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Resolved: The United States should adopt a declaratory nuclear policy of no first use.

November/December 2020 PF Brief*

*Published by Victory Briefs, PO Box 803338 #40503, Chicago, IL 60680-3338. Edited by Lawrence Zhou. Written by Inko Bovenzi, Ilana Cuello-Wolffe, Laurenn Vives, and Lawrence Zhou. Evidence cut by Ty Rossow and Lawrence Zhou. For customer support, please email help@victorybriefs.com.

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1 Topic Primer by Lawrence Zhou

Lawrence Zhou is the Director of Lincoln-Douglas Debate and Publishing at Victory Briefs. He debated at Bartlesville HS in Oklahoma (2010-2014) in Lincoln-Douglas debate where he was the 2014 NSDA Lincoln-Douglas national champion. While attending the University of Oklahoma, he placed as the National Runner Up at the 2018 Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl National Competition, advanced to outrounds at the 2016 and 2018 Cross Examination Debate Association National Tournament, and championed the Beijing Language and Culture University in British Parliamen-tary debate. Lawrence graduated in 2019 with degrees in MIS, Marketing, and Phi-losophy. He was formerly the Debate League Director at the National High School Debate League of China and is currently a graduate assistant at the University of Wyoming and an assistant coach at The Harker School. His students have advanced to late outrounds at numerous regional and national invitational tournaments, in-cluding finals and semifinals appearances at the NSDA National Tournament.

NFU is an excellent topic and the literature for it is great for both sides. NFU has been a staple debate argument for a while now. It was popular as a counterplan on the 2020 January/February Lincoln-Douglas debate topic and an entire topic area on the 2018-2019 NDT-CEDA college policy debate topic. As a result of these topics, we know that the topic literature for both sides is excellent. We also know that the number of cards isn't what is going to determine wins and losses on the question of NFU. One good card with lots of warrants is better than shotgunning 10 cards that only have a claim. Even in college policy, an event characterized by extreme research loads (some teams easily cut over 10,000 cards a season), the number of "unique" cards (unique in the sense that other teams didn't read them) was fairly low as people tended to gravitate towards the same few, well-warranted cards for each side. Instead, what differentiated the good from the great teams wasn't the number of cards they had, but their ability to understand and deploy those cards.

But before I go on too long about this, let's start with introducing the topic.

1.1 Topic Background

1.1.1 What is NFU?

The other TA essays will introduce what NFU is generally. Most generally, a no first use policy is a policy to "only use these weapons in retaliation for a nuclear attack."[1] I won't dive more into the details of the NFU here. Instead, I want to talk about a few of the terms you'll almost certainly want to be familiar with basic terms of deterrence and International Relations (IR) theory.

1.1.2 What is Deterrence?

The core of this debate is the concept of deterrence. Deterrence is the threat of military retaliation directed from one state to another in an attempt to prevent the other state from using military force. It is about discouraging other state actors from taking un-wanted actions. You'll find deterrence theory everyone in society. It's a huge part of the crime literature. One of the rationales for why we incarcerate those who commit crimes is that the costs of committing the crime (imprisonment) outweigh the benefits of com-mitting that crime. It's also likely part of the reason why you're not willing to just punch random people in the street: if you do, you'll incur huge costs for doing so (the other person may retaliate, you may go to prison, you may lose friends/family from doing this) and receive almost no benefits. The idea behind deterrence is rational cost-benefit analysis: no rational state would use military force against another because the costs of doing so would outweigh the benefits. So, for deterrence to be effective, the state who is attempting to deter must be able to respond with sufficient force such that the costs for the aggressive state would be greater than the benefits of engaging in force. Or more accurately, the *perceived* costs of acting must exceed the *perceived* benefits of acting. It matters not if you *can* or *cannot* respond, it matters whether the state you're deterring *thinks* you can respond. For example, if you don't have any deterrence capabilities but your opponent thinks that you do, they'll probably opt not to call your bluff and attack since they *think* you'll be able to retaliate. Or for example, you might have a lot of deter-rence capabilities, but your opponent doesn't know about them, so they attack anyways because they don't realize the cost to attacking. So, one of the main ideas in deterrence

[1]Panda, A. (2018, July 17). 'No First Use' and Nuclear Weapons. Retrieved October 10, 2020, from https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/no-first-use-and-nuclear-weapons

is about communicating. The other main part of deterrence is "mutually assured de-struction," the idea that no country will initiate a nuclear strike against another because they both fear being totally annihilated by nuclear weapons.

Deterrence is a core part of American defense policy. We use deterrence in Europe to deter Russian adventurism in the Baltic states, in Korea to deter North Korean invasion, and in all throughout Asia to deter Chinese activities in the region. And deterrence isn't just used to deter invasion, it's also used to deter "gray-zone" activities which are operations beyond traditional state actions but below the threshold of escalation such as election meddling, which are belligerent actions but not sufficiently damaging to demand an escalation to all-out war.

Now, when it comes this topic, the main type of deterrence we're interested in is nu-clear deterrence. The premise behind nuclear deterrence is that each nuclear power (there are 5 legitimate nuclear powers: the US, UK, France, China, and Russia; 3 illegiti-mate powers: India, Pakistan, and North Korea; and 1 technically unconfirmed nuclear power: Israel) maintains a high level of instant and overwhelming destructive capabil-ity against any act of aggression by an enemy state. The success of nuclear deterrence depends on two basic conditions: the ability to retaliate and the will to retaliate.

The first is incredibly important. The ability to retaliate in the event of a strike, either nuclear or conventional, is called "second-strike capability." If states lack second-strike capability, then there's no deterrence because the aggressing state wouldn't face any costs from striking first. The United States ensures second-strike capability through its "nuclear triad." The triad is a three-pronged nuclear force structure that's composed of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) based on land, submarine-launched bal-listic missiles (SLBMs) based on nuclear submarines all through the world, and strate-gic bombers loaded with nuclear bombs that can be quickly deployed anywhere in the world. This triad ensures that no enemy first strike could destroy all of the United States' nuclear capabilities. In other words, if another country tried to nuke or invade the US, their first attack couldn't take out all of our nuclear weapons because there are so many of them hidden throughout the world. This makes it impossible for enemies to elimi-nate our second-strike capability which is what makes deterrence effective. If an enemy state tried to nuke the US, they would know they can't take out all of the United States' nuclear weapons, and thus they would be exposing themselves to the risk of retaliation. Since the risk of nuclear retaliation is too great, the costs exceed the benefits, and they won't attack us.

The second component is the will to retaliate. If states aren't perceived as credible in

their willingness to retaliate, then there is no cost to invading or striking another country. Most people tend to think that all major nuclear weapons are willing to retaliate in the event of a first strike.

Now one of the phrases I've been using up until now should be fairly easy to understand but it's worth explaining a little more because it explains what the topic is: "first strike." A first strike is a preemptive surprise attack using overwhelming force, most likely nu-clear weapons. The point of a successful first strike is to neutralize a country's second strike capability, thus neutralizing their deterrent capabilities. The most oft discussed version of a first strike is called a counterforce strategy, one that targets the enemy's military targets such as their ICBMs or nuclear command and control centers. A suc-cessful counterforce strike would eliminate a country's ability to second strike and thus create the conditions for an overwhelming victory on the part of the aggressor. This is different from a countervalue target which would target things of value to a country like their cities or economic resources. So, counterforce targets the adversary's military and countervalue would target their civilian populations. Closely related to counterforce is decapitation, which targets nuclear command and control facilities which would pre-vent the enemy from being able to launch a second strike. Command and control (C2) is the military system that refers to the authority and ability to launch a strike. A closely related term is NC3 or Nuclear Command, Control and Communications system which is the system in place that aims to create a reliable and secure system that can verify the nuclear chain of command and move the necessary information around to wherever the president or authority is.

Another common phrase you'll hear is "strategic stability." This the state of affairs in which countries are confident that enemy states could not undermine their deterrent capabilities, i.e. their second strike capabilities. This is assured through the nuclear triad. The United States is confident no adversary has the ability to track every single one of the United States' nuclear submarines nor the ability to blunt those attacks from those submarines through missile defenses. However, we might not be living in a world of strategic stability. There are many nuclear experts who argue that we no longer live in a world of strategic stability due in part to the development of new technologies and weapons and due in part to the degradation of the treaties and agreements that prevented nuclear testing, use, and development. Starting with new technologies, one of the most worrisome developments for strategic stability has been the development of new Russian weapons designed to make nuclear weapons more precise and deadly have begun to undermine stability. These weapons include work on hypersonic (faster than

sound) missiles and underwater nuclear-power drones. It also includes work on cyber capabilities that aim to disarm or damage a population without nuclear weapons. These, and other weapons technology, upset the balance of power and undermine strategic stability.

1.1.3 What is IR?

So that's a lot about deterrence (although we've only scratched the surface on such an interesting and nuanced topic). We should also talk about the paradigms under which deterrence operates. International relations (IR) is the study of how states interact in the global sphere. Obviously, we cannot cover all of IR here as it is literally what people spend years of their life studying in college and beyond, but we can get enough of a primer on the basics so that you can better understand the topic. You should also read the Wikipedia entry on IR as it goes into a lot of depth about these issues.

Broadly, you need to know that are three big schools of thought in IR that you'll hear ref-erenced a lot in debate: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Realism is the view that states are self-interested, power-seeking rational actors. Liberalism is the view states are basically good and are interested in cooperation to promote positive change in the world. Constructivism is the view that the anarchic state of the international arena is what states make it out to be, i.e. that actions between states is not the result of any-thing other than social constructed behavior. Obviously, the realists are the most the pessimistic and tend to believe a lot in military power whereas liberals tend to like co-operation and alliances. The constructivists aren't really IR theorists per se and more just social theorists who just want to explain why states perform certain actions. There are other models of IR, e.g. neoliberalism or Marxism, but these will be the three refer-enced most often in the NFU literature. As I am personally not an IR scholar, I don't want to delve into these topics much more than I already have and so I leave it to you to research these issues on your own. Inko's topic analysis essay also delves more into these areas.

1.1.4 What's the Topic?

Ok, so we're about 1500 words in and so far, we haven't really discussed the topic yet. How does any of what was mentioned above relate to the topic? Well, for one thing,

knowing these terms will be incredibly important for crossfire and being able to demon-strate a command of the background of the topic.

But the more important thing that these terms do for you is that they really elucidate the question this topic poses. Should the US adopt a no-first-use policy? Let's think through that.

First, what is current problem we're faced with? The United States has the ability to first strike other countries. Why does this matter? Well, using the terms we've just dis-cussed, the answer is pretty clear. One of the problems, so argue proponents of a NFU, is that the United States has the ability to first strike other countries. And not only do we have the ability to, we have the ability to do it quite effectively given the size and advanced nature of our nuclear arsenal. This creates some problems. Let's saying we're in the middle of a conventional war (non-nuclear war) with Pakistan (another nuclear power). Neither side has used nuclear weapons yet. However, Pakistan knows that the United States is getting annoyed at this conflict. They fear that the United States might deploy nuclear weapons in this conflict. So, Pakistan begins making preparations for im-proving the survivability of their nuclear second strike capability. They begin moving missiles into the mountains, start constructing bunkers, raise their nuclear alertness lev-els, etc. Of course, Pakistan does this rapidly because they are scared the United States could strike with a nuclear weapon anytime. This speed of deployment, especially in a less developed nuclear environment like Pakistan's, increases the chance of acciden-tal launch and makes it more likely that Pakistan could "miscalculate" what the United States is doing and launch a nuclear weapon. While this is happening, the United States could observe what is happening with Pakistan's nuclear forces and interpret this as a sign that Pakistan is actually preparing to launch a nuclear strike against the United States. To avoid such an incident from happening, the United States might preemp-tively strike Pakistan. All of this is compounded by "use-it-or-lose-it" pressures that Pakistan has because they know that if the United States strikes first, Pakistan would likely not have enough surviving nuclear weapons to second strike, so Pakistan might feel compelled to launch first to prevent themselves from being preemptively attacked by the United States, especially because the United States has new nuclear technology that might prevent there from being strategic stability between the two countries.

Of course, the con's main argument will also rely on deterrence but opponents of the NFU don't find the above story all that compelling, for reasons we'll get into later. How-ever, the above story is the one that undergirds the logic of the pro's best arguments and so is one you should be able to easily describe both with the terminology and without.

1.2 Topic Thoughts

1.2.1 What is the Role of IR?

One concern I'll address here is the role that paradigms of IR play in this debate. There will likely be a tendency towards extremes here, with some people claiming that if they win that realism is the correct paradigm of IR, then it all but proves that NFU is a bad policy, with others thinking that paradigms of IR shouldn't be relevant in debate at all. I find both views a bit silly. Clearly paradigms of IR matter because they carry with them a great deal of predictive power as to how states will act. If realism is indeed true, then it does have some pretty serious implications for understanding the effects of a NFU policy. If liberalism is true, that would radically alter how one would see other states responding to such a policy change. However, paradigms aren't determinative and IR paradigms are no different. In fact, there are some scholars who don't recommend teaching from the paradigms because they don't hold monopoly on explanatory power. So, it seems the best way to deploy these IR paradigms is as a framing issue on certain debates. They frame how states will respond but they aren't determinative. Specific evidence will carry greater weight.

1.2.2 What are the Arguments?

Almost every argument on this topic is going to revolve around these terms and the other topic analysis essays will dive more into common arguments for and against the topic. I won't explore these here and instead encourage you to read the other essays and read through all of the cards in the file.

I do want to briefly talk about what the core of this debate will be. The pro is going to argue that NFU is bad because it undermines stability and increases uncertainty. The con is going to argue that NFU is bad for deterrence and assurances. Assurances just mean credible commitments to defend allies such as Japan, NATO, and South Korea. The broad debate here is uninteresting in the sense that everyone is going to make simi-lar arguments. The relevant part is going to be the extent to which teams can effectively explain the details that make each of those positions coherent.

In particular, I think that the pro is best set up with arguments that explain how NFU strengthens deterrence as a way to preempt the best con arguments. I also think that the pro is in a good place because they have easier access to a larger impact (preventing

nuclear war) versus an arguably smaller impact (deterring conventional conflict). If the debate is a toss-up, the pro has the bigger impact and so should win.

However, I think the con is best when they explain why conventional war is the most likely route to nuclear escalation and places a great deal of pressure by challenging the efficacy of a NFU policy at reducing the chance of an accidental nuclear exchange. I think good con teams can easily out-tech the pro on the details.

Regardless, I think the debate is fairly balanced and should reward teams that really do understand the background and theory of nuclear weapons theory.

1.2.3 Conclusion

I think this topic is excellent and should invite great debate. I encourage debaters to constantly read on this topic. The literature is expansive but also self-reinforcing: the more you understand in one area, that improves your understanding in other areas. Again, this is a topic where the best evidence will be found early on. It's less about the number of cards you read and more about how much you understand that evidence.

2 Topic Analysis by Inko Bovenzi

Inko Bovenzi debated for Hunter High School in New York City. He qualified to the Tournament of Champions twice and reached outrounds in his junior year. He has reached late elimination rounds in several varsity tournaments, including finals at Yale, quarterfinals at UK and semifinals at Scarsdale. In addition, he was 8th speaker at Harvard, 3rd speaker at UK, and 7th speaker at Scarsdale. He was invited to compete at the Harvard Round Robin twice, and during his senior year, he was ranked first in the country. He was an instructor at the Victory Briefs Institute this summer.

2.1 Background

A no first use police with respect to nuclear weapons means that the United States claims that it will never preemptively strike a foreign country with a nuclear weapon unless they attack with nuclear power first. The fact that this policy is "declaratory" means that this resolution does not fiat that the United States changes its military capability in any significant way, which is an important part of making a no first use policy credible:

Beginning in the early days of the Cold War, the United States has relied on the threat to use nuclear weapons first as a way to deter both nuclear and non-nuclear attacks. Yet, the world has changed significantly since then. In the contemporary era, the dangers and risks of a first-strike policy outweigh the hoped-for deterrence benefits. The United States should join China and India in adopting a declared no-first-use policy and should encourage the other nuclear-armed states to do likewise. A no-first-use policy means that the United States would pledge to use nuclear weapons only in retaliation for a nuclear attack. The sole purpose of U.S. nuclear weapons would then be to deter — and, if necessary, respond to — the use of nuclear weapons against the United States and its allies and partners. To be credible, this declaratory pledge would need to be

reflected in a retaliatory-strike-only nuclear force posture.[1]

Thus, there are two options for how you can structure a case on this topic. First, you can give reasons for why the United States is likely to back up its no first use pledge with decreased first strike capabilities. The advantage of this style of case is that you'll have many more arguments available to you (so will your opponent though), because this no first use policy will meaningfully change the balance of power and capabilities between America and our adversaries. The disadvantages of this strategy are two-fold: it's challenging to prove that the United States would weaken its own military arsenal just to make a pledge for no first use credible, and it's unclear how exactly second strike capabilities are significantly less threatening than first strike capabilities. They are still powerful nuclear weapons, and the whole point of second strike capabilities is that they can completely destroy another country's military strength.

Second, you can assume that the United States will make no significant changes to its nu-clear arsenal: that the pledge will be purely declarative in nature. While this approach avoids the disadvantages of the first, there just aren't a whole lot of arguments under this framework. Nothing meaningfully changes in the interactions between the United States and foreign powers when America goes "we promise to not completely wipe out your military capabilities so you should trust us and not be worried that we do exactly that." Not only has the Trump Administration severely stretched thin other countries' willingness to trust the consistency of our foreign policy, but even if we had never gone back on our promises before, countries need to plan for the worst-case scenario when nuclear weapons are involved. The next section of this topic analysis will be two inter-national relations-based frameworks to think about this topic (principles from different theories can be combined in a round, you needn't pick just one) and how these theories can help us understand no first use policies.

Finally, it's worth noting that while violating a no first use policy may lead to some international backlash, it's easy for the US to go "but we had to launch nuclear weapons at them because they were using chemical weapons, about to fire their own nuclear weapons, or killing thousands of innocent people." It's likely most US allies would support the move while adversaries would condemn it, which is basically the status quo.

[1]Texas National Security Review, 8-1-2019, "It's Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy," https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/

2.2 Realism

The realist theory of international relations, perhaps the dominant theory in current academic circles, rests on three central assumptions: that states operate in an anarchic system with no universal system of laws governing/restraining them, that states are primarily concerned with the relative power between them and the states around them, and that power is the ultimate means for states to achieve their goals. In practice this means that if any state decides that invading/attacking/declaring war on another may yield it more benefit than peace time, it will do exactly that.

On the idea of an anarchic system, there is no body that governs and restricts states in the modern world. There are two possible entities that could take on this role: the UN, and the US. The United Nations has roughly 0 power in controlling a state's behavior because it doesn't have any bite to back up its bark. Any military or economic power that the United Nations possesses is a) minimal and b) technically belongs to a mem-ber state and can be rescinded at will (thus that power doesn't bind that member state). This is why the United Nations is so hilariously inept at resolving conflicts in regions such as the South China Sea or curbing US foreign policy; American and China (or any other country) can do exactly what they want with no fear of repercussions. Moreover, with realism there can never be a powerful version of the United Nations, because states will never agree to meaningful multilateral institutions with power. That's because any cooperation between multiple states has the potential to alter the balance of power be-tween them, which is unacceptable for the state losing relative power. That's why the Paris Climate Accords' emission targets aren't meaningfully affecting global warming: states weakened them during negotiations and ignored them once the deal was signed (and if they did follow them, they probably would have anyway) because cutting back on carbon emissions can change your relative power with other states if you're a heavy emitter or an oil producer.

Ok, so what does this mean for the topic? A few things. First, the United States claiming to adopt a no first use policy with no meaningful changes to its nuclear arsenal will do absolutely nothing. States evaluate the (potential) power of the United States and then act accordingly. What the United States says it will do has no bearing on what states evaluate to be in their best interest, because the US could always be lying. In general, states will assume that the United States will do whatever is in its best interest, which could be to break the no first use promise.

Several theoretical approaches in international relations help to illuminate why states

choose to adopt a first-use versus a no-first-use (NFU) policy. A realist approach, which emphasizes the central role of material capabilities, would generally be skeptical of no-first-use pledges, which it would view as "cheap talk" and unenforceable. States that have made such pledges could still launch a nuclear weapon first in a conflict. Thus, NATO leaders and other observers expressed considerable skepticism during the final years of the Cold War that Russia's declaration of an NFU policy in 1982 had any real substance behind it. Today, while India has made an NFU pledge, analysts debate how constraining it really is. In turn, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is sometimes dismissive of China's NFU policy.[2]

What's funny is that this article advocates for a no first use policy from the United States but never actually answers the "realist approach" it outlines here. Even if for some reason you fiat that we abide by the no first use policy (which I don't think you can), that doesn't change states worrying that the United States could strike first. Thus, their behavior won't change.

Second, even if states believe that the United States will abide by its no first use policy, nothing really changes, because states care far more about relative power than abso-lute power. Our nuclear first-strike capability is a tiny reason why the United States is the most powerful nation on earth. Even if we removed two-thirds of our arsenal, there would not be a single state that went from being weaker than the United States to nearly on-par or more powerful than us. No country (country, not terrorist group) will risk starting a war with a nation wielding a military much more powerful than theirs. Likewise, the United States will engage in conflicts the same way as before, because the vast majority of American military capability is not nuclear, especially because using nuclear weapons is viewed to be unthinkable.

So to sum up, for realism, a no first use policy changes nothing because a) it's not en-forceable and b) even if it were it doesn't meaningfully change balances of power. I don't know how this theory could help you write a case (it probably won't), but it would be excellent for answering other cases in rebuttal. To read more about realism, here are a couple links:

Theory of International Politics by Kenneth Waltz (Chapter 6 is most important)

Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War by John J. Mearsheimer

[2]Texas National Security Review, 8-1-2019, "It's Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy," https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/

2.3 Liberalism

Liberalism starts off with the same parameters of realism regarding the anarchic system of states, which forces states to compete with one another to survive. However, liberal-ism contests the idea that states are solely motivated by balances of relative power. In general, liberalism argues that all states have a set of preferences from which they act and choose what to do with their foreign policy. Of course, not getting invaded/defeated militarily is the primary preference for all states, because that means a complete loss of power and sovereignty. These preferences come from three sources:

2.3.1 Ideational Liberalism

Ideational liberalism is based on the ideology of different states. States are far more likely to cooperate and wish to become allies with states that share similar ideologies to them. For example, the United States is less frightened of France's nuclear arsenals than North Korea's, even though France's is more deadly, because France is a Western power with a similar view of the world to us. This means that a) they're unlikely to ever want to attack us because we share common goals/values and b) even if they wanted to strike with nuclear weapons they wouldn't because both the United States and France share the primary preference of national security: a nuclear strike has far more drawbacks that benefits due to mutually assured destruction. The second point there is very important: some states have different ideologies that result in preferences.

