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## Putin's Nuclear Threats during the Russia-Ukraine War and Implications for Security on the Korean Peninsula

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Putin's tough talk of deploying nuclear weapons during the Russia-Ukraine War should be assessed from the perspectives of "declarative use" and "actual use" of nuclear arsenal. During the early stages of the Ukraine invasion, Kremlin's nuclear threats were viewed as "declarative use" focused on rhetorical intimidation. However, as Putin continues to make references to nuclear warfare, there is a need to take into account Russia's military doctrine enabling it to use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional strike. In addition, Putin's arbitrary decision-making mechanism and the ensuing misinterpretation and misjudgment of the status quo must also be considered when analyzing his nuclear rhetoric. Moscow's nuclear doctrine and Putin's view of the world make it difficult to completely rule out the likelihood of Russia employing the "actual use" of nuclear weapons. In the scenario where Russia anticipates a political and military defeat, albeit little potential for it to actually instigate an all-out nuclear war, Putin could consider the violent, intensive use of tactical nuclear weapons or WMD.

The implications of Putin's nuclear threats regarding security on the Korean Peninsula include the following:

First, an analysis of the North Korean military including its aggressive nuclear strategy and doctrine, limitations of its exclusive decision-making structure, and use of tactical nuclear weapons is critical for discerning the intentions of North Korea's nuclear missile provocations, and devising countermeasures. Second, the expansion of US and NATO missile defense capabilities prompted Russia to develop its offensive tactical nuclear weapons. As such, North Korea's recent missile provocations can be assessed in a similar context. Hence, the South Korean government should take heed of any signs of additional ICBM launches or nuclear tests for downsized or lightweight nuclear warheads. Third, the Ukraine War will expand the US-Russia nuclear arms race to a "trilateral nuclear arms race" with China as the third actor, and escalate the nuclear arms race in the Northeast Asian region.

In such a security environment, it is necessary to strengthen US extended deterrence and fortify independent security measures. Also, in the medium to long term, a national security strategy based on a comprehensive assessment of various issues including US-China strategic competition, the regional arms race in Northeast Asia, and North Korean nuclear threat is required for the enhancement of South Korea's national security.

Keywords: Nuclear weapons, nuclear strategy, declarative use, actual use, military doctrine