Political Science

To Serve and to Protect

Wes Meares

This paper was written for Dr. Tures’ International Politics course.

Introduction

Did the chicken come before the egg? That is one question that has baffled men for ages, one that could not be answered. However, there is a similar question that can be answered. Did the shield come before the sword? The answer to the question is likely that the shield came after the sword. Defensive weaponry is usually developed after the offensive weaponry. Now, the United States is facing the most deadly offensive weapon ever: the nuclear missile. To help protect itself, its allies, and its interests, the United States decided that to install a missile defense system. The United States already has missile defense systems in multiple locations and wants to install one in Europe. Some analysts say that this is a horrible idea because the United States does not need a missile defense system and it is an unnecessary burden on taxpayers. In this paper we will test to see if a missile defense is cost effective for the United States.

The Model

To test this we need to form a theory according to Monroe (2000) a theory is, “a set of empirical generalizations about a topic (Monroe 2000, 17).” This basically means that a theory is a general statement that shows some type of relationship between two or more variables that tries to explain a phenomenon. In this paper the theory is that the capabilities of one’s enemy will effect the development of one’s capabilities.

Since the theory is vague and general we need something that is testable, that is where the hypothesis comes in. According to Monroe (2000) a hypothesis is “an empirical statement that is derived from a theory (Monroe 2000, 18-19).” As an enemy’s offensive power increases then one’s defensive power will increase.

Inside the hypothesis there are two variables: the dependent variable and the independent variable. According to Monroe (2000) the independent variable is the variable in the hypothesis that is the cause, while the dependent variable is the variable consequences in the model. The dependent variable in this hypothesis is one’s defensive power and the independent variable is an enemy’s offensive power.

Now that the variables are defined the relationship between them must be established. According to Monroe (2000) there are two types of relation-
ships: positive and negative. A positive or direct relationship is as one variable starts to increase the other variable increases, and as one variable decreases the other variable will also decrease. A negative relationship is defined as one variable decreases then the other variable will increase (Monroe 2000). In this model there is a positive relationship because as an enemy’s offensive power increases then one’s defensive power should increase.

**Theoretical Rationale**

There is some rationale behind this theory. The rationale that drives this theory is realism. Kegley and Wittkopf (2006) contend that the foundation of realism can be found in the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. Kegley and Wittkopf (2006) state that out of the works of literature there are ten basic points of realism and they are: people are naturally selfish and ethically flawed, the most evil act of man is lust for power, one cannot eradicate the instinct for more power, international politics is a power struggle, the primary obligation of each state is its national interest, states acquire military capabilities to deter attack by potential enemies and to exercise influence, economics is not as relevant as military power, the loyalty of an ally ends when the ally’s interest change, states should govern themselves not international organization, and states seek to maximize power. Kegley and Wittkopf (2006), in these ten points, provide rationale for the hypothesis. The struggle for power leads people to build more developed weapons. The only way to be able to stay ahead is to be able to counter and defeat your opponents. The new and best weapon now is nuclear missiles, so the best way to defeat them is through the construction of missile defense systems.

Another rationale to support the hypothesis comes from the great Paul “Bear” Bryant. Paul Bryant was one of the greatest football coaches in the history of the NCAA. One of his famous quotes is “Offense sells tickets, but defense wins championships. Defense is the best type of offense (http://www.coachqte.com/bryant.html 2009).” Most coaches, like Paul Bryant, put their best players and assistant coaches on the defense, because if an opponent is unable to score then the opponent is unable to win. This transfers over to the use of defensive weapons, because if an opponent is unable to effectively attack a country then how can it defeat the country?

**Defensive Development Overview**

Defensive weaponry has been developing just as long as men have been fighting each other. According to Marvin Hull (2008) in the medieval ages defensive development never stopped. The original castle defenders were archers. Then the development of catapults and ballistas lead to a change in the castle’s defenses. The castle owners installed catapults and ballistas to counter the new offensive technologies. The owners used the catapults and ballistas to destroy enemy catapults, ballistas, and also enemy troops. Then
the owners also reinforced masonry to be able to withstand the blows given by the catapults and ballistas. The next major offensive advancement was the battering ram. Battering rams were used to knock down the door/gates that lead into the castle. To counteract these new developments, boiling oil was used to burn the operators of the machine; murder holes were also created. Murder holes are holes in the roof of the castles where the defenders stood, when the enemies broke the first gate and were going to break the second gate, the defenders shot the attackers through the hole to stop their advancement. One of the last major advancement of offensive weapons was the siege tower. This is a giant tower that latched on to the side of the castle and allowed a massive number of troops to advance inside. Once again defensive measures were taken overcome this new technology. Greek fire, an incendiary weapon, was used to burn the towers down, and masonry changes were made to make it more difficult to latch the tower on to the castle. The medieval ages did not stop the development of defensive weapons.

