

## *Chapter 3*

# Formation and Evolution of Kim Jong Un's "Nuclear Doctrine": The Current State of North Korea's "Minimum Deterrence" in Comparison

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### I. Preface – Components of "Minimum Deterrence"

The government statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea), released on January 6, 2016, after testing what it claimed to be a "hydrogen bomb," said that North Korea "will neither be the first to use nuclear weapons... as already declared as long as the hostile forces for aggression do not encroach upon its sovereignty."<sup>1</sup> "...as already declared" here refers to the phrase, the DPRK would "never use nuclear weapons first" emphasis added),<sup>2</sup> used in a statement by the North Korean Foreign Ministry on October 3, 2006, that gave notice of its upcoming first nuclear test. This may be taken as an unconditional commitment to "no first use (NFU)" of nuclear weapons by North Korea. At the same time, this indicated North Korea's potential nuclear posture under the assumption that its nuclear capability is inferior to that of the United States and falls short of mutual assured destruction (MAD) and North Korea is inferior to the combined conventional forces of the United States and South Korea. North Korea has never comprehensively unveiled its nuclear posture before, but it is closer to "minimum deterrence." This belongs to the simple category of nuclear deterrence, but this posture represents the second-strike capability that can survive the first strike by a hostile country even when it is in an inferior position in nuclear force, with its core factor being making a hostile country think twice about making the first strike. "Minimum deterrence" has a measure of rationality as a nuclear deterrence structure taken by a latecomer in nuclear weapons development.

NFU is not necessarily a prerequisite condition for "minimum deterrence." China

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<sup>1</sup> "Statement of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – The First H-Bomb Test Was Successfully Conducted in Juche Korea," *Minju Choson*, January 7, 2016 (in Korean).

<sup>2</sup> "Statement of the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK," *Minju Choson*, October 4, 2006 (in Korean). This phrase was also cited in a statement by North Korea's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, released on October 17, 2006, that criticized the adoption of Resolution 1718 of the U.N. Security Council on its nuclear test ("Statement by the Spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK," *Minju Choson*, October 18, 2006, in Korean).

is often cited as a typical example demonstrating the relationship between the two. China is the only nuclear-weapon state that is officially committed to NFU since the Chinese Government declared that “China will never be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances”<sup>3</sup> after conducting its first nuclear test in October 1964. India must also be cited as a country, though a non-signatory of the Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT), that is officially committed to NFU while calling for “minimum deterrence.” Following its nuclear test in 1998 and the Kargil conflict in the following year, India announced the “Draft Report of National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine” (hereinafter abbreviated as the “Draft Nuclear Doctrine”). While the Draft Nuclear Doctrine was not made into an official policy, the document clearly set forth that “India shall pursue a doctrine of credible minimum nuclear deterrence,” reaffirming the country’s NFU stance declared in 1994. In addition, the Draft Nuclear Doctrine, which noted that “the survivability of our arsenal is critical,” stated that India’s nuclear forces “will be based on a triad of aircraft, mobile land-based missiles and sea-based assets” and the survivability of the second-strike capability should be ensured on land, at sea and in the air across the board.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, after the border conflicts in 2001-2002, the “Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews Progress in Operationalizing India’s Nuclear Doctrine” (hereinafter abbreviated as the “Nuclear Operationalization Review”), formulated by India in January 2003, put the Draft Nuclear Doctrine into official policy and reaffirmed its “triad”.<sup>5</sup>

A country that adopts “minimum deterrence” conveys it has no intent to wage nuclear war against a hostile nation by making a commitment to NFU, and at the same time, attempts to deter the hostile nation’s first strike by the threatened second strike. The second-strike capability of the country with “minimum deterrence” is essentially considered to be “counter-value” deterrence, in terms of being able to render

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<sup>3</sup> “China Succeeds in Detonation of First Nuclear Bomb – The People’s Republic of China Statement,” *Jiefangjun Pao*, October 17, 1964 (in Chinese).

<sup>4</sup> “Text of the Indian Nuclear Doctrine Prepared by National Security Advisory Board in August 1999,” Gopal Singh and S.K. Sharma (eds.), *Documents on India’s Nuclear Disarmament Policy: Rajiv to Vajpayee*, New Delhi: Anamika Publishes and Distributers, 2000, pp. 1542-1547. Hereinafter, quotations from the Draft Nuclear Doctrine are cited from this source. For commentaries on the Draft Nuclear Doctrine, see, V. N. Khanna, *India’s Nuclear Doctrine*, New Delhi: Samskriti, 2000, p. 115. See also, “Clarifying India’s Nascent Nuclear Doctrine: An Interview with Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh,” *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 29, No. 8 (December 1999).

<sup>5</sup> “Press Release: Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews Progress in Operationalizing India’s Nuclear Doctrine, 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2003” <<http://pib.nic.in/archive/lreleng/lyr2003/rjan2003/04012003/r040120033.html>>. Hereinafter, quotations from India’s ‘Nuclear Doctrine’ attribute to this source.

a punishment on the hostile nation, including nuclear attacks on its cities, and it is hard to call it a "counter-force." While the hostile nation, fearful of the counter-value second strike, is expected to make a saturation attack to wipe it out, the country with "minimum deterrence" nonetheless must have a survivable second-strike capability.

However, when the country with "minimum deterrence" makes any attempt in the future to overturn the status quo in the relationship with the hostile nation, NFU provides that country with the time to enhance its second-strike capability while avoiding the first strike by the hostile nation. Consequently, if the country with "minimum deterrence" thinks that it can enhance its nuclear capability and survive a nuclear war, albeit a limited one, NFU could be transformed into a declaration that forces a disadvantageous operation upon itself. As will be discussed below, however, even China and India, countries that have adopted "minimum deterrence" and committed to NFU, see their NFU commitments being called into question as their nuclear capabilities have been enhanced.

The momentum for revising or rescinding NFU should be assessed not only in terms of the buildup of nuclear capabilities but also from the relationship with conventional forces. When tension rises over an area of conflict, if the country with "minimum deterrence" has an advantage over the hostile nation in conventional forces, its NFU is credible. Looking at this from a different angle, when the advantage in conventional forces is overturned by the buildup of conventional forces of the hostile nation or by intervention by another country, it may be considered that NFU of the country with "minimum deterrence" can be withdrawn. From this perspective, this article attempts at a preliminary consideration of how North Korea's deterrence posture can be explained, bearing the nuclear posture of China and India in mind.