Ideational liberalism views domestic social identities and values as basic determinants of state preferences. Drawing on a liberal tradition of political philosophy dating back to John Stuart Mill, Giuseppe Mazzini, Woodrow Wilson, and John Maynard Keyes, liberals define social values as the set of preferences held by various individuals and groups in society concerning the proper scope and nature of legitimate state objectives. In particular, nations and groups within nations differ in their conceptions of what a le-gitimate domestic order is—that is, their conception of which social actors belong to the polity and what is owed them. Thus for liberals, ends that may appear universal—such as the defense of political sovereignty and national security—are not necessarily ends in themselves, but are justified only insofar as they are means to realize the specific un-derlying preferences of social actors concerning "legitimate social order." Some states, such as aggressive states like Hitler's Germany, willingly place security and sovereignty at risk in order to achieve conquest. Other states may place security at risk to maintain

peace or prosperity. None of these choices are necessarily "irrational"; they simply in-volve varying sets of social preferences.[3]

2.3.2 Commercial Liberalism

Commercial liberalism examines the influence of the global market on state economic and security policy. Changes in the global market that are undesirable may lead to changes in foreign policy, while foreign policy that leads to undesirable changes in the market will be avoided. For example, the industrialization of China led to millions of jobs in the United States being outsourced to Chinese workers, spurred along by China's devaluation of its currency. As a result, this undesirable development in the global market for the United States led to more aggressive policy towards China, in the form of cases against them at the World Trade Organization and now tariffs.

The global market can also help stop conflict rather than just creating it. Experts cite the United States and China's economic interdependence as a major reason for why conflict is unlikely. We have a preference to maintain a strong economy that outweighs our preference to protect islands that aren't even ours in the first place in the South China Sea. The numerous conflicts concerning oil and special treatment oil-producing states may receive also falls under this category.

2.3.3 Republican Liberalism

All states, even the most authoritarian ones, have governments representative of the populace to some extent. This representation need not be (and is usually not) egalitarian in nature. Imbalances in representation lead to changes in a state's preferences, because (at least in theory) all special interest groups in a country employ rent-seeking behavior. If due to the quirks of the political system of a country one or a few special interest groups get disproportionate influence over lawmakers, their preferences will strongly influence the preferences of the state as a whole.

For example, in the United States we have the Electoral College! This system gives significantly more influence to the preferences of people living in Florida and Michigan than people living in New York or Texas. As a result, if for some reason voters in FL and MI cared a lot more about a specific foreign policy than the average voter, that policy

[3]LIBERAL THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A PRIMER, Andrew Moravcsik, Princeton University, 2010. If you want to read more about liberalism, this is a great place to start.

would have a greater chance of being passed. It is for this reason that the United States has deployed tariffs against the European Union and other allies while pulling out of the Trans Pacific Partnership (leaving realists scratching their heads), because voters in MI that have lost their jobs to overseas nations want them back, even though this policy hurts the US as a whole. Likewise, we have an embargo on Cuba and sanctions on Venezuela largely because of the demands of Cuban voters in Florida that we be "tough" on Latin American socialist regimes.

So what's the upshot from liberalism for this topic? While liberalists tend to agree with realists that no first use policies really don't matter much, liberalism can help you in two ways on this topic. First, the three sub-branches of liberalism give you a plethora of means to respond to any argument about what the foreign policies of nations would be given a specific scenario. These ideas will also help with argument generation: on the Venezuela sanctions topic last year, Republican Liberalism helped me come up with the argument that if we lifted sanctions on Venezuela voters in Florida might demand a (worse) military intervention. On this topic, many arguments involving the reactions of our allies can be built from these theories that wouldn't make sense under realism. For example, special interest groups in our allies' governments might demand that their governments build up their militaries, because a no first use policy may undermine mutual-defense pacts with our allies. Ally pushback is probably the biggest reason for why we don't have a no first use policy today. So even if technically our allies have nothing to fear from a no first use policy because we would just violate it if it were clearly in our best interest to do so (unenforceable), special interest groups, especially populist and nationalist parties in these countries may use our no first use policy as a reason for why they cannot rely on the United States anymore to defend them. More-over, under ideational liberalism, states may perceive that a no first use policy signals that the United States is falling more and more into an "America First" "your problems aren't our problems" type of outlook to the world. That may cause them to change their strategies. Our competitor states may also become more aggressive if they perceive this shift is happening, maybe just to actually test our reactions to their aggression to see if the shift is real.

Secondly, ideational liberalism gives you a framework to explain why having or not having a no first use policy might cause other states to react in ways we might view to be "irrational," but to them aren't. China or Russia or other hostile powers may behave more or less aggressively in ways that might puzzle the United States but be consis-tent with their preferences. China, for example, is very possessive over other countries'

land in the South China Sea and may engage in military conflict to protect its "right" to them, even if this may seem irrational (why risk war for an island) to the United States. Ideational liberalism may give your war scenarios just the nuance they need to be persuasive and resilient to a realist examination. Speaking of war scenarios...

2.4 War Scenarios

This section outlines a series of potential flashpoints for conflict involving the United States, and how potentially a no first use policy might relate to them. Something to keep in mind with this section: the United States already has a no first use policy involving all states that a) do not possess nuclear weapons and b) aren't proliferating them.

2.4.1 Korean Peninsula

There are two main ways in which conflict could begin on the Korean Peninsula: a US first strike and a North Korean preemptive/accidental launch. While a no first use policy is unlikely to prevent North Korean aggression, as North Korea uses its aggres-sion/perceived irrationality as a strategy to avoid being attacked, it is impossible that a US first strike would be less likely in a world where the United States has explicitly stated that it would not do such a thing. A US first strike would probably spell disaster for South Korea, as the North in a last ditch attempt might rain down nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons on Seoul.

Why might the United States strike first? If the United States perceives that it may be able to decapitate the North Korea regime with minimal risk of a second strike from the North then it might do so, especially if North Korea is on the verge of developing powerful inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with nuclear warheads that could target American cities. The US might view the development of these missiles as an unac-ceptable risk (or its people might regardless of what happens to South Korea, remember Republican Liberalism) or a US president in a desperate political situation might lash out to distract from his/her own domestic failings. Either way, if you can prove a rea-sonably high probability of a first strike in the status quo, because the Korean Peninsula is one of the few potential conflicts involving nuclear weapons that is not a exceedingly threatening issue for the United States, we might respect our no first use pledge in this situation even though it's not enforceable (Ideational Liberalism).

2.4.2 China

There's a lot of (primarily realist) literature out there explaining why a war with China in the near future has a frighteningly high probability. The dynamic between China and the US is a very dangerous one: the US has been the global hegemon for decades at this point and does not want to give up its power. Meanwhile, China is a rising power that wants acceptance/more hegemonic power and will do anything to achieve it. In the last 500 years, 75% of the time that a rising power has threatened a dominant power's hegemony, the outcome has been war: (Examples of conflict: Germany vs. Britain WWI, Japan vs. China WWII, Example of no conflict: Cold War).[4] Conflict could easily erupt over any territorial dispute in the South China Sea as China seeks to steal land from other countries that are US allies, like Japan, Taiwan, or Vietnam.

However, it's unclear how a no first use policy might impact a war between the US and China, or the probability of war, given that nuclear miscalculation remains exceedingly unlikely and as I explained earlier no first use policies are unenforceable.

2.4.3 Russia

Russia and the United States have a similar dynamic to the US and China, but Russia is considerably weaker than China and not meaningfully increasing its power either. It's likely that in the coming decades, China will come to dominate Asia (including Russia) as the US dominates the Americas. However, there are plenty of potential conflicts that could arise from a hawkish US president involving Russian encroachment into Eastern Europe, particularly Ukraine and the Baltic States. The same caveats of how no first use probably doesn't impact this conflict apply here, though.

2.4.4 Indo-Pak

A war between India and Pakistan is always a possibility as the countries have been fighting for decades. If conflict were to break out, the United States would probably play the role of the mediator, as we have done in the past. However, the United States is becoming increasingly close to India as we try to support regional hegemons that op-pose China, and we have been distancing ourselves from the Chinese-backed Pakistani

[4]Graham Allison, 9-24-2015, "The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?," At-lantic, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/

"government." Due to instability in Pakistan (there isn't really a non-Taliban controlled government), it's easy to see how a conflict could begin and potentially escalate. Similar to the Korean war scenario, this is one of the few scenarios where a US no first use policy could prevent the deployment of nuclear weapons, because the conflict isn't important enough to the United States (potentially) to incentivize us to violate a recently made no first use promise. However, it's unlikely that a response to this conflict from the US would be nuclear.

2.4.5 Iran

If Iran were to seriously begin proliferating nuclear weapons or behaving aggressively, it's possible that the US would initiate war against the regime. However, the probability of this conflict going nuclear is exceedingly low due to Iran's weak military capabilities; conventional forces should more than suffice for defeating Iran. The US has a long his-tory of deploying conventional forces in the Middle East (and everywhere else) and has never fired a nuclear weapon following World War II.

2.4.6 General

If you're reading an argument about any of these war scenarios, be sure to explain why the US would use nuclear weapons in their strike, and why a nuclear first strike is signif-icantly worse than an equally powerful conventional strike (100 conventional missiles instead of one nuclear missile at a target).

3 Topic Analysis by Ilana Cuello-Wolffe

Ilana Cuello-Wolffe debated for The Dalton School for three years. She qualified to the Tournament of Champions her junior and senior year, and the NSDA National Tournament her senior year. She reached elimination rounds at many national cir-cuit tournaments, including the New York Invitational, Princeton, Harvard, Ridge, and many others. She received many speaker awards including third speaker at Princeton, Ridge, Villiger, and top speaker at the Byram Hills Invitational and the Westridge Round Robin. She was an instructor at VBI this summer.

Welcome to the November topic! Online tournaments have finally started to settle into themselves and become the comfortable norm. It's really easy to sign up for tourna-ments though, and to spend all day on a screen without even noticing! That's why it's really critical that you make an active effort to take brain breaks and screen breaks. Just as you would during an in person tournament makes sure to talk to your friends or teammates, or walk through new locations to take a break from thinking about debate! Make sure you're not booking every weekend (I know it's tempting!) and that you do exercise or go on mini walks without your phone in between rounds.

This topic is an interesting one - and while at first glance a lot of the literature seems to be quite heavily skewed - it's worth understanding that this policy has been placed up serious debate quite recently:

Harvey of War on the Rocks in 2019[1] writes, "Over the past few decades, the United States has weighed the risks and benefits to both its nuclear deterrence posture and its non-proliferation policy goals of renouncing first-use of nuclear weapons in a conflict. In President Barack Obama's 2010 *Nuclear Posture Review* and, later, near the end of Obama's second term as part of a mini-nuclear review, the adoption of a so-called"no-first-use" pledge was considered. Both times, Obama rejected adopting such a policy. The 2018 *Nuclear Posture Review* carried out by the Trump administration reviewed the policy and reaffirmed Obama's decision.

[1]https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/assessing-the-risks-of-a-nuclear-no-first-use-policy/

Recently, Rep. Adam Smith, the new chair of the House Armed Services Committee, and Sen. Elizabeth Warren have called for a U.S. no-first-use policy."

With that let's get into the topic!

Resolved: The United States should adopt a declaratory nuclear policy of no first use.

3.1 Definitions and Background

Should:

The word should implies a moral decision - however what's up for contest is what sys-tem the morals should be aligned with. Morals aren't a universal or objective thing, and it could be favorable for you to either explicitly or implicitly have an understanding of whether or not the United States' moral calculus should be driven by the protection of America or a duty to create norms for the rest of the world.

Declaratory:

The critical thing here is that the policies are simply declared, and there's not really any check or balance. In order to think about the significance of a position being signalled, it's important to understand the purpose of these declaratory policies in the first place.

Davenport of the Arms Control Association in 2019[2] writes:

"The world's nuclear-armed states each have declared, to varying degrees of specificity, when and under what circumstances they reserve the option to use their nuclear weapons. Most nuclear-armed states have also declared under what circumstances they rule out the use of nuclear weapons. These"positive" and "negative" nuclear declaratory policies are designed to deter adversaries from military actions and to assure non-nuclear weapon states and allies they will not be subject to a direct nuclear attack on their territory and should be dissuaded from pursuing nuclear weapons themselves."

In order to have an understanding of whether or not a shift in the declared nuclear policy would be aligned with the United States goals or intentions, it's important to have some context on the history of US nuclear policy. The Congressional Research Service[3] in 2019 summarizes:

[2]https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/declaratorypolicies
[3]https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/IN10553.pdf

"A "no first use" policy would represent a change from current policy, where the United States has pledged to refrain from using nuclear weapons against most non-nuclear weapon states, but has neither ruled out their first use in all cases nor specified the cir-cumstances under which it would use them. This policy of "calculated ambiguity" ad-dressed U.S. concerns during the Cold War, when the United States and NATO faced nu-merically superior Soviet and Warsaw Pact conventional forces in Europe. At the time, the United States not only developed plans to use nuclear weapons on the battlefield to disrupt or defeat attacking tanks and troops, but it also hoped that the risk of a nu-clear response would deter the Soviet Union from initiating a conventional attack. This is not because the United States believed it could defeat the Soviet Union in a nuclear war, but because it hoped the Soviet Union would know that the use of these weapons would likely escalate to all-out nuclear war, with both sides suffering massive destruc-tion. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has modified its declaratory policy to reduce the apparent role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security, but it still has not declared that it would not use them first. In the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review Re-port, the Obama Administration stated that the United States "would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances" and would not threaten or use nu-clear weapons, under any circumstances, "against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations." But the Administration was not prepared to state that the "sole purpose" of U.S. nuclear weapons was to deter nuclear attack because it could en-vision "a narrow range of contingencies" where nuclear weapons might play a role in de-terring conventional, chemical, or biological attacks. The Trump Administration, in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) Report, also rejected the idea that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack, and, therefore, also did not adopt a "no first use" policy. It noted that "the United States would only consider the employment of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States, its allies, and partners" but stated that nuclear weapons contribute to "deterrence of nuclear and non-nuclear attack; assurance of allies and partners; achievement of U.S. objectives if deterrence fails; and the capacity to hedge against an uncertain future. Dav-enport for the Arms Control Association in 2018[4] furthers: "The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review report declared that there are four missions for the U.S. nuclear arsenal: deter-rence of nuclear and non-nuclear attacks, assurance of allies and partners, achievement of U.S. objectives if deterrence fails, and capacity to hedge against an uncertain future. The document reiterated that the United States does not maintain a nuclear "no first-use

[4]https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/declaratorypolicies

policy" on the grounds that U.S. response options must remain flexible to deter nuclear and non-nuclear attacks. "Non-nuclear capabilities," according to the report, "can com-plement but not replace U.S. nuclear capabilities" for the purpose of deterrence. In the event that deterrence were to fail, the report also declared that Washington could use nuclear weapons to end a conflict on the "best achievable terms for the United States." The NPR dictates that the use of nuclear weapons will only be considered under "ex-treme circumstances" to defend the "vital interests" of the United States and its allies. It defines "extreme circumstances," which the 2010 NPR did not, to include "significant non-nuclear strategic attacks" against "U.S., allied or partner civilian population or in-frastructure, and attacks on U.S. or allied nuclear forces, their command and control, or warning and attack assessment capabilities." The United States issued assurances not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon-state NPT members in 1978, 1995 and 2010 except in the case of "an invasion or any other attack on the United States, its territories, its armed forces or other troops, its allies, or on a State toward which it has a security commitment, carried out or sustained by such a non-nuclear-weapon State in association or alliance with a nuclear- weapon State." In 1997 the United States is-sued a classified presidential decision directive (PDD) reaffirming these pledges. The 2018 NPR repeated existing U.S. negative security assurances by stating that Washing-ton "will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obliga-tions." However, the report qualified that the United States reserves the right to amend its negative assurance if warranted by "the evolution and proliferation of non-nuclear strategic attack technologies." At the February 2 press briefing following the report's release, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy John Rood clarified that this may include cyber capabilities."

Another critical piece of background is understanding the policies of other countries, to understand how a shift from the United States would be perceived.

Davenport[5] writes:

> "Today, most nuclear-armed states, including the United States, reserve the option to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict. Only two nuclear-armed states (China and India) have declared no-first-use policies, by which they commit themselves to use nuclear weapons only in response to a nuclear attack.

[5] https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/declaratorypolicies

> All five of the nuclear-weapon states recognized in the nuclear Nonprolif-eration Treaty (NPT) (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) have issued a set of "negative" nuclear security assurances, which were recognized by the UN Security Council in Resolution 984 (1995). These pledges, however, are non-binding and some nuclear-weapon states reserve the right to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states under certain circumstances."

And the final thing to consider that's really important for uniqueness and the kinds of impact scenarios you can go for is the question of whether or not we live in a world where nukes are used, and if not what the perceptual consequences (if any) would arise from a change in the nuclear policy.

Union of Concerned Scientists in 2020[6] write:

> "Under current policy, the United States will not use nuclear weapons against the vast majority of the world's countries in any circumstances. Longstanding US policy, re-affirmed in the Trump administration's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), says that the United States "will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty] and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations"; this promise covers more than 180 countries (OSD 2018). This policy is known as a "negative security assurance." However, China, Russia, and North Korea do not fall under the US negative security assurance. China and Russia are nuclear weapon states under the NPT, and North Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003 and conducted its first nuclear test in 2006. This means that they could be targets for US nuclear weapons, including the United States launching weapons at them first"

As with all foreign aid topics make sure that you're articulating a well warranted and em-pirically true incentive structure for conflict. Asserting that a country has been 'vaguely' aggressive and that this is an incentive structure isn't productive, educational, realistic, or successful debating.

[6]https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/no-first-use-explained

3.2 Pro Arguments

There are a couple of different ways that US policy would change perceptual risk of conflict.

The first is stopping arms races. Holdren for Taylor and Francis in 2019[7] writes,

> "When the United States deploys nuclear weapons of types and in postures intended to make first-use credible, it not only incentivizes non-nuclear-armed potential adversaries to get their own nuclear weapons; it also incentivizes this country's nuclear-armed potential foes to upgrade their nuclear forces to deny the United States any first-use advantage (or to gain such an advantage for themselves). As the Cold War demonstrated, this syndrome drives a potentially endless cycle of action and reaction, compounded by the worst-case assessment on both sides. This arms racing is not only endlessly costly; it can actually increase the danger that a crisis will escalate to nuclear war when one side or the other perceives it would be better off going first."

This argument is reliant on the understanding that other countries wouldn't just advance their militaires anyways, or especially, if they see an opportunity where the United States is stepping down. It's also reliant on the understanding that there are many states left which haven't nuclearized, or wouldn't nuclearize in response to an escalation in conventional or cyber warfare.

The second is by setting a global precedent.

Holdren for Taylor and Francis in 2019[8] furthers,

> "Declaring a policy and posture of no first use of nuclear weapons offers the most conspicuous opportunity not yet taken for the United States to de-value the currency of nuclear weapons in world affairs. Importantly, this step could be accomplished by a US president on his or her own authority, without need for authorization or agreement by the Congress.
>
> Doing so would bring multiple benefits. Notably, it would immediately raise the global credibility of the US stance against nuclear proliferation.

[7] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1701277
[8] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1701277

> It would reduce the incentives of potential adversaries that don't have nu-clear weapons to acquire them. And it would reduce the risks of nuclear use through accident or miscalculation."

This argument relies on the understanding that the United States has credible global hegemony, and the ability to influence international military norms, which is not a granted idea by any means, especially as Trump continues to pull out of international agreements and disregard international norms.

The third is by stopping the US from initiating something erratically.

The argument here is that Trump or future presidents could be tempted to escalate and create nuclear threats. This threshold has been severely lowered during this adminis-tration.

The Union of Concerned Scientists in 2020[9] writes:

> "The Trump NPR broadens the definition of"extreme circumstances," say-ing these "could include significant non-nuclear attacks. Significant non-nuclear attacks include, but are not limited to, attacks on the U.S., allies, or partner civilian population or infrastructure, and attacks on U.S. or allied nu-clear forces, their command and control, or warning and attack assessment." This could potentially include cyber attacks as a valid reason for nuclear use under US policy."

Tierney of the Atlantic in 2016[10] responds to this idea however, writing "Viewed through a strategic — and perhaps more cynical — lens, the no-first-use doctrine also has a huge credibility problem. For the U.S. pledge to truly matter, a president who otherwise favors a nuclear first strike would have to decide not to press the button because of this policy. But in an extreme national crisis — one involving, say, North Korean nuclear missiles — a president is unlikely to feel bound by America's former assurance. After all, if a country is willing to use nuclear weapons, it's also willing to break a promise….
When provoked, we don't seem to consider the use of nuclear weapons a taboo, and our commitment to the immunity of civilians from deliberate attack in wartime, even with vast casualties, is shallow. Today, as in 1945, the U.S. public is unlikely to hold back a president who might consider using nuclear weapons in the crucible of war.

[9]https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/no-first-use-explained
[10]https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/09/nuclear-obama-north-korea-pakistan/499676/

In other words, the American public might well demand, rather than oppose or simply tolerate, a nuclear response to a catastrophic non-nuclear attack — no-first-use pledge or not."

From any of the above three links you can access most hotspots escalating (other topic analyses dive more into the specific places where conflict is likely). If you don't want to run nuclear war as an impact you can do conventionsl scenarios as well.

Meyerle in 2014 from the CNA writes that: "Because nuclear weapons [deter larger pow-ers from taking retaliatory action] appear to take major war and regime change off the table,they promise greater space for smaller powers to conduct proxy warfare, violent provocations, and even limited military operations at lower levels of escalation...nuclear powers have a greater tendency to escalate during international crises and to explore a wider range of coercive tactics short of war. New nuclear powers will seek to leverage their nuclear deterrent to enable aggressive action."

Allison 2018 from Kent State University furthers that "In fact, when either or both states in a dyad possess nuclear weapons, there is a 54% increase in the likelihood that they will engage in proxy war."

