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Trends. Prisoners of Time: Discourses on Antimissile Defense Systems

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Supporters of the United States (US) initiative to consider developing a limited, antimissile defense system assume that such a system can be built, can be built at an acceptable cost, can be acceptably effective, and will not have a prohibitively noxious consequence for the global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Opponents of the US initiative display some combination of the following assumptions: (1) A system cannot be built or can be built only at an unacceptable cost. (2) A system can be built at an acceptable cost but cannot be acceptably effective--especially against realistic countermeasures. (3) Even if the system would be acceptably effective, it would elicit noxious consequences for global proliferation.

Supporters and opponents have divergent assumptions based on identical databases--even if both may differentially attend to portions of these databases. One salient feature of this divergence comprises interpretations of time. Supporters point to times when the impossible became the possible and commonplace. Opponents point to times when the impossible remained the impossible. To the former, the past can change. To the latter, the past is also the present and the future. Unfortunately, being prisoners of magic beliefs about time bodes ill for defense against any threat. (See Abi-Hashem, N. (2000). Psychology, time, and culture. *American Psychologist*, 55, 342-343; Broad, W. (May 11, 2000). Physicists say missile defense test is insufficient. *The New York Times*, p. A24; Michon, J.A. (1993). Concerning the time sense: The seven pillars of time psychology. *Psychologica Belgica*, 33, 329-345; van Geert, P. (1997). Time and theory in social psychology. *Psychological Inquiry*, 8, 143-151; Wade, N. J., & Heller, D. (1997). Scopes of perception: The experimental manipulation of space and time. *Psychological Research*, 60, 227-237.) (Keywords: Missile Defense, Time.)