Mutually Assured Destruction
A/T Pro by Tabitha Sleeger

# No First Use

**A/T “Nuclear Escalation” – No problem. Consider Taiwan and Russia**

*Bruce Blaire 2016. (nuclear security expert and a research scholar at the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton and the co-founder of Global Zero.) “The Flimsy Case Against No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons”* *Politico Magazine. September 28, 2016.* [*https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/nuclear-weapons-no-first-use-debate-214300*](https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/nuclear-weapons-no-first-use-debate-214300)

One could imagine that nuclear first-use threats affect behavior at the high end of the spectrum. But again, the facts suggest otherwise. The threat of nuclear escalation has not weighed heavily on anyone’s readiness to wage limited conventional war if their vital interests or sovereignty are threatened. For instance, China undoubtedly would initiate head-to-head combat with U.S. forces protecting Taiwan if the latter declares independence with America’s approval. In the case of Russia, while it seeks to avoid a conventional war with NATO, it certainly envisions a conventional phase of war with NATO. That its nuclear doctrine allows Russia to initiate the use of nuclear weapons, probably for demonstration purposes, if the survival of the state is threatened clearly indicates that Russia entertains waging war with NATO below the nuclear threshold.

**A/T “Necessary for Security” – Allies agree, no longer needed**

*Bruce Blaire 2016. (nuclear security expert and a research scholar at the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton and the co-founder of Global Zero.) “The Flimsy Case Against No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons”* *Politico Magazine. September 28, 2016.* [*https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/nuclear-weapons-no-first-use-debate-214300*](https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/nuclear-weapons-no-first-use-debate-214300)

The opposition of U.S. senior officials also rests on scant evidence. A recent Global Zero study finds that neither elite nor public opinion among our 30 key allies believes that U.S. nuclear first use is critical to their defense. This threat has long been discounted, knowing that U.S. presidents would be very reluctant to carry out such a threat and that conventional forces are adequate to successfully defend the sovereignty and vital interests of these 30 nations against non-nuclear aggression, including chemical and biological threats. Nuclear forces, and nuclear first use, are simply not needed to protect them.

**A/T “No Support” – Most voters are strongly support no first use**

*Union of Concerned Scientists 2019. (The Union of Concerned Scientists is a national nonprofit organization founded more than 50 years ago by scientists and students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Today, they are a group of nearly 250 scientists, analysts, policy and communication experts dedicated to that purpose.) “Voters Strongly Support a “No First Use” Nuclear Policy” March 1, 2019. Updated November 4, 2019* <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/voters-strongly-support-no-first-use-nuclear-policy>

New Hampshire (University of New Hampshire poll, March 2019) Residents who believe the United States should never use nuclear weapons first: 73%. Residents who believe it is important for presidential candidates to give their views on nuclear weapons: 84%.

**No longer needed**

*Nina Tannenwald 2019. (Author and Journalist for the Texas National Security Review) “It’s Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy” August 1, 2019.* [*https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-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/)

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.

**U.S. hasn’t used nuclear tactics in over 70 years**

*Nina Tannenwald 2019. (Author and Journalist for the Texas National Security Review) “It’s Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy” August 1, 2019.* [*https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-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/)

The most important goal for the United States today should be to prevent the use of nuclear weapons. Since the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 — the only use of nuclear weapons in warfare — it has established a nearly 74-year tradition of not using nuclear weapons. This tradition is the single most important fact of the nuclear age. Today, the risks of nuclear war are increasing. Heightened geopolitical tensions, a more complex calculus of deterrence in a multipolar nuclear world, renewed reliance on nuclear weapons, technological arms races in nuclear and non-nuclear systems, the collapse of arms control, and the return of nuclear brinkmanship have all resulted in highly dangerous deterrence policies that, through miscalculation or accident, could plunge the United States into a nuclear war with North Korea, Russia, or China. The nuclear-armed states urgently need to step back from this dangerous situation by adopting a no-first-use policy that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war.

**Outdated theory**

*Michael S. Gerson 2011. (research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), in Alexandria, Virginia) “The Future of U.S. Nuclear Policy: The Case for No First Use” February 2011.* Quarterly Journal: International Security. Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. [*https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use*](https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use)

There are four reasons why the United States might decide to threaten, or actually use, nuclear weapons first: to deter or respond to conventional aggression; to deter or respond to chemical or biological weapons attacks; to preempt an adversary's use of nuclear weapons; and to hold at risk, and potentially destroy, underground targets. Upon close examination, U.S. conventional capabilities are more than sufficient for these missions, are more credible than nuclear threats, and do not carry the added political and military consequences associated with the United States breaking the long record of nuclear nonuse. For the United States, deterrence of conventional aggression—the original justification for the threat of nuclear first use—is a Cold War relic. Given U.S. conventional advantages, the threat of first use is unnecessary for deterrence and unlikely to be perceived as credible by current and potential adversaries.

**A/T “U.S. succeeded with nuclear threats in the Gulf War” – The nuclear threats did not work**

*Michael S. Gerson 2011. (research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), in Alexandria, Virginia) “The Future of U.S. Nuclear Policy: The Case for No First Use” February 2011.* Quarterly Journal: International Security. Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. [*https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use*](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.

**Support for Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)**

*Michael S. Gerson 2011. (research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), in Alexandria, Virginia) “The Future of U.S. Nuclear Policy: The Case for No First Use” February 2011.* Quarterly Journal: International Security. Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. [*https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-first-use*](https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/future-us-nuclear-policy-case-no-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 decision making in the heat of an intense crisis and increase the chances that nuclear weapons are used.