## **II. The 2013 Offensive and "Nuclear Doctrine" – Temporal and Spatial Conditions of NFU**

### ***(1) Retraction of North Korea's NFU – Reference to "Preemptive Nuclear Attack"***

As discussed above, in the statement issued by its Foreign Ministry, which gave an advance notice of its first nuclear test, North Korea declared that it would "never use nuclear weapons first" and committed itself to the unconditional NFU. Subsequently, however, North Korea only released the statement by the Foreign Ministry Spokesman on the occasion of the second nuclear test on May 25, 2009, which emphasized that the

nuclear test was a defensive measure but made no mention of NFU or the like.<sup>6</sup> It is true that North Korea did intensify its rhetoric denouncing the United States and upgrade its “nuclear deterrent” against the United States. Nonetheless, North Korea remained cautious about combining the two words of “nuclear” and “preemptive.” For example, the *Rodong Sinmun* used the phrase “the preemptive strike by advanced weapons”,<sup>7</sup> but avoided stating clearly that the weapons of the “preemptive strike” are nuclear weapons. Even after the death of Kim Jong Il on December 17, 2011, there was no change in North Korea’s rhetoric about the use of nuclear weapons. Kim Jong Un inspected the Strategic Rocket Force Command on March 2, 2012, and said that North Korea would “reduce the citadel of the enemy to a sea in flames by merciless firing strikes if it goes into action”<sup>8</sup> but did not refer to nuclear weapons at all.

For a while after Kim Jong Un’s accession to power, North Korea did not show much change in its rhetoric. On April 11, 2012, when the Fourth Conference of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) was held, North Korea launched the *Unha-3 (Galaxy-3)* rocket to mark the appointment of Kim Jong Un as KWP first-secretary and the centennial of the birthday of Kim Il Sung. The launch ended in failure then, but North Korea succeeded in sending it up on December 12, 2012, after making some improvements to the rocket. After the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2087 on January 22, 2013, a statement issued by North Korea’s Foreign Ministry said that “if the provocation by hostile forces continue, our revolutionary armed forces... are filled with firm and unshaken determination to take measures of consequence to root them out.”<sup>9</sup> The “provocation” cited in the statement was taken to mean the UNSC resolution on sanctions against North Korea, while the means to “root them out” was taken to mean “nuclear weapons” and “measures of consequence” nuclear tests.

Following the declaration of these intentions, North Korea went ahead with a third

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<sup>6</sup> “Statement by the Spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK,” *Minju Choson*, May 26, 2009 (in Korean).

<sup>7</sup> Om Il Gyu, “Prank by Odious Beggars in Nuclear War Puppet Forces,” *Rodong Sinmun*, June 9, 2009 (in Korean).

<sup>8</sup> “Korean People’s Army Supreme Commander Comrade Kim Jong Un Inspects the Korean People’s Army Strategic Rocket Force Command,” *Minju Choson*, March 3, 2012 (in Korean).

<sup>9</sup> “Statement by the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK,” *Minju Choson*, January 25, 2013 (in Korean). Furthermore, the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland said in a statement that “we declare complete nullification” of the “Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” (“Those who dare stand in the way of our just cause will never be able to escape deadly retaliatory blows – Statement by the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland,” *Rodong Sinmun*, January 26, 2013 (in Korean).

nuclear test on February 12, 2013, shortly before the inauguration of the South Korean government of President Park Geun Hye. Subsequently, the Spokesman for the Supreme Command of the Korean People's Army, who expressed the Supreme Command's intention to make the Korean Armistice Agreement totally "nullified," stated, "Now that the U.S. imperialists seek to attack the DPRK even with nuclear weapons, it will counter them with diversified precision nuclear strike means of Korean style....The DPRK will make a strike of justice at any target anytime as it pleases without limit."<sup>10</sup> It is true that "at any target anytime as it pleases" indicates North Korea's resolve to make a preemptive attack. While North Korea presents the condition that "the U.S. imperialists seek to attack the DPRK even with nuclear weapons" and refers to "precision nuclear strike," it did not mention "preemptive" and suggested it would use nuclear weapons as the means of the second strike.

North Korea subsequently combined "preemptive attack" with the word "nuclear" for the first time on March 6, 2013, in a commentary by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). It referred to "preemptive nuclear strike of Korean style"<sup>11</sup> for the first time here. Following this, the Spokesman of the Foreign Ministry stated that "the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK will exercise the right to launch a preemptive nuclear attack to destroy the strongholds of the aggressors."<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, on March 8, 2013, in the wake of the U.N. Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2094, *Rodong Sinmun*, in a bylined commentary, stated that "now that the U.S. is set to light a fuse for a nuclear war, the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK will exercise the right to a

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<sup>10</sup> "The Final Victory Is in Store for the Army and People of the DPRK Who Are All Out to Protect the Sovereignty of the Nation" – Statement by a Spokesman for the Supreme Command of the Korean People's Army," *Minju Choson*, March 6, 2013 (in Korean). Two days later, the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland announced that "The DPRK abrogates all agreements on nonaggression reached between the North and the South" ("Statement by the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland," *Minju Choson*, March 9, 2013, in Korean). For the 2013 offensive by North Korea, see Hideya Kurata, "Park Keun Hye Seiken no 'Shinrai Purosesu' to Kita Chosen – Anzen Hoshō Jo no Seiyaku no Naka no Nanboku Taiwa (The Park Geun Hye Government's 'Trust Process' and North Korea – North-South Dialogue amid Security Constraints)," FY2013 Ministry of Foreign Affairs Research Project on Diplomatic and Security Policies (Comprehensive Project), Chosen Hanto no Shinario Puraningu (*Scenario Planning for the Korean Peninsula*) Tokyo: Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIJA), 2014, pp. 70-72 (in Japanese).

<sup>11</sup> "Korean Central News Agency Commentary – We Will Sweep Away the U.S. Imperialists and the Puppet Enemy with Precision Nuclear Strike of Korean Style," March 6, 2013 <<http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-k.htm>>.

<sup>12</sup> "Statement by the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK," *Minju Choson*, March 8, 2013 (in Korean). For a similar commentary, see also Ri Kyung Su, "U.S. Threat and Blackmail Can Never Work on DPRK," *Rodong Sinmun*, March 7, 2013 (in Korean).

preemptive nuclear attack to destroy the strongholds of the aggressors and to defend the supreme interests of the country,” adding that “Japan must not mistakenly assume that it can escape a merciless attack just because it is located on the other side of the sea”.<sup>13</sup> On March 26, 2013, the Korean People’s Army Supreme Command said in a statement that all of its field artillery units were put into “the No. 1 combat ready posture,” and an editorial by *Rodong Sinmun* on the following day asserted that “military action” mentioned in the statement includes a “preemptive nuclear attack.”<sup>14</sup>

Subsequently, the Plenary Meeting of the KWP Central Committee, held on March 31, 2013, adopted the “parallel policy” of carrying out “economic construction” and “building nuclear armed forces simultaneously.” A news report on the meeting said, “The DPRK’s nuclear armed forces represent the nation’s life which can never be abandoned as long as the imperialists and nuclear threats exist on earth. They are a treasure of a reunified country which can never be traded with billions of dollars,” adding that “The DPRK’s possession of nukes should be fixed by law and the nuclear armed forces should be expanded and beefed up qualitatively and quantitatively until the denuclearization of the world is realized.”<sup>15</sup> What should be noted here is the content of the speech Kim Jong Un made to the Plenary Meeting. He stated that “The People’s Army should perfect the war method and operation in the direction of raising the pivotal role of the nuclear armed forces in all aspects concerning the war deterrence and the war strategy, and the nuclear armed forces should always round off the combat posture.”<sup>16</sup> The “war deterrence strategy” cited here can be taken to mean the second-strike capability for “minimum deterrence” with counter-value force at its core. On the other hand, the “war strategy,” if it is different from this, indicates the “counter-force” capability.

