

“GOOD COP/BAD COP” AS A MODEL FOR NONPROLIFERATION DIPLOMACY TOWARD NORTH KOREA AND IRAN

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Scholarly and popular literature in the recent past has framed nonproliferation diplomacy toward both Iran and North Korea as an example of “good cop/bad cop,” a social-psychological strategy borrowed from law enforcement to describe a process for forcing a confession by subjecting a target to stressful emotional contrast. This article examines those two cases, roughly covering the period since 2003, when the most recent attempts to deal with the Iranian and North Korean proliferation threats began, in light of criteria for employment of the good cop/bad cop strategy. There is some evidence that within the framework of the six-party talks with North Korea and within the framework of the EU-3-U.S. diplomacy toward Iran, the players seeking nonproliferation have adopted good cop/bad cop roles to that end. The article concludes, however, that while there are similarities to the interrogation room technique, the complexity of the international political environment as compared to the interrogation room has prevented the states involved from successfully adopting or effectively exploiting good and bad cop roles. Substantial and exploitable differences of interest among them, and the availability of alternative “escape routes” for the target state, raise serious questions about the applicability of the good cop/bad cop strategy to these two nonproliferation cases, and even about its applicability in future nonproliferation challenges.

KEYWORDS: Nuclear nonproliferation; North Korea; Iran; Good cop/bad cop

Seeking to address different U.S. and European approaches to ending Iran’s nuclear ambitions, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage explained in November 2004 that, “The incentives of Europeans only work against the backdrop of the United States being strong and firm on this issue. In the vernacular, it’s kind of a good cop/bad cop arrangement.”¹ Others have made the same analogy with respect to diplomacy toward North Korea, another member of President George W. Bush’s “axis of evil.”² While Armitage’s comment was doubtless meant as no more than a helpful analogy, not a literal or clinical description of reality, it nonetheless raises a question worthy of further consideration by policymakers and academics, namely, whether a social-psychological model of influence normally applied to individuals, termed an *influence attempt*, can usefully be generalized to interstate relations.

The present study explores that question by examining the cases of nuclear nonproliferation diplomacy toward Iran and the Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea (DPRK) in light of the four criteria required for the operation of the social-psychological model: role differentiation, role coordination, constraints on the target’s

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options, and credibility of good and bad cops. It sets out how these criteria might generally be understood and how they might be applied to international negotiations. Then, after a brief review of the international context, the study examines nonproliferation diplomacy in each of the two cases, covering the period between 2003, when the most recent diplomatic efforts began, and the autumn of 2006 in the wake of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on the nuclear programs of both countries.

The Good Cop/Bad Cop Model

“Good cop/bad cop” is a variant of distributive bargaining tactics that employ a mix of offered rewards and punishments to lead a target to make the desired decision. More specifically, it is a subset of a family of “emotional contrast strategies” of social influence in which two agents adopt contrasting interrogation methods to increase a target’s stress and thereby induce cooperation.³ In the standard model, one “cop” acts in a threatening, hostile, and abusive manner, issuing repeated threats if the target fails to confess or to provide desired information. The other adopts a nonthreatening, friendly, and sympathetic posture—hence the “good cop/bad cop” characterization. Only by “confessing” can the target escape the emotional whipsaw. As Susan Brodt and Marla Tuchinsky explain it, the goal is “to alter the target’s perception of the conflict situation such that the individual comes to accept the team’s offer.”⁴ The kindness of the good cop is designed to gain the target’s trust and thus to encourage the belief that he or she may safely confess.⁵ Implicit in the good cop’s message is the threat that “if you don’t cooperate with me, you will be left to the mercy of the bad cop.” The strategy assumes that *whether or not* the target confesses, he or she will be punished for the alleged offense. What is on offer is a mitigated punishment, not release or acquittal. Variants of the strategy may be employed.

Crucially for the model, the stress produced by the interrogators’ tactic is said to make the target more likely to confess than if he or she were faced with the good or the bad cop alone. It is the contrast between the two emotions produced by the interrogators, not merely the independent appeal of the good cop, that produces the desired behavior in the target.⁶ The presence of the bad cop makes “a warm, friendly, or kind person seem even warmer, kinder, and friendlier.”⁷ The prospects for confession are enhanced by the target’s psychological desire to reciprocate the kindness of the good cop.⁸ The key condition for success is not the presence of objectively “good” or “bad” cops. Bad cop/worse cop should work effectively as long as the target views confession to one cop as a means to escape the other. By shifting the target’s decision out of the domain of reason and into the domain of emotion, the strategy induces the target to discount what remains an objectively adverse benefit/cost ledger, confessing despite potentially negative consequences.⁹ In sum, the target confesses (1) in order to escape the feelings of anxiety and fear generated by the interrogation situation, (2) to reciprocate what the target perceives as the generous behavior of the “good cop,” and (3) because trust in the good cop reduces the perceived cost of compliance. In this latter sense the tactic operates within a rational, as well as an emotional, context.

To qualify as an example of "good cop/bad cop," an influence attempt must conform to the following four criteria:

1. *Role differentiation.* Good and bad cop roles must be clearly differentiated in the mind of the target. The point of the strategy is to "whipsaw" the target between the contrasting approaches, creating stress and uncertainty. Confusion about roles in the mind of the target only reduces the ability of the good cop to play off the target's fear of the bad cop.
2. *Role coordination.* To qualify as a *strategy*, good cop and bad cop roles must be adopted in a deliberate and coordinated fashion in pursuit of a common objective. Brodt and Tuchinsky refer to a choreographed and distinct sequence of persuasive attempts.¹⁰ It is essential that both cops agree on the end: confession by the target. Much of the power the influence agents exercise comes from their unity of purpose. If they are riven by genuine and deep disagreements about ends, they may be vulnerable to a "divide-and-conquer" strategy by the target.¹¹ Even if the good cop is genuinely sympathetic, he or she must have neither the desire nor the ability to exempt the target from the consequences of noncooperation. This point is critical. In terms of results, what matters is that the target be motivated to confess in order to escape the stressful situation. The good cop/bad cop routine may result in a successful interrogation even if it reflects genuine disagreement about appropriate *means* of interrogation between the good and bad cops, as long as agreement on the objective is clear.
3. *Constraints on the target's options.* The target must not be free to walk away from or to neutralize the stress situation by means other than confession. The influence agents must have the physical, psychological, or legal power to deny the target an alternative to a negotiated agreement.¹² Confession must be the only game in town. There are various scenarios in which the target can evade the pressure to confess. The target may know that the interrogators lack the legal power to hold him or her, or may see through the good cop/bad cop ruse. Alternatively, the target might have a bargaining chip that shifts an adverse power relationship in his or her favor, or be confident that the legal process offers a good chance of acquittal. The target might have an outside ally that can spring him or her from the interrogators' control. Finally, as noted above, differences between the good and bad cops may open the door to a divide-and-conquer strategy, allowing the target a means of escape.
4. *Credibility of interrogators' threats and promises.* The interrogators' threats and promises must be credible. The good cop's promise that confession will lead to better treatment must be credible. Given the essential psychological mechanism of instilling in the target a strong desire to relieve stress, the good cop must be able to offer assurance that the bad cop cannot continue to threaten the target after the confession is made. In individual-level situations, it is relatively easy to stage events to reinforce the good cop's credibility. For example, the bad cop could feign restraint as if in response to the pleas of the good cop.

By the same token, the target must genuinely fear the bad cop. The bad cop must be able to demonstrate the capacity and willingness to inflict more pain on the target than the good cop. In the model, this is achieved by threats and aggressive behavior, not necessarily by inflicting physical pain. If the bad cop's threats are not credible, if the target knows that the bad cop is constrained from making good on threats even if the target does not confess, then the opportunity to create emotional contrast is lost and the opportunity for escape, as discussed above, presents itself.

