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Abstract

This article analyzes the North Korean nuclear crisis as an empirical case that reveals the security dilemma logic present in world politics that is overlooked in international relations theories of security dilemma. Although many typically blame either Pyongyang or Washington for the crisis, this article argues that both the 'North Korean threat' thesis and the 'U.S. threat' thesis are incomplete and partial as an explanation for the North Korean nuclear crisis. A more comprehensive, and less partial, understanding of the crisis can be achieved by synthesizing the antithetical hypotheses into a dynamic model that takes into account the strategic interactions between Pyongyang and Washington. In other words, the crisis itself is a manifestation of the security dilemma logic that North Korea and the United States have produced, acting under uncertainty about each other's capacity and intention. And the security dilemma itself has ensued because their behaviors are guided by their identities in a way that exacerbates their social relationship. The North Korean nuclear crisis is, in short, constituted by destructive interactivity between their behaviors and identities. To acknowledge the reality of security dilemma and the necessity of positive reciprocity would be the necessary first step in the long journey toward ending the nuclear crisis.

About the Author

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Introduction

This article analyzes the North Korean nuclear crisis as an empirical case that reveals the security dilemma logic present in world politics that is overlooked in IR theories of security dilemma. If North Korea has since the early 1990s remained a source of grave concerns for its potential to develop nuclear weapons, the concerns about its future potential became ominous worries about its current capability after October 2006 when Pyongyang tested its nuclear weapon. In order to resolve the issue, international community has spent a considerable amount of political and economic capital, and individual countries – particularly, China, South Korea, and the United States – have at different times tried their favored solutions, including diplomacy, economic incentives and military threats. While over the course of a decade-long crisis, their efforts brought them fortuitously close to a grand bargain at one point and precariously close to war at another, the issue refuses to go away, remaining a tinderbox that can at any time blow up. This article suggests that some of the key reasons for its intractability lie in two types of interactivity: the interactive nature of security action and reaction between the concerned parties, particularly the United States and DPRK; and the malicious interactivity between behavioral consequences and identity effects of security measures.

Many typically blame either Pyongyang or Washington for the crisis.¹ On the one hand, it is common in the West to hear that Pyongyang has sought to acquire nuclear weapons because of its inherent aggressive nature, ulterior motive to unify Korea if necessary by force, desire to extort concessions from outsiders, or domestic political needs to maintain the regime.² While all of those contain a grain of truth, they share a common failure to acknowledge that even Pyongyang, repulsive a dictatorship as it may be, has legitimate security concerns, the concerns

that are particularly heightened in the wake of the Bush administration's adoption of the preemptive strike doctrine and designation of the North as part of the "axis of evil."³ On the other hand, many blame Washington, particularly the Bush administration, for causing Pyongyang to move away from the negotiating table and plunge into the weapons program. In their view, Pyongyang's behavior is attributable to Washington's threatening posture, backed up by its nuclear strike policy and economic sanctions, particularly the seizure of the North Korean account at the BDA, as well as its refusal to conclude a peace treaty with Pyongyang.⁴ While this view holds some truths, they neglect the fact that Washington's such behavior is at least in part driven by Pyongyang's own and that Washington's sense of security was profoundly transformed after 9-11 in a way that highlights the danger of nuclear proliferation and terrorism.⁵

Both the 'North Korean threat' thesis and the 'U.S. threat' thesis, this article argues, are incomplete and partial as an explanation for the North Korean nuclear crisis. A more comprehensive, and less partial, understanding of the crisis can be achieved by synthesizing the antithetical hypotheses into a dynamic model that takes into account the strategic interactions between Pyongyang and Washington. In other words, the crisis itself is a manifestation of the security dilemma logic that North Korea and the United States have produced, acting under uncertainty about each other's capacity and intention.⁶ And the security dilemma itself has ensued because their behaviors are guided by their identities in a way that exacerbates their social relationship. The North Korean nuclear crisis is, in short, constituted by destructive interactivity between their behaviors and identities.

The critical role played by identity in the security dilemma logic is dramatically illustrated by the divergent ways in which Seoul and Washington have reacted to the North. South Korea and the United States are faced with the same problem: that of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles. The problem is, as far as their structural conditions are concerned, more immediate and pressing for the South. Not only is South Korea within Pyongyang's missile

range, but it would suffer a certain disaster even if Pyongyang should detonate a nuclear weapon within its own border. In contrast, the United States is currently out of the North's missile range, and faces no immediate possibility of a nuclear attack at least until Pyongyang succeeds in manufacturing a nuclear warhead small enough for its missiles to carry. The North's nuclear threat is today's reality for South Korea; it is tomorrow's possibility for the United States. Given that many in the South hold a fresh memory of the Korean War, guerilla incursions, and aggressive acts by the North whereas to most Americans the Korea War is a "forgotten war," furthermore, it is not unreasonable to expect South Korea to feel much more threatened than the United States.⁷ But it is, ironically, Washington that is more worried about the North than Seoul. Their divergent threat perceptions, which run counter to rationalist or materialist expectations, can be readily explained in terms of the different identity perceptions that the United States and South Korea have of the North: to the former, it is Dr. Evil; to the latter, it is Mr. Korean.⁸

The argument, developed to account for the case, also enriches IR theory by specifying the role that identity plays in producing security dilemma.⁹ In general terms, state actors transform uncertainty in international politics into a set of ordered possibilities by choosing among a repertoire of social devices, such as social rules, norms, identities, or institutions, in order to devise simple rules of behavior that enable them to make decision with regard to the future. While the transformation process can, reflecting the diversity in the social devices that they can choose from, take a multitude of forms, the security dilemma is constituted by the type of social interactions that antagonistic identity replaces or reduces uncertainty in such a way as to exacerbate enmity. When social interactions between countries are characterized by 1) truncated understanding of dynamic interactions, 2) antagonistic identity, and 3) identity blaming, social effects and behavioral consequences multiply each other in a malign way, constituting the security dilemma.

This article is organized as follows. First, it develops a theoretical argument that security dilemma does not result immediately or automatically from uncertainty in anarchic structure but rather grows out of a pernicious kind of interactions between state identity and behavior. Second, using the North Korean case, it details the three attributes that characterize the social interactions that produce security dilemma. It illustrates how such interactions lead to a malign multiplication of behavior and identity that constitutes the core mechanism of the dilemma. Finally, given the security dilemma that the United States and DPRK are locked in, the article suggests that a way out of the impasse can be found only when both sides recognize the interactive nature and social underpinnings of the dilemma. A possible solution lies in a set of measures that address security concerns of both within a single framework, which can help both Washington and Pyongyang take the first step out of the malign multiplication and into a virtuous cycle that constitutes each other's identity in a more benign way and makes it possible for them to take further steps in the positive cycle of mutual security.

Security Dilemma

There is no denying that security dilemma does exist or that it makes up a critical feature of international relations. It has caused arms races and conflicts, as many point out; even when it does not, it remains conspicuous in the background, making international cooperation more difficult.¹⁰ Of many cases of security dilemma in history, the Cold War in particular produced an intensive and extensive arms race between its two superpowers, leading many scholars fixated on this important development that had the potential to spin out of control, with wide and far-reaching repercussions. As a result of intense scholarly efforts, we have developed a better understanding of the logic and scope conditions of the security dilemma that has produced many historical and contemporary cases of arms race, power competition and war.¹¹

This, nevertheless, does not mean that security dilemma is ubiquitous or inevitable, as some realists suggest.¹² Even during the Cold War when the U.S. and Soviet Union were locked in a security dilemma, there were many other countries that managed their relationships without the usual trappings of the security dilemma. Even the U.S. and Soviet Union were at times able to reign on their arms races to agree to arms control measures and to bring about periods of détente and ultimately the end of the Cold War. While arms races have historically occurred in a dramatic way and often ended in a tragic war, highlighting the importance of understanding their causes, they make up a subset of the universe of possible dyadic relationships. The small number of their occurrences, or at least the absence of security dilemma induced behavior under some conditions, suggests that uncertainty about structure or intention is a necessary but not sufficient condition for security dilemma. As illustrated by the history of the relations between the United States and Soviet Union, which has a period of intense security dilemma followed by one of détente, enmity too is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of security dilemma.¹³

The sufficient conditions are provided by the type of social interactions that antagonistic identity replaces or reduces uncertainty in such a way as to exacerbate enmity. This article specifies the sufficient condition by developing a structuration model that highlights the interaction between behavioral consequences and identity effects.¹⁴ A security dilemma emerges when and only when two states are locked in the kind of social interactions characterized by the following dynamics. State A believes State B to be acting in isolation, that is, that its own actions have had no effect on State B's. State B, simultaneously, believes the same to be true about State A. While each state believes itself to be acting non-spontaneously, that is, it believes itself to be *reacting* rather than *acting*, it simultaneously believes its counterpart state to be acting spontaneously, that is, without external or structural cause. State A believes itself to be *responding*; it believes State B to be *acting*, and vice-versa (truncated understanding). This non-

responsive, spontaneous act by the counterpart state must have *some* cause, and here is where identity enters the equation. Each state interprets the actions of its counterpart as resulting from non-external factors: the counterpart state's actions are seen as non-responsive acts inhering in and issuing from that state's aggressive identity (antagonistic identity). State B is developing nuclear weapons because it is aggressive. All of this leads to full blame being placed on the essence, as it were, of the counterpart state (identity blaming). State B could have no outside reason for acting as it does; it acts this way because of who it *is*. If that blaming is being issued from both sides, it goes around and around and gets worse and worse because the counterpart state's behavior is seen aggressive and thus necessitating a countervailing move. As a result, both states end up in the security dilemma.