A critical understanding within this is that, as Doyle of RealClearDefense writes in 2019[11], there is a lack of evidence that the threat of nuclear escalation can deter conven-tional war, "There is no evidence to support this belief. For at least the 25 years since the end of the Cold War Washington's assertion of its option to use nuclear weapons first has had little or no effect on the nearly constant outbreak of crises, provocations, terrorist acts and regional wars that have threatened our security interests and those of our allies. For example, nuclear threats did nothing to deter 9/11, the rise of ISIS or Russia's use of military force in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. Nuclear weapons are good for one purpose only, and that is to deter nuclear attack. A U.S. NFU pledge would acknowledge this fact by asserting that the U.S. would only use them after we or our allies had been attacked with nuclear weapons."

3.3 Con Arguments

The nuclear umbrella is an understanding that if our allies are being threatened in a nuclear setting, the United States would strike first in order to protect them. The impo-sition of a no first use policy calls into question whether or not we'd be likely to continue

[11]https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2016/07/13/nuclear_no-first-use_nfu_is_right_for_america_109556.html

this, as it raises the threshold significantly to use a nuclear weapon. That's why the re-sponse to discussion of this policy many allies who rely on the United States nuclear umbrella have indicated that a shift to a no first use policy would cause them to nucle-arize,

Harvey 2019 for War on the Rocks writes:

> "Many countries, including those that share a border with an adversary that presents a threat to their very existence, see no-first-use as a weakening, symbolic or otherwise, of U.S. extended deterrence. In response to Chinese provocations in the western Pacific and North Korea's nuclear tests and mis-sile launches, Japan regularly seeks, both in official consultations and on-going military cooperation, assurances that America will continue to fulfill its security commitments to protect the island nation. Some in South Korea have already pressed to explore an increased U.S. nuclear presence in their country to further deter regional threats. Loss of confidence in U.S. security commitments could cause some allies to seek accommodation with regional adversaries in ways that run counter to U.S. interests.
>
> Moreover, both South Korea and Japan, similar to many NATO allies, have latent nuclear weapons capabilities characteristic of advanced industrial economies with commercial nuclear power. Any perceived wavering of U.S. security commitments could cause allies to develop and field their own nuclear weapons.
>
> Further, America's allies have made their feelings about America adopting a no-first-use policy known. U.S. officials consulted America's allies extensively in the lead up to the 2010 and 2018 nuclear posture reviews. This dialogue has been rich and productive and, in some ways, surprising in its candor. For example, in 2009, Japanese officials briefed the Perry-Schlesinger Commission, established by Congress to seek a bipartisan approach to the U.S. nuclear posture, on specific features and capabilities of the U.S. nuclear deterrent that Japan viewed as critical to its security. In related dialogue, many foreign counterparts to U.S. officials, including those of Japan, have urged the United States not to adopt a no-first-use policy."

This argument is obviously reliant on the understanding that other countries still believe that the United States would cover them in the event of an attack, which given the faith

crisis in Donald Trump's military strategy, isn't a given.

Harvey for War on the Rocks in 2019[12] writes

> "Some argue that adopting such a policy would set an example and cause nuclear adversaries to follow America's lead. If promises were kept, this would allow the U.S. conventional juggernaut to win wars absent the threat of nuclear use. But this outcome is unlikely. Indeed, several nuclear adver-saries have acquired, or are currently seeking, nuclear weapons precisely to offset superior U.S. conventional capabilities."

Holdren for Taylor and Francis in 2019[13] calls this argument into question as well, writ-ing:

> "The argument that Germany, Japan, and South Korea would necessarily resist and resent a US shift to a no-first-use policy and posture – and indeed might be propelled into acquiring their own nuclear deterrent – is question-able.
>
> First of all, nobody is proposing that the US nuclear umbrella deterring nu-clear threats or attacks against US allies would be withdrawn under no first use. To misunderstand this reality is to conflate the two forms of extension in the term "extended deterrence": extension of the nuclear umbrella to pro-tect allies, as opposed to extension to cover nonnuclear threats. It's the latter form of extended deterrence, extension to non-nuclear threats, that would be renounced under no first use. The United States should be crystal clear in reassuring its allies – and reminding potential adversaries – on this point."

Have fun and do good debate!

[12]https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/assessing-the-risks-of-a-nuclear-no-first-use-policy/
[13]https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1701277

4 Topic Analysis by Laurenn Vives

Laurenn Vives is an undergraduate student at Boston University studying political science and philosophy. She competed in public forum debate for 3 years in High School, where earned 5 career bids and ranked nationally. This is her 3rd year coach-ing High School and middle school debaters.

4.1 Introduction

With power comes responsibility. When the first nuclear bomb was tested on July 16, 1945, in Alamogordo, New Mexico, humanity got one step closer to self-destruction. This one bomb alone created a 40,000 foot high mushroom cloud, and ushered our planet into a new era of war. Less than 15 years later, the most destructive nuclear weapon ever detonated was set off by the USSR, more than 3,000 times stronger than the first nuclear weapon developed, creating the largest man-made explosion so far in history. Countries around the globe continue to develop their own nuclear arsenals to compete with other countries and strengthen their military capabilities. Despite the enormous risk, the biggest argument countries have made for the continued creation of nuclear weapons is that of deterrence, and "mutually-assured destruction." Every state knows that if they were to launch one of these weapons, other states would retaliate, and conflicts would quickly escalate into a war with more severe casualties than ever before. The impact a nuclear war would have on the environment would be irreversible damage, and the risk of extinction for the human race is also extremely high. This fear of total self-destruction has deterred states around the entire world from engaging in nuclear war, and was the primary reason the Cold War materialized so differently than wars in the past. However, international relations experts today question how effective MAD is as a deterrent in the modern age. With the rise of leaders like Kim Jong-un in North Korea and Donald Trump in the United States, the threat of irrational action on behalf of our leaders has become much more real. One potential way to keep gov-ernments in check when it comes to nuclear threats is turning MAD theory into policy.

China and India have both declared a no first use (NFU) policy, pledging never to use nuclear weapons unless another country attacked them with nuclear weapons first. Is it time for the United States to join and declare this peaceful pledge of self-defense?

4.2 Pro Arguments

The implications of a declaratory policy are hard to measure, considering countries de-clare things all the time, and there is no concrete way to enforce international laws or promises, since enforcement power lies in the hands of the states. However, there are many reasons why it would be beneficial to the United States and the rest of the world if the United States were to declare an NFU policy.

The first reason is to weaken nuclear arsenals around the world. If the United States adopted a genuine NFU policy, they would have to restructure their operational forces to make them smaller and less threatening to be consistent with an "assured retaliation" posture. This weakening of the US nuclear arsenal, and potentially of other nuclear arse-nals in response, would result in greater peace and less threat of destruction, intentional or not.

> A second theoretical perspective, "liberal institutionalism," emphasizes the role of rules and institutions, both domestic and international, in stabiliz-ing expectations and behavior. According to this theory, **even if no-first-use pledges are unenforceable, they are not necessarily meaningless. To be meaningful, an NFU pledge must be built into domestic institutions, that is, the structure of operational military capabilities.7 A genuine NFU policy would require that nuclear forces be consistent with an "assured retaliation" posture that eschews counterforce objectives — the ability to destroy an adversary's nuclear arsenal before it is launched.**
>
> **This perspective thus emphasizes the value of an NFU pledge in structur-ing operational forces to make them smaller and less threatening.** When Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, soon after entering office in 1961, sent a directive to the Joint Chiefs of Staff about strategic force requirements, he stated that the first assumption shaping requirements was that "we will not strike first with such weapons."8 McNamara's directive was undoubt-edly partly an effort to stem Air Force demands for a first-strike capabil-ity and the vast procurement of weaponry it would require. This direc-

> tive, in effect, repudiated the extended deterrent doctrine that the United States would respond to a Soviet conventional attack in Europe with nuclear weapons.[1]

Another reason the US should adopt an NFU policy is because it is already a norm. Most countries know the consequences of a first strike, which is why no country has struck first thus far. Making it an official norm would provide extra security that all countries fully understand mutually-assured destruction.

> At the international level, liberal institutionalists emphasize the value of rules and institutions to prevent nuclear war. They argue that **NFU has be-come a de facto norm anyway and therefore should be declared publicly and multilaterally.** As Morton Halperin, who later became deputy assistant secretary of defense for arms control, wrote as early as 1961, **"There now exists a powerful informal rule against the use of nuclear weapons," and it would be advantageous to the United States to transform this tacit understanding into a formal agreement.9 Indeed, the "negative security assurances" first issued by the United States and the other P5 countries in 1978 and renewed periodically — commitments to non-nuclear states that are members of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them — already constitute a partial NFU regime.** Liberal institutionalists would also point out that constantly touting the value of a nuclear threat for security sends signals that nuclear weapons are useful and undermines nonproliferation goals.[2]

As the Pro, it is in your best interest to prioritize peace in every way. An NFU policy would reserve nukes for defensive operations only, when peace is disturbed. While the Con might try and argue that the threat of using nukes first is a good deterrent against US enemies, the threat of retaliation has a similar deterrent effect but also leads to decreased tensions overall. The US is already the strongest military power in the world, and does not need to threaten first use of nuclear weapons to prove their strength and power.

While the threat of intentional nuclear war is terrifying, what is even more probable is an accidental nuclear launch. Mutually assured destruction does not apply to accidental

[1]Tannenwald, Nina. August 2019. Texas National Security Review. "It's Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy"https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/

[2]Tannenwald, Nina. August 2019. Texas National Security Review. "It's Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy"https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/

launches, making it impossible to prevent. Many miscalculated missile launches have already occurred throughout history, and with the scale and power of nukes, these ac-cidents can start wars and destroy. If the US adopted an NFU, accidental nuclear war would become less probable.

> For the United States and its allies, NFU has several military and political benefits. **First, it would enhance crisis stability. A credible NFU policy would help decrease an opponent's trepidations about a U.S. first strike, thereby reducing the possibility that nuclear weapons are used acciden-tally, inadvertently, or deliberately in a severe crisis.**
>
> Second, **NFU would give the United States a consistent and inherently credible nuclear policy.** Although some states might question U.S. political resolve to use nuclear weapons first, a**dversaries cannot dismiss the possi-bility of a nuclear response after U.S. interests have been attacked with nuclear weapons. The threat to use nuclear weapons in response to a nu-clear attack is highly credible, and it is a threat that U.S. political leaders should want to execute if deterrence fails.**
>
> Third, NFU could help assuage some of the recent criticisms of U.S. mis-sile defense and nuclear stockpile maintenance initiatives. A credible NFU policy could help alleviate concerns that missile defenses might be used to complement offensive operations, such as providing a "safety net" for any remaining weapons launched in retaliation after a U.S. first strike against a state's nuclear capabilities. **An NFU policy might also score political points with domestic opposition to efforts by the United States to update its ag-ing nuclear stockpile. NFU could help ease domestic and international concerns that efforts to update and enhance the safety and security fea-tures of the U.S. nuclear arsenal might inadvertently signal that the United States views nuclear weapons as militarily useful.**[3]

One of the biggest influences the United States has on other countries is precisely how they should conduct their military efforts. As the largest military in the world, other countries model their military strategy after the US, and with the capabilities of the US in mind. If the US were to adopt an NFU policy, it would lead other countries to do the same, and create a more peaceful world.

[3]Gerson, Michael. February 2011. The Future of U.S. Nuclear Policy: The Case for No First Use. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use.

> **Finally, NFU would provide the United States with important political benefits in its efforts to lead the nonproliferation regime and encourage greater international support for nonproliferation initiatives. Many non-nuclear member states of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) often base their lack of support for U.S.-led multilateral nonproliferation initiatives on the grounds that the United States has not done enough to fulfill its obligation to Article 6 of the NPT, which commits the declared nuclear states to disarmament. Thus, NFU, by symbolizing an important step to-ward realizing Article 6, would help remove a significant roadblock** to greater support for and participation in the NPT regime among nonnuclear NPT member states.[4]

4.3 Con Arguments

An important thing to understand about the present and future of warfare is that it continues to change as new technology develops. Gone are the days of foot soldiers going to war. Cyberwar and biological warfare are two examples of modern warfare that continues to be more prevalent and more dangerous. If the US were to adopt an NFU policy, they would be committing to no nuclear retaliation against any attack ex-cept for a nuclear attack. The US nuclear deterrent against all other types of warfare would disappear, and they would have to use different methods to retaliate and to de-ter. This could lead to faster weapons innovation in cyberwar and biological or chemical war, which makes the world less peaceful and threatens more destruction, intentional or not. Furthermore, as the United States is the actor in this resolution, there is certainly an argument to be made about US interests being the priority. This option for nuclear retaliation against mass chemical warfare, for example, might be warranted in extreme cases. By seriously adopting an NFU, the US would be pledging not to use this nuclear retaliation against any other type of war, which makes the US more vulnerable as a country.

> How so? **Under the existing policy of ambiguity, potential aggressors such as Russia, China, North Korea or Iran must contemplate the reality that if they attack us or our allies, they risk possible US nuclear retaliation.** There is no doubt whatsoever that this risk of possible US nuclear retaliation has

[4]Gerson, Michael. February 2011. The Future of U.S. Nuclear Policy: The Case for No First Use. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use.

> deterred war and the escalation of conflicts. In fact, the percentage of the world population lost to war has fallen dramatically since US nuclear deter-rence was established after World War II.[2] That is an historic accomplish-ment. **The fatal flaw of the warm and progressive-sounding NFU proposal is that it tells would-be aggressors that they do not have to fear US nuclear retaliation even if they attack us or our allies with advanced conventional, chemical, and/or biological weapons. They would risk US nuclear retalia-tion only if they attack with nuclear weapons. As long as they use non-nuclear forces, a US NFU policy would provide aggressors with a free pass to avoid the risk now posed by the US nuclear deterrent.**Promising potential aggressors that they can use modern conventional, chemical or bi-ological weapons against us or our allies without fear of possible US nuclear retaliation will encourage some to perceive greater license to do precisely that. Numerous historical case studies demonstrate without a doubt that some aggressors look for such openings to undertake their military moves to overturn a status quo they deem intolerable. They do not need to see a risk-free path to pursue aggression, only a path that allows them some vision of success, however improbable that vision may seem to others. **The great advantage of current US nuclear policy is that the US nuclear deterrent helps to shut down the possibility that would-be aggressors contemplate such paths.**[5]

The reality is that all types of warfare disturb peace and cost lives. If the US adopted an NFU, there would be a shift from nuclear weapon innovation to other types of war inno-vation. When it comes to nuclear war, most people and states understand the destruc-tive consequences, and do not need to innovate anything stronger than what's already been created. The shift to different types of warfare, however, would lead to more and more innovative ways of destruction, making violence and war more creative than ever before. If the US maintained their nuclear policy as is, this innovation would at best barely even begin, or be at a far slower pace, at worst.

[5]Payne, Keith. July 2016.

https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2016/07/06/once_again_why_a_no-first-use_policy_is_a_bad_very_bad_idea_109520.html

4.4 Conclusion

Overall, this topic is going to involve a lot of very interesting research and balanced debates. On the pro side, the ideal of peaceful coexistence will be the theme. On the con side, the security of the nation will be the priority, and military strategy will be important. Living on Earth during the Atomic era or the Nuclear age is terrifying - just one press of a button from some incompetent leader and everything dies. This topic area will teach us a lot about the value of peace, the meaning of war, and the dark side of human nature.

5 Pro Evidence

5.1 IR Theory

5.1.1 Constructivism

Constructivism supports NFU to emphasize norms of nuclear restraint.

Tannenwald 19

Nina Tannenwald (director of the International Relations Program at Brown Univer-sity's Watson Institute for International Studies and a senior lecturer in political sci-ence). "It's Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy," Texas National Security Re-view, Vol 2, Iss 3, August 01, 2019. https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/

Finally, constructivists, who focus on the role of norms, identity, and discourse, empha-size that a declared NFU policy is an important way to strengthen norms of nuclear restraint and the nearly 74-year tradition of non-use. Strong statements from leaders about the need to avoid using nuclear weapons can help reduce tensions, just as irre-sponsible tweets can increase them. In the constructivist view, an NFU policy is also a diplomatic tool that can be used to signal that a state is a responsible nuclear power. As Modi recently put it, "India is a very responsible state. We are the only country to have a declared NFU [sic]. It's not because of world pressure, but because of our own ethos. We will not move away from this, whichever government comes to power."11 Indeed, India's NFU pledge has proved useful for portraying Pakistan as a relatively irrespon-sible custodian of its nuclear arsenal. Likewise, Indian leaders use their NFU pledge as a way to resist pressures to sign any treaties that would restrict India's nuclear arsenal.

5.1.2 Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal institutionalism supports NFU even if such a pledge is meaningless.

Tannenwald 19

Nina Tannenwald (director of the International Relations Program at Brown Univer-sity's Watson Institute for International Studies and a senior lecturer in political sci-ence). "It's Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy," Texas National Security Re-view, Vol 2, Iss 3, August 01, 2019. https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/

A second theoretical perspective, "liberal institutionalism," emphasizes the role of rules and institutions, both domestic and international, in stabilizing expectations and behav-ior. According to this theory, even if no-first-use pledges are unenforceable, they are not necessarily meaningless. To be meaningful, an NFU pledge must be built into domestic institutions, that is, the structure of operational military capabilities.7 A genuine NFU policy would require that nuclear forces be consistent with an "assured retaliation" pos-ture that eschews counterforce objectives — the ability to destroy an adversary's nuclear arsenal before it is launched.

This perspective thus emphasizes the value of an NFU pledge in structuring operational forces to make them smaller and less threatening. When Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, soon after entering office in 1961, sent a directive to the Joint Chiefs of Staff about strategic force requirements, he stated that the first assumption shaping require-ments was that "we will not strike first with such weapons."8 McNamara's directive was undoubtedly partly an effort to stem Air Force demands for a first-strike capability and the vast procurement of weaponry it would require. This directive, in effect, repu-diated the extended deterrent doctrine that the United States would respond to a Soviet conventional attack in Europe with nuclear weapons.

At the international level, liberal institutionalists emphasize the value of rules and insti-tutions to prevent nuclear war. They argue that NFU has become a de facto norm any-way and therefore should be declared publicly and multilaterally. As Morton Halperin, who later became deputy assistant secretary of defense for arms control, wrote as early as 1961, "There now exists a powerful informal rule against the use of nuclear weapons," and it would be advantageous to the United States to transform this tacit understanding into a formal agreement.9 Indeed, the "negative security assurances" first issued by the United States and the other P5 countries in 1978 and renewed periodically — commit-

ments to non-nuclear states that are members of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them — already constitute a par-tial NFU regime. Liberal institutionalists would also point out that constantly touting the value of a nuclear threat for security sends signals that nuclear weapons are useful and undermines nonproliferation goals.10

5.2 Nuclear War

5.2.1 Crisis Stability

First use escalates crises, making them dangerous and unstable.

Gerson 11

Michael S. Gerson (research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) in Alexandria, Virginia, where his research focuses on nuclear and conven-tional deterrence, nuclear strategy, and arms control). "The Future of U.S. Nu-clear Policy: The Case for No First Use." International Security, February 2011. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use

The Dangers of Threatening First Use

If a nuclear-armed opponent believes that the United States might use nuclear weapons first in a disarming strike, a severe crisis could be especially dangerous and unstable. A crisis is "stable" when neither side has an overriding incentive to use nuclear weapons first, and both sides are aware of this situation. Conversely, a crisis is "unstable" when one or both states have an overriding incentive to strike first.

Given U.S. quantitative and qualitative advantages in nuclear forces, and given that current and potential nuclear-armed adversaries are likely to have nuclear arsenals with varying degrees of size and survivability, in a future crisis an adversary may fear that the United States could attempt a disarming nuclear first strike. Even if the United States has no intention of striking first, the mere possibility of such a strike left open by a policy of not ruling one out could cause suboptimal decisionmaking in the heat of an intense crisis and increase the chances that nuclear weapons are used.

The U.S. option to use nuclear weapons first could generate crisis instability in three ways. First, in a severe crisis, intense apprehensions about a U.S. first strike could prompt an opponent to take measures to increase the survivability of its forces and help ensure nuclear retaliation, such as adopting a launch-on-warning posture, rapidly dis-persing forces, raising alert levels and mating warheads to missiles, or pre-delegating launch authority to field commanders. These actions increase the possibility of an acci-dental launch or other miscalculations that could lead to unauthorized use.

Second, in the midst of an intense crisis, trepidations about a U.S. first strike could create incentives for signaling and brinksmanship that increase the chances of miscommuni-

cation and nuclear escalation. For example, concerns about a U.S. attack could prompt an adversary to take measures to decrease the vulnerability of its forces, such as mating warheads to delivery vehicles, fueling missiles, or dispersing forces. While the oppo-nent might intend these measures to deter a U.S. counterforce strike by increasing the survivability of its forces, U.S. political and military leaders might misperceive these actions as a sign of the opponent's impending nuclear attack and decide to preempt.

Third, a state could be enticed to preempt out of fear that if it does not launch first, it will not have a second chance. A "use-it-or-lose-it" mentality might give an opponent a strong incentive to preempt. In this context, the adversary's motivation to use nuclear weapons first comes not from the possibility of gaining some advantage, but rather from the belief that waiting and receiving what it believes to be a likely U.S. first strike would only lead to an even worse outcome.

5.2.2 Miscalculation

Clear US NFU reduces the risk of Russian or Chinese miscalc provoking nuclear war.

Tannenwald 19

Nina Tannenwald (director of the International Relations Program at Brown Univer-sity's Watson Institute for International Studies and a senior lecturer in political sci-ence). "It's Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy," Texas National Security Re-view, Vol 2, Iss 3, August 01, 2019. https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/

The Benefits of a No-First-Use Policy

As Kingston Reif and Daryl Kimball of the Arms Control Association have argued, "a clear U.S. no-first-use policy would reduce the risk of Russian or Chinese nuclear mis-calculation during a crisis by alleviating concerns about a devastating U.S. nuclear first-strike."24 This would mean that the United States would rely on nuclear weapons only to deter nuclear attacks. Adopting this approach would involve more than "cheap talk," for it would require meaningful doctrinal and operational changes.25 Specifi-cally, it would allow the United States to adopt a less threatening nuclear posture. It would eliminate first-strike postures, preemptive capabilities, and other types of desta-bilizing warfighting strategies. It would emphasize restraint in targeting, launch-on-warning, alert levels of deployed systems, procurement, and modernization plans. In other words, it would help shape the physical qualities of nuclear forces in a way that renders them unsuitable for missions other than deterrence of nuclear attacks.26

Implementing these steps would significantly reduce the risk of accidental, unautho-rized, mistaken, or preemptive use. The removal of threats of a nuclear first strike would also strengthen strategic and crisis stability.27 Of perhaps equal importance, adopting an NFU policy would help address humanitarian concerns and reduce the salience of nuclear weapons.28 Likewise, it would "be more consistent with the long-term goal of global nuclear disarmament and would better contribute to US nuclear non-proliferation objectives."29

5.2.3 Russia

US first-use policies risk catastrophic nuclear war with Russia

Kimball 18

Daryl G. Kimball (Executive Director, Arms Control Association). "The Case for a U.S. No-First-Use Policy." *Arms Control Association*, October 2018. https://www.armscontrol .org/act/2018-10/focus/case-us-first-use-policy

But the potential for a catastrophic nuclear war remains. The core elements of Cold War-era U.S. nuclear strategy are largely the same, including the option to use nuclear weapons first and the maintenance of prompt-launch policies that still give the president unchecked authority to order the use of nuclear weapons.