Applying the Model to International Diplomacy

Research has found that the good cop/bad cop model may be generalized to a number of bargaining situations, including small group interactions.¹³ But can the model be applied to international diplomacy? To qualify as an example of good cop/bad cop, an international influence attempt, whether concerned with the target's nuclear weapons program or some other issue, must be judged against the criteria identified above. For the purposes of this discussion, the term *comply* will generally replace the term *confess* to describe the action expected of the target. Roles must be clearly differentiated and should ideally represent a conscious strategy toward an agreed end; the target must lack options for escaping the interrogation; and both good and bad cops' promises and threats must be credible.

Role Differentiation

It is difficult for states to adopt their ascribed roles as convincingly as do the good and bad cops in the interrogation room. The realities of international and domestic politics may operate in two directions. On the one hand, states may be "natural" good cops or "natural" bad cops, depending on their self-attributed role concepts in world politics, their strategic cultures, and the resources available to them. On the other hand, these same realities may prevent a state from adopting either archetypal role. Given a host of external and internal constraints, states may hedge their bets with a mix of carrots and sticks, bluster and conciliation. Electoral and bureaucratic politics may prevent a state from pursuing any clear strategy at all. Further, under conditions of anarchy in the global system, even if a state is able to play the good cop, target states would be ill-advised fully to trust it.

Yet another difficulty in maintaining distinct good and bad cop roles is that the relative abilities of the good and bad cop states to deliver positive or negative sanctions—their "market power"—may not coincide perfectly with their adopted roles. The good cop may not have a monopoly of incentives, and the bad cop may not have a monopoly of punishments.¹⁴ As a result of the above considerations, it will be more difficult for governments than for the cops in the interrogating room to establish and to manipulate clearly defined roles.

Role Coordination

In the ideal case, any conflict between the good and bad cops is adopted for effect only and does not reflect real differences between them. As a result, negotiation is easily

confined to the target-interrogator dimension. In interstate relations, where the interests of good and bad cops may clash, full accord on *both* ends and means will prove more elusive. Gaining the target's compliance with a demand may be higher on the agenda for some countries than others. States ranking compliance lower may be willing to forgo or postpone it if a higher-order goal can be achieved. Bad and good cops will have reason to mistrust each other's motives, creating real friction between them, not just between them and the target. They may have to divert some of their energies toward negotiating with each other rather than putting pressure on the target. The good cop may try to obtain concessions from the bad cop, and vice versa. If either is successful, role differentiation may break down, and the basis for "emotional contrast" vanishes. It should be noted, however, that as long as the target complies as a result of the contrasting actions of the two cops, the question of role coordination is rendered moot.

Constraints on the Target's Options

Police interrogators' unity and situational control give them a better chance than states to subject the target to both physical and emotional constraints, thus foreclosing the target's options. It is far less likely that states can so effectively isolate their target. Although globalization has potentially increased the target's dependency and hence vulnerability, it has also increased the chances that third countries can undermine the economic impact of sanctions.¹⁵ Target states may be able to seek the protection of allies or to devise their own deterrent—such as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or hostage taking. But there is another danger. A good cop state's interests may lead it genuinely to sympathize with the target, or to disagree with the bad cop about the danger posed by the target state, or to place that danger lower in its priorities than the bad cop state, or to fear the costs of confrontation with the target. Hence, it may side with the target against the bad cop. Such real sympathy may allow the target to pursue a divide-and-conquer strategy and escape having to comply.

Credibility of Interrogators' Threats and Promises

Thomas Schelling has written that "both sides of the choice, the threatened penalty and the proffered avoidance or reward, need to be credible."¹⁶ The bad cop state must have the perceived power, authority, and will to inflict some feared cost on the target state if it does not comply. Sanctions theory suggests that the bad cop's credibility might depend on its perceived ability to meet conditions, including a modest goal, a weak and helpless target state, a target state that lacks alternatives, the cost of noncompliance exceeding the cost of compliance for the target, limited time for the target to prepare for sanctions, resolution on the part of the sanctioning state, low domestic costs of sanctions to the sender state, and minimal reliance on international support.¹⁷

A suspect in an interrogation room likely has little doubt that the bad cop can make life miserable. But even powerful states face serious constraints on their ability to carry out the bad cop role. They might lack the independent ability to impose painful sanctions or military punishments on the target. They could be constrained by alliance relationships

(including relations with the good cop partner), by moral and cultural norms, by commitment of resources to other issues and theaters, or by domestic political considerations and bureaucratic infighting.¹⁸ Governments in target states are more likely than subjects of civil arrest to be aware that even the most intimidating bluster may mask unseen weakness.

By the same token, the good cop state's promises of better treatment must be credible.¹⁹ Like negative sanctions, positive sanctions are more likely to work under clearly specified conditions. The inducement offered should be valued by the target and unavailable through a third party (see "constraints," above). The cost of the inducement should be domestically acceptable. Ironically, the good cop state must have and be able to demonstrate the power to coerce or entice the bad cop to show restraint. The target will not comply unless assured that it is safe from the bad cop.²⁰ The target will fear that, having confessed, the good cop would say, "Okay, now I'm going to turn you over to the bad cop anyway." In the anarchy of international relations, reassurance may be difficult to convey convincingly. It could be expected that only the bad cop state could provide the security assurances desired by the target. The good cop would not be in a position to supply such assurances. In order to demonstrate its ability to protect the target, the good cop state may be compelled to offer costly concessions beyond what the bad cop considers acceptable. These concessions may open it up to exploitation by the target. Good cops' incentives might be more credible to the target if the good cop can minimize the reputational costs of its conciliatory behavior.²¹

Another problem for the good cop in establishing trust is that the target might, for historical reasons, be unable to accept the good cop's newly benign persona, or it could suspect the good cop of playing at "hawk engagement"—that is, employing engagement tactically to prepare the ground for later use of coercive measures.²² It is unlikely that the good cop/bad cop routine would be effective if the target perceived itself to be the subject of a ruse.

A final issue to consider is whether a psychological model of influence can apply to interstate relations conducted by officials subject to institutional, constitutional, and political control. Under the assumptions of realism and neo-realism, in which power and interests, not individual-level influences, are preeminent, the answer could be expected to be "no." Much of sanctions theory is predicated on the assumption that the target state behaves rationally, responding to manipulation of positive or negative incentives with a view to optimizing utility. Steve Chan and A. Cooper Drury write that "the focus of the influence attempt is the target's intentions—specifically, its calculation of costs and benefits."²³ In the good cop/bad cop psychological model, the intent of the strategy is to take the target's decision "out of the realm of reason and into the realm of emotion," leading the target to confess as a result of suffering the additional pain of emotional contrast and despite a decidedly negative benefit/cost calculation. But it is conceivable that the target's confession is entirely rational. Recall, for example, that the third condition for success of the good cop/bad cop paradigm is that "trust in the good cop reduces the perceived cost of compliance." The target may perceive compliance as the best means to obtain the least bad outcome. In short, good cop/bad cop may achieve the desired result, but not for the reason intended in the theory.

Bureaucratic models would also predict less susceptibility to psychological strategies. Unlike the suspect in the interrogation room, the state "target" is actually a multiplicity of domestic actors with divergent assets and interests, each playing off the others to maximize its own benefit. Internal bureaucratic and political dynamics and two-level games powerfully affect international behavior. The good cop/bad cop routine might affect domestic actors differentially and hence influence the target's reaction in unpredictable ways.