The above story can be analytically separated into three distinctive parts. First, if state A sees state B's arming as a reaction to its own efforts to increase security, the cycle of action-reaction that constitutes the security dilemma is less likely to start. The security dilemma is much more likely to emerge when states fail to recognize their counterpart's action as caused by its own because such a failure leads them not only to blame the other side for its behavior but also to maintain their innocence. If they have a truncated understanding of what is inherently a strategic interaction, they are likely to look for the cause of their counterpart's behavior in its attributes. They are also likely to believe that it is necessary and just for them to take a countermeasure in order to neutralize the adverse effect that their counterpart state's move causes on their security.

The truncated understanding alone does not necessarily lead to the security dilemma although it sets the states on the path to it. Since the states transform the uncertainty about others' intent or motive into a probability by indexing it to their identity, their identities determine whether or not they will move down the path that leads to the security dilemma. If their identities are constituted in a non-antagonistic way, the states may still attribute their

counterpart's move to a temporary exigency or idiosyncrasy, which makes it possible for them to develop a more benign understanding of its move. They are then able and likely to avoid the path leading to the security dilemma. But if their identities are constituted in an antagonistic way, they start to interpret their counterpart's move against the background of its perceived hostility. Such an interpretation tends to privilege "stick" over "carrot" as a mode of reaction. And they begin to move closer to the security dilemma.

Even if the states perceive each other in an antagonistic way, they do not necessarily end up in the security dilemma unless they blame their counterpart's identity for its behavior. When State A is engaged in identity blaming, it tends to understand all of State B's behaviors in terms of its hostile identity: its acquisition of arms is proof of its aggressiveness; its disarmament is at best its capitulation to State A's power or at worst a deception. When a pair of states does that, one's malignant move elicits a more malignant response by the other; one's benign act is replied by the other's malignant act, making the security dilemma much more likely to emerge. The U.S. and Soviet Union, for example, were caught in an arms race when they suspected the other's arming was motivated by its aggressive identity; but they were able to agree to arms control measures when they developed an understanding of the structural situation.¹⁵

And finally, if all of the above characteristics are present in a relationship, the states end up transforming uncertainties in their relationship in a way that produces the security dilemma because their behavior and identity amplify each other in a malignant way. When the three conditions are present, one is predisposed to overreact to another's act. Restoring a balance of power, a difficult task to accomplish in the first place, is further complicated by the fact that one's move to restore the balance does not only affect the material condition of security but it also, in the context of truncated understanding, antagonistic identity constitution and identity blaming, exacerbates its social relationship with the other. One's move to restore the balance only confirms its aggressor identity in the eyes of the other and strengthens the other's resolve to

defend against it, compelling a reaction and justifying an overreaction. Behavior and identity get locked in a negative feedback loop where they reinforce and amplify each other. When it happens, each reaction is magnified in a malign way, resulting in the security dilemma. It is that kind of interaction between behavior and identity that makes up the core mechanism of security dilemma.

Producing the North Korean Nuclear Crisis

Throughout the process of interactions, Washington (Pyongyang) believed itself to be reacting to the actions by the Pyongyang (Washington) that was acting spontaneously. In its view, Pyongyang started to develop nuclear weapons on its own and reneged its side of the bargain many times without provocation while Washington was scrambling to manage the problem created by its counterpart. Washington (Pyongyang) believed that its counterpart was behaving that way because of its inherent aggressiveness while maintaining its own innocence. In its view, Pyongyang (Washington) desired nuclear weapons because it wanted to use them to attack us or threaten us to extort concessions. Hence, no matter what Pyongyang did, it was seen deriving from its evilness. When it reneged on the Geneva Agreement, it was seen inevitable; when it halted its nuclear programs or proposed to conclude a peace treaty, its behavior was rejected as implausible. Because one attributed all of its counterpart's behaviors to its inherent aggressive identity, both ended up in an action-reaction chain that escalated the level of countervailing moves and amplified the enmity. The end result is what we know as the North Korean nuclear crisis.

Truncated Understandings of Dynamic Interactions

Both Washington and Pyongyang act as if they were not aware that they are caught in a relationship of strategic interactions, which makes it all the more difficult to come to terms with

each other. Because neither recognizes the interactive nature, neither realizes that the other's action, which it finds undermining its security, might have been triggered by its own action which it thinks of as a purely defensive measure and which the other nonetheless perceives as an aggressive move. Either actor looks only at the actions by the other side and overlooks his own. Such truncated understandings of what is inherently an interactive process make up an important aspect of the security dilemma.

International relations consists of a series of interactions among actors in a given issue area, a reality with which most schools in IR try to come to terms in different ways. One of the main reasons why game theory remains an effective theoretical tool with which to analyze strategic issues lies in the reality that actors make and implement their decisions in an interactive situation where one's choice affects the payoffs of the other's choices. Barry Buzan's notion of "security complex" underlines the importance that one's strategic decision has for the security of others.¹⁶ If realists focus on strategic interaction in a narrow sense of national security, liberals observe a broader set of interactive pattern where one's choice in a non-security issue has an effect on others' behavior in another issue area: security community, interdependence, democratic peace, commerce and peace.¹⁷ Although scholars in sociological school put an emphasis on social factors that shape actors' preferences that inform and guide their decisions, they too recognize that individual actors, bound within a set of social bonds, behave in a way that reflects their understandings of social interaction.

Despite such a wide consensus on the centrality of interactions in international politics, state actors themselves behave as if they were not aware of the interactive nature of their relationships. For example, although an arms race may be self-defeating, actors are caught in the race because it looks compelling and unavoidable to them because they perceive the other side's arming as a unilateral move. When an agreement breaks down, they blame the other for not holding up its side of the bargain even if its reneging was a reaction to their prior behavior. A

negotiated solution is cautioned against for fear that it might be exploited by the adversary who is suspected of using an agreement to disarm one side while keeping its own arms.

Such truncated understandings of strategic interactions are well illustrated by the ways in which Pyongyang and Washington understand the breakdown of the Geneva Agreed Framework as the result of the other side's renegeing. In 1994 the two made a landmark deal that was characterized by a set of carefully measured quid pro quo, which, as a safeguard against cheating, allowed them to withdraw its quo in response to the other's renege on a quid. Now that key parts of the agreement – the construction of a Light Water Reactor (LWR)¹⁸ and the freeze of the North's nuclear programs¹⁹ – are not honored, the agreement is all but torn to tatters. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the first cause of its breakdown, it is clear that both have taken many measures that cumulatively brought down the agreement. And one common feature of the degeneration process lies in the fact that neither acknowledges its responsibility while both blame the other for the breakdown.

Every story has to start somewhere, and each side starts its story with the transgression by the other. At every juncture of the North Korean nuclear crisis, Washington and Pyongyang blame the other for breaking the promise it had previously made while insisting they kept their end of the bargain. For example, President Bush's remark made on March 6 represents a prototype of such truncated understandings:

My predecessor, in a good-faith effort, entered into a framework agreement.
The United States honored its side of the agreement; North Korea didn't.
While we felt the agreement was in force, North Korea was enriching uranium.

In fact, Washington was slow to implement the terms of the agreement back in 1997 before Pyongyang began to look into HEU technology. In the face of what it perceived was Washington's intransigence, Pyongyang threatened to break the agreement. The North's acquisition of technology to enrich uranium from Pakistan began soon thereafter – in 1998,

according to Secretary of State Colin Powell.²⁰ And yet President Bush did not recognize that part of the story, demonstrating his truncated understanding of strategic interactions.