World War I led to a number of advancements in military defense. The History Channel show “Modern Marvels” (2009) mentions that in the trenches, the opposition would try outmanaging the defender and would try to overrun their position. To neutralize this, the machine gun was invented. The use of two machine guns that would shoot a path of bullets across each other would devastate the enemy. Also, to slow down and to help neutralize the enemy, the use of land mines and barbwire in the field was introduced. The introduction of airplanes into the battlefield led to the creation of anti-aircraft guns. Then the Central Powers came up with the use of poison gas. To neutralize this new advancement the Allied Powers came up with gas mask to keep their troops safe. Defensive advancements continued on.

In the Cold War the United States and the USSR were the only ones in possession of nuclear technology. According to the BBC (2009) the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 states, “This treaty limited US and Soviet anti-missile defenses to one ground site each. The Russians still operate theirs, around Moscow. The US chose to defend its strategic nuclear rockets based in North Dakota. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6720153.stm 2009).” Since the United States was limited to one land base missile defense system, the US found the solution with space-based missile defense systems. According to www.globalsecurity.org (2007) the Homing Overlay Experiment, “The U.S. Army’s Homing Overlay Experiment (HOE) first demonstrated the concept of exo-atmospheric hit-to-kill. The program, which spanned the period of Fiscal Years 1978 to 1984, consisted of four flight tests in February 1983, May 1983, December 1983 and June 1984 (http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/systems/hoe.htm 2007).” When the United States stated that the system was operable, it meant that the US could now defend itself from multiple angles. With this new deterrence, the USA was able to pressure Russia in ways that they were
Evidence

Now the United States is faced with more than just one threat. According to Arms Control Association (2008) China, Russia, North Korea, Russia, and Pakistan are all countries that have nuclear weapons and could possibly pose a threat to the United States. The association also mentions that Siberia and Iran are also developing a weapons program and that these countries could also pose a threat to the USA. Now with the presence of all these countries that have, or almost have, nuclear technology the United States should be developing more defensive weapons to defend itself from the threats, not only from countries, but from terrorists as well. According to the Associated Press (2009) China lost radioactive material in an accident, “Investigators have recovered potentially lethal radioactive material that was lost during the demolition of a cement plant in northwest China (Associated Press 2009).” The Chinese government lost the material on Monday March 23, 2009, but recovered the material four days later. The article said that the material was enough to weaponize. Now with all these countries developing nuclear technology the US has to worry about them and terrorist that could possibly get their hands on the increasing amount of nuclear material.

Even if these threats were not present there are other positives for installing missile defense systems. According to Atlantic Review (2009) a 2008 poll shows that 87% of Americans are in favor of missile defense systems. Not only do the people want it but, “An Obama-Biden administration will support missile defense, but ensure that it is developed in a way that is pragmatic and cost effective (www.ObamaBiden.com/defense 2009).” “North Korea’s rocket launch demonstrates the need for investment in missile defense systems, Sen. John McCain said Friday (Associated Press 2009, 1).” Both the people and the leaders in government are in favor of missile defense systems. Missile defense systems help the United States to protect its own people and people around the world; lives are priceless. There are some people that say a missile defense system is an expensive waste of money. However, if a missile hits the USA, or one of its allies, then the USA would have to enter into an even more costly war. If the USA was able to block the missile from striking then the US could largely avoid war.

Some people and organizations, like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, believe that the only way to deal with nuclear weapons is total disarmament. They state “Two obstacles to that progress [total disarmament] are the US’s so-called ‘missile defense’ system, and its backing for NATO expansion into Georgia and the Ukraine. Both of these are perceived by Russia to be provocative and threatening to its own security (http://www.cnduk.org/index.php.html 2009).” These people and organizations call for the peaceful dis-
armament of nuclear weapons. These requests are idealistic and are highly unlikely, because realism states that a country wants to gain power and by getting rid of nuclear weapons countries will lose power.

The only way to ensure that everyone gets rid of their nuclear weapons is the presence of a strong governing force over all nations. This governing force does not exist. Disarmament would also cause the US to lose the important advantage of first strike. The advantage of first strike helps the United States even the odds in certain areas that it is behind in. One example of a category that the US is lagging in is force size. Compared to a country like Russia, or China, the US has a small army. But by possessing nuclear weapons the US is able to be the strongest force on the planet. If the USA loses its nuclear ability, it would not only to be vulnerable for attacks, but it would also lose the power to militarily pressure foreign powers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, not only is a missile defense system a great advantage to have in one’s arsenal, but it is essential. The United States should not only maintain its current system, but it should continue to fund and advance the technology for the sake of its allies, its people, its interest, and all those who look to the US for protection.

Works Cited


