

Session 4: China's Nuclear Weapons

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Summary

Dr. Jeffery Lewis, as he stated in his book, the *Minimum Means of Reprisal*, describes China's nuclear posture as unique and "weird" in that it is small and vulnerable, since China's has a very limited nuclear arsenals and most of them are land-based immobile ICBMs. Yet China still embraces a no-first-use policy. Lewis believes that this doctrine is a result of cultural belief, historical background and in particular, Mao's belief in the utility of China's nuclear weapons.

Prof. Yuan Jingdong believes that China's nuclear posture is consistent since 1964. China has always maintained small and vulnerable arsenals, and a NFU doctrine. Although over the past five years, China has launched its nuclear modernization program, but it's targeted at enhancing its nuclear survivability. However, NFU is currently under debate inside China, even among military analysts. There are discussion about the credibility of NFU, and the scenarios in which NFU may be reconsidered, for instance, if China's nuclear forces are attacked by conventional weapons. But he does not believe that this will result in any change of nuclear doctrine, because in any case, China's nuclear response will invite an overwhelming U.S. nuclear-attack.

China's Nuclear weapons is therefore not for the purpose of use, but for anti-coercion. China's experience in the 1958 Taiwan crisis has convinced China that it needs nuclear weapons to repel nuclear coercion. But nuclear weapons have never been integrated in to war-fighting doctrine.

Dr. Wang Jun emphasized the historical background in which China's nuclear weapons were developed. China did not just yesterday acquire nuclear weapons. But in 1964 which is earlier than the NPT. China acquired nuclear weapons because Mao believed that if you don't have nuclear weapons, you would not be accounted for. So this is a matter of political significance, rather than real military utility.

China has no intention at all to reach parity, either qualitative or quantitative speaking. However, China is interested in acquiring the full range of nuclear capability, nuclear or thermal nuclear. Because, because China believes that nuclear war is a zero-sum game. China is not interested in the ultimate military utility of nuclear weapons and that's the direct reason why China adopted a no first use policy and continue to have that as the fundamentality of China's nuclear posture.

This policy has been with China since 1964, despite changes in the security environment, 暗淡 and China's economic rise and against the background of regional nuclear arms race. So how come China did not change its policy even though now China has the economic and technology resources to do so? Because China considers NFU as the wise way for its nuclear posture and is comfortable with it. For the Chinese, this policy serves their interest, and they don't want to pursue the deterrent value to compel others to comply with Chinese will.

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