Afterwards, the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) adopted the Ordinance “On Consolidating the Position of Nuclear Weapons State for Self-Defense,” organizing a set of fragmentary declarations thus far announced by North Korea. Article 4 of the ordinance states that “the nuclear weapons of the DPRK can be used only by a final order

<sup>13</sup> Cho Taek Boem “Rascal Anti-Republic Uproar Reflecting the Dangerous in Re-Invasion Plan,” *Rodong Sinmun*, March 17, 2013 (in Korean).

<sup>14</sup> Editorial, “All of the Party, the Military and People Will Brace Themselves for the Fatherland Unification War of Justice,” *Rodong Sinmun*, March 27, 2013 (in Korean).

<sup>15</sup> “Report on the March 2013 Plenary Meeting of the KWP Central Committee,” *Rodong Sinmun*, April 1, 2013 (in Korean). Hereinafter, quotations from this report attribute to this source.

<sup>16</sup> “Report Delivered by Dear Comrade Kim Jong Un to the March 3012 Plenary Meeting of the KWP Central Committee,” *Rodong Sinmun*, April 1, 2013 (in Korean). For the Japanese translation of the report, see “Report at the March 2013 Plenary Meeting of the KWP Central Committee, March 31, 2013,” *Kimu Jon Un Chosakushu (Collection of Works of Kim Jong Un)*, Tokyo: Hakuhoisha, p. 224.

of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army to repel invasion or attack from a hostile nuclear weapons state and make retaliatory strikes."<sup>17</sup> In the ordinance, North Korea justifies its nuclear weapons as a means of self-defense. Though it assumes "a hostile nuclear weapons state" as the subject that makes an "invasion or attack," it does not limit the means of that invasion or attack to nuclear weapons. Looking at this from a different angle, this provision of the ordinance indicates the possibility of North Korea repelling an attack by "a hostile nuclear weapons state" using conventional forces with the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the provision cannot be regarded as NFU. But this ordinance may be construed as equivalent to the Draft Nuclear Doctrine announced by India in 1999 and the Nuclear Operationalization Review that put the doctrine into official policy and can be taken as the "Nuclear Doctrine" of the Kim Jong Un regime.

## ***(2) Temporal Decay of NFU – The Relationship between Nuclear Forces and Conventional Forces***

Of course, it would be premature to take this as indicating that North Korea has abandoned its "minimum deterrence" posture. Even after the crisis came to an end, North Korea emphasized nuclear weapons as a means of second-strike capability.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "Ordinance of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK -- On Consolidating the Position of Nuclear Weapons State for Self-Defense," *Minju Choson*, April 2, 2013 (in Korean). Hereinafter, quotations from this ordinance attribute to this source. Article 5 of the ordinance states that "the DPRK shall neither use nukes against the non-nuclear states nor threaten them with those weapons unless they join a hostile nuclear weapons state in its invasion and attack on the DPRK," showing a paradox that North Korea provides the negative security assurance (NSA) unique to a nuclear weapons state that is a contracting party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This author believes that the prototype of this approach lies the Memorandum of the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs – The Korean Peninsula and Nuclear Weapons issued on April 21, 2010, which was prepared in response to the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) report released by U.S. President Barack H. Obama on April 6, 2010. For the interpretation of the Memorandum, see Hideya Kurata, "Rokusha Kaigo to 'Anzen no Hoshō' no Chiiki-teki Bunmyaku – Beikoku no Kaku Taisei to Kita Chosen 'Kaku Hoyu' no Shuji (Six-Party Talks and the Regional Context of the 'Security Assurance' – The U.S. Nuclear Posture and the Rerhetorics of North Korea's 'Nuclear Possession')," Masao Okonogi and Junya Nishino eds., *A Realignment of the Order on the Korean Peninsula*, Keio University Press, 2013, p. 254 (in Japanese). For the interpretation of the "Parallel Policy" and the Supreme People's Assembly ordinance, including NSA, see, Hideya Kurata, "Kita Chosen no Kaku Hoyu no Shuji to Tsjujo Heiryoku Zokyo no Ronri – 'Senryaku Domei 2015' no Shusei Katei to Beicho Heiwa Kyotei Teian (The Rerhetorics of North Korea's Nuclear Possession and the Logic for the Enhancement of Conventional Forces – the Amendment Process of the 'Strategic Alliance 2015' and the Proposed U.S.-North Korean Peace Treaty)," FY2015 Ministry of Foreign Affairs Foreign/Security Affairs Research Project Grant (for Extended General Projects), *The Korean Peninsula Reality Check (Interim Report)*, Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), 2016, p. 86 (in Japanese).

<sup>18</sup> Ri Hak Nam, "The U.S. Should Not Get Any Nefarious Ideas," *Rodong Sinmun*, March 17, 2013 (in Korean).

However, while North Korea committed itself to unconditional NFU on the occasion of the first nuclear test, it changed tact and referred to “preemptive nuclear attack,” an idea incompatible with NFU, as it strengthened its “nuclear deterrence” against the United States. This process can be likened to that of China.

China has publicly committed itself to NFU at the NPT Review Conference and other international meetings, pressing other nuclear weapons states to make similar declarations. China was not expecting the United States to come around and embrace the call for NFU, of course; rather, China used the fact that the United States was leaving leeway for a preemptive nuclear attack to justify the strengthening of its own second-strike capability, while enhancing its nuclear capability. Particularly notable is that during this process, officers of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) often made statements that seemingly ran counter to NFU. In 1995, for example, PLA Deputy Chief of the General Staff Assistant Chiefs of General Staff Xiong Guangkai told U.S. Assistant Undersecretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Charles W. Freeman, Jr. that China may use nuclear weapons in connection with the Taiwan issue, reportedly saying, “In the end, you care more about Los Angeles than you do about Taipei.” In July 2005, PLA Air Force Major General Zhu Chenghu said “If the Americans draw their missiles and position-guided ammunition on to the target zone on China’s territory, I think we will have to respond with nuclear weapons.”<sup>19</sup> While these statements apparently reflect the points of views held by some quarters in the PLA, they were never reported by the *Jieganjun Pao* (*Liberation Army Daily*), the official organ of the Chinese Liberation Army.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Danny Gittings, “General Zhu Goes Ballistic,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 18, 2005. See also, Chu Shulong and Rong Yu, “China: Dynamic Minimum Deterrence,” in Muthiah Alagappa, (ed.), *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asia*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. 175-176; Jeffery G. Lewis, *Paper Tigers: China’s Nuclear Posture*, London: International Institute of Security Studies, 2014, pp. 135-136.