For its part, Pyongyang was responsible for Washington's slow implementation, but it denied any responsibilities. On the construction site of the LWR, North Korean workers had refused to work due to a dispute over their wages, causing a delay of the construction work. While Pyongyang entered into negotiations with Washington over its missile production and export – as per terms of the Agreed Framework that conditioned political normalization on the resolution of political and security concerns – it stuck to its position, stalling an agreement on the missile issues. In 1998 it even test fired a missile over Japan, under the pretext that it merely launched a rocket that put a satellite on an orbit. Thus, the North is at least partially responsible for the breakdown of the Framework Agreement, and yet it refuses to acknowledge its responsibility, accusing only Washington.

Just as they do not acknowledge the action-reaction cycle that coalesced to kill the Agreed Framework, they blame only the other for the arms race that culminated in Pyongyang's declaration of "nuclear deterrent". While the action-reaction chain can be traced back to the Korean War, significant changes in military formation and strategy have been adopted as a way to counter what was perceived as the other's advantage. The Pentagon had introduced nuclear weapons into South Korea as a way to counter the North's large conventional forces; the Korean People's Army amassed its forces near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as a "bear hug" tactic that would make it difficult for the U.S. military to use nuclear weapons against them; the Combined Forces Command applied the AirLand Battle doctrine to deal with the conventional forces imbalance in the frontline; the North Korean military responded by deploying the long-range artilleries that would threaten the rear bases critical to the implementation of the new doctrine; Washington increased counter-artillery systems and made public its preemptive nuclear strike doctrine; and Pyongyang responded with its declaration of "nuclear deterrent capability". The

end result of the long chain reaction is the “asymmetric balance of terror” that both try to deter the other from initiating an attack by threatening an unacceptable degree of destruction with asymmetric means.²¹ Yet neither acknowledges that the other was reacting to its own action, blaming the other for what is perceived as its unilateral, unprovoked, and perpetual arming.

Antagonistic Identity: The “Axis of Evil” Meets the “Empire of Devil”

Even if two states have a truncated understanding of their strategic interactions, they may not get locked in security dilemma so long as they do not perceive each other in an antagonistic manner. Security dilemma is less likely between allies and between friendly states because they are more ready to give a benefit of doubt to each other and more likely to predict each other’s future behavior on the basis of their benign perception of each other’s identity. While allies face many problems, including abandonment and entrapment, security dilemma between them is rare or at least less intense than between adversaries.²² To the extent that states impute a benign intention to other’s security enhancement, they are not so concerned about others’ security enhancing efforts as to cause security dilemma.

When there is enmity between states, however, uncertainty about the other’s future behavior is more likely seen in an alarmist manner that highlights a worst-case scenario. Under such circumstances that tints states’ perception of the offense-defense indistinguishability of security measures with the enmity, the other’s move to increase security becomes one’s source of insecurity that needs to be counterbalanced with defensive measures. Security dilemma is most likely to emerge if one’s hostile identity is so reciprocated by another’s as to mutually constitute enmity. The interdependence of hostility creates the condition under which one’s sense of insecurity is both the cause and result of the other’s insecurity. The second necessary condition for security dilemma to arise, therefore, is that there is an antagonistic interdependence of hostile

identities between two states. At the heart of security dilemma logic lies a clash of antagonistic identities.²³

It is easy to see such an antagonistic interdependence of hostile identities between the United States and DPRK. Washington sees in North Korea a rogue state that is hell bent on acquiring weapons of mass destruction that it desires as a tool of threats, coercion and aggression. Pyongyang views Washington as an “imperialist warmonger” that is constantly looking for an opportune moment to strike it.²⁴ Because both see the other as an adversary whose identity is the polar opposite of their own, they are predisposed to interpret the other’s behavior as manifesting its aggressive intention. They tend to reduce uncertainty about the other’s intention and its likely future behavior by referring to its antagonistic identity. As a result, they will not merely react to the other’s act, but they will react more strongly and more quickly than a state that sees its environment as benign.

One characteristic of the U.S. and the North’s perception of each other is a kind of generalized identity language, where the other side is sharply ‘othered’, and where stark (often ‘orientalizing’ and ‘occidentalizing’) differences between the way the ‘North Koreans’ think and the way the ‘U.S.’ thinks are presented as truths about each side.²⁵ They routinely resort to overly generalized characterizations that pit one’s own peacefulness against the other side’s aggressive nature. This convergence in rhetorical type and polarization in rhetorical content reproduces the antagonistic interdependence of hostile identities. As it moves to extreme levels on both sides, it also has a more important impact on framing definitions of interest and threat in an antagonistic and irreconcilable manner. As it moves to extremes, the leaderships in both countries are more likely to interpret the other’s intentions in an alarmist way, to give up searching for cooperative solutions to conflicts of interest, and to prefer a “stick” as a reaction to the other side.

When Americans look at North Korea, they see a dangerous state whose nuclear arming is inevitable and nuclear disarming out of the question. When they think of North Korea, they think of gulags, one-man rule and dogmatic devotion to the ideology of Juche. They point out that North Korea started the Korean War in 1950, and that North Korea has perpetrated a number of terrorist attacks including commando style operations inside the South and the 1983 Rangoon bombing that killed 17 members of the South Korean President's entourage. According to some, the North's regime can even be suicidal – i.e., out of desperation, it may lash out against the South even if it knows that means its total destruction – making it all the more unpredictable and dangerous. They mobilize different evidence and offer various reasons but most in the United States agree that North Korea is a dangerous revisionist state that must therefore be guarded against. When American policy makers formulate policies, they act on this kind of understandings of North Korea's identity.²⁶

Within such a frame of mind, evident in the “axis of evil” speech and the “outposts of tyranny” comments, North Korea is naturally seen determined to acquire nuclear weapons. President Bush's speech writer and a defense policy advisor hence state without qualifications: “the North Korean leadership craves a nuclear arsenal even more desperately than it hungers for international approval or American aid.”²⁷ Others, sharing the same mind-set, believe that North Korea's nuclear intention is so entrenched that it is unalterable:

Pyongyang pushes its nuclear weapons project overtly when it can and covertly when it must. With the right enticements, furthermore, Pyongyang can be convinced to promise to give up its nuke program: it just can't be convinced to give up the program itself.²⁸

According to this view, the history of nuclear diplomacy is a story of the South's and U.S. genuine efforts and the North's deceptions. Following is a typical account of nuclear diplomacy with the North, which draws on the presumed perception of the North's identity. In the early 1990s, South Korea's President Roh Tae Woo managed to hammer out the North-South Joint

Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, only to find out that Pyongyang was cheating on that agreement. Then the United States signed the 1994 Agreed Framework, only to be cheated on by the North again. When that Framework began to wobble because of North Korean nuclear cheating, the Clinton Administration tried to stop North Korea's nuclear intentions through the Perry Process. Despite the Perry Process and the Sunshine Policy, Pyongyang was caught once again cheating on its nuclear deals in 2002. Instead of scrapping its weapons programs, North Korea admitted the violation, declared the Agreed Framework dead, and forged ahead with its nuclear weapons program.

Such a storyline reflects a truncated understanding of dynamic interactions. At the same time, it is predicated upon, and reproduces, a belief about the North's identity as inherently untrustworthy and dangerous. There is indeed a positive feedback loop between Washington's truncated understanding and its identity perception of the North as the two reproduce and reinforce each other. Furthermore, the positive feedback loop, in which Washington is caught, is buttressed by another feedback loop: one that Pyongyang is caught in about the U.S. identity. The two loops are mutually interdependent and reinforcing because one is the mirror image of the other. This mechanism is well illustrated by the events following the 2002 state of the union address. In the address, President Bush restored the North's identity as the "evil" that must be terminated, thereby effectively putting to an end the virtuous cycle that had begun under his predecessor's administration. Bush's name-calling was angrily returned by Pyongyang, which called the U.S. the "empire of devil." Here it is important to recognize that no obvious changes in material power condition triggered such vitriolic verbal exchanges. It is a change in actors' understanding that started the vicious cycle. After 9/11, the Bush administration brought to American decision making its Manichean understanding of the world where the North, together with Iraq and Iran, constituted the axis of evil that proliferates the danger of terrorists, missiles and nuclear weapons. Not only did the verbal exchanges reflect the new understanding of actors'

identities but they also provided the ideational context within which Washington and Pyongyang took actions that restored the vicious cycle. Because the former could not trust the “intransigent North” to honor its end of the Geneva Framework Agreement, it halted the shipment of heavy oil; because the latter feared the “aggressive Washington,” it restarted its nuclear programs. And one’s action does not only necessitate but also justifies the other’s reaction; such an action-reaction chain reinforces one’s identity perception. Within the restored Hobbesian culture, the other was always a suspect that compelled one to take preventive defensive measures. Within the enmity, such defensive steps were perceived as a renege, an aggression, or a preparation for an attack. Now the vicious cycle of insecurity was restored with vengeance.

