IDEATIONAL POWER IN A REALIST WORLD:
PAN-PACIFIC BRIDGE BUILDING BY NON-STATE ACTORS

Peter Hayes

2019 Building Bridges Awards Ceremony

Los Angeles

February 28, 2019

***

Let me begin by thanking Pacific Century Institute for making this award.

The Building Bridges award is a great way to recognize what it takes to cross borders, open lines of communication, and create value. It is truly an honor to receive it.

I also especially like that the Building Bridges website showcases the Sydney Harbor Bridge!

I may be the tallest awardee to date, but when I look at the bridges built by past recipients such as my mentor Professor Bob Scalapino, I feel very small indeed.

Nonetheless, I'd like to reflect on how Nautilus Institute built bridges across the Pacific for the last 26 years since we reconstituted it in 1992 after from Australia via the Philippines with a back pack and a baby.

I say we deliberately as this was a joint project undertaken by myself and my partner in life, Lyuba Zarsky, co-founder of Nautilus, often co-author, and now proud co-grand-parent.

Together, we set the tone for our then staff, known as Nautiloids, with what later became Nautilus' vision:

"*We hold,*" it says, "*that it is possible to build peace, create security, and restore sustainability for all people in our time.*"

As we get older, "*our time*" is dwindling rapidly—but this vision is also realistic in these sense that it is achievable.

We continued:
To this end, we convene a community of scholars and practitioners who conduct research on strategies to solve interconnected global problems.

Underlying this approach is the notion of "ideational power." This is really an old concept in new fancy words,[1] but it is important, because it defines how we have worked for the last quarter of a century at Nautilus.

In our prior, Cold War, incarnation we produced books and articles at the speed of airmail and hard copy publishing, usually over weeks, and sometimes years. Even mass media coverage involved days to communicate before the wire services kicked into action.

We had important direct impacts. For example, we know our 1987 study *Chasing Gravity's Rainbow* on the Kwajalein missile range and possible missile test arms control measures led ultimately to the creation of the 2002 Hague Code of Conduct on Missile Proliferation to which 139 states now adhere.

But when the Cold War ended, the world splintered, the Web arrived, and everything changed. In 1994 and we began to post the *Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network* or NAPSNet daily report on our website, and email it, first to hundreds, then thousands of readers, filling in with forward faxing when needed—as occurred for years from Tokyo to Pyongyang.[2] In effect, we used our unique knowledge and access from the Cold War era to "arbitrage" across thinly populated knowledge black holes in relation to issues such as North Korea.[3]

In turn, this conjuncture of information systems with urgent post-Cold War insecurities enabled us to deploy our ideational power in three distinct ways, by:
a)   Introducing heretical ideas into policy battles, for example, by advancing via NAPSNet the notion that the DPRK was using nuclear threat not for deterrence, but for compellance, as "the barrier that makes the water flow," to force the United States to change its hostile policies, and could be negotiated with, not merely contained, let alone destroyed.[4]
b)   Contesting conventional wisdom and circumventing gate keepers, especially *status quo* thinks tanks, for example, by controverting myths such as "The DPRK will collapse soon;"[5] and
c)   Stimulating civic diplomacy at the transnational level, for example, by building the iconic Nautilus Unhari village wind-power project to show it was possible to do business with North Koreans which was simply inconceivable in the dominant security paradigm.[6]

Information Axioms

In 1999, we codified how Nautilus exercised ideational power in a set of Information Axioms.[7]

Two of these axioms are very important to anyone who sets about building virtual bridges across the Pacific.

Common Knowledge

The first axiom is the notion of *Common Knowledge*. This is *not* consensual knowledge, where you have come to some mutual understanding.

Rather, it is simply ascertaining that some fact, some reference, is understood to be known to the "other" so that you can navigate to a common starting point.

We deliberately set out to create Common Knowledge over the last two and a half decades.

To this end, we provided the first legal "export" of a USG approved 386 generation 1980s era laptop to then UN Mission DPRK official Han Song Ryol. In 1994, we flew him to the Bay Area for training on how to use email, and helped him get his first Hotmail email address; and we transferred a computer to the DPRK so that our counterparts could read NAPSNet via email.[8]

I tell you this because ideational power requires information channels to be open, especially in crises, so that weak or inactive links can be activated to provide additional communication options to leaders at various levels.

