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I. What Made North Korea's Nuclear Threat "Underbalanced"?

The balance of power principle has prevailed on the Korean Peninsula since the Cold War began. The Korean War can be understood from this point of view. The military buildup has increased continuously between the two Koreas even since the signing of the armistice, and both big and small military conflicts keep occurring. These circumstances have resulted in a kind of strategic balance on the Korean Peninsula. However, a decisive factor that might change the inter-Korean strategic balance arose in the early 1990s: North Korea's nuclear development.

North Korea's nuclear development was first detected in its initial stages in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was never effectively stopped, and the North is now considered to be at a nuclear arsenal stage with an accumulation of nuclear materials and two nuclear tests. Notably, in November 2010, North Korea's uranium enrichment program was revealed in addition to its existing plutonium-based nuclear program, which made the North Korean nuclear issue of greater concern.¹ North Korea's nuclear test in 2006 marked a critical stage, making North Korea a de facto nuclear state. But South Korea's response was unexpectedly restrained. There were no strong sanctions against North Korea nor a corresponding attempt at nuclear armament. What made this happen?

Why was North Korea's nuclear armament not stopped? According to realist theory, the logic of the security dilemma should have called for a balancing behavior, but the actual responses were limited and even resembled a de facto appeasement policy. The U.S. option might have been restricted by the geopolitics of the Korean Peninsula and the U.S.-ROK alliance. Any sanctions against North Korea, military or economic, could not be im-



posed if opposed by South Korea, the United States' ally. What were South Korea's responses? North Korea's nuclear armament decisively changed the military strategic balance in inter-Korean relations. Although South Korea ought to have responded more proactively to the North Korean threat, it did not, from the standpoint of realism. Even without a preemptive military strike, strong sanctions against North Korea ought to have been imposed, given that security concerns were the highest priority in the South Korean decision-making process. Yet the Roh Moo-Hyun administration largely continued to draw on existing inter-Korean relations and only joined the sanctions against North Korea imposed by the UN Security Council following the first nuclear test, the most critical phase in the North Korean nuclear program. Was this action a policy failure or an exceptional case? If we just want to evaluate South Korean policy then we could stop here, but if we want to carefully analyze it then a much more complex analysis will be required.

Neoclassical realists call a threatened country's behavior "underbalancing" when it has failed to recognize a clear and present danger, has simply not reacted to it or has responded in a paltry and imprudent way (Schweller 2004, pp. 159–160). It is debatable whether we can call the Roh administration's reaction to North Korea's nuclear threat "underbalancing." Liberalists as well as realists might not consent to this argument. From a liberalist perspective, the Roh administration's response was a rational choice that reflected the progress of inter-Korean relations, because excessive military measures or strong sanctions against North Korea might have caused unnecessary military tensions on the Korean Peninsula and compromised the entire inter-Korean relationship. Strict realists may not regard the Roh administration's behavior as "underbalancing," either. In their view, any balancing act was not needed at that time, because an aggregate strategic balance was already working on the Korean Peninsula since the U.S.-ROK alliance was in place. Rather, they might have viewed the Roh administration's response as over-engaging behavior, which was too sensitive to North Korea's reaction. However, defining balancing behavior as a militarily meaningful measure is a too narrow and military-centric approach. Even the concept of "soft balancing" was developed to describe limited and indirect balancing strategies through coalition building and diplomatic bargaining, contrasted with "hard balancing" such as military buildup and alliance formation (Paul 2005, p.58). The Roh administration's response to North Korea's nuclear test in 2006 was even below its own threatened level, let alone the level that the conservatives and the United States demanded. There are enough grounds for taking the Roh administration's behavior as "underbalancing," for it neglected even "soft balancing"² It was, however, "underbalancing" on a specific issue rather than in an aggregate power structure.³

Nevertheless, this paper is not based on the neoclassical realist approach. The Roh ad-



ministration's response is difficult to explain using neoclassical realist theory even if there was some kind of "underbalancing" phenomenon. Neoclassical realism notes the role of domestic politics. The distortion in foreign policy by domestic politics is fully considered in foreign policy studies. The problem is that as shown by the complete differences in the policy toward North Korea of the Roh and Lee administrations, South Korean domestic politics can be an "overbalancing" factor as well as an "underbalancing" one. How can we explain such differences in policy preferences? We need a more complex approach than comparative foreign policy theory. In the case of South Korea, it is impossible to generalize about how domestic politics is reflected in foreign policy with several domestic variables. In South Korea, inter-Korean relations are deeply linked to domestic politics, because policy toward North Korea includes cultural elements such as identity and norms.

This discussion will analyze how the domestic politics of South Korea are reflected in the North Korean nuclear issue, the highest national security concern when North Korea conducted its nuclear test in 2006. Especially, it will show how cultural elements such as norms and identity shaped the South Korean government's response to North Korea's nuclear threat in term of constructivism.⁴ Yet the global cultural environment on which constructivism focuses will not be dealt with in depth here. Constructivism tends to note the effect of the domestic cultural environment in addition to the international one.⁵ But the global cultural environment such as the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime and non-proliferation norms have had a relatively insignificant impact on the South Korean government's policy decisions. I will therefore review the relevance of various alternative approaches that can be used to explain South Korea's underbalancing behavior in response to North Korea's nuclear threat.

II. How to Explain South Korea's Response to North Korea's Nuclear Threat: A Brief Theoretical Review

1. Neoclassical Realist Approach

The nuclear issue is the most typical military security issue in the international political arena and can be expected to be strongly explained by realist international political theory that stresses high politics. According to traditional realism, all nations pursue their national interests, defined as power. Yet there is an inevitable limitation to national power;



the balance of power is a major factor that determines the behavior of nations (Morgenthau 1985). And the most explicit form of power is the military and nuclear weapons that are the most destructive means. Thus the balance of power is the most effective tool for analysis to explain a nuclear issue. Structural realism, pioneered by Waltz, emphasizes the concept of the balance of power in a different context. Under an anarchical international system without global government, nations have the same functional property as units in that they have to put the top priority on their survival and safety rather than on cooperation with other nations. Therefore, the most significant element in international politics is the distribution of power; in this context the balance of power is the core factor that can explain and predict the behavior of all nations (Waltz 1979). Nuclear armament, in particular, is a critical factor that can change the strategic balance among nations in a fundamental way. North Korea's nuclear development can be interpreted from a realist point of view. There are various interpretations of the nuclear negotiating strategy of North Korea.⁶ Yet it cannot be disputed that North Korea developed its nuclear weapons program in order to secure its survival and safety. It is generally understood that the strategic factors for North Korea's nuclear weapons are the increased security vulnerability with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc; the fear of U.S. attack, which intensified following the Iraq War; the diverging gap in South-North Korea national capabilities; and the burden from the conventional arms race with South Korea due to the North's own economic difficulties. Whatever the factors might be, nuclear armaments can be perceived as the most effective tool to guarantee the survival of the North Korean regime in a rapidly deteriorating strategic environment.