The social structure of enmity serves as a perceptual prism that privileges an interpretation of facts and uncertainties about the North's nuclear program as the proliferation dangers. It discounts the possibility that the North, as well as the U.S., is caught in a security dilemma; it amplifies the possibility that the North lies, cheats, and deceives. It skews the discursive space in such a way as to dismiss as a deception Pyongyang’s offer to negotiate while accepting its rhetoric of war as true. Its denial of a weapons program is a lie; its admission a truth. The enmity constitutes the ideational context within which realists have it both ways. What is striking about the nuclear crisis is the ease with which many of the uncertainties and facts about the North's nuclear program were assumed away or disregarded. Alternative interpretations were quickly brushed aside as the threat of the “North’s nuclear weapons” established itself as the reality.

In the beginning years of the 21st century when North Korea's conventional military threat was increasingly coming into question, the reality of “missile threat” and “nuclear threat” added another layer to the master narrative, the “dangerous North.” Because that master narrative had existed ever since Korea’s division in 1945, it was all the easier to return to the familiar reality. The relative ease with which the vicious cycle was brought back and the relative

difficulty that the virtuous cycle faced provide evidence that the discursive playing field was skewed in favor of the North's dangerous identity. If the U.S. perception of the North as the danger had been heavily influenced by the global Cold War enmity, since the 1990s the reality of the "dangerous North" was reproduced through the articulation of "nuclear threat" and "missile threat." U.S. practices produced a constant articulation of danger to the national security of the allies. The "danger," through these practices, has become part of the social reality within which the U.S. understands the North and the world.

This is not to suggest that North Korea's nuclear or missile threats are nothing but lies fabricated by intelligence officers. I am not arguing that their threat perception has no material basis or that their interpretation of material facts is so out of touch it borders on fantasy. It is undeniable that there are "stubborn realities." For example, it is a well-established fact that North Korea has a nuclear reactor and a reprocessing facility; it is also a fact that it fired a projectile into the space in 1998. It is also true that Pyongyang's past behavior warrants caution and suspicion. At the same time, however, there are other possible interpretations that explain the same "stubborn realities" as well as the conventional wisdom. The alternative interpretations have the advantage of marshalling novel facts that do not fit the conventional discourse and that support the alternatives. If the public space were a "level playing field," therefore, one would expect at least a debate between different discourses. But one observes none. The fact that there were no meaningful public debates between different views shows that the "playing field" was not level. The policy debates, to the extent that they existed, were carried out only within the discursive space demarcated by the dominant discourse; and policies that were not predicated on the same understanding of North Korean identity were excluded from the debates themselves. It is this skewed nature of the discursive playing field – the hegemonic status of North Korea's identity as "danger" – that I am pointing out.

Joseph Nye's famous statement about the self-fulfilling nature of the 'China threat' is applicable to the 'North Korean threat' to the extent that security dilemma dynamics explain the evolution both of North Korea's sense of insecurity and of American perceptions of the North's revisionist goals.²⁹ This kind of argument has little appeal in both the more traditionally realpolitik and the overtly primacist factions in the Bush administration precisely because it requires them to accept that definitions of interest are dynamic. Similarly, security dilemma arguments rarely have appeal inside Pyongyang because they require the recognition that Pyongyang's own behavior has been counterproductive and has undermined its own security. Thus the North's and U.S. perceptions feed security dilemma dynamics precisely because leaders on both sides tend to ignore or downplay the existence of these dynamics.³⁰ The interdependence of hostile identities makes it all the more difficult to escape the security dilemma.

Identity Blaming: "The Basic Intentions...Have Not Changed"

Truncated understandings compel states to react; a hostile identity predisposes them to favor a "stick" over "carrots" as a method of reaction. And when state actors single out the other's identity as the root cause of its conflictual behavior, their "stick" tends to be bigger and stiffer than necessary to restore status quo ante. A mere tit for a tat is not enough because they are not just reacting to the other's action. A stronger measure is privileged by the perception that while its current behavior may be moderated by their countermeasure, its future behavior is likely dictated by its identity. In order to solve the problem, therefore, its aggressive nature, not just its behavior, has to be corrected. With the identity blaming, the name of the game is no longer "give and take" but rather "crime and punishment".³¹

Identity blaming refers to the use of language that generalizes about the nature of the 'other side' and one's own side in a way the other's nature is solely held responsible for conflicts.

That is, ‘the North Koreans’ are like X, ‘we’ are like Y, where X is an attribute that carries a great deal of moral opprobrium, and Y is a quality that carries great moral value.³² In identity blaming, X stands in as a proxy for uncertainties about the country in three ways: 1) the North’s past action is attributed to X even if it was reacting to America’s own action; 2) its current capabilities are assessed by indexing them to X; and 3) its future behavior is predicted more on the basis of X than an assessment of its structural condition. Such identity blaming does not merely compel the United States to react to every move the North makes. It increases the urgency of a reaction, and justifies the adoption of a tough reaction.

Character attribution has long been recognized by the political psychologists who note that images and stereotypes provide cognitive categories that allow people to sort and make sense of the political environment and their relationships.³³ As cognitive shortcuts and heuristic rules, they facilitate decision-making by managing both information overloads and shortfalls. They can also lead to biased patterns in foreign policy thinking.³⁴ Identity blaming serves a similar cognitive function on an intersubjective level. It pictures the other actor as motivated by evil and unlimited motives: it explains the enemy’s hostile behavior in terms of its inherent evil motivations while accounting for its non-hostile actions according to the exigencies of weakness. Such a depiction in turn reinforces the original identity perception, creating a positive feedback loop where behavior and identity reinforce each other. Consequently, when the target country behaves aggressively, this confirms the initial premise about its identity; when it does not, the apparent restraint is typically received with the suspicion that it is a trick designed to lull the perceiver’s state into a condition of relaxed vulnerability.

That kind of identity blaming characterizes the relationship between the United States and North Korea. One sees the other as a threat no matter what it does, for the other’s behavior is attributed to its nature that is seen as inherently and permanently aggressive. When Pyongyang is engaged in a dangerous action – for example, by declaring that it possesses

“nuclear deterrent capability” – its behavior confirms its identity as a danger. When its behavior is ambiguous – as when it declared a moratorium on missile developments – Washington tends to err on the safe side and interpret the ambiguity as a potential threat, thereby forging ahead with what it considers defensive measures, such as the deployment of missile defense systems. If Pyongyang’s behavior does not fit the enemy identity, for example, by proposing to conclude a peace treaty, Americans become suspicious: Is it trying to throw them off guard, trying to drive a wedge between them and their allies, or is there a sinister motive behind the apparent “peace overture”? And, of course, Pyongyang sees in Washington what the latter sees in the former, generating an antagonistic interdependence of identity blaming.

When identity blaming becomes the dominant framework of strategic interactions, character attribution plays a critical role in strategic assessment. While over the Korean peninsula the condition of mutual deterrence constitutes the structural condition under which the United States and North Korea must formulate their policies,³⁵ the “reasons adduced by scholars as to why they worry about North Korea’s intentions are attributes, and little mention is made of the situation within which North Korea must make decisions.”³⁶ One can make the same argument about the United States that mirrors Kang’s observation: North Korean policymakers and scholars alike worry about the United States because they act on their perception of U.S. identity while ignoring the structural condition under which Washington must make her decisions. And because the countries hold the view that the other side is inherently aggressive, they worry about the *possible* military capability that the other state might acquire rather than the actual capability that it has. Their worries about possibility of harm are expressed in discursive claims, which provoke reciprocating claims, leading to a process of increasing conflictual interactivity in discursive claims.

Not only does identity drive a strategic assessment to focus on the adversary’s possible capability, but it also helps resolve uncertainty about the adversary’s capabilities in a way that is

consistent with the identity. Identity blaming in the context of antagonistic identity predisposes state actors to interpret the uncertainty by privileging the worst case over the best; amity in contrast orients them to perceive the uncertainty in a more benign light. The former mechanism is responsible for the first nuclear crisis with DPRK, which began in earnest in 1993 when IAEA inspections revealed an uncertainty about the amount of plutonium that North Korean scientists had extracted. Although the North's authorities claimed in the documents submitted to the IAEA that they had extracted 100 grams of plutonium in a single reprocessing campaign of spent fuel, IAEA inspectors found evidence that they had reprocessed the spent fuel more than once. An uncertainty consequently emerged because IAEA could not establish the exact number of reprocessing operations or the precise amount of plutonium extracted. All it could say was that the North had extracted more than the 100 grams that it had admitted and less than approximately 20,000 grams, the maximum amount of plutonium that would have been contained in the spent fuel.

