

The Boy Who Cried Wolf-North Korea Nuclear Test and Its Implication to the Regional Stability

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Abstract : The very lethal weapon of nuclear warhead had threatened the survival of the world for half of the 20th century. When most of the countries have already denounced and stopped the development, one country is eager to produce and use them. Since 2006, Pyongyang has launched six times of nuclear tests. The most recent one in September 2017 signaled North Korea's military capability to project the mass destruction through ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) over Seoul, Tokyo, Guam, Hawaii, Alaska or probably the West Coast of the United States with the explosive energy ten times of the atom bombing of Hiroshima in 1945. This research paper adopted time-series content analysis focusing on the related countries responses to North Korea's tests in 2006, 2009, 2013, and 2016. The preliminary hypotheses are first, North Korea determined to protect the regime by having triad nuclear capability. Negotiations are mere means to this end. Second, South Korea is paralyzed by its ineffective domestic politics and unable to develop its independent strategy toward the North. Third, Japan was using the external threat to campaign for its rearmament plan and brought instability in foreign relations. Fourth, China found herself in the strange position of defending the loyal buffer state meanwhile witnessing the fourth and dangerous neighboring country gaining the card into nuclear club. Fifth, the United States had admitted that North Korea's going nuclear is unstoppable. Therefore, to keep the regional stability in the East Asia, the US relied on the new balance of power formed by everyone versus Pyongyang. But, countries in East Asia actually have problems getting along with each other. Sixth, Russia distanced herself from the North Korea row but benefitted by advancing its strategic importance in the Far East. Tracing back the history of nuclear states, this research paper concluded that North Korea will head on becoming a more confident country. The regional stability will restore once related countries deal with the new fact and treat Pyongyang regime with a new strategy. The gradual opening and economic reform are on the way for the North Korea in the near future.

Keywords : nuclear test, North Korea, six party talk, US foreign policy

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