### Adopt NFU—literature/context

#### Adopt NFU—policy/context

Harvey, former principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical, and biological defense programs., 2019 *(*John R. Harvey, 7-5-2019, "Assessing the Risks of a Nuclear ‘No First Use’ Policy," War on the Rocks, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/assessing-the-risks-of-a-nuclear-no-first-use-policy/>, DoA 6/3/2023, DVOG)

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***](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/NPR/2010_Nuclear_Posture_Review_Report.pdf)**and, later, near the end of Obama’s second term as part of a**[**mini-nuclear review**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/obama-plans-major-nuclear-policy-changes-in-his-finalmonths/2016/07/10/fef3d5ca-4521-11e6-88d0-6adee48be8bc_story.html?postshare=3501468199481657&tid=ss_tw-bottom)**, 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*](https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF) carried out by the Trump administration reviewed the policy and reaffirmed Obama’s decision.

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](https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/01/30/warren-smith-introduce-bill-to-bar-us-from-using-nuclear-weapons-first/). Well-meaning supporters of no-first-use are taken with the simplicity of the idea and its potential for bolstering U.S. “moral leadership” in the world. After all, they argue, the United States has no intention of starting a nuclear war so why not just say so? **Given the recent revival of this topic, it is appropriate to review some of the considerations that caused both Obama and Trump, as well as Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bus, to reject adopting a policy of no-first-use.**

**There are three major risks in adopting a nuclear declaratory policy of no-first-use. The first risk is to deterrence: Adversaries, absent a fear of reprisal, could be emboldened to act against U.S. interests. The second risk is to U.S. assurances to its allies: If America adopts no-first-use, then allies could lose confidence in America’s extended deterrence commitments**. The third risk is to the goal of non-proliferation: Such lost confidence among America’s allies could spur them to develop and field their own nuclear weapons. The purported benefits of adopting a no-first-use policy, which I discuss below, are insufficient to offset these inherent risks.

#### Adopt NFU—Policy—Biden

Sirota, politics reporter for The Intercept, 22 (Sara Sirota, 1-21-2022, "Biden’s Nuclear Strike Policy Is the Same as Russia’s," Intercept, <https://theintercept.com/2022/04/11/nuclear-weapons-biden-russia-strike-policy/>, DoA 6/3/2022, DVOG)

DURING HIS CAMPAIGN for president, Joe Biden penned an [article](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again) in Foreign Affairs titled “Why America Must Lead Again.” In it, he laid out his thoughts on the most dangerous arms in the U.S. stockpile. “I believe that the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack,” the then-candidate wrote. “As president, I will work to put that belief into practice, in consultation with the U.S. military and U.S. allies.”

**The declaration gave arms control advocates hope that the president would adopt a no-first-use policy — meaning that the U.S. would commit to never initiating a nuclear conflict**. Current policy allows the president to strike first in an extreme circumstance, like in response to a devastating chemical attack, which can lower the threshold for nuclear war to break out. But now, at a time when the world is closer to a nuclear exchange than ever, thanks to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s devastating war against Ukraine, Biden has gone back on his word.

#### Adopt—Topic experts/officials

Geller, Former Senior Policy Analyst, Center for National Defense, 2021 (Patty-Jane Geller, 10-20-2021, "What Experts and Senior Officials Have Said About Adopting a No-First-Use or Sole-Purpose Nuclear Declaratory Policy," Heritage Foundation, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/what-experts-and-senior-officials-have-said-about-adopting-no-first-use-or-sole>, DoA 6/3/2023, DVOG)

SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS ADVISE AGAINST NFU

* Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley [testified](https://armedservices.house.gov/hearings?ID=AEFE8C4B-54FF-463C-89C5-0F218774D7B0) in 2021, “I would not recommend making a declaration of no first use. It is a topic [that] I think would take away an option for the president.”
* Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Hyten [explained](https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/Transcript-%20General%20John%20E.%20Hyten%20on%20Progress%20and%20Challenges%20Implementing%20the%20National%20Defense%20Strategy%20.pdf) in 2020, “[M]y advice is that a no first use policy is bad policy for the United States of America and it’s bad because we can’t predict the future.” In 2019 he [explained](https://www.stratcom.mil/Media/Speeches/Article/1800469/house-armed-services-subcommittee-on-strategic-forces-holds-hearing-on-fiscal-2/), “[It] would create an environment where an adversary could think that crossing the line would be okay and that the United States would not respond to whatever the situation was.”
* **Commander of U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) Admiral Charles Richard**[**testified**](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/19-71_10-24-19.pdf)**in October 2019, “My best military advice would be to not adopt a ‘no first use’ policy…. [It] would have a significant negative effect on our commitments to our allies.”** He [reiterated](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-22_04-20-2021.pdf) his opposition in April 2021.
* Former STRATCOM Commander General Robert Kehler [testified](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-31_04-28-2021.pdf) in April 2021, “[A] no-first-use policy incentivizes our adversaries to act aggressively, to include, perhaps, starting a major, conventional, regional war, without facing the consequences of the ultimate risk…. [I]t removes a pillar of security from our allies and that is a fundamental pillar for them.”
* Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford [testified](https://www.fischer.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2019/3/chairman-of-joint-chiefs-deterring-nuclear-war-is-most-important-mission-of-the-department-of-defense) in 2019, “I think the current policy is one that complicates an adversary’s decision making process and I wouldn’t recommend any change to simplify an adversary’s decision making calculus.”