The problem is whether realism can explain South Korea's response to North Korea's nuclear threat. Traditional realism regards a state as a unit pursuing power as a human being does. And structural realism sees the international anarchic structure as defining the behavior of an individual state. Either way, realism takes a state as a rational unitary actor. A state naturally shows balancing behavior toward external threats, but this has not been the case on many occasions, such as the response to North Korea's nuclear threat in 2006.⁷ South Korea did not take any meaningful military measures at that time. In this regard, we might take note of the geopolitical risk that the South Korean government faces. The possibility of full-scale war, as experienced in the Korean War, limits options in North Korean policies. But overemphasizing the geopolitical risk might lead to ignorance of the fact that there are various levels of sanctions and diverse types of military sanctions, such as military exercises and deterrence measures. In any sense, the Roh administration's response is difficult to explain from a realist point of view.

Even within realism, international politics theory based on a positivist hypothesis of



rationality has been questioned. Neoclassical realists note the process and interaction of agents and acknowledge that the response of a state to an external threat can be influenced by domestic circumstances. The closer the policymaking process and actual state's society relations to a unitary actor, the more accurate realism's prediction is. Conversely, when states are divided at the society level, they are less likely to behave in accordance with balance-of-power predictions. According to Schweller, a neoclassical realist, we can explain an actor's choices by two reasons, the first being an actor's preferences, that is, willingness, and the second being the ability of the actor to balance, given the political and material hurdles that must be overcome to do so. Schweller posits four variables that are comprehensive enough to explain state responses to threats: elite consensus, government or regime vulnerability, social cohesion, and elite cohesion. He insists that incoherent and fragmented states are unwilling and unable to balance against potentially dangerous threats, because elites view the domestic risks as too high and are unable to mobilize the required resources from a divided society (Schweller 2004, pp. 168–170).

A neoclassical realist approach indeed has some implications concerning the North Korean nuclear issue. It is true that the North Korean nuclear issue has deteriorated over the past twenty years since the early 1990s despite some progress. North Korea was suspected of developing its nuclear program in the early 1990s and is supposed to be a de facto nuclear state today. From a neoclassical realist viewpoint, this situation is the result of a lack of proper responses to explicit external threats and a typical “underbalancing” phenomenon. In Schweller's framework, it is the result of South Korea's specific domestic politics. It is true that the South Korean state-society was fragmented during the same period. Particularly after the first inter-Korean summit in 2000, the entire society as well as the political elites was rendered almost dichotomous over inter-Korean relations and the policy toward North Korea. But it is not enough to explain South Korea's response to North Korea's nuclear threat only by reference to the cohesion of society. Schweller's framework, based on the British and French experiences during the interwar period, cannot be applied to South Korea, which has a different historical background. Furthermore, it is virtually impossible to explain the Lee administration's response to the North Korean nuclear issue, which is the very opposite to the Roh administration's, while societal fragmentation and cohesion have not changed. It does not make sense to explain that South Korea's response has changed completely after only two years, with a change of actor's preferences due to adjustments in domestic political circumstances. Rather, it would be more plausible to say that the policy preferences of the two administrations were different socio-psychologically. It is true that domestic politics are relevant in balancing external threats. But in the South Korean case, cultural elements such as norms and identity are



much more influential than political and economic interests.

2. Liberalist Explanation

Liberalists have much to say about South Korea's response to North Korea's nuclear threat. They would resent the concept of "underbalancing." "Underbalancing," which is very value-oriented, is a concept based on the assumption that a proactive balancing action has to be taken. But liberalists would not consider the Roh administration's response to be "underbalancing." To them, it was the appropriate response to prevent tensions from accelerating on the Korean Peninsula. In their view, a kind of under-engaging has happened under the Lee administration, to the extent that the North Korean nuclear issue has deteriorated to a much greater extent. The motivation behind North Korea's nuclear threat has been to prompt the United States to negotiate the lifting of financial sanctions against North Korea rather than to create a substantial and immediate threat to cause a strategic imbalance between the two Koreas.⁸ Taking excessive military measures is overbalancing that might cause military tensions on the Korean Peninsula. In the liberalist view, the Roh administration's choice reflected the progress of inter-Korean relations. Based on a cost-benefit analysis, it was a rational choice to maintain inter-Korean relations through a measured response rather than through sacrificing the entire relationship by strong sanctions against North Korea.⁹ This means that the so-called "spill-over effect" worked, as liberalism and functionalism would say. Liberalist approaches are based on the hypothesis that the state is basically a rational actor. But if we understand that the Roh administration's choice was not the best but was inevitable and rational, it, at least, comes from the fact that the actor (the Roh administration) had a liberalist's view. The Lee administration showed another choice in sacrificing its inter-Korean relationship in order to protect its security interests. Still, the liberalist approach also cannot effectively explain why the two South Korean administrations under almost the same state-society structure made opposite political choices.

3. Constructivist Alternative

The constructivist approach is relevant in analyzing the Roh administration's response to the North Korean nuclear issue in that it emphasizes cultural elements such as norms and identity. South Korean domestic politics became more diversified as the country went through rapid industrialization and democratization over the past half century, and the influence of domestic variables in the decision-making process has greatly increased. Thus, we can explain South Korean behavior by analyzing public opinion on specific foreign policy issues or bureaucratic



interests.¹⁰ We can also simply use ways of analysis such as cognitive consistency, group thinking, and psychological stress. However, the Roh administration's response to North Korea's first nuclear test that I analyze here seems to have been more affected by discourse politics and cultural elements than by political interests, being much more relevant than the personal level cognitive and psychological elements of political elites.

Constructivism focuses more on the cultural-institutional elements of a state's environment and identity than on the physical environment surrounding it, shaping the national security interests or the security policies of a state. Katzenstein defines norms as collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity. In some situations norms operate like rules that define the identity of an actor. In other situations norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity. The former is called "constitutive effects" that specify what actions will make the relevant others recognize a particular identity, and the latter is called "regulative effects" that specify the standards for proper behavior (Katzenstein 1996, p. 5). Taken together, norms establish expectations about who the actor will be in a particular environment and about how these particular actors will behave (Katzenstein 1996, p. 54). Norms influence policy decision-makers to prefer or avoid particular policies on the grounds of norms, and the public or experts present or support specific norms to affect policymaking.¹¹

Another important concept of constructivism is identity. Identity reflects mutually constructive and evolving images of self and others. It refers to the images of individuality and distinctiveness held and projected by an actor and formed through relations with significant others (Katzenstein 1996, p. 59). The term comes from socio-psychology but can be used in international relations in that nations construct and project collective identities, and states operate as actors. Identities in international politics are constructed by nations' perception of self and others through collective experience and political leaders' definitions. The problem is that national identities are varied, and they have a direct impact on national security interests and policies.¹² States' policies or activities may be a direct enactment or reflection of identity politics. Identity politics and change in collective identities can precipitate substantial change in states' interests and policies. Postwar domestic conflicts in Germany and Japan over proper security policy were a part of a broader conflict of identities. As Berger shows, the continuity in German and Japanese security policy must be attributed to their domestic policy of identities rather than to discontinuity in the structure of international society. Similarly, Kier argues that during the interwar years, domestic conflicts over the identity of the French provided the settings in which the organizational culture of the French military caused the adoption of a defensive doctrine (Kier 1996). Israel was deeply divided between those defending a traditional conception of geostrategic security, even at the risk of losing the moral support of the



American public, and those favoring strategic entrenchment and strengthening the notion of Israel as a Western-style democracy. The peace offensive of the Rabin government illustrates that identity can trump geostrategy as a determinant of national security policy (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, p. 62).

