springer, C. A., Britt, T. W., & Schlenker, B. R. (1998). Codependency: Clarifying the construct. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 20, 141-158.) (Keywords: Abuse, Control, Israel, Lebanon, Syria.)