SENIOR BIDEN AND OBAMA OFFICIALS HAVE OPPOSED NFU

* Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, while acknowledging that NFU is a matter of policy that the Administration will review, [testified](https://armedservices.house.gov/hearings?ID=AEFE8C4B-54FF-463C-89C5-0F218774D7B0) in June 2021 that he agreed with Chairman Milley that “our goal is to provide as many credible options to the president as possible.”
* Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl [testified](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-08_03-04-2021.pdf) in March 2021, “I am not personally in support of a no-first-use policy.”
* Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs Deborah Rosenblum [testified](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-45_05-27-2021.pdf) in May 2021, “Give[n] the strategic environment that we face, one that is absolutely challenging U.S. interests and those of our allies, I do not support a no-first-use policy.”
* Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks [testified](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-03_02-02-2021.pdf) in February 2021, “I do not believe no-first-use policy is necessarily in the best interest of the United States,” and in April 2018, she [stated](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/fp_20190424_extended_deterrence_transcript.pdf), “I am more comfortable having that ambiguity that you can provide to a policy maker…in the current environment we're in….”
* **President Barack Obama’s former Cabinet officials, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Secretary of State John Kerry, and Secretary of Energy Ernie Moniz, all**[**opposed**](https://www.wsj.com/articles/no-first-use-nuclear-policyproposal-assailed-by-u-s-cabinet-officials-allies-1471042014)**adopting an NFU policy, reportedly due to expressed concerns from allies. Secretary of Defense Carter reportedly raised objection to NFU “on the grounds that it risked provoking insecurity about the U.S. deterrent among allies, some of which then could pursue their own nuclear programs in response.”**

#### Adopt—policy

Perkovich, vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Vaddi, fellow in the Nuclear Policy Program at CEIP, 2021 (George Perkovich and Pranay Vaddi, March 2021, Arms Control Today, Vol 51 Number 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27067192>, DoA 6/3/2023, DVOG)

The concept of pledging not to be the first to initiate nuclear weapons use has been a feature of the nuclear policy debate for decades. It has long been an element of the official public policies of China and India. **In recent years, U.S. policymakers, encouraged by other countries and civil society groups, have once again considered whether to adopt a no-first-use policy, most recently the Obama administration in 2016. In its most restrictive form, such a policy would pledge the United States to never use nuclear weapons first in a conflict.** The goals are to establish or clarify that the United States would not start a nuclear war and to reduce politically the salience of nuclear weapons nationally and globally.

#### Adopt an NFU policy

White, Emeritus Professor at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 2021 *(*Hugh White, 7-26-2021, "The right reasons for saying no to nuclear first use," East Asia Forum, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/07/26/the-right-reasons-for-saying-no-to-nuclear-first-use/>, DoA 6/3/2023, DVOG)

Washington is once again debating whether to declare that it will never be the first to use nuclear weapons. There are good reasons why it should. But it would not be right to [suggest](https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/07/04/time-for-us-nuclear-strategy-to-embrace-no-first-use/) that a no-first use policy would cost the United States nothing strategically.

On the contrary, it would be a grave step. That does not mean it should not be taken — it should. But the consequences need to be fully understood for the wisdom of a no-first use policy to become clear.

Those who oppose no first use have a key fact on their side. In some circumstances, threatening to launch a nuclear attack can deter an adversary when conventional forces cannot. It worked when US and NATO conventional forces had little chance of defeating a Soviet invasion of Western Europe during the Cold War. What deterred Moscow from invading was Washington’s clear threat to use nuclear weapons first to stop Soviet tanks.

**It is widely assumed that US conventional forces have since become vastly superior to everyone else’s, so they no longer need to rely on nuclear threats to prevail. This is the key argument for adopting a no-first use policy today.**

Yet US superiority in conventional warfare is a myth. Washington’s conventional forces have ‘global reach’ — an unmatched capacity to project armed force to battlefields far from the United States itself. But they cannot deploy enough force to distant battlefields to defeat a major power like Russia or China fighting on its own doorstep.

Washington can no longer expect to win a [conventional war](https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/05/10/us-pacific-deterrence-initiative-too-little-too-late-to-counter-china/) in the Western Pacific over, say, Taiwan against China’s vastly improved maritime forces. At best it would achieve a costly and inconclusive stalemate, an outcome that Washington could only hope to break by threatening nuclear attack.