Constructivists emphasize norms and identity because these elements affect the definition of national interests and security policy. The constructivist approach to national interests contrast with the realist one. Realism depicts international politics as a state of anarchy in which a state as an actor pursues its national interest, defined as power. In a realist's view, national interest is obvious, for a state as a rational unitary actor can always find out what its interest is. Constructivism criticizes the realist's concept of national interest. Constructivists understand that national interest is not defined by a state as a personified entity, but rather is socially constructed in terms of common values, norms, and identity (Wendt 1999, pp. 233–234). Therefore, as norms and identity change, national interests may change as well. Furthermore, when competing norms and identities exist in a single state, national interests are not defined unitarily.

Thus the two core cultural elements of norms and identity affect a state's national interest and security policies. Yet how norms and identity interact is somewhat obscure. Most often norms are considered to shape state identity by many constructivists while the configurations of state identity are thought to affect interstate normative structures such as regimes and security communities.¹³ That is, norms are relatively superior to identity. This is, however, a hasty generalization mainly based on Western experience, where international norms were formed due to a dense interaction, and identity was shaped by the norms. More often than not, identity used to be more influential than norms in non-Western countries that were incorporated into a modern international system by the West. This clearly occurred in the South Korean case, as we will review later.

4. South Korea's Foreign Policy and Cultural Elements

The relevance of constructivism to South Korea's foreign policy studies can be easily proved by the influence of cultural elements such as norms and identity. We can find many occasions where norms define South Korea's security policies and national interests. The most influential international political norms in Korea may be the ones related to sovereignty and the avoidance of war. The following are cases of internalized norms of sovereignty: thirty-six years of experience under Japanese colonial rule inculcated a strong sovereign consciousness in the minds of South Korean people; South Koreans' strong reaction to Japanese distortions of history and claims over the sovereignty of the Dokdo Islands; some skepticism about the U.S.



position regarding the Gwangju democratization movement; and anti-U.S. sentiment provoked by the death of school girls during the U.S.-ROK military exercise in 2002. Meanwhile, the experience of the Korean War solidified the norms of peace-keeping and avoidance of war.

During the Cold War, the influence of the international political structure was dominant and cultural-institutional elements like norms had a relatively small weight in security policy decision-making in a small country like South Korea. After the end of the Cold War, however, the influence of norms and identity explicitly increased in defining South Korea's security policy and national interests. At least since the 1990s, peaceful coexistence and cooperation became dominant norms in inter-Korean relations. "The Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Inter-Korean Exchanges" adopted by the two Koreas in 1991 is a typical example demonstrating that inter-Korean norms are institutionalized.¹⁴ The concern over avoiding evolving into a full-scale war was one reason that the United States planned (but never carried out) a surgical strike on the Yongbyeon nuclear facilities.¹⁵ The norms of peace-keeping and war avoidance tend to restrict South Korea's response considerably. Military measures have the strongest deterrent effect but have difficulty finding political support. Even economic sanctions on North Korea were barely imposed on the ground that they could unnecessarily heighten the tension on the Korean Peninsula. The Inter-Korean Relations Development Act, legislated in 2005 in South Korea, is another example of the institutionalization of norms of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. In this atmosphere, the Roh administration's policy toward North Korea was named PPP (Peace and Prosperity Policy) and even the Lee administration's North Korea policy, which criticized the Roh administration's policy harshly, was called MBCP (Mutual Benefit and Common Prosperity).

Identity is a more influential element in South Korea's foreign policy. South Korea has a more complex identity than any other state and is a typical state whose identity as well as definition of national security interests and policy has changed radically. However, it is affected by its peculiar historical experience and domestic identity politics, while Western countries are affected by global norms and regimes. In the case of South Korea, external invasions throughout thousands of years of history, experience under Japanese colonial rule, and division by global powers and a special geopolitical environment surrounded by great powers have shaped a national and state identity of resistance and self-protection. These circumstances have contributed to the maintenance of the same national collective identity of the two Koreas notwithstanding their more than half-century-long division and subsequent differentiation. In South Korea's relations with neighboring great powers like the United States, China, and Japan, a unitary identity of resistance operates, be it as a nationhood or a statehood. This is proved by South Korea's fervent reaction to ROK-U.S. FTA negotiations, China's distortion of Korea's ancient history, and Korea-Japan history disputes. Korean people perceive the dis-



tortions by China on the history of Goguryeo and Japan's claim on the sovereignty of Dokdo as literal "identity problems."¹⁶ The identity problem in inter-Korean relations is much more complex. Division of the Korean Peninsula, the Korean War, and the strong confrontation between the two Koreas brought about the tension and split of nationhood and statehood. Today, in inter-Korean relations, South Korea has double identities, one being the state identity of the democracy and the other being the same national collective identity of two Koreas, which often clash with each other. This is represented as identity politics in the domestic context. The most decisive element in shaping the inter-Korean identity is how to define the North Korean regime. Some observers emphasize that North Korea is a despotic regime oppressing its people; others insist that North Korea is a candidate for negotiation and cooperation so long as South Korea does not pursue a change of regime. The problem is that the identity of the others affects the identity of self. The former blames the latter as pro-North Korea or North Korea followers. The latter calls the former anti-North Korea or Cold War-minded.

