Robert Jervis, *Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,*
World Politics, v. 30, 2 (January 1978), Week 8

Due to the lack of international institutions to enforce international laws, anarchy leaves all states worse off than they would otherwise be (167). To be more specific, even though there are a number of outcomes that would leave all states better off based on the pursuit of a common goal, "they may not be able to reach it." (168). This is caused by a number of factors evident in the "stag hunt" example, in which each player fears the others will defect and so decides to effect as well. The international system complicates the stag hunt in 3 ways: (1) because there are no mechanisms to bind players (states) to an agreement to cooperate; (2) due to lack of guaranteed access to resources in war time, even states that may prefer the status quo may seek territorial expansion; (3) one states increase in security may decrease the security of other states (security dilemma).

Given this "gloomy picture," Jervis asks what motivates states to cooperate (171). Jervis first explores how relatively low costs of being exploited (CD in the prisoners dilemma) increase the likelihood of cooperation as it is more tolerable for states to bear such low costs. The less vulnerable the state, the easier these costs are to bear. These costs must be measured subjectively from the position of decision makers subject to security requirements and is decreased by the knowledge that allies are likely to join it or that only a few states are likely to ally against it. Jervis next looks to the CC (cooperate) and DD (war) positions on the matrix. He observes that the greater the benefits of cooperation and the costs of war, the more likely states are to cooperate. In the final situation, exploitation (DC), Jervis observes that the lower the gains of exploitation, the more likely states are to cooperate. As these calculations are subjective, states can and do manipulate them, either by decreasing the perceived costs of defection or increasing the perceived benefits of cooperation.

In Part III, Jervis looks to the differences between offensive and defensive weapons. Two variables are at play here: whether offensive weapons can be distinguished from defensive ones and whether offensive or defensive weapons have an advantage (187). When defensive weapons have an advantage and are distinguishable, the security dilemma is lessened; when offensive weapons have an advantage, the security dilemma is exacerbated. The situation in Europe preceding and following WWI illustrate this difference most dramatically. Technology and geography are the primary determinants of whether offense or defense will be privileged (194). Differentiation between offensive and defensive capabilities is crucial as it allows states to signal to one another what their intentions are and thus avoid the problems of the security dilemma. (200). There are, of course, significant difficulties in differentiating between offensive and defensive capabilities.(202-204). Jervis applies this logic to the consideration of strategic nuclear weapons (205-209) finding that "one can not differentiate between offensive and defensive strategic nuclear weapons" (209).

Jervis concludes by developing a 4-box matrix of 4 worlds of varying levels of security:

	Offense has advantage	Defense has advantage

Not Distinguishable	Doubly dangerous	Security dilemma, but security requirements may be compatible
Distinguishable	No security dilemma but aggression possible	Doubly Stable

Jervis then describes each of these four “worlds” by making observations about the nature of the nuclear stalemate. He closes by finding that the doubly safe world is one in which the super powers “relied on SLBMs” and “limited nuclear options were not taken seriously.”