Making such a threat is not explicit in US policy today, but without the capacity to make it there seems no way for the United States to win a war over Taiwan, and it will thus become harder to deter China from attacking Taiwan. This is a throwback to the Cold War.

But that doesn’t settle the argument over no first use, because nuclear threats will only deter China if they are credible — credible in the face of China’s threat to retaliate against any US nuclear attack on China with nuclear attacks on the United States. If threats to go nuclear are not credible, there is no point in keeping the option open.

This is not a new problem. During the Cold War Washington had to convince the Soviets that the United States would use nuclear weapons to defend Western Europe when it was virtually certain that the Soviets would retaliate with nuclear strikes against the US homeland. It did so by convincing the Kremlin that Washington believed defending Western Europe was essential to the defence of the United States itself.

Can Washington do the same now? Can it convince Beijing that the United States sees the defence of Taiwan in the same way it saw the defence of Western Europe during the Cold War? The answer is almost certainly no, partly because [Americans themselves](https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/03/28/malign-or-benign-china-us-strategic-competition-under-biden/) do not argue that way — and partly because it is so evidently not true.

The stakes over Taiwan are high, but not that high. Its defence is vital to preserve Washington’s role as the leading power in Asia, but not to the defence of the United States itself. That means it cannot credibly threaten to fight a nuclear war — and risk nuclear attack on US cities — to defend Taiwan.

Some may argue that US nuclear threats nonetheless remain credible because China’s retaliatory threats are not credible, thanks to America’s ability to destroy Chinese warheads before they reach their targets, and to launch massive counter-retaliatory strikes that would deter Chinese retaliation.

But some Chinese warheads would probably survive US pre-emptive strikes and penetrate its missile defences to reach US cities. And no president could be sure that Beijing would not be willing to risk US counter-retaliatory strikes when the stakes for them are so high — just as Washington was willing to risk Soviet nuclear retaliation in the Cold War. The risk of [Chinese retaliation](https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/05/08/chinas-calculus-after-the-inf-treaty/) remains very real, and the credibility of US threats to use nuclear weapons first is correspondingly low.

That alone is good reason for Washington to abandon the first use option, and it leads into an even better reason. The heated debates over no first use show how firmly many people in Washington still believe that US threats to use nuclear weapons first against China are credible. That leads them to overestimate Washington’s chances of using first use threats to prevail in a war with China, despite the ever-dwindling chances of winning with conventional forces.

This overestimation poses a real and present danger that the United States will start a war with China it cannot win. It would then confront a choice between accepting defeat or making good on its threats by starting a nuclear war — a true disaster.

**The best reason for Washington to adopt a no-first use policy is therefore to help US decision-makers understand the limits of US power and adjust their plans and ambitions accordingly.**

### Adopt—dictionary

#### Adopt—dictionary

Cambridge Dictionary, No Date (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/adopt>, DoA 6/3/2023, DVOG)

**B2: to**[**accept**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/accept)**or**[**start**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/start)**to use something new:**

*I*[*think*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/think)*it's*[*time*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/time)*to adopt a different*[*strategy*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/strategy)*in my*[*dealings*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/dealings)*with him.*

*The new*[*tax*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/tax)*would*[*force*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/force)[*companies*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/company)*to adopt energy-saving*[*measures*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/measure)*.*

*He's adopted a*[*remarkably*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/remarkable)[*light-hearted*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/light-hearted)[*attitude*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/attitude)*toward the*[*situation*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/situation)*.*

**to**[**choose**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/choose)**someone or something or take something as**[**your**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/your)**own:**

*Dr. Kennedy has been adopted****as****the party's*[*candidate*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/candidate)*for*[*South*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/deep-south)*Cambridge.*

**to**[**start**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/start)[**behaving**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/behave)**in a**[**particular**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/particular)**way,**[**especially**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/especially)**by**[**choice**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/choice)**:**

*Roz has adopted one or two*[*funny*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/funny)[*mannerisms*](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/mannerism)*since she's been away.*

#### Adopt—dictionary—policy

Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, No Date (<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/adopt>, DoA 6/3/2023, DVOG)

​B2 [transitive] **adopt something--to formally accept a suggestion or policy** by voting

The government adopted a resolution on disarmament.

The council is expected to adopt the new policy at its next meeting.

The UN Security Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

#### Adopt—dictionary—formal/official policy

Merriam Webster, No Date (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/adopt#:~:text=adopt%2C%20embrace%2C%20espouse%20mean%20to,a%20ready%20or%20happy%20acceptance>., DoA 6/3/2023, DVOG)

3: **to accept and establish (something, such as a law or policy) in a formal or official way**

adopt a constitutional amendment

adopted new safety measures

By then almost every state had adopted an animal anti-cruelty law.—Mindy Norton