It was not until the first inter-Korean Summit that identity politics worked actively in inter-Korean relations. The so-called July 7 declaration by the Roh Tae-woo administration in 1988 and the joint joining of the United Nations by the two Koreas and the adoption of the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement in 1991 established norms of reconciliation and cooperation to some degree, but identity was not yet raised as a serious question at that point. The rapid progress in inter-Korean relations shown by the first inter-Korean Summit raised the question of identity regarding how to define and deal with North Korea, which caused political debates to break out. The "June 15 Joint Declaration" itself was highly controversial. Article 1 of the Joint Declaration reads [the] "two Koreas as one nation try to resolve the unification problem autonomously with joint efforts." The Article 2 reads that [the] "two Koreas recognize a common element in the South's confederation proposal and the North's low stage federation proposal." The conservatives criticized these two articles as accepting North Korea's long-held position, causing confusion of identity.¹⁷ Identity politics finally took center stage to the point that the Grand National Party, the opposition, used the term "identity crisis."¹⁸

The so-called main enemy controversy is another example of identity politics. The main enemy controversy comes from the reality that the two Koreas pursue dialogue and cooperation while they are technically at war, with a massive military standoff creating a practical threat to one another. It is awkward to define one's counterpart as the enemy while pursuing reconciliation and cooperation, but North Korea is still "an enemy" in a military and strategic sense. The expression "North Korea is the main enemy" was first used in the 1995 *Defense White Paper* after the North Korean representative Park Yong-Soo's remark referring to a "fire raid on Seoul" in the 8th inter-Korean working-level meetings in 1994. The term created controversy consistently, even delaying the publication of subsequent *Defense White Papers*. Since



the 2004 *Defense White Paper*, the term was replaced with "direct military threat" and "existing military threat from North Korea," and so on. The Roh administration deleted the term "main enemy" on the grounds that the concept was anachronistic. Yet the conservatives, including the Grand National Party and some influential members of the press, reacted strongly to abolishing the term, regarding its absence as an indication of an identity crisis. This controversy did not cease during the Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun administrations. Literally, identity politics prevailed.¹⁹

As there is controversy about norms and identity in inter-Korean relations, there also exist different views as to what South Korea's national interest is. Identity politics in inter-Korean relations is a game of defining the national interest. *Peace, Prosperity, and National Security*, published in 2004 by the Roh administration to present its national security strategy, defines one of South Korea's national interests as "peaceful coexistence and unification of the two Koreas." Similarly, three national security goals are set to promote national interests. Two of them are "peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula," and "co-prosperity of the two Koreas and Northeast Asia." (NSC 2004, pp. 21–22). It is impressive that two of three national security goals have something to do with inter-Korean relations. This implies that the Roh administration defined national interests to form common interests and to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula through reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas. The Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun administrations firmly maintained their positions that they would continue inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation on the principle of separation of political and economic affairs even if North Korea provoked. When a military conflict broke out in the West Sea in 2002, tourism at Mt. Geumgang in the East Sea was maintained. Economic cooperation in Gaesung and Mt. Geumgang was not suspended despite the security crisis of North Korea's nuclear test in October 2007. Development of inter-Korean relations in any case was interpreted as contributing to South Korea's national interest. On the contrary, issues like human rights were relatively neglected on the grounds that they would provoke North Korea and create obstacles to inter-Korean relations.

Meanwhile, conservative political and social forces defined national interests in terms of security considerations even in inter-Korean affairs. Top priorities in North Korea policy for the South were resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and dealing with North Korean military threats. Policy discussions focused on the need for the North Korean regime to be transformed for the fundamental elimination of the North Korean threat. Inter-Korean cooperation that did not contribute to North Korea's reform and North Korean people's lives was criticized for helping the North Korean regime.²⁰ Such issues as human rights and abduction of South Koreans were regarded as necessary agenda items to be discussed even if they might provoke the North Korean regime. In the South's view that was the true national interest in



inter-Korean relations.

We can easily find how norms and identity affect South Korean foreign policy, particularly North Korea policy. The differences in norms and identity are reflected in the definition of national security and policy preferences. In the next section, I will analyze how cultural elements such as norms and identity affected a high security issue, North Korea's nuclear threat.

III. North Korea's First Nuclear Test and South Korea's Responses

1. The Roh Administration's Initial Stance on the North Korean Nuclear Issue

The Roh administration was inaugurated following the outbreak of the so-called second North Korean nuclear crisis. This crisis began in December 2002, when the Bush administration viewed North Korea as having breached the 1994 Geneva Agreement because of its development of a uranium enrichment program. Consequently the United States stopped provision of heavy oil shipments to North Korea. In response, North Korea lifted its nuclear freeze and withdrew from the NPT in January 2003. In the first round of the nuclear crisis in 1994 the situation came close to a possible war as the United States seriously considered a surgical strike against the nuclear facilities in Yongbyeon, North Korea. In this regard, the Roh administration was very concerned in formulating its response. As soon as President Roh took office in February 2003, he strongly urged North Korea not to take any measure that could cause the situation to deteriorate and called on the Bush administration to seek a peaceful resolution through dialogue. The strategic objective was to stem any possibility of war on the Korean Peninsula due to the second nuclear crisis.

The contingency plan of the Roh administration at the early stage was strong. The fact of North Korean nuclear development was intolerable for the Roh administration even though it saw North Korea as a partner of reconciliation and cooperation. North Korea's nuclear development was regarded as a serious danger to South Korean national interests, and there was no room for any other interpretation. It was the the Roh administration's consistent message that North Korea could not have both nuclear weapons and economic cooperation. A step-by-step scenario was drawn up to respond to North Korea's reprocessing of spent fuel rods, intermediate and long-range missile tests, declaration on the possession of nuclear weapons, nuclear transfer, and so on.²¹ With North Korea's nuclear weapons declaration or nuclear test, the assumption was that inter-Korean relations



would in turn be completely severed. For the reprocessing of spent fuel rods, strong measures, including economic sanctions against North Korea, were planned. Yet this never happened. Since the summer of 2003, criticism and warnings against North Korea have been the only measures taken within inter-Korean relations even though reprocessing facilities in North Korea were discovered and verifications followed. Even in May 2005, when North Korea declared its possession of nuclear weapons, no military responses occurred and inter-Korean economic cooperation continued. Stable management of the situation was preferred rather than a stern response. From a realist point of view, there was no balancing behavior in the face of an obvious threat.

There could be many reasons behind this series of non-responses. At least before the 2006 nuclear test, external factors such as intelligence assessment failures, underestimating the North Korean nuclear capability, and the existence of the Six-Party Talks played a more important role than domestic political factors. Intelligence assessments could not ignore the fact that North Korea was increasing its nuclear materials, but in order to make nuclear detonators, many tests of high-explosives and related data were required and they would provide signals of an impending test. Furthermore, it was expected that it would take a long time for North Korea to make nuclear weapons smaller, which was essential for deployment on missiles. Surprisingly, however, three years after North Korea began reprocessing, it went ahead with its first nuclear test. The Six-Party Talks were initially designed for North Korea's nuclear disarmament but ironically served to delay necessary responses to North Korea's nuclear threat. The Six-Party Talks had some achievements, such as the September 19 Joint Statement and February 13 Agreement, but the repeated stop-go nature of the talks resulted in allowing North Korea to enhance its nuclear capabilities.