<sup>20</sup> China’s Defense White Papers have invariably referred to NFU since its first publication in 1998, but the 2013 White paper did not include the description. Citing this, some researchers in the United States noted that China has abandoned NFU (see, James M. Acton, “Is China Changing Its Position on Nuclear Weapons?” *New York Times*, April 18, 2013). The 2013 White Paper states that “If China comes under a nuclear attack, the nuclear missile force of the PLASAF will use nuclear missiles to launch a resolute counterattack” (Information Office of the State Council, the People’s Republic of China ed., *The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces*, Beijing, People’s Publishing House, 2013), giving rise to the counterargument that China has never abandoned NFU. See, M. Taylor Fravel, “China Has Not (Yet) Changed Its Position on Nuclear Weapons: Has China Abandoned Its ‘No First Use’ Policy When It Comes to Nuclear Weapons? No, Says MIT’s M. Taylor Fravel,” *The Diplomat*, April 22, 2013 <<http://thediplomat.com/2013/04/china-has-not-yet-changed-its-position-on-nuclear-weapons/>>. China’s State Council emphasized that there is no change in China’s NFU

The article by Zhang Jianzhi carried on the *Liberal Army Daily*, which advocates "Medium-Sized Nuclear Powers' Nuclear Strategy," is often quoted. While this paper does underscore NFU and thus does not deviate from the category of "minimum deterrence," it also argues that the second-strike capability is not "counter-value" and calls for an "effective nuclear counterattack" against "strategic targets" of an enemy state.<sup>21</sup> If China's current nuclear capability is not limited to "counter-value" but also includes "counter-force" factors, then that may have its origin in this article. If China enhances its "counter-force" nuclear capability, it could create room for a review of NFU that would put China at an operational disadvantage.<sup>22</sup>

Behind the Chinese PLA officials' statements that contradict NFU are not only the enhancement of China's nuclear capability but also the strengthening of its conventional forces, especially its air supremacy capability over the Taiwan Strait. If China believes that it can win against Taiwan by containing the fighting to conventional forces, it may resort to nuclear capability to block the U.S. forces from intervening in the Taiwan Strait. Thus, China's nuclear capability is not limited to "counter-value" and includes "counter-force" factors designed to neutralize the U.S. forces in the Western Pacific, including Japan. If China were to adopt such a posture, this would resemble "limited deterrence," which prevents conventional war from escalating into nuclear war through both "counter-value" and "counter-force." In such a situation, nuclear capability is not necessarily used for the second strike alone, and NFU would amount to a declaration in advance of the abandoning of an operational option.<sup>23</sup> Some regard China's nuclear posture as "assured retaliation,"<sup>24</sup> and if this is to be interpreted literally, while the Chinese posture emphasizes the preservation of the second-strike capability as a retaliatory measure, part of it, such as intermediate-range ballistic missile Dong-feng (DF), has turned into

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policy ("PLA Units for Rescue Work in Quake-Hit Area, Aircraft Carrier in Deep Sea Training, China's Nuclear Policy, Diaoyu Islands Issue – Ministry of National Defense Press Briefing," *Jiefangjun Pao*, April 26, 2013, in Chinese). In the 2015 Defense White Paper, the description of NFU was restored (Information Office of the State Council, the People's Republic of China ed., *China's Military Strategy*, Beijing, People's Publishing House, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Zhang Jianzhi, "View on Medium-Sized Nuclear Powers' Nuclear Strategy," *Jiefangjun Pao*, March 20, 1987 (in Chinese).

<sup>22</sup> For the argument that China will hold fast to NFU even in the event of an armed clash with the United States in the Taiwan Strait, see, Rong Yu and Peng Guangquan, "Nuclear No-First-Use Revisited," *China Security*, No. 5 (Winter 2009), p. 89.

<sup>23</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's New 'Old Thinking: The Concept of Limited Deterrence,'" *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Winter 1995/1996), p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> See, M. Taylor Fravel and Evan S. Medeiros, "China's Search for Assured Retaliation: The Evolution of Chinese Nuclear Strategy and Force Structure," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Spring 2006).

“counter-force.” Therefore, “assured retaliation” should be taken to mean the period of transition to “limited deterrence” regionally while trying to preserve the second-strike capability under “minimum deterrence.”<sup>25</sup> If China moves further toward the latter going forward, there would be no guarantee that China would maintain NFU in the U.S.-China confrontation over the Taiwan Strait. This view is supported by the notion also presented by China that NFU is time-limited.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, India’s relations with China may be cited as an example where India’s declared NFU is currently being called into question. Certainly, China-India relations are currently not so tense as to trigger discussions of the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, India has been extending the range of its ballistic missiles, and succeeded in April 2012 in test-launching the *Agni-V* missile, which has an estimated maximum range of over 5,500 kilometers.

The Draft Nuclear Doctrine and the Nuclear Operationalization Review touched on “sea-based assets,” which is one of the “triad,” and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which was responsible for the development of a series of *Agni* missiles, is also involved in the development of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). If the *Agni-V* is deployed as an SLBM, India, in its relations with China, would have the “credible” second-strike capability, underlined by the Draft Nuclear Doctrine and the Nuclear Operationalization Review.

When NFU is viewed in terms of the relationship between nuclear capability and conventional forces, however, India’s relations with China stand at the other end of China’s relations with the United States. As discussed above, behind Chinese PLA officials’ suggestions of the modification or withdrawal of China’s NFU commitment was China’s superiority in the Taiwan Strait, not only in terms of nuclear capability but also conventional forces. By contrast, it is hard to imagine India’s armed forces having the upper hand over the Chinese PLA. Instead, what is deemed conceivable is that

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<sup>25</sup> For a similar interpretation, see Tetsuya Umemoto, “Chugoku to Kaku Gunshuku (China and Nuclear Disarmament),” FY2010 Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Funded Research, “*Kakuheiki no Nai Sekai ni Muketa Kadai no Saikento (Reexamination of the Agenda of Creating a ‘World without Nuclear Weapons’)*,” Center for the Promotion of Disarmament Non-Proliferation (CPDNP), Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), 2011, p. 30 (in Japanese).

<sup>26</sup> Pan Zhenqiang, “Study on the Issue of China’s No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons,” Li Bin and Zhang Tong, eds., *Understanding Chinese Nuclear Thinking*, Beijing, Social Science Academic Press, 2015, pp. 48-49 (in Chinese); see also, Zhu Mingquan, “China-U.S. Nuclear Relationship,” Zhu Mingquan, Wu Chunsi and Su Changhe, *Deterrence and Stability – China-U.S. Nuclear Relationship*, Beijing, Shishi Chubanshe, 2005 (in Chinese), p. 212. See also, Baohui Zhang, “The Taiwan Strait and the Future of China’s No-First-Use Nuclear Policy,” *Comparative Strategy*, Volume 27 Number 2 (2008), p. 168.

were a conflict to erupt between China and India after India's nuclear capability has grown strong enough to threaten major cities in China, India would suggest at the first nuclear strike to deter China's superior conventional forces. It is not the case that a joint declaration of NFU by China and India is inconceivable;<sup>27</sup> rather that idea fails to be realized partly because China fears that if it recognizes India's NFU, that could mean the effective recognition of India's possession of nuclear weapons. This can also be interpreted as India's NFU commitment being designed to allow it to augment its nuclear capability in the intervening period to create leeway for a preemptive nuclear attack in its relations with China in the future. If that were the case, in contrast to China's nuclear deterrence against the United States, India would modify or withdraw its NFU commitment to deter war by conventional forces for which India is inferior to China.

