

No First Use and the Asia-Pacific



ASIA-PACIFIC LEADERSHIP NETWORK
FOR NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

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— **Manpreet SETHI** If deterrence is the basic purpose of nuclear weapons, which really is the only credible purpose of these Weapons of Mass Destruction(WMD), then the question that exercises every nuclear armed state is how to deter or what deters best. Is signaling preparation for deliberate and unhesitating employment of nuclear weapons, or first use, better for deterrence? Or does signaling preparation for nuclear retaliation, or no first use, able to deter better? Of the nine nuclear armed states today, seven have a first use strategy. Only China and India have declared no first use doctrines. Neither of them has ever explained the logic or benefits of No First Use(NFU). Benefits of NFU are many. In fact, nuclear first use not a good idea when the adversary has secure second strike capability since there can be neither a guarantee of a ‘splendid first strike,’ nor a guarantee against escalation. In fact, nuclear offense cannot assure victory. Nor can it help escape damage to self.

NFU is more credible and liberating since: there is no material weight of first use – stringent credible ‘superior’ first strike and use requirements; there is no psychological burden of first use – nuclear norm

not easy to be broken; there is no logistics burden of the requirements of first use; there is a less financial strain; there are fewer existential risks associated with nuclear weapons; decision to retaliate can be far easier, legitimate and guilt free. NFU is more stabilizing in that: arsenal requirements are limited; force postures can be more relaxed; adversary not on edge under use or lose pressures; and it raises chances of no use of nuclear weapons – meets the purpose of nuclear weapons, which is deterrence.

NFU is also more conducive to international security because: it reduces the value of nuclear weapons as usable weapons; eases pressures for proliferation; allows nuclear weapons to retain a notional sense of security from nuclear weapons possession; strengthens norm of non-use nuclear weapons; and allows gradual de-legitimization of nuclear weapons, easier pathway to elimination. Barriers to NFU are many too: adversary dismisses it as declaratory; critics at home decry it as defensive or pacifist; politics of extended deterrence; emergence of new counterforce conventional capabilities; the heightened salience of nuclear weapons; increasing incidences of nuclear

brinksmanship – triggering possibilities of further proliferation.

Who can lead it? It is a difficult question in today’s times of nuclear cacophony. All countries engaged in nuclear modernization, replacements for old arsenals and technologies, new inductions. Predominant senses of increasing salience of nuclear weapons. Difficult political relations between nuclear states; U.S.- Russia; U.S.-China; U.S.- Democratic People’s Republic of Korea(DPRK)-China; India-China-Pakistan. Beijing and Delhi could start by formalizing their NFU through a bilateral treaty. Washington could start a dialogue on this with its allies under a nuclear umbrella.

— **ZHAO Tong** First use doctrines raise threat perceptions and fuel arms race: U.S.-China; India-Pakistan; U.S.-DPRK, fueling arms race not only at the nuclear level, but also non-nuclear level. Examples include China’s concern about the U.S. preemptive attack against Chinese nuclear strategic submarines is driving China to deploy more conventional forces to protect its nuclear submarines in the South China Sea. This causes increasing military confrontations at the conventional level. The U.S. and ROK worry about the DPRK’s first use of nuclear weapons; the DPRK has the same worry about the U.S. Such mutual concern motives both sides to engage in further arms competition and to rely more on preemptive military strategies. All of these contribute to heightened threat perceptions and raise tensions.

NFU prohibits not only the first use of nuclear weapons, but also the threat of first use of nuclear weapons. NFU makes nuclear weapons only useful for deterrence purpose and but not for coercive purpose. NFU is not only a declaratory policy, but also has substantial implications for nuclear weapon development, deployment, and employment policies. NFU requires a small nuclear arsenal; not developing counterforce and first strike capability; refraining from developing so called “tailored” or “flexible” nuclear weapons with high accuracy and low yield. NFU requires keeping nuclear weapons at a low level of alert during peacetime, and refraining

from adopting Launch on warning posture. NFU reduces risk of accidental nuclear war and the risk of inadvertent escalation.

What are the barriers to the adoption of no first use doctrines? There is unclear strategy. For example, debate within the U.S. about whether to pursue nuclear primacy against China and Russia. Excessive risk-averse thinking: policy planners fixating on very low probability scenarios and wanting to keep all options open. Technical modernization without strategic guidance, such as the U.S. modernization of submarine-launched ballistic missiles, with “super-fuze”

Allies’ concerns are that Japan does not trust China’s NFU, wanting the U.S. to maintain the capability to preemptively strike China; If China obtains conventional superiority, the U.S. may need to use nuclear weapons first in a future conflict; If the U.S. needs to disarm the DPRK, it may need to rely on first strike with tactical nuclear weapons. Other deep issues that cannot be resolved soon are such as India-Pakistan conventional imbalance; divergent views on state-sponsored terrorism, and Kashmir.

A clear political guidance from the top leaders: Political leaders need to provide clear policy guidance to the military and defense scientists, to overcome bureaucratic inertia. Recognize the impact of emulation: Western influence on China and India’s thinking on NFU. Urgent need for dialogues and substantive exchanges among the nuclear weapons states about the merits as well as drawbacks of certain nuclear posture. Encourage rather than challenge the others’ NFU policy: NFU may not be verifiable, but still has great value, especially for building confidence. Do not discount the role of moral considerations in decision-making.

