



The North Korean Nuclear Issue and the Limitations of Regional Approaches

——Changes in North Korean Nuclear Policy Under the Kim Jong-un Regime

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[Key Points]

- North Korea is trying to justify its possession of nuclear capabilities and make it a fait accompli by leveraging the security assurances offered in the Six-Party Talks on condition of denuclearization and turning measures aimed at establishing a peace regime to its own advantage. The Supreme People’s Assembly of North Korea ordinance adopted in 2013 clearly demonstrates its intent. Although measures such as security assurances are still necessary, North Korea is seeking the implementation of these measures despite its refusal to accept denuclearization as a condition thereof.
- North Korea’s nuclear stance is predicated on ensuring “minimum deterrence,” but since 2013, it has rowed back noticeably from the declaration of “no first use” (NFU) that originally formed part of this. Vows of a “preemptive and offensive nuclear strike,” which would run counter to NFU, were made in official media and Kim Jong-un himself referred to such an action in 2016.
- It is worth keeping a watchful eye on North Korea’s bolstering of its second-strike capability, which is one of the constituent elements of minimum deterrence. In 2016 alone, North Korea carried out two nuclear tests and demonstrated dramatic improvements in the capability of other weapons, including in tests to verify the heat and pressure resistance of warheads, solid-fuel missile tests, and SLBM tests. The approach based on linking denuclearization to regional security is reaching its limits and the establishment of an unshakable deterrence posture by Japan, the USA, and South Korea is becoming a matter of urgency.



The Kim Jong-un Regime's "Nuclear Doctrine"

Key Data

The nuclear weapons of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) serve the purpose of deterring and repelling the aggression and attack of the enemy against the DPRK and dealing deadly retaliatory blows at the strongholds of aggression until the world is denuclearized.

The nuclear weapons of the DPRK can be used only by a final order 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.

The DPRK shall neither use nuclear weapons 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.

Source: Excerpt from the Ordinance of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK, "Law on Consolidating the Position of a Nuclear Weapons State" (April 1, 2013). *Minju Joson*, April 2, 2013.