Today, the United States and Russia deploy massive strategic nuclear arsenals consist-ing of up to 1,550 warheads on each side, as allowed under the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. These numbers greatly exceed what it would take to decimate the other side and are far larger than required to deter a nuclear attack.

Worse still, each side maintains the capability to fire a significant portion of its land-and sea-based missiles promptly and retains plans to launch these forces, particularly land-based missiles, under attack to guard against a "disarming" first strike. U.S. and Russian leaders also still reserve the option to use nuclear weapons first.

As a result, President Donald Trump, whom Defense Secretary Jim Mattis reportedly described as having the intellect of a "fifth- or sixth-grader," has the authority to order the launch of some 800 nuclear warheads within about 15 minutes, with hundreds more weapons remaining in reserve. No other military or civilian official must approve the order. Congress currently has no say in the matter.

Continuing to vest such destructive power in the hands of one person is undemocratic, irresponsible, unnecessary and increasingly untenable. Cavalier and reckless state-ments from Trump about nuclear weapons use only underscore the folly of vesting such unchecked authority in one person.

Making matters worse, the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review expands the range of contingencies and options for potential nuclear use and proposes the de-velopment of "more-usable" low-yield nuclear weapons in order to give the president the flexibility to respond quickly in a crisis, including by using nuclear weapons first in response to a non-nuclear attack.

5.2.4 Korea

Trump's unpredictability on the Korean Peninsula makes US NFU risk nuclear war.

Fetter and Wolfsthal 18

Steve Fetter and Jon Wolfsthal (Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, University of Maryland School of Public Policy, and former Special Assistant to the President of the United States for National Security Affairs and senior director at the National Security Council for arms control and nonproliferation, respectively). "No First Use and Credible Deterrence." Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament, Vol 1, Issue 1, 2018. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25751654.2018.1454257

One need look no further than today's headlines to see how the lack of a no first use policy has increased the prospects for nuclear conflict. As with so many other things, President Donald Trump's rejection of accepted norms and codes of conduct is likely to significantly undermine America's historical position as a nonproliferation champion and already increasing the risks that nuclear weapons will be used. The situation on the Korean peninsula in particular risks accidental or miscalculated first-use of nuclear weapons by North Korea and the United States, due to a lack of restraint and overre-liance on nuclear ambiguity. As a candidate Donald Trump refused to rule out the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States (Sanger, 2016) and implied his willingness to initiate nuclear weapons' use against North Korea (Fifield and Wagner, 2017). Rus-sia's stated willingness to initiate nuclear use in Europe (Tucker, 2017), combined with their military adventurism, remains a serious concern. The poor relations between the United States and Russia and the disparity in conventional and nuclear forces and doc-trine fuel these dangers.

This contrasts with the consideration, reported in 2016 by the New York Times (Sanger and Broad, 2016) and the Washington Post (Rogin, 2016a) that President Obama was considering ruling out the first-use of nuclear weapons for the United States. The issue of possible first use contingencies was deeply debated in the process leading up to the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). In the end, the President determined that the ca-pabilities of the United States were not yet to a point where nonnuclear options were sufficient for the United States to state that the sole purpose of US nuclear weapons was to deter or respond to nuclear attacks against the United States or its allies. Instead, the NPR made clear that the United States would seek to create the conditions where a sole-purpose statement could be adopted, because it would benefit American security

and the pursuit of nuclear reductions and stability. His visit to Hiroshima in May 2016 indicated his openness to the idea when he said: "among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them."1

Former defense officials with full knowledge of America's conventional and nuclear ca-pabilities and the threats America faces, including former Defense Secretary William Perry2 and former Strategic Command commander and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. James Cartwright (Cartwright and Blair, 2016), have spoken in fa-vor of no first use. According to General Cartwright, "nuclear weapons today no longer serve any purpose beyond deterring the first use of such weapons by our adversaries" (Cartwright and Blair, 2016).

According to the Times and Post reports, the main reason President Obama did not adopt a policy of no first use was concern about the reaction of allies – particularly Japan. In fact, the Washington Post reported that Prime Minister Abe personally conveyed his opposition to NFU, because he believed it could increase the likelihood of conventional conflict with North Korea or China (Rogin, 2016b). Reports indicated, however, that the Japanese concern stemmed from a belief that adopting no first use would weaken the perceived American commitment to Japan's defense. While untrue and not even directly related, this perception made rapid adoption of a no-first-use statement impos-sible. President Obama left office without adopting a policy of NFU or making any additional major changes to US nuclear policy.

The 2018 NPR, completed by the Trump Administration, made major changes to US declaratory nuclear policy, including steps that would increase the circumstances in which the United States would consider using nuclear weapons first (US Department of Defense, 2018). The new NPR reserves the right to use nuclear weapons first not only against nuclear weapon states in response to nonnuclear strategic attacks, but would also reserve the right to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear weapon states. Some-what ironically, the new NPR also notes that potential adversaries must

"not miscalculate regarding the consequences of nuclear first use, either regionally or against the United States itself. They must understand that there are no possible benefits from…limited nuclear escalation. Correcting any such misperceptions is now critical to maintaining strategic stability in Europe and Asia"

(US Department of Defense, 2018, VII). It is unclear why that same logic does not apply to first use by the United States. Trump, who has called for strengthening and expand-

ing US nuclear capability3 and seems unable or unwilling to connect how America's nuclear doctrine can influence its ability to achieve nonproliferation and disarmament outcomes, may be willing to take a far more expansive view of when he might use nu-clear weapons than his predecessor.

Regardless of how President Trump will implement the nuclear strategy based on this new NPR, there are certain facts that should inform his decision, and will clearly affect the analysis of allies and experts on whatever position the United States adopts. Chief among these is the reality that, as the world's sole conventional military superpower, the United States does not need nuclear weapons to deter or respond to any nonnu-clear threats to itself or its allies. The debate is not whether the United States can win a war; it is to what extent does US nuclear posture deter conflict and convince poten-tial adversaries not to initiate conflict, and to what extent US nuclear capabilities be used to respond to nonnuclear threats. Some believe nuclear weapons are useful and even essential to deter or respond to nonnuclear aggression (Payne, 2016; Sestanovich, 2016). Others believe it is dangerous and undermines deterrence and crisis stability.4 A key challenge for those who support no first use is working with and helping allies understand in concrete terms that such a step would enhance the credibility of US com-mitments to their security.

The behavior of President Trump demonstrates that words and actions can do more to affect alliance confidence and commitments than any change to US nuclear policy. Trump's disruptive statements and policies should not deflect those who seek a more stable international order that relies less, not more, on nuclear weapons threats from the task of building that more stable order. The United States, Japan, and other US allies must continue to work to enhance their security and the credibility of their alliance while reinforcing the norm against the nonuse of nuclear weapons that will enhance stability and reduce the risks of escalation.

A dialogue is needed between the United States and Japan on the role that nuclear weapons should play in our mutual defense – and in particular the question of whether and under what circumstances the United States should use or threaten to use nuclear weapons first in the defense of Japan, and under what conditions Japan would welcome the adoption of such a policy of no-first-use by United States.

US nuclear posture under President Trump is also likely to widen a growing schism in the global nonproliferation and disarmament process. The Nuclear Weapons Ban Con-vention, which was completed in 2017 without participation by any nuclear weapon state, may enter into force within the next few years. The Convention would outlaw

possession of nuclear weapons and the use or threat of use such weapons by its signato-ries. There is a global campaign working to push US allies covered by nuclear extended deterrence to sign the treaty, and thereby reduce America's requirement for maintaining some of its nuclear capabilities.

The shift of US nuclear policy under President Trump to include greater reliance on nuclear weapons and more circumstances when nuclear weapons might be used will add energy and enthusiasm for supporters of the nuclear weapons ban convention. But if the United States does not need to rely on nuclear weapons in most circumstances and can reduce the role of nuclear weapons in maintaining the security of itself and its allies, doing so would be an important step toward reinforcing extended deterrent rela-tionships because it would reduce the momentum of nuclear weapons ban convention movement. If the goal of US nuclear policy is, in part, to provide the greater assurances of our commitment to the security of Japan and other US allies, we must continue to bal-ance our military requirements for defense and deterrence with our broader support for nonproliferation and disarmament. Over-reliance on the former and disregard for the latter can lead to domestic political decisions in countries such as Japan and in North At-lantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states to join the ban, directly weakening America's ability to protect and defend its system.

5.2.5 AT: No Spillover

That's not the point of NFU

ACC 20

ACC (national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of nu-clear arms control). "No First Use: Myths vs. Realities." Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, 2020. https://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/no-first-use/no-first-use-myths-vs-realities/

Myth: A U.S. NFU policy will not change policy in other nuclear weapon states.

Reality: The goal of an NFU policy is not to influence other nuclear weapons states. The goal of an NFU policy is to make it clear when and how the United States would consider using nuclear weapons. This clarity will help reduce the risk of miscalculation or inadvertent escalation in a crisis with a nuclear-armed adversary.

Adopting an NFU policy would be welcomed by non-nuclear weapon states, including U.S. allies, that are increasingly frustrated that nuclear weapon states have not made sig-nificant progress on their disarmament obligations as outlined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

5.3 Perception

5.3.1 US Perception

NFU assuages criticisms of US nuclear policy and provides credibility to the nonproliferation regime.

Gerson 11

Michael S. Gerson (research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) in Alexandria, Virginia, where his research focuses on nuclear and conven-tional deterrence, nuclear strategy, and arms control). "The Future of U.S. Nu-clear Policy: The Case for No First Use." International Security, February 2011. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use

Third, NFU could help assuage some of the recent criticisms of U.S. missile defense and nuclear stockpile maintenance initiatives. A credible NFU policy could help alleviate concerns that missile defenses might be used to complement offensive operations, such as providing a "safety net" for any remaining weapons launched in retaliation after a U.S. first strike against a state's nuclear capabilities. An NFU policy might also score political points with domestic opposition to efforts by the United States to update its aging nuclear stockpile. NFU could help ease domestic and international concerns that efforts to update and enhance the safety and security features of the U.S. nuclear arsenal might inadvertently signal that the United States views nuclear weapons as militarily useful.

Finally, NFU would provide the United States with important political benefits in its efforts to lead the nonproliferation regime and encourage greater international support for nonproliferation initiatives. Many nonnuclear member states of the Nonprolifera-tion Treaty (NPT) often base their lack of support for U.S.-led multilateral nonprolifer-ation initiatives on the grounds that the United States has not done enough to fulfill its obligation to Article 6 of the NPT, which commits the declared nuclear states to disarma-ment. Thus, NFU, by symbolizing an important step toward realizing Article 6, would help remove a significant roadblock to greater support for and participation in the NPT regime among nonnuclear NPT member states.

5.4 Solvency

5.4.1 AT: Not Credible

NFU is credible because it would be accompanied by changes in posture.

Holdren 20

John P. Holdren (American scientist who served as the senior advisor to President Barack Obama on science and technology issues through his roles as Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Co-Chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology). "The overwhelming case for no first use." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 13 Jan 2020. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1701277

Against the argument that, outside the peace movement and countries that don't matter, no one would give the United States any credit for a no-first-use declaration

This argument ignores the transformation a US no first-use declaration, backed up by changes in posture, would bring to the moral standing of the United States in the global discussion about both nonproliferation and reducing the role of nuclear weapons in the policies of countries that have them. It also ignores the statements in favor of the United States taking a no-first-use position that have been made by many experienced statesmen, nuclear-weapon experts, and retired military leaders from countries that do matter.

In fact, it is NFU that isn't credible because the US would never use nukes first already.

Collina 16

Tom Z. Collina (Policy Director at Ploughshares Fund in Washington DC). "America Would Never Be the First to Use Nukes. So Why Say We Might?" The National Interest, July 28, 2016. https://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-would-never-be-the-first-use-nukes-so-why-say-we-17168

President Barack Obama is reportedly considering changing U.S. policy to say that the United States would never be the first nation to use nuclear weapons. Good idea. The United States has nothing to lose from this new policy, and everything to gain.

No sane U.S. leader would ever—ever—initiate the first use of nuclear weapons. So why keep the option open?

Most Americans will be surprised to learn that current U.S. policy allows the first use of nuclear weapons and horrified that we would even consider it. Given our vast ad-vantage in conventional weapons and the devastating consequences of nuclear war for both the United States and its allies, using nuclear weapons first would be a military and diplomatic blunder of historic proportions.

Against a state with nukes, like Russia, U.S. first-use would be suicidal; the attacked state would hit us back with atomic devastation. Imagine Washington looking like Hi-roshima in 1945, only worse. Nukes are truly weapons of last resort, useful only to deter their use by others.

And nuking a state that does not have them, such as Syria or Iran, would cast Wash-ington as a global pariah, an international bully, undermining U.S. leadership on all issues—including terrorism and nonproliferation—for decades to come. It is unthink-able, and utterly unnecessary. Any threat from a nonnuclear state—including chemical and biological weapons—could be countered with diplomacy or conventional force.

Nukes are just different, and rightly so. No other weapons can kill so many, so fast. They need to be put in a class all by themselves. Even Donald Trump said recently that, if elected, "I will do everything within my power never to be in a position where we have to use nuclear [weapons] because that's a whole different ballgame." In March, Trump said, "I'd be the last one to use the nuclear weapon."

It is credible – the US will back it up

ACC 20

ACC (national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of nu-clear arms control). "No First Use: Myths vs. Realities." Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, 2020. https://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/no-first-use/no-first-use-myths-vs-realities/

Myth: U.S. allies and adversaries will not believe a U.S. NFU policy.

Reality: Like any political commitment, the credibility of an NFU policy will rely on the actions the United States takes to back it up. In the long term, the United States can take steps to shift to a "deterrence-only" nuclear force posture. For example, de-alerting the

land-based leg of the triad would work in conjunction with an NFU policy to improve stability in a crisis. Eventually, Washington could reevaluate the necessity of the ICBM force altogether. In the near-term, even if allies and adversaries are skeptical of a U.S. NFU policy at first, the commitment will create an incentive and opportunity for an adversary to communicate directly with the United States to confirm its intentions and reduce the risk of miscalculation in a crisis.

5.4.2 AT: Russia Doesn't Follow

That's fine – US NFU alone is enough to diffuse Russian tensions

Note: sole purpose is essentially NFU; it is the belief that the " 'sole purpose' of U.S. nu-clear weapons should be to deter and—if necessary, retaliate against—a nuclear attack" (author).

Pifer 20

Steven Pifer (William Perry Research Fellow at Stanford's Center for International Se-curity and Cooperation and a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer). "Nuclear Weapons: It's Time for Sole Purpose." Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Septem-ber 15, 2020. https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/nuclear-weapons-it%E2%80%99s-time-sole-purpose

Eliminating the ambiguity by adopting the sole purpose might not provide a huge secu-rity bonus, but it would have a positive security impact. Russia likely would not follow, at least not in the near term. However, the change could help defuse the current situa-tion, in which both Washington and Moscow believe that the other seeks to lower the nuclear threshold and thus is adjusting its own nuclear policy accordingly. It is not in the U.S. interest that the Russians believe America might go nuclear first and develop (or further develop) a posture to beat Washington to the nuclear punch. That fosters conditions that could be very dangerous in a conventional crisis or conflict and make nuclear use more likely.

5.4.3 China – US Solves

NFU preserves Chinese NFU and prevents a nuclear standoff.

Note: sole purpose is essentially NFU; it is the belief that the " 'sole purpose' of U.S. nu-clear weapons should be to deter and—if necessary, retaliate against—a nuclear attack" (author).

Pifer 20

Steven Pifer (William Perry Research Fellow at Stanford's Center for International Se-curity and Cooperation and a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer). "Nuclear Weapons: It's Time for Sole Purpose." Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Septem-ber 15, 2020. https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/nuclear-weapons-it%E2%80%99s-time-sole-purpose

Adopting the sole purpose would send an interesting signal to China. Some analysts question whether Beijing will continue to adhere to a no first use policy, but the Pen-tagon reports that "China almost certainly keeps the majority of its nuclear force on a peacetime status—with separated launchers, missiles, and warheads," a posture consis-tent with that policy. Adoption of the sole purpose could open the path to a strategic security dialogue with Beijing that has eluded Washington for years. It would raise the political costs to China of abandoning its no first use posture. A change in American pol-icy might even help avoid the development of a U.S.-China nuclear standoff somewhat similar to that between Washington and Moscow during the Cold War.

The adoption of a sole-purpose policy would reduce the ability of a U.S. president to use nuclear weapons for saber-rattling. But giving up the option to rattle a saber that the adversary believes Washington would never draw seems to give up little.

5.4.4 Crisis Stability – US Solves

US NFU maintains crisis stability and gives the US an inherently credible nuclear policy.

Gerson 11

Michael S. Gerson (research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) in Alexandria, Virginia, where his research focuses on nuclear and conven-tional deterrence, nuclear strategy, and arms control). "The Future of U.S. Nu-clear Policy: The Case for No First Use." International Security, February 2011. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use

The Benefits of No First Use

For the United States and its allies, NFU has several military and political benefits. First, it would enhance crisis stability. A credible NFU policy would help decrease an oppo-nent's trepidations about a U.S. first strike, thereby reducing the possibility that nuclear weapons are used accidentally, inadvertently, or deliberately in a severe crisis.

Second, NFU would give the United States a consistent and inherently credible nu-clear policy. Although some states might question U.S. political resolve to use nuclear weapons first, adversaries cannot dismiss the possibility of a nuclear response after U.S. interests have been attacked with nuclear weapons. The threat to use nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear attack is highly credible, and it is a threat that U.S. political leaders should want to execute if deterrence fails.

5.4.5 Prolif – US Solves

NFU reassures non-nuclear states they don't need nuclear weapons, checking prolif.

Collina 16

Tom Z. Collina (Policy Director at Ploughshares Fund in Washington DC). "America Would Never Be the First to Use Nukes. So Why Say We Might?" The National Interest, July 28, 2016. https://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-would-never-be-the-first-use-nukes-so-why-say-we-17168

A no-first-use policy would also reassure the world's nonnuclear states that they could continue to protect themselves without nuclear weapons. To prevent states, such as Iran, from building the bomb we must convince them that they can be secure without nukes. A no-first-use policy would strengthen U.S. efforts to stop the spread of the bomb in a major way.

At the same time, U.S. allies should not worry that a no-first-use pledge would under-mine Washington's commitment to come to their defense. Even for states under the U.S. nuclear "umbrella," such as Japan or South Korea, the U.S. first use of nuclear weapons is not needed to keep them safe, and in fact any use of nukes would undermine their security.

5.4.6 Russia – NFU Solves

NFU reassures Russia and reduces the chance of accidental nuclear war.

Collina 16

Tom Z. Collina (Policy Director at Ploughshares Fund in Washington DC). "America Would Never Be the First to Use Nukes. So Why Say We Might?" The National Interest, July 28, 2016. https://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-would-never-be-the-first-use-nukes-so-why-say-we-17168

Keeping the option open, just in case, is no longer worth the risk. The possibility of U.S. first use "exacerbates mutual fears of surprise attack, putting pressure on other nuclear-armed states to keep their arsenals on high-alert and increasing the risk of un-intended nuclear war," ten U.S. senators wrote to President Obama recently, including former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders (D-Vermont) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), who is close to the Clinton campaign.

If Obama takes this wise step, it could reassure Russia that the United States is not secretly planning to attack Moscow without warning. This might allow Russia to ease its finger off the nuclear trigger and reduce the chance of an accidental nuclear war. Given the dilapidated state of its warning system and very short decision times, the possibility of a Russian launch based on a false alarm is a serious risk to U.S. security. During the Cold War, the U.S. had at least three false alarms that could have led to an accidental nuclear war.

5.4.7 US Key

Formal US adoption of NFU creates political space for others to follow suit.

Tannenwald 19

Nina Tannenwald (director of the International Relations Program at Brown Univer-sity's Watson Institute for International Studies and a senior lecturer in political sci-ence). "It's Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy," Texas National Security Re-view, Vol 2, Iss 3, August 01, 2019. https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/

Implementation

The United States ought to unilaterally adopt an NFU policy, and ask other nuclear-armed states to do the same. This would constitute the formal adoption of what is al-ready essentially de facto U.S. policy.33 A U.S. NFU policy would create political space for Russia to follow suit: For Russia to consider NFU, its concerns about U.S. ballistic missile defenses, imbalances in conventional forces, and issues of NATO enlargement would need to be addressed. The United States would also need to tackle the issue of ex-tended deterrence with its allies and move toward conventional extended deterrence.34 India and Pakistan would need a modus vivendi on Kashmir, while the United States and North Korea would need to sign a non-aggression pact. In fact, the United States could actually negotiate a mutual NFU agreement with North Korea. The United States is extremely unlikely to use nuclear weapons first on North Korea, therefore an agree-ment that provided a basis for imposing some restraint on the North Korean arsenal would be in America's interest.35

Doctrinal and operational changes would need to follow such a declaration. China's restrained nuclear arsenal provides the best example of an NFU pledge implemented in practice. Unlike the United States and Russia, China keeps its warheads and missiles separated. It has not developed precision-strike nuclear war-fighting capabilities, such as tactical nuclear weapons, and it does not keep its forces on "launch-on-warning" alert. China has also invested heavily in conventional military modernization so that it would not have to consider nuclear escalation in a conventional war.36 India, too, keeps its warheads and missiles separate in support of its NFU pledge, though some analysts argue that India's NFU policy does not run especially deep and that it "is neither a stable nor a reliable predictor of how the Indian military and political leadership might actually use nuclear weapons."37 Nevertheless, both countries' operational postures

reflect (to some degree) their NFU policies.38 The United States and the other nuclear powers should move in this direction.

