

Fear of Escalation in Kosovo

As of mid-April, 1999, the top story of every major media outlet is focused upon the conflict in Kosovo, Yugoslavia. An ages-old ethnic tension has become inflamed to the point that Serbians are committing genocidal acts against the Albanians of Kosovo. In an attempt to end this atrocity, the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) embarked upon a lengthy peace process. That process was largely fruitless, because it did not halt Serbian atrocities. Consequently, NATO has now taken a more forceful course of action, in order to bring an end to Serbian aggression. This action alone has many moral ramifications, but the United States Congress is currently debating whether-or-not ground forces should be deployed, moving this conflict to an entirely new level. From my viewpoint, the current aggressive action by NATO on Yugoslavia can be considered a good action, but an escalation of aggression by using ground forces would not be a good action. To properly demonstrate my position, I shall need to present an overview (how my perceptual model works), and then compare and contrast each action based upon their intentions and consequences.

My intent with this discussion is to judge NATO's action, in an attempt to come to some conclusion about its nature. As such, I submit that I am completely subjective by nature. Thus, I must first frame my analysis with an analysis of my own subjectivity, so that this essay will be properly understood. I have learned how to perceive the world around me, in accordance with my environment. Socialized in the United States of America, I tend to view things with a very "American" mindset. This mindset includes beliefs that individual persons should have freedom, and that virtue and morality should succeed over selfishness and evil. American culture also adheres to values of meritocracy

and of responsibility for the consequence action. Yet, before expounding upon my beliefs, it is important to note that I have *never* experienced any situation similar to what is occurring in Kosovo. This is an important consideration, because as Mill states, "... the judgement of those who are qualified by knowledge of both [situations] ... must be admitted as final" (Mill, 90). Thus, my lack of experience with this sort of situation weakens my ability to judge it.

As my perceptual model has grown, I have formed a certain set of rules, which can be labeled *morals*. Thus, in order to understand my subjective view of NATO's action in Kosovo, I must expound upon my morals. I believe that action is best if it attempts to seek a "higher ground". This means that conflicts should not be resolved through the *base* means. Rather, I believe that the healthiest solution to any conflict is one that makes use of the conflicting parties rational and emotional abilities to their fullest. I also believe that purposely inflicting pain upon others is wrong. However, I do believe that some level of "justification" can be used in order to abridge these inherently wrongful acts. If I must inflict pain upon someone in order to move him or her to a "better place", then I'm not being as creative or as intelligent as I could be. However, since it is possible that I may never arrive at a better solution, then I feel justified in pursuing the *base* course of action.

From this perceptual definition, I have developed a consciousness, within which my faculties of judgement reside. Thus, if I am to subjectively judge the actions of others, it will come from this region of my being. My consciousness has the ability to interpret my previously established moral tendencies and then to evaluate a situation. Based upon this evaluation, I will arrive at a course of action for myself, which I will attempt to

pursue to the best of my ability. Furthermore, the experience from my actions will impress further feedback onto my perceptual and conscious faculties, modifying their composition if necessary.

Now that my personal subjectivity has been laid bare, I am ready to evaluate NATO's action. From my perspective, I believe that NATO intends to halt the genocide occurring in Kosovo via aerial bombing. According to Kant, "a good will ... is good in itself" (Kant, 81), so good motives bode well for NATO's action. Furthermore, since I do not believe that intentionally causing pain is ever warranted, then I must concede that stopping genocide is a noble goal. However, I also have a moral imperative that guides me to seek a "higher ground" in order to resolve conflict. These competing notions lead me to the source of ambiguity with which I regard NATO's air strikes. The resolution of this ambiguity will have to revolve around the fact that I feel that the nature of this atrocity *demand*s action. In this case, if NATO were to do nothing, then the genocide would have continued unabated. Furthermore, this would have been an act of complicity on NATO's part, placing them firmly in Nietzsche's herd. Thus, the path of non-action would clearly have been worse than that of action.

Since I have determined that action must be taken, I must now evaluate the consequences of the one that NATO has chosen. It is unfortunate that the base consequence of NATO's aggressive action is that of destruction, to both lives and property in Yugoslavia. However, hope still persists that through this aggressive action, Yugoslavia's President Slobodan Milosevic will be more receptive to a peaceful resolution to this conflict. In my view, a peaceful end to this conflict will benefit all involved.

There is a strong possibility, however, that NATO's air strikes will not provide sufficient motivation for Milosevic to accept peace. To this end, it is possible that NATO might embark upon a ground-based assault. I believe that NATO would move to a ground assault in order to complete what an air assault alone cannot. However, I find that this logic is flawed: if an air conflict cannot deter Serbia from their current course of action, then their stubbornness will certainly not be deterred by a ground assault. In fact, I feel that the consequences of a ground assault would be completely unsatisfactory – due to Serbian stubbornness, nearly total destruction of life and land would have to be wrought by NATO. In turn, this would require a high cost of NATO forces – both in lives and material means. To put it simply – this action cannot be good. In order to achieve NATO's goal – ending the genocide in Kosovo – an alternative means would have to be pursued. Escalating the conflict to a full-on war simply isn't the answer.

Yet I am left to wonder, for all of my posturing, is there any way to know if NATO's action is definitively good or bad? To this end, I shall reflect upon what I have written, and determine if my assertions are absolute. If they are, then it should be possible to reach a definitive conclusion about the nature of NATO's action in Kosovo. My analysis of this situation has been entirely subjective, based upon my perception, and carried out by my consciousness. Yet, since someone with a different perceptual model could come to a different set of valid assertions, then my thoughts cannot be considered *absolute*. Therefore, from what I have presented, there is no mechanism by which to definitively judge the moral composition of NATO's action. Furthermore, because all judgement is inherently rooted in perception, I believe that it is impossible to find some absolute way of determining the moral character of any given action.