Let me give you an example of how common knowledge works. In 1994, we began to build a DPRK energy database, now 24 years old, and still in use. We then convened training workshops with energy experts from each country, including the DPRK, to use the same LEAP software. The result was a shared vocabulary with North Koreans and the international community to discuss the DPRK's energy economy.

In April 2004, while we were in Beijing conducting such a workshop, I got a phone call from a USG official in Washington who asked me to give a message to the North Koreans. "Tell them they are shitheads from me," he said. I asked him why. He replied that President Bush, taking a major political risk, had just made the first unconditional offer of medical aid after the Ryongchŏn train explosion disaster, and the DPRK had not responded. I relayed this to the head of the DPRK delegation, who I knew well. That was a Saturday. By Monday, the DPRK had communicated its willingness to accept the USAID team, and they arrived in Pyongyang two days later.

So ideational power is real. It enables non-state actors to help people do things that they wouldn't otherwise have done—the classic definition of the exercise of power.

Of course, it has its risks. In one NAPSNet Special Report, we published a satirical essay by Bob Carlin.[9] The story was titled "Wabbit in Free Fall." The story line was how DPRK First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju spoke to a meeting of North Korean diplomats in New York about how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs now longer had any influence on the DPRK's policies in Pyongyang. Bob was actually highlighting the idiocy of US policy that strengthened DPRK hardliners.

Unfortunately, the ROK mass media did not realize that "Wabbit in Free Fall" was entirely fictional. For a day, it was emblazoned as headline news in the major newspapers in Seoul. This was funny—but also not—because who knows how the North Koreans read the Korean newspapers reporting in Korean on what a former US intelligence analyst was reportedly saying in English about what one of their seniors was saying, in Korean, in New York.

We concluded that in future cross-border, cross-cultural, and multilingual bridge-building, we would refrain from including satire in the building materials.

Information Degradation and Small Worlds

The second axiom I want to highlight is *Information Degradation*. As anyone who knows thermodynamics and organizational theory is aware, the information dispatched is never the information received.

In the course of building the wind power plant in Unhari, we discovered a simple but hugely important fact: from our digital download of continuous grid measurement in the village, it was evident that the DPRK from 1998-2000 was operating on 50 and 60 hertz at the same time in a nominally 60 Hz grid.[10] This simple fact told us that there was no integrated national grid; and the DPRK grid was too small and unstable to operate the light water reactors under construction at a cost of $5 billion in the DPRK at Sinpo, period.

The distance from electrons in the grid to the digital readout in the village power station to our team and then to US policy makers via the Perry review in 1999 was very short. This is how networks use the small worlds effect to exercise ideational power.

Powerful Ideas and Conducive Conditions

However, not all ideas suffice to create ideational power. The ideas themselves must be based on deep research to the highest standards; and the analysis must be authoritative. But that isn't enough to make lend influence to a merely powerful idea.

A potent idea must also offer a new vocabulary or definition of an intractable problem, thereby redefining the solution(s). Such an idea often presents multiple meanings to different users—that is, it is polysemic;[11] and this attribute makes it possible for ideational entrepreneurs to find policy champions who in turn lend legitimacy to the idea in different constituencies. Thus, the idea may need to be formulated in an elastic or ambiguous manner to accommodate different even conflicting interests, at least in the moment.

For example, the concept of a nuclear weapons free zone in Northeast Asia[12] implies greater reliance on conventional forces which many military officers find attractive—just as those from internationalist wing of Japan's polity find it attractive because it supports the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons and Japan's Peace Constitution—a very different resonance.[13] Thus, a nuclear weapons free zone may have valence not only because it is a rational policy response, but because of its emotive content.

Another authoritative Special Reports also appeared on NAPSNet. Former State Department counsel Patrick Norton chose NAPSNet in 1997 as the vehicle to publish his study of the legal aspects of ending the Korean Armistice, almost the only publicly available study of the subject.