Conclusion

What are the prospects for an NFU policy? On Jan. 30, 2019, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA) introduced legislation that declared, "It is the policy of the United States to not use nuclear weapons first."39 But Congress is divided on this.40 Skeptics have objected that the geopolitical preconditions are not ripe for an NFU policy at this time. In 2016, the Obama administration seriously considered declaring an NFU policy but then hesitated at the last minute largely because of pushback from European and Asian allies who are under the U.S. nuclear umbrella.41 Donald Trump, for his part, has been busy dismantling arms control agreements, not creating them.42

Adoption of an NFU policy will require close consultation with allies, but the U.S. ad-ministration should begin this task. As an initial step on the way to NFU, U.S. leaders should consider the recent proposal by Jeffrey Lewis and Scott Sagan that the United States should declare it will not use nuclear weapons "against any target that could be reliably destroyed by conventional means."43 This policy would not solve the problem posed by highly asymmetric crises, as noted above. Nevertheless, it would represent an initial important declaratory statement of nuclear restraint.

The most important goal of the United States today is to prevent the use of nuclear weapons. The policy of relying on the threat to use nuclear weapons first is an outdated legacy of the Cold War. As even card-carrying realists such as the "four horsemen" recognized, given U.S. conventional capabilities, there are no circumstances in which the United States ought to start a nuclear war.44 Relying on the pretense that it might do so in order to deter a conventional threat unacceptably increases the chances of nuclear escalation. Moving toward declared NFU policies is the best way to reduce the risks of nuclear war.

5.5 AT: Deterrence

5.5.1 General

Conventional weapons and second-strike solves deterrence

ACC 20

ACC (national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of nu-clear arms control). "No First Use: Myths vs. Realities." Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, 2020. https://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/no-first-use/no-first-use-myths-vs-realities/

Myth: Adopting a No First Use policy will undermine extended deterrence to U.S. allies and create a less stable security environment.

Reality: Adopting a No First Use policy will not reduce the United States' commitment to extended deterrence. Extended deterrence is about much more than just nuclear weapons. Forward deployments of U.S. conventional forces paired with strong and unwavering political commitments play the most immediate roles in deterring aggres-sion against the United States and its allies. The United States maintains thousands of troops and hundreds of ships in commands around the world to balance crisis zones and deter aggression. The United States employs advanced conventional capabilities includ-ing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance tools and precision-guided weapons in conflicts, but also to help deter potential attacks. The United States' robust conven-tional forces are more than sufficient to deter or counter non-nuclear attacks on U.S. allies, and conventional military threats are more credible than threats to use nuclear weapons first. Current and former military officials have emphasized the crucial role that U.S. conventional forces play in projecting power globally and credibly deterring aggression.

The credible U.S. second-strike capability is and will remain a deterrent to nuclear attack, but the threat of nuclear preemption is unnecessary and dangerous. If nuclear-armed adversaries believe that the United States would use nuclear weapons first, they will be incentivized to use their nuclear weapons before a devastating U.S. strike degrades the capability. This dynamic is destabilizing and increases the chance of a nuclear miscal-culation.

Maintaining extended deterrence guarantees requires consistent communication and

coordination. Any change to U.S. declaratory policy should be made after consultation with allies about why this change is in our collective security interest.

5.5.2 Cold War

Using NFU for deterrence rests in Cold War logic that no longer applies.

Fetter and Wolfsthal 18

Steve Fetter and Jon Wolfsthal (Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, University of Maryland School of Public Policy, and former Special Assistant to the President of the United States for National Security Affairs and senior director at the National Security Council for arms control and nonproliferation, respectively). "No First Use and Credible Deterrence." Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament, Vol 1, Issue 1, 2018. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25751654.2018.1454257

This logic collapsed with the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. The conventional balance of power shifted dramatically in favor of the United States and NATO. There was no longer a need to threaten to use nuclear weapons first to deter a conventional Soviet – or Russian – attack. Nuclear weapons were needed only to deter a nuclear attack, and even then it was not clear from where such an attack might come.

The first post-Cold-War secretary of defense, Les Aspin, ordered a review of US nuclear policy and stated that no-first-use could form the basis of a new nonproliferation policy. Unfortunately, that NPR – and the two that followed – rejected no first use,7 largely due to concerns expressed by allies who had been told by US officials for decades that the US nuclear arsenal was the foundation of their security. That thinking and dogma was slow to change.

In November 1993 Russia discarded its no-first-use pledge to compensate for its per-ceived conventional inferiority (Schmemman 1993). It, in essence, adopted its own US-style approach to the problem of conventional inferiority. Russian reliance on threats of nuclear first-use increased with NATO expansion to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1999, and the Baltic states in 2004. More recently, Russia may have adopted an "escalate to de-escalate" doctrine that envisions the first use of low-yield tactical nu-clear weapons in conflicts near its borders against a conventionally superior NATO force. Although Russian officials dispute this (Oliker, 2016), there is no doubt that American military officials believe it is the case and are wrestling with the implications of this pol-icy. Russian doctrine asserts that such first use would only come if the existence of the Russian state were at risk as the result of a conventional conflict it was losing.8 How-ever, to American ears it is easy to imagine a Russian gamble that goes poorly – perhaps

a Ukraine-style invasion of Baltic state that is forcefully repelled by NATO, including NATO attacks on Russian targets. This could prompt Putin to use nuclear weapons to forestall a humiliating defeat that might threaten his control of the Russian state. Such scenarios have driven US military planners to seek ways to deter any such first use of nuclear weapons by Russia.

The United States and its allies retain their military superiority to all potential adver-saries. In the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the United States declared that the United States would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear weapons states that are in compliance with their nonproliferation obligations (US Department of Defense, 2010). Our conventional capabilities so outstripped that of any conceivable single or group of nonnuclear adversaries that the need to threaten the use of nuclear weapons was explicitly rejected. This statement was also central to providing a clear incentive for states to remain in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obliga-tions.

For nuclear-armed states, a similar view prevailed. There was and is no need to threaten to use nuclear weapons to deter or respond to any plausible conventional attack from a nuclear-armed adversary. The NPR and the Obama team considered, but did not adopt, a policy that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack. It rejected "sole purpose" primarily because of concerns about how US allies might respond. But the NPR pledged to strengthen conventional capabilities and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring nonnuclear attack, with the objective of making deterrence of nu-clear attack on the US and its allies the sole purpose of US nuclear weapons. By 2016 much progress had been made on this effort. As a result, in his final national security speech, Vice President Biden told an audience in Washington DC that "it is hard to envi-sion a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary or make sense."9

5.5.3 Consultation Solves

Doesn't alienate allies because we'd pursue consultation first.

Note: sole purpose is essentially NFU; it is the belief that the " 'sole purpose' of U.S. nu-clear weapons should be to deter and—if necessary, retaliate against—a nuclear attack" (author).

Pifer 20

Steven Pifer (William Perry Research Fellow at Stanford's Center for International Se-curity and Cooperation and a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer). "Nuclear Weapons: It's Time for Sole Purpose." Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Septem-ber 15, 2020. https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/nuclear-weapons-it%E2%80%99s-time-sole-purpose

A Nuclear Taboo?

It has been seventy-five years since the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan at the conclusion of World War II. Since then, neither America nor any other country has used nuclear arms in anger. Some suggest a taboo against nuclear use has developed.

The taboo is informal, not fixed by international agreement. It would benefit U.S. and allied security were non-use of nuclear weapons to become a widely accepted and en-trenched international norm. The United States has powerful conventional forces, fa-vorable geography and the world's largest network of allies, so reducing the possibility of nuclear use seems very much in the U.S. interest, reducing one of the few existential threats to America's existence. Sole purpose would help bolster that norm.

Adopting sole purpose would mark a significant change in U.S. policy. Washington should do so only after consulting with NATO and key allies in the Pacific region. Im-portantly, the sole purpose would not close the U.S. nuclear umbrella; it would mean that U.S. nuclear weapons would be used in an ally's defense only after the other side had gone nuclear. Unlike nuclear first use, the threat of nuclear retaliation after a nu-clear attack is credible.

The next U.S. nuclear posture review should, following such consultations, adopt sole purpose as the reason for U.S. nuclear weapons. That would change a dynamic that now has possible adversaries designing potentially dangerous policies and postures in a belief that the United States is lowering its threshold for use of nuclear weapons

and could go nuclear first. It would boost the establishment of an international norm against any nuclear weapons use. It could help make Americans safer. And the only cost: abandoning an option that an American president would never use and whose threat has little credibility.

5.5.4 US Superiority Solves

US nuclear and conventional superiority makes current policy unnecessary

Kimball 18

Daryl G. Kimball (Executive Director, Arms Control Association). "The Case for a U.S. No-First-Use Policy." *Arms Control Association*, October 2018. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-10/focus/case-us-first-use-policy

The reality is that a launch-under-attack policy is unnecessary because U.S. nuclear forces and command-and-control systems could withstand even a massive attack. Given the size, accuracy, and diversity of U.S. forces, the remaining nuclear force would be more than sufficient to deliver a devastating blow to any nuclear aggressor.

In addition, keeping strategic forces on launch-under-attack mode increases the risk of miscalculation and misjudgment. Throughout the history of the nuclear age, there have been several incidents in which false signals of an attack have prompted U.S. and Russian officials to consider, in the dead of the night and under the pressure of time, launching nuclear weapons in retaliation. No U.S. leader should be put in a situation that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons based on false information.

Retaining the option to use nuclear weapons first is fraught with unnecessary peril. Given the overwhelming conventional military edge of the United States and its allies, there is no plausible circumstance that could justify legally, morally, or militarily the use of nuclear weapons to deal with a non-nuclear threat. Even in the event of a con-ventional military conflict with Russia, China, or North Korea, the first use of nuclear weapons would be counterproductive because it likely would trigger an uncontrollable, potentially suicidal all-out nuclear exchange.

5.5.5 AT: Conventional Attack

Conventional threats are either easily defeated or not worth the costs of nuclear war, or both

O'Hanlon 16

Michael O'Hanlon (senior fellow, and director of research, in Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution). "In support of nuclear no first use." *Brookings Institution*, August 19, 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/08/19/in-support-of-nuclear-no-first-use/

CONVENTIONAL THREATS

First, a word is in order on conventional military scenarios. Aren't there cases in which the United States might need to use nuclear weapons against an enemy's conventional attack—just as we feared during the Cold War, if the Soviet Union attacked a Euro-pean ally, for example. In today's world, though, and in foreseeable cases, any such attack—by, say, Russia or China on, say, Poland or Japan—would be either defeatable by American and allied conventional response or not worth the costs of a nuclear war, or both.

In a number of hypothetical conflicts near Chinese or Russian borders, should the United States and allies lose a battle, they would be better advised to strengthen their defenses in order to prevent further losses while also patiently preparing a military countermove (and applying strong economic sanctions in the meantime). Of course, more can be said on this but I believe that is the correct bottom line.

5.5.6 AT: Bioweapon Attack – Belligerent Reprisal

Belligerent reprisal doctrine solves.

O'Hanlon 16

Michael O'Hanlon (senior fellow, and director of research, in Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution). "In support of nuclear no first use." *Brookings Institution*, August 19, 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/08/19/in-support-of-nuclear-no-first-use/

Yet there is a way around this conundrum, even if the United States makes a nuclear no first use pledge and changes its standard military planning procedures accordingly. Legally, the argument begins with the concept of belligerent reprisal. Though contro-versial and subject to debate, the idea here is that if one is grievously attacked by a country violating international law, the aggrieved country has a right under the U.N. Charter (and its self-protection clauses) to retaliate proportionately in a way that could itself violate international law—and thus, presumably, the country's own doctrines and promises as well.

5.5.7 AT: Bioweapon Attack – Not Credible

No one would assume NFU holds for serious bioweapons attacks. But that doesn't take out its meaningfulness.

O'Hanlon 16

Michael O'Hanlon (senior fellow, and director of research, in Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution). "In support of nuclear no first use." *Brookings Institution*, August 19, 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/08/19/in-support-of-nuclear-no-first-use/

Second, and more importantly, no adversary could wisely assume otherwise. If a biolog-ical attack of the type posited above were successfully conducted at some distant date— no one is close to being able to conduct it now, even if they had the motivation—it is implausible that, with millions of innocent civilians dead, the United States would feel honor-bound to eschew severe retaliatory measures based on some historical pledge. Because a nuclear strike could in fact be carried out with greater precision than a biolog-ical attack, the response could in fact be somewhat less severe and escalatory than the initial offense, lending further credibility to the likelihood that it would be conducted.

A no first use pledge would still be meaningful, because it would be understood to fo-cus on plausible scenarios. It would usefully reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in near-term U.S. defense policy. And jittery allies, once they saw that it had no sub-stantial bearing on U.S. military preparedness, would almost surely adjust. All at home and abroad could rest secure in the knowledge that, for the truly heinous and almost unimaginable scenarios like those that could result from advanced, contagious, highly lethal biological attacks, America's well-maintained nuclear arsenal was not just there for show—and would provide significant residual deterrence whatever the formal doc-trine said.

5.5.8 AT: Bioweapons Attack – Conventional Response Solves

Empirically, conventional threats have deterred bioweapons

Gerson 11

Michael S. Gerson (research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) in Alexandria, Virginia, where his research focuses on nuclear and conven-tional deterrence, nuclear strategy, and arms control). "The Future of U.S. Nu-clear Policy: The Case for No First Use." International Security, February 2011. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use

In recent years, the strongest argument for the United States to retain the first-use option has been that nuclear weapons are necessary to help deter, and possibly respond to, CW and especially BW attacks.

The necessity of retaining this option is grounded in part on the supposed success of nuclear deterrence in the 1990–91 Gulf War, where the United States implied that it might consider a nuclear response if Saddam Hussein used CW or BW. Yet the United States actually made two threats against the Hussein regime: an ambiguous threat of nuclear retaliation and an explicit threat of regime change. Although the documentary record is still incomplete, the available evidence suggests that the unequivocal threat of regime change, rather than the veiled threat of a nuclear response, was more influential in deterring Saddam.

In future crises involving CW- or BW-armed adversaries, the United States should em-ploy a combination of conventional denial and punishment strategies. It should force-fully communicate that its deployed forces are equipped with appropriate defenses that will deny any potential benefits of the battlefield use of CW and BW. In addition, the United States should threaten an overwhelming conventional response, possibly cou-pled with the threat to capture and hold key decisionmakers responsible for their ac-tions.

5.6 AT: Assurances

5.6.1 AT: Allies – General

Barriers to proliferation are too high

ACC 20

ACC (national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of nu-clear arms control). "No First Use: Myths vs. Realities." Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, 2020. https://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/no-first-use/no-first-use-myths-vs-realities/

Myth: Allies will acquire their own nuclear weapons if they lose faith in the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence.

Reality: The financial, political, and security consequences of acquiring nuclear weapons are strong deterrents against nuclear proliferation among U.S. allies, as are their own legal obligations. U.S. allies understand that developing nuclear weapons in contravention of their Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations would severely disrupt alliance relationships and would certainly have a greater negative impact than a shift in U.S. declaratory policy. U.S. allies have no need to pursue nuclear weapons, as there is no reason to question the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence. An NFU policy will have no effect on the ability of the United States to deter threats to its allies' security with its robust conventional forces and the threat of nuclear retaliation in response to a nuclear attack.

Assurances argument is wrong – three reasons

Holdren 20

John P. Holdren (American scientist who served as the senior advisor to President Barack Obama on science and technology issues through his roles as Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Co-Chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology). "The overwhelming case for no first use." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 13 Jan 2020. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1701277

Against the argument that allies will oppose no first use

The argument that Germany, Japan, and South Korea would necessarily resist and re-sent a US shift to a no-first-use policy and posture – and indeed might be propelled into acquiring their own nuclear deterrent – is questionable.

First of all, nobody is proposing that the US nuclear umbrella deterring nuclear threats or attacks against US allies would be withdrawn under no first use. To misunderstand this reality is to conflate the two forms of extension in the term "extended deterrence": extension of the nuclear umbrella to protect allies, as opposed to extension to cover nonnuclear threats. It's the latter form of extended deterrence, extension to non-nuclear threats, that would be renounced under no first use. The United States should be crystal clear in reassuring its allies – and reminding potential adversaries – on this point.

Second, public and leadership opinion on the proper role of US nuclear weapons is undoubtedly not uniform in any of these countries. Whether people think they want non-nuclear threats against them to be deterred or responded to with US nuclear weapons varies with many factors, including whether they think deterrence will assuredly work and whether they think, if it doesn't, nuclear weapons will end up exploding on or near their own territory. (The Cold War saying that "the towns in Germany are two kilotons apart" is relevant here.) And Japan's leaders would do well to consider the direction the fallout would travel if the United States attacked North Korea with nuclear weapons.

Third, US allies should see a declaration of no first use as an expression of this country's confidence in the capabilities of its conventional forces to deter or defeat any non-nuclear threat from a state adversary. (Non-state adversaries, of course, may not be deterrable.) And, if US allies are thinking clearly, they will conclude that the US pledge to come to their defense if they are attacked is actually more believable by all concerned if it based on defending them with conventional rather than nuclear forces.

5.6.2 AT: Allied Prolif – Offense

Turn --- NFU invites the nonproliferation regime by eroding US moral authority

Holdren 20

John P. Holdren (American scientist who served as the senior advisor to President Barack Obama on science and technology issues through his roles as Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Co-Chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology). "The overwhelming case for no first use." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 13 Jan 2020. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1701277

Among the many arguments that support changing US nuclear weapons policy to a no-first-use stance, five stand out in my mind as so strong, when taken together, as to be dispositive.

With respect to nonproliferation

When the country with the most capable conventional forces the world has ever seen insists that it nonetheless needs nuclear weapons to deter and respond to non-nuclear attacks, it is logically conceding, to any country that fears or professes to fear attack by another, the right to acquire its own nuclear weapons to deter or respond to such attacks. The US stance of "first use if we think we need to" undermines, in the eyes of most of the world, any moral authority the United States might wish to assert against the acquisition of nuclear weapons by others. And if potential adversaries that don't possess nuclear weapons think the United States would use nuclear weapons against their conventional forces or in retaliation for an actual (or suspected!) chemical or biological attack, that can only increase their incentive to acquire nuclear weapons of their own.

5.6.3 AT: Japan

Japanese nuclear deterrence isn't worth the price and isn't even credible.

Fetter and Wolfsthal 18

Steve Fetter and Jon Wolfsthal (Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, University of Maryland School of Public Policy, and former Special Assistant to the President of the United States for National Security Affairs and senior director at the National Security Council for arms control and nonproliferation, respectively). "No First Use and Credible Deterrence." Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament, Vol 1, Issue 1, 2018. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25751654.2018.1454257

That brings us to today. It is clear that Japan is rightly concerned about its security in the face of an aggressive North Korea with increasingly advanced nuclear and missile capa-bilities. Japan also has reason to be concerned about the possibility, however remote, of nuclear attack by China or Russia. However, the US strategic nuclear arsenal is a highly effective deterrent against such an attack. America has over 4000 nuclear weapons in its active stockpile, and the entire US strategic nuclear force is undergoing modernization. This aspect of the nuclear umbrella would not be diminished in any way if the United States adopted a policy of no first use. US threats to use nuclear weapons in retaliation for nuclear attacks on Japan are highly credible, because Japan is a very close ally and the US has military bases and over 100,000 troops and dependents based in Japan.

Japan's opposition to no first use is not compatible with its rhetorical support for even-tual nuclear disarmament. As noted above, no-first-use is equivalent a "sole purpose" declaration. If the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter to use of nuclear weapons by others, then it follows logically that a country would be willing to give up its nuclear weapons if it could be sure that all other countries had done so. If no other countries had nuclear weapons, there would be no need to have nuclear weapons to deter their use by others. But if Japan believes that the United States must be willing to threaten the first-use of nuclear weapons, it is saying that nuclear weapons are needed to deter more than nuclear attack. Even if nuclear weapons were eliminated, these other reasons would still exist. In opposing no first use, Japan is opposing the principle of nuclear dis-armament.

Some might say this is not true because there are other conditions for nuclear disarma-ment, such as Japan facing no security threats. But saying that we can have nuclear disarmament when all countries are content to live in peace is the same as saying that

nuclear disarmament is impossible.

US and Japanese opposition to no first use weakens nonproliferation. The United States and its allies are by far the strongest military alliance in the world. The United States alone spends four times more than China and 10 times more than Russia on defense; the US and its allies together account for over 70 percent of world military spending, over four times more than all adversaries and potential adversaries combined (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017). Because Japan is an island nation, it is easier defend than was Germany during the Cold War. If Japan believes that the United States must resort to the first-use or threat of first-use of nuclear weapons to defend it against a nonnuclear attack, what message does this send to all other countries – particularly those that are not US allies? Countries that are weaker and harder to defend would have even more need of nuclear weapons. A policy of no first use would strengthen nonproliferation efforts; opposing no first use weakens those efforts.

The Government of Japan no doubt believes that maintaining the option of nuclear first use by the United States provides some measure of deterrence against conventional at-tack on Japan. The key question is how much deterrence it provides and whether these deterrence benefits are worth the price. Nuclear deterrence of conventional attack is not cost-free because such threats lack credibility. As we saw in Europe during the Cold War, actions to increase the credibility of nuclear threats have consequences, such as increasing the likelihood of nuclear war. It would be far better to strengthen conven-tional defenses so that there was no reason to resort to nuclear use, and to provide for a more credible deterrent.

5.6.4 AT: NATO

Conventional, not nuclear, deterrence is key to NATO

Kimball 18

Daryl G. Kimball (Executive Director, Arms Control Association). "The Case for a U.S. No-First-Use Policy." *Arms Control Association*, October 2018. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-10/focus/case-us-first-use-policy

Some in Washington and Brussels believe Moscow might use or threaten to use nuclear weapons first to try to deter NATO from pressing its conventional military advantage in a conflict. Clearly, a nuclear war cannot be won and should not be initiated by either side. The threat of first use, however, cannot overcome perceived or real conventional force imbalances and are not an effective substitute for prudently maintaining U.S. and NATO conventional forces in Europe.

As the major nuclear powers race to develop new nuclear capabilities and advanced conventional-strike weapons and consider using cybercapabilities to pre-empt nuclear attacks by adversaries, the risk that one leader may be tempted to use nuclear weapons first during a crisis likely will grow. A shift to a no-first-use posture, on the other hand, would increase strategic stability.

Although the Trump administration is not going to rethink nuclear old-think, leaders in Congress and the next administration must re-examine and revise outdated nuclear launch policies in ways that reduce the nuclear danger.

Shifting to a formal policy stating that the United States will not be the first to use nuclear weapons and that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack would be a significant and smart step in the right direction.

6 Con Evidence

6.1 Assurance

6.1.1 East Asia

NFU collapses assurance, causing East Asian allied proliferation.

