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Trends. A Strategic-Moral Calculus: For the Mathematically or Morally Challenged?

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The United States Government (USG) is confronted with a strategic-moral calculus on many fronts. The strategic denotes what is best for the country instrumentally and is often exemplified by securing more tangible benefits such as hard currency, preferred styles of life, and distancing from military threat. The moral denotes what is best for the country based on consonance with publicly professed and sometimes adhered-to-values. The calculus of the two generate a policy decision.

Often these decisions suggest a needless dichotomy between the strategic and the moral: as if values cannot contribute to, be expressed by, and even be the prime vehicle to tangible benefits; as if tangible benefits cannot contribute to, be expressed by, and even be the prime vehicle to values. So significant food aid is rushed to Russia but not to Sierra Leone. So military atrocity must be stopped in Kosovo but not the Congo. So intractable conflict must be stopped in Northern Ireland but not Burundi. The USG rationale for all three policy decisions is that the European countries have more strategic import than African ones. A counter-rational of USG critics is thinly disguised racism.

A more substantive rationale may be the subjugating discourse that fragments the strategic from the moral in a manner inauthentic to human life. Given that we are what we do and do what we are, the chance to become authentic is there. We can construct and reconstruct ourselves towards a transcendence of boundaries that may nurture ourselves as much or more than we attempt to nurture others. (See du Toit, A.P. (1998). Kierkegaard's psychological explanation of moral sense and moral courage. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 28, 154-158; Gordon, M.R. (November 5, 1998). Russia cannot pay its foreign debts. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Newman, B., Reinecke, D.R., & Kurtz, A.L. (1996). Why be moral: Humanist and behavioral perspectives. *Behavior Analyst*, 19, 273-280; Wong, K.N. (1998). Can social action be voluntary action? The epistemological-moral crisis of psychology re-examined. *Theory and Psychology*, 8, 335-358.) (Keywords: Morality, Security, Strategy, United States Government.)