Notwithstanding these reservations, however, many scholars would answer "yes" to the question of a psychological model's salience.²⁴ Psychological models of decisionmaking leave ample room for "emotional contrast" dynamics. As Herbert Kelman observes, "Psychological processes at the individual and collective levels constitute and mediate much of the behavior of nations."²⁵ The security dilemma, arms spiral theory, and prospect theory all accept that leaders may be influenced by emotions when they make decisions. Appropriate to the good cop/bad cop model, for example, is prospect theory's contention that "choice is driven by an overwhelming psychological desire to avoid loss."²⁶

The Diplomatic Context

A decision to treat both the Iran and North Korea cases as subject to the influence of good cop/bad cop psychology assumes significant similarities between them. Before considering whether nonproliferation diplomacy toward North Korea and Iran conforms to the good cop/bad cop model, it will be helpful to assess the similarities and differences between the two situations.

Similarities Between the Iran and North Korea Cases

In both the Iran and North Korea cases, the United States and its partners seek abandonment of nuclear weapons and/or any ambitions to acquire them. The principal forum for the influence attempt has been negotiations—the six-party talks on the DPRK program, and the European Union or EU-3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) talks with Iran—that have confronted the target with a multinational negotiating team ostensibly united in opposing the target's nuclear ambitions. In both cases, the United States and its partners have been divided, sometimes sharply, over diplomatic strategy. This division is most stark over whether military force should remain "on the table" and what domestic capacity, if any, the target states should be allowed for producing fuel for nuclear energy generation. It is this fact, more than any other, that establishes a prima facie case for the applicability of the good cop/bad cop model. The United States, alone among its partners, lacks diplomatic relations with either Tehran or Pyongyang. Though maintaining limited contacts with both, perceived interests and domestic politics have prevented it from the degree of engagement preferred by its negotiating partners.

Economic, diplomatic, and military levers for influencing Iran and the DPRK are unevenly distributed. With respect to military assets, its superiority and unmatched power projection capabilities give the United States the ability unilaterally to strike both target states. Economic leverage is more evenly shared but different in form. While the United

States has nearly exhausted its ability to impose economic sanctions, the European Union, China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia, as major benefactors of Iran and the DPRK, retain the freedom to offer both the incentive of expanded rewards and the threat of withdrawal of benefits. Unsatisfactory economic conditions in Iran and the DPRK leave both states potentially susceptible to economic threats and inducements. On the other hand, both governments have shown in the past a stubborn resistance, backed by powerful nationalism, to threats and pressure.

In both the Iran and North Korea cases, domestic political and bureaucratic disputes have affected the ability of the United States and its negotiating partners to pursue a coordinated strategy. In both cases, the argument still rages whether these two states are moved by greed or by fear, whether they are aggressive expansionists or security seekers.²⁷ If they are motivated by fear arising from the security dilemma, then approaches that rely in whole or in part on offering reassurance are more likely to be effective than threats. If they are motivated by greed, then such approaches are less likely to be effective.

If good and bad cops disagree about the target's motives, then the prospect for successful role coordination, and thus for a good cop/bad cop strategy, would be precluded. Domestic divisions over policy have been extensively discussed in the United States, where critics charge that infighting has prevented the formulation of any clear or consistent policy.²⁸ But other actors have faced analogous factional splits that affect their disposition toward Iran and North Korea.²⁹ Recent UNSC resolutions on both Iran and North Korea would suggest that the gaps among those countries' interlocutors have narrowed in significant respects.

Differences Between the Iran and North Korea Cases

One of the most obvious contrasts in the situations of the two states is that unlike Iran, the DPRK was believed to have had, and now has proven that it does have, nuclear weapons. The DPRK also possesses the additional deterrent of its conventional threat against Seoul, a situation not faced by any of Iran's interlocutors (though Israel, not a participant in the negotiations but a valued U.S. ally, is an implied hostage). Furthermore, the DPRK has withdrawn from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while Iran has not. The nonproliferation problems these two countries pose are thus of a different order of magnitude and urgency.

There are also differences with respect to the domestic situations in the two countries. Though intelligence about both is poor, Iran's relatively greater openness reveals that it is more divided than is the DPRK over the wisdom of having nuclear weapons and more anxious to integrate with the global economy.³⁰ The internal struggle between hardline clerics and economic pragmatists who favor greater openness to the global economy may leave Iran more susceptible than the DPRK to diplomatic exploitation, provided the West does not press Iran's nationalist buttons, and provided that the "hardliners" are unable further to consolidate their power.³¹ However, the results of Iran's 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections suggest that such a consolidation has already taken place. Though possibly more vulnerable to the threat of sanctions than

the DPRK, Iran's networks of energy relations with the West give it considerable leverage against sanctions.

The negotiation formats employed in the two cases have been different, with the United States a direct participant in the six-party talks on the DPRK but remaining aloof from talks between the EU-3 and Iran. The policy gulf between the United States and its partners over the issue of sanctions has until recently been somewhat greater in the case of the six-party talks than in the case of Iran. These divisions may have given the DPRK potentially more leverage over its adversaries than Iran has enjoyed, especially in light of the United States, its European partners, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) closing ranks in the fall of 2005. Its nuclear test, however, appears to have cost North Korea much of that leverage. Since emerging as a major player on the Iran question, Russia has shown some signs of assuming the good cop mantle—nudging Iran closer to surrendering its nuclear aspirations. Despite the permanent five's unanimous support for UNSC Resolution 1696, which demanded that Iran suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities by August 31, 2006 or face sanctions under Article 41, Iran may continue to see Russia (which had already proved sympathetic to Iran's position) and China as presenting an opening through which to escape meaningful sanctions.³²

Role Conceptions in a Post-9/11 Environment

The United States and its partners in nuclear nonproliferation diplomacy share many of the same interests. However, differences of interests and diplomatic philosophy have created obstacles to the pursuit of a coordinated approach to both Iran and the DPRK. Deep differences between a more unilateral, militarized, Manichean, and universalistic United States and a more multilateral, pacifist, pragmatic, and pluralist Europe have received considerable attention in recent years.³³ For U.S. realists and neoconservatives, "weakness is provocative."³⁴ They are likely to view European diplomacy as naïve, irresponsible, and even dangerous.³⁵ For their part, many Europeans perceive U.S. power and its willingness to use it as incompatible with Europe's values and its "sense of mission," and, in the eyes of many European publics, even as a threat to world peace.³⁶ Of course, within the United States and Europe there are many shadings of opinion, and among European states, the British government has been notably more in tune with the U.S. approach on many security matters.

A similar, though more complex, gap can be said to exist between the United States and its Asian partners. Japan's Peace Constitution and its own strategic calculations have led Tokyo until recently to eschew military force in its foreign relations, although Tokyo was generally content to give economic and moral support to U.S. Cold War military operations and is now emerging as a more active ally of the United States in Asia. South Korea, once reliably a tough ally against the threat of communism on the Korean Peninsula and elsewhere, has in recent years moved in a pacifist and sometimes anti-American direction. China's strategy of "peaceful rising" and its own limited military capabilities have led it to champion multilateralism and peaceful settlement of disputes in contrast to what many in Asia see as the more confrontational U.S. approach.³⁷ Whatever the causes—history, interests, cultural values, domestic politics, or the tyranny of means—the

perceptual and policy divide has complicated how the international community identifies and addresses security threats such as those posed by North Korean and Iranian nuclear proliferation.³⁸

Applying the Model to Iran and the DPRK

Are apparent differences among the United States and its partners with respect to how to approach Iran and North Korea the product of profound cultural and strategic divergence, or are they consciously adopted roles in a diplomatic drama?

Iran

As noted, observers in the United States and Europe have claimed that diplomacy toward Iran exemplifies the good cop/bad cop strategy.³⁹ How does that claim measure up against the four criteria delineated above?