Advance the norm of NFU internationally, against the background of the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons Initiative in recent years and the Nuclear Ban Treaty negotiation in the UN. Encourage DPRK to clarify and substantiate its NFU commitment: Engaging DPRK to restrict its nuclear deployment and employ policies does not mean the

acceptance of DPRK's legitimate nuclear status. Refusing to engage undermines the security of ROK, the U.S., and the international community.

— **CHUN Yung-woo** Potential benefits of wider adoption of no first use principle are strategic stability between nuclear-armed States; reduction in the risk of miscalculation and unintended use of nuclear weapons; reduction in the role and significance of nuclear weapons in national security policies; creation of a more stable and peaceful international environment conducive to nuclear disarmament and eventually to the realization of a nuclear free world.

And there are barriers to the adoption of no first use. Mutual distrust between nuclear-armed States and lack of confidence in the commitment of the rival nuclear-armed State(s); Mistrust is exacerbated by the return of great power politics involving competition for power and influence and attendant rise of tensions; Lack of transparency in the number and types of nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles, their deployments, modernization programs, alert status and doctrines; Dependence of the ROK and Japan upon U.S. extended nuclear deterrence which does not rule out a first nuclear use: It is driven by the myth that keeping the option of first use is helpful in deterring unpredictable North Korea and that the abandonment of no first use would weaken deterrence; Practical need to keep the option of using nuclear weapons under extreme circumstances of overwhelming conventional attacks; need for maintaining as much strategic ambiguity as possible and not to restrict the scope of circumstances under which nuclear weapons can be used.

Where can we look for leadership? China stands out by setting an example in adopting a no first use policy. Despite the lack of its nuclear transparency, its nuclear posture adds credibility to the policy. U.S. leadership in adopting the no first use is vital to turning it into an established international norm. Russia and other nuclear armed states will lose excuses to avoid the adoption. The ROK and Japan should change their national security policies toward excluding the first use in U.S. extended nuclear deterrence.

They must rely upon conventional means for first use. Is the no first use principle applicable to North Korea? There are two fundamental problems: credibility and implications on North Korea's nuclear status. North Korea's no first use commitment is only as good as its credibility. Given North Korea's track record of defiance of and noncompliance with civilized international norms of behavior, its pledge cannot have any credibility. Accepting North Korea's no first use pledge has the implication of recognizing and legitimizing North Korea as a de facto nuclear weapon state. North Korea's ultimate goal is to be treated as such like India and Pakistan. Unlike other nuclear armed states, there exists a sui generis international law legislated by the UN Security Council which categorically bans North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons and related programs as well as launch of any devices using ballistic missile technologies. Despite all these problems of North Korea adopting a no first use commitment, a U.S. unilateral no first use assurance to North Korea could help in mitigating North Korean leadership's temptation for a first use.

Keywords

No First Use, North Korea, nuclear weapon, missile, doctrine



Policy Implications

- China and India can play a leading role by formalizing their NFU through a bilateral treaty while the U.S. can start a dialogue on NFU with its allies under nuclear umbrella.
- It is desirable to encourage rather than challenge the others' NFU policy.
- It is also necessary to encourage North Korea to clarify and substantiate its NFU commitment.
- The U.S. leadership in adopting the no first use principle is vital to turning it into an established international norm.
- Despite all the problems of North Korea adopting a no first use commitment, a U.S. unilateral no first use assurance to North Korea could help in mitigating North Korean leadership's temptation for a first use.

The Strategy for Peaceful Use of Han River Estuary Neutral Zone under New South Korean Government



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— **YOO Young-Rok** I expect a big change in inter-Korean relations with the inauguration of the new South Korean government after the two Koreas closed the doors to each other for nine years. As the Han River estuary was the only neutral zone in 1953 when the armistice treaty was concluded, civilian ships have been free to enter the estuary under the permission of the authorities of the two Koreas. Gimpo City sought to conduct a survey on the ecology and water flows in the estuary in 2016, but it was suspended due to the nuclear test by North Korea on Jan. 6, 2016. I expect the city might resume the survey, if inter-Korean relations improve during the new government.

— **Glen SEGELL** How to establish a marine peace park is a crucial matter for both Korea and Israel. The establishment of a neutral zone across the borders could not only solidify the ties between the parties locked in confrontation against each other and improve their ties, but also serve as a potential solution to the conflicts, and as a concrete measure to bring peace. Until 1994, Israel had diplomatic ties

with only Egypt among the Arab countries. Israel and Jordan, which have fought against each other for years, agreed on the special treaty on the Aqabi-Eilat region in tripartite peace talks, including the U.S., in 1994 to create a marine park in the Red Sea.

The treaty stipulates that the two countries have agreed to cooperate in research on coral reefs and marine life and on the ecological protection of the coral reef. For discussions on tourism, the environment, water resources and border security, the Jordanian delegation made a visa-free visit to Eilat in Israel and an Israeli delegation to Aqaba in Jordan for one week. While the peace talks were underway, the resource managers, scientists, research institutes and Non-Governmental Organizations(NGO) discussed research and monitoring activities required to maintain and improve the ecological conditions for the coral reef in the Aqaba Gulf. The peace process was meaningful in that it succeeded in bringing multilateral, tripartite and bilateral negotiations.

The objectives of the peace park are as follows: preservation of the seaside ecology and biodiver-