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The Psychology of Rogue Nations, Missile Defense, and Self Defense

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Abstract. This article describes the construct and psychological meanings of "rogue nation."

The ongoing, international debate on the merits of antiballistic missile defense often focus on the construct "rogue nation." The construct seems to denote the government of a nation-state--less frequently and always incorrectly the governing authorities of a non-state actor--that does not play by the accepted precedents of international law and custom. For example, North Korea often is considered a rogue nation because it intentionally reinforces opaqueness about the machinations constituting its domestic and foreign policies and policy processes. It also is considered a rogue nation because it supports and engages in terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and/or supporting technology and components. And then, of course, there are the residua from the still unresolved Korean war initiated by a North Korean attack on South Korea. Finally, there is the fear that unbound by convention, the North Koreans may launch a nuclear attack via ballistic missile(s).

With the above denotations, one might posit that "rogue nation" might apply to denotators and the denotated alike. Many governments seek to reinforce opaqueness in their political dealings and value the various disciplines of physical, communications, operations, and personnel security. The North Koreans are often termed xenophobic in this regard to the point of clinical paranoia, but one might still note quantitative as opposed to qualitative differences among nation-states and non-state actors. A number of governments usually not considered to be rogue engage in terrorism and proliferation of weapons--or associated technology and components--of mass destruction. Merely the post-World War II era includes examples from the United States, Germany, India, Russia, and Indonesia. On various pretexts, the governments of these and other countries have attacked other countries. And the very latticework of nuclear weapons treaties and agreements is predicated on the potentiality of any government that can get its hands on nuclear weapons to employ them.

A conclusion about advocacy for ballistic missile defense based on the threat from rogue nations? We are all rogue nations--in actuality or potentially. If we do need a defense, we need it from ourselves. (See Axelrod, L. J., & Newton, J. W. (1991). Preventing nuclear war: Beliefs and attitudes as predictors of disarmist and deterrentist behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 21, 29-40; Churcher, J., & Lieven, E. V. (1983). Images of nuclear war and the public in British civil defense planning documents. *Journal of Social Issues*, 39, 117-132; Lerner, M.P. (1965). The effect of preparatory action on beliefs concerning nuclear war. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 65, 225-231; Moyer, R. S. (1987). The enemy within. In W. M. Evan & S. Hilgartner (Eds.) *The arms race and nuclear war* (pp. 228-231). Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall, Inc; Pande, S.K. Letter to the editor. (June 6, 2000). *The New York Times*, p. A30.) (Keywords: Ballistic Missile Defense.)