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Trends. NATO Attacks: A Can Do Attitude in a Can't Do World

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Most opponents of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) attacks on Yugoslavian (save for Kosovo Liberation Army and other military and paramilitary entities that are against the regimes of Yugoslavia, Montenegro, and Serbia but that are of Yugoslavia, Montenegro, and Serbia) military assets cite the lack of a coherent plan for the eventuality that the attacks don't work. In other words, the attacks don't precipitate achievement of the three objectives cited by United States President Clinton: (1) demonstration of the seriousness of NATO's opposition to aggression directed by the authority of Yugoslavian President Milosevic in Kosovo, (2) deterrence of this aggression, and (3) damage of the capacity to cause this aggression in the future.

Yet another Issue is what if the attacks do work? The political Issues behind the aggression will not have been resolved. These Issues have been notoriously resistant to diplomacy and negotiation. Moreover, the history of air power suggests that such power cannot effect resolutions of such Issues.

A strong case can be made that the political Issues encompassing variants of Yugoslavs, Serbs, and Montonegrans can only be resolved through force--viz., violence on the ground--as the bloody claw of history might suggest. The NATO air attacks may have no significant functional consequence to the political Issues. The attacks, then, may reflect wishful thinking that what can't can; the notion that something, anything, should be tried as opposed to doing or trying nothing; or merely the emotional complex of frustration leading to aggression—even if for therapeutic reasons.