Within the wide range, the Central Intelligence Agency and Department of Defense settled on the upper limit, claiming Pyongyang had manufactured two to three nuclear weapons. This claim represented the worst-case scenario based on the two heroic assumptions that the North Koreans had extracted all the plutonium and that they had successfully converted all of it into fission bombs.³⁷ Although these assumptions were little warranted by the past history of DPRK nuclear activity and its level of technology, they seemed a justifiable, and at least safe, conclusion given the North's dangerous, irrational identity around which there was a strong consensus in the United States.

Once the uncertainty about DPRK nuclear capability was resolved this way, the issue quickly became a grave, urgent international security concern that necessitated an immediate reaction. Because Washington did not see Pyongyang's action in the historical context of the long chain of security measures-counter measures between the two, it isolated the issue as

triggered by Pyongyang and requiring Washington's reaction. Because of the antagonistic identity Washington perceived in Pyongyang, the nuclear capability in its hands was a grave threat. Because Pyongyang was driven to this capability by its aggressive nature, it needed to be taught a stern lesson, with a stick if necessary. Within Washington's social context of the truncated understanding, the antagonistic identity, and the identity blaming, a tough measure such as a demand for special inspections of the North's facilities seemed natural.

Within Pyongyang's mirror image social context, the tough measure seemed a hostile move designed to spy upon its military facilities, a move that must therefore resisted. Upon Pyongyang's refusal, which confirmed Washington's perception of the North's antagonistic identity, it seemed justifiable to resume the Team Spirit exercise as a way to increase military pressure on Pyongyang to come clean. The resumption of the exercise, which strengthened Pyongyang's perception that U.S. identity was the root cause, led it to respond with a stronger measure: the declaration of a "semi-war state". Pyongyang's continued recalcitrance justified, in Washington's eyes, the need to consider a military strike and prepare for the worst. Out of what seemed to either side a reasonable series of security measures came the crisis of the summer of 1994 where the two countries ended up on the brink of war.

If identity blaming affects the states' strategic assessment in a subtle but substantial manner to contribute to the emergence of security dilemma, it deepens the dilemma by weighing their prognosis of the other's future behavior with the burden of its identity. Since there is no realistic way to assess its intention and to predict its future behavior with 100 percent certainty, states are bound to deal with a level of uncertainty as much as they can and they interpret the residual uncertainty on the basis of the target country's identity to transform it into a distribution of probabilistic behaviors. When its identity is seen as the root cause of its behavior, changes in the behavior provide insufficient evidence of a "genuine change," the kind of changes of essential characteristics

At the heart of the current debate between the Bush and Roh administrations – and within each capital – about how to deal with the North is a fundamentally disparate assessment of how much its intentions have changed. Advocates of engagement, on one side of the debate, justify their policy preference on the basis of the assessment that Pyongyang’s recent policy changes represent a fundamental change in DPRK intentions away from revisionism and in the direction of reform. They, for example, point to Pyongyang’s formalization of market measures and creation of special trade zones as evidence of giant leaps toward economic reform. Critics, on the other hand, argue that those changes are mere baby steps, representing a change in DPRK tactic aimed at improving the short-term situation. They point to “a deeply held set of revolutionary beliefs and values in North Korea” as evidence that “the basic intentions of the DPRK have not changed.”³⁸

It is difficult to resolve the debate because there are enough facts to support both positions. Empiricism alone leaves unresolved a degree of the “true uncertainty” about intentions for an empirical analysis is contingent as much on evidence as on its interpretation that is fundamentally framed by analysts’ or policy-makers’ understanding of the target’s identity. When an antagonistic identity and a truncated understanding represent a dominant characteristic of debate, identity blaming tends to help resolve the uncertainty in an alarmist way that privileges the worst case scenario; absent the first two conditions, the identity blaming settles the uncertainty about intention in a benign manner that allows the benefit of doubt. The divergent paths are illustrated in the opposite ways in which the Bush and the Roh administrations react to the North.³⁹ The Bush administration, which attributes to the DPRK regime’s evil nature its aggressive behavior and intransigency, interprets its economic reforms as tactical changes designed to strengthen its power without modifying its ultimate aggressive intentions. Negotiations and engagement are therefore seen counterproductive; a tough stance and punishment remain the only effective course of action. In contrast, the Roh administration of the

South, which sees the North caught in a security dilemma situation with the United States, perceives its reforms as indicative of its desire to secure its survival and to change its way of life. It therefore sees exchanges and engagement more effective. Under the same condition of uncertainty that neither Bush nor Roh knows Kim Jong-II's true intention, both design their policies in a way that reflects their respective ways of identity blaming. As a result, one chooses a course of action that reproduces the security dilemma whereas the other moves away from the dilemma. The contrast in their relationships with the North former starts with the divergent ways in which they attribute its behavior to its identity.

*Malign Multiplication: "Our Adversary's Gun Will Be Met with Our Cannon."*⁴⁰

The more the interactions between two actors are characterized by the above three attributes, the more likely one's action is to be reciprocated by the other's reaction in a way that undermines the first actor's security and deepens the enmity between the two. Because they have a truncated understanding of their interactions, each fails to recognize that the other's action might be the reaction to its own move, a failure that precludes the possibility of undoing its own original move as a solution and that compels it to make a new move to counter the others' action. The countermove tends to take the form of a "stick" because the antagonistic identity distribution precludes the possibility of offering a carrot as its countermove and predisposes either actor to favor a tough measure. And the countermove is likely to exacerbate the status quo as the identity blaming intervenes in the action-reaction cycle to amplify each reaction. The end product is a malign multiplication between security measures and identities, which makes up the core mechanism of security dilemma.⁴¹

Not only do the actors, caught in the malign multiplication, react to the other's move but they are also predisposed to overreact because their action-reactions are embedded in, and contribute to, the increasing conflictual interactivity in discursive claims about the others'

potential capability. The actions that the two sides take show greater interactivity or endogeneity not just because one's behavior elicits the other's reaction but also because one's behavior confirms its malignant identity. This interactivity between behavior and identity exacerbates enmity to the extent that non-cooperative moves are reciprocated in kind while being also perceived as evidence confirming the other's hostile identity. The process of this malign multiplication becomes more entrenched over time, as each move exacerbates antagonism between the actors.

Such a malign multiplication is at the heart of security dilemma for it escalates security tensions and makes a negotiated resolution progressively more difficult. A dispute, which may have been negotiable, becomes progressively more difficult to resolve because a series of intervening actions and reactions creates bad blood and increases suspicion. As a negotiated resolution becomes less promising, so the actors tilt progressively more toward unilateral self-regarding measures, which in turn exacerbates the deteriorating relationship. Not only does this escalating cycle of malign multiplication between behavior and social relationship reproduce the security dilemma but also entrenches it by making it increasingly more difficult for the actors to escape the dilemma. In game theoretic terms, a game of chicken, which simulates a security dilemma situation, locks two players in a test of resolve;⁴² in terms of malign multiplication, each iteration of the play exacerbates the social underpinning of the game, shifting the players' payoffs in a more confrontational direction, which gradually transforms the game of chicken into a cock fight.⁴³

The same kind of malign multiplication can be seen in the ways in which the United States and the North are caught in the nuclear crisis. The crisis was the product of both parties' behavior and identity that bound them in an escalating security dilemma. Pyongyang might have believed that it took what it deemed an evidently defensive measure because it was facing an aggressive revisionist opponent in the Bush administration. Its action was in turn seen as a

hostile move by Washington who held the mirror image of the identities: the U.S. as a status quo state and North Korea as a revisionist. In the nuclear politics, furthermore, one side sought to deter attack by convincing the other of its willingness, as well as capacity, to inflict an unacceptably costly damage, and this type of behavior only ended up adding to the view that its identity was truly aggressive and revisionist. Both sides' words and actions reinforced the enmity between them, which in turn justified stronger reactions, which then further deepened the enmity, *ad infinitum*. The escalating cycle between behavior and identity lay at the heart of the security dilemma.

The first phase of the nuclear crisis began in 1993 when uncertainty about the North's reprocessing emerged as a result of IAEA inspections. Because the IAEA suspected that the North's untrustworthy nature would render regular and ad hoc inspections useless in resolving the uncertainty, it demanded special inspections. Suspecting an aggressive U.S. hand behind the demand, Pyongyang rejected the demand that it charged was a ploy to spy on its military facilities. In the context of the truncated understanding, hostile identity, and identity blaming, the Clinton administration saw in Pyongyang's rejection its unilateral and aggressive move to develop nuclear weapons. Reacting to its dangerous move, the Pentagon resumed in March the Team Spirit exercise that had been cancelled the previous year. Grippled by its own truncated understanding, hostile identity, and identity blaming, in turn, the DPRK found the military exercise confirming an aggressive U.S. identity, and responded four days later with a stronger measure: by announcing that it would withdraw from the Nonproliferation Treaty, thus no longer prevented from developing nuclear weapons. Behavior and identity multiplied each other in a malign way to escalate an uncertainty about the amount of extracted plutonium into Washington's resumption of a military exercise and the North's withdrawal from the NPT.