In the case of North Korea, by contrast, even when Kim Jong Un referred to the "war strategy" and suggested that North Korea's nuclear capability included "counter-force" capability, that was not premised on North Korea's superiority in conventional forces. Since the end of the Cold War at least, the Korean People's Army's conventional forces have never had an advantage over those of the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces. Viewed in this way, North Korea's rhetoric about a "preemptive nuclear strike" may be comparable with possible India's intended nuclear deterrence against China in the future.

### ***(3) Spatial Limitations of NFU – Regional Restrictions***

On the other hand, as seen in the example of China, it is not always true that nuclear weapons states with an NFU commitment behave uniformly regardless of region. As can be seen in the statements of Chinese PLA officers like Xiong Guangkai and Zhu Chenghu, PLA officials' unofficial statements insinuating the possibility of nuclear first use are almost all limited to those concerning the Taiwan Strait, made in connection with the possible intervention by U.S. forces.

In contrast to the Taiwan Strait, however, China has pledged NFU in its relations with Russia since the 1990s. After the end of the Cold War, China and Russia demarcated

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<sup>27</sup> Dipanker Banerjee, Rukmani Gupta, Avinash Godbole, and Gunjan Singh, "Building Mutual Confidence: The View from India," Lora Saalman (ed.), *The China-India Nuclear Crossroads*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012, p. 167. For Japanese sources, see Toshitaka Takeuchi, "Indo no Kaku Dokutorin Soan – Saishogen Yokushi Gainen no Meikakuka to In Chu Sensei Fushiyo Joyaku Teiketu no Susume (India's Draft Nuclear Doctrine – Clarification of the Minimum Deterrence Concept and Recommendation of the Conclusion of the India-China Treaty on No-First-Use)," *Bulletin of Asia-Pacific Studies* (Osaka University of Foreign Studies) No. 10 (March 2,000), p. 188 (in Japanese).

their borders, largely with Russia accepting many of China's claims, and China prefers the status quo of its relations with Russia for the time being. Following a meeting of Chinese and Russian defense ministers in July 1994, then Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Moscow in September 1994. Jiang Zemin and then Russian President Boris N. Yeltsin announced a joint statement, which incorporated their mutual pledge of non-use force as well as NFU and agreement to de-targeting each other with strategic nuclear weapons. They also signed an agreement on the reduction of armed forces in the border region. Moreover, when Jiang Zemin visited Russia in July 2001, the two countries concluded the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. The treaty upgraded their existing "strategic partnership" into part of their political pact, and also stated, "The contracting parties reaffirm their commitment that they will not be the first to use nuclear weapons against each other nor target strategic nuclear missiles against each other" (Article 2),<sup>28</sup> Thus, China's principles of the use of nuclear weapons are not uniform, and China maintains the contrasting principles for its relations with Russia and the Taiwan Strait.

China restricts its NFU commitment to certain regions, and the same can be said about Russia, its contracting partner. As is well known, Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev, in the process of negotiations on an agreement on intermediate nuclear forces (INF), declared the Soviet Union's NFU commitment and called on Western nations to act in concert<sup>29</sup> because of its superiority in conventional forces in the European theater. The Soviet Union seemed to think that if the West responded to this by acting in concert, the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) could lock in its superiority in conventional forces while mitigating the nuclear threat from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). After losing its superiority in conventional forces in association with NATO's eastward expansion following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the WTO, however, Russia clearly expressed its intent to rescind the NFU commitment in the Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation of November 1993,<sup>30</sup> released as part of the Military Doctrine. A full text of the Military

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<sup>28</sup> "The Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation (Full Text)," *Rosia Geppo (Russia Monthly)*, No. 697 (July 2001), p. 2 (in Japanese).

<sup>29</sup> "General Secretary Brezhnev's Message to the Second U.N. Special Session on Disarmament (June 16, Pravda)," *Soren Geppo (Soviet Union Monthly)*, No. 468 (June 1982), p. 6 (in Japanese).

<sup>30</sup> While the full text was not released, Soviet Defense Minister Pavel S. Grachev clearly stated that NFU had been withdrawn (Dunbar Lockwood, "News and Negotiations: Russia Revises Nuclear Policy, Ends Soviet 'No-First-Use' Pledge," *Arms Control Today*, Volume 23, Number 10 (December 1993), p. 19.

Doctrine, announced subsequently in 2000, states that "The Russian Federation reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction against itself or its allies and also in response to large-scale aggression involving conventional weapons in situations that are critical for the national security of the Russian Federation and its allies."<sup>31</sup> The "strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, above all NATO's eastward expansion,"<sup>32</sup> mentioned in "The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation," justified this. This passage can be taken as referring to NATO's air raids on Kosovo in 1999. Since then, following the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, Russia has for the most part been lowering its threshold for first use of nuclear weapons. The Military Doctrine released in February 2010 clearly states that "Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of force against it and (or) its allies, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as in the case of aggression against Russia with conventional weapons, which threaten the very existence of the state."<sup>33</sup>

In recent years, Russia's preparedness for first use of nuclear weapons has become particularly noticeable in Europe. For example, in March 2015, after the Ukrainian crisis, Russian President Vladimir V. Putin said that he was "ready to put Russia's nuclear weapons on standby."<sup>34</sup> While it cannot be said that Russia's wariness of the threat from China has receded in the meantime, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov visited China in April 2016 and endorsed the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly

<sup>31</sup> "The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation," *Rosia Geppo (Russia Monthly)*, No. 679 (January 2000), p. 7 (in Japanese).

<sup>32</sup> "Russia's New Military Doctrine," *Rosia Geppo (Russia Monthly)*, No. 800 (February 2010), p. 144 (in Japanese).

<sup>33</sup> Shinji Hyodo, "Shin 'Gunji Dokutorin' ni Miru Roshia no Gunji Senryaku no Henka – Siryokuken-teki Hasso • Kyoi Ninshiki • Kaku Heiki no Shiyo Kitei wo Chushin ni (Russia's Changing Military Strategy Seen in the New 'Doctrine' – Mainly on the Idea of the Sphere of Influence, Recognition of Threat and the Terms of Use for Nuclear Weapons)," *Roshia • Yurashia Keizai – Kenkyo to Shiryo (Economic Research Materials of Russia and Eurasia)*, No. 938 (October 2010), p. 46 (in Japanese). In addition, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai P. Patrushev in October 2009 referred to a "preemptive strike" using nuclear weapons (See Miho Okata, "Reemergence of Nuclear Weapons – Russia's Nuclear Policy and the Changing European Security," *Area Studies*, Volume 16, No. 2 <March 2016>, p. 173, in Japanese). See also, Volha Charnysh, "Russian Nuclear Threshold Not Lowered," *Arms Control Today*, Volume 40, No. 3 (March 2010), pp. 38–40. Since the author does not have enough space to explain the changes in Russia's nuclear doctrine, for that, see Alexei G. Arbatov, *The Marshall European Center Papers, No.2; The Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine: Lessons Learned from Kosovo and Chechnya*, Garmisch-Partenkirchen: The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> "3-15 Vesti," *Rosia Geppo (Russia Monthly)*, No. 861 (March 2015), p. 15 (in Japanese).