Role Differentiation. Robert Einhorn suggests that good cop and bad cop are the natural roles of Europe and the United States, respectively, in dealing with Iran.⁴⁰ Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, their behavior seemed to confirm that assumption. Since the 1979 hostage crisis, the U.S. government has viewed Iran as a threat to American interests in the region, branded it a state sponsor of terrorism, and targeted it with a panoply of economic sanctions. In the Iran-Iraq War, the United States “tilted” its policy toward Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. With the election of George W. Bush, Iran soon became “the poster child of Bush’s axis of evil.”⁴¹ When in 2003 the IAEA discovered Iranian deception in its reporting, the United States urged the IAEA board to find Iran in noncompliance with the NPT, pressed Russia to halt construction of a nuclear reactor at Bushehr, and introduced the Iran Democracy Act to promote democratic change in Iran. Lacking economic relations, however, the most important leverage in U.S. hands has been the threat of military pressure.⁴² The United States has shown its military card ostentatiously, if only implicitly, in its campaigns against Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, respectively, which resulted in the military encirclement of Iran. The “crusading” language of U.S. officials and barely veiled threats of regime change heightened Iran’s sense of insecurity.⁴³

The Bush administration has perceived Iran as a greedy state, concerned with aggressive expansion of its regional influence. Although the United States publicly endorsed the EU-3 negotiations, the U.S. administration and congressional hawks have remained skeptical that negotiations can ever induce Iran to halt its program.⁴⁴ They continue to advocate covert support for dissident movements, encouragement of popular unrest, and opposition to any kind of a negotiated deal that they believe could easily be evaded by Iran.⁴⁵ In 2006 the United States escalated its pressure by threatening European businesses that failed to curb their connections with Iran.⁴⁶ Iranian officials surely noticed when in January 2006, Bush critic Sen. John McCain (Republican of Arizona) used language similar to the president’s in refusing to take the military option off the table and indicating that the United States might even have to act against Iran with a coalition of the willing if

the Security Council failed to act. It is even possible that U.S. endorsement of the EU-3 negotiations with Iran masked a strategy of “hawk engagement” designed to buy support for a hard-power approach later.

In contrast to the United States, the Europeans viewed Iran as a security seeker. While in the 1990s the United States pursued a coercive strategy of sanctions, Europe pursued a policy of engagement, “allowing Iran to mitigate the effects of U.S. sanctions.”⁴⁷ Europe’s response to the 2003 IAEA findings was to pursue a “soft power” policy of “conditional engagement” based on the belief that isolation and punishment would not work, given Iran’s fierce pride and nationalism. Alarm over the danger that U.S. bellicosity might lead to a military confrontation might have played a role in pushing the EU to open negotiations with Iran.⁴⁸ Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder very publicly opposed any suggestion that force might be used, and even British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw was on the record as opposing a military solution. In its talks with Iran, the EU-3 negotiating team offered specific packages of incentives that showed Europe to be more willing than the United States to guarantee Iran access to peaceful nuclear technology—a concession strongly opposed by the United States—and to grant additional economic incentives if Iran agreed to forgo the development of nuclear weapons.⁴⁹

For Europeans, Iran has remained an important trading partner and supplier of petroleum. In fact, between 2000 and 2005, European-Iranian trade nearly tripled.⁵⁰ Even Europe’s “sticks” consisted mostly of threats to postpone, not withdraw, anticipated benefits until the nuclear issue is resolved.⁵¹ The European Union’s 2003 statement of basic nonproliferation principles stressed diplomatic prevention and reserved coercion as a last resort, and then only under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. For many months Europe resisted U.S. efforts to persuade the IAEA to declare Iran in noncompliance with the NPT and strongly opposed regime change. Under pressure from the IAEA, Europe, and the United States, Iran consented in October 2003 to a suspension of its uranium conversion and enrichment program. In exchange, the European Union promised enhanced trade (including civilian energy development) and opposition to Security Council consideration of the issue.

Since the breakdown of the EU-3 Iran negotiations in August 2005, differences between the United States and its partners have narrowed, with the five-plus-one powers (the permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany) publicly demonstrating a harder line leading ultimately to the passage of UNSC Resolution 1696. Only two months earlier, however, the United States had demonstrated greater public support for a diplomatic solution. In May 2006, the United States dropped its long-standing opposition to domestic uranium enrichment and consented to direct participation in talks with Iran as part of an agreement with the Europeans “on the essential elements of a package containing both benefits, if Iran makes the right choice—and costs if it does not.”⁵² The package reportedly included help with Iran’s civilian nuclear program, assured supplies of nuclear fuel, trade concessions, and security guarantees. If it were not for Europe’s simultaneously hardening position, greater U.S. flexibility might be seen as evidence of Europe’s (the good cop’s) success in restraining the United States (the bad cop). Though the United States remained the most assertive advocate of deadlines and forceful action by the Security Council, by mid-2006 role differentiation had blurred considerably. China

and Russia, however, continued to resist imposing sanctions even after Iran missed the deadline for compliance set by the Security Council. They were acting more like good cops than the Europeans.

Role Coordination. Though U.S. and European roles appeared compatible with good and bad cop behavior, there was little evidence until recently of successful coordination. Rather, their roles appear to have reflected genuine differences in interest and perception, as noted above. Reacting to the tensions of the Iraq crisis, however, Europe and the United States increasingly agreed on the need for “a concerted and unified international effort” in approaching Iran.⁵³ Despite their strong predilection for negotiation, the EU and Russia shared U.S. consternation over Iran’s nuclear deceptions.⁵⁴ As their interests converged, the U.S. and European positions began to coalesce late in 2004 around a joint carrot-and-stick strategy.⁵⁵ The EU-3 agreed that if negotiations ultimately failed, they would support taking the matter to the UN for consideration of sanctions, thus presenting Iran with a “fading opportunity” variant of good cop/bad cop in which Europe threatened to “defect” to the side of the bad cop. For its part, the United States publicly endorsed the EU-3 negotiations and agreed to offer limited incentives to Iran as further demonstration that it, too, sought a peaceful resolution.

When Iran declared in January 2006 its intention to resume uranium conversion, the United States and its European partners adopted a common stance, warning of referral to the United Nations and consequent diplomatic sticks. The May 2006 package of carrots and sticks was the result of assiduous negotiations among the five-plus-one states. Two months later, Europe and the United States joined China and Russia in supporting UNSC Resolution 1696. When Iran defied the resolution, the United States and the EU-3 resumed consultation over a coordinated response. Increased cooperation has affirmed the decrease in good cop/bad cop role differentiation between them. However, continuing differences between Europe and the United States on one side and Russia and China on the other reflected their divergent interests, not a coordinated good cop/bad cop strategy.

Constraints on the Target’s Options. At least until Security Council action in the summer of 2006, Iran had demonstrated the ability to walk away from the “interrogation room.” In August 2005 it broke its agreement to suspend uranium conversion, leading to an eventual breakdown of talks with the EU-3. Subsequently, Iran initiated steps toward uranium reprocessing and spoke defiantly of its immunity from Western pressure. It exploited Bush’s “axis of evil” rhetoric to justify its nuclear ambitions “while exploiting Europe’s reluctance to get tough in order to buy time to fulfill them.”⁵⁶

Not long after the Security Council passed its resolution, Iran announced that it had successfully taken further steps toward uranium enrichment. Iran has perceived U.S.-EU differences as fundamental and strategic, as manifest in disputes over the Anti-Ballistic Missile and Kyoto treaties, the war in Iraq, and European displeasure with U.S. international behavior in general. The government saw the EU-3 negotiations “as a matter of reputation and credibility” for Europe and a way to “rejuvenate the lost reputation of the European Union in the international arena.”⁵⁷ It is possible that Iran may conclude even now that public unity among the United States and its partners masks ongoing, and still exploitable,

differences. Europe, like China and Russia, continues strongly to oppose a military option, something the United States continues to hold in reserve, and all parties share concern for any disruption of the world supply of petroleum.