Like good whisky, it has aged well, and two decades later, is now more topical and widely read than when it was published thanks, to all of people, President Trump.[14]

To be effective in an era of fake news, spoofing, and devaluation of expert knowledge by the leaders of states—all morbid systems of a post-hegemonic interregnum[15]--the exercise of

ideational power requires a narrower focus on authoritative research that policy makers can lean on for support, but also can appeal to new constituencies.[16]

To that end, we have also committed to supporting three partnerships, each of which is an ideational force multiplier in East Asia anchored in South Korea.

The first is participation in the annual Jeju Forum, the premier regional networking event in Northeast Asia and the magnificent child of East Asia Forum and of Chung-in Moon's vision, and in which Pacific Century Institute played an important seeding role.[17]

The second is to serve in an editorial role with the most important regional policy journal, *Global Asia*, founded by none other than…Chung-in Moon, which cross-posts NAPSNet essays.

The third is to advise the Asia Pacific Leadership Network core group, an important emerging network of Asian leaders on nuclear weapons issues, co-convened by Chung-in Moon.

Conclusion

None of this ideational work—7400 postings for the last 24 years—is done by only one person, least of all by me. Our core team over the years includes not only staff such as energy expert David von Hippel, in-house public intellectual Richard Tanter, and human resource expert Joan Diamond, but also our board members and donors, an invisible college of dozens of former Nautiloids, and a network of roughly 40 partner organizations.

In this regard, I have personally benefited from intellectual joint ventures with Korean colleagues, especially with Kiho Yi;[18] and with Chung-in Moon, with whom I was fortunate to co-edit an anthology on identity and community formation in Northeast Asia aimed at the next generation of scholars and intellectuals in the region.[19]

I hope that this short, selective history demonstrates reason for hope, that civil society-based, non-state actors will continue to use ideational power to build pan-Pacific bridges leading to sustainability, security and peace in our time.

They are not the only bridge builders and cannot achieve their goals alone.

But their responsible use of ideational power will assist the next generation of leaders willing to embrace uncertainty and each other to walk across these bridges together.

Thank you for your attention and thank you again to Spencer Kim, Angie Pak, and the Pacific Century Institute for organizing this wonderful celebration.

ENDNOTES

[1] See M. Carstensen, V. Schmidt, "Power through, over and in ideas: conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism," *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23:3, 2016, pp. 318-337, at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2015.1115534 and D. Béland and R. Cox,"Ideas as coalition magnets: coalition building, policy entrepreneurs, and power relations," *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23:3, 2016, pp. 428-445, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2015.1115533

[2] NAPSNet began publication in December 1993. See Peter Hayes, Wade Huntley, Tim Savage, GeeGee Wong, "The Impact of the Northeast Asian Peace and Security Network in US-DPRK Conflict Resolution", Global Problem Solving Information Technology and Tools, December 10, 1999, https://nautilus.org/global-problem-solving/the-impact-of-the-northeast-asian-peace-and-security-network-in-us-dprk-conflict-resolution-3/

[3] Leonard Seabrooke, "Epistemic arbitrage: transnational professional knowledge in action," *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 2014, 1, 49–64, at: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.714.4686&rep=rep1&type=pdf

[4] P. Hayes, THE DPRK'S CALCULUS FACED WITH MULTILATERAL SANCTIONS," Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network, revised, February 25, 1994, at: https://nautilus.org/staff-publications/hayes0294a-txt/

[5] Peter Hayes, "ATTACHMENT 4: NORTH KOREA THROUGH AN AMERICAN PRISM: A LIST OF MYTHS CURRENTLY RECYCLED THROUGH THE MEDIA," in Peter Hayes, Wade Huntley, Tim Savage, GeeGee Wong, "Attachments to The Impact of the Northeast Asian Peace and Security Network in US-DPRK Conflict Resolution", Information Technology and Tools, December 10, 1999, https://nautilus.org/information-technology-and-tools/attachments-to-the-impact-of-the-northeast-asian-peace-and-security-network-in-us-dprk-conflict-resolution-2/ A recent example of this pushback: Peter Hayes, "Thinking About The Thinkable: DPRK Collapse Scenarios Redux", NAPSNet Policy Forum, September 24, 2013, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/thinking-about-the-thinkable-dprk-collapse-scenarios-redux/