Table 1. Malign Multiplication in the First Nuclear Crisis, 1993-1994

Date	Actions by the U.S. side	Actions by North Korea
2/9/93	IAEA requests special inspection	
2/20/93		Rejects special inspections
3/8/93	Team Spirit exercise begins	Declares "semi-war" state
3/12/93		Announces its intention to withdraw from NPT
6/11/93	High-level talks first joint statement	Suspends withdrawal from NPT
12/29/93	Agrees to third round of high-level talks, suspension of Team Spirit	Accepts "inspections necessary for continuity of safeguards," resumption of talks with ROK
3/21/94	IAEA refers North Korea to Security Council	
5/4/94		Begins nuclear reactor refueling
6/3/94	Withdraws its offer to resume high-level talks, discusses sanctions & military strike	
6/13/94		Officially withdraws from IAEA; UN sanctions regarded as "a declaration of war"

A similar malign multiplication is also responsible for the second phase of the nuclear crisis that began to escalate in October 2002 when Assistant Secretary James Kelly charged the North, in a contentious meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-Ju in Pyongyang, of running a secret uranium enrichment program in violation of the Agreed Framework.⁴⁴ The Bush administration, upon receiving the information that the North Koreans had acquired aluminum tubes and other parts that *could* be used to enrich uranium for a weapons purpose, perceived it as the evidence that they *were* engaged in a weapons program, for it blamed their behavior ultimately on their inherently “evil” nature that would not change. Kelly was instructed to confront the North Koreans with the charge, and allegedly succeeded in getting their admission. Kelly’s success vindicated the Bush administration’s identity blaming. It justified the measures designed to punish them for their violation while solidifying its doubts about the usefulness of negotiations. The Bush administration thus in November 2002 proceeded to stop its fuel supply that it had maintained as part of the 1994 Agreed Framework.

In a public rebuttal, Pyongyang insisted that what its representative said to Kelly was only that the North was “entitled to acquiring nuclear weapons.” It saw the White House’s

public allegation as an outright lie that revealed its true untrustworthiness; it perceived the U.S. decision to stop the heavy oil shipment as a flagrant violation of the Agreed Framework, which justified a strong reaction. In a tit for tat move, Pyongyang reactivated in December the 5 MW reactor that had been frozen – in exchange for the provision of the heavy oil – under the Agreed Framework. And because it felt justified punishing Washington for lying, it took further steps: it removed IAEA seals and cameras from its nuclear facilities, and expelled IAEA inspectors in December 2002, and completed its withdrawal from the NPT the following January.

All these moves by Pyongyang were worrisome to Washington not just because they constituted real steps towards manufacturing nuclear weapons. They were ominous also because they bolstered its suspicions about the North's identity: "Was it ever plausible that Kim Jong Il would keep his word? He signed, then cheated. When caught cheating, he reneged. If he signs another agreement today, he will renege on it, too."⁴⁵ Given the perception that some of Bush administration officials, including President Bush himself, held of the North, it seemed logical to think that the only way to end the problem would be the toppling of Kim Jong Il.⁴⁶ The North's action, seen through the prism of its identity, therefore, justified stronger countermeasures, including a scenario of a nuclear attack on the North, the dispatch of an aircraft carrier group, the initiation of a military exercise, etc.

As the two moved up the ladder of escalating hostility, Pyongyang defiantly declared that its "attack can be taken to all military personnel and all military commands of the United States in the world". Soon after the U.S. launched its "preventive war" against Iraq in March 2003, DPRK Foreign Ministry announced that the North was being compelled to "mobilize all potentials to acquire war deterrent," strongly indicating it would proceed to develop nuclear weapons.

As a result of the malign multiplication, the relationship between the two deteriorated to the lowest point in short order. In October 2002 when Kelly visited Pyongyang, there was a high

hope that the disputes between the two countries could be peacefully resolved. Not only did the meeting dash the hope but also triggered a chain reaction that amplified suspicion and anxiety. By May the following year, the two countries considered the Agreed Framework all but dead and found any meaningful negotiations all but impossible. By the beginning of 2005 when the Bush administration started its second term, its perception of the North's identity had been entrenched: Secretary of State Rice began her tenure by calling the North an "outpost of tyranny"; and President Bush inaugurated with the "great objective of ending tyranny". Such remarks, seen through Pyongyang's perceptual framework of Washington's intransigent identity, in turn led it to take a yet stronger countermeasure: DPRK Foreign Ministry announced in February that it had "manufactured nukes" and would "take a measure to bolster its nuclear weapons arsenal". Washington responded by tightening financial sanctions, to which Pyongyang responded by test firing missiles, to which Washington responded by working with the UN Security Council to penalize it, to which Pyongyang responded by testing its nuclear bomb. What began as a diplomatic meeting ended up the death of diplomacy for behavior and identity multiplied each other in a malign way to turn a verbal accusation into the mobilization of military and the explosion of a nuclear weapon.

Table 2. Malign Multiplication in the Second Nuclear Crisis, 2002-2006

Date	Actions by the U.S. side	Actions by North Korea
1/29/02	State of the Union address calls North Korea "axis of evil"	
3/9/02	US media reveals Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) includes North Korea in nuclear targets	
3/13/02		Foreign Ministry states if NPR is true, DPRK is "to take a substantial countermeasure against it, not bound to any DPRK-U.S. agreement"
10/4/02	Kelly charges the North of running HEU program	
11/14/02	Announces halting heavy oil supply in December	
12/12/02		Reactivates 5MW reactor
12/22/02		Removes IAEA seal and camera from nuclear facilities
1/6/03	IAEA refers North Korea to UN Security Council	
1/10/03		Withdraws from NPT
1/23/03	Sends Kitty Hawk to Korea	
3/4/03	Foal Eagle exercise begins	
3/20/03	Iraq War begins	
4/6/03		Foreign Ministry: "to mobilize all potentials to acquire war deterrent"
4/9/03	NK brought to UN Security Council	
9/3/03		Supreme People's Assembly approves the "possession and strengthening of nuclear deterrent force"
9/10/03	PSI exercise	
9/10/03	Imposes sanctions against DPRK for human trafficking	
10/2/03		Declares completion of reprocessing, and changes the use of plutonium "in the direction of increasing its deterrent force"
11/21/03	KEDO decides to suspend the construction of LWR	
1/19/05	Rice calls North Korea "outpost of tyranny"	
1/20/05	Bush in inauguration speech talks of "great objective of ending tyranny"	
2/10/05		Declares it "manufactured nukes" and will "take a measure to bolster its nuclear weapons arsenal"
9/17/05	Freezes NK's account in Banco Delta Asia	
7/5/06		Test fires missiles
7/15/06	UN Security Council condemns the test	
10/9/06		Tests nuclear weapon

In order to appreciate the critical role that the identity blaming played in creating the second crisis, it is useful to remember that although the Clinton administration had a similar set of information about the North's uranium program, it was not as worried about the program because it was treating the North as a negotiating partner whose trustworthiness needed to be tested.⁴⁷ It was not because of a change in the North's material capability or behavior that the Bush administration began to change the course of diplomacy. It was rather because it came into office with a different set of mind, reflected in speeches of the "axis of evil" and the "outpost of tyranny". The conviction – that "evil" must be ended, not negotiated with – was only strengthened and deepened with the shock of 9/11. The different view of the North's identity oriented the administration to prefer punitive measures and to interpret DPRK moves in a malign way. The DPRK, in turn, unable to recognize the changed security mind-set triggered by 9/11, saw the Bush administration exactly the same way as the latter perceived of the former. Identity blaming, under the condition of the interdependence of hostile identities, resulted in the malign multiplication that constituted the North Korean nuclear crisis.

Conclusion: To Turn the Dilemma into a Virtuous Cycle

The North Korean nuclear crisis is a manifestation of the security dilemma between the United States and North Korea, two antagonistic state actors who operate under the condition of anarchy where there is no international sovereign that can make and enforce a rule over all state actors. As such, they find it imperative that they provide for their own security and take measures to close their perceived security gap. But one's actions are perceived by the other who understands them in a truncated manner as an attempt to put it in a relatively weaker position, prompting it to take a countermeasure to compensate for the effect that the other is suspected of intending to produce. As a result of the countermove, each actor's initial move to increase security ends up undermining it while exacerbating the enmity. As a result, the United States is

now faced with the nuclear-armed North Korea; and the latter with the United States that is tightening its noose around Pyongyang and prepared to strike preemptively.