Iran’s harsh rhetoric, defiance of the United Nations, and meddling in Lebanon, however, may have helped coalesce a shared perception of Iran as a greedy state and therefore reduced its leverage over its interlocutors. Should recently adopted unity foreclose the divide-and-conquer option vis-à-vis Europe and the United States, Iran would still retain other options for maintaining its autonomy. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s policy of Eastern orientation suggests that Iran may still harbor hopes that it can seek protection from Moscow, Beijing, or New Delhi (the latter possibility reduced by the recent U.S.-India entente).⁵⁸ Russia does not want a nuclear Iran, but it wants a U.S. military action in Iran even less.⁵⁹ For its part, China felt constrained by a recent \$70 billion deal for Iranian energy to fuel its voracious economic growth.⁶⁰ How far Iran could go by pinning its hopes on Russia and China remains an open question. Both states supported the five-plus-one initiative and UNSC Resolution 1696.

Should all options for divide-and-conquer be foreclosed, Iran can still count on its oil power, its growing missile capability, dispersion of its nuclear facilities, and its ability further to disrupt regional politics. In the longer run, options might include possession of the very WMD that the West wishes to prevent.⁶¹ In sum, while Iran faces increased unity among its interlocutors in opposition to its nuclear program, it is not yet clear that Iran’s options for walking out of the interrogating room have been exhausted.

Credibility of Interrogators’ Positions. Steven Everts writes that, “For conditional engagement to succeed, Iran must be assured that if it implements its commitments, so too will the EU and others.”⁶² Iran could interpret U.S. endorsement of EU-3 negotiations and of a package of incentives, however grudging, as evidence of good cop Europe’s ability to insulate (at least temporarily) Tehran against the wrath of the bad cop. As noted above, however, U.S. support for the negotiation option is as likely to be the result of temporary limitations resulting from the Iraq War as it is of European influence. If this is the case, then there is a real question whether Iran would have confidence that if it complied with EU demands, the U.S. bad cop would not eventually take advantage of Iranian “disarmament” to press for regime change by any means necessary.⁶³ It is doubtful that the Iranian government had very much faith that Britain, a country Tehran sometimes refers to as the “second Satan,” was capable of restraining the United States. Iran’s doubts would be reinforced by numerous U.S. statements and actions in support of regime change. In its recent criticisms of Iran and its support for UNSC Resolution 1696, the EU-3 has effectively sacrificed much of its credibility as good cop.

In order for the good cop’s blandishments to be appealing to the target, the bad cop’s threat must be credible, too. Iran appears to be ambivalent about the urgency of a U.S. military threat. Iranian behavior after September 11, 2001 suggests that Iran indeed feared finding itself next on Washington’s list of candidates for regime change. The U.S. government’s open encouragement of regime change has reinforced the bad cop persona in the eyes of Iran. Certainly reports of U.S. plans for military strikes, even nuclear strikes, do nothing to reassure Iran’s leaders.⁶⁴ It is not entirely clear, however, that Iran has

continued since 2003 to be fearful of a U.S. military strike.⁶⁵ Kenneth Pollack has lamented an “abdication of American interests” to European negotiators little interested in U.S. security concerns.⁶⁶

In light of Europe’s past reluctance to impose new penalties, U.S. preoccupation with Iraq, and openly expressed doubts within the U.S. government about the feasibility of a military strike, Iran may have concluded that “the major powers no longer have the stomach, or the unity, to seriously threaten sanctions or military action.”⁶⁷ As noted above, even after the Security Council’s action in July, Iran may still calculate that in the end, Russia and China would veto truly comprehensive sanctions. If the United States is the “paper tiger” that critics charge, then there is no reason that an EU or Russian or Chinese good cop serves any useful purpose in creating “emotional contrast.” Even if the U.S. threat were credible, it is not clear that the result would be altogether positive for nonproliferation. Wyn Bowen and Joanna Kidd, for example, have concluded that fear of the United States “is the main driver of Iran’s nuclear ambitions,” not a reason to abandon those ambitions.⁶⁸ If greed, not fear, is Iran’s principal motivation for acquiring nuclear weapons, however, even credible threats may do little to deter it.

Europe’s credibility as good cop has been largely undone by its increasingly tough rhetoric and its willingness to support Security Council action, but its remaining resistance to the harshest sanctions and military force continue to distinguish it from the United States—leaving Europe at most a “less-bad cop.” The U.S. credibility as bad cop may have been compromised by its greater support for diplomacy, but it remains distinguished from its negotiating partners by an unrepentant belief that far greater pressure may ultimately need to be applied.

North Korea

A large majority of published references to the good cop/bad cop strategy have concerned the case of Iran. It is ironic, then, that as diplomatic alignments in the Iran case have shifted, the six-party talks with the DPRK have provided a somewhat better fit with the good cop/bad cop model.

Role Differentiation. The United States and its four partners in the six-party talks that began in 2003 have all publicly agreed on the goal of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, and they all have expressed their commitment to a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue. Nonetheless, the differences among them have been significant, and until recently perhaps even greater than the differences between the United States and the EU-3 in the Iran case. As in that case, the United States has established a reputation as the “bad cop.” The perception is widespread in the Bush administration that the DPRK is a greedy state. However, U.S. policy during the first Bush term often appeared to be based on the assumption that, given the parlous state of North Korea’s economy, confrontation would compel the North to cave in to U.S. demands.⁶⁹

Again as in the Iran case, the United States has refused to rule out the use of force. Complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of the North’s nuclear programs, including peaceful uses, ranked at the top of the U.S. agenda. However, the

United States has upped the ante by demanding settlement of a host of side issues from human rights to drug trafficking, counterfeiting and money laundering, and the conventional military threat to South Korea. For four years, the United States refused to hold formal one-on-one talks with the DPRK or to offer any rewards until after Pyongyang had committed to complying with demands to dismantle its nuclear program. Regularly revised contingency planning for war on the peninsula and upgrading of U.S. military hardware in the region, the 2002 National Security Strategy and nuclear targeting doctrine, continued modernization of the Republic of Korea (ROK) armed forces, progress toward theater missile defenses, new legislation such as the North Korean Human Rights Act, the inauguration of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), intensified imposition of financial sanctions, and harsh public rhetoric were all part of the policy of pressure embraced by the United States. At the June 2004 talks, the United States insisted that permanent security assurances would take effect only upon completion of CVID and that full normalization of relations with Washington would have to await solution of other issues of concern.

The case can be made that three U.S. partners in Northeast Asia have played the good cop role more out of a genuine preference for engagement than out of any tactical intent to increase stress on the North Koreans. With the exception of Japan, U.S. partners in the six-party talks perceive the DPRK as a security-seeking state. Though supporting a nuclear-free Korea, China, South Korea, Russia, and even Japan have had different priorities than the United States. All of them share as their primary and immediate goal the prevention of war in Korea, while CVID remains a long-term objective.⁷⁰ A Tripartite Declaration among China, the ROK, and Japan in October 2003 affirmed their "commitment to a peaceful solution of the nuclear issue...through dialogue and to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."⁷¹

Together, China and South Korea account for more than half of trade with the DPRK, and Japan is also a major trading partner. Though their trade and investment stakes in the DPRK could give these partners negative leverage, until the North's nuclear test it was leverage they generally chose not to employ. United by their acute concern to avoid war or regime collapse, China and South Korea have criticized what they see as U.S. inflexibility and have opposed sanctions and UN Security Council consideration. With the possible exception of Japan, all the U.S. partners have been reluctant to increase pressure on the North.⁷² Aidan Foster-Carter has written that, "For the other parties, the six-party talks were a fig leaf."⁷³ Despite U.S. insistence that any rewards must be conditional, he argued, China, Russia, and South Korea have all continued to provide material support to the North. South Korea and Japan resisted U.S. pressure to cancel the light water reactors promised to the DPRK in the Agreed Framework. The DPRK's missile and nuclear tests dramatically altered the respective roles of participants in the six-party talks, as China joined, and the ROK publicly endorsed, penalties as prescribed in the Security Council resolution. Even then, however, China and the ROK entertained serious reservations about going as far as the United States urged in interpreting and applying those penalties.⁷⁴

