

Fallacies III

1.Hasty Conclusion

“Clearly Saddam Hussein must have been behind the September 11 terrorist attacks. What is the evidence? Well Hussein clearly has no moral scruples, he believes in the use of violence to achieve his objectives, and he has a sizable military and intelligence apparatus. For heaven sake, he is a man who used poison gas against his own people! And furthermore, he clearly has a motive to attack the United States.”

2.Small Sample Size

“I spoke to two officials in the Bush administration, and both stated that the United States will go to war against Iraq. So, there must be widespread agreement among most U.S. government officials on the need for war with Iraq.”

3.Unrepresentative Sample

“Nearly all of the students that I have talked to are opposed to war. So, the sentiment in favor of war in this country must be very small.”

4.Questionable Cause (*Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc*)

“Doctors don't know anything and seeing one can shorten your life. Consider my Aunt Bertha. She went to see a doctor for the first time when she was 112 years old and the next year - poof! - she was dead.”

“George Bush was in office for eight months at the time of the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the attacks were Bush's fault and that his flawed foreign policies must have caused these attacks.”

5.Questionable Analogy

“Efforts to appease Hitler through negotiation only encouraged his aggression and led to war. Similarly, any effort to negotiate with Saddam Hussein will only encourage his proclivities toward aggression and war. The lesson here is that one must use force rather than negotiation to deal with vicious leaders.”

6. Begging the Question (or Tautology):

Roger has a Kilimanjaro mountain bicycle; Therefore, Roger has a bicycle.

A slightly more racist version of this fallacy:

"The problem with Middle East politics is that it is all based on a fundamental lack of respect for the concept of truth. People in that region simply lack compunctions about the need to be truthful in political debate, newspaper editorials, and government pronouncements. Why is this so? Because Middle Eastern countries have a culture that does not value truth, and in this respect is so different from the United States and other Western countries. The fact that political debate is so completely based on dishonesty in the Middle East proves that the culture must be dishonest."

7. Fallacy of the Slippery Slope

"Any U.S. military action in Ukraine is bound to lead to a Vietnam style ground war, detrimental to U.S. interests."

8. Argument of the Beard

All humans (including women) have some amount of hairs on their faces.

There is no fixed number of hairs you need to have in order to qualify as having a beard. Therefore, there is no difference at all between having a beard and not having a beard.

There is no clear standard as to what constitutes a "good" human rights record. Both Sweden and Iraq can be said to have human rights records that, by any standard, are less than perfect.

Therefore, there is no difference at all between the human rights conditions in Sweden and Iraq.