Cooperation, which marked the 15th anniversary of the signing.<sup>35</sup> If Foreign Minister Lavrov really wanted to maintain the bilateral treaty, which incorporates NFU, it would mean that Russia, in its relations with China, would have jointly declared the NFU commitment with China while setting aside the possibility of becoming the first to use nuclear weapons in Europe.

Likewise, India has announced the “Nuclear Doctrine” that mentions NFU and “minimum deterrence,” but there is no guarantee that India would apply it in a uniform way regardless of counterpart country. It is certainly hard to expect that Pakistan’s conventional forces would outstrip those of India. Thus, if India were able to contain war with Pakistan as one conducted with conventional weapons, it would be highly likely to win that war, making the use of nuclear weapons unnecessary. In its relations with China, on the other hand, it is hard to expect India’s conventional forces to outstrip those of China and it is also hard to expect India to be able to win a war with conventional forces against China. Certainly because there is the possibility of India finding the nuclear threat necessary to prevent China’s intervention with conventional forces, the credibility of India’s NFU commitment in its relations with China is being called into question. If that were the case, despite its announcement of the uniform “Nuclear Doctrine,” India would manage the operation of its nuclear weapons in its relations with Pakistan and its relations with China separately, provided the power relationships of the three countries of India, China and Pakistan are not reversed in terms of conventional forces and India strengthens its nuclear capability amid the rising tension in China-India relations.

As illustrated above, major countries like China, Russia, and India can prescind limited war and the survival of the regime to a certain extent. In contrast with these major countries, North Korea’s envisaged war against the United States, which may be limited for the United States, cannot be limited for North Korea, given its narrow land area and the fact that its enemy forces are almost entirely limited to the United States, South Korea, and Japan. Furthermore, it is hard to imagine North Korea with multiple fundamental principles to operate its nuclear weapons. Therefore, in the case of North Korea, it must be considered from the perspective of how the single rule of operating nuclear weapons has transformed over time.

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<sup>35</sup> “Chinese President Meets Russian Foreign Minister,” *Renmin Rebao*, April 29, 2016 (in Chinese).

### III. The 2016 Offensive and the Shift to the “Preemptive Nuclear Strike Approach” – The Nuclear Posture after “Hydrogen Bomb” Test

#### (1) *Kim Jong Un's Statement on a “Preemptive Nuclear Strike” – Concept of “Strategic Vertical Depth”*

Since North Korea unilaterally halted its 2013 offensive, it has not made mention of NFU in official statements. As discussed at the outset of this article, however, when it announced the “hydrogen bomb” test on January 6, 2016, North Korea said it would not be “the first to use nuclear weapons” for the first time since the first nuclear test. But the government statement, which essentially repeats the Foreign Ministry statement from 10 years ago that said that North Korea would “never use nuclear weapons first,” added the condition that “as long as the hostile forces for aggression do not encroach upon its (North Korea's) sovereignty,” in an apparent indication of retrogression from its NFU commitment. Based on the observation of the explosive yield, it is hard to believe that the fourth test was a test of a “hydrogen bomb.” However, the fact that North Korea issued the government statement and, despite its rhetoric of the “preemptive nuclear strike” until then, stated again that it would not “use nuclear weapons first,” suggested that the fourth nuclear test was conducted with the method different from the previous ones.

Furthermore, after North Korea test-fired what was believed to be the ballistic missile Kwangmyongsong-4, on February 7, 2016, the United States and South Korea were about to begin their joint military exercise “Foil Eagle” from March 7. The Foil Eagle annual military exercises reportedly involved U.S. Special Forces belonging to the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group and the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment. Though neither the U.S. forces nor the South Korean forces official acknowledged it, North Korea denounced the March 2016 joint exercises as being a “beheading operation” aimed at removing the North Korean leadership. The KPA Supreme Command, in a “crucial statement,” threatened that “The DPRK is possessed of the most powerful and ultra-modern strike means in the world which are capable of dealing fatal blows at the U.S. mainland any moment and in any place.”<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, following the adoption of Resolution 2270 by the U.N. Security Council, after many twists and turns, to impose fresh sanctions on North Korea, Kim Jong Un's remarks extended to cover the country's overall military posture. On March 3,

<sup>36</sup> “We Will Punish Those Who Dare to Extinguish Our Brightly-Burning Destiny – Crucial Statement by KPA Supreme Command,” *Minju Choson*, February 24, 2016 (in Korean). Hereinafter, quotations from the Crucial Statement attribute to this source.

2016, Kim Jong Un was quoted as stressing that “the need to get the nuclear warheads deployed for national defense always on standby so as to be fired *any moment*” (emphasis added) and that “Now is the time for us to convert our mode of military counteraction toward the enemies into an preemptive attack one in every aspect.”<sup>37</sup> Though North Korea thus far did refer to the “preemptive nuclear attack” in its official oragans, this was probably the first time that the reference was reported as Kim Jong Un’s statement.

Following Kim Jong Un’s statements, the Spokesman for the North Korean Foreign Ministry issued a statement that made mention of a “preemptive attack.” What should be noted about this statement is that it stated that “A decisive preemptive attack is the only way for the DPRK to beat back the sudden surprise attack of the U.S. ultra-modern military hardware and special units and protect itself as its strategic depth is not long.” An example that should be referred to as regards the relationship between the “strategic depth” and the preemptive attack would be Israel. Since Israel’s territory is long and narrow north to south, the area around the capital is vulnerable to Arab attacks and it is always exposed to the risk of severance in the territory. In the third Middle East War of June 1967, judging that war would be inevitable when Egypt completed its preparations for war, Israel succeeded in occupying the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula by carrying out preemptive attacks.<sup>38</sup>

The North Korean statement, while criticizing the U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises as a “beheading operation,” justified a preemptive attack by North Korea by citing its own strategic limitations. The statement continued that “we have the most-advanced means of attack with which we can strike the U.S. mainland at will from anywhere... in combat deployment.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> “Respected Marshal Comrade Kim Jong Un Guides Test-fire of New Multiple Launch Rocket System,” *Rodong Sinmun*, March 4, 2016. This report did not carry the date when Kim Jong Un made the statements, but it was confirmed that North Korea test-fired a multiple-launch rocket system into the Sea of Japan on March 3. The author concluded that Kim Jong Un made the statements on the same March 3. Hereinafter, quotations from Kim Jong Un’s statement attribute to the *Rodong Sinmun* (in Korean).