And yet neither Washington nor Pyongyang acknowledges that they are caught in the security dilemma. Believing that what their potential adversary insists is a defensive capability is in fact a weapon of aggression, both insist they must take actions to defend against the threat that they see in the other side. Maintaining that their own military capability is purely defensive, both insist that their opponent does not need to worry about their military if it harbors no aggressive intentions. Failing to see that the other's action may be a reaction to one's own action, both are troubled by what they perceive to be unilateral escalation of tension or outright renegeing of previous commitments to cooperation. Both find every move of the other's as a further confirmation of its hostile intention. As a result, they end up increasing their military preparedness and entrenching the enmity.

A way out of the dilemma, therefore, starts with an understanding that the North Korean threat and the U.S. threat are mutually constitutive. This requires underscoring the social aspects of the security dilemma, rather than treating the dilemma, as IR theory has done to this point, simply as insecurity spirals in which rational unitary actors get locked in response to uncertainty under anarchy. Needed are not just institutional measures that constrain state behavior but also social steps that contribute to a transformation of the social reality between the countries. Because a solution to security dilemma requires an attention to the underlying social dimension as well as the adoption of appropriate behavioral measures, this final section turns to some of the specific issues that stand in the way of reaching these goals.

In order to find a way out of the dilemma, it is instructive to reexamine the chain of events in the 1990s that ultimately culminated in the North-South summit in 2000. A critical turning point in the convoluted nuclear history came in 1991 when President Bush announced that the U.S. would pull out all its nuclear weapons from South Korea. Also it was critical for

the process to move forward that Pyongyang did not take advantage of the American action by launching a surprise attack on the South – as in a realist’s “worst case scenario” – but reciprocated with its own disarming moves: Pyongyang within several months thereafter signed a safeguard agreement with IAEA and a denuclearization declaration with Seoul. Such positive tit for tat was made possible under the propitious political milieu created in the early 1990s by the end of the global Cold War as well as by the regional rapprochement between South Korea and its erstwhile enemies, China and Russia. Washington’s positive tit and Pyongyang’s positive tat, in turn, created an opening for the Koreans to rise above their Cold War division. Quickly taking advantage of the opening, the two Koreas held a series of exchanges – reunion of separated families, cultural performances, and sports events – all of which contributed to unraveling the Hobbesian culture between the Koreas. The cascading events of rapprochement culminated in the summit between Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Jong-Il in 2000.⁴⁸

The effects these developments have on ameliorating the security dilemma are dramatically illustrated by the opposite ways in which South Korea and the United States reacted to the North’s nuclear weapons and missiles in the 21st century. Seoul received with a relative calm the bombastic announcement Pyongyang made about its nuclear deterrent force in 2005, despite the apparent material reality that South Korea was physically extremely vulnerable to the North’s weapons of mass destruction. Although it was far from clear that the North had the delivery capacity to threaten American security with its nuclear weapons, in contrast, Washington took the announcement in a more alarmist manner. Also in 2006 when the North test-fired several missiles at once, Seoul – within the easy reach of these missiles – continued its exchanges with the North and proceeded with its planned high-level meeting with Pyongyang whereas Washington – outside the range of most, if not all, of the missiles – demanded tougher measures, including UN sanctions.

The difference stems from divergent degrees of enmity. Because the two Koreas have managed to lower the level of enmity through engagement policy, cultural exchanges, and economic intercourse, they could moderate the process of malign multiplication. The rapprochement on the peninsula allowed the Koreans to see the interactive nature of the security measures, helping them slow down the action-reaction chain. Truncated understandings, hostile identities, and identity blaming have decreased between the two Koreas, reducing the level and speed of malign multiplication and creating an opening for diplomacy, although there still remains the potential that the cycle of malign multiplication may restart, particularly given that South Korea's security policies are still guided by its alliance identity.

While national security concerns drove the Clinton and Kim Il-Sung administrations to the negotiating table at which the Agreed Framework was signed, in contrast, the agreement ultimately failed because the enmity between the United States and North Korea was brought back to the fore under the Bush and Kim Jong-Il administrations. The United States and North Korea, unlike the two Koreas, had no commonly shared identity that would facilitate the process of rapprochement. Nor did they start the process of exchanges that would expand the scope of interactions beyond that of national security and that would lay a basis of mutual understanding. In the absence of such a foundation, the political negotiations were susceptible to sudden changes of perception brought about by exogenous shocks.

Key to the Agreed Framework's initial success lay in the Clinton and Kim Il-Sung administrations' willingness to recognize the other side's core security concerns and address them on the basis of the principle of reciprocity.⁴⁹ When the willingness was undermined by a changed understanding of international security, facilitated by 9/11, that underlined the dangers of weapons of mass destruction and the "evil" identity of actors, the tit for tat – contained in the Agreed Framework – served as a step by step mechanism that ultimately undid the agreement. Only if the two are willing to move out their Manichean view of the other and to return to the

principle of reciprocity will they be able to get out of the stalemate. This process may be facilitated by relatively easy and tangible steps similar to the Kumchangri “inspection”: as a way to address U.S. concerns, Pyongyang invites U.S. officials to “visit” its facilities that Washington suspects produce HEP for weapons purposes; as a way to reassure its willingness to honor the Agreed Framework, the Bush administration, in turn, resumes its supply of heavy oil.

A possible institutional solution may take the form of a nuclear weapons free Korean peninsula treaty, following the Six Party statement of 2005, whereby Pyongyang commits to ridding itself of nuclear weapons productions while at the same time Washington gives a negative security guarantee to the North. Although North and South Korea signed the denuclearization declaration in 1991, they kept it at the level of a declaration and left out a negative security guarantee by the nuclear powers, a key component of a nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) treaty. The absence of an additional protocol, containing a negative security assurance, was the fatal flaw that subsequently all but killed the declaration. Immediately following President Bush’s decision to withdraw nuclear weapons from South Korea, the North signed the declaration because it believed that it no longer faced U.S. nuclear threat. After learning that its belief bore little relationship with U.S. military strategy, however, Pyongyang started dragging its feet in implementing the declaration as well as the Safeguard Agreement with IAEA, triggering what is now known as the first North Korean nuclear crisis.

In order to avoid repeating the same mistake, it is imperative that a new NWFZ treaty on Korea contains assurances from both Pyongyang and Washington. The former promises not to maintain or develop nuclear weapons while the latter not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the North. The two’s concurrent declarations within the framework of an NWFZ treaty would represent the first step that they take together to allay the other’s security concerns, laying the groundwork for further concrete measures that address other specific issues.⁵⁰ To acknowledge the reality of security dilemma and the necessity of positive

reciprocity, however, would be the necessary first step in the long journey toward ending the nuclear crisis.

Endnotes

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² Nick Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press publisher for the American Enterprise Institute, 1999); and David Frum, and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003).

³ Andrew Mack, "The Nuclear Crisis on the Korean Peninsula," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (April 1993), pp. 339-359; and "A Nuclear North Korea: The Choices Are Narrowing," *World Policy Journal* Vol. 11 (Summer 1994), pp. 27-35 and I Yông-Hûi, "Nambuk hwahaewa kunch'ukûi sinsidaerûl yôlja [Let's Open the New Era of South -North Reconciliation and Arms Reduction]," *Wolgan Mal* (Seoul), October 1993, pp. 58-63.

⁴ Selig S. Harrison, "DPRK Trip Report," in *Policy Forum Online*, 05-39A, Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network, May 10, 2005, <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0539AHarrison.html>; and Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁵ Christian Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004).

⁶ Peter Hayes, "The Stalker State: North Korean Proliferation and the End of American Nuclear Hegemony," *Policy Forum Online*, 06-82A, October 4th, 2006, <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0682Hayes.html>; and Jungsup Kim, "The Security Dilemma: Nuclear and Missile Crisis on the Korean Peninsula," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Fall 2006), pp. 89-106.

⁷ Such an expectation would be derived from the balance of threat theory. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

⁸ This mainly refers to the general public perception, but there are of course individuals who hold different views of North Korea. Gallup Poll, conducted in 2002, for example, shows that 37

percent of South Koreans held a negative image of North Korea whereas 53.7 percent negatively viewed the United States. Victor D. Cha, "Anti-Americanism and the U.S. Role in Inter-Korean Relations," in David I. Steinberg, ed., *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), pp. 116-138. Kim argues that "many South Korea people tend to believe that North Korea's nuclear weapons... will be aiming at Americans or Japanese, not its southern 'brethren'." Kim Sung-han, "Brothers versus Friends: Inter-Korean Reconciliation and Emerging Anti-Americanism in South Korea," in David I. Steinberg, ed., *Korean Attitudes Toward the United States: Changing Dynamics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), p. 181.