2. Competing Norms of Inter-Korean Relations

When Seoul deals with the North Korean nuclear issue, norms of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the two Koreas have a strong impact. As the North Korean nuclear issue is essentially an item on the global agenda, the global norm of non-proliferation is naturally expected to be the most important guide in responding to the North Korean nuclear issue. Evidently, all the parties involved, including North Korea, emphasized non-proliferation. Denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula was repeatedly stated to be the objective in the agreements reached in the Six-Party Talks—the September 19 Joint Statement and the February 13 Agreement. The South Korean government firmly maintained its position not to allow North Korean nuclear development. However, the norms of peaceful coexistence and avoidance of war had a greater effect on South Korea's actual



responses toward North Korea's nuclear threat. The global norms of non-proliferation cannot overwhelm the local norms of peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas. The Roh administration advocated peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula in the context of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the two Koreas. This envisioned that military tensions should be moderated beyond ending hostilities, and inter-dependent development should be pursued by building on a common interest structure. Such inter-Korean norms were applied to deal with the North Korean nuclear issue, but the Roh administration did not separate national security from the development of inter-Korean relations.²² More often than not, the Roh administration had conflicting norms: one calling for a firm response to the nuclear issue, and the other for development of inter-Korean relations. Any responses to the nuclear issue, however strong they were, remained within the framework of inter-Korean peace and prosperity.

Meanwhile, there were not only the norms of peaceful coexistence and cooperation regarding desirable inter-Korean relations. The opposition in South Korea started to articulate alternative norms criticizing the ruling party's North Korea policy after the first inter-Korean Summit meeting. They presented reciprocity and fundamental change in North Korea as an alternative, criticizing the negotiation stance of the Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun administrations. Many opposition figures accused the ruling party's policy of "just giving without taking," "being swayed by North Korea," and having a "submissive attitude." Exposure of the fact that Hyundai Asan, a South Korean conglomerate involved in North Korean projects, provided cash to the North Korean regime just before the first inter-Korean Summit, led to alternative norms proposed by the opposition to gain more political support. In this way, competing models of inter-Korean norms began to appear. The new norm pushed forward by the opposition stressed the necessity of being tough with North Korea in order to induce substantial changes within the North Korean regime.

Generally, competing norms tend to diminish the influence of the existing, dominant norms.²³ North Korea's nuclear test in October 2006 questioned whether the existing norms of peaceful coexistence and cooperation were still valid. A true breakthrough in inter-Korean relations seemed almost impossible unless North Korea fundamentally changed and stopped provocations. It can be understood in this context that President Roh suggested the review of his North Korea policy on the day of the nuclear test. Yet the Roh administration maintained its norms of peace and prosperity. The rationale behind this was that certain measures were inevitable, but the rearrangement of the entire inter-Korean relationship would be undesirable, because so much depended on continued passive foreign investment into South Korea and public opinion against increased military tension. This strengthened the avoidance of war.



Given this, the Roh administration's response seemed to be excessively restrained because economic sanctions against North Korea, such as the temporary suspension of the Mt. Geumgang tourism project and limitation of inter-Korean trade, were not supposed to cause any immediate military conflict. This can hardly be explained only within the norms of inter-Korean relations, considering the fact that the norms of peaceful coexistence and cooperation have been weakened by competing norms. Therefore, it is not enough to explain the Roh administration's choice only by reference to norms. We need to consider another cultural element: identity.

3. North Korea's First Nuclear Test and Identity Politics

Domestic politics, more specifically, the politics of identity, reacted meaningfully to the North Korean nuclear threat before and after the nuclear test in October 2006. In July 2006, North Korea's test-launch of long-range missiles raised seriously the question of sanctions against North Korea for the first time. The Roh administration halted rice loans and fertilizer provisions in response to the missile launches. It was the first time sanctions were used against North Korea under the Roh administration. This was not without controversy in the administration and the ruling party. The liberal branch in the ruling party criticized the sanctions effort as they violated the principle of assistance for North Korea on humanitarian grounds.²⁴ Yet the government had no other choice, because the Ministry of Unification, led by Minister Lee Jong-suk, had already notified North Korea in advance that rice and fertilizer assistance could not be provided if North Korea test-fired missiles. If there had been no such prior notification or preemptive measure, the politics of identity would have affected the responses by the Roh administration a little earlier.

The politics of identity began in earnest over the first North Korean nuclear test. This was the most significant phase in the course of Pyongyang's nuclear development. A nuclear test is a mandatory step in becoming a nuclear state and the strategic situation is completely altered after a nuclear test as opposed to before. By conducting its nuclear test, North Korea became a de facto nuclear state, and the nature of the issue of North Korea's nuclear capabilities changed from concern over nuclear development to managing a nuclear threat. The Roh administration viewed North Korea's nuclear test as the last action that it could tolerate. While not made public, within the administration the nuclear test was seen as a de facto red line and there was recognition that strong countermeasures, including the complete severance of inter-Korean relations, seemed required. And when North Korea conducted its first nuclear test, the Roh administration did consider a shift in its North Korea policy. Yet it maintained its existing policy toward North Korea without



imposing strong sanctions despite the nuclear test.

When it seemed that the North Korean nuclear test was imminent, the opposition party and some conservative media outlets insisted that if North Korea conducted a nuclear test it would decide the success or failure of the Roh administration's North Korea policy. Furthermore, these observers argued that a historical evaluation of President Roh and the central figures in foreign and security policies should be made on the basis of the North Korean nuclear test. When North Korea finally conducted its nuclear test on October 9, 2006, the opposition party and some conservative media pushed the government to make a complete shift in North Korea policy, immediate suspension of inter-Korean projects such as the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Geumgang tourism project, and even a halt in humanitarian assistance (*Chosunilbo* 2006). Furthermore, there were demands for the resignation of the whole cabinet and the abandonment of the engagement policy toward North Korea (Spokesman's remark of Grand National Party 2006).

The Roh administration itself seemed to consider some degree of sanctions on North Korea as inevitable after North Korea's nuclear test. In this context, President Roh commented that North Korea should have been notified of the possible consequences of a nuclear test when North Korea declared its plan for a nuclear test on October 4 (*Yonhap News* 2006). In the initial stage, President Roh took a strong position, even mentioning the need to review inter-Korean relations in a comprehensive way. President Roh said in a press conference after the South Korea–Japan summit on October 9 that "the South Korean government finds it difficult to uphold the engagement policy now and also hard to argue for bigger effectiveness of the policy," and "it is hard to persevere, concede and totally accept whatever North Korea does as we have done in the past." This strongly signaled a change in the South's policy toward North Korea (President Roh's press interview 2006). The government held a National Security Council meeting that led to the denouncing of North Korea's nuclear test and support for immediate discussion of the issue in the UN Security Council. This was the declaration of its intention to impose sanctions against North Korea in cooperation with the international community (ROK Government's Statement on North Korea's Nuclear Test 2006). The ruling Woori Party criticized the nuclear test, saying the test could never be tolerated and North Korea should take full responsibility, maintaining the position that the South would closely cooperate with the international community and the UN in taking stern action. The strong stance of the Roh administration, however, did not last long, because when it came time to actively defend its policy, the conservatives drove the Roh administration into a dead end.

