

Translated literally, the phrase used by North Korea does not really say "weapon" or "arms." It does not appear to claim NPT-"nuclear weapons state"-hood. Rather, it asserts that the DPRK wears its NPT-outlaw badge with pride. Also, like Article 26, which avers that the DPRK's "self-supporting national economy...is a firm foundation for the happy socialist lives of the people and for the affluence and prosperity of the fatherland," its constitutional nuclear statehood may be primarily aspirational.

Some pundits suggest the phrase substitutes for a nuclear test after the April 12 rocket launch debacle. Others viewed it as solidifying the DPRK's commitment to keep forever its nuclear weapons, or, creating a new slice of salami to cut off later in revived negotiations.

My intuition is that the change reflects a widely held conviction in North Korea's elite that Kim Jong Il's signal, perhaps only achievement was to get nuclear weapons in spite of two decades of US-led opposition. Like the 2004 fusion in DPRK statements of the party center with the Bomb, the nation itself and nuclear weapons have been combined in a condensed symbol of intention.

The change signals, therefore, that the road to denuclearize the DPRK will be long, slow and arduous, just as the DPRK's nuclear breakout was slow motion and tortuous.

—[Peter Hayes](#), NAPSNet Contributor

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Nautilus Institute

608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:

nautilus@nautilus.org