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Reification of the Is: Logical Fallacies and Ballistic Missile Defense

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Title: 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 reactivity. 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.

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One might well surmise that with U.S. Congressional- Executive Branch convergence on setting policy to eventually build missile defenses--a public policy driven at least somewhat by the upcoming U.S. presidential elections in the year 2000--U.S. adversaries are milking the present and future costs to the US of this policy and are choosing alternate means of military, paramilitary, and psychopolitical attack. (See Biological warfare as psychological warfare. (March 13, 1998). IBPP, 4(10); Biological warfare as psychological warfare II. (February 12, 1999). IBPP, 6(6); Fox, E., & Orman, S. (1997). Why the United States still lacks a national missile defense. *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, 22, 131-141; National missile defense and the ABM Treaty. (May 1, 1997). United States Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services. Superintendent of Documents (ISBN 0-16-055705-4). 105th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Hearing 105-199; Pike, J. (1998). Ballistic missile defense: Is the U.S. "rushing to failure?" *Arms Control Today*, 28, 9-13; Surrendering on missile defense. (March 19, 1999). *the New York Times*, p. A20; The logic of the biological warfare terrorist: An example from Afghanistan. (February 26, 1999). IBPP, 6(8).) (Keywords: Ballistic Missiles, Missile Defense, Nuclear Warheads.)