Harvey 19

Dr. John R. Harvey (physicist who has spent his career working to advance U.S. nu-clear weapons programs and policies including in senior posts in the Departments of Energy and Defense. He retired from government service in 2013 as principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical, and biological defense programs). "Assessing the Risks Of A Nuclear 'No First Use' Policy." *War on the Rocks*, July 5, 2019. https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/assessing-the-risks-of-a-nuclear-no-first-use-policy/

Assurance and Nonproliferation Risks

Building and maintaining strong alliances has been a centerpiece of America's effort to produce and sustain a more peaceful world. Critical to this is assuring U.S. allies of America's commitment to their defense by extending to them the full range of U.S. military power.

Many countries, including those that share a border with an adversary that presents a threat to their very existence, see no-first-use as a weakening, symbolic or otherwise, of U.S. extended deterrence. In response to Chinese provocations in the western Pacific and North Korea's nuclear tests and missile launches, Japan regularly seeks, both in official consultations and ongoing military cooperation, assurances that America will continue to fulfill its security commitments to protect the island nation. Some in South Korea have already pressed to explore an increased U.S. nuclear presence in their coun-try to further deter regional threats. Loss of confidence in U.S. security commitments

could cause some allies to seek accommodation with regional adversaries in ways that run counter to U.S. interests.

Moreover, both South Korea and Japan, similar to many NATO allies, have latent nu-clear weapons capabilities characteristic of advanced industrial economies with com-mercial nuclear power. Any perceived wavering of U.S. security commitments could cause allies to develop and field their own nuclear weapons.

Further, America's allies have made their feelings about America adopting a no-first-use policy known. U.S. officials consulted America's allies extensively in the lead up to the 2010 and 2018 nuclear posture reviews. This dialogue has been rich and productive and, in some ways, surprising in its candor. For example, in 2009, Japanese officials briefed the Perry-Schlesinger Commission, established by Congress to seek a bipartisan approach to the U.S. nuclear posture, on specific features and capabilities of the U.S. nuclear deterrent that Japan viewed as critical to its security. In related dialogue, many foreign counterparts to U.S. officials, including those of Japan, have urged the United States not to adopt a no-first-use policy.

6.1.2 NATO

NFU collapses European assurances – triggers long-standing worries about not sacrificing Boston for Berlin

Downman 19

Maxwell Downman (nuclear policy analyst for the British American Security Informa-tion Council (BASIC), a London-based independent think tank at the forefront of global initiatives on nuclear disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation). "Where Would Europe Stand on a U.S. No First Use Policy?" *Outrider Post*, no date, but internally cites a May 7, 2019 publication. https://outrider.org/nuclear-weapons/articles/where-would-europe-stand-us-no-first-use-policy/

In private conversations, European officials remain firm in opposing a NFU policy. The security situation in Europe has deteriorated since 2016. There is a high level of distrust between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia. And, many gov-ernments see the threat of nuclear first use as important for deterrence. They also see no reason to reassure Russia when they are convinced of its bad intentions.

Europe has a long-standing anxiety about whether the United States would really risk Boston for Berlin. This worry is now more complex given the Trump Presidency. Pres-ident Trump has shown lackluster support for NATO's commitment to collective de-fense. And, President Trump is willing to make loose nuclear threats. Nuclear risk is squarely back on the European agenda, in a way not seen since the Cold War.

6.1.3 NPT

NPT shakes over 30 alliances and severely undercuts the NPT

Miller and Payne 16

Franklin C. Miller and Keith B. Payne (principal of The Scowcroft Group. He is a retired civil servant, having served 22 years in senior positions in the Department of Defense, and Keith B. Payne, president and co-founder of the National Institute for Public Pol-icy). "The dangers of no-first-use." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, August 22, 2016. https://thebulletin.org/2016/08/the-dangers-of-no-first-use/

US adoption of no-first-use would also severely shake allied confidence in our security guarantees to them. In fact, US allies Japan, South Korea, Great Britain, and France reportedly have recently informed the Obama administration that a no-first-use policy would be detrimental to their security. The vast majority of our treaty allies depend, at least in part, on a credible US nuclear deterrence "umbrella" for their security. US adop-tion of a no-first-use policy would compel some to take steps to mitigate the degrada-tion of the US nuclear deterrent which has heretofore protected them. One such avenue would be the possible acquisition or creation of their own independent nuclear weapons. There already appears to be considerable popular support today for the development of nuclear weapons in South Korea; US adoption of no-first-use would only increase that motivation. A policy of no-first-use now would likely increase the prospect for new nuclear powers in Asia and Europe, which would severely undercut the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and be extremely destabilizing, given the likely severe Chinese and Russian responses.

In short, based on evidence from the past seven decades, the US nuclear deterrent helps deter war and preserve global stability by compelling potential aggressors to consider the possibility of a US nuclear response in any of their prospective plans to attack us or our allies. It also provides enormous support for nuclear non-proliferation by helping to assure over 30 US allies of their security. US adoption of a no-first-use policy would threaten to degrade this critical deterrence of enemies and assurance of allies.

6.1.4 Saudi Arabia

NFU undermines Saudi assurances which causes proliferation

Kahan 16

Jerome H. Kahan (Director of Regional Studies at the Center for Naval Analyses, mem-ber of the Council on Foreign Relations and the International Institute of Strategic Stud-ies, former Adjunct Professor in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown Univer-sity, former Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution). "Security Assurances for the Gulf States: A Bearable Burden?" Middle East Policy, Volume 23, Number 3, Fall 2016, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/mepo.12214

The uncertain and dangerous environment in the Middle East demands that the GCC states remain convinced that the United States will indeed stand behind our security assurances, including our extended-deterrence and nuclear-umbrella guarantees. We should recognize that "in today's international environment 'deterrence' should mean convincing the adversary not to attack because he will calculate that any such attempt would likely fail to achieve its political or military objectives and therefore not be worth the investment or the risk."35At the same time, we must accept that it is very demand-ing to reassure our Gulf allies we will honor our extended deterrence commitment — by being both willing and able to come to their aid if they are threatened — whereas even a small chance of U.S. intervention would tend to have the effect of deterring ad-versarial actions.36 This proposition is especially apt if we have to reassure these states that our "nuclear umbrella" will safeguard their security by deterring potential nuclear-armed adversaries, thus obviating their need to acquire such weapons.37 Special atten-tion should be paid to ensuring the Saudis trust this assurance and do not move to acquire their own nuclear weapons, even if Iran becomes nuclear-armed. To make our assurance more credible, we should reaffirm our nuclear guarantee to Gulf-state lead-ers in future high-level summits, hold institutionalized exchanges on deterrence and refrain from major reductions in our nuclear forces that might be seen as making our commitment less viable.38 Additionally, the United States should assure the Gulf allies that we will not allow our nuclear forces to be lowered to levels that cannot support our nuclear assurances, nor adopt a nuclear no-first-use policy.

6.2 Deterrence

6.2.1 Conventional Attack

NFU invites non-nuclear attack from China and/or Russia

Heinrichs 20

Rebeccah Heinrichs (senior fellow at Hudson Institute). "Reject 'No First Use' Nuclear Policy." *Newsweek*, August 24, 2020. https://www.newsweek.com/reject-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-opinion-1527037

The reality is that every single American president, Democrat and Republican alike, has rejected an NFU declaration because to do so would invite unacceptable risk that could yield catastrophic war—and for no tangible benefit at all.

This is true for four reasons.

First, adopting an NFU policy invites a strategic non-nuclear attack against the Amer-ican people, our allies and our interests. An NFU declaration broadcasts to America's enemies that they can proceed with a chemical weapons attack on U.S. forces and their families, can proceed with a biological attack on an American city and can proceed with an overwhelming conventional attack against critical U.S. assets, all without fear of nu-clear retaliation. Any would-be enemy could carry out an infinite number of attacks short of a nuclear attack, while the NFU-endorsing U.S. president assures their safety from our nuclear weapon arsenal.

An NFU policy is especially unwise now, while the United States contends with not one, but two major power threats. Both Russia and China are expanding their military capa-bilities and have acted in ways that demonstrate their willingness to attack sovereign nations and redraw borders.

Of the two, China poses the single greatest threat to America's national security and way of life. General Secretary Xi Jinping and his Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are now in the midst of a rapid modernization of their military. China has the most di-verse missile force on the planet, and has launched more ballistic missiles for testing and training than the rest of the world combined. Nor has Beijing neglected its nu-clear capabilities—although their efforts are furtive, we know the CCP is investing in a large force, with delivery systems capable of launching nuclear weapons. Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency Lt. General Robert P. Ashley, Jr. said in 2019 that the

intelligence community believes China is likely to "at least double the size of its nuclear stockpile in the course of implementing the most rapid expansion and diversification of its nuclear arsenal in China's history." The number commonly cited for China's stock-pile is around 300. But it is plausible that there are actually many more than 300, as one highly credible former government official confided to me.

What's more, China likely has an advanced chemical warfare program. Like its nuclear program, China does not reveal to the United States what, exactly, it does have. But the more we learn about the CCP's gross abuse of religious minorities, including of the Uyghurs imprisoned in Xinjiang concentration camps, the more our hackles should be raised. Western democracies view any use of chemical weapons as unconscionable, but the evidence shows our enemies do not share this view.

Although the scope of Russia's economy and the ambitiousness of its national objectives pale in comparison to China's, Russia still seeks to undermine the United States and our allies wherever it can. Like China, it is investing heavily in its nuclear forces and has re-peatedly violated U.S. arms control agreements. To take one particularly abhorrent and brazen example, on August 6, 2018, the Russian government used chemical weapons on British soil in an attempt to assassinate a former Russian spy, eliciting sanctions by the United States.

6.2.2 Empirics

Empirically, no NFU deters war

Miller and Payne 16

Franklin C. Miller and Keith B. Payne (principal of The Scowcroft Group. He is a retired civil servant, having served 22 years in senior positions in the Department of Defense, and Keith B. Payne, president and co-founder of the National Institute for Public Pol-icy). "The dangers of no-first-use." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, August 22, 2016. https://thebulletin.org/2016/08/the-dangers-of-no-first-use/

The Obama administration reportedly is seriously considering adoption of a no-first-use nuclear policy. Such a declaratory policy would tell the world that the United States would never use nuclear weapons other than in response to an opponent's nuclear at-tack. To some, such a policy may seem attractive because it suggests a type of symmetry and proportionality with regard to nuclear weapons.

In fact, however, US adoption of a no-first-use policy would create serious risks without offering any plausible benefit.

Why so? There is no doubt that the US nuclear deterrent has prevented war and the esca-lation of war in the past. For example, there is considerable evidence from the 1991 First Gulf War that the US nuclear deterrent helped to prevent Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein from escalating to the use of Iraqi chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction— possibly saving tens of thousands of US and allied lives. A US pledge of no-first-use now would encourage current and future opponents to believe that they need not fear the US nuclear deterrent in response to their potential massive use of military force against us or our allies—including the use of advanced conventional weapons, and chemical and biological weapons.

Consequently, declaring a no-first-use policy would degrade the prospective credibility of the US nuclear deterrent—a particularly imprudent step at a time when Russia and China are rapidly expanding their military capabilities, pursuing aggressive policies in Europe and Asia respectively, and issuing explicit threats to US allies in the process. The same applies to North Korea, which repeatedly issues extreme threats against us and our Asian allies while maintaining the world's fourth largest army and reportedly advanced chemical and biological capabilities. Given these contemporary realities and the stakes involved, degrading the credibility of the US nuclear deterrent by adopting

a policy of no-first-use is no small matter. Our goal instead should be to maintain the most effective deterrent possible to such lethal threats.

6.2.3 Empirics -- Russia

Specifically, NFU empirically deterred Russian aggression towards NATO states.

Chang 16

Gordon R. Chang (author of Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes On the World and a columnist for the Daily Beast). "Declaring a no-first-use nuclear pol-icy would be exceedingly risky." Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, July 27, 2016.

https://thebulletin.org/2016/07/declaring-a-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-would-be-exceedingly-risky/

Whether maintaining a first-use policy does in fact deter aggression is much debated. Kimball argues that the risk of "an uncontrollable and potentially suicidal escalation" is so high that the threat of using nuclear weapons "lacks credibility." Meanwhile Henry Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, told me "we don't really know what precisely deters and what does not." There is evidence, though, suggesting that nuclear threats can prevent conventional attacks. After all, dur-ing the Cold War, Soviet tanks could have rolled across Western Europe but never did. Back then, NATO threatened to incinerate the Soviet Union in the event of such an in-vasion. Odds are, the NATO threat helped stop the Soviets in their tracks. Moreover, we know that nuclear weapons affected Soviet defense thinking and planning. Moscow worked hard to prevent NATO from upgrading its nuclear arsenal, especially in the early 1980s when the Kremlin tried to forestall the deployment of America's Pershing II missiles in Europe.

We cannot say for sure how the alliance's most destructive weapons have affected Putin's thinking—as Sokolski said, nuclear deterrence is "endlessly debatable"—but at least so far, a strong Russia, which had no compunction in going after non-alliance members Georgia and Ukraine, has not attacked weak, nearby NATO states.

In any event, Putin is bulking up forces on his side of the border, planning to deploy three new divisions near Poland and the Baltics. Therefore, common sense, if nothing else, suggests now may not be the best moment to adopt no-first-use and thereby create a real-life experiment on what deters aggression.

Conventional deterrence needed. The United States has maintained a first-use policy for as long as it has possessed nuclear weapons. For all their drawbacks, these weapons shortened World War II and look instrumental in having avoided global war since then.

"The current policy has served us well over many years and if there's some movement to change that, it would require some scrutiny," said Adm. Cecil Haney, commander of US Strategic Command, at a hearing of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces this month. "We need to be very careful given the directions and the developments we see around the world, that we do everything in our power to maintain strategic stability." Timing, as Haney suggests, has become an issue. The moment when large states are redrawing their borders by force is not the time to try something different with America's weapons of last resort.

That is what Washington's Japanese allies think. Threatened by China and its ally North Korea, Tokyo does not want to see a declaration of no-first-use. As "a senior government official close to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe" told Kyodo News about such a possibility, "it is unacceptable." South Korea, Jonathan Pollack and Richard Bush of the Brookings Institution report, is also opposed to America adopting no-first-use.

6.2.4 Nonconventional Attack

NFU invites devastating chemical, biological, and cyber attacks

Peabody 19

Brent Peabody (researcher at the Center for New American Security). "How to Make the U.S. Military Weak Again." The National Interest, September 21, 2019. https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-make-us-military-weak-again-81891

First, a no-first-use policy would weaken our military posture in the face of a wide array of chemical, biological, and cyberattacks. Under the rules of engagement outlined by the no-first-use policy, the United States could suffer a biological attack killing thousands of troops stationed abroad, a chemical attack killing hundreds of thousands of civilians in San Francisco, and a crippling cyberattack on America's nuclear infrastructure and still be unable to respond with nuclear force. A no-first-use policy would place a needless restriction on the country even when nuclear force would be the best option to deter further aggression.

And far from reducing the probability of nonconventional warfare, America's adoption of a no-first-use policy would make nonconventional warfare likelier. Adversaries, em-boldened by the knowledge that even the most brazen attacks on the United States no longer carry the risk of an American nuclear strike, would feel more confident in testing the upper boundaries of what they could get away with. In short, a no-first-use pol-icy would leave the United States less able to respond to exactly the kind of biological, chemical, and cyber brinksmanship it would invite.

6.2.5 Bioweapons

NFU shreds deterrence and invites CBW attacks

Lowther 16

Adam Lowther (Ph.D., is a Director of the School for Advanced Nuclear Deter-rence Studies). "A No-First-Use Policy Would Make the United States Less Secure", E-International Relations, https://www.e-ir.info/2016/10/04/a-no-first-use-policy-would-make-the-united-states-less-secure/

In the years since the Cold War ended, Americans generally have not thought much about nuclear weapons, the debate over their modernization, the role they play in Amer-ican foreign policy, or the principles that guide U.S. nuclear deterrence strategy and policy. But the summer of 2016 is a notable exception, largely as a result of the Obama Administration's public discussion of the wisdom of adopting a "no-first-use" nuclear weapons policy. Although the Administration has reportedly decided against such a policy, there are those, including some in the President's inner circle, who are still urging President Barack Obama to make such a change. A no-first-use nuclear weapons policy means that a country vows not to use nuclear weapons unless it is first attacked with nuclear weapons. Such a declaration would be a departure from the current U.S. policy of "calculated ambiguity." Since the dawn of the atomic age, the United States has re-fused to specify exactly which scenarios would lead to the use of its nuclear weapons. The ambiguity created by having an undefined "red line" contributed greatly to deter-rence during the Cold War—including deterrence of large-scale attacks conducted with non-nuclear weapons—and continues to do so today. The effect of changing this policy would be to make the United States and its allies less secure while failing to provide tangible nonproliferation benefits. The very term "no-first-use" is misleading. While a nuclear weapon has not been used in anger for over 70 years, nuclear weapons are used every single day to deter large-scale conventional and nuclear attacks. Former Air Force Chief of Staff General Larry Welch points out that "we have used the nuclear forces ev-ery second of every day for 50 years." Moreover, during those 50 years, humankind has experienced the most peaceful period in its history as measured by the number of conflict-related casualties as a proportion of the world's population. This is due in large part to the devastating risks that nuclear weapons pose to any society that is attacked with them. For the United States and the Soviet Union, a large-scale nuclear exchange meant the end of society as Americans and Russians had known it. That risk led Ameri-can and Soviet leaders to exercise a level of caution and restraint that was not exercised

by German, Japanese, and other world leaders in the years leading up to World War II. If the United States were to adopt a no-first-use policy, the perceived threat of nuclear conflict admittedly would decline. While a decline in the perceived threat of nuclear weapons use may seem like a good thing, however, it is actually dangerous because it is that very perceived threat that gives leaders who may be contemplating the use of force the chance for second thoughts that can prevent great-power war. This is an important point. Opening the door to great-power conflict, even if ever so slightly, is obviously a step in the wrong direction. Nor are great-power conflicts the only dangerous challenge that nuclear weapons deter. Biological, chemical, and even well-organized and targeted cyber-attacks can be as devastating as nuclear attacks. Some proponents may claim that the combination of a no-first-use policy and American conventional superiority plays to America's strength, but recent history suggests that simply using our conventional forces rarely achieves our political objectives. It is also worth noting that the U.S. mili-tary is overstretched and on the verge of a readiness crisis. In the European theater, for example, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces are judged by many to be insufficient to counter a Russian military advance into the Baltics. Most important, the point of deterrence is to prevent a war from happening, which is frequently preferable to becoming engaged in a war even if one wins at the end of the day. In the context of the no-first-use policy, we must keep in mind that President Harry Truman made the decision to use nuclear weapons against Japan to prevent an estimated 500,000 or more American casualties in a planned invasion of Japan. We cannot know that future Presidents will not find the nation in a similar situation in which using nuclear weapons could end a war and save thousands or even millions of American lives. Such a deci-sion ought never to be taken lightly, but considering how many times we have been wrong about the future, changing a policy that has served the United States and its al-lies so well since the end of the Cold War would be at best naïve and at worst dangerous, particularly since security trends for the United States point in a negative direction.

6.2.6 AT: Cold War Logics

The Cold War is over, but the dynamic is the same --- NFU collapses credible deterrence, causing South Korea, Saudi, Japan, and Taiwan prolif

Peabody 19

Brent Peabody (researcher at the Center for New American Security). "How to Make the U.S. Military Weak Again." The National Interest, September 21, 2019. https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-make-us-military-weak-again-81891

A no-first-use policy is likewise bad for our allies, who have long relied on our extended deterrence for their own protection. During the Cold War, for example, the threat of a first-use nuclear strike did much to deter the Soviet Union from rolling into Western Europe, even when they had the superior conventional forces to do so.

The Cold War is over, but the dynamic is much the same. Allies from South Korea to Saudi Arabia depend on America's right to use nuclear weapons first as a credible deterrent to keep regional rivals like North Korea, China, and Iran in check. This was made explicit in the run-up to the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, when President Barack Obama flirted with the idea of a no-first-use policy but backed off after hearing firsthand from allies how the policy would leave them more exposed to attack from emboldened regional adversaries.

Indeed, it is conceivable that many of our allies would develop nuclear weapons of their own if they no longer felt covered by America's nuclear-security umbrella. South Korea, for example, is the world's fourth largest generator of nuclear energy, and the transition from producing the low-enrichment uranium needed for nuclear energy to the weapon-grade uranium needed for a warhead is not insurmountable. Japan and Taiwan, with latent nuclear capabilities of their own, could also nuclearize if they no longer deem America's nuclear deterrent strong enough.

And this is the paradox of a no-first-use policy. Its purported goal is a world with fewer nuclear weapons, but its implementation would in fact result in more of them. Some may welcome a nuclear South Korea or Taiwan in an era of strategic competition with China, but the reality is a world more populated with nuclear countries would neces-sarily increase the chance of nuclear miscalculation—exactly what a no-first-use policy set out to avoid in the first place.

From the Iran Nuclear Deal to the Paris Climate Agreement, the Trump administration

has made a point to undo much of what was accomplished during the Obama years. This makes Trump's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review all the more notable. Not only did the review retain the previous administration's language on a no-first-use policy, it did so word-for-word. Obama and Trump's mutual rejection of a no-first-use policy per-haps best underscores the extent to which the policy would weaken the United States, endanger our allies, and lead to nuclear proliferation. We might continue to hear more about this policy in the coming presidential cycle, but we should hesitate before upend-ing a policy that has underscored decades of national and global security—and could continue to do so for decades to come.