⁹ Brian Frederking, *Resolving Security Dilemmas: A Constructivist Explanation of the INF Treaty* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); and Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

¹⁰ Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (July 1984), pp. 461-495.

¹¹ Charles Louis Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Oct. 1997), pp. 171-201; John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Jan. 1950), pp. 157-180; Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Jan. 1978), pp. 167-214; Andrew Kydd, "Game Theory and the Spiral Model," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (April 1997), pp. 371-400; and Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹² To use the conventional distinction between offensive and defensive realists, the former usually make such arguments. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading,

Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979). John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001); and John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994-1995), pp. 5-49.

¹³ Evan Braden Montgomery, "Breaking out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Fall 2006), pp. 151-185.

¹⁴ It hence takes advantage of the creative possibilities offered by a synthesis of rationalist and constructivist works. Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change," *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Summer 2001), pp. 553-588; and J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson, eds., *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Emanuel Adler, "The Emergence of Cooperation: National Epistemic Communities and the International Evolution of the Idea of Nuclear Arms Control," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (1992), pp. 101-146.

¹⁶ Barry Buzan, and Eric Herring, *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998); and Barry Buzan, "Waltz, His Critics, and the Prospects for a Structural Realism," in Barry Buzan, Charles A. Jones and Richard Little, ed., *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Emanuel Adler, and Michael N. Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Robert O. Keohane, and Joseph S. Nye, "Transgovernmental Relations and International Organizations," *World Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Oct. 1974), pp. 39-62; Richard N. Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); and Bruce M. Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Following its decision to suspend the LWR project in 2005, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) officially terminated it a year later.

¹⁹ The North Korean government announced in 2005 that it possessed what it described as “nuclear deterrent force”.

²⁰ Leon V. Sigal, "Negotiating with the North," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 59, No. 6 (November-December 2003), pp. 19-25.

²¹ Jae-Jung Suh, "The Imbalance of Power, the Balance of Asymmetric Terror: Mutual Assured Destruction (Mad) in Korea," in John Feffer, ed., *The Future of US-Korean Relations: The Imbalance of Power* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 64-80.

²² Thomas J. Christensen, and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 137-168; and Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (July 1984), pp. 461-495.

²³ Onuf, *World of Our Making*.

²⁴ Gavan McCormack, *Target North Korea: Pushing North Korea to the Brink of Nuclear Catastrophe* (New York: Nation Books, 2004).

²⁵ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); James G. Carrier, ed., *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

²⁶ Roland Bleiker, "A Rogue Is a Rogue Is a Rogue: US Foreign Policy and the Korean Nuclear Crisis," *International Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (July 2003), pp. 719-737.

²⁷ Frum and Perle, *An End to Evil*, p. 103.

²⁸ Nicholas Eberstadt, "Diplomatic Fantasyland: The Illusion of a Negotiated Solution to the North Korean Nuclear Crisis," *Policy Forum Online*, PFO 03-042, NAPSNET, September 23, 2003, http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0342_Eberstadt.html.

²⁹ Some scholars noted the security dilemma in which China was locked with the U.S.-Japan alliance. Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 49-80. Some of the components of a security dilemma argument are found even earlier. Karl W. Eikenberry, "Does China Threaten Asia-Pacific Regional Stability?" *Parameters* (Spring 1995), pp. 82-99.

³⁰ As Jervis puts it: "the dilemma will operate much more strongly if statesmen do not understand it." Jervis, "Cooperation under Security Dilemma," p. 181. This is a failure of truncated understanding. In large part the end of the Cold War came about because Gorbachev and his new thinking consciously recognized security dilemma dynamics of the US-Soviet relationship. This allowed him to experiment with unilateral, de-escalatory signaling and limited de-militarization of Soviet foreign policy. Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); and Celeste A. Wallander, "Lost and Found: Gorbachev's 'New Thinking'," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 117-129.

³¹ Sigal notes that American response to the North Korean nuclear crisis is characterized by the "crime and punishment" mentality. Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

³² There is interesting evidence, for example, that inter-ethnic conflicts in U.S. neighborhoods are created because of perceptions that others are blaming one's own ingroup for the problems. Blame rhetoric, in other words, has as much, if not more, an independent and destructive effect on inter-group relations as real conflict of interests at stake. Romer Daniel, H. Jamieson Kathleen,

Riegner Catharine, Emori Mika, and Rouson Brigitte, "Blame Discourse Versus Realistic Conflict as Explanations of Ethnic Tension in Urban Neighborhoods," *Political Communication*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (July 1997), pp. 273-291.

³³ Ole Holsti, "The "Operational Code" Approach to the Study of Political Leaders: John Foster Dulles' Philosophical and Instrumental Beliefs," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (March 1970), pp. 123-157; Douglas Stuart, and Harvey Starr, "Inherent Bad Faith Reconsidered: Dulles, Kennedy and Kissinger," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 1981/82), pp. 1-33; Richard K. Herrmann, *Perceptions and Behavior in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985).

³⁴ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

³⁵ Suh, "The Imbalance of Power".

³⁶ David C. Kang, "International Relations Theory and the Second Korean War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 2003), p. 319.

³⁷ Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*.

³⁸ Cha, and Kang, *Nuclear North Korea*, p. 83.

³⁹ Geun Lee, 2005. "The 2nd North Korean Nuclear Crisis," paper presented at Korea-US Next Generation Forum for Future Strategies, Korea Institute for Future Strategies, Washington, DC, 2005, http://www.kifs.org/file/0505_paper_Washington.pdf.

⁴⁰ The exact translation of the relevant passage is as follows: "If our adversary wields a gun, we will wield a cannon. That is the hopeful way to protect the fate of the country and people and win glorious victory." "Raise Higher the Flag of Revolution," *Rodongsinmun*, October 13, 2006, [carried in *Chosŏn'ongsin*, October 14, 2006].

⁴¹ Johnston uses the expression “malign reciprocation” to explain the emergence of the security dilemma between the United States and China. Although my concept of “malign multiplication” is similar to his, I prefer to call the phenomenon “malign multiplication” because it involves more than simple reciprocity: behavioral consequences and social effects multiply each other, exacerbating the cycle of action and reaction. Alastair I. Johnston, "Beijing's Security Behavior in the Asia-Pacific: Is China a Dissatisfied Power?" in J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein and Allen Carlson, eds., *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 34-96.

⁴² Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 116-125.

⁴³ The Bayesian model presumes that the players’ payoffs remain stable through multiple iterations, and argues that the players can eventually learn, from their interactions, each other’s true payoff and adjust their strategies. For the best application of the Bayesian model to security dilemma, see Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*. I argue, however, that there are cases where the players’ payoffs themselves are transformed as a result of their interactions. Habermas’ theory of communicative action, for example, suggests that dialogues are more than exchanges of information or “signaling” as they involve the actors in self-reflexive activities which can lead to a change of the actors’ values, principles, and identities. See, for example, James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996); and Marc Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁴⁴ Jonathan D. Pollack, "The United States, North Korea, and the End of the Agreed Framework," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer 2003), pp. 11-49.

⁴⁵ Frum and Perle, *An End to Evil*, p. 101.

⁴⁶ Karen DeYoung, *Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell* (New York: Knopf, 2006), excerpted in *Tongailbo*, October 14, 2006; and Seymour M. Hersh, "The Cold Test: What the Administration Knew About Pakistan and the North Korean Nuclear Program," *The New Yorker*, January 27 2003, http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/030127fa_fact.

⁴⁷ Pollack, "The United States, North Korea, and the End."

⁴⁸ Frederking examines the discursive practices by which the Cold War was ended in Europe. Frederking, *Resolving Security Dilemmas*.

⁴⁹ For a detailed account of the Clinton administration's negotiations with North Korea, see Joel S. Wit, Daniel Poneman, and Robert L. Gallucci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press. (2004).

⁵⁰ In a more ambitious proposal, Umebayashi suggests that the two Koreas and Japan establish a regional nuclear-weapons-free zone, which should then be honored in a protocol by China, Russia, and the United States. Others also make similar suggestions. John E. Endicott, and Alan G. Gorowitz, "Track II Cooperative Regional Security Efforts: Lessons from the Limited Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone for Northeast Asia," *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (October 1999), pp. 293-324; Andrew Mack, "A Northeast Asia Nuclear-Free Zone: Problems and Prospects," in *Nuclear Policies in Northeast Asia*, UNIDIR/95/16 (New York: United Nations, 1995); and Hiro Umebayashi, "A Northeast NWFZ: A Realistic and Attainable Goal," *INESAP Information Bulletin*, No. 10 (August 1996), <http://www.inesap.org/bulletin10/bul10art03.htmfile://C:%5CArticles%5CUmebayashi-%201996-A%20Northeast%20Asia%20NWFZ.txt>.