4. Battlefields of an Identity War



Debate about how to respond to North Korea's nuclear test might be termed an identity war. There were at least three "battlefields." The first was whether the engagement policy had failed or not. President Roh softened his position on the next day after the nuclear test, saying that it was necessary to review the South's North Korea policy but it was also necessary to verify the cause and effect of the nuclear test. On the same day, Minister of Unification Lee Jong-Suk commented at the National Assembly that a review of the policy toward North Korea was inevitable, but he did not think that the engagement policy must be abolished or completely revised. Remarks by former President Kim Dae-Jung had a determining impact on the change of atmosphere within the ruling party. In a lecture at Cheon-nam University on October 11, 2006, he said "the Engagement policy is not guilty," thereby protecting the engagement policy. He argued that North Korea's nuclear policy was the result of the failure of U.S. policy toward North Korea (*Yonhap News* 2006, October 11). The atmosphere in the ruling party and the government changed overnight as the ruling party demanded that the government maintain the framework of the engagement policy, and the government took a more cautious approach in formulating its response, suggesting a reflection of public opinion and coordination with the international community. Some attributed the North Korean nuclear test not to the engagement policy but to the hard-line U.S. policy toward North Korea.²⁵ The core of the debate was not how to cope with the North Korean nuclear test but whether the engagement policy had failed or not. One influential press outlet believed that the ruling party was attempting to maintain the engagement policy to "protect identity." The biggest policy difference between the ruling and the opposition party was their North Korea policy. So, abolishing the engagement policy would deny its identity and would thus be totally unacceptable (*Dongailbo* 2006, October 13). Identity politics played its role again.

The second "battlefield" was with inter-Korean cooperation projects. It was mainly focused on inter-Korean relations, as the government had already decided to actively cooperate with sanctions against North Korea led by the UN Security Council. Some radical conservatives argued for military sanctions and even South Korea's own development of nuclear weapons. But the ruling party was concerned about the possibility of a full-scale war, which meant military options were excluded from the early stages. Therefore, the topic mostly concerned economic sanctions focused on the suspension of inter-Korean economic projects, for humanitarian aid had already been halted in response to North Korea's long-range missile test. Conservatives in South Korea demanded the suspension of the Geumgang tourism project and the Kaesong Industrial Complex, the two most important symbols of inter-Korean economic cooperation. Particularly, the Geumgang tour-



ism project had become a target of criticism as it was perceived to have a minimal effect on inducing North Korea to reform and open up. For North Korea, the Geumgang project was primarily a means to raise much-needed foreign currency reserves. The Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Geumgang Tourism Project, however, were hailed as the core achievements and symbols of the engagement policy of the ruling party. The Roh administration was very sensitive to public opinion and the Presidential Office often surveyed public opinion on North Korea policy. Public opinion was supportive of maintaining economic cooperation in Kaesong and Mt. Geumgang while criticizing the government's response.²⁶ Finally the Roh administration decided to continue with both because they could easily be stopped but would be harder to resume at a later date and their contribution to easing tension was considered more significant than the expected pressure that would be placed on North Korea were they discontinued. Minister Lee Song-Juk's visit to Kaesong Industrial Complex and Mt. Geumgang Project right before his resignation was supposed to demonstrate the efforts to protect the engagement policy.

The final “battlefield” was whether to join the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). South Korea's participation in the PSI was almost openly demanded by the George W. Bush administration. Discord over South Korea's participation in the PSI was visible in the U.S.-ROK alliance and among local political parties. The Bush administration requested through various channels that South Korea join the PSI officially, which the conservatives in South Korea also strongly called for. There was even a split within the Roh administration. A few officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade regarded South Korea's participation in the PSI as inevitable and there were open remarks about it. This angered the progressive bloc of the ruling party.²⁷ PSI participation was attacked because it was thought that it would provoke physical conflict between the two Koreas unnecessarily and harm the consistency of the engagement policy. Even an outright warning was issued to the officials of the Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry by the chairman of the ruling party. In the end, the Roh administration did not press for full-scale participation in the PSI and the United States complained informally, saying it was “very disappointed and frustrated.”

In the end, there were no concrete measures taken in terms of inter-Korean relations. South Korea only joined in those sanctions against North Korea imposed by the UN Security Council. The Roh administration interpreted the sanctions against North Korea by UN Security Council resolution 1718 as mostly unrelated to South Korea, except for the luxury goods embargo and some other articles. The only meaningful measure was to reaffirm the continuity of the suspension of humanitarian aid that was taken in response to North Korean missile tests in July 2006. Any meaningful move in the Roh administration



after North Korea's nuclear test was to vote for the UN human rights resolution on North Korea in November of the same year. However, even this represented a political consideration to support Ban Ki-Moon's election as UN Secretary-General rather than a policy shift. The Roh administration abstained from the same resolution the following year on the grounds that it would unnecessarily provoke North Korea.

How did the Roh administration define its national interests in facing North Korea's first nuclear test? From a realist's perspective, it was a critical security threat and proper balancing measures had to be taken within all possible means. However, there was only a very restrained response. We can find a clue about how President Roh defined national interest at that time from his memoir. He wrote, "North Korea used the declaration of nuclear possession, missile tests and a nuclear test as political weapons but they were not an immediate danger. So, wasn't it desirable not to make people too worried and not to make [an] irrecoverable deep conflict with North Korea? Wasn't it helpful for solving problems later?" (Roh 2009, pp. 216–217) After all, he took it as in the national interest not to raise tensions between the two Koreas and not to damage inter-Korean relation. It is obvious that the most fatal national interest was defined as stable management and the development of inter-Korean relations under the Roh administration.

As explained above, the Roh administration did not show active balancing behavior despite a strong call for it from the United States and local conservatives. However, interpreting this as a failed response simplifies the issue too much. From a liberalist point of view, the most appropriate level of balancing itself is controversial. It is also hard to say that South Korea's response represents the lack of cohesion and general behavior of a fragmented nation, as neoclassical realism argues. Fundamentally, the rational choice assumed in realism doesn't exist in reality. Particularly in the course of South Korea's policy toward North Korea, the tendency to focus on identity logic more than on rationality logic should be noted. The controversy over the failure of the North Korea policy severely limited the list of options the Roh administration had. A comprehensive rearrangement of inter-Korean relations was deemed an acknowledgment of the failure of the existing North Korea policy and even a denial by themselves of the identities of the Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun administrations that pursued peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. The choice the Roh administration made was the result of identity politics that raged furiously in South Korea since the first inter-Korean Summit. In other words, it was the result of the discourse over the norms and identities of inter-Korean relations and the national interest. The Roh administration's response to the first North Korean nuclear test shows that the cultural elements are more influential than geostrategic interests or security considerations. The Roh administration was pressed to shift from its engagement policy,



facing North Korea's nuclear test. In the end, it was unacceptable and not an option at all, for that would deny its identity.