[6] See J. Williams *et al*, "The Wind Farm in the Cabbage Patch," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, volume 55, no. 3, May/June 1999, pp. 40-49, at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.2968/055003014

[7] The ten axioms were: 1. Common Knowledge; 2. Network Effects; 3. Early Entrants Win; 4. Information Feed-back Loops; 5. Standard Setting is Power; 6. Do You Know User Needs? 7. Gatekeepers and Intermediaries; 8. Information Distortion; 9. "Revenues;" 10. The Best Information is Free. The December 10, 1999 conference and papers are found at: https://nautilus.org/gps/tools/information-axioms/

[8] "On November 30, 1993, Hayes initiated communication with US Government concerning transfer of a computer to enable NAPSNet counterparts in the DPRK to receive NAPSNet product. After much review, Nautilus was authorized in May 1994 by the US Commerce Department to transfer a 386 IBM clone desktop computer to the DPRK. This became the first of three computers transferred to the DPRK (more precisely, two more 486s were approved in years following for "export" to the DPRK UN Mission in New York)." Hayes *et al, op cit*, 1999.

[9] "Policy Forum 06-78A: Wabbit in Free Fall", NAPSNet Policy Forum, September 21, 2006, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/wabbit-in-free-fall/

[10] We compared our results at the Unhari site with measurements we collected at other sites around the DPRK some of which were time-coincident with our measurements; which told us that at least two separate grids were operating simultaneously on different frequencies.

[11] Polysemy means that the idea contains multiple meanings and/or offers partial solutions to the stakeholders in the problem, including linked problems. That is, the idea offers enough for everybody to buy into a policy coalition.

[12] Starting with Morton H. Halperin, "The Nuclear Dimension of the U.S.-Japan Alliance", NAPSNet Special Reports, December 21, 2000, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/the-nuclear-dimension-of-the-u-s-japan-alliance/

[13] See for example Morton Halperin, Peter Hayes, Chung-in Moon, Thomas Pickering, Leon Sigal, Philip Yun, "BEYOND THE SECOND TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT: TIME FOR REALISTIC NEXT STEPS", NAPSNet Special Reports, February 01, 2019, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/beyond-the-second-trump-kim-summit-time-for-realistic-next-steps/

[14] Patrick M. Norton, "NAPSNet Policy Forum Online #2 — Norton, "Ending the Korean Armistice"", NAPSNet Policy Forum, March 29, 1997, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/napsnet-policy-forum-online-2-norton-ending-the-korean-armistice/

[15] P. Hayes, "Trump and the Interregnum of American Nuclear Hegemony," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, 1:2, 2018, pp. 219-237, at: https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2018.1532525

[16] K. Pfei, "Expertise in a Post-Factual World: The Ideational Power of ThinkTanks," *St Antony's International Review* 13: 2, 2018, pp. 88-108 and C. Rastrick, "Thinking about Trump: American Think Tanks and Their New Political Reality," On Think Tanks Working Paper Series, August 2017, at:
https://onthinktanks.org/publications/thinking-about-trump-american-think-tanks-and-their-new-political-reality/

[17] See "Case study 4: Jeju Peace Forum" which recounts its genesis in Yi Kiho and Peter Hayes, "The Implications of Civic Diplomacy for ROK Foreign Policy", NAPSNet Special Reports, October 05, 2015,
https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/the-implications-of-civic-diplomacy-for-rok-foreign-policy/

[18] Peter Hayes, Yi Kiho, edited, *Complexity, Security and Civil Society in East Asia. Foreign Policies and the Korean Peninsula,* Open Book Publishers, June 2015, at:
https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product.php/326/complexity--security-and-civil-society-in-east-asia--foreign-policies-and-the-korean-peninsula?326/complexity--security-and-civil-society-in-east-asia--foreign-policies-and-the-korean-peninsula

[19] P. Hayes, C.I. Moon, edited, *The Future of East Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, 2017.