6.2.7 Conventional War Outweighs

The most likely scenario for nuclear use is a drawn-out conventional war

Colby 16

Elbridge Colby (Robert M. Gates Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security). "Nuclear Weapons Aren't Just For the Worst Case Scenario." Foreign Policy, August 4, 2016.

https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/04/nuclear-weapons-arent-just-worst-case-scenario-first-use-china-obama-trump/

Recent reports suggest that Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump insistently asked an anonymous foreign-policy expert why the United States should not use nu-clear weapons more readily. This has led to a chorus of voices decrying the way in which Trump is reported to have spoken about the nuclear option, with many insisting the United States should only ever employ nuclear weapons in retaliation after an op-ponent has used them first. It is certainly right that such terrible weapons should only be used in extreme circumstances (a point of view Trump appears to have expressed earlier this year), but the conventional wisdom is wrong in suggesting the United States should under no circumstances be the first to use nuclear arms. This controversy is not merely another spark of the campaign season, for, according to news reports, President Barack Obama himself is considering implementing a "no-first-use" pledge regarding nuclear weapons — that is, a promise never to be the first to use nuclear weapons. Such a pledge would be exceedingly unwise. Nuclear weapons are horrible instruments of destruction, but they are also associated with the longest period of major-power peace in human history. And they only work because potentially ambitious states believe their use is plausible enough that starting a war or escalating one against a nuclear-armed state or its allies would just be too risky to countenance. The point of reserving the right to use nuclear weapons first (which, it must be emphasized, is different from a policy of preemption or heavy reliance on them) is not to convey a madman's itchy trigger finger on the button. Rather, its purpose is to communicate clearly to any potential aggressor that attacking one's vital interests too harshly or successfully — even without resorting to nuclear weapons — risks prompting a devastating nuclear response, something that, at scale, is far more costly than any realistic gains. A no-first-use pledge would under-mine this pacifying logic. If the policy were believed, then it would make the world safe for conventional war. Since potential aggressors would write the risk of nuclear use down to zero, they would feel they could safely start and wage fierce conventional wars. Conventional wars can be small, quick, and decisive, which is why they can also

be appealing — just ask Napoleon, James Polk, Otto von Bismarck, or Moshe Dayan. But they can also escalate dramatically and unpredictably, especially when major pow-ers are involved. Thus, the most likely route to nuclear use is via a nasty conventional war, as happened in World War II. In such circumstances, high-minded pledges made in peacetime may well seem foolish or too burdensome. A believable no-first-use pledge would likely raise, rather than diminish, the likelihood of nuclear weapons being used by lightening the shadow of nuclear weapons over the decision-making of potential combatants. Better for everyone to think as carefully and clearly as possible about nu-clear weapons before a war is underway. Alternatively, if the no-first-use pledge were not believed, what would the point of such a promise be other than diplomatic window dressing? It is for these reasons that the United States has never adopted a no-first-use policy. During the Cold War, the United States relied on its nuclear deterrent to com-pensate for perceived Soviet and Warsaw Pact conventional advantages in Europe. But even in the post-Cold War period of American military supremacy, when Washington sought to diminish its strategic reliance on nuclear weapons, it judged the future was too uncertain to dispense with the reserved right to go first. While other countries such as China and India have declared no-first-use policies (though there is a great deal of skepticism about how reliable Beijing's pledge is), Washington and the allies that de-pend on its nuclear umbrella have always recognized that a no-first-use pledge by the United States would be unwise because of the breadth of defense commitments it has assumed. If the U.S. nuclear arsenal were solely designed to deter attacks on the conti-nental United States, a no-first-use pledge might have more merit, as launching such an assault would be incredibly difficult. But Washington also seeks to deter attacks on its allies in areas like Eastern Europe and East Asia, where U.S. conventional superiority is far less assured. The main reason why a no-first-use pledge does not make sense for Washington, then, is the reality that the United States cannot always expect to maintain the military upper hand everywhere, and a no-first-use pledge is not the kind of com-mitment a nation can turn on and off without damage to its credibility and reputation.

6.3 Politics

6.3.1 Popular With Dems

NFU is popular with Democrats

Downman 19

Maxwell Downman (nuclear policy analyst for the British American Security Informa-tion Council (BASIC), a London-based independent think tank at the forefront of global initiatives on nuclear disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation). "Where Would Europe Stand on a U.S. No First Use Policy?" *Outrider Post*, no date, but internally cites a May 7, 2019 publication. https://outrider.org/nuclear-weapons/articles/where-would-europe-stand-us-no-first-use-policy/

Still, support for a No First Use (NFU) policy has grown steadily in Democratic circles since President Obama left office. NFU has featured in campaign pledges from nine Democratic candidates, including Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, and Bernie Sanders. It's possible that the United States could have a NFU pledge after the 2020 election.

6.3.2 Abolition DA – Link

"No first use" is the wrong rallying cry --- it causes abolition campaigns to run out of gas.

Krepon 19

Michael Krepon (co-founder of the Stimson Center. He worked previously at the Carnegie Endowment, the State Department, and on Capitol Hill). "NO USE IS STRONGER THAN NO FIRST USE." *Arms Control Wonk*, October 6, 2019.

https://www.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/1208200/no-use-is-stronger-than-no-first-use/

One reason why abolition campaigns run out of gas is that the focus of effort is, by design, on the end state. The sooner the proposed end state for abolition, the more politically unrealistic it seems; the more distant the end state, the easier it becomes to be dismissive. In contrast, with a norms-based approach, success happens every day, every month, and every year without battlefield use and testing. We succeeded yesterday. We

can succeed today. And tomorrow. A norms-based approach lends itself to success far more than one based on complex numbers and an ideal end state.

What do we call this most important norm? What bumper sticker lends itself to growing public support and makes rebuttals harder?

In my view, "No First Use" isn't the right frame. It's too wonky. Rebuttals are easy, beginning with the obvious one: Russia doesn't accept No First Use. Pakistan won't accept No First Use, either. India is backing away from it. Why does embracing this make the United States safer? See what I mean?

No First Use is a doctrinal issue. Doctrinal debates don't expand public support. And besides, nuclear orthodoxy usually wins doctrinal debates. Just ask Obama administra-tion officials who sought doctrinal change.

6.3.3 Abolition DA – Impact

Abolition is the only guarantee against otherwise inevitable nuclear war.

Krepon 19

Michael Krepon (co-founder of the Stimson Center. He worked previously at the Carnegie Endowment, the State Department, and on Capitol Hill). "NO USE IS STRONGER THAN NO FIRST USE." *Arms Control Wonk*, October 6, 2019.

https://www.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/1208200/no-use-is-stronger-than-no-first-use/

I salute Women's Action for New Directions and Woman's Legislators Lobby for con-vening women state legislators to lend impetus to the prevention of mushroom clouds on battlefields. They have assembled under the banner of No First Use. No First Use is crucial, because first use will be followed by second use, perhaps very quickly, given how spring-loaded nuclear postures are. Then all hell can break loose.

Whatever issue matters most to you, that issue is imperiled by mushroom clouds. I endorse No First Use, but wonder whether it is the right rallying cry. Please bear with me.

The prevention of battlefield use of nuclear weapons has been the most profound, un-acknowledged diplomatic achievement of the Cold War. No one expected success, not even the early conceptualizers of deterrence theory. Deterrence alone didn't prevent

battlefield use because deterrence is dangerous and is subject to breakdowns. Reassur-ance was as important as deterrence in preventing mushroom clouds, but there were still many close calls.

And yet we survived, so far, without nuclear war. There are many reasons for this success — hard diplomatic work, trust building, deterrence, plain dumb luck and per-haps divine intervention. The norm of non-battlefield use has now held for almost three-quarters of a century. The national leader that breaks this norm and uses nuclear weapons first will live in infamy for as long as there is recorded history.

Every useful step in reducing nuclear dangers as well as reducing the salience and num-bers of nuclear weapons depends on the absence of mushroom clouds. Success in pro-tecting this norm can compensate for failures on other fronts.

Crucial norms have succeeded even as treaties have fallen by the wayside. Nuclear arms control was conceived in the early 1960s. It was designed to be about stabilization, but it devolved into a numbers game, much to the disappointment of some of its conceptual-izers, like Thomas Schelling. Because it was a numbers game and because harsh critics didn't trust the process, the numbers became increasingly complex. Treaties became hundreds of pages long with dense paragraphs of fine print. The more complex the numbers got, the longer it took to negotiate them and the easier it was for critics that opposed lower numbers to take aim.

The era of numbers-based nuclear arms control is on life support. I've argued elsewhere that it is important to try to extend the numbers we've got (New START). Whether or not Donald Trump can be convinced of the wisdom of doing so, what do we do next?

In my book in progress, thankfully supported by the MacArthur Foundation, I argue that a new plan is needed, one that brings in other regional nuclear powers. Success is more likely by placing norms rather than numbers front and center. Demanding that China join the United States and Russia is a numbers-based treaty at this stage is a snare and a dodge. But we can bring Beijing into a norms-based approach. And if we can bring China in, India and Pakistan can follow.

What would a norms-based approach look like? The most important norm is no mush-room clouds. To reinforce this norm, the norm of no nuclear testing is also central. Every test — and there have been almost 2,000 during the Cold War — was an advertisement of potential use.

The norm of not demonstrating prowess through nuclear testing, like the norm of no battlefield use, is taking hold. The Soviet Union stopped testing in 1990. The United

States stopped in 1992. China stopped in 1996. India and Pakistan started and stopped in 1998, over two decades ago. The passage of time without testing doesn't foreclose resumption, but makes this decision harder for national leaders.

A new 21st Century plan can succeed if it's built around these two norms. Subsidiary norms can lend reinforcement. Norm building can be reaffirmed by treaties. Their entry into force is to be sought and welcomed, but norms can still be strengthened absent entry into force. Numbers can also be utilized to back up norms, but without norms, the numbers might provide only cold comfort and would be hard to draw down. The longer key norms are observed, the more they facilitate the draw down of numbers — with or without treaties.

Amidst our cries of lamentation, it's worth remembering that every day, month and year that passes without the use and testing of nuclear weapons constitutes a victory because the passage of time raises the bar for potential norm breakers.

I know that questions have lately been raised about whether Russia has tested nuclear devices below detectable yields. If the U.S. Intelligence Community has a credible case in this regard, it can defend this assertion against an intense inquiry by independent technical experts. Color me skeptical, given the U.S. Intelligence Community's prior record of being wrong about declaring testing violations. This is one more mess — and a rather minor one, at that — to be cleaned up after the Trump administration moves on to the trash heap of history.

6.4 Solvency

6.4.1 Not Credible – Public Pressure, History

Public pressure and US history create a credibility problem that makes NFU meaningless

Harvey 19

Dr. John R. Harvey (physicist who has spent his career working to advance U.S. nu-clear weapons programs and policies including in senior posts in the Departments of Energy and Defense. He retired from government service in 2013 as principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical, and biological defense programs). "Assessing the Risks Of A Nuclear 'No First Use' Policy." *War on the Rocks*, July 5, 2019. https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/assessing-the-risks-of-a-nuclear-no-first-use-policy/

Deterrence Risks

Every president since Dwight Eisenhower has viewed nuclear weapons not just as an-other weapon of war augmenting conventional arms, but as a special kind of weapon to be used only in the direst circumstances when vital U.S. security interests are at stake. The main concern in adopting a policy of no-first-use is that it could lead an enemy to believe that it could launch a catastrophic, non-nuclear strike against the United States, its allies, or U.S. overseas forces without fear of nuclear reprisal. Consider, for example, a North Korean biological attack on an American city that kills hundreds of thousands, or an artillery bombardment of Seoul with chemical weapons, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of Korean and U.S. forces and citizens. Would North Korea be more willing to contemplate such attacks if it thought it was immune to a U.S. nuclear response? Recent presidents have been unwilling to accept the risk to deterrence that would accompany a pledge of no-first-use.

Two factors might mitigate such risks to deterrence were a no-first-use policy adopted. First, a no-first-use pledge is unlikely to appear credible to an adversary contemplating major aggression. For example, North Korea is unlikely to base any military planning to reunify the Korean Peninsula by force, or plans for its regime survival after an un-successful effort to achieve that objective, on a U.S. promise of no-first-use. Consider China's existing no-first-use pledge, which has not caused the United States to moder-ate its own nuclear posture one iota. Few states will risk their national security based

on a declaratory policy that can be reversed overnight. Dominic Tierney, an academic who supports a no-first-use policy, eloquently addresses this point:

Viewed through a strategic — and perhaps more cynical — lens, the no-first-use doctrine also has a huge credibility problem. For the U.S. pledge to truly matter, a president who otherwise favors a nuclear first strike would have to decide not to press the button because of this policy. But in an extreme national crisis — one involving, say, North Korean nuclear missiles — a president is unlikely to feel bound by America's former assurance. After all, if a country is willing to use nuclear weapons, it's also willing to break a promise.

Second, it's not at all clear that an adversary could count on U.S. public opinion to act as a "brake" on an American president contemplating first use in response to a catastrophic non-nuclear attack. Several surveys conducted by Scott Sagan and Ben Valentino look at the American public's willingness to support first-use under such circumstances. The results reveal a surprising level of support. Sagan and Valentino thus argue:

Would we drop the bomb again? Our surveys can't say how future presidents and their top advisers would weigh their options. But they do reveal something unsettling about the instincts of the U.S. public: When provoked, we don't seem to consider the use of nuclear weapons a taboo, and our commitment to the immunity of civilians from deliberate attack in wartime, even with vast casualties, is shallow. Today, as in 1945, the U.S. public is unlikely to hold back a president who might consider using nuclear weapons in the crucible of war.

In other words, the American public might well demand, rather than oppose or simply tolerate, a nuclear response to a catastrophic non-nuclear attack — no-first-use pledge or not.

Thus, an adversary's doubts about a no-first-use pledge and its belief that the U.S. public may well support breaking such a pledge in response to a horrific attack could mitigate some of the deterrence risks of adopting a no-first-use policy. However, the degree to which those risks would be mitigated remains uncertain and, so far, no president has been willing to find out.

6.4.2 Not Credible – Too Dangerous

NFU isn't credible – we wouldn't adhere to it in tough situations.

Geraghty 19

JIM GERAGHTY (senior political correspondent of National Review). "No First Use: A Solution in Search of a Problem." *National Review*, August 19, 2019.

https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/no-first-use-a-solution-in-search-of-a-problem/

Imagine it's mid 2021 and Elizabeth Warren has been elected President of the United States. Shortly after taking office, President Warren announces a policy of "No First Use," declaring that no matter what, the United States will never be the first to use nu-clear weapons in war. Unfortunately, a short time later, some sinister foreign power — take your pick, Russia, China, Iran or North Korea — unleashes every cyber-war weapon in their arsenal, hitting power grids, air traffic control, Internet access, the stock markets, banks, water and sewage system controls, the works. Or picture an electromagnetic-pulse weapon going off in the middle of Manhattan or just outside O'Hare International Airport, or chemical or biological weapons being released in Los Angeles or Miami.

A significant swathe of the country is crippled, and recovery will take months or years. America's intelligence agencies and allies find incontrovertible evidence leading back to Moscow, or Beijing, Tehran or Pyongyang. In other words, picture some really bad scenario of death and destruction on American soil directed by a foreign power that does not involve nuclear weapons.

Would a Warren administration still honor its declared no-first-use policy? After all, the adversary has not used nuclear weapons yet.

6.4.3 Shouldn't Act Now

Fundamental policy changes should only come during strategic stability – that's <u>not</u> the case, which makes NFU dangerous

Chang 16

Gordon R. Chang (author of Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes On the World and a columnist for the Daily Beast). "Declaring a no-first-use nuclear pol-icy would be exceedingly risky." Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, July 27, 2016.
https://thebulletin.org/2016/07/declaring-a-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-would-be-exceedingly-risky/

Various defense and disarmament experts have suggested that in the coming months, US President Barack Obama will declare a no-first-use stance on nuclear weapons, which would mark a fundamental policy shift. In June, Bruce Blair, co-founder of the pro-disarmament organization Global Zero, wrote in Politico, "I believe Obama will soon announce that henceforth the United States will never use nuclear weapons first in a conflict." Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin asserted as much on July 10, citing officials who said the president was considering a no-first-use declaration. A few days later, Japan's Kyodo News reported that President Obama would decide by the end of this month whether to announce the policy shift.

Would declaring no-first-use actually be a good idea, though? The answer is no, at least not now. Unilateral changes of this sort should be made only in times of strategic stabil-ity. At this time, America and its treaty partners are already having difficulty deterring big-state aggressors in Europe and Asia, and may need their most destructive weaponry to maintain peace and stability in troubled regions.

As its name implies, a no-first-use policy is a promise to use nuclear weapons only in retaliation for a nuclear attack. There are, of course, reasons to favor such a policy, and none is more important than avoiding history's last war. As Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, wrote in War on the Rocks, "A clear U.S. no-first-use policy would reduce the risk of nuclear miscalculation by nuclear-armed ad-versaries by alleviating concerns about a devastating U.S. nuclear first-strike, especially during a crisis." Blair put forth a more practical perspective: "The strategy today," he wrote of America's first-use posture, "has grown less and less connected to the contem-porary world and its emerging security threats: terrorism, proliferation, cyber warfare, economic disruption, mass refugee migrations, and climate change." Proponents of first

use, Blair suggested, are "mired in a Cold-War mind-set."

Today, unfortunately, resembles that multi-decade, global struggle in crucial respects. During the Cold War, big-power authoritarians threatened the international system, seizing territory and using armies to hold on to their new possessions. Now, China is grabbing specks in the South China Sea. It effectively seized Scarborough Shoal from the Philippines in 2012, and is threatening to take others, notably Second Thomas Shoal, also claimed by the Philippines, and the Japan-administered Senkakus in the East China Sea. Beijing is, at the same time, sending troops deep into Indian-controlled territory in the Himalayas. Its prosecution of territorial claims is creating instability in an arc from India to South Korea.

Moscow is also on the march. Russian President Vladimir Putin dismembered Georgia last decade and Ukraine this one, annexing Crimea in 2014. At the moment, his forces are occupying a large portion of the Ukrainian region of Donbass, which he ominously calls part of "New Russia." As former Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk re-cently told the Washington Post, there are, despite a cease-fire, both civilian and military casualties there every single day.

No time to experiment. The West largely stood by and watched Putin's mischief in Georgia and Ukraine, but now he has his eye on the Baltic states. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are NATO members, and pursuant to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, an attack on any of them would be considered an attack on all.

The alliance, however, is not at the moment capable of defending the Baltics with just conventional weapons. A RAND study released this year, reporting on the results of a series of war games, produced sobering assessments of a Russian move on the three states. "The games' findings are unambiguous: As currently postured, NATO can-not successfully defend the territory of its most exposed members," the authors write. "Across multiple games using a wide range of expert participants playing both sides, the longest it has taken Russian forces to reach the outskirts of Tallinn and Riga is 60 hours." A NATO war game in March also showed Russia winning.

The West, in short, is outgunned, tank for tank, plane for plane, and soldier for soldier. To slow down Russian advances, Obama and leaders of the 27 other members of the Atlantic alliance met in Warsaw early this month for perhaps the most important NATO meeting since the fall of the Soviet Union. There, they agreed to deploy four battalions, consisting of around 4,000 troops in total, in Poland and the three Baltic states. The new force, according to the Wall Street Journal, will be "the first regular deployment aimed

at deterring Moscow since the reunification of Germany more than a quarter-century ago."

Presumably, NATO will increase the size of this small contingent. As president of the Center for Security Policy Frank Gaffney argues, though, today the West needs more than just conventional forces. He said to me in an interview that it needs to convince aggressors they can be destroyed by a first nuclear strike.

6.5 AT: International Cooperation

6.5.1 AT: Cooperation

There's no evidence for the cooperation or international perception theses, and US NFU may do more harm than good.

Harvey 19

Dr. John R. Harvey (physicist who has spent his career working to advance U.S. nuclear weapons programs and policies including in senior posts in the Departments of Energy and Defense. He retired from government service in 2013 as principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical, and biological defense programs). "ASSESS-ING THE RISKS OF A NUCLEAR 'NO FIRST USE' POLICY." *War on the Rocks*, July 5, 2019. https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/assessing-the-risks-of-a-nuclear-no-first-use-policy/

Would U.S. adoption of no-first-use cause other countries to be more inclined to cooper-ate with the United States to work toward a strengthened nonproliferation regime and less likely to acquire nuclear weapons of their own? No evidence exists to support such a contention and, as noted above, allied perceptions of weakened extended deterrence could actually spur proliferation.

Another purported benefit of adopting a no-first-use policy is that it might silence crit-icism from Non-Aligned Movement countries that periodically denounce the United States for, among other things, not having disarmed unilaterally. This is unlikely. In-deed, the enormous progress made in the decades leading up to the end of the Cold War and beyond in ending the nuclear arms race, reducing nuclear stockpiles, and eliminat-ing other global nuclear threats has done little to moderate such rhetoric.

Along these lines, some view no-first-use as a means to delegitimize nuclear weapons in general, and, more specifically, as a first step to removing from alert and eventually getting rid of the inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) leg of the Triad. After all, if ICBMs are not survivable unless used first, and if America's policy becomes one of no-first-use, then why does the United States need them at all, much less on alert? This claim misrepresents both the role of America's ICBMs and the obligations that America would be under as part of a no-first-use pledge. Thus, such arguments are unlikely to sway any president who views a nuclear Triad as an essential element of U.S. security for managing risk in a dangerous world.

Many who favor a U.S. no-first-use pledge see it as a way to signal to the world a reduced role for nuclear weapons in U.S. national security. Reducing that role, and hence the likelihood that the United States would ever have to resort to nuclear use, is a laudable goal advanced in the nuclear posture reviews of the three previous presidents. But, in regard to its foreign impact, the actual security benefits that could justify accepting the risks of this policy are not well understood, nor are they quantifiable, and so far they have not tipped the scales toward the adoption of no-first-use.

Those who support no-first-use as a way to advance U.S. security must explain what has changed for the better in the international security environment since 2010 that would cause this president, or this Congress, to reverse earlier presidential decisions rejecting it.

Conclusion

It has been a precept of U.S. policy for decades that deterrence is strengthened when an adversary is unsure of the precise conditions under which the United States would em-ploy nuclear weapons — essentially, that uncertainty breeds caution. America has made exceptions, however, in certain cases to advance concrete security interests — for exam-ple, in regard to nuclear negative security assurances provided to non-nuclear weapons states that are parties in good standing with the Nonproliferation Treaty. If the United States were to adopt a policy of no-first-use, it would present clear risks for deterrence, for regional security more broadly, and to the non-proliferation regime, while the sup-posed benefits of such a policy that could offset such risks are largely illusory. It is thus no surprise that since the dawn of the nuclear age presidents across party lines have rejected no-first-use. The United States should continue to do so.

6.5.2 AT: Follow On

Assuming international follow-on is arrogant and outdated.

Miller and Payne 16

Franklin C. Miller and Keith B. Payne (principal of The Scowcroft Group. He is a retired civil servant, having served 22 years in senior positions in the Department of Defense, and Keith B. Payne, president and co-founder of the National Institute for Public Pol-icy). "The dangers of no-first-use." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, August 22, 2016. https://thebulletin.org/2016/08/the-dangers-of-no-first-use/

In light of this, adopting a policy of no-first-use would have to bring powerful benefits to offset the likely harm done to stability. What might these be? Advocates of a US no-first-use policy claim that US adoption of no-first-use would lead other nuclear powers to similarly do so, and thus contribute to nuclear stability.