<sup>38</sup> See, Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen (eds.), *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> “Statement by the Spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK,” *Minju Choson*, March 8, 2016 (in Korean). On the following day, the DPRK National Defense Commission issued a statement that “(As the joint military exercises to be staged by the enemies are regarded as the most undisguised nuclear war drills aimed to infringe upon the sovereignty of the DPRK,) its military counteraction will be more preemptive and offensive nuclear strike to cope with them.” See, “The Army and People of the DPRK Will Make the Gunfire of Provocateurs in the Reckless War of Aggression Sound as a Sad Dirge – The DPRK National Defense Commission Statement,” *Minju Choson*, March 8, 2016 (in Korean).

A few days later, Kim Jong Un said that "The right to make a preemptive nuclear strike is by no means a monopoly of the U.S." and declared that "If the U.S. imperialists *infringe upon* the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's sovereignty and right to existence with nuclear weapons, it will never hesitate to make a *preemptive* nuclear strike at them" (emphasis added),<sup>40</sup> more clearly underscoring North Korea's will to use nuclear weapons first than the statements made on March 3 cited above. At the end of March, Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong said that "The DPRK *has shifted* all the military counteraction modes to preemptive attack ones...and declared the will to mount a decisive preemptive nuclear attack" (emphasis added).<sup>41</sup> Earlier in March, Kim Jong Un said that North Korea would "convert our mode of military counteraction toward the enemies into a preemptive attack one," but Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong said essentially the same thing by using the present perfect form.

## ***(2) Deterrence by "Irrationality" – Significance of the Launching of "Musudan"***

On March 3, 2016, Kim Jong Ung said that "The only way for defending the sovereignty of our nation and its right to existence under the present extreme situation is to bolster up nuclear force both in quality and quantity and keep balance of forces." On March 11, Kim Jong Un further said that "if they destroy *even a single tree or a blade of grass* in our inviolable territory, I will issue a prompt order to launch attack with all military strike means including nuclear weapons"<sup>42</sup> (emphasis added). Given that North Korea is on the back foot in conventional forces against the United States and South Korea, however, North Korea cannot expect to be on par with the United States by boosting its nuclear capability. Suppose that war of conventional forces breaks out on the Korean Peninsula, in such a case, if North Korea were to make a preemptive nuclear attack, it would invite retaliation with nuclear weapons by the United States, mostly likely leading

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<sup>40</sup> "Respected Marshal Comrade Kim Jong Un Meets the Scientists and Technicians in the Field of Researches into Nuclear Weapons and Provides On-Site Guidance on the Project to Weaponize Nuclear Weapons," *Rodong Sinmun*, March 9, 2016 (in Korean). The *Rodong Sinmun* Commentary also said that "If the U.S. imperialists and the Park Geun Hye group of traitors are so desperate as to ignite a war despite the DPRK's repeated warnings, the world will clearly witness how it will wipe them out to the last man with merciless and preemptive nuclear strikes." See, Ri Hyo Jin, "The World Will Clearly Witness the Juche-Oriented Military Counteraction Mode", *Rodong Sinmun*, March 12, 2016 (in Korean).

<sup>41</sup> "DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong Answers to the Questions Posed by the Foreign News Editor of TASS News Agency," *Minju Choson*, March 30, 2016 (in Korean).

<sup>42</sup> "Respected Marshal Comrade Kim Jong Un Watches Ballistic Rocket Launch Drill of Strategic Force of KPA," *Rodong Sinmun*, March 11, 2016 (in Korean).

to the collapse of the North Korean regime. Unlike China and India, which can think of the use of nuclear weapons separately from the survival of government, it has to be pointed out that for North Korea, the preemptive use of nuclear weapons would be the “irrational” option that would inevitably result in the collapse of its own regime.

The possibility of such an “irrational” use of nuclear weapons by North Korea brings us back to Israel. While Arab countries have never become united, Israel has refused to join the NPT and made Arab countries recognize that it owns nuclear weapons and that it could use nuclear weapons even in attacks by conventional forces. In the event of an all-out war, Israel could get neighboring countries embroiled in the war with the use of nuclear weapons, though the collapse of Israel itself would also be unavoidable. This “irrational” nuclear option for Israel is commonly known as the “Samson Option.”

Similarly, Kim Jong Un’s reference to the “preemptive nuclear strike” is nothing less than the demonstration that North Korea is prepared to draw neighboring countries into the collapse of its own regime by using nuclear weapons. Furthermore, when South Korea goes into a “state of war,” the commander of the U.S.-South Korea combined forces exercise operational control over the South Korean forces, and at the same time, as the commander of the U.N. Command in South Korea, he would have to call up the U.N. forces from the U.N. bases located in Japan. In addition, the United States may propose prior consultations with Japan for the mobilization of U.S. forces stationed in Japan for combat on the Korean Peninsula. In addition, if the United States intends to launch large-scale air raids against North Korea, it could consider mobilizing its forces from Andersen Air Base in Guam. North Korea’s intermediate-range or longer ballistic missiles would have to trim the weight of their warheads to reach these bases. Thus, the threat with conventional weapons is unlikely to have the effect of preventing the U.S. forces from using these bases. North Korea’s “preemptive nuclear strike” would invite U.S. retaliation by nuclear weapons. If North Korea demonstrates its preparedness for the “preemptive nuclear strike” even by sacrificing its survival, the United States might hesitate to mobilize its forces for combat from these bases.

In this context, Kim Jong Un’s statements made during the U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises in the spring of 2016 warrants an appropriate amount of attention. In mid-March 2016, when North Korea conducted a laboratory “reentry environmental simulation” test for a reentry vehicle plunging into the atmosphere, Kim Jong Un said that “a nuclear warhead explosion test and a test-fire of several types of ballistic rockets capable of carrying nuclear warheads will be conducted in a short time to further increase

the reliability of nuclear attack capability."<sup>43</sup> Following his statement, North Korea conducted the test-firing of *Rodong* missiles (March 18, 2016), an engine test for an intercontinental ballistic missile (April 8, 2016) and the test-firing of an SLBM (April 23, 2016). In the series of launch tests, the successive firing of *Musudan* intermediate-range ballistic missiles deserves the greatest caution.

Though these firing tests all failed, Andersen Air Base could be within range of the *Musudan* missile, which is estimated to have a range of up to 4,000 kilometers. While the *Musudan* can be launched to attack Japan as well as U.S. military bases located in Japan, it has the counter-force purpose of having Guam, not a densely-populated place, within its range. The *Musudan*, which is said to be a surface-to-surface missile based on an SLBM developed by the former Soviet Union, was already mounted on a 12-wheeled transporter erector launcher (TEL) during a military parade commemorating the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the KWP. Unlike the past launching of *Taepodong* missiles, North Korea did not claim the right to peaceful use of outer space in the test-firing of *Musudan* missiles or give advance notices of the launching.

