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Trends. Human Rights and Politics: The Wrong Argument Against the International Criminal Court

IBPP Editor
bloomr@erau.edu

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Author: Editor

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Opponents of an International Criminal Court (ICC) assert that their primary concern is political. They maintain that--contrary to the Court's purpose of furthering human rights through adjudicating allegations of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes--the ICC will be used in political vendettas against the governments of nation-states, the leaders of these states, and such allegations. ICC opponents assert that only a non-political ICC could be supported but that no such thing is in the offering. This "holier-than-thou" attitude is suspect because its purveyors are secular, not sacred, and because expunging "the political" from the ICC or from any effort to change the world for the better or worse is not possible.

The very quest for human rights, as well as a viable definition, is in essence political. So is the identification of specific acts as human rights violations and any process of adjudication. Moreover, "the political" permeates human psychology--the latter being the foundation on which the human rights quest, definition, violation, and adjudication is based. For example, Monin and Miller (2001) have demonstrated that people employ political heuristics in deciding whether to express attitudes that might be viewed as somehow prejudiced. Atlani and Rousseau (2000) have demonstrated the employment of political heuristics related to culture in providing aid to refugee victims of sexual abuse and rape. Schreuder (2001) has demonstrated the political induction of changes in the phenomenology of transitional space based on violations of boundaries between the inner and outer world of prisoners. Albee (1998) has long demonstrated the politics of primary prevention in mental health--especially biases of political authorities towards the employment of biological approaches and against social change bearing on poverty, exploitation, and injustice. (In fact, a powerful argument against the ICC might be that it attracts resources that could better be addressing the poverty, exploitation, and injustice that often are at the roots of war and other atrocities that engender human rights casualties.) Brewis (2001) has demonstrated the politics of sexual discrimination and harassment and has provided an analysis that could be used to suggest that the ICC might actually compel people to think and behave in ways which foster the very behaviors that ICC supporters seek to expose and remove.

In conclusion, there can be a viable debate about the need for and consequences of the ICC. Tarring the ICC with a political brush need not be part of this debate. (See Albee, G.W. (1998). The politics of primary prevention. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 19, 117-127; Atlani, L., & Rousseau, C. (2000). The politics of culture in humanitarian aid to women refugees who have experienced sexual violence. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 37, 435-449; Brewis, J. (2001). Foucault, politics and organizations: Reconstructing sexual harassment. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 8, 37-60; Crossette, B. (July 1, 2001). Long-range justice raises fears for sovereignty. *The New York Times*, p. Y8; Monin, B., & Miller, D.T. (2001). Moral credentials and the expression of prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 33-43; Schreuder, B.J.N. (2001). The violation of inner and outer boundaries in political persecution. *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 3, 231-242.) (Keywords: Human Rights, International Criminal Court.)