Worries about resolving the DPRK's missile threat and the abductee issue have positioned Japan closer to the United States than its other partners.⁷⁵ Other than the United States, it was the only one of the "five" unilaterally to impose new sanctions after the six-party talks began. In the summer and fall of 2006 it played an active role in pushing

for tough Security Council resolutions. Nonetheless, it still prefers to minimize the risk of war and instability.⁷⁶ Until the abductee issue exploded, Japan was seeking normalization of relations, sweetened by substantial economic inducements to the North.⁷⁷

South Korea publicly endorses the U.S. negotiating position of, in effect, “disarm and reap benefits, fail to disarm and be isolated,” but its interests diverge from the United States in important ways. Throughout the recent crisis, it has played the archetypal role of good cop, openly displaying genuine sympathy for the North and opposing what it sees as U.S. strong-arm tactics. In the meantime, South Korea has become a substantial source of aid, trade, and tourism for the DPRK.⁷⁸ In June 2003, South Korea agreed to provide significant electric energy to the North. Confounding the United States, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun even expressed understanding for the North’s nuclear program as a way of “safeguarding” the country and proclaimed that South Korea was a “mediator” not a co-combatant with the United States.⁷⁹ Though committed to the alliance with the United States, South Korea is determined to avoid antagonizing China or being “sucked into a U.S.-China conflict.”⁸⁰ Given its past behavior, the ROK’s support of Security Council sanctions following the DPRK missile and nuclear tests in 2006 appeared to signal a remarkable U-turn, but to date the Roh government remains firmly committed to its engagement strategy and continues vigorously to oppose isolating the DPRK.

China’s policy toward the DPRK must pursue a balancing act among many competing priorities.⁸¹ In the best of all worlds, it would not have to choose between them. China highly values good relations with the United States. It shares with the United States and the other powers a desire to see a nuclear-free North Korea and to avoid a regional nuclear arms race. Further, China’s concern for its rising prestige in the region has given it a stake in a favorable outcome of the six-party talks, of which it is chief sponsor. Despite U.S. hopes of enlisting China as a “protagonist” in the dispute, however, the People’s Republic has a hierarchy of regional interests distinct from those of the United States that have kept it from making such a commitment: maintaining regional stability conducive to its economic growth, preserving and extending its regional dominance, restraining U.S. power, and forestalling a resurgent Japan.⁸²

On the Korean Peninsula, China seeks to continue broadening its relations with the South while preserving influence in the North. Unlike the United States, it is determined to forestall the collapse of the DPRK.⁸³ Despite a cooling of relations over the past decade and a half, China still has important stakes in the DPRK.⁸⁴ China is the North’s last formal ally, its largest trade partner, its major energy supplier, and a major source of investment and humanitarian assistance.⁸⁵ It views the Korean Peninsula as its natural sphere of influence, and in the long run will work for the expulsion of the United States and peaceful reunification of the peninsula, preferably via Chinese-style economic reform in the North. China pursues a three no’s policy—no nuclear weapons, no war, no collapse of the North’s regime. Ending the DPRK’s nuclear program is thus “only a piece of a larger and more complicated puzzle for China.”⁸⁶

China has the archetypal good cop’s ability to protect the target from the bad cop through its economic support, the ability to play on the importance that the United States attaches to good relations with China, and its key position on the Security Council. To the extent that it has played that role in the past, however, it has not only failed to deliver

DPRK denuclearization, but has also failed even to dissuade it from carrying out a nuclear test. In the process it suffered a blow to its prestige that led to a marked shift in its public stance vis-à-vis the DPRK. By supporting UNSC Resolutions 1695 and 1718, and by subsequently increasing criticism of and pressure on the DPRK, China has greatly reduced, though not entirely abjured, its potential to play good cop. As in the case of the ROK, China's hesitation to join the PSI or to engage in the full range of sanctions sought by the United States still leaves it in the position of "less-bad cop." It remains to be seen whether it can deliver the sine qua non of a good cop/bad cop strategy: the "confession" that both it and the United States claim to desire. If it can, it may gain a lion's share of the credit, to the detriment of bad cop United States.

Like other regional states, Russia, the final member of the six-party talks, wants a nuclear-weapon-free Korea, but strongly values stability as well.⁸⁷ At least for now, however, Russia's influence is limited.⁸⁸ Driven by strategic interests in reviving its diplomatic influence in the region, the promise of economic opportunities in Eastern Siberia, and aversion to the consequences of a collapsed North Korea, Russia prefers engagement rather than a policy of containment that could lead to instability.⁸⁹ It long resisted calls for sanctions and the use of force. On the other hand, Moscow has a compelling interest in preventing the destabilizing effects of a nuclear North Korea as well as in maintaining good relations with the United States.⁹⁰ It has expressed its willingness to join the ROK and China in offering economic and energy assistance to the North. However, Russia warned the DPRK that its support was conditional upon the North remaining a non-nuclear state, and it has joined the United States and Japan in the PSI. Even after voting for Security Council sanctions, Russia has remained staunchly opposed to the threat or use of force.

To conclude, role differentiation with regard to North Korea was until the end of 2006 far clearer with respect to what pressure is acceptable and what unacceptable than in the case of Iran, with U.S. support for more economic pressure steadfastly deflected by China and South Korea. North Korea's missile and nuclear tests, however, may have been more effective than any U.S. diplomacy in narrowing the gap among the five powers. There remains a degree of role differentiation, but it is in the process of being redefined.

Role Coordination. If the actors were united by the same goals, and their positions were coordinated, their actions would be consistent with the good cop/bad cop model. If they were moved by fundamentally divergent views and interests, they would not be. The United States has insisted since the six-party talks began that all of the North's interlocutors share the same goals. It viewed the six-party talks as "a vehicle to secure support for U.S. demands" and to create a "five versus one" dynamic leading to sanctions.⁹¹ There can be no question that the United States has maintained regular consultation with its partners throughout the talks. Consultation only intensified in the wake of Security Council action, as the United States attempted to persuade its partners to impose tough sanctions. Top government officials have shuttled back and forth to discuss and harmonize their positions and have frequently issued joint statements to underline their unity. It is not at all clear that these harmonious statements, such as those issued by Bush and Roh after their 2005 summit or by foreign ministers Condoleezza Rice (United

States), Ban Ki-moon (South Korea), and Taro Aso (Japan) in October 2006, reflected genuine consensus. Indeed, public disagreements between China and the United States and South Korea and the United States appear to reflect real differences, as discussed above, and not dramatic roles designed to put pressure on the North Koreans.

From the U.S. perspective, the problem is that its good cop partners are *not* role-playing but have created what Foster-Carter has called “a post-Cold War axis of carrot.”⁹² One of many explanations for announced U.S. troop withdrawals from South Korea was that they were designed to pressure Roh to “cool his enthusiasm” for economic aid to the North, “and allow a tougher policy on North Korea to prevail in Seoul.”⁹³ The charge has even been made that because the United States does not trust the good cops’ ability to deliver CVID, it has made a deliberate effort to scuttle the talks—a charge similar to some critics’ views of the U.S. position on the EU-3 talks with Iran.⁹⁴ It has been alleged that hardliners moved to squelch the September 2005 Joint Statement, which appeared to offer at least the prospect of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.⁹⁵ “For the U.S.,” argues Noriyuki Katagiri, “a successful non-military solution to the North’s program would affirm the value of diplomacy and thus undermine [the] case” for preemptive military action under the Bush doctrine.⁹⁶ Indeed, several commentators have observed that U.S. partners, having concluded that the U.S. hardline could not work, or that the United States lacked any credible strategy, may have considered going their own way in dealing with the DPRK.⁹⁷ In any case, it is not at all clear that a coordinated good cop/bad cop strategy was being pursued prior to the North Korean tests. The subsequent hardening of positions of all the DPRK’s interlocutors has certainly weakened any case for a good cop/bad cop model.