IV. Theoretical Implications and Policy Advice

South Korea's response to the North Korean nuclear issue, particularly the Roh administration's countermeasures to North Korea's first nuclear test, shows the merits of constructivism, which emphasizes cultural-institutional elements such as norms and identity. Norms and identity politics are found to operate strongly rather than the logic of balance of power in the North Korean nuclear issue. Norms of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the two Koreas restricted the scope of balancing acts against the North Korean military threats. Identity definition and identity politics regarding what North Korea means to South Korea and how to deal with North Korea had an enormous impact on the Roh administration's policy toward North Korea. Even when faced with the North Korean nuclear test, full-scale sanctions against North Korea were denied by the Roh administration, which had been pursuing inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation.

Meanwhile, South Korean responses to the North Korean nuclear issue imply how norms and identity operate in non-Western states differently than in Western ones. Constructivists tend to emphasize those global norms, and standardized identities define the individual states' national interests and have an influence on their policy preferences. However, non-Western states that were incorporated into the modern international system are much more sensitive to historically formed bilateral relationships with neighboring states and their domestic identity politics. In the South Korean case, norms resulted from relations with North Korea, the United States, China, and Japan, and its related identity politics seem to have much more influence than the cultural pressure from the global or international society. This shows that most of the constructivist approaches today are Western-centric or biased toward international society and need to be complemented with various non-Western cases. First of all, norms need to be sorted into three levels, that is, global, regional, and local ones, because the degree to which three levels of norms affect states depends on each state's historical experiences. It is also notable that how norms and identity shape each other depends on the attributes of the states. As for non-Western states, identity tends to be more influential than norms while norms mainly shape state identity for Western states.



As reviewed here, the South Korean response to the North Korean nuclear issue was more affected by cultural elements, that is, norms and identity rather than the rationality that neorealism and neoliberalism depend on. From a constructivist point of view, rationality itself makes no sense. What is South Korea's national interest is defined and constructed, even on a critical issue like a nuclear threat. The problem is that definition of the national interests of South Korea can change widely, which can undermine the political community and hurt policy consistency at the change of administrations. The presence of competing norms and identities is inevitable and constructive to some degree but might hinder effective responses to external threats if they are not properly managed.

In retrospect, South Korea's security policy has shifted completely due to contending norms and identities, without any fundamental change in the geopolitical situation. The whole situation on the Korean Peninsula has been deteriorating day by day since the inauguration of the Lee administration in 2008. Most of the inter-Korean trade and cooperation projects have been halted since 2010 except the Kaesong Industrial Complex. Physical clashes such as the sinking of the *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010 have raised already high military tensions. Notably, the North Korean nuclear issue is becoming worse while the Lee administration has made it a top priority. There are many causes of this situation. North Korea's power succession seems to be the most decisive one. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the Lee administration's policy to link inter-Korean issues to the North Korean nuclear issue is responsible for it as well. The Lee administration is maintaining its position that North Korea has to apologize for its provocative actions before the resumption of the Six-Party Talks. This is partly because the Lee administration pursues differentiated norms and identity in inter-Korean relations from the former administration. The Roh and Lee administrations' contrasting responses to North Korea's nuclear threat show that excessively competing norms and identities cause "underbalancing" sometimes and "under-engaging" at other times. Thus the South Korean government is required to create a minimum of social consensus on the national interests of South Korea in the context of desirable inter-Korean norms and inter-Korean relations while encouraging constructive debates. Such efforts are valuable in order to solidify the unity of the Republic of Korea as a political community and to increase efficiency of policy toward North Korea. Especially in defining the national interest, the role of scholars and experts is very important for political elites, and social forces are not free from their partisan interests. Without these efforts, when South Korea's new administration is inaugurated in 2013 there will be a repeat of the identity-oriented policy shift again. Therefore a proper and balanced response to North Korea's nuclear threat will be difficult to predict.

At the same time, it is desirable that the South Korean government should strategical-



ly separate security issues from inter-Korean issues. The Lee administration seems to hesitate to act proactively on the North Korean nuclear issue, being concerned it might undermine its principles on inter-Korean relations, while the Roh administration considered the negative impact on inter-Korean relations too much in its response to North Korea's nuclear test. So-called benign neglect or strategic patience does not look like it is working effectively, considering North Korea's second nuclear test and the disclosure of its highly enriched uranium (HEU) program. Not to link the North Korean nuclear issue strongly to inter-Korean issues is helpful in avoiding an identity-oriented policy choice.

Finally, the United States and neighboring states need to take note of the cultural elements such as norms and identity that affect South Korea's security policy. The United States faced an unexpected phenomenon of anti-American sentiment from underestimating the impact of two school girls' deaths during a U.S. military exercise in 2002. The South Korean reaction at that time can be explained by the logic of the identity of resistance and self-protection. Cultural elements have to be considered in the North Korea issue as well. South Koreans have double identities, one being a state identity of democracy and the other being the same national collective identity of the two Koreas. The fact that the major voters indicated that the United States was the most responsible for North Korea's nuclear test in an opinion poll in 2006 is significant. For South Koreans, fears of a military clash and war are much stronger than hostility toward North Korea. Any unilateral coercive policy as well as exclusion of South Korea in North Korea policy will not be welcomed. ■

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Endnotes

¹ North Korea may have obtained enough plutonium from its power reactors to build anywhere from four to thirteen nuclear weapons. Moreover, Siegfried Hecker reported on a visit to Yongbyon that he saw a sophisticated facility with some 2,000 centrifuges that had "P-2" advanced designs (CSIS 2011, p.5).

² Whether it is underbalancing or under-engaging that caused North Korea to be a de facto nuclear state is controversial. On the other hand, the most effective response to North Korean nuclear development depends on each situation or phase. Sometimes balancing, other times engaging might be appropriate. This paper is based on the hypothesis that North Korea's first nuclear test was underbalanced, though there has been both underbalancing and under-engaging for the past twenty years.

³ In this regard, we need a more sophisticated concept of "underbalancing."

⁴ There are a few studies that apply constructivism to inter-Korean relations (Chun 2005; Lee 2000). In particular, Chun presents a general framework that can be used to analyze inter-Korean relations from a constructivist view, and this paper is inspired by his study.

