Reification of the Is: Logical Fallacies and Ballistic Missile Defense

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Abstract. This article describes the illogic that seems to underlie support for fielding ballistic missile
defenses against ballistic missiles that carry nuclear warheads and that target the United States.

Previous IBPP articles have highlighted the illogic of mass immunizations of United States (U.S.) armed
forces against weaponized anthrax (4(10); 6(6); 6(8).) A similar sort of illogic seems to be supporting U.S.
efforts to missile defenses against ballistic missiles that carry nuclear warheads and that target the US.

Both illogics share a reification of the word ‘is.’ Unlike the current U.S. President who revels in a
pubescent parsing and postmodern deconstruction of is as applied to breathless sexual antics and who
is a reconstructed and belated supporter of both illogics, long-term supporters of missile defense
construct and fortify an is that is impervious to any challenge. In essence, once a threat has been
identified, it is and must be confronted regardless of the many consequences of what will be developed
to confront the threat. When a calculus of probability and impact is carried out for both threat and the
consequences of what is developed to confront it, the latter might well seem to harm security more
than the former. This conclusion is further reinforced by the benefits that the purveyor of a threat
obtains merely by being perceived as creating the threat.

First, a political entity can upgrade its comparative political power through a ballistic missile program.
Merely through others’ knowledge of the program’s existence, political objectives may be more easily
obtained. (The same, of course, is the case for terrorism, other weapons of mass destruction, and
significant amounts of exploitable natural resources from strategic minerals to agricultural
commodities.) Second, a political entity may engage in negotiations to receive grants, loans, credits, and
various materiel in exchange for promising the termination of its ballistic missile program. The entity
may also agree to inspections varying in degree of comprehensiveness, obtrusiveness, and reactiveness.
Given the difficulties in verifying the absence of a ballistic missile program, the entity may end up with
the best of both worlds: aid and a program. Third, the very threat of possible ballistic missile
employment (with nuclear warheads) can have significant adverse effects on a potential military
adversary that otherwise seems militarily superior. These effects largely involve the expense of research,
development, purchasing, and fielding defensive technologies. And ironically, the sunk costs and the
final product may be largely for nought. The purveyor of threat can merely switch to nuclear weapons
that are not delivered by missiles. Fourth, the threat of ballistic missile employment against an
adversary’s civilians and “home turf” can also foster the costs described in (3) as well as a myriad of
decrements to a population’s preferred life style, law and order, gross national product, and political
stability. Fifth, a purveyor's ballistic missile program can serve as a significant deterrent against an
adversary’s deliberations of military intervention. Sixth, a political entity may not possess any ballistic
missile assets but may engage in disinformation programs to garner the benefits of being perceived to
possess such assets. Seventh, increasing globalization is facilitating the invasion of traditional cultures
and values with mass commercialism and crass materialism and is easing the transport of products
across borders. These two phenomena make nuclear weapons deliverable by other than the means of
ballistic missiles an ever more attractive weapon against those who build ballistic missile defenses.