Constraints on the Target’s Options. While the good and bad cops dickered, the North was quietly slipping out the door. A combination of gridlock among the allies, successful North Korean diplomatic outreach, and apparent U.S. hesitancy appear to have given the DPRK the same kind of wiggle room that Iran has enjoyed. As a result, the DPRK was able successfully to turn good cop/bad cop into its own game of divide and conquer.⁹⁸ The DPRK has taken every opportunity to play upon the differing priorities and preferences of its interlocutors. Fanning doubts about U.S. intelligence following the Iraq War, and keeping tensions high, the DPRK has attempted to prod the other actors “to escalate further their criticisms of U.S. positions and proposals.”⁹⁹ Through October 2006, it continued to stall on convening a new round of talks, threatened to keep expanding its nuclear deterrent, flamboyantly broke its moratorium on missile tests, and dramatically demonstrated its nuclear deterrent. Even after it agreed to rejoin the talks, the North’s intentions remained opaque and the “five’s” ability to pursue a coordinated and effective strategy remained untested. Instead of confronting the North with “five against one,” the six-party talks have subjected Washington to allied pressure, sometimes successful, to show more flexibility and have allowed the DPRK to “dictate the pace of the crisis.”¹⁰⁰ DPRK missile and nuclear tests had the effect of pushing the UN Security Council permanent five closer together, but potentially exploitable differences remained among them.

Credibility of Interrogators' Threats and Promises. U.S. concessions to South Korea and China such as those included in the June 2004 proposals at the six-party talks, public endorsement of South Korea's "peace and prosperity" policy toward the North, and its conceding in 2005 the North's sovereign right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, are compatible with the good cop/bad cop model, offering the North some evidence that the good cops can restrain the bad cop United States. After public criticism from President Roh in November 2004, the United States backed away from "regime change" and spoke instead of its goal of gradual economic "transformation."¹⁰¹ During the fourth round of talks, the United States showed greater flexibility, apparently to some degree in deference to pressure from its partners. The result was the Joint Statement of September 2005, pledging the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear programs in return for various incentives including the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. During the six-party talks, the good cops—China, South Korea, and Russia—had certainly met half of the requirements to be an effective good cop. They successfully differentiated themselves from the United States while proving their ability to keep the bad cop at bay. By leaving ambiguous the degree of their insistence on a North Korean "full confession," however, they have failed fully to confirm the model. Complicating the question of the good cops' credibility is that even if the offers of aid, trade, and security assurances were credible, the North has expressed distrust of the "carrot tactics" that it says brought down the Soviet Union and induced Libya, unwisely in its view, to give up its own WMD.¹⁰² Finally, by raising side issues such as counterfeiting and human rights, the United States raises DPRK concerns that even after it relinquishes its nuclear weapons, Washington will continue to threaten the regime.

It might appear from the litany of North Korean complaints about the its "hostile policy," that the United States would have had little difficulty in successfully cultivating a credible bad cop persona. Going back decades, the United States has continuously sought to upgrade its own and South Korea's military deterrent on the Korean Peninsula. This trend has been continued, if not accelerated, under the Bush administration. There seems little doubt that the DPRK fears U.S. military action, but its fears may be less short term than long term. No sooner had the fourth round of the six-party talks been completed than the United States backed away from one of the provisions of the Joint Statement, imposed sanctions on eight North Korean companies, and resumed its inflammatory rhetoric. The DPRK continued to voice its suspicions that American restraint is both disingenuous and ephemeral.

Nonetheless, the argument is made that U.S. weakness, not aggressiveness, has damaged the nonproliferation effort. Though it is commonly assumed that the DPRK was intimidated by the U.S.-led action in Iraq, counterevidence suggests that it saw the war, and later its aftermath, as "a window of opportunity" to ignore American pressure to dismantle its nuclear program.¹⁰³ China's continued reluctance to endorse tough Security Council action and South Korea's adamant opposition to any military solution further reduced the credibility of the U.S. threat.

Other aspects of U.S. behavior would seem to confirm this view. The United States failed to act when the DPRK crossed its first red line and reprocessed plutonium in 2003, and it remained passive when in 2005 the North again engaged in reprocessing and

admitted that it was a nuclear power. Accusations of administration indecision, delay, failure to follow through with its own threats, and passively accepting each North Korean advance have been widespread.¹⁰⁴ Contributing to this impression was the highly publicized and allegedly paralyzing debate between “dominant hard-liners and the few top officials interested in some level of engagement.”¹⁰⁵ This debate has played itself out in bureaucratic jockeying throughout the six-party talks, though some observers see a more coherent approach in the Bush second term.¹⁰⁶

In effect, concludes Richard Haass, far from the United States successfully intimidating the DPRK, “there is thus a reality of de facto acceptance of what North Korea has done.”¹⁰⁷ In this view, the United States and its partners have largely failed to meet the third condition for the good cop/bad cop strategy. Though their approach has been more cohesive since the DPRK’s October 2006 nuclear test, their past differences, far from subjecting the North to stressful pressure, have allowed it to continue its nuclear program unchallenged—and in effect escape from the interrogation room.

Conclusions

Nonproliferation diplomacy toward North Korea and Iran has exhibited some characteristics of the good cop/bad cop model, but overall, neither case fully meets the criteria of that strategy.

With respect to role differentiation, in both cases U.S. behavior appears consistent overall with the bad cop. It has adopted the hardest negotiating line, pushed for the toughest sanctions, and taken actions that have increased the military threat to the target states. By the same token, it has been America’s partners that have most consistently pushed for a negotiated settlement and resisted the call to seek sanctions on the Security Council. However, the lines have not always been clear. In the case of Iran, the United States and Europe have converged around a “fading opportunity” strategy (if not “hawk engagement”), in which it is agreed that Iran will face punishments if negotiations fail. UNSC Resolution 1696 appeared to confirm a degree of convergence among Iran’s interlocutors that had hitherto been absent. The good cop/bad cop model seems an ill fit under these conditions. To the extent that the model applies at all, it may be Russia and China that have taken up the good cop roles to the EU and U.S. bad cop. The United States and European Union felt constrained to endorse Russia’s proposal to take custody of Iran’s enrichment in exchange for permitting Iran to have a nuclear energy program and to put off referral of the issue to the United Nations. However, any willingness of Russia or China to accept a nuclear Iran would disqualify them from the good cop role by giving Iran a ticket to walk out on the interrogators. As of the end of 2006, Iran was very publicly moving ahead in pursuit of an expanded uranium enrichment capability, while all the cops squabbled over how to respond.

Ironically, while the “good cop/bad cop” analogy was first and most often made with reference to the situation in Iran, the fit was until quite recently closer in the case of the DPRK. No French, British, or German leader has expressed “understanding” for Iran’s desire for nuclear weapons as President Roh did with reference to North Korea. Differences between South Korea and China, on the one hand, and the United States on the other, are

still significant enough to meet the first criterion of good cop/bad cop diplomacy. Although the U.S. position had moderated somewhat during the fourth six-party talks session, the Bush administration's bottom line remains fixed on the formula, "disarm first, rewards later." It continues to link the nuclear issue to side issues such as human rights and counterfeiting and to engage in confrontational rhetoric. China and South Korea, in particular, have remained firmly committed to a graduated program of reciprocal concessions leading, perhaps, to denuclearization and have continued to be openly critical of the U.S. "lack of flexibility."