In truth, however, there is zero evidence that US adoption of a no-first-use policy would lead others to mimic the United States. The idea that the rest of the world follows the United States in this way is itself outdated, arrogant, and contrary to considerable evi-dence. The failure of President Obama's Prague Agenda to convince Russia, China, In-dia, Pakistan, North Korea, or other nuclear powers to reduce the role nuclear weapons play in their respective security policies is a powerful testament to this fact.

Russia by its own open statements is now committed to a policy of coercive and unam-biguous nuclear first-use threats and possible employment to support an expansionist agenda in Europe—which means it hardly would follow a US no-first-use agenda. In-deed, a senior Russian official recently responded to US arms control overtures by ob-serving that Russian nuclear policies are driven strictly by Russian security needs, not by "mythical universal human values." Other nuclear powers similarly pursue their own paths and "do not seek to emulate" the United States. And, based on China's own open statements about its potential use of nuclear weapons, China's existing supposed no-first-use policy is wholly ambiguous and uncertain; China cannot seriously be con-sidered to have a no-first-use policy.

In 2009, the high level and bipartisan Congressional Strategic Posture Commission, also known as the Perry-Schlesinger Commission, concluded that the United States should not adopt no-first-use. In 2010, the Obama administration's own Nuclear Posture Re-view reached the same conclusion. Since then, the international security situation has deteriorated. The spectrum of military threats to the United States and our allies has

expanded considerably as Russia and China have pursued military buildups and ag-gressive policies in Europe and Asia respectively. US adoption of a no-first-use policy now would only reflect willful US detachment from these global realities, and would be perceived as such by friends and foes alike.

6.5.3 Russia

Russia won't follow-on --- that's dangerous

Chang 16

Gordon R. Chang (author of Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes On the World and a columnist for the Daily Beast). "Declaring a no-first-use nuclear pol-icy would be exceedingly risky." Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, July 27, 2016.

https://thebulletin.org/2016/07/declaring-a-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-would-be-exceedingly-risky/

The world, of course, would be far safer if all nine of the world's nuclear-armed states— the five recognized by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the four that are not— had no-first-use policies in place. Blair, the co-founder of Global Zero, believes that if the United States took a first nuclear strike off the table, it would "exert pressure on other nations whose doctrines allow for nuclear first use—Russia and Pakistan in particular— to revise those doctrines accordingly."

In the case of Russia, though, a revision of its first-use posture is unlikely while Putin remains in the Kremlin. He has talked about using nuclear weapons to hold onto Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, and his generals, meeting with American officials in March of last year, threatened to use them to prevent NATO from reinforcing the Baltic states.

General Sir Richard Shirreff, NATO's deputy supreme allied commander from 2011 to 2014, thinks a war with Russia over the Baltics would not stay conventional. "The chill-ing fact," he told BBC Radio 4, "is that because Russia hardwires nuclear thinking and capability to every aspect of their defense capability, this would be nuclear war."

We don't have to take Shirreff's word for it. Putin, while in Crimea in August 2014, talked about his country's "new developments in offensive nuclear weapons." And Gaffney of the Center for Security Policy said that the Russians not only have a doctrine of first-use, but are also "building first-strike capabilities, including some in violation of their arms-control obligations." So Kimball's argument that declaring no-first-use will reduce the possibility of nuclear conflict looks, at best, debatable.

"During the past half century, no president has dared to change the nation's nuclear strategy in any fundamental way," Blair wrote. He's right to ask us to rethink risky nuclear policy, but what he does not say is that any adoption of no-first-use would require a substantial rebuilding of conventional war-fighting capabilities.

It takes years—and sometimes decades—to do that, so no-first-use is not an idea whose time has come. As Sokoloski said of nuclear weapons, "We should not want to use them first, we should be reluctant to use them first, we should do everything not to use them first, but we should not exclude the possibility of doing so."

6.5.4 China

US-China war is exceedingly unlikely because of nuclear deterrence

Keck 17

Zackary Keck (Research Assistant at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Cen-ter for Science and International Affairs). "The 2 Forgotten Reasons China and America Probably Won't Go to War." The National Interest, August 26, 2017. https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-2-forgotten-reasons-china-america-probably-wont-go-war-22061?page=0%2C1

In recent years, many observers have woken up to the fact that a war between the United States and China is not unthinkable. Although this is true, there are still strong pacifying forces. Two factors strike me as the most important. The first, and most obvious one, is that both sides maintain secure nuclear arsenals. As Thomas Schelling and others have pointed out, nuclear weapons are not a game-changer simply because of their massive destructive capabilities. The speed and certainty of nuclear retaliation is just as impor-tant. These two characteristics simply aren't present with conventional weapons. Lead-ers can delude themselves into thinking their conventional forces, however improbably, will end up victorious in battle. In any case, the consequences of being wrong are far in the future. For instance, Imperial Japanese leaders knew it was a tremendous gamble to take on the United States. Isoroku Yamamoto, the Japanese admiral who planned Pearl Harbor, warned his civilian leadership beforehand: "In the first six to twelve months of a war with the United States and Great Britain I will run wild and win victory upon victory. But then, if the war continues after that, I have no expectation of success." After the American economic embargo, however, Japanese leaders were only faced with bad options: capitulating in the face of American pressure or fighting a more powerful en-emy in a likely futile effort. In these circumstances, Tokyo decided to gamble. After all, it was conceivable that America would be so exhausted from fighting Nazi Germany in Europe that it would ultimately sue for peace in Asia, especially in the face of fierce Japanese resistance. Can America and Its Allies "Play Fort" against China Deadly Mis-siles? While the outcome of conventional wars hinges on a number of unknowable fac-tors, nuclear retaliation is certain. And, unlike with conventional weapons—especially before airplanes and missiles—one doesn't have to defeat the other side's military to wreak havoc on its cities. Nuclear weapons can do so immediately. Moreover, as Robert Jervis points out , when two countries with secure, thermonuclear arsenals go to war, "the side that is 'losing' the war as judged by various measures of military capability

can inflict as much destruction on the side that is 'winning' as the 'winner' can on the 'loser.' " This changes the calculation of leaders, and makes it inconceivable that ratio-nal leaders would opt for total war. This is not foolproof of course— there is still the possibility that miscalculations, gradual escalation, or the "threats that leave something to chance" will produce an outcome neither side wanted— but it is a strong incentive for peace. While it is widely recognized that nuclear weapons make a U.S.-China con-flict less likely, the pacifying effect of geography is often overlooked. Geography works to attenuate tensions in two interrelated ways. First, both China and the United States are massive countries that would be extremely difficult to conquer and occupy. Second, both are separated by the largest ocean on earth, and it is extremely difficult to project power over large bodies of water. As John Mearsheimer has written : "When great powers are separated by large bodies of water, they usually do not have much offen-sive capability against each other, regardless of the relative size of their armies. Large bodies of water are formidable obstacles that cause significant power-projection prob-lems for attacking armies." These two geographical factors reduce the intensity of the so-called security dilemma. Despite all their disputes over issues like Taiwan and the East and South China Seas, China and the United States generally do not have to fear that the other side will seek to invade and conquer them. This has usually not been the case for rising and ruling powers that went to war. In many of these instances, the rivals were located on the same continent or even shared a border, which generated significant insecurity and led to conflict. As Mearsheimer again explains , "Great powers located on the same landmass are in a much better position to attack and conquer each other. That is especially true of states that share a common border. Therefore, great powers separated by water are likely to fear each other less than great powers that can get at each other over land."

6.6 AT: Nuclear War

6.6.1 Offense

NFU hobbles the US in the event of actual nuclear warfare

Peabody 19

Brent Peabody (researcher at the Center for New American Security). "How to Make the U.S. Military Weak Again." The National Interest, September 21, 2019. https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-make-us-military-weak-again-81891

If a no-first-use policy weakens our hand in the face of such attacks, then it outright hobbles us in the event of actual nuclear warfare. In any scenario with an American no-first-use policy in place, adversaries would understand the first strike is theirs and thus use it as an opportunity to erode our second-strike capabilities, something that could give them a decisive advantage in the conflict ahead. This threat is underscored by Russia's tactical nuclear advantage over the United States, which they could leverage to destroy nuclear bunkers, siloes, and submarines before we ever have the chance to use them. A no-first-use policy would thus weaken our nuclear posture even in the only situation where nuclear weapons are permitted—after we've already been attacked.

6.6.2 Still Nuclear War

Adversaries will still strike!

Heinrichs 20

Rebeccah Heinrichs (senior fellow at Hudson Institute). "Reject 'No First Use' Nuclear Policy." *Newsweek*, August 24, 2020. https://www.newsweek.com/reject-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-opinion-1527037

Third, our adversaries would hardly restrict themselves if America were to adopt a true NFU policy. In fact, we have reason to believe that many are willing to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict.

Start with Russia. Russian officials have implied their comfort with the use of nuclear weapons in a conventional conflict, have at times threatened nuclear use against purely defensive systems and, in at least one instance, an official stated that the conditions for a Russian nuclear use could as small as a regional, or even a local, conflict. In June 2015, the Obama administration's deputy secretary of defense, Robert Work, and then-Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral James Winnefeld informed Congress that "Russian military doctrine includes what some have called an 'escalate to de-escalate' strategy—a strategy that purportedly seeks to de-escalate a conventional conflict through coercive threats, including limited nuclear use." Then-Trump adminis-tration Secretary of Defense James Mattis testified to the same concern in 2018.

As for China, the Chinese have purported to embrace NFU. Way back on October 16, 1964, China declared that it "willnever, at any time or under any circumstances, be the first to use nuclear weapons." For decades, that was blindly accepted by those who wished to believe it—including NFU proponents in the U.S. But current Commander of U.S. Strategic Command Admiral Richard, when speaking about the Chinese NFU policy, told senators in February 2020, "I could drive a truck through that no first use policy." He went on to explain that the Chinese nuclear program lacks transparency and fosters distrust. Worse, the CCP's dubious claims to disputed Chinese territory raises concerns about how, and where, Beijing may employ nuclear weapons. Moreover, the CCP is engaged in a robust disinformation campaign across all areas of its government and society: America should not presume anything but deceit from our number one geopolitical threat.

6.6.3 US Won't Strike

NFU is a solution in search of a problem. There is no risk of

US first-use and adversaries aren't provoking it.

Geraghty 19

Jim Geraghty (senior political correspondent of National Review). "No First Use: A

Solution in Search of a Problem." *National Review*, August 19, 2019.

https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/no-first-use-a-solution-in-search-of-a-problem/

Warren's proposed policy is a solution in search of a problem. Our current policy amounts to "no first use, probably, unless you really mess with us, and we'll decide when we think you're really messing with us." For all of the current problems in our government, we're not even contemplating using nuclear weapons against anyone, and whatever else hostile regimes are doing, they haven't done anything to even put that option on the table.

6.6.4 AT: Rogue Strike

No rogue strikes --- there are checks on the president

French 17

David French (Senior writer for National Review). "We Have Enough Checks on the President's Power to Order a Nuclear Strike." National Review, November 16, 2017.

https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/we-have-enough-checks-presidents-power-order-nuclear-strike/

As it is, the president possesses the exclusive legal authority to order a nuclear attack. No general can decide to use our most deadly weapons, even if the forces under his command face complete destruction and only a nuclear strike can save his troops. A general facing a crumbling front and an imminent military disaster has only conven-tional weapons at his command. At the same time, the president doesn't have to con-sult with Congress before using our nation's ultimate weapons. It's one reason why the American commander-in-chief is rightly described as the most powerful man in the world. But it's not unchecked power. Every American president is subjected to impor-tant constitutional and military restraints. The most important constitutional safeguard against the kind of man who'd launch a truly rogue strike — initiate genocidal war on impulse — is the 25th Amendment. A man so unhinged is incapable of serving as pres-ident, and the Constitution provides for his emergency removal if the vice president and a "majority of the principal officers of the executive departments" determine that the president is "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office." Moreover, a proper reading of the Constitution also limits the president's authority to initiate any kind of war, including nuclear war. The Constitution reserves the power to declare war to Congress. The commander-in-chief, by contrast, is responsible for waging war. When our constitutional system is functioning, the only time the president should be able to act without Congress is when he's responding immediately to an actual or im-minent attack on the United States, on Americans abroad, or to an attack on American allies when we're under a Senate-ratified defense obligation. Even then, he should turn to Congress as soon as possible to ratify his defensive response and authorize offen-sive military action. As we know, however, a number of American presidents have disagreed with this constitutional formulation and have taken it upon themselves to wage war without congressional approval. And they've done so without facing any constitutional consequence. In other words, one of our constitutional safeguards has already failed — at least in the face of lower-stakes conflicts. Thus, we have to consider

a nightmare scenario. What if a president snaps — acting before his cabinet can remove him — and orders an indefensible, rogue nuclear strike? The answer is simple. The military wouldn't comply. It's officers are bound by law to refuse lawless commands, and the modern American military has profound cultural and moral restraints against the kind of world-changing mass murder that would result from a rogue strike. It won't happen. In fact, it's doubtful that it would happen even in the face of more defensible temptations to launch a first strike. Our nation has suffered conventional military disas-ters (for example, deep in North Korea during the first year of the Korean War) without resorting to nuclear weapons, and it's hard to imagine a single general recommending a nuclear strike in the absence of actual or imminent opposition use of weapons of mass destruction. Our military is built to fight and win wars through the use of conventional weapons . . . and conventional weapons alone. Of course one can always imagine a different, dystopian future where our current safeguards would be inadequate. But as much as I've critiqued Trump on other grounds, I have no fear that he'll attempt a rogue strike. In fact, his actual military policies since assuming office have been quite moder-ate, and his military operations have not just been successful, they've been conducted squarely in compliance with the laws of armed conflict.

6.6.5 AT: Miscalculation

NFU has little impact on miscalculation because promises won't be kept and others wouldn't follow on.

Harvey 19

Dr. John R. Harvey (physicist who has spent his career working to advance U.S. nu-clear weapons programs and policies including in senior posts in the Departments of Energy and Defense. He retired from government service in 2013 as principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical, and biological defense programs). "Assessing the Risks Of A Nuclear 'No First Use' Policy." *War on the Rocks*, July 5, 2019. https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/assessing-the-risks-of-a-nuclear-no-first-use-policy/

Supposed Benefits of a U.S. No-First-Use pledge

In light of these risks, what are the benefits of a U.S. no-first-use pledge that could offset them? Would it, as Sen. Warren claims, "[reduce] the risk of a nuclear miscalculation by an adversary in a crisis …"? If an adversary launches a nuclear weapon because it has misinterpreted America's actions or intentions, or even if it launches a nuclear weapon by accident, the consequences would, of course, be tragic. Such actions must be assid-uously avoided with clear crisis communications, transparency, and strong negative control of nuclear weapons. But, a U.S. no-first-use pledge, by itself, is unlikely to have any effect at all in preventing such a situation from arising in the first place.

Some argue that adopting such a policy would set an example and cause nuclear ad-versaries to follow America's lead. If promises were kept, this would allow the U.S. conventional juggernaut to win wars absent the threat of nuclear use. But this outcome is unlikely. Indeed, several nuclear adversaries have acquired, or are currently seek-ing, nuclear weapons precisely to offset superior U.S. conventional capabilities. Again, quoting Tierney:

"If [a President] made a dramatic announcement of no-first-use, it would probably have less impact than people think because other countries wouldn't follow suit, especially if they're weak."

6.6.6 AT: Simplifies Calculation

Complex calculations are good. Simple calculations undermine deterrence.

Heinrichs 20

Rebeccah Heinrichs (senior fellow at Hudson Institute). "Reject 'No First Use' Nuclear Policy." *Newsweek*, August 24, 2020. https://www.newsweek.com/reject-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-opinion-1527037

That brings us to the second reason NFU is a terrible idea. The United States should be working to create more complex calculations for China and Russia—not making their calculations simpler. Every policy decision related to arms control, the make-up and quality of America's own weapons and our public declarations should be made with one goal in mind: to deter acts of aggression against the United States. The United States must keep our options open, maintain some ambiguity about what we may do and force our enemies to make complex calculations and always doubt whether an act of aggression against the United States would be worth the punitive cost.

6.6.7 AT: Use It or Lose It

Use-or-lose pathway depends on the certainty that a country will conduct a disarming nuclear first strike. That rarely exists, and the empirical record supports the thesis that pre-emptive wars don't happen

Lanoszka and Scherer 17

Alexander Lanoszka (Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Waterloo) and Thomas Leo Scherer (senior program specialist for Economics and Peace-building at the U.S. Institute of Peace and a PhD candidate in the Politics department at Princeton University). "Nuclear ambiguity, no-first-use, and crisis stability in asym-metric crises," The Nonproliferation Review, 24:3-4, 2017, pages 343-355

The previous two pathways considered an intentional attack by the major power and an accidental strike by the adversary, but what if the adversary intentionally strikes first? If the adversary is convinced that a major power will attempt a disarming first strike, perhaps with nuclear weapons, an adversary could choose to attack first. This desper-ate, use-it-or-lose-it attack occurs when the adversary believes that it will suffer similar costs regardless of whether it strikes first. In this scenario, the indifferent adversary becomes just as likely to launch an attack, or perhaps even more likely if it believes it could inflict enough pain to get the major power to stand down. If the major power de-clares NFU, however, then its adversary would not fear a disarming strike and would not feel the need to use its weapons while it still can.38 A hypothetical example true to this pathway highlights the scope conditions. Imagine a weak state deciding whether to use its weapons before it would lose them in a war with a major power. Its choice involves whether to use them. If the adversary uses them, then war occurs. If they are unused, then the major power attacks with some probability less than 1 and again war occurs; otherwise, no conflict occurs. If war has the same the payoff for the weak state regardless of whether it attacks first, then the weak state will not attack. Put differently, the use-it-or-lose-it pathway requires that the weak state believe that an attack by the major power is absolutely certain. The use-it-or-lose-it pathway confronts the same log-ical problem as the downward-spiral pathway in terms of the assertions made by NFU supporters. If nuclear weapons are unnecessary for the major power to prevail, as some NFU supporters claim, and if AFU lacks credibility such that the adversary disregards it, then why would that same adversary feel pressure to "use it or lose it" against an NFU state and not an AFU state?39 The argument that AFU is unnecessary contradicts the argument that AFU is dangerous. The weak state is ultimately choosing between likely

annihilation if it does not attack first and certain annihilation if it does. Why would it ever choose the certain suicide of the latter remains unclear.40 We may suppose that if a weaker adversary believes that it is about to be hit first with nuclear weapons and wiped out, then it may take a chance on striking first to try to inflict pain on the major power in order to compel that major power to back down. But why would the major power back down if the adversary has already expended its arsenal, making it more vulnera-ble to a devastating riposte? There are cases where the weak state tried to impose costs against a stronger opponent to compel the major power to back down, such as Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War, as we discuss later. However, in these cases, the weaker state does not attempt to impose costs until after the major power has initiated the conflict. Once the conflict has started, the adversary indeed has nothing to lose by attacking, but until then the adversary will have much to lose. These points raise an interesting question: might a weak state choose to attack first and sacrifice the possibility of better material outcomes for some emotional or psychological utility gained by imposing costs on the major power. Though plausible, such an assumption raises the additional question of whether the state can enjoy this immaterial benefit if it has successfully self-destructed. Similarly, in the event that the state somehow survives the conflict, would it still receive the same benefits? The use-it-or-lose-it pathway is thus empirically very rare. One study finds that pre-emptive wars—that is, wars either fought to exploit military advantages before they disappear or caused by fear of surprise attack—"almost never happen."41 In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cases that seem prima facie to have been pre-emptive wars were World War I, China's entry into the Korean War, and the 1967 Arab– Israeli War. Although World War I does not meet the asymmetrical conditions that our analysis emphasizes, it suggests that use-it-or-lose-it pressures embodied by mobiliza-tion schedules can exist in a purely conventional world, where nuclear doctrines are absent. Still, the case of the United States and China in 1950 better approximates the asymmetrical conditions explored by our analysis. According to the pre-emptive-war version of events, China intervened in the Korean War out of concern that the US-led forces moving toward the Yalu River were striving to reunify the peninsula under non-Communist control. By taking over all of Korea, these forces would pose an imminent threat to China's security.42 Yet Chinese decision makers were not necessarily facing a use-it-or-lose-it conundrum even in this case. Other motivations—promoting the world Communist revolution and forestalling an indefinite US presence on the border—were also present.43 To be sure, China did go on to acquire nuclear weapons, but the evi-dence suggests that it did so in order to be self-reliant following its dissatisfaction with the support it was receiving from the Soviet Union during the 1950s.44 Of course, just

because something has not happened before does not mean that it could never happen. Nevertheless, if we believe that the use-it-or-lose-it pathway is possible, then the funda-mental inconsistency in the argument that AFU is dangerous remains. We must believe that the adversary's incentives to strike first under AFU will reverse if the United States declares NFU, as in the instance where the adversary believes that its armaments could survive a conventional first strike but not a nuclear first strike. Though that is possible, it again goes against arguments made by NFU advocates that the first use of nuclear weapons would provide no tactical benefit to the United States.45 Indeed, when other scholars discuss the adversary's use-it-or-lose-it incentives, the adversary is presumed to fear a result of any likely US first strike or effort toward regime change, regardless of whether nuclear weapons are used.46 Nuclear weapons may even be a moot point if the strong state is unwilling to use them for normative reasons but maintains its con-ventional military superiority.

6.6.8 AT: Trump

Trump isn't good reason for NFU. He's too conflict averse.

Geraghty 19

Jim Geraghty (senior political correspondent of National Review). "No First Use: A Solution in Search of a Problem." *National Review*, August 19, 2019.

https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/no-first-use-a-solution-in-search-of-a-problem/

If President Trump was threatening to nuke other countries three times a week, formal-izing this policy change, or requiring congressional approval of a nuclear strike would make sense. As of this moment, the only lawmaker who has recently discussed an Amer-ican first-use nuclear strike against a target is Congressman Eric Swalwell, who specu-lated about nuking his own constituents during a gun-control debate. (I could meet Warren halfway and support a no-first-use policy regarding the use of the U.S. nuclear arsenal against American citizens.)

If there was a good chance that President Trump was going to order a nuclear strike on some country for no good reason, this policy change would make sense. But this is the president who's eager to play footsie with Kim Jong-un, who nods along to Vladimir Putin's nonsensical claims at joint press conferences, who's publicly expressing confi-dence in Xi Jinping during the clashes in Hong Kong, and who made a big show of call-ing off a military strike against Iran at the last minute. Despite all the bellicose rhetoric, Trump clearly wants to avoid a military conflict.