As discussed earlier, Kim Jong Un, at the plenary meeting of the KWP Central Committee in March 2013, made reference to the "war strategy," separately from the "war deterrence strategy." Moreover, Kim Jong Un in early March 2016 said that "our mode of military counteraction" would be converted "into a preemptive attack in every aspect," followed by Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong's remarks at the end of March that the conversion had been completed. The "most-advanced means of attack...in combat deployment" the Foreign Ministry Spokesman cited in the statement in early March may have meant the *Musudan* missile. While it is unlikely that North Korea has made a clear distinction between its "counter-value" capability and "counter-force" capability, it may have positioned the *Musudan* missile as the weapon for the "preemptive nuclear strike," which constitute a component of Kim Jong Un's "war strategy."

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<sup>43</sup> "Success of Ballistic Rocket's Reentry Environmental Simulation: New Advanced Achievement of Juche-Oriented National Defense Science and Technology/Respected Marshal Comrade Kim Jong Un Guides Ballistic Rocket's Reentry Environmental Simulation," *Rodong Sinmun*, March 15, 2016 (in Korean).

### **Conclusion—“Rationality” and “Irrationality” of the Nuclear Posture**

After Kim Jong Un came to power, amid the international community’s imposition of sanctions against Pyongyang and the U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises in the aftermath of the test-firing of ballistic missiles and nuclear tests, North Korea’s nuclear posture has been shaped in the spring of 2013 and 2016 and also transformed. Consequently, the unconditional NFU that North Korea unveiled on the occasion of its first nuclear test has now changed beyond recognition. Chinese leaders often make unofficial remarks that run counter to its NFU commitment, but they officially deny such remarks when its commitment is called into question. In the case of North Korea, meanwhile, Pyongyang did make its NFU commitment initially, but the country’s supreme leader himself currently has been making statements that significantly undermine the credibility of that commitment.

China’s NFU commitment is viewed with skepticism because it has been regarded as the transitional stance maintained only until China gains an advantage over Taiwan in conventional forces. On reflection, if that advantage for China is going to be reversed by intervention of another nuclear weapon state, or the United States, and China hints at the possibility of using nuclear weapons to forestall such an eventuality, that Chinese behavior would run counter to its NFU commitment. Nevertheless, if the U.S. forces intervene in the Taiwan Strait, China would have to move to neutralize the U.S. forces deployed in the Western Pacific. All in all, the NFU that binds a country that has a nuclear-tipped “counter-force” capability not to use them first appears to be a principle that China would find difficult to uphold.

In the case of North Korea, in contrast, it has repeatedly made public comments that contradict its NFU commitment not because Pyongyang has gained an advantage in conventional forces over the combined U.S.-ROK Combined Forces but rather, the common backdrop of North Korea’s repeated statements running counter to the NFU commitment and China’s similar behaviors is apparently the augmented nuclear deterrence against the United States. North Korea has conducted a number of nuclear tests over the last 10 years since its first test blast in 2006 and repeatedly carried out the test-firing of ballistic missiles, and it has also deployed counter-force capability, albeit in a rudimentary form, with the *Musudan* missile. This reminds us of India, which now presents the possibility of rescinding its NFU commitment in its relations with China by the development of the Agni-V missile.

That said, it seems unlikely that North Korea will, as did China, shift from “minimum deterrence” to regional “limited deterrence” after going through “assured destruction.”

Neither China nor India assumes the limited use of nuclear weapons in the Taiwan Strait in connection with the survival of their political regimes. If hit by U.S. nuclear retaliation, the survival of the political regime of North Korea, which is quite limited in area, would probably be unthinkable. Nonetheless, North Korea persistently talks about a "preemptive nuclear strike" as it hopes to deter the United States by demonstrating its readiness to involve neighboring countries by using nuclear weapons even at the expense of the collapse of its own regime.

What should be pointed out in this context is that Kim Jong Un, in a work report of the Central Committee of the KWP delivered at the seventh Party Congress, came up with the condition by stating that North Korea would "not use nuclear weapons first unless its sovereignty is encroached upon by any aggressive hostile forces *with nukes*" (emphasis added).<sup>44</sup> However, just two months prior, North Korea threatened to make a pre-emptive attack against the United States using nuclear weapons. The ordinance adopted by the Supreme People's Assembly in April 2013, which included the words "if a hostile nuclear weapons state were to invade or attack North Korea," did not limit the means of the first strike to nuclear weapons. Here, however, Kim Jong Un confined the means of the first strike to nuclear weapons. This means that the NFU commitment disavowed by the country's supreme leader in March 2016 was pronounced again by the same supreme leader. Judging from this latest statement by Kim Jong Un alone, North Korea still appears to adhere to "minimum deterrence."

However, Kim Jong Un has not refrained from referring to the "preemptive nuclear strike" even after the Party Congress. On June 22, 2016, North Korea succeeded in the test-firing of the *Musudan* missile after a string of failures from April, and on that occasion, Kim Jong Un said that "It is necessary to increase in a sustained way our preemptive nuclear attack capability."<sup>45</sup> This test-firing, following a string of failures from April, was apparently conducted only after a number of tests involving not only flying objects but also atmospheric reentry vehicles. Given Kim Jong Un's remarks on the occasion of what

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<sup>44</sup> "Work Report of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea Delivered by First Secretary Kim Jong Un at the 7<sup>th</sup> Party Congress," *Rodong Sinmun*, May 8, 2016. For the same phrase, see "Written Decisions of the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea," *Rodong Sinmun*, May 9, 2016 (in Korean).

<sup>45</sup> "Juche Korea Flaunts its National Defense Power, Succeeds in Test-fire of Surface-to-Surface Intermediate-to-Long-Range Strategic Ballistic Rocket "Hwasong-10" -- Respected Marshal Comrade Kim Jong Un Guides Test-fire of Surface-to-Surface Intermediate-to-Long-Range Strategic Ballistic Rocket "Hwasong-10" on Site," *Minju Choson*, June 23, 2016 (in Korean). This news report confirmed that the *Musudan* missile is called "*Hwasong-10*" in North Korea.

was claimed to be the successful test launch, it was driven home anew that the *Musudan* missile has been positioned as the weapon for the “preemptive nuclear strike.”

Judging from this, it is easy to argue that the “rational” “minimum deterrence” and “irrational” “preemptive nuclear strike” of North Korea at present coexist, akin to the “Samson Option.” Given that all of these have been presented by the same leader, namely Kim Jong Un, the rhetoric of the “irrational” “preemptive nuclear strike” also stems from the “rational” judgment. As long as this logic holds, the “war strategy” as envisioned by Kim Jong Un is the strategy of North Korea, which is still inferior to the alliance of the United States and South Korea in both nuclear capabilities and conventional forces, to keep the U.S.-South Korean alliance from using them. Thus, it can be construed that the “war strategy” is not necessarily a strategy that is utterly different from the “war deterrence strategy” but a strategy that is connected to it. However, when we consider that North Korea’s preparedness for the “irrational” “preemptive nuclear strike” is beginning to affect not only South Korea but also Japan and the United States, if the judgment of Kim Jong Un, whatever its prologue, loses its “rationality,” the collapse of North Korea’s regime would come only with unbearable damage being inflicted upon the three nations of Japan, the United States, and South Korea.