In neither the North Korea nor the Iran case do the good and bad cop roles appear to have been adopted as part of a coherent diplomatic strategy of deception and manipulation. Good and bad cop roles have been the default positions of the parties, arising from real differences in their internal political dynamics, diplomatic philosophies, and interests, rather than as a deliberate effort to engineer emotional contrast. The United States and its negotiating partners have each faced dramatically different political realities at home, pushing the former to a bad cop role, and pushing its allies, by and large, into a good cop role. To the extent that U.S. squabbles with its partners constrain all of them and limit their ability successfully to coordinate their approaches, their behavior runs counter to the good cop/bad cop model. The willingness of key "good cops" in 2006 to support Security Council resolutions critical of Iran and the DPRK not only suggested greater coordination, but also reduced role differentiation. If there is more coherence today, it is more around some *as yet undefined* policy of pressure than a strategy of emotional contrast.

Both North Korea and Iran have demonstrated the capacity to walk away from the pressures applied by the United States and its negotiating partners, most notably by employing their own divide-and-conquer strategies, but also, apparently, by acting on the assumption that U.S. threats are not credible. Since they represent real rather than affected differences, quarrels between the United States and its partners over strategy have worked to the benefit of both target states, each of which has demonstrated a facility for manipulation and delay. Pyongyang has proved especially effective at extorting concessions from the good cops just to attend talks. There could be no clearer demonstration of the ability of the target to walk out of the interrogation room than the DPRK's nuclear test in October 2006. Though eventual dismantlement of its nuclear program cannot be ruled out, the North has greatly enhanced its leverage with any putative good or bad cops. In light of the Security Council's call for sanctions against both Iran and the DPRK (superficially a nullification of a good cop/bad cop dynamic), it is too soon to conclude that either state will be able to walk away scot-free as a nuclear power. Ultimately, however, the test of the good cop/bad cop model is that the good and bad cops are equally committed to obtaining the target's compliance.

Conclusions about the credibility of the good and bad cop roles are more difficult to establish without documentary evidence from two notoriously closed regimes. On the one hand, there is still good reason to believe that both North Korea and Iran continue to fear the powerful and hostile bad cop. After all, U.S. military supremacy is undisputed, and the Bush administration has shown its willingness to use it unilaterally. At the same time the credibility of China, South Korea, and (until recently) the EU-3 good cop roles is buttressed

by the fact that they are all more dependent on trade and good relations with their respective targets than is the United States. Their credibility has been further enhanced by their seeming ability to keep the U.S. bad cop on a leash. In both cases Washington's desire for an all-out push for sanctions or military action was restrained, if not contained, until passage of the two Security Council resolutions in the last half of 2006.

On the other hand, the credibility of both the good and bad cops is undermined by several factors. Europe's, and more recently China's and Russia's, agreement to UNSC Resolutions 1695, 1696, and 1718 have put the DPRK and Iran on notice that good cop restraint has its limits. The good cop's credibility is further called into question by the fact that neither the EU-3 nor the DPRK's neighbors command all of the rewards that might be attractive. Only the United States, for example, can alleviate their security concerns. In agreeing to return to the six-party talks, the DPRK continued to insist that it was the United States from which it wanted concessions. Even if the two target states were willing to forgo nuclear weapons, the good cops cannot guarantee that the bad cop will not eventually take advantage of the targets' disarmament to pursue regime change by force or subversion. The fact that the United States continues to raise serious side issues with both the DPRK and Iran could strengthen that suspicion. As a result, Iran and the DPRK may continue to see nuclear weapons as an essential deterrent and their most reliable path to walk away from the interrogators once and for all.

The U.S. credibility as bad cop has long been undermined by the ability of its negotiating partners to block punitive sanctions and, more important, by its military preoccupation with Iraq. Thus restrained, the United States has been in a weakened position to create the "emotional contrast" upon which the good cop/bad cop strategy relies. Without a credible bad cop, the good cops have no foil against which to play. What incentive does either Iran or the DPRK have to reward the good cops for delivering them from a hyped threat? Both continue to say publicly that "self reliance," or in the case of the DPRK, the "*songun* policy," is sufficient to ensure their security. If a credible threat from the United States should emerge in the future, the question remains for both Iran and the DPRK whether having nuclear arms or the absence of nuclear arms offers more security. Despite U.S. urgings and increased economic pressure, Iran and the DPRK seem disinclined to follow Libya's example.

This paper has examined the question of whether the United States and its partners have pursued a good cop/bad cop strategy in the Iran and North Korea cases and concluded that at best it was a default position rather than a choreographed strategy. The two cases examined here do little to suggest that good cop/bad cop can effectively be pursued in international diplomacy. Conditions in the interrogation room can be strictly controlled, whereas in the international arena, there are simply too many variables operating to undermine an effective and coordinated role play. The different international and domestic interests of the potential good and bad cops prevent them from assuming clear-cut roles and from providing the kind of coordinated whipsawing that the model requires. Not only will the target state be fully aware of and able to exploit differences between the good and bad cops, it will often have escape options as well. It is exceedingly difficult to seal off a state from exploitable links to the outside world. Other players can intervene in ways that permit the target state a means of exit

from the tactics of the good and bad cops. The good and the bad cops rarely are the only game in town, and they rarely control the environment in which they are attempting to influence the target. Finally, there is little evidence to date that either the North Korea or the Iran case meet the essential condition of the model that the target will be more likely to comply in the presence of a good cop/bad cop dynamic than if faced with the good or bad cop alone.

Although the present cases leave little room for confidence that good cop/bad cop is a viable strategy, they do not exclude that possibility under carefully circumscribed conditions. Those conditions would certainly have to include the following: (1) There must be fewer "cops" engaging the target state. In the Iran and North Korea cases the large number of players have made clear differentiation and coordination of roles all but impossible. Iran and North Korea have been able to exploit the divergent and crosscutting interests of their interlocutors. The smaller the number of good and bad cops, the better the chance that their interests will coincide and thus that they can coordinate their tactics. (2) Good and bad cops must have more "market power" for their respective positive and negative incentives than in the present cases. Neither the United States nor its partners had proprietary control over incentives and disincentives. (3) Success will be more likely when the cops' goal is relatively modest (clearly not the case in nuclear nonproliferation diplomacy) and the target's behavior is driven more by domestic political and prestige concerns and less by security concerns.¹⁰⁸ (4) Where good and bad cops enjoy more parity in their influence on each other, the target will have greater confidence that the good cop has the resources to restrain the bad cop (reassurance) if the target complies. Power disparities between the United States and its partners have created reasonable doubt in the Iran and North Korea cases that giving in to the demand for disarmament would offer protection against future "regime change" by the bad cop. (5) Credibility will be enhanced if the target perceives that domestic elites and publics in the good and bad cop states are united in support of their respective roles. Very public infighting over foreign policy in the Bush administration has opened up maneuvering room for both Iran and North Korea. (6) Finally, the target state must lack deterrent assets of its own, such as both North Korea and Iran have demonstrated, that allow it to shift the adverse power relationship in its favor. Both Iran and North Korea have demonstrated the ability to do great harm to the United States if it carries through on its threats, and as noted, U.S. restraint has shown that it is aware of and influenced by those risks. The hapless prisoner in the interrogating room is far less likely to be able to make a credible deterrent threat.

Good cop/bad cop is most likely to succeed against the weakest of states. In those cases, however, there is no particular reason why good cop/bad cop would have any tactical advantage over more traditional applications of positive and negative sanctions. To sum up, based on the present examples, prospects are dim that good cop/bad cop can succeed as a negotiating strategy under any but the most limited circumstances.

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