⁵ External cultural environments may have three effects on states. First, they may affect a state's prospects for survival. Second, they may change the model character of statehood in the system over time. Third, cultural environments may cause variation in the character of statehood within a given international system. There are at least three layers to international cultural environments: first, formal institutions or security regimes such as NATO and the NPT; second, world political culture; third, international patterns of amity and enmity (Katzenstein 1996, p.34).

⁶ There are largely two interpretations. One argues that North Korea's tactics were intended to waste time to allow a nuclear armament buildup from the beginning. The other insists that North Korea was willing to give up its nuclear program in return for a security guarantee and economic rewards, but continued to develop nuclear weapons owing to the rupture of negotiations.

⁷ So-called appeasement policy in Hitler's Germany during the interwar period is regarded as a typical example.



⁸ This position takes note of the fact that nuclear armament cannot be accomplished by just one nuclear test that seems to have failed, and North Korea's nuclear armament does not cause meaningful change in the strategic environment for Seoul, which is within the range of North Korea's artillery.

⁹ President Roh explained his choice in this context. He argued that the security situation might have severely deteriorated if he did as the conservatives demanded (Roh 2009, pp. 216-218).

¹⁰ Ahn applies the bureaucratic politics model to the Roh administration's response to North Korea's first nuclear test (Ahn 2008, pp.207-226).

¹¹ Various case studies show that norms defined as such operate in the international political area. Price and Tannenwald insist that models of "responsible" or "civilized" states are enacted and validated by specific norms and that these norms constrain the use of some technologies for killing or incapacitating people in large numbers. Berner insists that German and Japanese anti-militaristic norms have made it difficult for their governments to adopt more assertive national security policies since the end of the Cold War. Finnemore shows that owing to the proliferation of Western norms of humanitarian concerns, humanitarian military interventions often take place when geostrategic interests are absent or unclear. Herman writes that norms related to the avoidance of military force, the maintenance of strategic stability, and the legitimation of human rights emerged during the era of détente. This development encouraged the Soviet Union's liberal reformists to define their national interests (Price and Tannenwald 1996; Berger 1996; Finnemore 1996; Herman 1996). For more cases showing that global norms affect an individual state's national interests, see Finnemore, Martha. 1996. *National Interests in International Society*. New York: Cornell University Press.

¹² Constructivists have presented many case studies showing how identities affect national interests and policies. Many national security interests depend on a particular construction of self-identity in relation to the conceived identities of others. This was certainly true during the Cold War. Actors often cannot decide what their interests are until they know what they are representing. On the contrary, after the end of the Cold War, the United States and the successor states of the Soviet Union had difficulty in defining their national security interests. Price and Tannenwald argue that a commitment to a "civilized" identity



reinforced the acceptance of norms defining chemical and nuclear weapons as illegitimate. And the wishes of U.S. elites to present a pacific picture of the American nation facilitated the development of these norms. Herman argues that the definition of the Soviet identity and of the U.S.-Soviet relationship precipitated a new picture of Soviet interests. Berger shows that multilateralism is internalized as a German identity as Germany developed an interest in participating in and promoting it. This is a kind of self-binding and character planning (Price and Tannenwald 1996; Herman 1996; Berger 1996).

¹³ A standardized model of statehood is one example. Many states procure a standardized weapons portfolio, one related more to domestic display and international prestige than to the actual security threat that a state faces. Ideas of more or less legitimate state identities are another example. As norms of democracy, racial equality, and citizenship proliferate globally, many states internalize them as their identities. Especially after the Second World War, in both Germany and Japan, the global model of the legitimate state and national identities affected the domestic political process of reconstructing identities (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, pp. 58–59).

¹⁴ As norms become institutionalized, support for institutions may partially supplant adherence to norms as motivators of government behavior. The so-called South and North Basic Agreements, Development of the Inter-Korean Relations Act, June 15 Joint Declaration, and October 4 Declaration are cases of institutionalized norms in inter-Korean relations.

¹⁵ U.S. military leaders estimated that if war broke out in Korea, it would cost 52,000 U.S. military casualties and 490,000 South Korean military casualties in the first ninety days, plus an enormous number of North Korean and civilian lives, at a financial outlay exceeding \$61 billion (Oberdorfer 1997, p. 315).

¹⁶ “Chinese distortion of Goguryeo’s history is a serious diplomatic issue related to Korean people’s national root[s] and identity.” (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ban’s weekly briefing 2004) “Dokdo is our territory, not just territory but historic land that a history of bitterness is engraved in.” (President’s Special Statement on Korea-Japan Relations 2006) Minister Ban and President Roh’s comments clearly show that they took Goguryeo’s history and the Dokdo issue as problems of identity. In other words, they are issues of what China and Japan mean to Korea and how Korea will deal with the two countries.



¹⁷ “Two leaders’ agreement to review each other’s unification proposals caused [an] identity controversy.” (*Segeilbo* 2004)

¹⁸ “Today is an era of identity crisis.” (Grand National Party’s remarks 2004)

¹⁹ “Deleting [the] concept of main enemy in [a] *Defense White Paper* is to deny the constitution of our nation.” (Remark by spokesman for the Grand National Party 2004)

²⁰ “The concept of nation is valid only when North Korea changes positively and pursues universal values with us.” (Spokesman’s remark of Grand National Party 2006)

²¹ An interview with the former Senior Secretary to the President, Ju-Suk Suh. 2011. July 18. He confirmed the so-called contingency plan or manual of North Korean nuclear issue was made in NSC but he said “manual is nothing but a manual, it is just for decision making procedures, not detailed measures.”

²² *Peace, Prosperity, and National Security*, the title of Roh administration’s National Security Strategy itself has many implications (NSC 2004).

²³ The strength of the causal effects of norms varies. There are weak norms, contested models of norms, and strong norms like “common wisdom.” (Katzenstein 1996, pp. 55–56)

²⁴ An interview with the former Minister of Unification, Jong-Suk Lee. 2011. June 16. President Roh is said to have regretted that the leverage of humanitarian aid had been used too early against North Korea’s missile test, though he approved it.

²⁵ On the next day after North Korea’s nuclear test, President Roh said “it is necessary to examine cause-and-effect between the engagement policy and North Korea’s nuclear test” and Prime Minister Han remarked “the U.S. sanctions against North Korea might be one cause of North Korea’s nuclear test.” Furthermore, the chairman of the ruling party, Kim Gun-Tae, mentioned the failure of the U.S. policy toward North Korea.

²⁶ In an opinion poll conducted by SBS right after North Korea’s nuclear test, 52.9 percent of voters favored maintaining economic cooperation with North Korea and 44.4 percent of voters were opposed to it. In another survey of MBC, 42.3 percent of voters favored in-



ter-Korean economic cooperation and 27.2 percent of voters were against it. And unexpectedly, a majority of the voters indicated that the United States was the most responsible for North Korea's nuclear test (KBS 43%, SBS 38%).

²⁷ An interview with the former Secretary to the President, Sun-Won Park. 2001. July 16.



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